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# A Planting of the Lord: Contemporary Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in Australia

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Sydney

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# Declaration of Originality

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or institute of higher learning.

I affirm that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work. I certify to the best of my knowledge that all sources of reference have been acknowledged.

Elizabeth Miller

August 2015

## Abstract

Their expanding numbers, political influence, cultural impact, and financial resources are increasingly visible, yet there has been curiously little academic exploration of the extraordinary growth of Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Australia over the last forty years. Historical analysis is notably absent from the small body of existing literature on this topic. By introducing the history of modern Australian Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity, alongside an examination of the current form of the movement, this thesis addresses this scholarly gap. Using participant observation, discourse analysis, and archival research, it answers the question: how can we understand the place and form of contemporary Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity in Australia?

Contemporary Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity in Australia forms a distinct social movement based on a set of shared understandings within these churches, and between Pentecostals and charismatics and wider Australian society. The secular embrace of neoliberalism and individualism, and reactions to second wave feminism, made churches that reflected these social changes—particularly through an embrace of the prosperity gospel—appealing, particularly when combined with their use of modern tools and technology to convey what are essentially conservative messages. These factors account for the growth of these churches and explains their *place* in Australian society. Their *form* is based on negotiating identity across local, national, and international demands, as well as on structuring themselves to provide a complete community for members. Finally, I argue that these churches have had a broad impact on Australian churches and society, and yet they are widely critical of the outside world, arguing that those outside their churches can never understand this evangelical movement. To illustrate this point, my thesis uses five churches as case studies: in Sydney, Hillsong and C3 are the best known and biggest Pentecostal congregations. They are analysed alongside their counterparts in Melbourne (Planetshakers) and Adelaide (Influencers Church) all of which are megachurches with multiple campuses. The fifth church I consider is Newfrontiers, which began in the United Kingdom, but has since spread across the world, including to Australia. Study of these churches reveals a movement that is growing, but is plagued by internal contradictions and a transient membership base. The thesis will explore the tensions of the movement, connecting its history and theology to Pentecostal understandings of, and interactions, with the secular world.

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I wrote most of this thesis sitting in a shed in my parent's garden. My father had built the shed as a cubby house for my sister and I as children and it had stood derelict for a decade. I do not think my parents expected that, at twenty-three, I would reclaim the cubby house. Mum and Dad: I am sure that many times you wished you had let me quit studying while I was ahead; I am desperately glad you did not. Thanks not only for reading endless drafts, but for housing and loving me. It seems I have not quite grown out of asking endless questions about the world (and I am starting to suspect I never will) and your forbearance in first answering those questions and now encouraging me to find the answers is much appreciated.

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# Table of Contents

<b>Declaration of Originality</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>List of Illustrations</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<i>Welcome home</i> .....	10
<i>Focus of the study</i> .....	17
<i>Literature review</i> .....	23
<i>Sources and methodology</i> .....	26
<i>Outline</i> .....	39
<b>Chapter One: Historical Overview</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<i>Nineteenth-century evangelicalism</i> .....	45
<i>Azusa Street and the early twentieth century</i> .....	50
<i>Early Australian Pentecostals</i> .....	55
<i>Evangelical and charismatic renewal in the 1950-1960s</i> .....	59
<i>Pentecostals, evangelicals, and charismatics from the 1970s</i> .....	71
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	79
<b>Chapter Two: Healthy, Wealthy, and (God)Wise</b> .....	<b>81</b>
<i>Signs and wonders</i> .....	89
<i>Other Christian responses to neoliberalism and the prosperity gospel</i> .....	98
<i>Pentecostal understandings of wealth</i> .....	104
<i>Churches as businesses</i> .....	111
<i>Individualism, self-development and positive thinking – the answer to social ills?</i> .....	115
<i>Divine health</i> .....	123
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	127
<b>Chapter Three: God Made Adam First</b> .....	<b>129</b>
<i>Women in early international Pentecostalism</i> .....	137
<i>Women in Australian Pentecostalism</i> .....	142

<i>Pentecostal understandings of sex, gender, and feminism</i> .....	147
<i>Leadership and submission</i> .....	163
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	171
<b>Chapter Four: The Road Leads Home</b> .....	<b>173</b>
<i>'A religion made to travel': locating identity in faith</i> .....	181
<i>'The Great Commission': local and national contexts</i> .....	192
<i>Networks of social integration</i> .....	195
<i>Modernity and megachurches</i> .....	201
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	208
<b>Chapter Five: Attracting and Keeping Members</b> .....	<b>210</b>
<i>Retaining members</i> .....	215
<i>Creating communities</i> .....	218
<i>Fostering belonging</i> .....	224
<i>Encouraging self-development</i> .....	237
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	246
<b>Chapter Six: Pentecostals and their Critics</b> .....	<b>248</b>
<i>Charismatic renewal within other churches and Pentecostal responses</i> .....	252
<i>Pentecostalism as a threat to other Christian denominations</i> .....	260
<i>Secular critiques and Pentecostal responses</i> .....	266
<i>Pentecostal victimhood</i> .....	275
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	281
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>283</b>
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>294</b>
<i>Primary Sources</i> .....	294
<i>Secondary Sources</i> .....	307
<b>Appendix A: Definitions</b> .....	<b>330</b>
<b>Appendix B: Participant Observation Criteria</b> .....	<b>336</b>
<b>Appendix C: Ethics approval and letter of consent</b> .....	<b>338</b>

## List of Illustrations

<b>Figure 1:</b> Hillsong Australia Website Homepage. ....	11
<b>Figure 2:</b> Hillsong London Website Homepage. ....	12
<b>Figure 3:</b> Hillsong Kiev and Moscow Website Homepage. ....	13
<b>Figure 4:</b> “Welcome Home” is projected onto screens as people walk into the Opening Night Rally at Hillsong Conference 2 July 2012, Allphones Arena, Sydney. Image is author’s own.....	13
<b>Figure 5:</b> Front cover of <i>Paradise Assembly of God Welcome You</i> , 1996. ....	14
<b>Figure 6:</b> The Apostolic Faith Mission on Azusa Street in 1907. ....	28
<b>Figure 7:</b> Azusa Street on 30 November 2012. Image is author’s own. ....	29
<b>Figure 8:</b> Azusa Street on 30 November 2012. Image is author’s own. ....	29
<b>Figure 9:</b> Crowds at final service of Southern Cross Crusade at the Sydney Showground, 10 May 1959. ....	63
<b>Figure 10:</b> Howard Guinness (illustrated by Frank Benier), <i>I Object...to Billy Graham...</i>	65
<b>Figure 11:</b> Brian Houston speaking on Day 1 of Hillsong Conference 2015. Image from Hillsong Conference Website. ....	67
<b>Figure 12:</b> Shot of the crowd on Day 1 of Hillsong Conference 2015. Image from Hillsong Conference website.....	67
<b>Figure 13:</b> Brian Houston with his son Joel Houston, a worship leader and member of Hillsong United, on stage on Day 1 of Hillsong Conference 2015. Image from Hillsong Conference Website. ....	68
<b>Figure 14:</b> Influencers Church, Paradise Campus, 11 August 2012. Image is author’s own.....	76
<b>Figure 15:</b> Hillsong Church, ‘Colour Memories’, from <i>Your Conference Diary – Colour 2013</i> , 15. ....	82
<b>Figure 16:</b> Assemblies of God in Victoria and Tasmania, <i>Harvest</i> , Spring vol. (1998), 13.....	110
<b>Figure 17:</b> Opening night, Colour 2013. Image author’s own, taken 7 March 2013. The women on stage and in the glass boxes are singers/dancers who are performing the opening act for the conference. ....	153
<b>Figure 18:</b> Brian Houston speaking at Colour 2013. Image author’s own, taken 7 March 2013. ....	155
<b>Figure 19:</b> Caroline Leaf, one of the invited speakers at bU Conference (Influencers Church) 2012 chose to have her husband on stage with her as an assistant. 11 August 2012. Image is author’s own.....	156

<b>Figure 20:</b> Scan of front Cover of Bobbie Houston, <i>I'll Have What She's Having</i> . .....	170
<b>Figure 21:</b> Prayer and Offering Evening hosted by David Holden, at Newfrontiers 'Together on a Mission' Conference, 2011. Image author's own, taken 14 July 2011.....	175
<b>Figure 22:</b> "Love Lead Me Home T-Shirt", advertised for sale at 'Hillsong Store', <i>Hillsong Church Website</i> . .....	177
<b>Figure 23:</b> "The Road Leads Home T-shirt", advertised for sale at 'Hillsong Store', <i>Hillsong Church Website</i> . .....	178
<b>Figure 24:</b> Exterior of the Brighton Centre from Brighton Beach. Image is author's own. Taken 15 July 2011. ....	179
<b>Figure 25:</b> ANZAC Day service during C3 Presence Conference, Sydney. Image is author's own. Taken 25 April 2014. ....	181
<b>Figure 26:</b> Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea. Image is author's own. Taken 10 February 2012. ....	187
<b>Figure 27:</b> Parking lot at the front of Influencers Church, Paradise. Image is author's own. Taken 11 August 2012. ....	204
<b>Figure 28:</b> Hillsong Church Facebook Page, "'†=♡ #crossequalslove" at Bondi Beach'. 1 April 2015.....	206
<b>Figure 29:</b> Hillsong Church Facebook Page, "'†=♡ #crossequalslove"' 29 March 2015 .....	207
<b>Figure 30:</b> Invitation to Colour Conference 2013 (as sent to author).....	212
<b>Figure 31:</b> The spectacle of musical performances at church conferences is immense and deliberately creates a sensory overload. Photo from evening session of Colour Conference 2013, 7 July. Image is author's own. ....	226
<b>Figure 32:</b> Emotional worshippers close their eyes and raise their hands as they sing along with the band at evening rally of Hillsong Conference 2012. Image is author's own.....	228
<b>Figure 33:</b> Band plays at 7 July evening rally of Hillsong Conference 2012 with lyrics displayed on the screen for worshippers to read and sing along. Image is author's own.....	228
<b>Figure 34:</b> Advertisement for Commonwealth Bible College in November 1984 Supplement of Australian Evangel (newsletter of the AOG). ....	242
<b>Figure 35:</b> Cartoon published in Methodist Church of South Australia, 'Charismatic Fellowship Rally' pamphlet, 1975. ....	256
<b>Figure 36:</b> Hillsong Church London, Word (London: Hillsong Church London, 2013), np.....	279
<b>Figure 37:</b> Hillsong Church London, Word (London: Hillsong Church London, 2013), np. ....	280

## Abbreviations

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACC	Australian Christian Churches (formerly Assemblies of God)
ACCC	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
AOG	Assemblies of God
APSC	Australian Pentecostal Study Centre
APU	Azusa Pacific University
BGEA	Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
CAC	Catholic Apostolic Church
CCR	Catholic Charismatic Renewal
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CRA	Christian Research Association
CRC	Christian Revival Crusade
KJV	King James Version
NIV	New International Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NCLS	National Church Life Survey
PHC	Pentecostal Heritage Centre

# Introduction

## Welcome home

Darlene Zschech co-pastors Hope Unlimited Church with her husband, Mark.<sup>1</sup> She is also one of Australia's—and indeed the world's—most successful Christian music singersongwriters.<sup>2</sup> Zschech can recall clearly her first experience in church. What stands out in her description is the sense of welcome she felt: “From the moment I stepped into my local church as a tentative fifteen-year-old, I had the sense of coming home. And it was this openarmed welcome that made me love the house of God”.<sup>3</sup> The founder of C3, one of the largest Pentecostal churches in Australia, had a comparable experience of feeling at home at his first Pentecostal service. Phil Pringle said: “It was as though someone inside me nodded and said, ‘Go ahead.’ I began to speak in this strange but beautiful language. After all this, I hugged all the elders. I was full of a love I had never felt before”.<sup>4</sup> Ashley Evans, a senior pastor at Influencers Church and one of the co-founders of the Australian conservative Christian political party, Family First, relates a similar story. His earliest memories of the church were likewise full of comfort, belonging, and love: “The one place that was familiar to me was church. I knew what to expect and developed a deep sense of God’s presence there. It was a place I could count on”.<sup>5</sup>

That members and visitors feel this sense of ease, comfort, and welcome in their churches is particularly important to Hillsong. The three images below, taken from local Hillsong Church websites, explicitly demonstrate this point. So too do the “Welcome Home” banners that hang outside their churches and which they project onto large screens for the congregation (see below). It is not only churches in their contemporary forms that offer this

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<sup>1</sup> Hope Unlimited Church describes itself as “one church in three locations” on the Central Coast of New South Wales, Australia. See: Hope Unlimited Church, ‘About Us’, *Hope Unlimited Church Website*. Available: <http://www.hopeuc.com/#/home/about-us>. Accessed 5 April 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Under her leadership as Worship Pastor, one of Australia’s biggest churches, Hillsong, achieved unprecedented success on the secular and Christian music charts. See Chapter Five for more.

<sup>3</sup> Darlene Zschech, *The Art of Mentoring: Embracing the Great Generational Transition* (Bloomington: Bethany House Publishers, 2011), 12.

<sup>4</sup> Phil Pringle, *Seven Big Things That Make Life Work: Principles for Successful Living* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image, 2010), 75.

<sup>5</sup> Ashley Evans, *No More Fear: Break the Power of Intimidation in 40 Days* (Springfield: Influence Resources, 2012), 12.

message of welcome. Paradise Assembly of God—now Influencers Church—produced a Welcome booklet aimed at families and particularly young children in 1996 (see image below). The appropriately named pastor Andrew Shepherd wrote in this booklet:

Hi There! It's great to have you in church today. We love Jesus here at Paradise. Jesus is the best friend that you can have. We pray that you can come back again to learn more about Him and how much He loves you. Here at Paradise we have...a fantastic time learning about God. Our teachers would love you to come along and join the fun. Jesus thinks you're wonderful and so do we. We look forward to seeing you again soon.<sup>6</sup>

The relentlessly welcoming, positive, and upbeat message offered by these churches is one of their key selling points. However, this work approaches Australian Pentecostal and charismatic churches from a markedly different perspective; while I have always felt welcome in these churches, not once have I felt at home.



Figure 1: Hillsong Australia Website Homepage.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Paradise Assembly of God, *Paradise Assembly of God Welcome You* (Paradise: Paradise AOG, 1996), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Hillsong Church, 'Homepage', Hillsong Church Australia Website. Available: <http://hillsong.com/australia/>. Accessed 26 February 2015.



Figure 2: Hillsong London Website Homepage.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Hillsong Church, 'Homepage', *Hillsong Church London Website*. Available: <http://hillsong.com/london>. Accessed 26 February 2015.

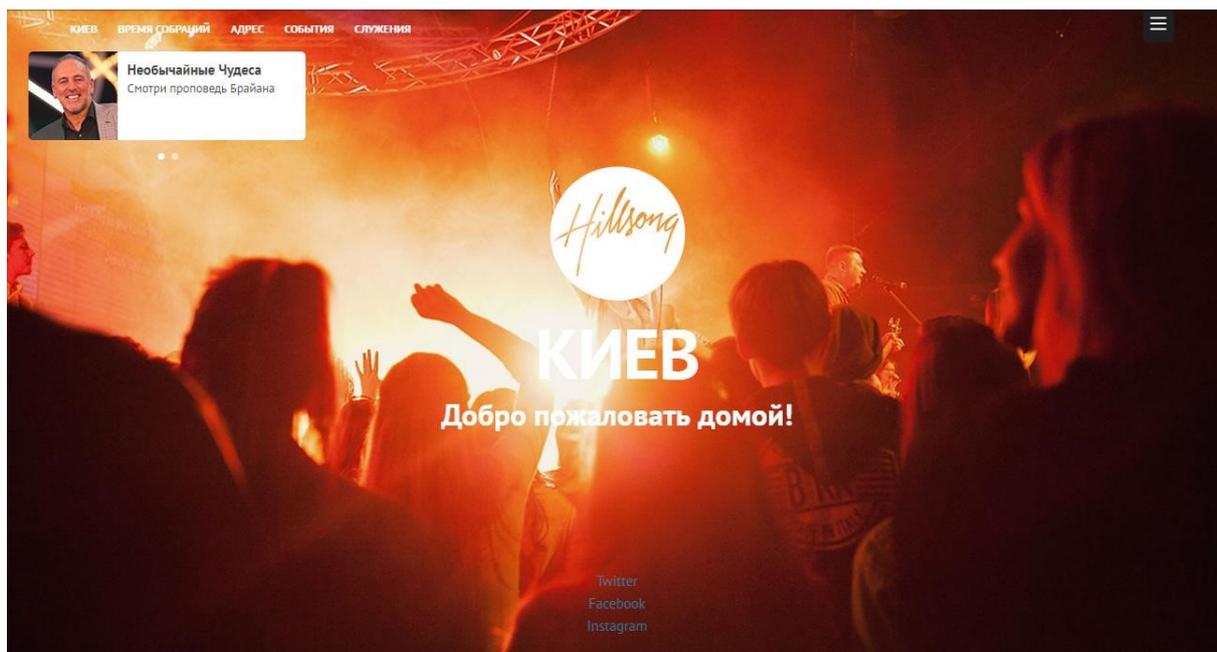


Figure 3: Hillsong Kiev and Moscow Website Homepage.<sup>9</sup>

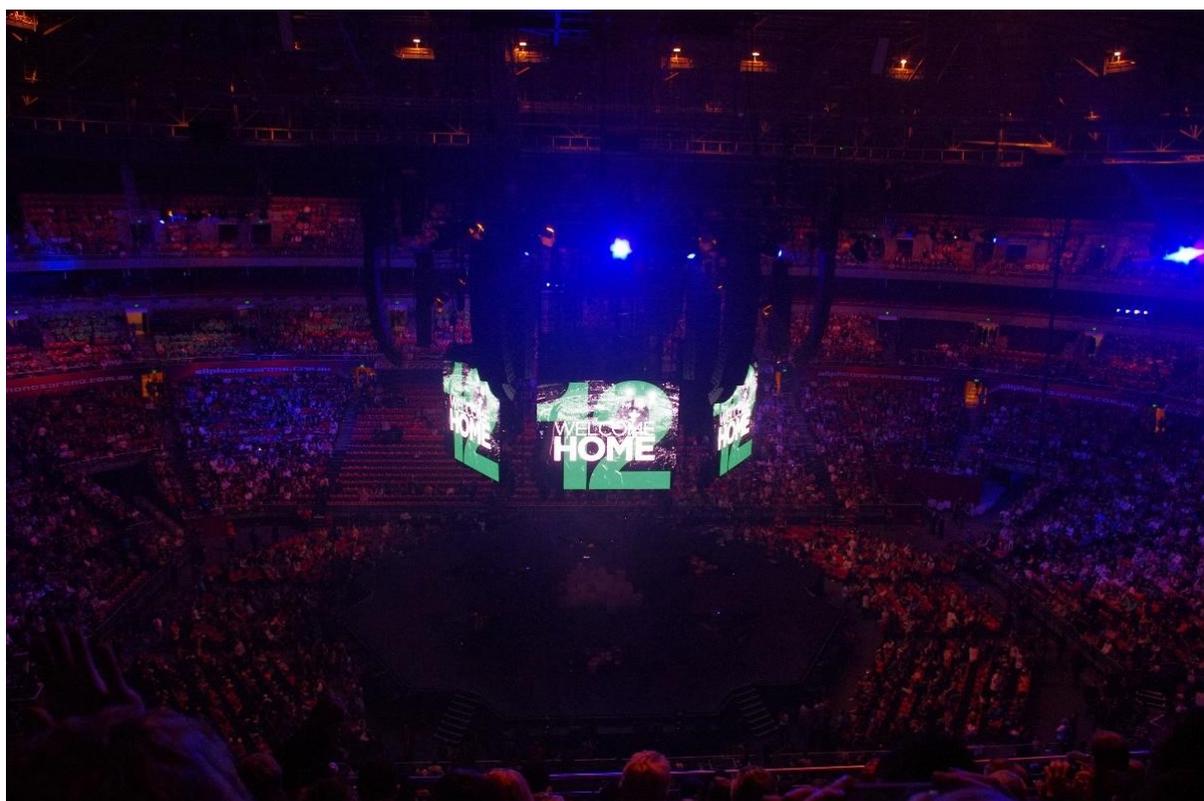


Figure 4: “Welcome Home” is projected onto screens as people walk into the Opening Night Rally at Hillsong Conference 2 July 2012, Allphones Arena, Sydney. Image is author’s own.

<sup>9</sup> The central text in the image translates into English as “Kiev. Welcome Home!” (Translation provided on the page by Google). Hillsong Church, ‘Homepage’, *Hillsong Church Kiev/Moscow*. Available: <http://hillsong.com.ua/>. Accessed 26 February 2015.

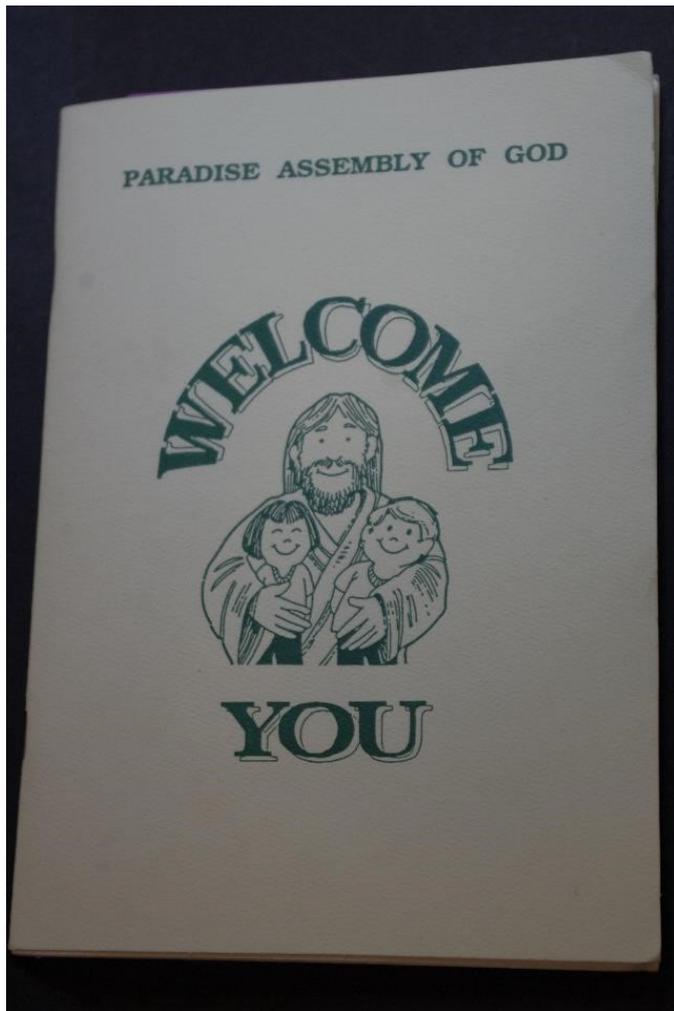


Figure 5: Front cover of *Paradise Assembly of God Welcome You*, 1996.

This thesis explains why a new receptiveness to Pentecostalism in Australia came about at a particular historical moment by examining the place of the movement in Australian society, as well as the form it takes.<sup>10</sup> It also considers how established Christian denominations and non-church going Australians responded to these changes. For the “home” to which churches welcome people comes with a clearly defined set of beliefs and values, and as such, not everyone can belong. The churches create a comfortable space for those who share their beliefs and values. However, there is a clear distinction between those who are “inside” and those who are not, and setting up and defining who is “outside” the church community has been important in the way Pentecostals and charismatics understand their group identity and

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix A for a discussion of definitions of the following terms: Evangelicalism; Pentecostalism; Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit; Charismatic; and Renewal.

their purpose. This purpose is commonly described—particularly when it comes to starting or “planting” new churches or “planting” people within existing churches—using the language of Isaiah 61:3-7 (New International Version), which says:

They will be called oaks of righteousness,

a planting of the LORD for the  
display of his splendour.

They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore  
the places long devastated; they will renew the  
ruined cities that have been devastated for  
generations. Strangers will shepherd your  
flocks; foreigners will work your fields and  
vineyards. And you will be called priests of  
the LORD, you will be named ministers of our  
God. You will feed on the wealth of nations,  
and in their riches you will boast.

Instead of your shame you will  
receive a double portion, and  
instead of disgrace you will rejoice  
in your inheritance.

And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and  
everlasting joy will be yours.

This Bible verse mentions many of the themes that define Pentecostals as a group. Most notably: renewal; a belief that end times are coming; the linking of wealth, riches, and belief, particularly in the notion that their faith entitles believers to a “double portion”; and the potential for happiness or “joy” through faith. Each of the chapters below will discuss how these themes have come to define Pentecostals’ faith and their place in the charismatic movement.

Academics often contest—or are unclear about—*who* is a Pentecostal and *what* distinguishes them from other Christians. Looking beyond the rituals, beliefs, and worship experiences self-described Pentecostals see as defining their group, we are left with the need for a definition of this form of religion that gestures to the particular history of this group as being a distinct part of evangelical charismatic Christianity, but one that also acknowledges the beliefs and forms of contemporary Pentecostal and charismatic groups. Allan Anderson, from the University of Birmingham’s Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, argues that we should use “Pentecostal” as a broad category that often includes the term

“Charismatic”. He supports the argument of American church historian Cecil M. Robeck, that we should speak of a “range of Pentecostals”. Thinking about a “range” recognises that classical American Pentecostalism shaped the broader movement and remains a powerful form of religion today. Yet this definition excludes the rapidly growing numbers of Christians globally who have a different understanding of the Bible.<sup>11</sup> Andre Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani, two scholars whose edited volume addresses Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America, similarly argue that American-centric definitions of Pentecostalism are no longer adequate to understand this now diffuse, contemporary movement. They point to a new wave of Pentecostalism that focuses on miracles of health and prosperity, and also implies a new dynamic between conversion and salvation. Salvation is no longer delayed until after death or the arrival of a new millennium, but experienced in this world.<sup>12</sup> When referring to churches that place an emphasis on experience and Spirit, Anderson recommends amalgamating the “Pentecostal” and “charismatic movements”, arguing that we should only distinguish between “classical Pentecostal” and “Charismatic” when a narrower designation, based on denominational affiliation, is required.<sup>13</sup> This thesis adopts Anderson’s approach, referring to “Pentecostal and charismatics” as forming one coherent social movement, at times terming them simply “Pentecostal”.

The sense of belonging and feeling of being “home” that Pentecostal churches deliberately seek to create is central to their success. They have adopted, and adapted to, elements of broader social change over the last forty years. In doing so, they have made their churches central to their members’ identities. The similarities between these churches in form, appearance, and message, are striking, most obviously in the way they explain the outside world. It is this commonality in the way Pentecostals and charismatics understand “outsiders”—and then set themselves up in opposition to these outsiders—that allows for the study of these churches as a coherent movement. In a world of rapidly changing norms, members of Pentecostal and charismatic denominations cling to the ways their churches explain nation, race, philanthropy, money, class, gender, sex, and the family. This thesis argues that the success of Pentecostals in Australia—as measured by their growing numbers

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<sup>11</sup> Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 10.

<sup>12</sup> Andre Corten and Ruth Marshall-Frantani, ‘Introduction’, in Andre Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani eds., *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 6.

<sup>13</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 14.

and cultural influence—has occurred largely from the late 1970s and early 1980s, when several of Australia’s biggest Pentecostal churches were founded. These churches were successful because of their ability to encompass all aspects of members’ lives and bring them into a strong community that engaged with not only their spirituality but their personal and professional lives too. Churches have been able to do this because they “fit” within their secular host culture’s attitudes to wealth, health, consumption, families, travel and migration, technology, and modernity to such a degree that separating “Pentecostal culture” from wider Australian culture is difficult. Yet making this separation is important because Pentecostals themselves are very aware of the differences between them and other Australians. The tension between being evangelistic and appealing to those outside the group, while also continually redirecting those inside toward the group, has created considerable challenges for these churches. They may have become adept at attracting members, but this study will show that they are not necessarily so skilled at keeping them.

## Focus of the study

What began as a history of the growth of evangelicalism in Australia from the end of World War Two (WWII), has since become an exploration of the origins and current forms of Pentecostal and charismatic churches, focused on the period from the late 1970s. Where Pentecostal and charismatic churches expanded rapidly in the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) from the early twentieth century, Australia—in so many ways culturally and historically linked to these two nations—proved a less fertile mission ground for evangelists. This type of Christianity grew slowly in Australia (as will be outlined in Chapter One) and numbers did not increase significantly until the 1980s. I sought to understand this difference: what was it about this moment in Australian history that made the country suddenly more receptive to Pentecostalism? Why did this form of religion develop differently here? How can we account for the particular success of Australian Pentecostal and charismatic churches, both here and internationally? To answer these questions, I examine the history of these churches as well as their current structures, ideas, and practices. Most importantly, I trace the contours of their rapid growth, drawing on the limited secular-academic work that attempts to account for this extraordinary modern development.

By the mid-1990s, after the 1994 Toronto Blessing, the growing number of Pentecostals in

Australia began to receive increasing press attention, through articles with titles such as “Soaring Church Fills Pews”.<sup>14</sup> A National Church Life Survey of religion in Australia demonstrated that between 1996 and 2001, Catholic Church attendance declined by thirteen percent, and Anglican attendance grew by just one percent. In the same period, attendance at Australian Assemblies of God (the AOG has since changed its name to Australian Christian Churches or ACC) Pentecostal churches grew by forty-two percent.<sup>15</sup> Census data (see Table 1 below) reveals a similar picture of growth. The number of Australians identifying as Pentecostal steadily increased relative to the size of the Australian population, while the overall proportion of Australians identifying as “Christian” more broadly, has consistently declined. Census figures, however, do not show the large number of “visitors” who regularly attend Pentecostal services, even if they identify with other denominations. Chapter Five will discuss this topic in more detail, alongside the considerable problems these churches have had in retaining members. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the sizeable number of visitors points to the growing influence of Pentecostalism not just within the Australian population generally, but more specifically within other Christian denominations.

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<sup>14</sup> Helen Pitt, ‘Soaring Church Fills Pews’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 November 1996, 6.

<sup>15</sup> John Connell, ‘Hillsong: A Megachurch in the Sydney Suburbs’, *Australian Geographer* 36, no. 3 (2005), 318. The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) is sponsored by the following agencies: the Uniting Church NSW Board of Mission, ANGLICARE (Diocese of Sydney) and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. It gathers information from 7,000 congregations across Australia, and has partnerships with similar organisations in the UK, US and New Zealand allowing for international comparisons. NCLS Research, ‘What We Do’, *National Church Life Survey Website*. Available: <http://www.ncls.org.au/default.aspx?sitemapid=4538>. Accessed 24 March, 2011.

YEAR	AUSTRALIAN POPULATION (MILLIONS)	NUMBER OF PENTECOSTALS (THOUSANDS)	PROPORTION OF AUSTRALIAN POPULATION IDENTIFYING AS CHRISTIAN
1981	14.9	72,100	76.40%
1991	17.3	150,600	74%
1996	18.3	174,700	70.90%
2001	19	194,600	68%
2006	20.7	220,000	63.90%
2011	21.5	238,000	61.10%

Source: ABS Census Data

Table 1: Proportion of Australians identifying as Christian and number of Pentecostals

In 2004, Hillsong Church alone collected an estimated ten million dollars in its “Sunday buckets”, with its music arm earning the church a further eight million dollars.<sup>16</sup> Hillsong United’s 2013 album, *Zion*, debuted in the US secular billboard at number five, and reached number one on iTunes in Australia, the US, Singapore, South Africa, New Zealand, Ghana, Indonesia, Brazil, and Sweden.<sup>17</sup> On September 30, 2015, Hillsong will release its first feature-film (*Hillsong - Let Hope Rise*), based on what the film’s website describes as the “unlikely rise to prominence of the Australia based Christian band, Hillsong United”.<sup>18</sup> In attendance figures, financial earnings, and cultural impact, evangelical, Pentecostal, and charismatic churches have achieved remarkable success. While Hillsong stands out within

<sup>16</sup> Greg Bearup, ‘Praise the Lord and Pass the Chequebook’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 January 2003. Available: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/National/Praise-the-Lord-and-pass-thechequebook/2005/02/18/1108609391134.html>. Accessed 24 March, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Hillsong Church Album Zion Cracks US Billboard Chart top 5’, *News.com*, 8 March 2013. Available: <http://www.news.com.au/entertainment/music/hillsong-church-album-zion-cracks-us-billboard-chart-top-5/story-e6frfn09-1226593339154>. Accessed 24 July 2014; Michael Bodey, ‘Rap to Religion’, *The Australian*, 10 September 2014. Available: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/from-rap-to-religion-for-hillsong-director/story-e6frg8n6-1227053047076>. Accessed 15 September 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Hillsong Church, ‘About the Film’, *Hillsong – Let Hope Rise Website*. Available: <http://hillsongmovie.com/about-the-film/>. Accessed 5 June 2015.

this group, it is not alone among Pentecostal churches, particularly megachurches, in gathering social, economic, cultural, and political power.<sup>19</sup>

The mainstream media has paid ample attention to these developments, producing television documentaries, magazine articles, and newspaper editorials on the subject. Academics have been slow to follow their lead, however, and few scholarly treatments of Australian Pentecostalism exist. Indeed, as one commentator points out, the “chill winds of secularism” in the modern era tend to generate discomfort whenever the subject of modern Christianity comes up, such that those interested in the area feel like they should apologise for their topic.<sup>20</sup> Given the salience of evangelicalism to modern Australian history, uneasiness or a lack of interest are equally problematic.

This thesis examines five churches to tell the story of Australian Pentecostalism: Hillsong, C3, Influencers, Planetshakers, and Newfrontiers (see Table 2 below for an overview). These churches were chosen because they are represented in all of Australia’s major cities through either their main campuses or satellite churches.<sup>21</sup> They were also chosen for their prominence in public, academic, and religious discourse though admittedly, the name Hillsong certainly stands out among the group. Moreover, they were chosen because of their varied origins, even though similar ideas and people connect their histories. One church, Influencers, can trace its origins back to one of Australia’s earliest charismatic congregations, one founded by the evangelist Smith Wigglesworth. This church became the Paradise Assembly of God under Andrew Evans, who passed leadership to his son, Russell Evans. Andrew’s other son, Ashely, founded another church, Planetshakers, when he moved to Melbourne in 2006, along with a small group of church members including the church band, after whom the church was named. Andrew Evans, that same head pastor from Influencers, was also—for a time—the leader of the AOG in Australia, before he was

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<sup>19</sup> The membership numbers provided by churches are hard to verify, particularly since many eschew the need to formalise membership. As Shane Clifton argues, Brian Houston inherited from his father Frank not only the leadership of a church, but a belief in the importance of strong pastoral leadership without formal congregational membership or government as part of his belief in apostolic authority as outlined in the New Testament. See Shane Clifton, “Analysis of the Developing Ecclesiology of the Assemblies of God in Australia”, PhD dissertation, Australian Catholic University, 2008, 217, 222.

<sup>20</sup> Sheridan Gilley, ‘Introduction’, in Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley eds., *The Cambridge History of Christianity Volume 8: World Christianities c. 1815-c.1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006),

<sup>21</sup> Note that campus is a word Pentecostal churches often use to describe their physical churches, particularly when congregations do not meet in venues specially built as churches or used only for that purpose. For example, Hillsong’s Chinese Chatswood extension service meets in the Mandarin Shopping Centre while Newfrontier’s Grace City Church had to move its Sunday service to Dee Why Returned and Services League (RSL) Club when the congregation outgrew its former building in a quiet residential area.

succeeded by Brian Houston, the founder of Hillsong, another of this study’s five churches. Hillsong was founded in Sydney when the Houstons moved there from New Zealand in the late 1970s, just as C3, the fourth church examined by this study, was started in Sydney when Phil and Chris Pringle migrated from New Zealand in 1980. The fascinating—if at first confusing—echoes and connections between these Australian churches will be explored through out this thesis. As a point of contrast, however, a fifth church will also be discussed.

Newfrontiers follows almost the reverse trajectory of the churches above, which have all since planted congregations overseas, in that it was started in the UK, and only recently found its way to Australia.

Church	Year est.	Founder	Current head	Original location	Number of churches	Number of Australian churches	Number of countries with churches
HILLSONG	1983	Brian and Bobbie Houston	Brian and Bobbie Houston	Sydney (Hills District)	41	13	11
C3	1980	Phil and Chris Pringle	Phil and Chris Pringle	Sydney (Northern Beaches)	314	95	64
INFLUENCERS (PARADISE AOG)	1970	Andrew Evans	Ashley and Jane Evans	Adelaide	4	3	2
PLANETSHAKERS	2004	Russell Evans	Russell and Sam Evans	Melbourne	6	4	3
NEWFRONTIERS	1968	Terry Virgo	Team of 14 Apostolic Leaders	Seaford (UK)	850	2	60
ACC (AOG)	1937	C.L. Greenwood	Wayne Alcorn		1000	1000 (280,000 individual members)	1

Table 2: Overview of the key churches and organisations of this study.

As the biggest and best-known Pentecostal church in Australia, Hillsong has become the focus of this project, and it is the key example discussed throughout the work. As well as drawing intense media interest, Hillsong is the subject of more academic study than any other Australian Pentecostal church. These existing scholarly studies of Hillsong are limited in number, albeit more plentiful than those for other Australian Pentecostal churches. They

include work by John Connell, whose interests lie in Hillsong's human geography and suburban origins; Robbie Goh, who has written about semiotics and the practice of this megachurch; Marion Maddox, who has researched gender, politics, and consumption as they relate to Hillsong; Tom Wagner and Tanya Riches, who pay particular attention to Hillsong's music and its development as a "brand"; and Matthew Wade and Maria Hynes, who as geographers are interested in the "affective labour" that Hillsong performs. These works come from a variety of disciplines, most notably geography, English, politics, and music, but historians are noticeably lacking. This thesis marks one of the first studies of Hillsong by a historian, and will demonstrate that the discipline has an important contribution to make in dialogue about the church. Historians ask different questions about Hillsong, and can bring a clear understanding of change and continuity over time by providing an explicit discussion of temporalities.

Despite Hillsong's central place in this project, understanding the histories of the other four churches is important in complementing the story of Hillsong and drawing broader conclusions about Australian Pentecostalism. As Jeremy Black and Donald MacRaidl argue, comparisons provide a crucial check on explanatory models.<sup>22</sup> The other four churches provide points of contact and, more importantly, points of similarity that has allowed me to identify trends in, and understand nuances of, Pentecostalism. Furthermore, the limited access I had to source material related to Hillsong or, indeed, any other Pentecostal church, made studying a variety of churches the only practical option.

There has been another advantage to focusing most of my attention on one church: while I initially hoped to spend equal time comparing all churches, being forced into a model of a central church with four points of comparison has allowed me to write a history of the movement that is more reflective of the current shape of Australian Pentecostalism. Rather than taking an experimental or teleological approach—where I applied a model and tested it on five churches assuming there was a "uniformity of casual laws across time and a causal independence of every sequence of occurrences"—I have been able to recognise what economists describe as "path dependence".<sup>23</sup> That is, I assume that prior events will effect events later in time without the assumption that causal structures will necessarily have

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<sup>22</sup> Jeremy Black and Donald MacRaidl, *Studying History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 107.

<sup>23</sup> William Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 100.

changed, but acknowledging the possibility that they might have, and that ruptures and breaks in history are possible.

This “eventful” conception of temporality takes, as William Sewell argues, events as a theoretical category, “which is close to the implicit intellectual baggage of most academic historians”.<sup>24</sup> With this understanding of time, one that is not focused on forcing churches into one model but on understanding the structures and cultures around them, this thesis considers continuity and change in Pentecostalism, with Hillsong Church as the frame.

## Literature review

Much of the existing transnational or even Australian literature on the history of Pentecostal churches does not know where to place its Australian incarnations. Australia does not feature in many of the founding narratives of Pentecostalism, as it was not well known as a place for charismatic revival in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when the movement emerged. As such, Australian Pentecostalism is often left out of broad histories of this religion. Where accounts of Pentecostalism in the US and the UK have a large number of sources to rely on and a strong historiography surrounding them, the same cannot be said of Australia. A history of this form of religion in Australia must have a wide focus. Where British or American histories may only briefly look outward—mainly to each other or to early missionaries—Australian studies of religion are necessarily better positioned to consider a broader frame of reference.

Australia similarly lacks a clear place in Asia-Pacific regional accounts of Pentecostalism. There are strong bodies of work looking at charismatic Christianity in Asia, which has the fastest growing Pentecostal population in the world, including the 2005 collection *Asian and Pentecostal* edited by Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang.<sup>25</sup> Australia, however, does not feature in these studies. It seems to float amorphously in histories of this religion. This might be because there are no accounts of an indigenised form of Pentecostal theology in Australia,

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<sup>24</sup> Sewell, *Logics of History*, 102.

<sup>25</sup> Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang eds., *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Baguio City: Regnum Books International, 2005).

of the kind that Hyeon Sung Bae locates in South Korea, or historian David Maxwell identifies in Zimbabwe.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, countries such as South Korea have experienced what Anderson refers to as the Pentecostalism of Korean Protestantism. Pentecostalism has been so firmly established as the dominant form of Protestantism in South Korea that the majority of churches of other denominations have adopted charismatic conventions and approaches to religion.<sup>27</sup> This has not been the case in Australia.

There is a further problem with the existing literature in that Pentecostalism, and evangelicalism more broadly, tends to be studied by scholars from within the movement. This alignment does not, of course, render their work unimportant, but it does create space for a different emphasis. In a positive development for the scholarship of Australian Pentecostalism, there seems to be something of a resurgence in the academic study of the topic in Australia, though not often by historians. One exception is the work of Barry Chant, whose history of Australian Pentecostalism came out of his 1999 doctoral thesis, now published as *The Spirit of Pentecost*.<sup>28</sup> Another is the work of Sam Hey, who, like Chant, is a member of a Pentecostal churches. Hey's 2010 doctoral thesis, "God in the Suburbs and Beyond" was a valuable contribution to the emergent, yet still limited academic engagement with Pentecostal churches in Australia. Hey's research, later published as *Megachurches*, explores the growth of the Christian Outreach Centre in Brisbane, one of the first megachurches in Australia, providing provides a rich oral history of the church that finds many of the same explanations as I do for the growth of Pentecostalism in Australia.<sup>29</sup> Hey highlights the fact that all but three of Australia's megachurches are Pentecostal churches; the two phenomena are intimately linked. Furthermore, the three megachurches that are not Pentecostal have practices and traditions strong associated with charismatic religion,

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<sup>26</sup> Hyeon Sung Bae, 'Full Gospel Theology and a Korean Pentecostal Identity', in Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang eds., *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, (Baguio City: Regnum Books International, 2005), 528; David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism and the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement* (London: James Currey, 2006), 32.

<sup>27</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 137.

<sup>28</sup> Barry Chant, "The Spirit of Pentecost: Origins and Development of the Pentecostal Movement in Australia", PhD dissertation, Macquarie University, 1999.

<sup>29</sup> Sam Hey, *Megachurches: Origins, Ministry and Prospects* (Preston: Mosaic Press, 2013).

meaning that analysis of Pentecostalism in Australia must be tied to examination of megachurches.<sup>30</sup>

My focus will differ substantially from that of scholars such as Stuart Piggin, a key contributor to evangelical historiography in Australia. A devout evangelical, Piggin claims that evangelicals who are “agnostic about history”—those who attempt to use secular explanations—have “opened their vacated souls to the demons of secular philosophies”. Yet while Piggin remains sceptical toward the practice of history from a nonreligious point of view, he has nonetheless put forward a number of claims to account for the historical tenacity of Australian evangelicalism that warrant further exploration. Particularly important in Piggin’s argument is the role of missionary family dynasties and key institutions, such as the Anglican Church League and various evangelical colleges and conventions in sustaining the evangelical movement.<sup>31</sup> My study will show that family dynasties are an important way the churches ensure continuity over generations and that Piggin is correct in claiming their import. Nonetheless, “secular philosophies” ground my work, despite the risk of demons rushing in.

Evangelical historians such as Piggin—rather than historians of evangelicalism—dominate this area of study and as part of a movement aimed at guarding and spreading the “evangel”, there is undoubtedly a tendency in their work to engage in either polemical self-definition or self-promotion.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, as religious historian Mark Noll argues, anti-intellectualism tends to dominate modern evangelical movements, leading to a rather striking “intellectual sterility” in much current religious debate. The “scandal of the evangelical mind”, he goes so far as to say, “is that there is not much of an evangelical mind.”<sup>33</sup> Piggin has also commented on this problem, arguing that the “inner history” written by evangelicals may not adequately explain the social context of the movement. Conversely, he suggests, “it is difficult to relate evangelicalism to Australian social history because it is not concerned primarily with the social system.”<sup>34</sup> By contrast, my work will consider the many ways

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<sup>30</sup> These three churches are Blackburn Baptist, Gateway Baptist, and Careforce Church of Christ. Hey argues that these churches in fact “appear dependent on charismatic, Pentecostal and related practices to draw and hold their large attendances”. Hey, *Megachurches*, 10.

<sup>31</sup> Stuart Piggin, ‘Towards a Bicentennial History of Australian Evangelicalism’, *Journal of Religious History* 15, no. 1 (1988), 20, 23, 25.

<sup>32</sup> Rob Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism, 1966-2001: A Theological and Sociological Study* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), 5.

<sup>33</sup> Mark Noll quoted in Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism*, 5.

<sup>34</sup> Piggin, ‘Towards a Bicentennial History’, 21.

Australian evangelicalism has grown out of and engaged with the broader society, a crucial task in understanding religious culture.

In a culture of scepticism—if not distrust—of conservative Christian ideas, and of reduced dependence on the church as a provider of welfare and social connections, evangelical historians tend to produce histories of churches and the movement that focus on justifying their relevance, authority, and place in modern Western countries. Rob Warner claims that evangelicals “increasingly need to fight a rearguard action to preserve some semblance of their own moral legitimacy”. In a “post-Christian” and increasingly pluralistic society there is an “instinctive sense of *moral superiority* [original emphasis] to the conventional morality of the church, which appears repressive and authoritarian”.<sup>35</sup> The way evangelicals engage with history has enormous bearing on this thesis. If evangelical historians always feel the need to justify their religion, the history they write will tend to be defensive and far more likely to look for and to credit supernatural causes of revival. More importantly, if religious scholars view their religion as somehow exceptional, as being apart from wider society, they are likely to ignore the overlapping of religious and secular cultures; perhaps acknowledging points of intersections between these cultures, but failing to recognize that they have grown alongside and out of each other. An account written by someone whose view of the topic and approach to history is not informed by an evangelical identity will fill this gap in the literature. This thesis provides a secular account of the Pentecostal and charismatic movement in Australia that has so far been lacking.

## Sources and methodology

Perhaps because Azusa Street (home to the Apostolic Faith Mission in 1906 and seen by commentators as the “birthplace of Pentecostalism”) had been so central to my work, I expected something more exciting, more dramatic, more memorable—or just...more. Since most Pentecostal churches have been so successful internationally precisely because of their adaptability, their enthusiastic adoption of new technologies and social trends, and their willingness to embrace change, I should not have been surprised at what I found in Azusa

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<sup>35</sup> Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism*, 3.

Street, Los Angeles (LA) in November 2012. I visited on a miserable, wet, and grey day. The street itself is now a pedestrian mall, so I jumped out of the car and madly dashed over puddles to take a photograph of the small street sign that is the only reminder of the historical significance of this place. Above a notice from the LA Police Department warning visitors that video monitoring is in progress, the little sign announces that this was the site of the Azusa Street Revival and thus the “Cradle of the Worldwide Pentecostal Movement”. A few words are all that remain to indicate that this was a site of immense historical importance to Christianity, both at the time and since.

Azusa Street today is little more than an alley; there are no churches on the street now. It forms part of LA’s “Little Tokyo”, although the only group that walks by me as I survey the street are speaking Spanish, and there are a number of Mexican restaurants nearby. Perhaps it is appropriate that this site is so multicultural and has not become a place of pilgrimage or the home of new churches. After all, leaders of Pentecostal and charismatic churches so often direct the efforts of their church forward. The past matters, but it is not to be memorialised or enshrined; leaders’ focus is on their current mission.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See section on Newfrontiers change in strategy in Chapter Four.



Figure 6: The Apostolic Faith Mission on Azusa Street in 1907.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Nswinton, 'The AFM on Azusa Street in 1907', *Wikimedia Commons*. Available: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AFM\\_on\\_azusa\\_street.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AFM_on_azusa_street.jpg). Accessed 6 February 2013.



Figure 7: Azusa Street on 30 November 2012. Image is author's own.



Figure 8: Azusa Street on 30 November 2012. Image is author's own.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> The sign reads: Azusa St. Mission. Site of the Azusa St Revival from 1906 to 1931. Cradle of the Worldwide Pentecostal Movement.

The curious tension between the role of the past and the importance of the present is what took me to LA in 2012. Searching for material about the history of Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Australia has been surprisingly difficult. The Australian AOG does not have a publicly accessible archive.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, while four of the five major churches of this study (Hillsong, C3, Planetshakers, and Influencers Church) all have their own colleges and libraries, none are open to the public, save for Planetshakers College. This is because Alphacrucis College, formerly Southern Cross College and originally founded in Melbourne in 1948 as the Commonwealth Bible College, accredits and runs Planetshakers courses. Their students use the Alphacrucis library, which is open to anyone. Alphacrucis College, along with Hillsong International Leadership College and Paradise College of Ministries (the college of Influencers Church), are all registered with and accredited by the ACC, demonstrating once again how connected these churches are.

The library of the main Alphacrucis campus in Parramatta has a Pentecostal Heritage Centre (PHC), founded in 2001. The aim of the centre, which in June 2015 was renamed the Australasian Pentecostal Studies Centre (APSC), is to: “Physically and digitally store pentecostal archives and encourage research and scholarship into the history and impact of Pentecostal and charismatic movements in the Christian churches of Australasia”.<sup>40</sup> When I visited the PHC in February 2013, however, I found a room filled with cardboard boxes, only some of which had labels explaining their contents.<sup>41</sup> The apologetic library staff member explained that the PHC had moved its collection in 2011-2012, and it had not yet been unpacked. When I contacted the centre again in March 2014, the librarian informed me that they had done some unpacking, but it would be better if I could postpone my research a little longer. The new iteration of the PHC, the APSC, opened 6 July 2015 with a

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<sup>39</sup> Mark Hutchinson has also written about the difficulties posed to researchers of Australian Pentecostalism by the lack of a complete body of sources, either publicly or privately held. See Mark Hutchinson, *Pellegrini: An Italian Protestant Community in Sydney 1958-1998* (Chester Hill: Australasian Pentecostal Studies Journal, Supplemental Series, 1999), vii.

<sup>40</sup> Australasian Pentecostal Studies Centre, ‘Who We Are’, *Australasian Pentecostal Studies Centre Website*. Available: <http://apsc.ac.edu.au/about/>. Accessed 28 June 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Note that the volume of these boxes, the lack of physical access to parts of the very full, but very small room, the vague nature of the labels, and the lack of any organisational system inside the boxes prevented me from attempting a thorough examination of their contents. I went through boxes with labels that appeared pertinent to my period and research themes, but left the rest of what is essentially an ephemera collection—albeit a valuable one—for another project.

“Pentecostal Heritage Workshop” described as: “A wonderful opportunity to learn more about how to preserve our precious Australian Pentecostal heritage. Alphacrucis College is hosting this FREE event so come and be part of making history!”<sup>42</sup> This points to the value placed on Pentecostal history by those within the movement, but also their conception of their history as “precious” and something that they are continuing to make.<sup>43</sup>

The PHC website demonstrated that those in the centre are aware of the challenges facing historians of Pentecostalism. It noted: “One of the key issues with archives is that, for the most part, the sources are unavailable to the average person. When they are in physical form, archives are often distant from people wishing to do research, and any thoroughgoing research requires the sort of time, funding and commitment which most people are often not willing to spend”.<sup>44</sup> The website went on to explain that this is why their focus had been on digitising “surviving Pentecostal journals” such as *Australian Evangel* and *Glad Tidings Messenger*. The PHC also digitised *Good News*, the magazine of Australia’s first Pentecostal church, the Good News Hall. However, the collection is unfinished “partly due to several arson attacks on Dr Chant’s offices over the years, and through the incompleteness of the original collection”.<sup>45</sup> Dr Chant had personally collected these journals and his work represents one of the largest contributions to a history of Australian Pentecostalism, while his *Heart of Fire* (1973) represented the first historical overview of the movement.<sup>46</sup> His later doctoral thesis and subsequent book on the history of Pentecostalism in Australia provide more detail than his earlier work, but both focus on the development of the movement and only cover the period from 1870-1939.<sup>47</sup>

The PHC was in fact created to address the lack of information about Pentecostal and charismatic religion in Australia: “Aware of the paucity of resources available to those who would seek a better understanding of Holy Spirit movements in Australia and New Zealand, the Centre was established to collect sources, create a digital archive, and encourage

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<sup>42</sup> Australasian Pentecostal Studies Centre, ‘Homepage’, *Australasian Pentecostal Studies Centre Website*. Available: <http://apsc.ac.edu.au>. Accessed 28 June 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, the opening of the APSC came too close to the submission date of this project for me to conduct further archival research.

<sup>44</sup> Pentecostal Heritage Centre, ‘Digitisation @ PHC’, *Pentecostal Heritage Centre Website*, 17 November 2010. Available: <http://phc.ac.edu.au/page/2/>. Accessed 6 March 2014.

<sup>45</sup> *Digitisation @ PHC*, Pentecostal Heritage Centre.

<sup>46</sup> Barry Chant, *Heart of Fire: The Story of Pentecostalism* (Fullarton: Luke Publications, 1973).

<sup>47</sup> Chant, “The Spirit of Pentecost”; Barry Chant, *The Spirit of Pentecost: The Origins and Development of the Pentecostal Movement in Australia 1870-1939* (Lexington: Emeth Press, 2011).

publication in the area”.<sup>48</sup> It is worth noting that the PHC’s motto was “that their stories may be told”, and the centre was and continues to be explicit about its religious affiliation.<sup>49</sup> However, this agenda makes their collection no less valuable, particularly given the limited interest major libraries have exhibited in preserving Australia’s Pentecostal heritage.

The State Libraries of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia all have narrow and piecemeal collections relating to Pentecostal and charismatic religion in Australia, as does the National Library in Canberra. Occasional conference guides, religious tracts, and biographies make up the bulk of the available material, and these by no mean form a coherent collection, nor one that covers the span of Pentecostalism in Australia. The State Library of South Australia—which has an extensive collection of material related to the Commonwealth Revival Crusade (CRC)—is the exception.

In contrast with Australia, America is home to several libraries and centres focused on the country’s Pentecostal history. These include the American AOG’s Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center in Missouri, the Oral Roberts University’s “Holy Spirit Research Center” in Oklahoma, the DuPree Holiness Pentecostal Center in Florida, as well as the libraries I chose to visit in Fuller Theological Seminary and Azusa Pacific University. Azusa Pacific University is one of the largest Christian universities in the US. Founded in 1899, it claims to be “the first Bible college on the West Coast geared toward preparing men and women for ministry and service”.<sup>50</sup> Fuller Theological Seminary—in Pasadena, California—is an evangelical seminary which contains a surprisingly large volume of sources pertaining to Australia, including the collection of the Study Centre for New Religious Movements in Primary Societies, only the bibliography of which is available in Australia.

In my hunt for sources explaining the history of the Pentecostal movement I visited the UK in 2011, 2013, and 2015. There, the British Library, Gladstone’s Library, and secular universities have a greater interest in new Christian religious movements than their Australian counterparts. The University of Birmingham, for example, has a Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, no equivalent of which exists in Australia. The Centre

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<sup>48</sup> Pentecostal Heritage Centre, ‘Who We Are’, *Pentecostal Heritage Centre Website*, 25 November 2010. Available: <http://phc.ac.edu.au/about/>. Accessed 6 March 2014.

<sup>49</sup> Pentecostal Heritage Centre, ‘Who We Are’.

<sup>50</sup> Azusa Pacific University, ‘About APU: Our History’, *Azusa Pacific University Website*. Available: <http://www.apu.edu/about/history/>. Accessed 28 January 2014.

offers courses in Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Charismatic Studies. Its students also have access to the Orchard Learning Resources Centre which houses an extensive collection related to New Religious Movements, African Initiated Churches, and Pentecostalism.<sup>51</sup> The apparent lack of interest by Australian academics and libraries in the country's Pentecostals—who form an increasingly large and visible group at a time when other forms of Christianity seem to be diminishing in size and relevance—drove my research.

Biographies of church leaders, and to a lesser extent lay-people, are the most easily accessible and comprehensive body of sources available to historians of Pentecostalism. This is partly the case because of the wealth of online material, published by both churches themselves and by individual leaders on personal websites, blogs, and social media accounts. While there are obvious issues with excluding the majority of lay people's views from the research, analysing the work of the movement's leaders has its benefits. Relying on the biographies of leaders provides not just an understanding of what they think but also, and perhaps more interestingly, *how* they think. It leads to consideration of the personal and temporal parameters in which they wrote. Nonetheless, this thesis offers more than an analysis of church leaders' discursive statements. It also looks to the considerable ephemera their churches produced, as well as the websites they have created, which offer a continuously updated set of sources. One of the advantages of writing such contemporary, sociologically informed history is that this wealth of sources is publicly and freely available. This present-focus, however, is not without challenges: as Manuel Vásquez puts it, studying contemporary religions means studying religion “in motion” and there is a “surplus of religious artefacts, narratives, practices, and institutions” circulating the globe, available for researchers to study.<sup>52</sup> Sifting through these sources has been a challenge, but also one of the great pleasures of my research.

This work focuses on explaining the growth of Pentecostal churches and understanding their historical and current forms. Adherents participate in cultural practices particular to their religion, but of course, they also interact with wider mainstream Australian or Western

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<sup>51</sup> University of Birmingham Department of Theology and Religion, Research, ‘Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies’, *University of Birmingham Website*, 2015. Available: <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/ptr/departments/theologyandreligion/research/pentecostalcharismatic.aspx>. Accessed 28 May 2015.

<sup>52</sup> Manuel A. Vásquez, ‘Studying Religion in Motion: A Networks Approach’, *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 20, no. 2 (2008), 153.

culture.<sup>53</sup> The form of this interaction is often self-consciously adversarial in a way that marks churches' attempts to demonstrate themselves as having a separate culture. Religious groups can be consumers or producers of culture (or possibly both), and since the 1980s, academics have been interested in understanding this widening frame of reference in religious history.<sup>54</sup> However, little work considers evangelicalism broadly, or Pentecostalism specifically, as a cultural phenomenon in Australia. Historians such as Kenneth Meyers, Kent Hughes and Brian Haymes have suggested that evangelicalism in America represents a subculture.<sup>55</sup> These historians base their argument on the fact that the behaviour patterns, rather than doctrine, form the basis of identity and cohesion in these churches.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, in his "travelogue" *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America*, Randall Balmer argues that not only does evangelicalism form a subculture, it is a distinctly American one. Balmer characterises prosperity theology as "a baptism of American materialism and consumerism".<sup>57</sup> Little work has considered whether this is also the case in Australia. Yet this is an area worth exploring, particularly if we ask whether the creation of a subculture is part of a deliberate strategy on the part of religious leaders. I will analyse cultural patterns and interactions between Pentecostals and other Australians, arguing that their cultures are not all that distinct. They do not form a simple dichotomy. Instead, they overlap, intersect, and transform one another. This form of religion and neoliberal Australia are fundamentally entwined. It is more useful to think about the ways majority Australian culture has helped

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<sup>53</sup> Definitions of "religion" are many, and are often contested between and among scholars of various disciplines. Vásquez rightly argues that we need a definition of religion that "challenges the exclusive emphasis on symbols, beliefs, and theologies, and brings into focus the 'material' aspects of religion: embodied practices, emplaced institutions, and the sacralised artifacts that sustain complex relations with global commodity and financial flows": Vásquez, 'Studying Religion in Motion', 156. Keeping this need in mind, I use Melford E. Spiro's inclusive yet simple definition of religion as: "an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings", Melford E. Spiro, 'Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation', in M. Banton ed., *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London: Tavistock Press, 1966), 96.

<sup>54</sup> For an overview of this development, see Olwen Huften, 'What is Religious History Now?', in David Cannadine ed., *What is History Now?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 58-59.

<sup>55</sup> Milton Yinger pointed to the overuse of the term "subculture" as early as 1960, suggesting that academics used it too casually, without sufficient consideration being given to definition and usage. Two of the three major uses of "subculture" offer confusion, with one suggesting that "subculture" describes the normative systems of a group that differs from the larger society, and the other suggesting that the frustrations or conflicts between emergent groups and broader society constitute subcultures. To simplify matters, Yinger suggests we instead use the term "contraculture" when referring to situations of conflict. See: J. Milton Yinger, 'Contraculture and Subculture', *American Sociological Review* 25, no. 5 (1960), 627-29.

<sup>56</sup> Kenneth Meyers, Kent Hughes and Brian Haymes in Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism*, 31.

<sup>57</sup> Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 315.

bring contemporary Pentecostalism to fruition by embracing values that fit surprisingly well with this conservative form of Christianity.

Anthropology and sociology offer important tools for historians engaged in any fieldwork, not least because these disciplines are more inclined to adopt and explain explicit methodologies than historians. Patrick Joyce argues that the rise of cultural history has meant that not only is there less critical engagement with theory, but there is also less “critical engagement of history with other disciplines”.<sup>58</sup> While I remain unconvinced that the cultural turn is to blame for a lack of critical engagement, I agree that it exists. However, the more interesting point to be made here is about the reluctance of history to engage with theory and method of other disciplines in the way historians, Joyce included, so willingly engage in introspection of these things within their field. Perhaps the recent key exception to this trend is William Sewell, whose *Logics of History* has provided this thesis with a frame of reference to understanding its place across, between, and within disciplines. Sewell argues that historians and other social scientists are connected by the borrowing of methods and theories across disciplines and by an interest in the same fundamental problems, “the functioning, reproduction, and transformation of social relations”.<sup>59</sup> Where social scientists, particularly in America, tend to ascribe to a positivist epistemological culture, Sewell suggests that anthropologists tend to be interpretivist, and that the theoretical assumptions of historians are therefore closest to these social and cultural anthropologists.<sup>60</sup> This study offers a predominantly qualitative analysis of the rituals, conventions, language, and behaviour of everyday people, as well as church leaders. This has given my work a grounding in the assumption that cultural structures are more than just a reflection of social structures but are their equal in ontological terms.<sup>61</sup>

This work, a study of Pentecostalism as a cultural phenomenon, has been informed by my participation in this culture, even if only as an observer. I sought to understand this religious culture in Australia at particular moments. Yet, while the project might have required me to

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<sup>58</sup> Patrick Joyce, ‘What is the Social in Social History?’, *Past and Present* 206, no. 1 (2010), 246.

<sup>59</sup> He does, however, acknowledge that theory has a less central place in historical writing than these other disciplines. Sewell, *Logics of History*, 2-3.

<sup>60</sup> Sewell, *Logics of History*, 123.

<sup>61</sup> Sewell, *Logics of History*, 41.

“do” ethnography, this is not an ethnographic work. I am looking to explain how and why Pentecostal culture and Pentecostal cultural practices came to be, questions that I believe require a historical answer. Accessing the culture Pentecostal churches seek to create was only made possible by my active participation in church events, where I had the chance to hear leaders and lay people explain their understanding of their church. One of the only female speakers at a Newfrontiers conference in 2011, Abi Malortie, is employed by Christ Church London (a Newfrontiers church) under the job description of “Social Action and Cultural Transformation”.<sup>62</sup> Malortie believes that Christians “have been called by God to transform the culture around us”, and need to “create an environment or culture which reflects God and (so) then we can bring people in. We can end up creating a subculture”. Malortie explained this explicit wish to create a subculture as a desire to create the society God wished to see and to attract new converts seeking something different in their way of life.<sup>63</sup> Without participant observation, I would have had limited opportunity to understand the type of culture Pentecostal churches seek to create.

I had initially hoped to undertake an oral history of the movement in Australia to supplement the previously outlined lack of sources. I planned to conduct semi-structured interviews with evangelical lay people, building on the sociological survey undertaken by Mason, Singleton and Webber in *The Spirit of Generation Y*.<sup>64</sup> However, the University of Sydney’s ethics protocol requires that researchers gain permission from the leader of each institution from which they seek participants. For this study, permission was only forthcoming from Peter Brooks and Terry Virgo as representatives of Newfrontiers.<sup>65</sup> While I had ample interest in participation from lay people I spoke with, I was unable to conduct formal interviews or surveys without the permission of their church. It is worth noting that no other church explicitly refused permission. Rather, as an outsider to the group, my requests were ignored or put off. While I agree with Jeppe Sinding Jensen’s argument that the “insider-outsider” debate in the study of religion adds little to a researcher’s theoretical approach, on a practical

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<sup>62</sup> Christ Church London, ‘About Us- Staff’, *Christ Church London Website*. Available: <http://christchurchlondon.org/staff>. Accessed 6 September 2011.

<sup>63</sup> Abi Malortie, ‘Mobilise Seminar: To Transform the World’, speaking at Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference, Brighton Centre, Brighton, UK. 14 July 2011. Based on author’s observations.

<sup>64</sup> Michael Mason, Andrew Singleton and Ruth Weber, *The Spirit of Generation Y: Young People’s Spirituality in a Changing Australia* (Mulgrave: John Garratt Publishing, 2007).

<sup>65</sup> See Appendix C for the ethics approval for this project and a copy of the consent letter written by Peter Brooks as a representative for Newfrontiers on 23 May 2011.

level, as an outsider trying to contact the leaders of such large and powerful organisations, I was ultimately unsuccessful.<sup>66</sup> An insider would undoubtedly have had a far greater degree of access to church leaders, and thus to the lay population as well.

I had always planned to supplement oral histories with personal observations in the style of John Connell or Allan Anderson.<sup>67</sup> However, without the permission of churches to conduct formal oral histories, my personal observations became an important source of information about the ways leaders and congregation members acted and expressed themselves and their modes of worship.<sup>68</sup> I went to services by all five key churches. Between April 2011 and February 2015, I attended services in Sydney, Canberra, Adelaide, Melbourne, Brisbane, New York, Los Angeles, London, and Brighton. I also attended services at Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul (the largest Pentecostal church in the world) in February and July of 2013, as well as services at West Angeles Church of God in Christ and Calvary Chapel South Bay (both in Los Angeles) in November 2012. I aimed to be an unobtrusive participant observer, but not a passive one.<sup>69</sup> Attending religious services and conferences offered a chance to see how congregants interacted with each other and with leaders, and also with outsiders, such as myself. I also paid attention to the physical space, considering the layout and decoration of rooms—for these services are very rarely held in traditional church halls—as well as the positioning of projection screens, audio material, and lighting. Attending services allowed a chance to see the way pastors emphasized particular messages and the ways audiences responded to them. After all, Pentecostal services are characterized by the active participation of the audience, who are regularly emotional when “filled with the Spirit”.

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<sup>66</sup> Jeppe Sinding Jensen, ‘Revisiting the Insider-Outsider Debate: Dismantling a Pseudo-problem in the Study of Religion’, *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 23, no. 1 (2011), 29-47.

<sup>67</sup> See Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*; Connell, ‘Hillsong: A Megachurch’, pp. 315-32.

<sup>68</sup> As a historian, participant observation is not a method I was trained in. Indeed, prior to commencing my PhD I had no training or experience of research that involved fieldwork. The History Department and Faculty of Arts at the University of Sydney generously supported my efforts to train myself in this methodology by contributing financially to my participation in ‘Methodology 101’, a summer school course at the London School of Economics, and ‘Field Experiments’, an intensive short course run by the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney.

<sup>69</sup> Zina O’Leary, *Researching Real-World Problems: A Guide to Methods of Inquiry* (London: SAGE Publications, 2005), 121. I owe a debt to, and based much of my methodology on, Kathleen M. DeWalt and Billie R. De Walt, *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011).

Being a participant observer allowed me to hear the throb of the bass while preachers asked members to “give” to the church. I experienced the adrenaline rush and the joy that accompanied thousands of people singing the same chorus. I felt the vibrations that came from 20,000 people cheering Brian Houston as he walked onto the stage. To outsiders, the intensity of a Pentecostal church service can be unnerving. It can also be exciting, confusing, emotional, frightening, inspiring, infuriating, or simply bewildering. Having spent four years studying and attending these churches, I am now accustomed to the sweep of emotions that accompanies a service. I have had a chance to see aspects of the Pentecostal and charismatic religious experience; aspects that are incredibly important, but which I could not have understood solely by reading documents, or even by conducting formal interviews.

I used semi-structured observation techniques to guide my research, in that I had built a set of criteria to analyse church services.<sup>70</sup> I noted the size and demographic makeup of the congregation, the place and space of the church, the message of the preacher, attempts to raise funds, the use of music and lighting, and biblical references, both in terms of which version was used and which passages quoted. These criteria (included in Appendix B) provided a useful framework for ensuring coherence in my analysis across divergent institutions. I did not, however, limit my observations to these criteria. Indeed, my chapter on gender emerged initially from personal observations about the place women held in these churches. The gendered makeup and messages of church services were not originally part of my research project, but the flexibility of this method allowed me not only to include this dynamic but also, after seeing its importance, make it a central part of the thesis. The many informal discussions I had with Pentecostals and charismatics at church services I attended were a vital part of my observation protocol.<sup>71</sup> In consciously adopting a semi-structured mode of observation I was also acknowledging that I am not attempting to provide ontological truths. An interpretive lens of analysis provides a chance to understand what political scientist and ethnographer Nancy Wadsworth terms the “epistemological frames”

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<sup>70</sup> Semi-structured research techniques allow for contact with the subject or object of study to determine final research notes, which cater specifically to each situation. While a readiness to revise plans is important, it is nonetheless critical that observation topics are thought through and planned out before attendance to ensure that the observer does not veer too far off track, and that there is a degree of consistency across observations. See Tom Wengraf, *Qualitative Research Interviewing* (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), 109.

<sup>71</sup> For more on participant observation and the use of informal interviews as part of this approach, see Julia Vorholter, *Towards a Culture of Participation?* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 7-8.

through which those being observed, “make sense of their own efforts”.<sup>72</sup> I was able to see how Pentecostals understand themselves and their place in wider society.

## Outline

To understand the fit between Pentecostalism and the secular host culture the thesis explores the place of the “prosperity gospel” in Australia and its echoes with neoliberalism. Changing social values and new ideas about the place of the individual meant popular attitudes shifted in a way that gave credence to churches that promoted a version of the prosperity gospel.

Economic changes through the 1980s—the “greed is good” decade—made palatable a form of religion arguing that God wanted individual congregants to be successful. The assumption that meeting individual needs was the key to benefitting the group held sway in both secular and religious understandings of how Australians should order social and economic life.

A further link with the host culture exists in the growing trend of seeking out “natural” or non-invasive healing options and the emergence of “lifestyle” as a concept in the 1980s, both of which provided fertile ground for a resurgence of a belief in divine healing.<sup>73</sup> A growing focus on diet, fitness, and particularly “wellness”, echoes nineteenth-century religious belief in metaphysical explanations of human health.<sup>74</sup> In affluent segments of Australian society, and within Pentecostal and charismatic churches, the pursuit of health and wellness is seen as virtuous in itself. There is moral value placed on being healthy and happy, just as the prosperity gospel sees it as morally virtuous to pursue professional and financial success.

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<sup>72</sup> Nancy Wadsworth, “Could this be Political Anthropology? Reflections on Studying Conservative Evangelical Subculture(s)” (paper presented at American Political Science Association Meeting, Washington DC, September 2-4, 2010).

<sup>73</sup> R. Marie Griffith points out that this is a reflection of the fact that Pentecostals in Western countries have dramatically improved access to medicinal and psychological experts, as well as medicine itself, compared to their early twentieth century forebears. Griffith argues, “while they speak the same Bible-based language or healing, urban and suburban spirit filled women in the late twentieth century...conceptualise illness, disease, and health in distinctly modern ways”. I would add that modern Pentecostal women also have access to a vast body of freely available, and easily accessible information about health. See R. Marie Griffith, *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 83.

<sup>74</sup> Divine healing has been a key theme of modern Evangelicalism from the nineteenth century, and Donald Dayton has written about the links between this and modern Pentecostalism, as well as the contemporary broader Evangelical movement. Donald Dayton, ‘The Rise of the Evangelical Healing Movement in Nineteenth Century America’, *Pneuma* 4, no. 1 (1982), 1-18.

Another key aspect of the movement's relationship to Australian culture is its reactions to feminism, and its ideas about family, and gender roles. The backlash against the feminism of the 1970s meant a return to conservative articulations of "the family" as the central social and economic unit of the nation.<sup>75</sup> In this paradigm, roles within the family were tightly constructed along gender lines, and this understanding was replicated in the literature produced by Pentecostal churches. They argue that it is admirable for women to be educated and have a career, but that their femininity is central to their identity and should see them performing a "natural" nurturing role, usually as wives and mothers.<sup>76</sup> The Pentecostal gender paradox sees women pastors and female church planters and leaders accepting a theology of submission, to both their husbands and to male church leaders.<sup>77</sup>

Having examined the *place* of Pentecostalism in Australian society, the thesis goes on to argue that the current *form* of the movement is based on three key areas. First, negotiating the demands of local churches alongside the national and international Pentecostal movement is a complicated task, one Pentecostals undertake by embracing modernity's tools, while simultaneously rejecting some of its key tenets.<sup>78</sup>

Second, the form of the movement is based on the way churches structure themselves. There is a focus on creating a complete community that reaches new adherents but simultaneously isolates existing members within the church in an attempt to retain members. Examining the way churches organise and structure themselves reveals the tensions between being evangelistic and outward looking, and being self-sufficient. The style of worship and the division of the congregation into smaller groups is part of an attempt to embed the lay membership within the church and to create a powerful group dynamic. Ultimately, churches

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<sup>75</sup> For more on the concept of this backlash see Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Crown, 1991).

<sup>76</sup> This spiritual conceptualisation of women as nurturers or carers who value cooperation is by no means exclusive to Pentecostalism, or any particular religion. For more on the history of feminist spirituality see: Cynthia Eller, 'Twentieth-Century Women's Religion as Seen in the Feminist Spirituality Movement', in Catherine Wessinger ed., *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions: Explorations Outside the Mainstream* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 183-84.

<sup>77</sup> Bernice Martin, 'The Pentecostal Gender Paradox: A Cautionary Tale for the Sociology of Religion', in Richard K. Fenn ed., *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 5266.

<sup>78</sup> Small group worship is a key feature of the Pentecostal religious experience and is explored in greater detail in Chapter Five. In his history of Pentecostal and Charismatic worship, Telford Work argues that these groups are important because they "express the social as well as personal character of Pentecostal life". Telford Work, 'Pentecostal and Charismatic Worship', in Geoffrey Wainwright ed., *The Oxford History of Christian Worship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 579.

focus their efforts on what could be termed a “core” group of members; those who often go on to become church leaders. The focus on these members, and on reaching new converts, means that the larger mass of attendees remains “visitors”, explaining the high turnover rate experienced by Pentecostal churches.

Finally, the thesis argues that Pentecostal and charismatic religion has disrupted mainstream Australian Christianity and affected the broader society. Examining responses to the churches by the media, the wider public, and by other churches reveals how successful and influential the Australian Pentecostal movement has become. Moreover, analysing Pentecostal answers to criticism reveals how important setting up and insider-outsider dynamic is to these churches.

Given the rapid growth of Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Australia, it is important that we understand and tease out the historical and contemporary echoes between these churches and secular ideas. Doing so allows us to see the movement as a whole, to understand its form and place in Australian society, and to consider why so many people choose to call these churches home.

## Chapter One: Historical Overview

“We are living in an exciting time, a time of church restoration. God is moving among his people and we are again seeing manifestations of his power both in our own nations and throughout the world.”

Terry Virgo and Phil Rogers, *Receiving the Holy Spirit and His Gifts*, 2013.<sup>1</sup>

In 1900, eighty percent of Christians lived in Europe, the Russian Empire, and North America while only five percent resided in Asia and Africa. By the year 2000, forty percent of Christians lived in the former regions, and the percentage in the latter had increased to thirty-two, with the remainder in South America.<sup>2</sup> At the turn of this century, the AOG was the largest non-Catholic church in Latin America, with over four million adherents.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, research in 2006 by the Pew Forum found that the major strands of Pentecostalism represented at least one-quarter of Christians globally, ranked second only to Catholicism in the number of followers. The Pew ten-country study of *Spirit and Power* argued: “Pentecostal beliefs and practices are remaking the face of World Christianity. In Latin America, for example, Pentecostals now account for approximately three-in-four Protestants”.<sup>4</sup> The same study found that in Brazil, Guatemala, and Kenya, “membership of the renewalist movement approaches or exceeds fifty percent of the population”.<sup>5</sup> The dynamics of global Christianity are shifting and Pentecostalism is driving much of the change.

The expansion of Pentecostalism, particularly in the global South, has begun to receive increasing academic attention. However, it is hard to locate Australian Pentecostalism in scholarly efforts to understand this expansion, both historically and in its current form. This is partly because America and Britain were the two dominant cultural influences in Australia

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<sup>1</sup> Terry Virgo and Phil Rogers, *Receiving the Holy Spirit and His Gifts* (Saint Louis: Newfrontiers USA, 2013), 47.

<sup>2</sup> Hugh McLeod, ‘Introduction’, in Hugh McLeod ed., *Cambridge History of World Christianity vol. 9: World Christianities c. 1914-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Allan Anderson, ‘The Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements’, in Hugh McLeod ed., *Cambridge History of World Christianity vol. 9: World Christianities c. 1914-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 95.

<sup>4</sup> Pew Research Centre, *Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals*, The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, October 2006. Available: <http://pewforum.org/Christian/Evangelical-Protestant-Churches/Spirit-andPower.aspx>. Accessed 21 August 2011, 1-4.

<sup>5</sup> Pew Research Centre, *Spirit and Power*, 3.

over this period and, as David Martin argues, the emergent Pentecostal movement was based on nineteenth-century “laissez-faire lay religion, running to and fro between Britain and North America”.<sup>6</sup> Australia was supposedly primed to receive religious trends from both countries and is thus often considered as merely an extension of British or American Pentecostalism. As to the current form, based on developments in the mid to late twentieth century, Australia’s place in the narrative is still harder to define. As a Western country, should Australia be considered alongside European or American Christianity? Alternatively, perhaps Australian Pentecostalism needs to be examined in the context of the Asian expansion of this religion? Or maybe we need to discuss Australian Pentecostals in the same framework as not only Asia but also Africa and South America, borrowing a metropole and periphery model from transnational historians? This thesis makes the case that while the international roots of Pentecostalism help us understand the Australian context, what is really needed is a study of Australia specifically; a study that is not comparative and which puts Australia at its centre.<sup>7</sup>

This chapter provides a historical overview of the Pentecostal movement internationally and in Australia. By examining key scholarly work on the topic, as well as providing a description of the origins of Pentecostalism historically and globally, it argues that the rapid post-1970s expansion represents a turning point in the growth of Pentecostalism in this country. More than this, the expansion marks the emergence of the current form of Australian Pentecostalism. While Pentecostals and charismatics have a long history in this country, the movement did not gain much of a foothold until this time. The rapid rise of Pentecostalism elsewhere, particularly in other English speaking countries, was not mirrored in Australia. Instead, Australian Pentecostalism experienced a stuttering start. Like its international counterparts, its origins lie in nineteenth-century evangelicalism, although the first formal expressions of Pentecostalism in Australia occurred in the years after the Azusa

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<sup>6</sup> David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 5.

<sup>7</sup> Hans Kippenberg outlined the antiquated nature of comparative studies of religion when he argued that this approach to religion originated from the modernisation of Europe and the accompanying focus on rationalisation which attempted to separate “rational religion” from “historical religion”, that is, religion with a political function compared with the social and moral functions of religion. This also provides another reason for this study not to separate a historical study of Pentecostalism from its current form. For more, see Hans Kippenberg, *Discovering Religious History in the Modern Age*, translated from German by Barbara Harshav (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 22-23.

Street Revival in America. Early Australian Pentecostals were small in number and influence and did not represent a coherent movement. High levels of church attendance in Australia and charismatic renewal in the Anglican, Catholic, and Protestant churches matched international evangelical renewal in the 1950s and 1960s. Further, the crusades of the evangelist Billy Graham, particularly his 1959 visit, laid foundations for contemporary Pentecostalism.<sup>8</sup> The crusades represent an explicit recognition of American cultural influence and the power of celebrity preachers; both concepts that are highly visible in and important to Australian churches today. The type of Pentecostalism that is familiar to Australians today emerged from the late 1970s, following a period where conservative Evangelicalism held increasing political and cultural sway overseas. Although again, the Australian story is slightly different, in that this development occurred later. The 1970s onwards also saw changes in the organizational structures of the AOG, pointing to the emergence at this moment of a Pentecostal movement distinct from earlier forms.

This chronological survey shows the international roots of Australian Pentecostalism, but also demonstrates its points of divergence from Pentecostalism in other nations. Most notably, Australian Pentecostalism grew very slowly over the first half of the twentieth century. This slow growth was partly due to the doctrine of the first Pentecostal congregation in Australia, which was divisive and was criticized by leading international evangelists.<sup>9</sup> It was also because there were two large Pentecostal groups competing for adherents in much of the period. Growth from the second half of the twentieth century remained relatively slow, until the reorganisation of the AOG and the planting of Hillsong and C3 churches. We cannot understand what makes Australian Pentecostalism different from its international counterparts, or its contemporary form, without examining the history of the movement. Most significantly, this historical overview allows us to identify the years around 1980 as a

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<sup>8</sup> For more on the links between evangelicals like Graham and contemporary preachers and the importance they place on celebrity (their own and attracting the famous to their churches) see Shayne Lee and Luke Sinitiere, *Holy Mavericks: Evangelical Innovators and the Spiritual Marketplace* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> The origins of the Good News Hall will be explored in greater detail below, but Sarah Jane Lancaster (the founder of the church) took a divisive doctrinal stance. Where two major theological schools existed in early American Pentecostalism (Trinitarian and Unitarian/Oneness), Lancaster's view was different. Seeing God the Father and the Holy Spirit as one, with Jesus Christ as God's son. For more on Lancaster's doctrinal views and how they isolated her from the Pentecostal mainstream see Chant, *The Spirit of Pentecost*, 117-22.

period that the movement emerged in its current form and explains why this thesis is focused primarily on the recent past.

## Nineteenth-century evangelicalism

The roots of contemporary Pentecostalism lie in nineteenth-century evangelicalism, which in turn had its roots in the new international, evangelical, Protestant missionary movement that rose during the eighteenth century. The movement was spearheaded by the Moravian leader Count von Zinzendorf (1700-60), and the British theologian and evangelist, John Wesley (1703-91), the founder of Methodism. The emerging international power of the United States and the rise of the British Empire made this a distinctly global phenomenon through a complicated combination of mission and settlement.<sup>10</sup> Protestant biblical criticism increased leading to the emergence of many new movements, but the “irreligious working class” drove major variations in churchgoing.<sup>11</sup> Not only did the working class grow dramatically in size, but they were also unsatisfied by the inability of the established churches to explain or rationalise the wrenching economic and social transformations they experienced. The shock of industrialisation and the failure of the established churches to create new places of worship left the working class largely “unchurched”, and voluntarist and nonconformist evangelicalism proved more responsive to their needs.<sup>12</sup>

New religious practices, or at least practices that were novel to Christianity at that time, characterized some groups within this emerging evangelical movement. Glossolalia, or the gift of speaking in “tongues”, is one of the most well-known Gifts of the Spirit Pentecostals experience, and it became one of the key outward expressions of a new religious practice. This phenomenon was first integrated in formal church services—in modern times—in Edward Irving’s services at the Presbyterian Church on Regent Square, London in 1831, following the use of tongues in his meetings the previous year.<sup>13</sup> Irving himself did not speak

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<sup>10</sup> Gilley, ‘Introduction’, 2.

<sup>11</sup> For more on Protestant biblical criticism in the nineteenth century see Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2004), 12, 203. See also David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1993), 185, 216.

<sup>12</sup> Gilley, ‘Introduction’, 4-5.

<sup>13</sup> Gordon Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving* (London: Daron, Longman and Todd, 1973), partially reprinted in William K. Kay and Anne E. Dyer eds., *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, A Reader* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 3.

in tongues, but many members of his congregation did. Speaking in tongues continued at intervals in the UK through the nineteenth century, notably at the sermons of Dwight Moody in 1874 and during the Welsh Revival of 1904.<sup>14</sup> The legacy of Irving's church (which after his death became known as the Catholic Apostolic Church) in Australia can be seen in Alfred Wilkinson's Catholic Apostolic Church (CAC) services in a tent on Melbourne's Domain in 1853. The CAC continued to preach about—and encourage the use of—charismatic Gifts in its services in Sydney and Melbourne throughout the nineteenth century. This well organised and well-known (at the time) denomination is to some academics, the precursor, if not the starting point, of Australian Pentecostal history.<sup>15</sup>

This new form of religion rejected the “ancient authority” of the established churches. Instead, it derived power from an ability to empathise with “common people”, and speak to and address their concerns in a direct, colloquial style of sermon.<sup>16</sup> Classical Pentecostalism is an obvious example of this style of worship, and alongside the charismatic movement, it has perhaps been the most visible of the new evangelical denominations that emerged out of nineteenth-century religious developments. Building on these nineteenth-century evangelical traditions, early Pentecostal pastors shaped a new type of sermon, where emotion and physicality—most notably through speaking in tongues—played a large role. This contrasted with the dry biblical exegesis of established churches. Congregants also played a new role through active participation in services. Glossolalia provides an example of the contrast between this new form of religion, where God sometimes worked through “ordinary” people by gifting them with the Spirit, and traditional services, where decorous listening was the key role attendees expected to play in services.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Vinson Synan, *The Holiness- Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing co., 1997), 88.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Elliott, ‘Nineteenth-Century Australian Charismata: Edward Irving's Legacy’, *Pneuma* 34, no. 1 (2012), 31-33, 35.

<sup>16</sup> James Moorhead, *World Without End: Mainstream American Protestant Visions of the Last Things, 1880-1925* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 4.

<sup>17</sup> Though now dated, a key study of glossolalia is that by Felicitas D. Goodman, who points out that this tradition is not exclusive to Pentecostals. See: Felicitas D. Goodman, *Speaking in Tongues: A Cross-cultural Study of Glossolalia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 6.

Other key figures important to explanations of the origins of Pentecostalism include the Wesley brothers and the Anglican cleric, George Whitefield.<sup>18</sup> The founders of Methodism made “the world their parish and not the parish their world”. This involved a calculatedly ambiguous appeal to other Christian denominations, including Catholics and Dissenters, which turned what might have been a small-scale awakening into a widespread revival.<sup>19</sup>

John Wesley’s doctrine of a “second blessing”—resulting from a crisis experience after conversion—was particularly significant in the emergence of Pentecostalism. By the end of the nineteenth century, these evangelicals had been successful in linking this “second blessing” with personal empowerment and spiritual service, and with a revival of belief in the “latter rain” that would precede the return of Christ.<sup>20</sup>

At its core, the new way of thinking about Christianity that emerged in the nineteenth century was focused on individuals and their direct experiences with the divine. It emphasised emotional, intensely personal encounters with the Spirit; a sense of egalitarianism within a culturally flexible community; a focus on converting others; and an expectation of transformation of the individual. Because of its focus on the potential of people, Methodism and other voluntarist denominations were particularly successful in the Australian colonies among the working and middle classes. Stuart Piggin argues that the optimism and energy of these denominations, along with the importance they placed on the need for “social and

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<sup>18</sup> For more on George Whitefield and the growth of Methodism and evangelicalism more broadly see: Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991); Frank Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity: George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1770* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). For more on the growth of evangelicalism in American and Britain see Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington and George A. Rawlyk eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). For more on nineteenth-century revivals see David Bebbington, *Victorian Religious Revivals: Culture and Piety in Local and Global Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). For more on the Wesley brothers, the history of Methodism, and its links to the transformation of Christianity see: John H. Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Rupert E. Davies, *Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1976). For John Wesley’s own (very brief) account of the history of Methodism, which was sold by George Whitefield and at Methodist churches and meetings, see: John Wesley, *A Short History of Methodism* (London: printed by G. Paramore, North-Gree, Worship-Street, 1795) available online via “Eighteenth Century Collections Online”, Gale: <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy2.library.usyd.edu.au/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=usyd&tabID=T001&docId=CW122955913&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE>. Accessed 29 June 2014.

<sup>19</sup> John Walsh, “Methodism” and the Origins of English-Speaking Evangelicalism’, in Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington and George A. Rawlyk eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 27-29.

<sup>20</sup> Anderson, ‘The Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements’, 89.

civic reform”, explains the success of Methodism relative to the Anglican and Catholic Churches in nineteenth-century Australia.<sup>21</sup> The new value placed on individuals from diverse backgrounds and their ability to experience their religion in a direct way meant that evangelical denominations were able to invigorate belief—best seen in the many instances of revival—among large swathes of the population who had become disenchanted with the established churches. The growing popularity of this new way of thinking about religion not only influenced early Pentecostal leaders, but also engendered a receptiveness to later, specifically Pentecostal ideas among the wider populations of Britain, America, Australia, and other predominantly Christian nations.<sup>22</sup>

Several important nineteenth-century movements and revivals led to this religious transformation. In the UK, this included the Wesleyan-Holiness movement and the Scottish Presbyterian revival of the 1830s.<sup>23</sup> In the US, it included sweeping religious revivals before and after the American Revolution, as well as the New Thought and Christian Science movements, which allowed for paranormal religious experiences outside mainstream Protestantism.<sup>24</sup> Some revivals, such as those experienced simultaneously in the 1850s in the US, Wales, Scotland, India, and West Africa, moved beyond the boundaries of one nation. John Alexander Dowie’s International Divine Healing Association (later the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church), also experienced this international expansion, which took the Scottish evangelist from the UK to the US and Australia.

Particularly important in this religious transformation was the move towards a form of Christianity focused not only on individual’s direct experiences with the Spirit but also on New Testament doctrine. One of the clearest examples of this move in Australia was the

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<sup>21</sup> Piggin, ‘Towards a Bicentennial History’, 25-26.

<sup>22</sup> Note that for non-Western countries without a strong Christian tradition, the waves of evangelical revival in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and particularly Methodist revivals, were often at odds with classical Pentecostalism and later waves of Charismatic Christianity because of what Mark Hutchinson and John Wolffe see as the tendency for Pentecostals to be critical of the fusion of faith with local nationalism and, particularly in the Pacific region, ethnic conflict. Mark Hutchinson and John Wolffe, *A Short History of Global Evangelicalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 236.

<sup>23</sup> The Wesleyan-Holiness movement’s focus on Wesley’s doctrine of second grace (a personal experience or interaction with God which transforms the lives of individuals) and perfectionism (a belief that humans can live a life largely without sin) was heavily influenced by the American Holiness movement. Glen O’Brien argues that the movement’s focus on the moderate language of “victorious living” more “accessible” and thus more appealing than other more extreme or radical elements of Wesleyanism. Glen O’Brien, ‘Joining the Evangelical Club: The Movement of the Wesleyan-Holiness Churches in Australia Along the Church-Sect Continuum’, *Journal of Religious History*, vol 32, no. 3 (2008), 322.

<sup>24</sup> Margaret M. Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 25.

growth of “Assembly Testimony”, which focused on the testimony of individuals, usually given in informal locations such as private residences.<sup>25</sup> One of the earliest instances of Assembly Testimony in Australia was Thomas Manders’ meetings in and around Brisbane from 1876. These meetings occurred outside recognisable Christian institutions, and can be thought of as an early example of a “House Church”. The gatherings became formalised by area, and by 1885 there were groups regularly meeting in South Brisbane, Ipswich, and Warwick in Queensland alone.<sup>26</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, evangelicals on both sides of the Atlantic had moved from simply offering new ways of thinking about and experiencing religion, to formalising these offerings and developing strong institutions. Evangelical Christians extended their use of relatively new religious institutions, such as training and Bible colleges, and began holding increasing numbers of “conventions”, which were often interdenominational and which attracted large numbers of attendees. As well as providing answers to—or at least offering comfort in the face of—the questions posed by rapid industrialisation, evangelicals also took advantage of modern technological developments. They used cheaper and faster communication methods, as well as rapid urban growth, to imitate the colleges, seminaries, and literary journals of the traditional churches.<sup>27</sup> Evangelicals saw telegrams as an opportunity to spread the word of God, while low-cost printing and increasingly rapid transport led to an inundation of religious tracts as well as increased missionary activity globally. Evangelicals linked these secular inventions to Christianity and notions of “progress”, seeing them as evidence of God’s presence in history.<sup>28</sup> These developments were combined with a growing emphasis on united evangelical social reform movements and coordinated attempts at public outreach and missionary work.<sup>29</sup> Thus by the turn of the twentieth century, an increasingly institutionalised evangelical form of Christianity had a strong place in British and American society, and an increasingly visible one in Australia. As this chapter will go on to demonstrate, classical Pentecostalism grew out of and built

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<sup>25</sup> Assembly Testimony groups (also referred to as Gospel Hall Assemblies) were, and are, an evangelical, conservative and dispensational Brethren strand based on salvation through faith alone. For more on the history of this group in nineteenth-century Australia see Anne Killalea, ‘Frontier Religion in Tasmania: Explaining the Success of the Christian Brethren in the 1870s’, *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1997), 100-124.

<sup>26</sup> Alex Monro, *1876-1976: 100 Years Assembly Testimony in Queensland* (Mansfield: A. Monro, 1976), 1.

<sup>27</sup> Moorhead, *World Without End*, 4.

<sup>28</sup> Moorhead, *World Without End*, 10.

<sup>29</sup> Hutchinson and Wolffe, *A Short History of Global Evangelicalism*, 145.

upon earlier evangelical ideas and institutions, allowing for rapid Pentecostal organisational growth over the twentieth century.

## Azusa Street and the early twentieth century

On 18 April 1906, the *Los Angeles Times* reported, “the newest religious sect has started”.<sup>30</sup> In what was originally an African-American Methodist church on Azusa Street in downtown LA, William Seymour led the Apostolic Faith Mission in a radically different type of Christian church service.<sup>31</sup> Providing readers with a sensationalized account of this beginning, the *Los Angeles Times* described:

The devotees of the weird doctrine practice the most fanatical rites, preach the wildest theories and work themselves into a state of mad excitement in their peculiar zeal. Colored people and a sprinkling of whites compose the congregation, and night is made hideous in the neighborhood by the howlings of the worshippers, who spend hours swaying forth and back in a nerve racking attitude of prayer and supplication. They claim to have the “gift of tongues” and be able to understand the babel.<sup>32</sup>

While there is often dispute about where to commence accounts of modern Pentecostalism, and while this chapter began with earlier developments, historians usually begin their stories here, in Azusa Street.

Most scholars use the Azusa Street Revival as a convenient turning point or central date when explaining the driving force behind the rapid spread of the Pentecostal movement.<sup>33</sup> This tendency is due in large part to the influence of Walter Hollenweger and his colleagues at the University of Birmingham in the 1970s. This group focused on Azusa Street as the beginning of the Pentecostal story, before going on to argue that the missionaries sent out

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<sup>30</sup> Los Angeles Times, ‘Weird Babel of Tongues’, *Los Angeles Times*, 18 April 1906, 1.

<sup>31</sup> For further information on William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival and a discussion of the African-American influences on Pentecostalism see Cheryl J. Sanders, *Saints in Exile: The Holiness Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 27-31.

<sup>32</sup> Los Angeles Times, ‘Weird Babel of Tongues’, 1.

<sup>33</sup> For examples of the prominence placed on Azusa Street see the following edited collection: Harold D. Hunter and Cecil M. Robeck Jr., *The Azusa Street Revival and its Legacy* (Cleveland: Pathway Press, 2006). See also Cecil M. Robeck Jr., ‘Launching a Global Movement: The Role of Azusa Street in Pentecostalism’s Growth and Expansion’, in Donald E. Miller, Kimon H. Sargeant, and Richard Flory eds., *Spirit and Power: The Growth and Global Impact of Pentecostalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 42-62.

from the United States were the key reason for the movement's spread. Anderson argues that, without detracting from the importance of these early missionaries, some historians have ignored, overlooked, or minimized the vital role of thousands of local workers in this initial period.<sup>34</sup> However, there is not always such a clear dichotomy between the two groups. For a researcher of Australian Pentecostalism, both the outward spread of missionaries and the growth of national or local Pentecostals are important. The relationship between these two groups was complicated; they did not always share the same doctrine or aims though they regularly worked together giving credence to each other's claims about the restoration of New Testament experiences into modern churches. Local Pentecostals attempted to bolster their authority by inviting travelling Pentecostal missionaries or evangelists to visit their churches, while these same missionaries and evangelists relied on the local networks of information these churches created (through newsletters, journals, and pamphlets sent to adherents) to spread both their fame and their message.

It is important to remember when discussing "Pentecostalism" in the early-twentieth century, we are applying our modern understanding of the term retrospectively onto a period when it was used very loosely. "Pentecostal" at this time was not an exclusive label, and the people we describe as Pentecostals today would more likely have identified with the description, "Apostolic Faith".<sup>35</sup> "Pentecostalism" today describes a group with historical connections and a shared theological focus, even if members of the group would not have viewed each other in this way. In the early twentieth century, when these connections were being forged, and shared theological underpinnings negotiated, "Pentecostalism" was not yet a distinct form of Christianity. It did not become so until after the "revival and missionary movements with which it was originally entwined", had largely disappeared.<sup>36</sup> One of the markers that connected these early groups was the fact that Pentecostals then, as now, based their use of Gifts of the Spirit and their inclusive and participatory style of religion on the description of the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost. This coming is described in Acts 2:1-21:

In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and

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<sup>34</sup> Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (St Albans Place: SMC Press, 2008), 6.

<sup>35</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 4.

signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (NIV).

The verse above is critical to the Pentecostal story because it is emphasised that faith was to be experienced, and experienced by all.

“Apostolic Faith” emerged in America after Charles Parham opened the Bethel Gospel School in 1900, where the Bible was the only text studied, and it was believed that the biblical evidence of baptism was glossolalia, or speaking in tongues.<sup>37</sup> By 1908, “spirit led missionaries”—those who felt called by the Holy Spirit to serve God by spreading his word overseas—had left Azusa Street and reached places as diverse as India, Japan, Argentina, Somaliland, and Angola. Anderson argues that these “Pentecostal migrants” (an apt term that could be used to describe the work of Pentecostal and charismatic missionaries today) caused the rapid spread of the “fires” of Pentecostalism internationally.<sup>38</sup> Back in America, a group of three hundred Christians laid the formal foundations of what would become the largest Pentecostal denomination in the world in Arkansas in April 1914 when, in aiming to create an annual convention run by a small committee, the AOG was launched in 1914. From those three-hundred original members, the AOG grew to over 50,000 people by 1925.<sup>39</sup> The AOG joined the newly formed National Association of Evangelicals in 1942, making them a distinctly middle-class denomination, one that had 400,000 members by 1955 and over two million members in the US by the year 2000.<sup>40</sup>

Much as evangelicalism grew in response to social and religious changes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Pentecostalism burgeoned in America, and then across the world, in response to circumstances particular to the early twentieth century. There is, however, debate among historians about what these circumstances were. In America, the ability of the movement’s leaders to present this as an *American* phenomenon, rather than a set of ideas and ideals imported from Europe, is linked by some historians to the success of

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<sup>37</sup> Anderson, ‘The Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements’, 90. For more information on early twentieth century evangelical movements that contributed to the development of early Pentecostalism, such as the Metropolitan Church Association, see William Kostlevy, *Holy Jumpers: Evangelicals and Radicals in Progressive Era America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 127-35.

<sup>38</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 3-5.

<sup>39</sup> Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, xvi-xvi.

<sup>40</sup> Anderson, ‘The Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements’, 92-93.

the movement.<sup>41</sup> There were also circumstances particular to Azusa Street that may have contributed to the mission's success. Harvey Cox points to the perceived artificiality of life in LA, the disillusionment with "progress" of the early 1900s, and the widespread destruction of the San Francisco earthquake and subsequent fire—which occurred just four days after the Azusa Street Mission opened—as creating an apocalyptic atmosphere. In this atmosphere, the positive and inclusive message of Pentecostals was well received.<sup>42</sup> To explain the success of the movement beyond the Azusa Mission, scholars also commonly use deprivation theory.<sup>43</sup> According to this theory, most notably put forward by Robert Anderson in *Vision of the Disinherited*, the growing working class population was increasingly educated and aspirational, yet remained economically, socially, or personally deprived. The aspirational, inclusive, and positive messages preached by Pentecostals were thus appealing and explain why the bulk of the movement's early followers in America came from this group.<sup>44</sup> Cox and Hollenweger also view the appeal of early Pentecostalism to Black Americans as grounded in the movement's use of worship music, particularly jazz, country, and folk idioms, as well as to its participatory nature.<sup>45</sup> However, Barry Chant makes a compelling case for why these theories do not apply to Australia. Here, early Pentecostals were not necessarily urban or poor, and they were overwhelmingly white.<sup>46</sup>

What made the emergence of the Pentecostal movement at this time so distinct is the way it extended earlier evangelical ideas about the importance of the individual. One of the key characteristics of Pentecostals, charismatics, and evangelicals more broadly is the importance they place on the role of the Holy Spirit in the individual's religious experience. Anderson describes a renewed interest in spirituality and pneumatology (the branch of theology concerned with the Holy Ghost and other spiritual concepts) as the key to

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<sup>41</sup> Harvey Cox argues that the Pentecostal "revolution, a genuinely spiritual revolution if ever there was one, was bubbling up from underneath". Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2001), 30.

<sup>42</sup> Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 59-60.

<sup>43</sup> For an overview of the work of those scholars who have applied deprivation theory to Pentecostalism see Chant, *The Spirit of Pentecost*, 7. For a detailed examination of the contribution of these scholars, as well as a critique of this approach as it related to economic and racial deprivation, see Stephen Hunt, 'Deprivation and Western Pentecostalism Revisited: The Case of 'Classical' Pentecostalism', *PentecoStudies* 1, no. 1 (2002), 1-32.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (New York: Oxford, 1979), 225.

<sup>45</sup> Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 107, 143; Walter Hollenweger, 'The Black Roots of Pentecostalism', in *Pentecostals After a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition*, eds. Allan Anderson and Walter Hollenweger (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 36.

<sup>46</sup> Chant, *The Spirit of Pentecost*, 7-15.

understanding Pentecostal and charismatic churches. He argues that the diversity in Pentecostalism has “amounted to a twentieth-century reformation of Christianity” which accounts for this renewed interest.<sup>47</sup> In his history of Pentecostalism in Australia, Phillip Hughes from the Christian Research Association asserts that receiving “spiritual gifts” was the most unifying and common characteristic of the early Pentecostal and charismatic churches.<sup>48</sup> He argues that what demarcates Evangelicals from other Christians is that where the latter understand that the spiritual gifts written about in the Acts of the Apostles (quoted above) and in Paul existed only in the first days after Jesus, the former believe that these gifts can be received and exercised in modern times.<sup>49</sup> Thus, spiritual gifts have become a tool to empower and unify individuals—objectives that are important in Pentecostal discourse built on earlier evangelical ideas.

Part of the early appeal of many evangelical groups was their ability to reach “common” people. The movement originally achieved this success through the rejection of elaborate ceremonies and traditions; by using church leaders and lay preachers who were not highly educated; and by placing emphasis on “Spirit” and the search for the power of the “Pentecost”, rather than the earlier focus on achieving “perfection”, which was the alternative still offered by many other Christian churches.<sup>50</sup> The doctrine of “free grace”—or justification by faith—appealed to the poor. The doctrine implicated that acceptance of and by God was not dependent on moral duties or “good works”, which many had neither time nor money enough to undertake. Rather, salvation was granted to all who repented and believed.<sup>51</sup> This inclusivity leads scholars such as James Moorhead to argue that new leaders of the evangelical movement “democratised” Protestantism by encouraging people to reject “ancient authority”, examine scriptures directly, and form their own judgements.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Allan Anderson, ‘Spreading Fires: The Globalisation of Pentecostalism in the Twentieth Century’, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 31, no. 1 (2007), 11.

<sup>48</sup> Formed in Melbourne in 1985, The Christian Research Association, whose motto is “Charting the faith of Australians”, provides statistical and interpretive information about Christian life in Australia and their work is published as books, as well as released as research papers, and through their website and *Pointers*, their newsletter. See: Christian Research Association, ‘About the CRA’, *Christian Research Association Website*. Available: <https://www.cra.org.au/>. Accessed 28 May 2015.

<sup>49</sup> Phillip Hughes, *The Pentecostals in Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1996), 9.

<sup>50</sup> Note that many evangelicals were and are opposed to spiritual Gifts of the Pentecostal kind. See Anderson, ‘The Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements’, 89.

<sup>51</sup> Walsh, “‘Methodisim’”, 31.

<sup>52</sup> Moorhead, *World Without End*, 4.

One of the key features of Pentecostal and charismatic religion is that it had “interracial and intercultural beginnings”. From the movement’s origins among African Americans in the Azusa Street Revival (1906), to the spread of missions around the world in the following century, there has been an emphasis on spreading God’s word to people of all cultures.<sup>53</sup> The theme of international revival is not unique to Pentecostal and charismatic varieties of evangelicalism. As historian of Methodism John Walsh argues, contemporaries of the eighteenth-century revivals interpreted their existence on both sides of the Atlantic as a sign that “the universal, millennial spread of the gospel might be imminent”. Walsh suggests that the base of Methodism’s early spread was the ability to integrate a broad range of groups into the associated networks of its societies.<sup>54</sup>

Anderson makes similar arguments about the ability of Pentecostal and charismatic movements to integrate diverse constituent groups. He suggests that *Apostolic Faith*, the monthly periodical arising out of the Azusa Street Revival, illustrates the intercultural beginnings of this movement. The third volume of the periodical said of the revival:

I bless God that it did not start in any church in this city, but out in the barn, so that we might all come and take part in it. If it had started in a fine church, poor colored people and Spanish people would not have got it, but praise God it started here...it is noticeable how free all nationalities feel...No instrument that God can use is rejected on account of color or dress or lack of education. This is why God has so built up the work.<sup>55</sup>

The ability of Pentecostals to integrate diverse groups into their congregations from the start of the movement and, more importantly, make them feel that their faith is a more significant marker of identity than race or class, is critical to the Pentecostal story. It explains the contemporary Pentecostal emphasis on individualism and aspiration, as well as the success of the early form of the movement.

## Early Australian Pentecostals

I dispute the arguments put forward by historians Stuart Piggin and Andrew Walls that

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<sup>53</sup> Anderson, ‘Spreading Fires’, 9.

<sup>54</sup> Walsh, “‘Methodisim’”, 19, 29.

<sup>55</sup> *Apostolic Faith*, vol. 3 (November 1906), 1, quoted in Anderson, ‘Spreading Fires’, 9.

America was a “mission field” where localised forms of Christianity were created, whereas Australia “simply gave life to Old World traditions, although slightly modified or exaggerated”.<sup>56</sup> It is possible that Piggin and Walls took the limited academic interest in, and explanations of, Australian Pentecostalism as a sign that it was not actually different from its international counterparts. This section will clarify that while there are certainly parallels, and while the ideas, practices, and theology of Australian Pentecostals were influenced by the American and British contexts, Australian Pentecostalism followed a different path. This path is worthy of study in its own right.

Several key examples of charismatic, although not Pentecostal, revival occurred in Australia over the nineteenth century. Alfred Wilkinson, a Catholic Apostolic Evangelist, arrived in Melbourne in 1853. Working as a traveling evangelist, he helped to lay the groundwork for churches that followed an apostolic model and practiced charismatic gifts.<sup>57</sup> From the 1870s on, there were a series of revivals and charismatic “outbreaks” among the Methodists, Wesleyans, and Salvation Army in Australia. Notable among these was the 1870 outbreak in Portland, Victoria, led by Joseph Marshall, who believed in water baptism accompanied by Spirit baptism through glossolalia.<sup>58</sup> The healing focus of John Alexander Dowie—originally a Congregationalist minister and later founder of Zion City in Illinois—in his Sydney ministry during the 1880s paved the way for the later focus by Pentecostal preachers on divine healing.<sup>59</sup> These nineteenth-century expressions of charismatic impulses among other Christian churches introduced Australians to several key Pentecostal teachings and were built upon over the twentieth century in increasingly formal ways.<sup>60</sup>

Pentecostal expressions of faith occurred in Australia not long after the Azusa Street Revival. *The Apostolic Faith* reported in May 1908, “fires are being kindled by the holy ghost throughout the world”. The same volume featured a special report on “Pentecost in

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<sup>56</sup> Piggin, ‘Towards a Bicentennial History’, 24.

<sup>57</sup> Mark Hutchinson, ‘Wilkinson, Alfred (1809-1896)’, in *Australasian Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (2010), np. Available: <http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/ojs/index.php/ADPCM/article/view/231/228>. Accessed 2 May 2014.

<sup>58</sup> Chant, *The Spirit of Pentecost*, 42.

<sup>59</sup> D. William Faupel, ‘Theological Influences on the Teachings and Practices of John Alexander Dowie’, *Pneuma*, 29, no. 2 (2007), 228.

<sup>60</sup> For a much more in depth exploration of nineteenth century Pentecostalism in Australia see Chant, *The Spirit of Pentecost*, 25-83.

Australia”. The paper said that: “The Lord has visited Australia in great power and souls have been baptized with the Holy Ghost and signs”. It recounted a cottage meeting in February 1907 in Melbourne, where a “young brother received the baptism of the Holy Ghost and began to speak in tongues. Some fell under the power of God, and a great awe came over the meeting”.<sup>61</sup> The paper also recounted the story of a policeman in Melbourne who also “received his Pentecost” only a couple of months later.<sup>62</sup> These early examples of Pentecostalism in Australia were sporadic, and there was no rush of “revival” here comparable to that which was sweeping across America.

Sarah Jane “Jeannie” Lancaster founded the first formal Australian Pentecostal congregation in Melbourne in 1909. The Good News Hall grew slowly, and never neared the numbers of Azusa Street or its daughter churches. Lancaster’s Good News Hall received little support from international evangelists and in 1926, faced with a diminishing congregation, she launched an alternative, the Apostolic Faith Mission. While the new name of Lancaster’s church seems a recognition of the importance of the mission of the same name in Azusa Street, Lancaster, in a 1928 edition of her organisation’s journal (*Good News*), denied that external parties had influenced her thinking.<sup>63</sup>

Like Lancaster’s Apostolic Faith Mission, the Pentecostal Church of Australia also formed in 1926. Realising that they were competing for a limited number of adherents, the two bodies united in 1937 to form the AOG in Australia, now the Australian Christian Churches (though still commonly referred to as the AOG).<sup>64</sup> Until the Australian church-planting efforts of the South African evangelist Frederick van Eyk in 1926-27, native born residents had founded all but one of the twenty-five Pentecostal congregations that existed in Australia.<sup>65</sup> This is not to say that international influences—particularly from America—were not strong, notably through the likes of Aimee Semple McPherson, Adolfo C. Valdez,

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<sup>61</sup> Anon., ‘Pentecost in Australia’, 2, no. 13, May 1908, np. Reprinted in *Australian Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Available online via Alphacrucis College WebJournals: <http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/ojs/index.php/ADPCM/article/view/148/145>. Accessed 23 June 2012.

<sup>62</sup> Anon., ‘Pentecost in Australia’, 2.

<sup>63</sup> Sarah Jane Lancaster, ‘From Our Letter Box’, *Good News* 19, no. 1, 1 November 1928, 4, in Chant, *Spirit of Pentecost*, 99, 105.

<sup>64</sup> Anderson, ‘The Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements’, 101.

<sup>65</sup> Chant, ‘The Spirit of Pentecost’, 41. Sarah Lancaster wrote enthusiastically of van Eyk’s 1926 visit in *Good News*, saying that his healing missions and preaching of the Full Gospel won many souls. See ‘Campaign Secretary’s Report on Evangelist’s Korumburra Meetings’, *Good News*, vol. 17, no. 10, October 1926, np.

and Mina Brawner. British evangelists such as Smith Wigglesworth, William BoothClibborn, William Cathcart, and John Hewitt also visited and influenced Australian Pentecostal churches.<sup>66</sup> The Good News Hall sponsored several famous evangelists, including Aimee Semple McPherson and Smith Wigglesworth, to visit its Melbourne congregation, but were disappointed when they criticised the church and distanced themselves from it.<sup>67</sup> After her 1922 visit, McPherson said that Lancaster's group was "not only small in numbers, but were ostracised and feared by the most earnest ministers and Christian workers". McPherson described her "horror" at Lancaster's doctrinal positions, which "so differed from the Orthodox Christian teaching".<sup>68</sup> While international evangelists certainly influenced Australian Pentecostal churches, these were not simply outposts of American or British organisations. As McPherson's response to Lancaster's church suggests, early Australian Pentecostalism developed in different forms and often had different doctrinal positions to its international counterparts, and it certainly developed at a different rate.

To understand what made the Australian context different to other culturally similar countries it is important to recapture the initially slow and halting growth of Pentecostalism in Australia. From an initial flurry of interest surrounding Lancaster's work and other similar small churches that emerged at the same time, numbers declined. This is possibly because anxieties over changing social mores led to an inward-looking movement more focused on protecting its members from outside influences than on reaching out to new members. Stuart Piggin argues that following the First World War, Australian evangelicals "withdrew progressively from national and social movements", and "in the interests of defending their citadel from Modernist incursion, adopted a counter-cultural stance".<sup>69</sup> This stance helps account for the fact that AOG membership numbers declined in the ten years following the inception of the organisation. In 1937 when the AOG formed, it had around fifteen hundred

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<sup>66</sup> Chant, "The Spirit of Pentecost", 40.

<sup>67</sup> For accounts of Smith Wigglesworth's visit to Melbourne, particularly his demonstrations of "healing" see 'Healing by Touch: Manifestations at Olympia', *The Argus*, 22 February 1922, 16; and 'Healing by Touch: Further Demonstrations', *The Argus*, 23 February 1922, 8.

<sup>68</sup> Aimee Semple McPherson's report to her constituency on her visit to the Good News Hall is reprinted in Chant, "The Spirit of Pentecost", 679-80.

<sup>69</sup> Piggin, 'Towards a Bicentennial History', 25.

members. By the end of World War Two, the organisation had declined to just twelve hundred members.<sup>70</sup>

In defending itself from charges of parochialism, the AOG claimed that it had inherited problems from the Good News Hall and early Australian Pentecostalism, which the organisation needed to overcome before it could expand. Philip B. Duncan was one of the founding members of the AOG, the founding Principal of the AOG's Commonwealth Bible College in Brisbane, and later, the Chairman of the AOG Executive. In his memoir, *Pentecost in Australia* (1947), he argued: "It is unfortunate that Good News Hall, the body which instituted the work of pioneering the message of the baptism of the Holy Ghost...embraced false teaching and doctrine so detrimental to the truth of the Pentecostal experience". Duncan noted that the organisation's journal, *The Good News*, was popular and attractive, but suggested that it "covered up" the true opinions of the Hall. He saw these views as "clearly Christadelphian in character", a serious and controversial charge.<sup>71</sup> As proof of his claim that the Good News Hall was not a "true" Pentecostal church, he cited the visits of the evangelists Aimee McPherson, Smith Wigglesworth, and Adolfo C. Valdez. All were "brought out to Australia by the Good News Hall but quickly denounced the body when they fully understood it".<sup>72</sup> These problems, to Duncan and the AOG, accounted for the dawdling growth of the organisation.

## Evangelical and charismatic renewal in the 1950-1960s

Today the AOG, or ACC, claims to have over 250,000 members.<sup>73</sup> Explanations for its growth must include discussion of the 1950s and 1960s, decades that saw evangelical and charismatic renewal internationally. The 1950s were important in embedding civic Protestantism in the "moral" middle class. The decade was also important because it

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<sup>70</sup> Chant, "The Spirit of Pentecost", 215.

<sup>71</sup> This was a serious charge as Christadelphians are millenarian Christians, widely regarded by other Christian groups as heretics owing to their rejection of the Trinity and their biblical Unitarianism. Christadelphians do not participate in politics, voting, or military service, and are thus outside mainstream society and culture in many ways. 'Christadelphians', in John Bowker ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>72</sup> Philip B. Duncan, *Pentecost in Australia* (Sydney: Assemblies of God in Australia, 1947), 4-5.

<sup>73</sup> Cheryl Catford, 'Women's Experiences: Challenges for Female Leaders in Pentecostal Contexts', in Shane Clifton and Jacqueline Grey eds., *Raising Women Leaders: Perspectives on Liberating Women in Pentecostal and Charismatic Contexts* (Chester Hill: Australasian Pentecostal Studies, 2009), 27.

included the first visit of the evangelist, Billy Graham to Australia. The 1960s saw the first dramatic increase in Pentecostal numbers in Australia, in contrast to a wider decline in Christian church attendance rates nationwide. It was in this decade that several important Bible colleges were founded, including the AOG's Alphacrucis College. However, it was not until the "third wave" of Pentecostalism hit Australia in the late 1970s and early 1980s that the movement burgeoned. The third wave developed in response to charismatic revivals within other Christian churches, notably the Catholic Church. The United Kingdom particularly saw an emphasis on house or home churches, and this model seemed to resonate more strongly in Australia than had earlier, more American forms of Pentecostalism.

The "Jubilee 50" edition of *Australian Evangel*, the magazine of the AOG Australia, devoted considerable time to explaining the origins of Pentecostalism in Australia as it celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the AOG in this country in 1987. In an article titled "Last Days—Perilous Times, A 20<sup>th</sup> Century Observation", C.W. Usher, a prominent and highly active AOG member, outlined the ways he believed the development of Pentecostalism fit with changes to Australian secular life. He explained that "people were more righteous, God fearing, law abiding, (and) morally conscious" in the early 1900s, than at the time he was writing. Usher believed the 1920s tested these moral people through "vast unemployment, the advent of radio...plus Hollywood's sexy and promiscuous films". The end of the Second World War, he believed, was a pivotal period because the new "plenteousness of money...came with a decline in morals and religion".<sup>74</sup> For Usher, the 1950s signaled a turning point: a "downturn in Godliness". Rock and roll music had "lustful, blasphemous, sexual influences" while television "accentuated people's emotions to pleasure, sport and gambling". From the 1960s, Usher identified mini-skirts, "Gay clubs", and "free love" as leading to the 1970s "upsurge in drugs, also the condoning of homosexuality, more sin, robberies, rapes, murders and violence". These changes in turn led to the increase in "crime of all kinds" in the 1980s.<sup>75</sup> Usher's particular view of the past is interesting in that he sees influences external to the control of the church as causing a "decline" in society. While he clearly sought to demonstrate the need for what he called "true Christianity and gospel preaching", he did not reflect on what role the AOG had in preventing this supposed decline. Nor did he suggest that the organisation should intervene

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<sup>74</sup> C.W. Usher, 'Last Days—Perilous Times, A 20<sup>th</sup> Century Observation', *Australian Evangel: Jubilee 50 1937/1987* 44, no. 5 (May 1987), 35-39.

<sup>75</sup> Usher, 'Last Days—Perilous Times', 35-39.

and reverse it. He also did not discuss the revival and renewal ministries that grew in Australia and around the world from the 1950s, the period he interpreted as signalling the start of darkness. Or, as he put it in his article's title, "Last Days—Perilous Times".<sup>76</sup>

The fifteen years that followed the end of WWII saw high levels of Christian belief and church attendance among the Australian population. Some consider this a sign of "revival" in Australia. Others contend that this was a function of the ways social capital was built in the period, with the "moral middle class" being responsive to ideas of civic Protestantism.<sup>77</sup> Historians have seen this as a reaction to several factors, including the Cold War and the threat of nuclear destruction; growing youth culture and rebellion; the Americanization of Australian culture, particularly music; and perceived threats to the family and morality in the face of growing materialism and changing patterns of consumption.<sup>78</sup> Economic prosperity—evidenced in low unemployment rates, the growth of real income, and increasing rates of property and car ownership among the middle class—helped create a sense of optimism, one that secular public figures such as politicians were eager to demonstrate was framed by Christian morals.<sup>79</sup>

Evangelical Christianity experienced a particular revival in the period strongly linked to travelling missions, principally the "crusades" of William Franklin "Billy" Graham. Founded in 1950 after his successful eight-week Los Angeles Crusade the previous year, the "Billy Graham Evangelistic Association" (BGEA) was, and continues to be, based on what

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<sup>76</sup> Usher, 'Last Days—Perilous Times', 35-39.

<sup>77</sup> Robert Putnam makes a similar argument about citizenship in America following WWII, arguing that this was the "the civic minded WWII generation". See Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000). For more on this and the "moral middle class" in Australia see Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 132-33. Gary Bouma contends that these high rates were at least partly due to the limited leisure activities available at the time, arguing that during this period, churches were the "primary local social centres", see Gary Bouma, *Australian Soul: Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-first Century* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 78. Douglas Booth also argues that by the 1970s leisure patterns in Australia changed significantly and after this, "the church had lost much of its influence and Australians quietly abandoned the Sabbath", see Douglas Booth, *Australian Beach Cultures: The History of Sun, Sand and Surf* (Abingdon: Routledge & Co. Ltd., 2001), 163.

<sup>78</sup> David Hilliard provides extensive overviews of this period of religious boom and the factors behind it: David Hilliard, 'God in the Suburbs: The Religious Culture of Australian Cities in the 1950s', *Australian Historical Studies* 24, no. 97 (1991), 399-419; David Hilliard, 'Church, Family and Sexuality in Australia in the 1950s', *Australian Historical Studies* 27, no. 109 (1997), 133-46.

<sup>79</sup> For more on the 1950s and the links between Christianity, changing social and economic conditions, and economic prosperity, see Hugh Chilton, "Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia: Nation and religion I the public square 1959-1979", PhD dissertation, University of Sydney, 2014, 75-83.

Graham sees as his purpose in life: “to help people find a personal relationship with God, which, I believe, comes through knowing Christ”.<sup>80</sup> Although the American crusader did not arrive in Australia until 1959, the religious and popular press began discussing his visit at least five years beforehand. This reflects the growing public awareness of the upsurge in evangelicalism in Australia and internationally.<sup>81</sup> In 1954, W. Ashley-Brown, a retired Anglican Archdeacon, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* expressing his support for the upcoming and already well publicised crusade. In the letter, he compared Graham’s travelling evangelism to missions earlier in the twentieth century. Ashley-Brown suggested that Graham’s fundamentalism and literal interpretation of the Bible would “limit” his “permanent influence...unless the Australian churches can canalise and exploit the awakened interest”, which Ashley-Brown believed would be achieved if traditional churches combined their discipline and doctrinal teaching with “the spiritual awareness of the Evangelicals”.<sup>82</sup> The BGEA reported that 3,362,240 people attended the “Southern Cross Crusade”, the organisation’s crusade to Australia and New Zealand from February to May 1959. The final service at the Sydney Showground, on 10 May, drew a crowd of 150,000 (see the image below).

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<sup>80</sup> ‘About: William (Billy) F. Graham’, *Billy Graham Evangelistic Association Website*, 2014. Available: <http://billygraham.org.au/billy-graham>. Accessed 30 July 2015.

<sup>81</sup> Examples of this discussion can be seen in ‘Billy Graham for Australia?’, *The Methodist*, 28 August 1954, 1; ‘Billy Graham Plans Tour’, *The West Australian*, 20 November 1954, 2. ‘Billy Graham May Visit Australia’, *The Canberra Times*, 13 May 1955, 4.

<sup>82</sup> W. Ashley Brown, “‘Billy’ Graham and The Churches”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 August 1954, 2.

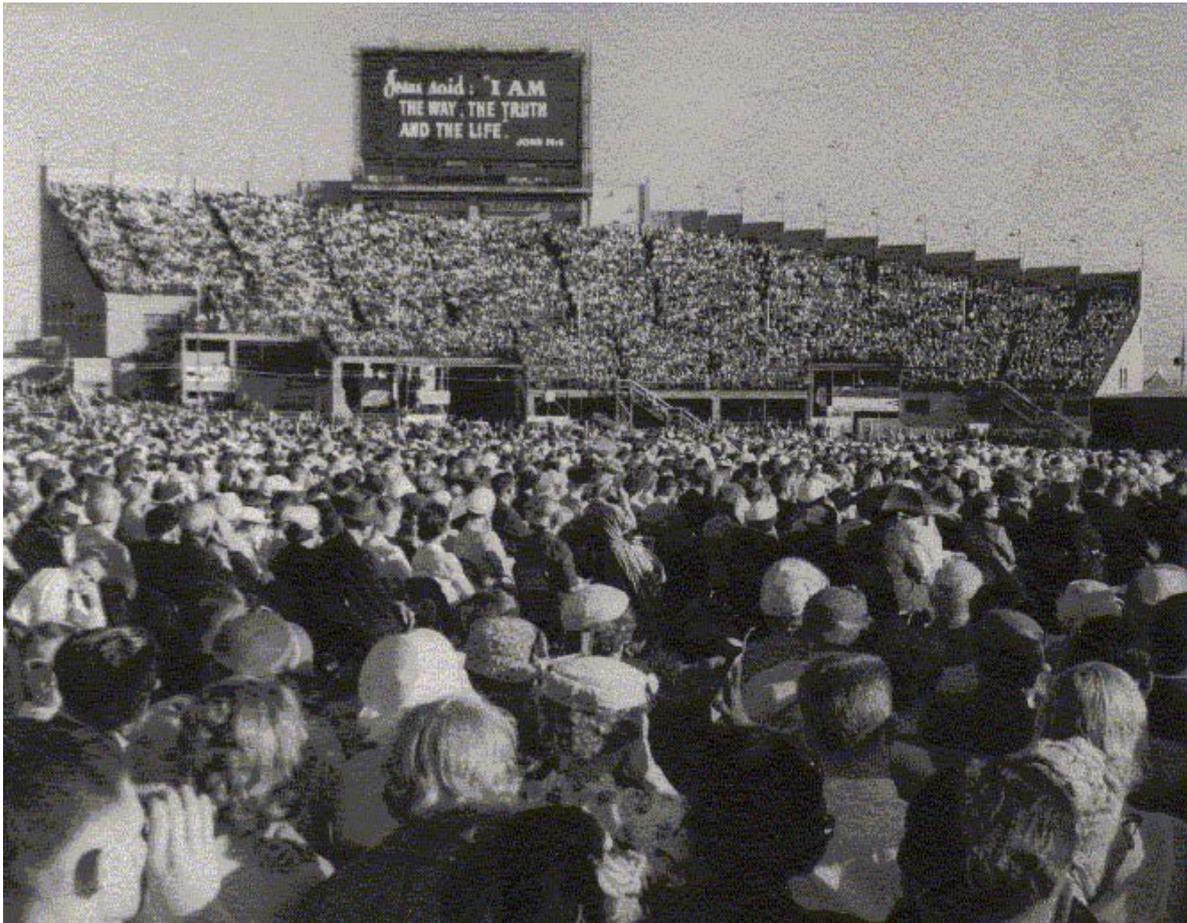


Figure 9: Crowds at final service of Southern Cross Crusade at the Sydney Showground, 10 May 1959.<sup>83</sup>

Despite the 130,000 “Decisions for Christ” made during the 1959 Southern Cross Crusade, the lasting impact of Graham’s visit in terms of increasing churchgoing rates was negligible.<sup>84</sup> In fact, the 1960s mark what many scholars have called a period of “religious crisis” for Christianity.<sup>85</sup> The period marked a shift away from the privileging of Christianity in Australian politics and culture.<sup>86</sup> The biggest impact of Graham’s crusades for the form of Pentecostalism that is the subject of this thesis, was the acceptance of a model of Christianity based on large group gatherings (then called crusades, now called conferences),

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<sup>83</sup> Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College. Available:

<http://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/archhp1.html>. Accessed 12 June 2015.

<sup>84</sup> Judith Smart, “The Evangelist as Star: The Billy Graham Crusade in Australia, 1959”, *Journal of Popular Culture* 33, no. 1 (1999), 167.

<sup>85</sup> The decline in participation in Christian churches from the 1960s in Western countries, often focused on the Second Vatican Council for the Catholic Church and the production of an alternative to the *Book of Common Prayer* in the Anglican Church, is often referred to as the “religious crisis of the 1960s”. For more on the topic see Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>86</sup> Chilton, “Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia”, 83-84.

on the charisma of leaders, and on the acceptance of an American style of evangelicalism in Australian Christianity.

The Australian sponsors of Graham's visit, made up of laypeople and clergy, were aware of the criticism Graham's detractors often made: that he was exporting "Americanism". In anticipation of this and other critiques, the crusade's sponsors published a pamphlet in Sydney in 1958—that is, before Graham's visit—listing a series of objections commonly made to Graham's work and offering answers (see below). On the subject of Americanisation of religion, the pamphlet's author, Howard Guinness, acknowledged that a religion imported from America might be "superficial, flashy, emotional [and] high power". But, he countered, "America exports quality goods...If not why should her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II invite him to preach?"<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Howard Guinness (illustrated by Frank Benier), *I Object...to Billy Graham* (Sydney: Ambassador Press, 1958), np. Held in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College. Available: <http://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/archhp1.html>. Accessed 30 July 2015.

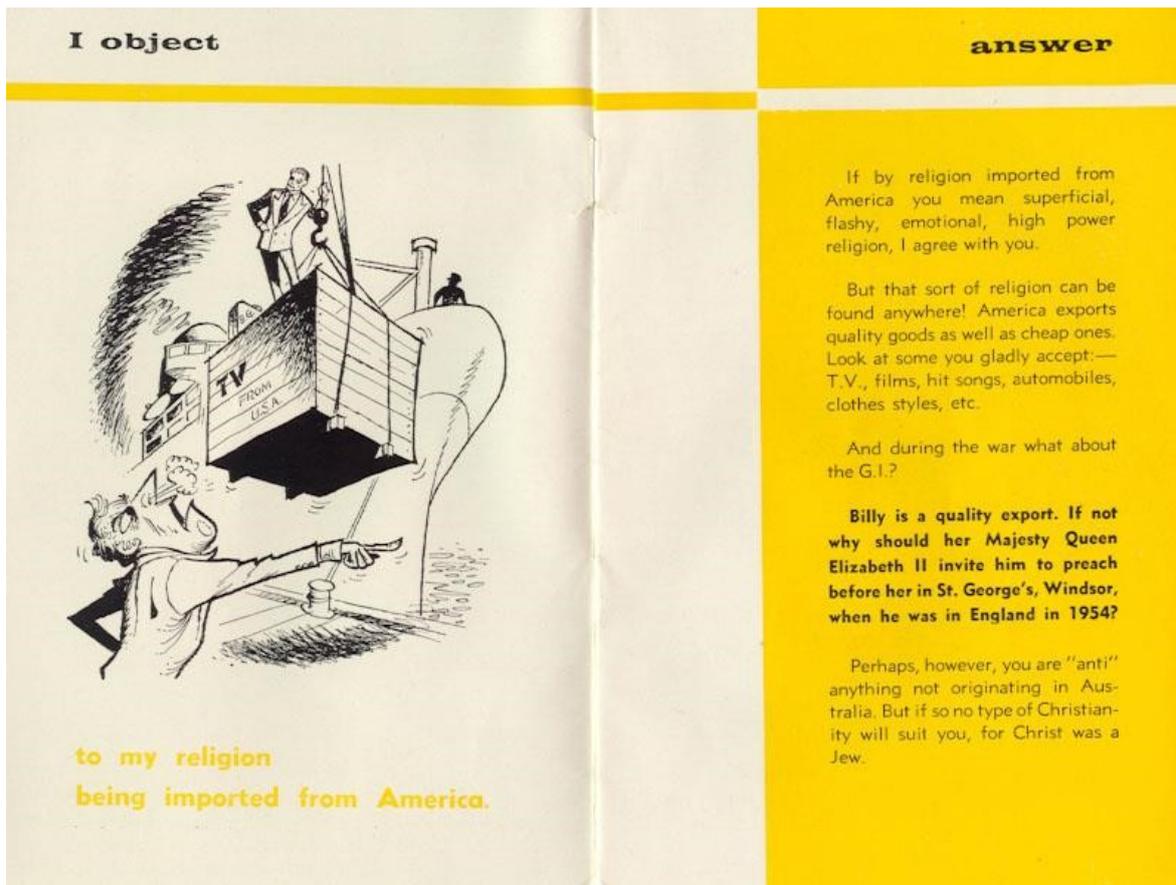


Figure 10: Howard Guinness (illustrated by Frank Benier), I Object...to Billy Graham.<sup>88</sup>

The Graham crusades, therefore, laid significant ground work for the American-influenced style of Pentecostalism that developed in Australia twenty years later. As will be discussed throughout this thesis, Hillsong and other Pentecostal churches—particularly megachurches—have become linked in scholarly discussion with American culture and consumerization, often termed the “McDonaldization” of Christianity.<sup>89</sup> The intersections of this new form of American Evangelicalism—which embraced consumption, technology, individualism, and the power of the media—with wider Western culture helped make this kind of religion palatable to modern society.

<sup>88</sup> Howard Guinness (illustrated by Frank Benier), I Object...to Billy Graham. (Sydney: Ambassador Press, 1958), np. Held in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College. Available: <http://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/archhp1.html>. Accessed 30 July 2015.

<sup>89</sup> For examples see H. Young-Gi, ‘Encounter with Modernity: The “McDonaldization” and “Charimatization” of Korean Mega-Churches’, *International Review of Mission* 92, no. 365 (2003), 239255; John Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church: Spirituality, Creativity, and the Future of the Church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000); and John Drane, *After McDonaldization: Mission, Ministry and Christian Discipleship in an Age of Uncertainty* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

The other significant legacies of the Graham crusades were the increasing use of large gatherings to reach the widest possible audience, which built on the open-air or tent revivals in the UK and US over the previous one-hundred years, and the recognition that charismatic leaders themselves had tremendous power in attracting potential converts. As an annual conference and not a short-term crusade, Hillsong conference does not attract the 150,000 attendees who came to see Graham during his final service in Sydney in 1959. In 2015, however, 30,000 visitors attended the Hillsong conference in Sydney, a conference also held in London and New York City each year.<sup>90</sup> Brian and Bobbie Houston describe the purpose of Hillsong conference as being to “champion the cause of local churches everywhere” through three streams, “Lead, Create and Help”.<sup>91</sup> Hillsong draws on the celebrity power of its lead pastor, Brian Houston, as well as the stardom of its band (Hillsong United) and other Australian and international evangelists, to attract attendees. Images used in the conference blog reflect the importance of both large crowds and the church’s charismatic leader (see below for examples). In “Hillsong Conference 2015 Day 1 in Photos”, of the nine photos uploaded to the blog, four feature Brian Houston and the rest, the large crowd.<sup>92</sup> The church is, understandably, proud of the numbers gathered and chose to emphasise this and the charisma of Brian Houston when curating a record of the conference for public consumption.

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<sup>90</sup> Michael Koziol, ‘Hillsong Conference at Sydney Olympic Park: 30,000 Flock for Enlightenment’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 July 2015. Available: <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/hillsong-conference-at-sydneyolympic-park-30000-flock-for-enlightenment-20150701-gi2hd1.html>. Accessed 4 July 2015.

<sup>91</sup> Hillsong Church, ‘Sydney 2016: Hillsong Conference’, *Hillsong Conference Website*. Available: <http://hillsong.com/conference/sydney16/>. Accessed 5 August 2015.

<sup>92</sup> Hillsong Church, ‘Hillsong Conference 2015 Day 1 in Photos’, *Hillsong Conference Website*. Available: [http://hillsong.com/collected/blog/2015/06/hillsong-conference-2015-day-1-in-photos/#.VcFX9\\_mqpBf](http://hillsong.com/collected/blog/2015/06/hillsong-conference-2015-day-1-in-photos/#.VcFX9_mqpBf). Accessed 5 August 2015.



Figure 11: Brian Houston speaking on Day 1 of Hillsong Conference 2015. Image from Hillsong Conference Website.



Figure 12: Shot of the crowd on Day 1 of Hillsong Conference 2015. Image from Hillsong Conference website.



Figure 13: Brian Houston with his son Joel Houston, a worship leader and member of Hillsong United, on stage on Day 1 of Hillsong Conference 2015. Image from Hillsong Conference Website.

The power of large crowds to create exciting, shared experiences will be discussed in later chapters, but combined with the charisma of the well-groomed, smiling, and eloquent church leader, there are strong echoes of Graham's style of evangelism. Houston and Graham as "stars" are consciously products of mass culture and capitalism. Both men understand their value as commodities for their churches. They reflect an ideology of individualism and embody cultural meanings.<sup>93</sup> Their power as individual "stars" needs to be situated in ideas contemporary to their respective periods.<sup>94</sup> For Graham, this means understanding Cold War anxieties, rapid social change, and the growing economic, political, and cultural influence of America on Australian society. For Houston, this means acknowledging the supremacy of celebrity culture (which is also seen in the church's efforts to attract international celebrities at their services), the aspirational desires of the Australian population, and the

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<sup>93</sup> Christine Gledhill, 'Introduction', in Christine Gledhill ed., *Stardom: Industry of Desire* (London: Routledge, 1991), xi.

<sup>94</sup> Richard Dyer, 'Charisma', in Christine Gledhill ed., *Stardom: Industry of Desire* (London: Routledge, 1991), 59-60.

importance of individualism and consumerism.<sup>95</sup> Houston, as the charismatic leader of an evangelical church, needs to be understood in the context of religious developments in the thirty years proceeding the founding of his church. The contemporary form of Australian Pentecostalism may date to the late 1970s and early 1980s, but developments in international evangelicalism inform it throughout the twentieth century. Of particular import were Graham's crusades, which Houston has described as formative, referring to Graham as one of his "role models".<sup>96</sup>

The emerging form of contemporary Australian Pentecostalism was also shaped by the local and international growth of the charismatic movement from the 1960s. This incorporated charismatic renewal within traditional churches, as well as the "second wave" of the charismatic movement within specifically evangelical and Pentecostal churches (with classical Pentecostals representing the first, and "neo-charismatics" or "postdenominational" and independent charismatic churches, representing the third wave).<sup>97</sup> Charismatic renewal within established churches is discussed further in Chapter Six, but was characterised by the creation of groups within churches who advocated the use of the charismatic practice of Gifts of the Spirit within worship and an emphasis on individuals having a personal relationship with Jesus.

Outside these Christian churches, one of the key developments of the 1960s was the establishment of the British House Church Movement, an expression of the second wave of charisma. Following an experience of Baptism in the Holy Spirit, the early leaders of the British House Church Movement left established churches to meet in private homes.

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<sup>95</sup> The press in Australia and internationally feed into this celebrity culture by repeatedly writing about celebrities who have reportedly attended Hillsong services, including musicians, actors, models, and sports stars such as Justin Bieber, Kendall Jenner, Kevin Durant, Jarryd Hayne, Vanessa Hudgens, Esther Houston (née Lima), and Hailey Baldwin. For examples of this media coverage see: 'Justin Bieber's Hipster Pastor: Dana Schuster, "I'm Praying for this Boy to Make it"', *New York Post*, 13 November 2014. Available: <http://nypost.com/2014/11/13/meet-justin-biebers-spiritual-leader-36-year-old-pastor-carl-lentz/>. Accessed 14 July 2015; Candace Sutton and Penelope Kilby, 'Hillsong's Hottest Couple', *Daily Mail Australia*, 1 July 2014. Available: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3143901/Hillsong-s-hottest-couple-tattooed-Australian-pastor-glamorous-wife-Justin-Bieber-s-spiritual-guides-dark-family-secret-plaguing-new-age-church.html>. Accessed 14 July 2015; and Geoff Chambers, 'Sons of Sydney Hillsong Pastor Brian Houston Target US Celebs', *Daily Telegraph*, 30 June 2015. Available: <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/sons-of-sydney-hillsong-pastor-brian-houston-target-us-celebs/story-fni0cx12-1227420752287>. Accessed 14 July 2015.

<sup>96</sup> Brian Houston, quoted in 'The Life of Brian', *Australian Story*, ABC, 1 August 2005. Available: <http://www.abc.net.au/austory/content/2005/s1424929.htm>. Accessed 30 March 2012.

<sup>97</sup> Allan Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 217.

Members of the movement, which emerged at the beginning of the 1960s, aimed to restore the church to their interpretation of church life in the New Testament. The House Church Movement grew rapidly and led to the founding of “networks” of congregations. The networks often went on to become established churches that mixed contemporary and experiential worship styles with conservative social attitudes and an emphasis on formal authority structures and literal or fundamental Bible interpretations.<sup>98</sup> Newfrontiers is an example of a church that grew from this movement. Started by Terry Virgo as “Coastlands”, the network eventually became the Newfrontiers family of churches.<sup>99</sup> The increasing acceptance of New Testament Christianity, as well as experiential worship and Gifts of the Spirit, was important in laying the groundwork for the establishment of Pentecostal churches in their contemporary form.

Key churches of this study, such as Hillsong and C3, originally worshipped in small groups in informal spaces, including homes, much in the style of these House Churches. They also placed a similar emphasis on building personal relationships, catering to local groups and their needs, and apostolic (not hierarchical) leadership. As seen above, Hillsong today claims to be a “champion” of the local church. The church’s mission statement repeatedly emphasises that it represents a “network that connects hundreds and thousands of pastors...committed to the apostolic anointing of leaders”, much the way that Virgo’s churches were originally formed as, and remains, a network of churches with apostolic leadership.<sup>100</sup>

Evangelical and charismatic renewal of the 1950s-60s thus laid footings for the particular type of Pentecostalism that was to emerge in Australia around 1980. The period saw significant social changes and anxieties about these changes, and there was initially an

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<sup>98</sup> Kristin J. Aune, ‘House Church Movement’, in Peter Clarke, ed., *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 279. For more on the House Church Movement in Britain see A. Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom: The Radical Christianity of the House Church Movement* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985).

<sup>99</sup> William K. Kay has written about the apostolic networks in Britain at the time and Virgo’s involvement in them. He describes Virgo as a “key leader” in the “networks that were made up of completely new congregations or of existing congregations that were severed from their denominational moorings and reconfigured”. William K. Kay, ‘Apostolic Networks in Britain: Personality and Praxis’, in Leslie J. Francis, Mandy Robbins, and Jeff Astley eds., *Empirical Theology in Texts and Tables: Qualitative, Quantitative and Comparative Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 325.

<sup>100</sup> Brian Houston, ‘The Church I Now See’, *Hillsong Church Website* 2014. Available: <http://hillsong.com/vision/>. Accessed 31 January 2015.

upsurge in attendance at Christian services as people looked to religion to soothe fears. Evangelical Christianity in Australia was transformed by the tremendous scale of Billy Graham's crusades and well as the increasing celebrity of Graham as an individual. This was combined with an international move towards charismatic expressions of Christianity inside, and independently of mainstream churches. These expressions saw the growth of worship styles, doctrinal views, and leadership styles that have come to characterize contemporary Pentecostalism. Despite this important groundwork being laid, the number of Pentecostals in Australia remained small, and their cultural influence relatively insignificant.

## Pentecostals, evangelicals, and charismatics from the 1970s

The 1970s and 1980s were a crucial period in the emergence of the third wave of Pentecostalism. During this time, charismatic and evangelical Christianity became increasingly important in cultural and political life, most notably in the US. Conservative evangelicalism gathered influence in mainstream American culture in response to social and cultural changes of the preceding decades, and Jimmy Carter's 1976 declaration during the Presidential election that he was "born again" was the first of this kind. By the 1980 election, all three candidates (Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, and John B. Anderson) identified as "born again". This public evangelical identification suggests that this was not only a common claim, but also a socially desirable one.<sup>101</sup> In 1983, Donald Bloesch, an American evangelical minister and theologian, worried that this reappearance of evangelicalism was temporary, that it might "be an Indian summer before the total collapse of organized religion in this country".<sup>102</sup> His fear proved unwarranted. Indeed, evangelical Protestantism emerged with renewed force from the 1980s. The more formal Protestant expressions formed over the long nineteenth century eroded in a way that allowed for the emergence of charismatic fellowships within Protestant churches. These fellowships, which were often decentered,

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<sup>101</sup> David C. Legee and Lyman A. Kellstedt, *Rediscovering the Religious Factor in American Politics* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1993), 199.

<sup>102</sup> Donald G. Bloesch, *The Future of Evangelical Christianity: A Call for Unity Amid Diversity* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 89.

sectarian, and marked by the enthusiasm and vigour of members, in fact, resembled their eighteenth-century, more than their nineteenth-century, Protestant predecessors.<sup>103</sup>

The trend towards increasingly visible and publicly important expressions of evangelical Christianity developed much later in Australia than America, as did the upsurge of evangelical and Pentecostal numbers. The Whitlam, Hawke, and Keating ministries were in office at a time when less than a quarter of the Australian population identified as religious agnostics or atheists, yet nearly half the members of these ministries identified themselves thus.<sup>104</sup> This trend changed substantially from 1996 when the Liberal Party, led by John Howard, came to office and more actively linked Australian political and church life. Howard opened church facilities for both Hillsong and C3 in Sydney. His treasurer, Peter Costello, spoke of the need for Australia to turn to the Ten Commandments to relieve social ills in front of 21,000 people at the opening of Hillsong Conference in 2004, signaling a shift in public discourse about evangelicalism.<sup>105</sup> Under Howard, the use of religious rhetoric in political speeches increased dramatically, as did the number of politicians who actively courted the votes of conservative Christian groups, and particularly those of Pentecostal megachurch members.<sup>106</sup> In 2004, the Liberal Party preselected a Hillsong employee, Louise Markus, to stand in the marginal federal seat of Greenway.<sup>107</sup> In a 2004 interview with the ABC, following Costello's address to the Hillsong congregation at the Sydney Superdome, journalist Tony Jones explicitly asked Costello about the fit between the Liberal party and Pentecostal churches, such as Hillsong: "Do you think this brand of Christianity is actually more suited to conservative politics than to Labor politics?" Costello replied: "Certainly there's an emphasis on individual responsibility, on taking responsibility for your own life. I think they're important values. But I just think that this is really the same Christian faith that you meet in the older churches in subdued ways."<sup>108</sup> Costello here played down the

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<sup>103</sup> Christopher Clark and Michael Ledger-Lomas, 'The Protestant International', in Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene eds., *Religious Internationals in the Modern World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 24.

<sup>104</sup> About fifty percent of the 1983 Hawke ministry and the 1991 and 1993 Keating ministries declined take their oath of office on the Bible. Alan W. Black, 'Religion and Capitalism in Australia', in Richard H. Roberts ed., *Religion and the Transformations of Capitalism: Comparative Approaches* (London: Routledge, 1995), 296.

<sup>105</sup> Marion Maddox, *God under Howard: The Rise of the Religious Right in Australian Politics* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2005), 164, 223.

<sup>106</sup> For a more extensive discussion of this topic see Maddox, *God under Howard*.

<sup>107</sup> Maddox, *God under Howard*, 105.

<sup>108</sup> Peter Costello, quoted in 'Costello Addresses Hillsong Congregation', *Lateline*, ABC, 4 July 2005. Transcript available: <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2005/s1406779.htm>. Accessed 2 June 2011.

novelty of this development, but my research suggests that there was, indeed, something new here.

The link between a Pentecostal church and one of Australia's major political parties would have been unthinkable earlier in the century, or even as recently as the 1960s. Pentecostals were not sufficient in number and had neither much cultural or political influence. This changed in the 1970s and 1980s, which mark a pivotal point in the emergence of the contemporary form of Pentecostalism in Australia. From this period, the AOG in Australia transformed their leadership—in what David Cartledge describes as an “apostolic revolution”—as they moved from a system of loosely democratic leadership, to “leadership by God appointed apostolic ministries”.<sup>109</sup> Beyond this apostolic revolution in the Australian AOG, this period was significant because it was when two of Australia's biggest Pentecostal churches were founded. These churches built on American classical Pentecostal ideas and doctrine as well as the British charismatic and House Church movement's style of worship. This borrowing created a flexible form of Pentecostalism, and adherents' attitudes to social and cultural issues were not overly dissimilar from the majority of the Australian population, even if the views of their leaders were. The significance of the late 1970s, and particularly the early 1980s is evident in the histories of the major churches in this study.

### Hillsong:

Brian Houston, founder and current Senior Pastor of Hillsong, explains that when he was a child, his parents left their positions in the Salvation Army in New Zealand to join a Pentecostal church “with nothing, really, at that time. We grew up in what would be a

Housing Commission house.” Following this, Houston's father “got filled with the Holy Spirit, so it was from there that he became an Assemblies of God minister in New Zealand”.<sup>110</sup> It was this “filling” with the Spirit that marked a turning point when Brian told his story. Today, Houston is the Senior Pastor of Hillsong Church, which his father, Frank Houston, founded as the Christian Life Centre in 1977 in Sydney. Brian, together with his wife Bobbie, “planted” the Hills Christian Life Centre in 1983 from Frank's original church. The Houstons merged the two centres in 1999, with other smaller churches that they had in

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<sup>109</sup> David Cartledge, *The Apostolic Revolution: The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets in the Assemblies of God in Australia* (Sydney: Paraclete Institute, 2000), back cover.

<sup>110</sup> Brian Houston, in ‘The Life of Brian’, *Australian Story*.

turn planted, following the AOG's decision to stand Frank Houston down from all ministry positions after accusations that he had sexually assaulted an underage boy.<sup>111</sup> As President of the AOG, Brian oversaw his father's removal from the church.<sup>112</sup> After the scandal, he rebranded his "family" of churches simply as Hillsong.<sup>113</sup>

The Hillsong family of churches has since grown rapidly. In 1992, Hillsong planted international churches in London and Kiev, and there are now also Hillsong churches in South Africa, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, the US, Germany, France, Russia, and the Netherlands. As a member of a Hillsong church, congregants find themselves part of a community that is bigger than many small cities in Australia. The Christian Life Centre may have held its first meetings in the homes of its forty-five members, but the church now has a congregation of around 20,000 in Sydney alone.<sup>114</sup> A further 10,000 people attend their services in other Australian cities.<sup>115</sup>

### C3:

The history of Christian City Church (renamed C3 in 2008) is remarkably similar to the story of Hillsong. Phil and Chris Pringle came to Australia in 1980 from New Zealand, specifically to start a church. They brought their children and some good friends with them and held their first service on Sydney's Northern Beaches later that year. Only twelve people attended. By 1984, over 400 people attended services run by the Pringles. Three years later, Christian City Church became a movement, rather than an individual church, when Hamish and Dianne

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<sup>111</sup> National Executives of the Assemblies of God in Australia and New Zealand, "Statement Concerning Frank Houston", 8 December 2000. Exhibit Number 18-0002 for Case Study 18, Day 86 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Tendered by Simeon Beckett, 7 October 2014. Available: <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/exhibits/610f6115-eb55-4d6f-96f8-6b05a4ae4415/case-study-18,-october-2014,-sydney>. Accessed 23 February 2015; Stephen Gibbs, 'Hillsong Farewells a Lost Sheep Pioneer', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 November 2004. Available: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/National/Hillsong-farewells-a-lost-sheep-pioneer/2004/11/12/1100227581958.html>. Accessed 2 September 2012.

<sup>112</sup> See fax from Brian Houston to Kelly Bourke at the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Brian Houston, "Letter to Kelly Burke Re: Statement of Facts", 25 March 2002. Exhibit Number 18-0002 for Case Study 18, Day 86 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Tendered by Simeon Beckett, 7 October 2014. Available: <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/exhibits/610f6115-eb55-4d6f-96f86b05a4ae4415/case-study-18,-october-2014,-sydney>. Accessed 23 February 2015

<sup>113</sup> Hillsong Church, 'About Hillsong Family', *Hillsong Church Website*, 2014. Available: <http://www.hillsong.com/family/about-hillsong-family/>. Accessed 12 August 2014.

<sup>114</sup> The difficulties in accurately estimating the membership of Pentecostal churches compared outlined above are compounded by the fact that weekly turnover varies enormously, particularly around Christian holidays.

<sup>115</sup> Nick O'Malley, 'The Rise and Rise of Hillsong', *The Age*, 8 September 2013. Available: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/the-rise-and-rise-of-hillsong-20130907-2tbzx.html>. Accessed 31 July 2014.

Divett planted Christian City's first overseas church, in Auckland, New Zealand.<sup>116</sup> In 1989, its first American church was established in New York, and a second was founded 1996. There are now over thirty Christian City churches in the United States, Canada and Brazil, as well as forty in the Asia-Pacific Region and over eighty in Africa.<sup>117</sup> The church is a truly transnational operation. Having been founded in Australia by migrants from New Zealand, the church has since been transplanted back to New Zealand, and its values, beliefs, and structures have been transmitted around the world through networks of people and ideas. Churches that fall under the C3 brand are either planted specifically as C3 churches, or else are existing congregations that choose to align themselves officially with

C3. These congregations become "satellite" churches after being sponsored by an existing C3 church; and after a successful twelve-month probationary period, may go on to become a "C3" church.<sup>118</sup> As ideas and people become increasingly mobile, C3's popularity and public presence have increased. The church now promotes its main goal as having one thousand churches thriving internationally by 2020, each with a congregation of over 500.<sup>119</sup> C3 does not have AOG or ACC connections but is a standalone organisation.

### Influencers:

The Northern Adelaide suburb of Paradise is home to the main campus of Influencers Church (Global), although when research on this project began in 2011, the church was still known as Paradise Community Church. Influencers' origins as an organisation are the oldest of any of the churches in this study. British evangelist Smith Wigglesworth founded the initial congregation, the first of its kind in Adelaide, in 1907. It existed in various locations around Adelaide under loose leadership structures until it was renamed the Adelaide Assembly of

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<sup>116</sup> C3 Global, 'About C3 Church', *C3 Global Website*. Available: <http://www.c3churchglobal.com/aboutc3church>. Accessed 24 August 2013.

<sup>117</sup> C3 Global, 'Find a Church', *C3 Global Website*. Available: <http://c3churchglobal.com/#about-section>. Accessed 12 May 2015.

<sup>118</sup> C3 Church Global, *Policy Document: Plant a C3 Church*, June 2010. Available: [http://c3churchglobal.com/pdf/c3i\\_policy.pdf](http://c3churchglobal.com/pdf/c3i_policy.pdf). Accessed 16 May 2013.

<sup>119</sup> C3 Global, *2020 Vision* (video). Available: <http://c3churchglobal.com/cms/2020-vision>. Accessed 23 December 2012.

God in 1944.<sup>120</sup> Thomas Lever “Tommy” Evans took over as the church’s lead pastor in 1951 and led the congregation for six years.<sup>121</sup> The church moved to the suburb of Klemzig, and Tommy Evan’s eldest son, Andrew, became the Senior Pastor in 1970 of the Klemzig Assembly of God Church. The church grew rapidly, and in 1982, Andrew oversaw the purchase of property on which the church could build bigger facilities in the suburb of Paradise. Andrew Evans pastored Paradise Assembly of God, later named Paradise Community Church, for thirty years before his son, Ashley Evans, became Senior Pastor.<sup>122</sup> This is a very dynastic church.



Figure 14: Influencers Church, Paradise Campus, 11 August 2012. Image is author’s own.

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<sup>120</sup> Planetshakers Church, ‘About Russell Evans’, *Planetshakers Website* 2015. Available: <https://www.planetshakers.com/russellevans/about/>. Accessed 21 February 2015.

<sup>121</sup> Elizabeth Evans, *To Run With His Promises* (Adelaide: Assembly Press, 1988), 81. Available online via Alphacrucis College WebJournals: <http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/authors/elizabeth-evans/>. Accessed 23 June 2014.

<sup>122</sup> Planetshakers Church, ‘About Russell Evans’, *Planetshakers Website* 2015.

Influencers Church describes itself as a “multi-site mega church” that is “multigenerational,” and the examination of its leaders above reveals the truth of this statement.<sup>123</sup> While the church’s largest campus is still in Paradise, it also has a campus in Adelaide city centre. In November 2012, Ashley and Jane Evans, now termed “Global Senior Pastors” relocated from Australia to America to found Influencers Church Atlanta, which has grown to over one thousand members. The Influencers website explains the next phase of church expansion as being, “to plant over 200 congregations in the next 10-15 years around the world and to raise 10,000 leaders in the next 6-10 years”, and the church already has active plans for sites in Papua New Guinea and South Africa.<sup>124</sup>

### Planetshakers:

Planetshakers began as a movement within Paradise Community Church focused on music, with a particular emphasis on appealing to teenagers and young adults. Planetshakers Ministries was founded in 1997 and launched at the first “Planetshakers Conference”, held in Adelaide the same year. From its initial three-hundred “delegates”, the conference attracted over 20,000 attendees by 2008.<sup>125</sup> Russell Evans, younger son of Andrew and brother to Ashley, was given: “a mandate to plant a vibrant, Spirit-led church that was to see revival come to the city of Melbourne” with his wife Sam in 2002. Two years later in February 2004, he established Planetshakers City Church.<sup>126</sup> The Evans initially moved to Melbourne with ten other “team members” and the church band (also called Planetshakers), a far-cry from the church’s current sixty full-time employees. The Melbourne City Campus continues to attract over 5,000 congregation members to its services each week, which are translated into Spanish, Korean, Mandarin, and Sri Lankan. Planetshakers now also has two other Melbourne campuses. It has a further campus in Geelong, and another in Cape Town, South Africa.<sup>127</sup> Fearless LA, in downtown Los Angeles, is also a Planetshakers church.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Influencers Church, ‘About: Ashley & Jane Evans’, *Influencers Church Website* 2015. Available: <http://influencers.church/ashley-jane>. Accessed 21 February 2015.

<sup>124</sup> Influencers Church, ‘About: Ashley & Jane Evans’, *Influencers Church Website* 2015.

<sup>125</sup> Planetshakers Church, ‘About’, *Planetshakers Church Website* 2013, Available: <http://www.planetshakers.com/melbourne/about.php>. Accessed 17 December 2013.

<sup>126</sup> Planetshakers Church, ‘Welcome’, *Planetshakers Church Website* 2013, Available: <http://www.planetshakers.com/melbourne/about.php>. Accessed 17 December 2013.

<sup>127</sup> ‘Services’, *Planetshakers City Church Website* 2013. Available: <http://www.planetshakers.com/southafrica/services.php>. Accessed 26 February 2015.

<sup>128</sup> Fearless LA, ‘Homepage’, *Fearless LA Website*. Available: <http://www.fearlessla.com/>. Accessed 29 June 2015.

## Newfrontiers:

Terry Virgo created the Newfrontiers family of churches in Southern England in the early 1970s. Virgo did not come from a religious background and describes himself as being saved in the 1950s “during the days of Billy Graham’s greatest impact on Britain”. The “breakout of the charismatic movement” in the 1960s provided a new spiritual dimension of worship, which he says “came to my rescue” and transformed his religious experience. After attending Anglican services, he decided that the Baptist church appealed to him as a place where people were “born again” and belonged to a “genuinely spiritual community”.<sup>129</sup> However, Virgo desired a “truly New Testament church” that would acknowledge and receive the Ephesians 4 ministries and was based around the roles of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher.<sup>130</sup> He joined a Pentecostal church that met informally in the Lanes of Brighton, although he was later ordained in the Baptist church. Still concerned by the lack of emphasis on the New Testament, Virgo decided to plant his own church to remedy this situation.<sup>131</sup>

Virgo describes Newfrontiers as a reformed but “Spirit-filled” church.<sup>132</sup> Charismatic church elders encourage Gifts of the Spirit—such as laying on hands and speaking in tongues— although the church has a conservative theology that encourages adherents to “find the person who loves you and loves God, marry them and have as many children as you can as quickly as possible”.<sup>133</sup> There is no place for women leaders, divorce, or remarriage after divorce, sex or children outside of marriage, abortion, homosexuality, or explicit prosperity preaching (although tithing is encouraged, and indeed expected, and later chapters will reveal that the church certainly embraces some tenets of the prosperity gospel). The Newfrontiers website explains this conservatism as being “strong in both Word (the Gospel or Bible) and Spirit”, by which they mean that biblical lessons and literalism inform—or even dictate—their theology. Their theology is practically experienced through

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<sup>129</sup> Terry Virgo, *No Well-Worn Paths: Restoring the Church to Christ’s Original Intentions* (Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications, 2001), 11.

<sup>130</sup> Newfrontiers, ‘Leadership of Newfrontiers’, *Newfrontiers Together on a Mission Website*, Available: [http://www.newfrontierstogether.org/Groups/98946/Newfrontiers/About Us/Leadership of Newfrontiers/Leadership of Newfrontiers.aspx](http://www.newfrontierstogether.org/Groups/98946/Newfrontiers/About%20Us/Leadership%20of%20Newfrontiers/Leadership%20of%20Newfrontiers.aspx). Accessed: 15 September 2011; Virgo, *No Well Worn Paths*, 103.

<sup>131</sup> Terry Virgo, *No Well Worn Paths: Restoring the Church to Christ’s Original Intention* (Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications, 2007), 58-60.

<sup>132</sup> Based on author’s conversation with Terry Virgo in Cromer, Sydney, December 2010.

<sup>133</sup> P.J. Smyth ‘Mobilise Main Session: Suffering’, speaking at Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference, Brighton Centre, Brighton, UK. 14 July 2011. Based on author’s observations.

the perceived presence of the Spirit in their services and by the reception of Gifts of the Spirit.<sup>134</sup>

The Newfrontiers brand now represents over 850 churches in more than sixty different countries. Australia is represented in the “Pacific Rim” region of the church, which is led by a church elder, Peter Brooks. Brooks planted the first Newfrontiers Australian church (Grace City Church in Sydney in 2006) and has been the congregations lead pastor since. In 2011 Virgo declared the “missionary phase” of the church to be over. He explained the current stage of the church as a consolidation of Newfrontiers’ foothold in countries where it has already planted churches. This goal is to be achieved by targeting new audiences within these countries, or, as the elders refer to it, by “touching unreached people groups”.<sup>135</sup>

Choosing a church without an AOG or ACC connection, one which was not founded in Australia, and which does not have the same crossover of characters as the other churches in this study, has been fruitful. Newfrontiers provides not only a point of international comparison but a crucial check on my analysis. In writing about a church founded by different people, in a different country, at a different time to the other churches, I have been able to test whether I was writing a nuanced history of these churches, or simply extending the narrative of one onto the others.

## Conclusion

The late 1970s marks a turning point not only in the growth of the Pentecostal movement broadly but in the importance of the churches of this study. The similarities in the individual churches discussed here allow us to see that they form part of a broader Pentecostal movement, one that grew rapidly from this point. The 1970s mark a clear shift in Australian religious dynamics. Following a lacklustre start, the Pentecostal movement began to grow rapidly. During the 1970s and 1980s, Pentecostal churches were founded in all of Australia’s major cities, and many of these churches experienced rapid growth both domestically and

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<sup>134</sup> Newfrontiers, ‘About Us: History’, *Newfrontiers Together on a Mission Website*. Available: [http://www.newfrontierstogether.org/Groups/98940/Newfrontiers/About\\_Us/History/History.aspx](http://www.newfrontierstogether.org/Groups/98940/Newfrontiers/About_Us/History/History.aspx). Accessed 15 September 2011.

<sup>135</sup> Terry Virgo, ‘Main Session Six’, speaking at Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference, Brighton Centre, Brighton, UK. 14 July 2011. Based on author’s observations.

internationally. Although most of these churches were part of the Australian AOG, the narrative of Australian Pentecostal history begins to shift at this point, and the newly founded churches started to publish their own journals, pamphlets, and books, leaving the historian less reliant on the AOG as the key chronicler of the movement. The shift in source materials indicates the growth of importance of individual churches, all of which would go on to either become megachurches or hold megachurch style conferences.

For the first time in Australian Pentecostal history, we can see the emergence of separate churches that had the potential to compete with each for adherents and for leadership of the Pentecostal movement. Yet, there was and still is a large degree of ecumenism. These churches, with their closely linked and similar foundation stories, have remained selfgoverning, but have connected themselves to each other, and often to a larger authority structure in the form of the AOG. In fact, in 1977, Andrew Evans (the founder of Paradise Community Church, now Influencers), became General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Australia, indicating how important it was to Pentecostal churches to become part of a wider movement. During the twenty years he led the AOG Evans oversaw the expansion of the organisation, which founded seven-hundred churches and saw its membership base grow thirteen-fold. Further demonstrating the close connections between these newly powerful individual churches and the movement more broadly, is the fact that Brian Houston succeeded Evans as the new National President of the Assemblies of God in Australia in May 1997.<sup>136</sup> A shared understanding of the past and a joint vision of the future binds these churches into a movement, one that has experienced rapid growth in the last forty years. Having located the 1970s and 1980s as critical in the expansion of Pentecostalism, the next two chapters will consider changes taking place in Australian society that provided the conditions for the growth of this movement.

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<sup>136</sup> Australian Christian Churches, 'About Us', *Australian Christian Churches Website*, 2014. Available: <http://www.acc.org.au/about-us/>. Accessed 10 September 2014.

## Chapter Two: Healthy, Wealthy, and (God)Wise

“And what do you mean to be?”  
The kind old Bishop said  
As he took the boy on his ample knee...

“I want to be a Consumer,”  
The bright-haired lad replied  
As he gazed up into the Bishop’s face

In innocence open-eyed.  
“I’ve never had aims of a selfish sort,

For that, as I know is wrong,  
I want to be a Consumer, Sir,  
And help the world along.”

Patrick Barrington, ‘I Want to be a Consumer’, *Punch*, 1934.<sup>1</sup>

At the Hillsong online store, you can buy journals and diaries with “No Other Name” emblazoned across the front cover. The most common items of clothing for sale are monochrome t-shirts with logos such as “Brave”, “The Road Leads Home”, “Found in His Love Story”, and “Royal”. The messages of the t-shirts all indicate that the wearer has found contentment, happiness, and strength in their faith, most strongly signaled in the t-shirts and singlet tops that simply say “So Loved”. Music albums, videos, and sheet music are all for sale, so too are books, Bibles, and “Teachings”. The store also features curricula for children (Hillsong Kids), girls and women (Shine), and boys and men (Strength), to learn more about their faith and the world.<sup>2</sup> At conferences run by Hillsong and other Pentecostal churches, there is always a store where attendees can buy recordings of the conference, books written by speakers, as well as special edition items, such as clothing, jewellery, bags, Bibles and journals. The Hillsong 2013 Colour Conference dedicated a page of its “Conference Diary” to advertising the “Colour Memories” for sale (see below). The women who attended could buy mementos of the conference. Items for sale included a “Sisterhood candle”, and an “Our

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Barrington quoted in Frank Trentmann, ‘Knowing Consumers—Histories Identities, Practices’, ed. Frank Trentmann, *The Making of the Modern Consumer: Knowledge, Power and Identity in the Modern World* (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 1.

<sup>2</sup> See ‘Hillsong Store’, *Hillsong Church Website*. Available: <https://hillsong.com/store/>. Accessed 10 May 2015.

Father Who Art in Heaven Nightshirt”, while there was also the option to pre-order the audio or visual recording of the conference.

**COLOUR MEMORIES**  
MEMORIES YOU'LL NOT WANT TO LEAVE BEHIND!

				
SISTERHOOD CANDLE VANILLA / LIME & COCONUT	GOD SAVE THE WORLD T-SHIRT	"OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN" NIGHTSHIRT WITH BAG	SISTERHOOD IPAD CASE	EAT. PRAY. LOVE. LEAD T-SHIRT

PURCHASE THESE AND MANY MORE ITEMS  
**LOCATED IN THE EXPO!**  
Outside Gate F and near Door 9 on the Upper Level



**COLOUR 2013 SESSION RECORDINGS**  
Pre order the 2013 DVD collection for \$89.99 at the Colour Expo!  
(CD's also available)

Figure 15: Hillsong Church, ‘Colour Memories’, from *Your Conference Diary - Colour 2013*, 15.

Churches also sometimes give away items at their services or conferences. Bibles or religious texts are often gifted to those who come forward to be saved during a service, while at the Hillsong Colour conferences I attended, church volunteers threw t-shirts and tote bags from the stage into the excited audience, who scrambled to claim their prize. Those who missed out on these giveaways could buy similar items in the foyer. At other conferences, attendees also received “gifts”. Among the items I was given at Planetshakers ‘Beautiful Woman’ 2012, for example, was a silver necklace with a love heart engraved with a Bible quotation, which was designed to resemble iconic Tiffany necklaces. At C3’s “Everywoman” Conference in 2014, I received a tan faux-leather iPad case with “beautiful forever” written across the front, a slogan that was also printed onto the nightgowns, t-shirts, and journals that were for sale in the lobby. For Pentecostal and charismatic Christians, the

consumption of religion is an important way of signalling their faith to the outside world, supporting their church, and learning more about their religion.

Buying and consuming goods from their churches offers people a way to experience their faith outside church services. Whether by listening to worship music, owning a particular Bible, or simply wearing clothing branded with their church's logo, purchasers see such consumption as a way to help their church and therefore as a moral act. Importantly Pentecostals also do not frown on the consumption of *other* goods. In this way, Pentecostals are extending traditional Christian missionary practices onto cultures similar to their own. Whereas missionaries in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries may have used consumer goods to encourage church attendance by new populations, often offering food, clothing, or luxury items as an enticement, modern Pentecostals go further.<sup>3</sup> They do not simply sell items as an alternative to products available in secular stores; instead, they offer goods that complement a lifestyle based around consumption, branding, and the display of personal wealth.

Scholars increasingly use the term “consumer religion” to describe evangelical churches, and this is even more frequent in the analysis of Pentecostal megachurches.<sup>4</sup> The “prosperity” or “therapeutic” gospel (also known as the “health and wealth gospel”) of megachurches has further linked consumption to Pentecostal religious practices. Those who believe in the prosperity gospel understand that their spiritual faith will lead to material rewards, most commonly expressed in their good health and increasing wealth. They believe that individuals—through their faith—have the power to overcome personal circumstances and be marked by “victory” in all aspects of their lives.<sup>5</sup> Believers expect God to give physical health *and* material wealth on earth—as well as a place in heaven in the future—to those whose beliefs and behaviour merit such rewards. To ensure they receive their rewards, prosperity gospel followers are encouraged (and indeed expected) to tithe a percentage of

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<sup>3</sup> Russell W. Belk, ‘Pimps for Paradise: Missionaries, Monetary Funds, and Markets’, *Marketing Intelligence and Planning* 18, no. 6/7 (2000), 338.

<sup>4</sup> For examples see J. B. Watson, Jr, ‘Purpose-Driven – Tweak Your Life – Let Jesus Make You Rich,’ in Jon K. Loessin ed., *The Year 2009 Proceedings of the ASSR-SW*, Dallas, TX: Association for the Scientific Study of Religion – Southwest, 2009, pp. 14-21.; Vincent J. Miller, *Consuming religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2005); S. Kline, ‘The Morality and Politics of Consumer Religion: How Consumer Religion Fuels the Culture Wars in the United States’, *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 17, no. 1 (2007), 1-15.

<sup>5</sup> Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 7.

their income and to expect physical returns on their divine “gifts of belief and money”.<sup>6</sup> The adoption of this line of thinking by many Pentecostal churches has perhaps made the abundance of material goods churches offer seem a natural extension of their theology. After all, if God rewards faith with material goods, why should believers refrain from purchasing items that help them express this faith? And so, considering the place of consumption as part of Pentecostal religious experience and linking this to the theology and practice of the prosperity gospel is critical in any exploration of Pentecostal and charismatic religion.

The first “Mobilise” (youth) session of the 2011 Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference began with Tom Shaw, an elder at City Church Canterbury, asking the audience, “Are you feeling counter-cultural?” His comment was seemingly intended to touch on the persecution of evangelical Christians and their place in modern Western societies. Shaw went on to note that the audience was currently at a 9 a.m. session, and said that when everyone attended tomorrow’s 7:30 a.m. worship session on Brighton beach (he suggested they pick up a “McDonald’s breakfast and a Costa coffee” on the way) they would feel “even more counter-cultural”. Shaw is comfortable grafting secular consumerism on to attendees’ religion.<sup>7</sup> His repeated use of the term “counter-cultural” is intended to mark out Pentecostals as being separate from mainstream society. For all that they may appear and behave in similar fashions, Shaw believes them to be different. In its self-conscious irony, Shaw’s words point to the fact that consumption does not present an intersection between attendee’s religious culture and their identity outside the church; it is a reflection of the ways the two merge. To be a Pentecostal, for Shaw, is also to be a consumer, indicating that this type of Christianity is a part of, or an extension of, a special case of wider cultures of

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<sup>6</sup> Joel Robbins, ‘The Anthropology of Religion’, in Allan Anderson et al. eds., *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 170.

<sup>7</sup> Emily Martin argues that instead of thinking about “intersections” of culture, we talk of “grafts”, which allow for growth, development, and interaction in differing capacities, that is, the intertwining of cultures, rather than a blunt point at which they intersect, and then depart from one another. See Emily Martin, ‘Grafting Together Medical Anthropology, Feminism, and Technoscience’, in Marcia C. Inhorn and Emily A. Wentzell, eds., *Medical Anthropology at the Intersections* (Durham: Duke Uni. Press, 2012), 23-40.

consumption.<sup>8</sup> Although worshipping on the beach may represent a point of departure from secular society, which uses this space for recreation and leisure, Shaw suggests that these young Pentecostals moderate this departure by also participating in the consumption not just of food and drink, but of popular secular brands. Integration of the two experiences does not seem to present a problem to Shaw or the attendees.<sup>9</sup> They and other religious groups can be consumers *or* producers of culture, or both simultaneously, a phenomenon academics have increasingly explored since the 1980s.<sup>10</sup> Shaw also announced that the church would run “SCVNGR hunt” alongside the conference. Prizes, including “movie tickets and Starbucks vouchers”, would be awarded to the winners of such challenges as taking a photo to prove how many people competitors can fit in a public telephone box.<sup>11</sup> The comfortable fit between secular and religious consumption patterns is part of a broader belief among Pentecostals and charismatics that the pursuit of wealth, health, and individual success is admirable. In this way, prosperity Pentecostalism finds a significant fit with its secular host culture; both embrace the central tenets of neoliberalism.

Scholars who study the prosperity gospel have noted its broad appeal, which they typically explain through two key theories. Those who study the developing world point to the alacrity with which churches there have seized on its hopeful promise of abundance in the here-and-now as well as in the afterlife. These scholars assume that in developing countries the

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<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that Newfrontiers does not explicitly preach or teach the prosperity gospel and its messages about wealth and success are more subtle than those preached by other churches in this study. However, Shaw’s argument above and the links he made between religion and consumption are a reflection of how deeply neoliberal language and understandings of the world are embedded in the ideas contemporary Pentecostal and charismatic churches. Newfrontiers particularly, but also the Australian churches of this study, engage with prosperity teachings in a more subtle way than is common in American, conservative, Bible belt churches. Yet this chapter will demonstrate that it is still fruitful to consider Pentecostal and charismatic churches within the lens of prosperity preaching because their ideas about success, wealth, consumption, individualism, and self-development correlate strongly with the dominant, Western, neoliberal view of the economy and society. For more on specifically American forms of prosperity preaching see Bowler, Blessed and Kathleen Hladky, ‘I Double-Dog Dare you in Jesus’ Name! Claiming Christian Wealth and the American Prosperity Gospel’, *Religion Compass* 6, no. 1 (2012), 82-96. For work on the impact of the prosperity gospel on other Christian churches see Kate Bowler, ‘Bigger, Better, Louder: The Prosperity Gospel’s Impact on Contemporary Christian Worship’, *Journal for the Study of Religion and American Culture* 24, no. 2 (2014), 186-230.

<sup>9</sup> While this meeting took place in the UK, beaches have long been a place of worship in Australia. David Millikan has written about the intersections between religion and Australian culture in a four part television documentary for the ABC which was later published in book form as David Millikan, *The Sunburnt Soul: Christianity in Search of an Australian Identity* (Homebush West: Anzea, 1981).

<sup>10</sup> For an overview of this development see Olwen Huftpn, ‘What is Religious History Now?’, in David Cannadine ed., *What is History Now?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 58-59.

<sup>11</sup> Tom Shaw, ‘Mobilise Main Session: The Fear of the Lord’, speaking at Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference, Brighton Centre, Brighton UK. 13 July 2011. Based on author’s observations.

rewards for faith offered by the prosperity gospel and its message of individual empowerment offer both an opportunity for personal gain and a moral explanation of the neoliberal economic system. To anthropologist Joel Robbins, the prosperity gospel is “a kind of camera obscura portrait of neoliberal capitalism as it is experienced full force in the structurally adjusted cities of the periphery of the global capitalism system”.<sup>12</sup> Here, Robbins builds on the work of Jean and John Comaroff, who argue that it is appropriate to group the prosperity gospel with other “occult economies”.<sup>13</sup> This grouping links the neoliberal condition in developing countries with the evolution of this particular religious system.<sup>14</sup> However, Robbins also believes that this relationship continues to grow as countries develop, and he uses Simon Coleman’s work on the Swedish Word of Life Church as an example. Coleman’s research suggests that members of the church understand themselves as involved in a “complex gift exchange system”.<sup>15</sup> People give to God with the expectation that they will receive a gift (which may range from a financial blessing to an act of kindness by a stranger) as a reward for their faith. From a theological perspective, the prosperity gospel thus links ill health, poverty, and suffering to a lack of faith, and so is criticised for denying the reality of some peoples’ suffering.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Robbins, ‘Anthropology of Religion’, 170.

<sup>13</sup> Occult economies have two key characteristics. First, efforts to create wealth are based on “techniques that defy explanation in the conventional terms of practical reason”. Second, the real or imagined value produced through this “magic” is accompanied by moral and ethical discourses and reactions. See Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, ‘Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming’, *Public Culture* 12, no. 2 (Spring 2000), 310.

<sup>14</sup> The Comaroffs argue that “prosperity cults” and other new religious movements of the late twentieth century, which marry the magical and millennial, “evokes not a Jesus who saves, but one who pays dividends. Or more accurately, one who promises a miraculous return on a limited spiritual investment.” See Comaroff and Comaroff, ‘Millennial Capitalism’, 315.

<sup>15</sup> Simon Coleman in Robbins, ‘Anthropology of Religion’, 171.

<sup>16</sup> Johan Mostert in Mark J. Cartledge, ‘Practical Theology’, in Allan Anderson et al. eds., *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 274.

For scholars who start their explanation of the prosperity gospel in America, there is a similar emphasis on theories of sectarian development or deprivation. They understand that a focus on aspiration and the potential for financial gain explain the movement's origins among the poor.<sup>17</sup> Some historians who subscribe to this explanation of the prosperity gospel understand Pentecostal heritage to lie with impoverished blacks and whites in the American South, who earned only subsistence wages and had a marginal place in society. Other historians believe that classical Pentecostalism was grounded among the urban masses, who gravitated towards the sense of purpose and community that Pentecostal preachers and churches provided.<sup>18</sup> Both explanations for Pentecostalism's roots find commonality in the conclusion that the prosperity gospel was appealing to underprivileged groups, and those who followed it became increasingly prosperous and socially integrated.

Both approaches largely fail to account for the relatively recent presence of the prosperity gospel in economies that are long established and highly developed, which characterises the Australian case. What differentiates contemporary Australian Pentecostalism is that its base of appeal is a middle class who are more affluent and educated than earlier Pentecostals. The common thread is, perhaps, the aspirational message of Pentecostal churches, one most clearly expressed through the prosperity gospel. The Australian media repeatedly focuses on this aspect of Australian Pentecostalism, and the financial power of Hillsong and other megachurches has become a contentious topic. Hillsong Church (Australia) reported a total revenue of \$ 85,956,557 and a net surplus of \$5,946,087 for the year ending 31 December

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<sup>17</sup> Stephen Hunt, 'Sociology of Religion', in Allan Anderson et al. eds., *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 182-83. Much of the assumption that deprivation theory can be used to explain Pentecostalism is grounded in the work of Max Weber who distinguished between congregational, salvation, prophetic and rational-ethical religions. While Pentecostalism might be best understood as a blend of all four, as a notably salvation religion, it is often linked to the underprivileged, who see this form of religion as providing them with both a voice where they feel marginalised, and opportunities to improve their social and financial position. See Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 332. Subsequent scholars who have since applied deprivation theories to Pentecostalism include most notably: Anderson *Vision of the Disinherited*. Other similar studies are: Walter Hollenweger, 'The Pentecostal Elites and the Pentecostal Poor, a Missed Dialogue?', in Karla Poewe ed., *Charismatic Christianity as Global Culture* (Colombia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 200; Vinson Synan, *The Holiness- Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing co, 1997); Roger C. Thompson, *Religion in Australia: A History* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Hunt, 'Sociology of Religion', 182-83.

2013 (the last year for which there is information available).<sup>19</sup> This enormous wealth has led to increasing criticism of a mentality dubbed by one commentator as “praise the Lord and pass the chequebook”.<sup>20</sup> Thus, a new explanation of the prosperity gospel is required to understand its place in Australian religious history and contemporary society.

Australian Christian denominations experienced declining numbers of adherents in the 1960s and 1970s as members increasingly looked to the government and other institutions to explain rapid social and cultural changes.<sup>21</sup> Into this climate—where Christian churches increasingly struggled to prove their relevance—entered the Houstons and the Pringles. Their American-style religion included a new attitude to wealth, but also to beauty, fashion, and the pursuit of “cool”. Their entrance might prove a counter to the functionalist explanation of social development, in that the diminishing social function of the church has not necessarily eroded its moral and spiritual message or authority.<sup>22</sup> It is the contention of this chapter that this is the case because the “greed is good” decade of the 1980s mainstreamed the prosperity theology of Pentecostalism, normalising it and making it attractive to new and existing adherents, even as the appeal of older denominations was declining. If we are to understand the place of Pentecostalism in Australia, we must acknowledge the significant fit between the “health and wealth” gospel of Pentecostal churches, and changes in the ordering of social and economic life in Australia from the 1980s onwards.

This chapter examines attitudes to wealth among charismatic and Pentecostal Christians, linking the long tradition of belief in “signs” of God’s favour with the growing popularity of the prosperity gospel. It explores the theological explanations of the prosperity gospel and investigates the ways different Pentecostal and charismatic churches understand wealth and godliness and how, and by what means, this enables them to resource their “mission”. The

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<sup>19</sup> Hillsong Church Ltd. is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and the church’s audited financial reports are thus made available on the commission’s website. Additionally, Hillsong makes its audited figures publicly available by publishing them in an annual report freely available on the church’s website. Figures taken from Hillsong Church, ‘Annual Report Hillsong Church 2013’, *Hillsong Church Website*. Available: <http://hillsong.com/policies/2013-annual-report-australia/>. Accessed 24 December 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Bearup, ‘Praise the Lord and Pass the Chequebook’.

<sup>21</sup> Katharine Massam, ‘Christian Churches in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, 1914-1970’, in Hugh McLeod ed., *The Cambridge History of Christianity Vol 9: World Christianities C.1914–C.2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 257.

<sup>22</sup> Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 10.

chapter also explores the ways other churches have responded to the prosperity gospel and why the general population—many of whom accept the power of positive thinking—are often suspicious of the health and wealth gospel and the evident affluence and power of churches such as Hillsong.<sup>23</sup> Attitudes to material wealth, as they are applied to the day-to-day running of these churches, means that there is a growing emphasis on individualism and the corporatisation of church structures, and this will be examined alongside changes to fundraising techniques and attitudes to philanthropy.<sup>24</sup> Finally, the chapter moves from “wealth” to “health”, in considering the links between the growing infatuation with “natural” healing and the focus on “wellness” that exists in Australian society, and the Pentecostal belief in divine healing. An emphasis on “lifestyle” and physical wellbeing as moral imperatives is informed by wider social trends and enthusiastically embraced by Pentecostals.<sup>25</sup> This chapter demonstrates that this fit is critical in understanding the growth of Pentecostalism in Australia, because both Pentecostal and secular culture see the pursuit of health and wealth as virtuous. Secular and Pentecostal cultures, in other words, are not as different as from each other as Shaw wanted his audience to believe.

## Signs and wonders

Pentecostalism’s belief in “signs and wonders” has separated it from other denominations both historically and theologically. Pentecostals believe that these signs and wonders are

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<sup>23</sup> For an example, see ‘Money Machine’, *A Current Affair*, 18 February 2013. Video available: <http://aca.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=8612601>. Accessed 3 October 2014.

<sup>24</sup> “Individualism” and “individuality” are contested terms, as C. Harry Hui and Harry C. Triandis’ study of the use of these terms by social scientists from around the world, see C. Harry Hui and Harry C. Triandis, ‘Individualism-Collectivism: A Study of Cross-Cultural Researchers’, *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 17, no. 2 (1986), 225-248. Debate is partly sparked because “individualism” is linked to modernism and the West and based on social and financial changes over the long nineteenth century as argued in Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 160-65. This thesis will use the definition put forward by Vered Amit and Noel Dyck, that individuals are “purposeful agents, actively intervening in the world around them”, although limited by “the social systems that govern so much of their lives”, and that the variation in ways people make different claims to individuality means that there are in multiple forms of “individualism”. Vered Amit and Noel Dyck, ‘An Introduction to the Issues’, in Vered Amit and Noel Dyck eds., *Claiming Individuality: The Politics of Distinction* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 9, 17-18.

<sup>25</sup> What Peter T. Weiler describes as “the acquisition of a Pentecostal lifestyle for the whole person” in postmodern Pentecostalism also includes participation in food cooperatives, sports clubs, cooking demonstrations, and the increasing dissemination of information about food and fitness by churches. Peter T. Weiler, ‘Pentecostal Postmodernity? Un Unexpected Application of Grenz’s Primer on Postmodernism’, *Australasian Pentecostal Studies*, issue 2-3, 2000, np.

supernatural and that they provide material proof of the truth of biblical teachings and God's presence and power in the world. These signs and wonders do not refer only to wealth, but to success in all areas of life, including health (discussed later in this chapter), and to miracles that display divine power.<sup>26</sup> No sign or wonder has attracted as much attention from the wider public, and from other Christian denominations, as the prosperity gospel. Also called "health and wealth", "faith for finances", and "name it and claim it", its adherents believe that financial abundance and good health are "public and perpetual demonstrations of Christian's spiritual progress".<sup>27</sup> Given that the accumulation of wealth is seen as a sign of God's favour, the display of this wealth is an important, if not necessary, part of Pentecostalism. The Australian public have often responded to Pentecostal displays of wealth with scepticism, but to Pentecostals, this scepticism represents a misunderstanding on the part of the public about Pentecostal attitudes to wealth. Brian Houston spoke about this extensively in 2005, saying:

It always amazes me, with all that our church is doing to help people, that some people can't look past my motorbike, and a watch. Yes, I do have a nice watch, but it's just not a big deal to me. Look, honestly, if there was a charity who says, "We want your watch," I'd give my watch away. I don't care about my watch. I do like my motorbike. I love to ride, it's a great hobby. But I don't think that in itself it's a sign that I'm living this massively, over-affluent life... Bobbie and I have been working now 35 years or so. We've worked hard. And there's no doubt that our lives have become blessed. I don't make any apology for it. I think that it represents all of the things that I teach others.<sup>28</sup>

Here Houston reiterates that his wealth is only important to him in that it represents a reward for his hard work and is a sign that he and his wife are "blessed". To Houston, the display of wealth is not problematic and is, in fact, a tool to reach others and teach them about his particular brand of religion.

The transactional relationship that Pentecostals and charismatics such as Brian Houston have with God has evolved out of a longer tradition of "signs" of God's grace and favour. Albert Banton, one of the founders of the Foursquare Church of Australia, relays the founding story

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<sup>26</sup> Many of these miracles occur in "healing services" and are a gift from God as a reward to the faithful. Classical Pentecostals understand that they occur because Christ has already suffered for humans and so can thus transform their physical, mental, and spiritual state to relieve suffering caused by evil forces, sin, or Satan. For more see Jörg Stolz, "'All Things are Possible': Towards a Sociological Explanation of Pentecostal Miracles and Healings", *Sociology of Religion* 72, no. 4 (2011), pp. 456-82.

<sup>27</sup> Bowler, *Blessed*, 78.

<sup>28</sup> Brian Houston, in 'The Life of Brian', *Australian Story*.

of this church using the language that so often accompanies a belief in financial ‘signs’ of God’s approval.<sup>29</sup> According to Banton, Frederick van Eyk, a South African evangelist, was conducting a preaching tour of Australia in the late 1920s when his wife started “showing signs of hereditary insanity”. Mrs van Eyk returned to South Africa to stay with relatives. Van Eyk booked his passage home, and while calling in Adelaide *en route*, or so Banton’s story goes:

He said to the Lord, ‘Lord if you really desire me to remain in Australia and continue my ministry in spite of all difficulties, whilst I am in Adelaide you put it in the heart of someone to give me £100 (this was quite a sum of money in 1928) for the work of the Lord and I will go back to the boat, remove my luggage and cancel my ticket’. As he walked along King William Street he met a Pentecostal sister to whom the Lord had been speaking. She was amazed when they met and told him the Lord brought him before her as she was praying and told her He wanted her to draw £100 out of the Bank and give it to Mr van Eyk for evangelistic work. She handed him the money and he went to Port Adelaide and withdrew his luggage and cancelled his booking.<sup>30</sup>

Banton’s retelling of this story is interesting for several reasons. First, it seemingly posits financial strain as the worst kind of hardship; note that there is no immediate mention of van Eyk’s wife’s mental health after this passage. Perhaps more interestingly, van Eyk is not only bargaining with God—which is hardly unusual—he is confident that God promptly gave him a very specific amount of money because he asked for it, and because his faith was strong enough.

Asserting that there is an association between forms of Protestant religion and the capitalist system is nothing new. Max Weber wrote extensively on the sociology of religion, arguing that the Protestant work ethic was closely linked to the “Spirit of Capitalism”. Weber proposed that four main forms of Protestantism (Calvinism, Pietism, Methodism, and Baptist sects) provide the foundations for an ascetic morality tied to economic conduct.<sup>31</sup> Historian Richard Henry Tawney examined the same theme in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study*. He emphasised the importance of the “individualist attitude towards economic relations” that he believed informed the growth of capitalism, and which now

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<sup>29</sup> The Foursquare Church was founded by Aimee Semple McPherson in 1923. For more, see Daniel Mark Epstein’s *Sister Aimee: The Life of Aimee Semple McPherson* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1993).

<sup>30</sup> A.E. Banton, *Pentecostal Pioneering with the Foursquare Gospel in Australia* (Westmead: Essington Christian Academy, 1989), 4-5.

<sup>31</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (La Vergne: BN Publishing, 2008), 95-97, 155.

plays a significant role in Pentecostal discourse.<sup>32</sup> Marxist historian Christopher Hill wrote about “Protestantism and the Rise of Capitalism” in his book *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth Century England*, explaining that most historians accepted the link between Protestantism and the capitalist system, though arguing that the nature of this connection remained contentious.<sup>33</sup> Historians, sociologists, economists, and political theorists, among others, have since adumbrated this theme. They have also applied market metaphors and rational choice theory to the study of religion, and when they apply this language to Pentecostals, scholars mirror the language these churches themselves use.<sup>34</sup>

Scholarly discussion of religion often talks of “religious firms”, “religious goods”, and a spiritual or divine “marketplace” in which Gods are “sold”.<sup>35</sup> However, few have considered the links between newer forms of Protestantism, specifically Pentecostal and charismatic churches, and neoliberal or neoclassical economic doctrines. Nor do they commonly consider the ways that Pentecostalism and consumerism do *not* represent an intersection of two cultures but are part of one another. Few have followed up on whether these churches are, to borrow the provocative language of Russell Belk, “pimps for paradise”. Belk uses this phrase to imply that these churches are “pimping” up paradise—perhaps to make the life one must lead to get to it more palatable—while also implying that these churches are motivated by financial gain and are perhaps immoral because of this.<sup>36</sup> One of the things that troubles Belk and other opponents of the prosperity gospel is that, historically, certain forms of religion critiqued global structures or forces for creating forms of inequality. Key examples of these critiques are visible in the flurry of Christian responses to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century inequalities, such as William and Catherine Booth’s creation of the

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<sup>32</sup> R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1938), 316.

<sup>33</sup> Christopher Hill, *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), 15.

<sup>34</sup> For an overview of the application of market metaphors to religions see Jörg Stolz, ‘Introduction: A New Look at the Question of Salvation Goods and Religious Markets’, in Jörg Stolz ed., *Salvation Goods and Religious Markets: Theory and Applications* (Bern: Peter Lang Academic Publishers, 2008), 9-18.

<sup>35</sup> In his innovative and oft-cited article, R. Stephen Warner argued that a new paradigm was emerging in the sociological studies of religion, “the crux of which is that organized religion thrives in the United States in an open market system”. Warner goes on to outline the development of the “open market” as a concept in the historical and sociological studies of American religion because it viewed American religion as following separate patterns to European religion, one that was “institutionally distinct and distinctly competitive”. R. Stephen Warner, ‘Work in Progress toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 98, no. 4 (1993), 1044, 1051. The use of neoliberal economic metaphors to discuss religion has also permeated popular examinations of religion in contemporary society, for an example see Malise Ruthven, *The Divine Supermarket: Travels in Search of the Soul of America* (New York: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2012).

<sup>36</sup> Belk, ‘Pimps for Paradise’, 337.

Salvation Army, and the Baptist Walter Rauschenbusch's publication *Theology for the Social Gospel*.<sup>37</sup> In contrast, far from critiquing modern trends such as neoliberalism that dehumanise society's most vulnerable members, the prosperity gospel lines up with the forces of privilege and elitism to help buttress their position. The concern Belk gestured to above is not that prosperity preachers are avaricious, but that their form of faith involves a conversion to a political and economic vision, not just a religious one. The merger of political, economic, and religious values transformed the balance between the secular and the religious, between the material and the immaterial, and provides confirmation of the hegemonic power of neoliberalism.<sup>38</sup> Consumption and aspiration motivate individuals and mobilise them as church followers in a way that messages of brotherhood and austerity supposedly do not. The prosperity gospel posits a different interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant, one where believers are heirs to Abraham's blessing and are thus entitled to a financial reward.<sup>39</sup> Kenneth Copeland, a key figure in the history of the American prosperity gospel explained in 1974: "Since God's covenant has been established and prosperity is a provision of this covenant, you need to realize that prosperity belongs to you *now!* [original emphasis]".<sup>40</sup> This understanding of the covenant has been influential in contemporary Pentecostal attitudes to wealth. Phil Pringle, founder and leader of C3, echoed Copeland's language in his book *Key's to Financial Excellence*: "The incredible news is that when we receive Jesus Christ, we not only become brothers of Jesus and children of God, but we also become inheritors of the awesome blessing of Abraham".<sup>41</sup>

Internationally, the prosperity gospel has its roots in many of the same nineteenth-century movements as Pentecostalism. In Victorian America, there was a large increase in participation in religious movements advocating that the power or "magic" of an individual's mind was such that it could affect material results.<sup>42</sup> Christian Science and its offshoot the New Thought or mind-cure movement were particularly significant because they

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<sup>37</sup> Bowler, *Blessed*, 31.

<sup>38</sup> Belk, 'Pimps for Paradise', 337-40.

<sup>39</sup> The Abrahamic Covenant is outlined in Genesis 15. The covenant is often used to explain justification by faith. God promises to reward Abraham's faith and his financial generosity (after he gave "a tenth of everything" to Melchizedek, King of Salem) with a future blessing for him and his decedents, a blessing which implies material success. R.N. Whybray, 'Genesis', in John Barton and John Muddiman eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 49.

<sup>40</sup> Kenneth Copeland, *The Laws of Prosperity* (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Publications, 1974), 44.

<sup>41</sup> Phil Pringle, *Keys to Financial Excellence* (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 2005), 202.

<sup>42</sup> Catherine Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 7.

represented an amalgam of spiritual and metaphysical power, and Protestantism. Radical evangelists on the early twentieth century such as E. W. Kenyon scaffolded their ideas on these movements and late nineteenth-century evangelicalism. They explained that for Christians, faith represented not only a promise of what was to come but an assurance that God had already granted benefits to believers. The physical “wholeness” and health of the faithful, as well as material abundance, were evidence of these benefits.<sup>43</sup> By the 1950s, the popularity of a religion that could be *used* had expanded to a wider cultural emphasis on “positive thinking” (where those who thought the “right” way would be rewarded). The American prosperity movement grew, and this way of thinking was used to explain the potential of individuals and to rationalise the success and respectability of the middle and upper classes.<sup>44</sup>

The Pentecostal and charismatic revivals, particularly the healing revivals, of the 1950s and 1960s, saw the prosperity movement grow in size and scope and begin to take a more distinct form based on networks of charismatic prosperity preachers. Mid-century healing revivals across North America spread around the world, and their message of physical and financial abundance resonated with the optimism of the post-war period. Critically, there was also an expansion of “self-help” texts to a mass market as consumer culture flourished.<sup>45</sup> The movement reached its current form from the 1970s. No longer led by independent revivalists, it was now irrevocably linked in the public mind with the growing Pentecostal movement and particularly with the megachurch movement.<sup>46</sup>

Individualism dominated Western society and culture from the 1970s and found resonance with the forms of prosperity teaching that began to emerge at that time. The 1970s to 1980s saw a transformation of both the Australian economy and the Australian religious scene, with deregulation characterising the former and a rapid growth in Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity marking the latter. Both transformations followed international trends in advanced economies. Sociologist Alan Black pinpointed the moment of economic

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<sup>43</sup> Bowler, *Blessed*, 12-3, 16-9, 32-3.

<sup>44</sup> Bowler, *Blessed*, 31.

<sup>45</sup> From the 1940s to the 1960s “positive thinking” dominated the self-help genre. It positioned scientific knowledge alongside religious or spiritual beliefs or language. “Pop psychology” books became increasingly popular and widely consumed. See Louise Woodstock, ‘Vying Constructions of Reality: Religion, Science and “Positive Thinking” in Self-help Literature’, *Journal of Religion and Media* 4, no. 3 (2005), 157-78.

<sup>46</sup> Bowler, *Blessed*, 7, 78, 100.

change in Australia as November 1975, a month that saw the end of the Whitlam government and the beginning of a “resurgence of capitalism” in Australian society. While the 1950s and 1960s had seen the increasing liberalisation of the Australian economy, Black argued that it was the growing deregulation of financial and labour markets, the liberalisation of trade, and the privatisation of public enterprises during the late 1970s and the 1980s that truly led to this resurgence.<sup>47</sup> Under this neo-classical economic system, the individual became the key to economic policy and the ordering of social life. Australian journalist Margaret Simons agreed, suggesting that particularly from the 1970s on there was a “preoccupation with personal fulfilment rather than community good. Words such as ‘lifestyle’ gained a foothold together with the focus on personal freedom”.<sup>48</sup> In July and August 1990, the *Sydney Morning Herald* published a series of articles titled ‘Greed Inc.’, which reflected on the 1980s as the “decade of greed”.<sup>49</sup> The decade of the 1980s clearly marked broad changes in attitudes to money and prosperity in Australia.

Alongside changes to the Australian economy, there was also a transformation of the national religious scene. The 1970s and 1980s saw huge growth in Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Australia, flowing on from a series of charismatic revivals that had occurred in the UK and the US during the 1960s.<sup>50</sup> Many of these churches embraced an ideology that promised believers eternal happiness in heaven, where all their needs were met, but which also allowed—and encouraged—adherents to pursue material success and conspicuous consumption here and now. This is clearly related to the 1960s as a decade of unprecedented prosperity in Western countries, and the advent of more conspicuous consumption in the form of transport (cars), household goods, and forms of entertainment and communication (such as television and stereo systems).

The relationship between Pentecostals and the changing socio-economic secular host culture was overlapping, intersecting, and transformative for both. The language leading Pentecostals used to explain their faith indicates that they were aware of this, and that it was deliberate. A British AOG edited collection of articles on “Revival” published around 1970

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<sup>47</sup> Alan W. Black, ‘Religion and Capitalism in Australia’, in Richard H. Roberts, ed., *Religion and the Transformations of Capitalism: Comparative Approaches* (London: Routledge, 1995), 285.

<sup>48</sup> Margaret Simons, *Faith, Money & Power: What the Religious Revival Means for Politics* (North Melbourne: Pluto Press Australia, 2007), 97

<sup>49</sup> ‘Greed Inc.’, *Sydney Morning Herald* quoted in Black, ‘Religion and Capitalism’, 293.

<sup>50</sup> For more information see Chapter One.

makes this clear. Percy S. Brewster, an Elim Pentecostal minister from Wales, argued that “in our desire to reach the sinner we must not be afraid to use all the legitimate means at our disposal: Attractive advertisements...the use of the largest public hall” included. Brewster said, “finance should not be spared if the venture is to be a success. It is false economy to be mean with the things of God. The world is prepared to spend millions of pounds on unimportant things and light pleasure for the people, so why should we hold back?”<sup>51</sup> In his writing, Brewster repeatedly uses words such as “venture” to describe churches spending financial capital to promote revival. The Anglican Renewal Ministries 1980 publication *Charismatic Crisis* also used the economic language of the period to describe this religious movement. In his history of charismatic Christianity, the author, Michael Harper—a key leader of the British charismatic movement from the 1960s-80s—described the 1960s and early 1970s as “the era of free enterprise in the Charismatic Renewal”. He characterised the era as one of a “kind of spiritual laissez-faire”, providing a good example of the way charismatics linked ecclesiology and economics.<sup>52</sup>

Similarly, Howard Carter (leader of Britain’s first Pentecostal Bible School and one of the founding members of the AOG in Great Britain and Ireland) titled his contribution to the volume, “The Cost of Revival”. Carter explained:

There is a price to pay for everything of value. We hardly expect to receive anything as a gift in this world which is worthy of acceptance, except of course the leaflet that advertises, or the brochure which describes the article for sale...Character is also bought; true Christian character is bought at a price, a price far higher than we would pay say for a worldly education. But someone will affirm that salvation is free. Why should other things be bought and yet salvation be offered without money and without price? Simply because it is utterly beyond the price that anyone could pay. The wealth of the world in aggregate could never purchase redemption for a single soul.<sup>53</sup>

Carter used “worldly” language and repeatedly talked of price, perhaps in acknowledgment that this is a word that those he hoped to reach through revival would understand. Using the language of cost and benefit, Carter applied a model of neoliberal rationalism to justify the worth of something that is free. Even redemption is, in Carter’s mind, at risk of being rejected

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<sup>51</sup> Percy S. Brewster, ‘The Promotion of Revival’, in George Newsholme ed., *Revival—A Series of Articles by Well Known Writers* (South Park Hill: Assemblies of God Evangelistic Society, c. 1970), 17-20.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Harper, *Charismatic Crisis: The Charismatic Renewal—Past, Present and Future* (Mitcham: Anglican Renewal Ministries Australia, c. 1980), 3-4.

<sup>53</sup> Howard Carter, ‘The Cost of Revival’, in George Newsholme ed., *Revival—A Series of Articles by Well Known Writers* (South Park Hill: Assemblies of God Evangelistic Society, c. 1970), 21-23.

by a world that expects everything to have a cost. He thus emphasized that salvation *does* have a price; it is simply one that is too high for our comprehension and thus only payable by God.

There was an “explosion” of the prosperity gospel in America in the late 1970s. Kate Bowler’s history of the prosperity gospel in America argues that it then thrived throughout the 1980s, a decade dominated by “supersized churches and televangelists with big hair and bigger promises”. Bowler says: “Success followed those ministers who learned how to combine media mastery, church-growth formulas, and openness to independent Pentecostalism”.<sup>54</sup> There has been no comparably detailed study done of the prosperity gospel in Australia over the same period, yet the Australian prosperity gospel needs to be understood separately to its American counterpart. Although the Australian interpretation is based on the same historical connection with the Word of Faith and Holiness movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it followed a different trajectory. In the 1970s, Australia did not have the same foundation of Pentecostal churches that could be “supersized”. Nor were televangelists as prevalent or successful here. As explained in Chapter One, there were very few Pentecostal churches in Australia prior to this period. It was not until the 1980s that Australia’s biggest Pentecostal churches, notably Hillsong and C3, were founded. The fact that both these churches, and the other large Pentecostal churches that followed, embraced the prosperity gospel from the outset means that the Australian version of the prosperity gospel, and Pentecostalism more broadly, grew in circumstances dissimilar to those in the US and the UK. This chapter takes this point of divergence as its central concern. Earlier forms of Pentecostalism failed to achieve the levels of success in Australia that they did in comparable countries. It was not until a version of Pentecostalism that embraced the prosperity gospel arrived here that the movement finally established itself as a key part of the Australian Christian landscape. The link between the prosperity gospel and Pentecostal in Australia was no coincidence. Economic changes within Australia over the latter half of the twentieth century provided the right circumstances for the prosperity gospel, and Pentecostalism, to achieve success in this country.

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<sup>54</sup> Bowler, *Blessed*, 78.

## Other Christian responses to neoliberalism and the prosperity gospel

While the Pentecostal movement quickly gained traction in Australia, there were, of course, local critics, many of who came from other Christian churches or were former members of Pentecostal and charismatic churches.<sup>55</sup> One critic was Cyril Maskrey, who resigned his commission as an Apostolic pastor and, fifteen years after his conversion, denounced Pentecostalism. Maskrey's main motivation for doing so was his belief that the emphasis on tongues and other gifts of the Spirit would "displace the Lord Jesus Christ and ultimately move the believer out of the realm of Christ-consciousness to a dependence upon psychic and physical sensations". If this were to happen, Maskrey believed, it would be a "masterstroke of the enemy".<sup>56</sup> His linking of "psychic" and "physical" indicates Maskrey's disdain for a religion that he viewed as promoting faith as a means to an end. Maskrey's book represents one of the earliest sustained criticisms of the prosperity gospel—in its early form—in Australia.

Maskrey was also one of the first to discuss the ways churches used business strategies in the running of their institutions:

A well-known slogan in salesmanship is, 'Sell the idea and you have sold the article.' This can be applied in directions other than business! The idea that tongues are for believers and that they are for to-day is conveyed very dogmatically by an entirely wrong handling of the Word of God.<sup>57</sup>

Maskrey did not come out and openly criticise Pentecostal "businesslike" approaches to religion, yet he was clearly uncomfortable with the ways these churches were "selling" their religion.

In the early 1980s, several major Australian churches released similar reports concerned with economic and power imbalances in Australian society. *Agenda for a Changing World* (1981) is a compilation of major papers from the National Evangelical Anglican Conference, and thus constitutes a barometer of the issues that concerned this group. In the publication, an Anglican Bishop, John Reid, reflected on this conference and the Commission on World

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<sup>55</sup> See Chapter Six for more.

<sup>56</sup> Cyril H. Maskrey, *The Pentecostal Error: A Study of Tongues and Healing with Chart* (Adelaide: Light Publishing Company, 1953), 2.

<sup>57</sup> Maskrey, *The Pentecostal Error*, 4.

Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches Conference held the previous year. He noted that many attendees raised questions about inequality and suffering in Australian society and said, “Some of the answers owe more to Marxism than Christianity”.<sup>58</sup> While he criticised socialist leanings of these solutions, he said he could not deny that they point to what the “world is really like”: increasingly affluent and yet unequal. Immediately after his discussion of the need for an equal distribution of wealth and power, Reid noted the growing impact of the charismatic movement on reaching “ordinary people”. He acknowledged that the Anglican Church in Australia had been slow to engage in “dialogue” with these churches compared with the church’s international counterparts. He saw evangelicals as having an important role to play in relating the Gospel to “social justice and action”, and argued that the “old positions” of power in Christianity had been challenged by the emergence of new movements, including the charismatic movement. The power shift in Christianity had led to differences in the experience of this religion, particularly through “modern music” and the “use of drama and dance”.<sup>59</sup> Reid thus saw the evangelical and charismatic movements as opportunities to reach more people, and further saw their increased power as an indication that the Anglican Church had a responsibility to engage with their thinking if they too were to reach “ordinary people”.

Two years later, the Anglican Social Responsibilities Commission, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, the Australian Council of Churches, and the Commission of Social Responsibility of the Uniting Church published a joint report titled *Changing Australia* that explored similar themes. The report made criticisms about the distribution of wealth in society:

Wealth and power are in the hands of a small number of people. Inequalities affect the ways in which people are able to live and the ways in which society works. There has been a loss of integrity in our national life. Australia is marked by relationships which exploit, by false values associated with wealth and power and by the encouragement of material success.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> John Reid, ‘Living Gospel – Changing World’, in *Agenda for a Changing World, Major Papers from the National Evangelical Anglican Congress* (Sydney: Anglican Information Office, 1981), 9.

<sup>59</sup> John Reid, ‘Preface’, in *Agenda for a Changing World, Major Papers from the National Evangelical Anglican Congress* (Sydney: Anglican Information Office, 1981), 3.

<sup>60</sup> Anglican Social Responsibilities Commission, Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, Australian Council of Churches, and Commission of Social Responsibility of the Uniting Church, *Changing Australia* (Blackburn: Dove Communications, c. 1983), 2.

In explaining this loss of “integrity” in national life, the report said, “our society gives rewards and recognition to those who succeed on its terms: the wealthy and powerful”. It went on to say that the two promote each other to the exclusion of other elements of society.<sup>61</sup> The report further commented on materialism, noting:

Our society encourages a desire for a life of material excess. Its attention is firmly focused on the present, and the enjoyment of this moment to its fullest. Its concerns are material concerns: more money, a second or third car, a video-cassette recorder or micro-wave oven, more possessions.<sup>62</sup>

The language used above is very different from that of the prosperity gospel. It suggests that materialism should be treated with suspicion and disdain; that there is even something “unchristian” about it. Beyond this criticism, the authors expressed concern over structural inequalities, and the ways this had created exploitative relationships in the pursuit of “success”, often marked by the accumulation of material goods.

The prosperity gospel offers something of an antidote to concerns about social inequality, overconsumption, and their impacts and the place of personal wealth in Christian life. The consciences of the wealthy and aspirational are soothed. Others are not only given something to aspire to; but the prosperity gospel also provides an imperative to seek this lifestyle. God *wants* you to be successful, in this life and the next. Contemporary Christian writer, Laura Hartman, offered a set of biblical passages for understanding the place of prosperity gospel saying, “the earth is fruitful” and “we insult God, the source of that bounty, by failing to enjoy it”.<sup>63</sup> Thus the prosperity gospel is a performance affirming the existence of social inequality, the implicit message being that “God is with the successful”.<sup>64</sup> Hartman also wrote a piece for the *Huffington Post*’s “Religion” section titled “Christian Consumption:

Top 5 Passages to Inform How We Spend”, indicating again that consumption is moral for those who believe in the prosperity gospel.<sup>65</sup> In her 2011 book, *The Christian Consumer*, she quoted Exodus, “So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians

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<sup>61</sup> Anglican Social Responsibilities Commission et. al., *Changing Australia*, 8.

<sup>62</sup> Anglican Social Responsibilities Commission et. al., *Changing Australia*, 8.

<sup>63</sup> Laura M. Hartman, *The Christian Consumer: Living Faithfully in a Fragile World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 56.

<sup>64</sup> Ferdinand Sutterlüty, ‘The Role of Religious Ideas: Christian Interpretations of Social Inequalities’, *Critical Sociology* (2014), 7.

<sup>65</sup> Laura Hartman, ‘Christian Consumption: Top 5 Passages to Inform How We Spend’, *Huffington Post*, 12 July 2011. Available: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/laura-hartman/top-5-scripture-passages-christianconsumption\\_b\\_1129743.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/laura-hartman/top-5-scripture-passages-christianconsumption_b_1129743.html). Accessed 17 August 2011.

and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8), and John, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). Hartman concluded that: “in affirming desire, prosperity theology joins other Christian theologies in affirming creation”.<sup>66</sup> The idea that the consumption practices of Western nations may be a threat to creation through their impact on the environment is not very often visible in Pentecostal literature. In fact, speaking at Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference in 2011, Tom Shaw argued that “people get gripped by fear” and so want to “save the planet”. This desire is, to Shaw, part of a “desperate attempt at selfsalvation”. Shaw believes that the “health of the Earth”, alongside the promotion on personal health, become “a functional saviour that this world...gets swept into. Why? Because if we’re not fearing God, we’re fearing anything and everything else”.<sup>67</sup> In this and other Pentecostal and charismatic teachings, there is little effort to account for the effects of consumption, unsurprising when seen in the context of the Pew Research Forum’s 2009 investigation of ‘Religious’ Groups Views on Global Warming’. When asked, “Is there solid evidence the earth is warming?”, only thirty-four percent of white evangelical Protestants said, “Yes, because of human activity”, the lowest acceptance rate of human-induced climate change of any of the groups represented in the survey.<sup>68</sup> The positivity of the prosperity gospel and its associated tenets leave little room for concerns about structural social, economic and environmental problems. And indeed, this may be its appeal – adherents are told that God does not want them to focus on these things.

Billy Graham, a charismatic leader and one of the best-known twentieth-century evangelists, was not a member of a Pentecostal or charismatic denomination. He did, however, speak favourably of the movement and its effects. Graham wrote about what he called the “Jesus Movement” in *Christianity Today* in 1971.<sup>69</sup> Graham said that in his personal study of the movement, one of the several “commendable features” which stood out was the “evidence of social responsibility” displayed: “These young people are solving the problem of

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<sup>66</sup> Hartman, *The Christian Consumer*, 61.

<sup>67</sup> Tom Shaw, ‘Mobilise Main Session: The Fear of the Lord’, speaking at Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference, Brighton Centre, Brighton UK. 13 July 2011. Based on author’s observations.

<sup>68</sup> Pew Research Centre, *Religious Groups’ Views on Global Warming*, The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life., 16 April 2009. Available: <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/04/16/religious-groups-views-on-global-warming/> Accessed 10 August 2015.

<sup>69</sup> Note that the Jesus Movement Graham talked about and which grew around him was certainly evangelical and charismatic, but was not a Pentecostal movement or represented by a Pentecostal denomination.

materialism and the deification of technology by their commitment to one another”.<sup>70</sup> It seems unlikely that he would make the same observation today, although the response from within the movement would likely be that technology and material goods are being used to create fellowship.

Charismatic movements within larger churches—including the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, as well as various Protestant churches—began to appear in Australia from the 1970s onwards. They too adopted the language of the prosperity gospel and some of its thinking and the accommodation of mainstream secular cultural trends by Pentecostal churches thus spread to other Christian denominations. Anglican Archbishop of Adelaide, Dr Keith Rayner, gave a series of speeches published under the title *The Spirit and His Gifts* (1983). In these speeches, Rayner’s language demonstrates just how embedded the economic language and ideas of the day had become by the early 1980s. When discussing the “Pentecostalist churches and the charismatic movement within our own church” (the Anglican Church), he explored healing as a gift of the spirit that had powerful potential to garner converts: “Millions upon millions of dollars are spent each year on the health of the nation - just think of the cost of health insurance alone...if there can be some guarantee of healing by spiritual means, this will be a great drawcard”.<sup>71</sup> Rayner wholeheartedly embraced the neoliberal economic system. He did not suggest that “healing” provided superior outcomes to Western medicine and he did not allude to any other benefits that might come alongside this Gift of the Spirit, such as close contact with Jesus or spiritual renewal. Rayner seemed merely to be pointing out that Gifts of the Spirit were a cost-effective way of ensuring health and should be marketed to potential converts as such.

In 1986, the Uniting Church in South Australia released *Charismatic Renewal: A Theological Statement* that noted that charismatic renewal was occurring outside Pentecostal churches. The Uniting Church outlined the heavy emphasis on individualism and individual action among charismatics, saying that this sometimes resulted in a “new, outgoing concern for others, manifested in evangelical zeal and diverse demonstrations of practical helping”. The report also said that charismatic influence had led to “a new, joyful liberality in giving

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<sup>70</sup> Billy Graham, ‘The Marks of the Jesus Movement’, originally printed in *Christianity Today*, reprinted in John E. Blacker ed., *Power for Mission: A Panorama of the Dynamic and Effect of the Holy Spirit Movement in the Seventies* (Sunshine: Mannamedia Gospel Communications Australia, 1973), 48.

<sup>71</sup> Keith Rayner, *The Spirit and His Gifts: Advent Addresses Given by the Archbishop of Adelaide Dr K. Rayner* (Adelaide: Anglican Board of Christian Education, 1983), 1-2.

financially” though it is not clear whether this refers to giving financially to the church itself. The Uniting Church was, however, concerned that individualism could also mean that members of the congregation could become:

[U]nduly centred upon their own experiences. Results of this vary from undue emphasis on the emotional elements of the Christian life to people being led astray...at times also, a more intense spiritual awareness has led to a private spirituality which is unwilling to accept the discipline of the Christian community or to heed its corporate insights.<sup>72</sup>

Where the earlier focus in the *Theological Statement* was on the potential of charismatic religion to produce positive outcomes for individuals, allowing them to help others and “give” more, the longer quotation indicates that this sat alongside unease about what this might mean for the church and its authority. The Uniting Church here had dual concerns. First, that members might embrace charismatic religiosity which came with the risk of “undue subjectivity and divisive tendencies”. Second, that individualism and an overemphasis on “emotional elements” would lead to people having only a superficial understanding of Christian life and being led astray.<sup>73</sup> There is a fear that in focusing on a private relationship between an individual and God, the church’s discipline or “corporate insights” will no longer hold sway.

Socio-economic change in Australia and other Western nations was thus entwined with the burgeoning Pentecostal and charismatic movement. Concerns in many Christian denominations about the inequalities in Australian society and the emerging focus on consumption and materialism were dismissed by Pentecostal and charismatic churches. These churches focused on success over failure; on aspiration over inequality. The prosperity gospel assured those with considerable financial resources that this was a sign of their good character and faith. Those with less were sold a message of hope: they too could succeed in life if they followed the teachings of their church. The attraction of this message was such that charismatic movements within existing churches grew, and began to pose a challenge to the authority of traditional churches. For Christians who did not embrace the tenets of the prosperity gospel and who were not enthusiastic supporters of the neoliberal system, both

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<sup>72</sup> Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia, *Charismatic Renewal: A Theological Statement* (Adelaide: Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia, 1986), 6.

<sup>73</sup> Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia, *Charismatic Renewal*, 8.

posed not only a risk to society through the growth of inequality, but the appeal of these ideas was also a challenge to organisations who did not embrace them.

## Pentecostal understandings of wealth

While very few Pentecostal or charismatic leaders could be accused of being purely motivated by monetary gain, those that follow the prosperity gospel understand that their faith is linked to their material success; it is an earthly reward. This is an approach to religion that may not go as far as saying “greed is good”, but which does not discourage adherents from desiring material wealth. Indeed, this approach tells them that if their faith is strong enough they can expect wealth. What needs to be explored is how this attitude to money is linked to ideas of godliness, and how it is justified in theological terms. I argue that the prosperity gospel sees failure as the result of a lack of belief and commitment to both oneself, and to God.<sup>74</sup>

The parable of “The Rich Young Man” (Matthew 19:16-24) tells the story of a wealthy man who came to Jesus and asked what he had to do in order to be assured that he would have a place in heaven. Jesus indicated that he should keep to the commandments. The young man responded that he had followed the commandments, and then asked, “What do I still lack?” Jesus replied:

“If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me”. When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, “I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (NIV).

The stark contrast between this biblical parable and the attitude of many Pentecostal and charismatic church leaders towards personal wealth is clearly demonstrated in Brian Houston’s words from his 2005 interview, outlined earlier. Houston argued that his watch, as a symbol of his wealth, was unimportant enough that he would give it away if asked, yet

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<sup>74</sup> This is an adaptation of an argument put forward by David Bromley that “in the tradition of Social Darwinism, there is a harsh side to the individualistic, free-enterprise ideology. Failure is regarded as the product of a lack of personal belief in and commitment to success”. David G. Bromley, ‘Quasi-Religious Corporation: A New Integration of Religion and Capitalism?’ in Richard H. Roberts ed., *Religion and the Transformations of Capitalism: Comparative Approaches* (London: Routledge, 1995), 144.

he saw no problem with a church pastor accumulating and wearing obvious symbols of wealth. In his mode of religiosity, being wealthy does not necessarily clash with Jesus' teachings. In fact, Houston argued that personal wealth can be a sign of God's favour. These attitudes have led to intense public debate about the role of wealth in Christian life, and many social commentators have criticised Houston as being driven by material gain. Whether Houston's views are doctrinally correct is not the subject here. Rather, Houston's views represent the changing relationship between wealth and Christianity and are a means to explore the growth of Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Australia over the last forty years.

The ABC's *Australian Story* chronicled the "Life of Brian" in 2005. During the interview, Houston consciously promoted himself as a "self-made man", and described his life story using the aspirational language of rags to riches. What made Houston different from other self-made men, in his mind at least, is that he did not doubt that his success was a direct result of his faith. Houston explained that he "grew up in what would be a Housing Commission house". But following Houston's father's filling with the Spirit, things changed and the family began to prosper.<sup>75</sup> The vast wealth Hillsong and the Houstons have accumulated and now control has led to intense public debate about the place wealth has in Christian life. Adam Shand, writing in *The Sunday Telegraph* in 2010, "revealed" that "Brian Houston uses a not-for-profit company—Leadership Ministries Inc. (LMI)—to fund a burgeoning, tax-free global preaching empire. LMI and other tax-free companies in the Hillsong network are able to provide housing, cars, overseas travel, accommodation, credit cards, and other perks free of fringe benefits or income tax".<sup>76</sup> Even the title of Shand's article, 'Taxpayers Support Lavish Hillsong Lifestyle', speaks volumes about the author's attitude to Hillsong's accumulation of wealth. An Australian current affairs television program posed similar questions in 2013 about the Hillsong 'Money Machine', asking how Hillsong raises money, what it spends it on, and whether the church and its leaders should shoulder a larger tax burden.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Brian Houston, in 'The Life of Brian', *Australian Story*.

<sup>76</sup> Adam Shand, 'Taxpayers Support Lavish Hillsong Lifestyle', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 July 2010. Available: <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/taxpayers-support-lavish-hillsong-lifestyle/story-e6frewt01225896526584>. Accessed 3 October 2014.

<sup>77</sup> 'Money Machine', *A Current Affair*.

In the *Australian Story* interview, Bobbie Houston dismissed public concern about the perceived material focus of Hillsong and other Pentecostal and charismatic churches saying, “You know, I think some people out there may have a perception that this is religion for a material age. But, um, that is so far from the reality of what it really is”.<sup>78</sup> Surprisingly, Brian seemed to disagree with his wife’s assessment. He said, “The Bible, God’s work, is going to work in any age. So, call this a material age, then yes, I think that you would be able to apply to scriptures”. In the interview, Brian regularly anticipated and deflected common critiques about the church’s attitude to and accumulation of money by saying, as Bobbie did, that this is the result of the public’s misunderstanding of the church. He emphasised the generosity of his congregation and the charitable causes they supported, saying the accumulation of wealth was about being “resourced”; people who have more can help more. Houston demonstrated his adoption of neoliberal approaches to charity when he said:

We want to be able to give people a hand up so that they can develop and be building their own lives, and not just a hand out. I think there’s always room to give people a hand out and help people who are desperate, but there’s something powerful about putting people in a position where they can start to move forward and develop in their own lives.<sup>79</sup>

He noted that “people get upset” about the tax concessions that Hillsong “like any non-profit organisation” receives, but deflected this charge simply by pointing out that Hillsong does not choose the rules, it only complies with them. He added that if things were to change and Hillsong was to be taxed more heavily, all that would be changed was “our ability to help people”.<sup>80</sup> Here Houston turned the accusation of greed back on his critics, implying that their selfish desire to see the church pay more tax would prevent people receiving help.

Houston argued that rather than being a weakness, the ability of his church and its members to attract money was about recognising the potential in his adherents and was an example of the importance Pentecostals place on the power of positive thinking:

Today, I think a lot of church ministers believe that suffering is the plight of people and there’s nothing we can do about it. I’m sure not so blind that I can’t see that people suffer and struggle. I just believe that we should have and can have answers that do something about it. I am an absolute believer in the potential of people.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Bobbie Houston, in ‘The Life of Brian’, *Australian Story*.

<sup>79</sup> Brian Houston, in ‘The Life of Brian’, *Australian Story*.

<sup>80</sup> Brian Houston, in ‘The Life of Brian’, *Australian Story*.

<sup>81</sup> Brian Houston, in ‘The Life of Brian’, *Australian Story*.

Houston here speaks to themes of individualism, aspiration, and above all, a belief that faith is rewarded with Gifts of the Spirit, which are often material in nature. He says: “People literally are seeing the results of their commitment to Christ through Hillsong Church, being outworked in their lives”.<sup>82</sup> The uncomfortable conclusion left is that those who suffer or struggle lack faith.

Brian Houston’s life may have aroused enough public interest for the national broadcaster to feature him on *Australian Story*, and the Houstons’ personal wealth and the financial power of Hillsong church might be the subject of much public scrutiny, however, the “Life of Brian” also illuminates much about a broader pattern among Pentecostal and charismatic churches. Personal testimony and narratives are used to justify and prove the prosperity gospel. Houston’s attitude to money, his aspirational story of personal victory—which includes moving on from a horrific family scandal—and his ability to prosper personally and professionally are part of the appeal of this brand of religion. You can have what you want in life if you have enough faith. More than this, you *deserve* what you want *because* of your faith. Houston went so far as to publish a book in 1999 titled *You Need More Money*, recently rebranded as part of a series titled *How to Maximise Your Life*. In the book he argued that “God actually gets pleasure when we prosper” financially because “money answers everything”.<sup>83</sup> There is a clear message that faith can lead to prosperity, and moreover, an individual’s faith is tangible and is reflected in his or her wealth and health.

Houston transformed *You Need More Money* to *How to Maximise Your Life* as a form of damage control, after the press lambasted the title of the earlier version.<sup>84</sup> When interviewed

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<sup>82</sup> Marion Maddox argues that one of the features of the prosperity gospel is that rather than promoting the solidarity and community of the social gospel, Pentecostals foster individual virtues such as “initiative, aspiration, self-belief and self-motivation”. Marion Maddox, ‘Prosper, Consume and be Saved’, *Critical Research on Religion* 1, no. 1 (2013), 109.

<sup>83</sup> Brian Houston, *You Need More Money: Discovering God’s Amazing Financial Plan for your Life* (Castle Hill: Brian Houston Ministries, 1999), 2, 20.

<sup>84</sup> Greg Bearup wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald*: “Let’s not be coy, Hillsong is not a church that is afraid of money – its spiritual leader, Brian Houston, is also the author of ‘You Need More Money: Discovering God’s Amazing Plan for your Life’”. Bearup, ‘Praise the Lord and Pass the Chequebook’. Matthew Benns described Hillsong as having “financially successful, American-style evangelical religion” which “may make some people uncomfortable.” He also noted that “Hillsong’s website sells branded back massagers, water bottles and books by Mr Houston’s wife, Bobbie, on how to be a super lover”. Matthew Benns, ‘Church in the Money with New Hit Album’, *The Age*, July 18 2004. Available: <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/07/17/1089694610240.html?from=storyrhs>. Accessed 2 February 2012.

by the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 2009, Houston explicitly criticised his decision to originally title the work, *You Need More Money*: “If you said to me ‘what are the three silliest things you’ve done’, that would probably be No. 1. The heart of the book was never just being greedy and selfish...I put a bullseye on my head”.<sup>85</sup> Houston regretted not the content of the earlier book, but the way people understood and criticised his work based on the title. He realised that this helped cement the public perception of Hillsong as being associated with financial greed or gain. Houston did not shy away from the message of *You Need More Money*, and did not repent his promotion of material success, but he did caution in the interview, that he promotes “prosperity for a purpose”. His language echoes that of influential preacher Rick Warren in *The Purpose Driven Life*: “The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfilment...you must begin with God. You were born *by* his purpose and *for* his purpose” [original emphasis].<sup>86</sup> Houston explained, “It’s great if you want to go make money for a purpose. If it’s just all about you and being selfish, then we wouldn’t [preach that]. It’s about being effective, not just being selfabsorbed, but living for things that are bigger than you are”.<sup>87</sup> Despite the argument that prosperity must be for a “purpose”, this does not mean adherents *must* give their money to their chosen “purpose”. Houston instead talked of living for something “bigger”, and seemingly, that is purpose enough. Of course, the implication here is that if the higher purpose is *his* religion, you can enjoy your wealth, knowing that you are not being selfish. The Houstons thus both preach and embody the prosperity gospel. They validate their success by viewing themselves as a living example of the power of belief, thereby encouraging others to join their church and aspire to emulate their glamorous lifestyle. To them, and other prosperity preachers, material worth can be seen as a measure of their faith.<sup>88</sup> More than this, it is a sign that a person’s faith is “working”.

The Houstons’ ideas about success and how its pursuit is admirable have filtered down through Hillsong Churches and are now disseminated in the literature these churches produce, without always being explicitly tied to the Houstons. An article in Hillsong

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<sup>85</sup> Houston quoted in Cosima Marriner, ‘Next Stop, Secular Europe, says Hillsong Founder’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 May 2009. Available: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/next-stop-secular-europe-says-hillsongfounder-20090524-bjj1.html>. Accessed: 11 May 2015.

<sup>86</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 17.

<sup>87</sup> Houston quoted in Marriner, ‘Next Stop, Secular Europe’.

<sup>88</sup> See Stephen Hunt, ‘The “Health and Wealth” Gospel in the UK: Variations on a Theme’, *Culture and Religion*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2002, 89-104.

London's *Abrupt* magazine discussed the importance of career success, saying that it provides a person with the gift of "choice where a person can be purposeful about how they live and the degree of impact they do or do not have on their immediate world and the world beyond them...The extent to which you can have a positive impact increases with your influence, and your influence can increase with career success". The author, business psychologist Rebecca Newton, went on to argue, "you can make money, regardless of what career you have chosen". She encouraged people to "look up" and work towards their boss' job. Newton said: "Being content with where you are today shouldn't mean you lose all aspiration for what you could be entrusted with in the future".<sup>89</sup> This language—openly encouraging social and career mobility, the pursuit of wealth, and aspiration more broadly—indicates how important the message of "success" has become within Hillsong Churches, representing an enormous shift in Christian attitudes to wealth.<sup>90</sup>

Beyond the open endorsement and validation of financial success, Pentecostal and charismatic churches often display open distaste for those Christians who eschew these goals. The Victoria and Tasmania branch of the AOG published a cartoon in 1998 (below) in its quarterly journal, which clearly indicates this disdain for those who ignore their ability to achieve both financial and spiritual success:

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<sup>89</sup> Rebecca Newton, 'Building Career Success', *Abrupt*, Issue Five: Generations (2010), Hillsong Church London, 127.

<sup>90</sup> Hollenweger notes that the upward social mobility of Pentecostals is ground well covered by academics. He makes the important point that while the mobility Pentecostals experience may partly be because of the pursuit of career and financial success that Pentecostals encourage, it may also be due to the fact that among Western Pentecostals, "these emerging elites operate in a context that is favourable for such social upward mobility". This favourable context included relatively low unemployment rates, high degrees of political and social freedom, as well as comprehensive education systems. Hollenweger, 'The Pentecostal Elites and the Pentecostal Poor', 203-4.

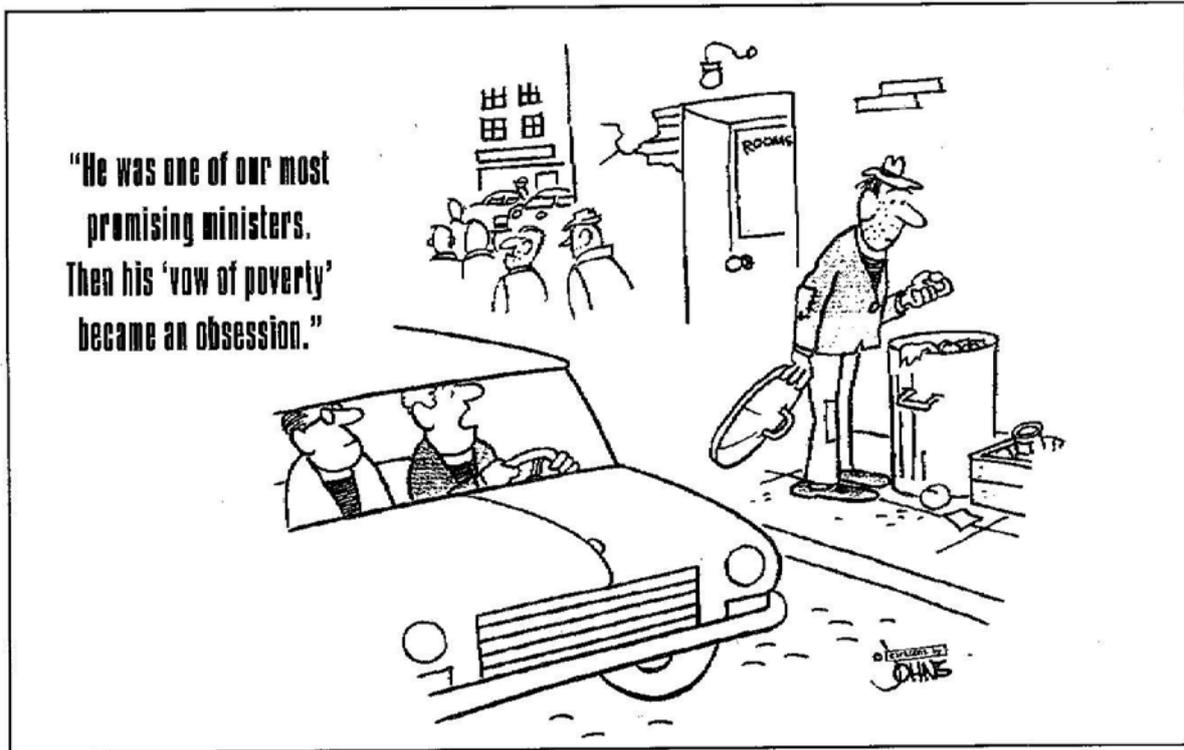


Figure 16: Assemblies of God in Victoria and Tasmania, *Harvest*, Spring vol. (1998), 13.

In this cartoon, a potentially “promising minister” has taken his vow of poverty to apparently absurd heights. Standing on the roadside in tattered clothing as he scavenges through a rubbish bin, he has presumably lost any potential he might have had to inspire his flock. He has instead transformed himself into a pitiable figure to whom others on the street have literally turned their backs. From the comfort of their car, two ministers of his church, who present clean-cut figures, look on in pity and distaste. The message of the cartoon is not critical of poverty in and of itself, but of those who “chose” to be poor. Similarly, a speaker at the Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference in 2011 seemingly accepted that poverty and inequality would always exist, suggesting that they were not merely worldly issues. Speaking about the return of Christ he said that everyone would appear before the judgement seat of Christ, but argued that that there would also be a second judgement, one that is not about salvation. The second judgment is for believers and is to do with “rewards”. Shaw said, “we often think Heaven will be this place of complete equality, but Scripture says again, and again, and again, no. How you live now really matters in terms of your

eternal destiny”.<sup>91</sup> Shaw did not specify the rewards allocated at this second judgement, but it is clear that in this form of religion, equality is not often promoted as an ideal. The cartoon above and the speaker at Newfrontiers both use the existence of inequality—here and in the afterlife—to motivate people to strive for more success, more money, and more faith.

## Churches as businesses

Changing attitudes to wealth and new understandings of affluence and success as being linked to Christian virtues have led to the transformation of Pentecostal and charismatic churches in practical, as well as theoretical, terms. The way churches organise, promote and market themselves has become increasingly linked to the popularity and financial position of their church, and the large majority of Pentecostal and charismatic churches have adopted business-like models. In fact, many of these churches have become market leaders when it comes to advertising, promotions management, and marketing campaigns. Robin Hicks, an editor of the marketing, media, and entertainment website *mUmbRELLA*, therefore described Hillsong as “Australia’s most powerful brand”.<sup>92</sup> The church does not use an advertising agency but rather markets itself using music (particularly the band Hillsong United); television (with services streamed as HillsongTV.com and watched in 180 countries); events (particularly the annual conference); and merchandising (the Hillsong “Resource Centre” sells not only books, CDs and DVDs, but also clothing).<sup>93</sup> While Hillsong might appear similar to other strong Australian brands, such as Qantas, as Hicks points out, the difference is that Hillsong “is not just part of their life...It is their life”.<sup>94</sup> Much of the value of Hillsong as a brand lies, as with any brand, in the narratives about identity that surround it. Brands stir emotion in a way that seems logical, and by marketing and

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<sup>91</sup> Tom Shaw, ‘Mobilise Main Session: The Fear of the Lord’, speaking at Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference, Brighton Centre, Brighton UK. 13 July 2011. Based on author’s observations.

<sup>92</sup> Robin Hicks, ‘Hillsong, Australia’s Most Powerful Brand’, *mUmbRELLA*, 26 July 2012. Available: <http://mumbrella.com.au/hillsong-australias-most-powerful-brand-104506>. Accessed 13 September 2012, np.

<sup>93</sup> Hicks, ‘Hillsong’, np.

<sup>94</sup> Hicks, ‘Hillsong’, np. Note that since Hicks wrote her piece, the Hillsong “Resource Centre” has been renamed the “Hillsong Store”.

branding themselves as offering a complete way of life, megachurches speak to consumers on a visceral level.<sup>95</sup>

Megachurches operate in much the same way as large businesses. They have warehouse-like buildings, large numbers of highly trained staff, large capital and investments, and focus on exploring new markets, locally and internationally. Indeed, Hillsong Emerge—a church-based not-for-profit organisation—started a “Christian Business Directory” in 2000. In 2006 they sold the business to a corporation that publishes similar directories in the US, UK, and New Zealand. Houston is one of the new class of “pastorpreneurs”, whose application of innovative business models to churches has transformed the way they are organised.<sup>96</sup> In 2005, Ian West—then an NSW Labor Party member of the Legislative Council—accused Hillsong Emerge (which is now called Hillsong City Care) of being the “business unit” of Hillsong Church.<sup>97</sup> The church, under a “Citizen’s Right of Reply” argued that Emerge was, “the public benevolent arm of the church, similar to the charities run by many churches”. Nonetheless, their Christian Business Directory was explicitly designed to help consumers find businesses owned or managed by Christians. It aimed to allow “Christians in business to reach a loyal, targeted audience who would mostly prefer to deal with like-minded Christians”.<sup>98</sup> Hillsong’s foresight in creating this directory was particularly significant because it illustrated the church’s approach to the business of religion. Initiatives such as this are key to explaining the expansion of Australia’s biggest megachurch as they represent the relaxed overlay of secular and religious life.

There is a homogeneity in the way megachurches operate. They are organised similarly, have very analogous business operations, and present themselves (as a brand) in very

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<sup>95</sup> Jennifer Wingard, *Branded Bodies, Rhetoric, and the Neoliberal Nation-State* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 21.

<sup>96</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich, *Bright Sided: How Positive Thinking is Undermining America* (Picador: New York, 2009), 137; John Jackson, *Pastorpreneur: Creative Ideas for Birthing Spiritual Life in Your Community* (Colorado Springs: Biblica Publishing, 2011). In his book, Jackson advises “pastorpreneurs” on vision, strategy, and action, telling readers how to increase their public visibility, build “strategic partnerships”, and increase the size of their congregation and budget. See pages 63-5, 80, 119-124.

<sup>97</sup> Ian West speaking about “Hillsong Emerge National Community Crime Prevention Funding”. NSW, Parliamentary Debates, Legislative Council, 8 November 2005, 19162. Available:

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parliament/hansart.nsf/V3Key/LC20051108058>. Accessed 5 October 2014.

<sup>98</sup> Note that Hillsong Emerge is now known as Hillsong City Care. Find a Christian Business, ‘About Us’, *Find a Christian Business Website 2011*. Available: <http://www.findachristianbusiness.com.au/about.asp>. Accessed 5 October 2014.

comparable ways. As sociologist Stephen Hunt highlights, “On an international scale their organisational frameworks tend to be very alike in form and genre. Many are structured, packaged, and exported in much the same way as business enterprises”.<sup>99</sup> The fact that Australian megachurches such as Hillsong have adopted these models, and well as the fact that they emerged alongside the neoliberal 1980s has defined the shape of Pentecostalism in Australia. By focusing on an individual’s relationship with God moving in parallel with existing cultural and economic frameworks of Australian society, megachurches have positioned themselves as able to offer “seekers” a sense of community, connection, and belonging. They offer all this without challenging (too deeply) other social structures in which they are embedded.

Where Hunt analysed these churches in their existing forms, it is also important to analyse how they came to be, and the Christian Revival Crusade (CRC) makes an interesting historical example of the ways these church have become largely corporatized and institutionalised. Leo Harris founded the CRC in Adelaide in 1945, when his historicist eschatology prompted the Assemblies of God to revoke his ministerial credentials.<sup>100</sup> What started as a breakaway denomination has grown in popularity and has spread—through missionary work—to several other countries in the Asia-Pacific as well as America. In 2008 CRC leaders rebranded the denomination as CRC Churches International. The church’s website outlines the CRC’s “International Strategic Directions 2010-15”, its “departments” and its “charter”, thus adopting both a corporate model and corporate language.<sup>101</sup> CRC Churches International has adopted a mode of operation in its structure, goals and operations that would not be out of place in a large, international corporation. It is therefore interesting to look at the ways the CRC has talked about money over time and how the church has moved from a position where it was sceptical of the neoliberal economic model to an acceptance, if not an outright embrace, of this economic system as the most effective and efficient way to garner new converts, plant new churches, and grow existing ones.

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<sup>99</sup> Hunt, “‘The ‘Health and Wealth’ Gospel’, 92.

<sup>100</sup> Harris held a historicist, rather than dispensational, belief in premillennialism, meaning that he rejected the idea that the second coming of Jesus would be interrupted by a seven year period of tribulation, believing instead that this would precede the second coming. Dudley Cooper, *Flames of Revival* (Endeavour Hills: Christian Revival Crusade, 1995), 11-20.

<sup>101</sup> CRC Churches International Website, ‘International Strategic Directions 2010-2015’, *CRC Churches International Website*. Available: <https://crcchurches.org/international-strategic-directions-2010-15/>. Accessed 2 October 2013.

In its 13 February 1977 newsletter, *Centre News*, the CRC asked the congregation to “continue to **pray for a release of finance** [original emphasis], so that building progress will be unhindered” indicating a belief in the prosperity’s gospel central tenet that wealth can come from an external force—faith.<sup>102</sup> Available *Centre News* editions from 1976 to 1988 all featured appeals for donations and updates on the church’s fundraising efforts. *Centre News* also often featured explicit discussions about the contemporary socioeconomic system. The 21 June 1981 edition rejected the rise of individualism and expressed fears for the future of Australian society, which the CRC believed had become dominated by humanism. The newsletter described humanism as having its roots in Genesis 3:5, where “Satan’s temptations are contained”. It went on to argue that “humanism strives for instant gratification, sensual pleasure and... is a case for equal rights, rejections of authority and elevating the sovereignty of man or man’s government. It’s the development through evolution, with government finally as God”.<sup>103</sup> This reactionary declaration appears to be a rejection of materialism and a corporate or materialist culture. However the next week’s edition featured a “Building Expansion” section which called for donations, explaining that “loans are also currently being received, both interested free and interest bearing, and an application for this purpose is available at the ‘Centre Books’ counter”.<sup>104</sup> The CRC clearly had a business plan and was not opposed to being charged and paying interest, despite traditional Christian objections to usury.

The CRC thus offers an interesting mix when it comes to finance and economics. Its rhetoric was clearly suspicious of individual excess and materialist culture, yet its financial practices offered little by way of a challenge to the broader neoliberal system. This lack is perhaps best seen in examination of Sunrise Christian School, which the CRC established in Adelaide. In its advertising material, the CRC emphasised that “we allow you to nominate the fees according to your ability to pay. Never let finance or inconvenience be a barrier to you fulfilling your God-given responsibility to the children he has entrusted to you”.<sup>105</sup> Despite this sensitivity to differing income levels, the school was nonetheless operating on a user-pays basis.

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<sup>102</sup> Adelaide Crusade Centre, *Centre News*, 13 February 1977, np.

<sup>103</sup> Adelaide Crusade Centre, *Centre News*, 21 June 1981, np.

<sup>104</sup> Adelaide Crusade Centre, *Centre News*, 28 June 1981, np.

<sup>105</sup> Adelaide Crusade Centre, *Centre News*, 13 July 1980, np.

Philanthropy is another key example of the way attitudes to wealth and prosperity affect daily operations of these churches. The Hillsong Foundation—the charity wing of the Hillsong Churches—published a booklet in 2010 titled *A New Era*, which laid out fundraising directions. In it, the foundation said it was, “opening the invitation for our Hillsong Foundation events to those within our church, who feel called to give financially, over and above their regular tithes and offerings into the Kingdom of God”. These church advertised the events as providing an opportunity to “connect with (the) finest speakers, business people and entrepreneurs in our community”.<sup>106</sup> Fundraising, at the high level referred to here, is also an opportunity to network, and the Hillsong Foundation did not present charity solely as a way to contribute to the church and community. Those who wished to donate were asked to fill out the “Confidential Application Form” provided, which did not ask money be given immediately, instead telling applicants to record their details and commit to donating a specific amount by June the next year – the end of the financial year and the deadline for making a tax-deductible gift. Applicants were asked to choose whether they were “Kingdom Builders” (who donate over \$5000), “Vision Impactors” (donations from \$2500-4999), or whether they were merely part of the “Army of Faithful Believers” (donations below \$2500).<sup>107</sup>

## Individualism, self-development and positive thinking – the answer to social ills?

Pentecostal biblical stories and personal testimonies focus on positive messages that have a wide appeal. The stories told find concurrence with the increasing tendency for people, particularly Westerners, to seek a “bright side” to life and its problems. Evangelist Caroline Leaf told the women at the Influencers ‘bU’ Conference in 2012 that, “you are not a victim of your life and circumstances”. She told her audience to be positive and smile, “even if you don’t feel like it”.<sup>108</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich argues that:

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<sup>106</sup> The Hillsong Foundation, *A New Era* (Castle Hill: Hillsong Church, 2010), 7.

<sup>107</sup> The Hillsong Foundation, *A New Era*, 20.

<sup>108</sup> Caroline Leaf speaking at ‘bU’ Conference, Influencers Church, Adelaide. 11 August 2012. Based on author’s observations.

The most successful preachers today are the positive thinkers, who no longer mention sin and usually have little to say about those standard whipping boys of the Christian right, abortion and homosexuality. Gone is the threat of hell and the promise of salvation, along with the grim story of Jesus's torment on the cross; in fact, the cross has been all but banished from the largest and most popular temples of the new evangelism, the megachurches.<sup>109</sup>

An important factor in the growth of Pentecostal churches thus lies in their ability to focus on individual needs (in line with the growing emphasis on individualism in secular Australia) while successfully suggesting that the church is the best way to meet those needs. A 1995 article in Adelaide's *The Advertiser* explored the link between the belief in signs and wonders and the growing popularity of Pentecostalism. It said Pentecostals "expected their faith to relate intimately to their lives and their personal needs", and in response, Pentecostal churches "offer a great deal of certainty about the outcome of their beliefs".<sup>110</sup> This is important not just for the study of Pentecostals, but for all religious groups in Western countries where "the religious stance today is more internal than external, more individual than institutional, more experiential than cerebral, more private than public".<sup>111</sup>

Contemporary religious writing continues to use language that reflects current economic and business jargon, and that embraces the power of individuals to change their lives for the better. In Issue Five of the Hillsong London magazine (*Abrupt*) the editor, Carlos Darby, wrote, "Our hope as a magazine is that we inspire you to live above circumstances, help you see that you do have a choice, and that we're not simply born a certain way". He went on to encourage readers to "invest in yourself".<sup>112</sup> The language of self-help and of rising above circumstance speaks to the popular appreciation of the "self-made man" and of the importance of choice. The same issue of *Abrupt* ran an article titled "Money: For The Love of Country" that told the history of English currency, but also discussed how important money is for personal and national identity. The author, Judi Burger, noted that money "stirs the passions, evoking all sorts of emotions like greed, obsession and selfishness", but was quick to point out that money, and people's reactions to it, also had "more positive qualities like generosity and charity".<sup>113</sup> Burger's language is representative of the shift towards

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<sup>109</sup> Ehrenreich, *Bright Sided*, 124.

<sup>110</sup> John Bellamy in, 'Church Facing the Winds of Change', *The Advertiser*, 18 February 1995, 14.

<sup>111</sup> Wade Clark Roof, 'God is in the Details: Reflections on Religion's Public Presence in the United States in the Mid-1990s', *Sociology of Religion* 57, no. 2 (1996), 153.

<sup>112</sup> Carlos Darby, 'Editor's Voice', *Abrupt*, Issue Five: Generations (2010), Hillsong Church London, 1.

<sup>113</sup> Judi Burger, 'Money: For the Love of Country', *Abrupt*, Issue Five: Generations (2010), Hillsong Church London, 129.

prosperity theology in Pentecostalism. In arguing that accumulating money is not intrinsically bad, and pointing out the positive qualities that people with money may possess, Burger represents a shift towards a paradigm where private philanthropy is important. The individual has an increasingly important role in not just receiving charity, but providing it also.

The so-called prosperity gospel is thus different to the social gospel that had previously dominated Christian attitudes to wealth in Australia and elsewhere. Rather than promoting the state or social institutions such as the church as the protector of the weak, the prosperity gospel suggested that the individual pursuit of economic self-interest would lead to the most equitable and effective distribution of resources. This concept mirrors neo-classical economic ideas about rational individualism.<sup>114</sup> Religion and free-market ideology become connected in a way that makes spiritual or religious choice synonymous with economic and political liberalism.<sup>115</sup> As William Connolly puts it, it is the pursuit of the Jesus of Revelation over the Jesus of Luke.<sup>116</sup>

Hillsong tempers the firm focus on individuals and their lifestyles by the promotion of the church as a moderator and as a way to ensure individuals remain connected to their community. At Hillsong Conference 2012, Youth Pastor Scott Samways argued that Generation Z—those born during or after 1995—are also known as the “media gen” or the “dot-com kids”, yet despite the plethora of technologies available to them, this generation is more disconnected from their community than any previous generation. Samways claimed that because of this isolation young people want deeper personal connections and meaning in their lives: “They’re hungry, they just don’t know what they’re searching for”. He argued that the church should use the technology and material culture available to reach out and make church “a place of community and family”.<sup>117</sup> What is perhaps most interesting to note here is not just how the “Jesus movement” has embraced what might be termed materialism,

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<sup>114</sup> As well as the development of capitalism, individualistic models of society are tied to the process of modernisation: Marie Nathalie LeBlanc, ‘Proclaiming Individual Piety: Pilgrims and Religious Renewal in Cote d’Ivoire’, in Vered Amit and Noel Dyck eds., *Claiming Individuality: The Politics of Distinction* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 173.

<sup>115</sup> Stephen, “The ‘Health and Wealth’ Gospel”, 92.

<sup>116</sup> William E. Connolly, ‘The Evangelical-Capitalist Resonance Machine’, *Political Theory*, vol. 33, no. 6 (2005), 874.

<sup>117</sup> Scott Samways, ‘Elective One: Effective Evangelism Today’, speaking at Hillsong Conference 2012, Allphones Arena, Sydney. 6 July 2012. Conference ran from Tuesday 12 – Friday 15 July. Based on author’s observations.

but also the fact that while Graham saw materialism and the rapid expansion of material culture as a significant problem, perhaps even a threat to society, Samways clearly does not share this view. Samways sees technology and material culture as part of the solution to social problems; they provide a chance to celebrate the agency of individual church members, while also connecting these individuals to their broader church community, thereby giving meaning to their lives.

Brian Houston further emphasised that money, or more correctly, the giving of money to the church, was an important way for individuals to connect with their faith and church in his opening address at the same conference. At the first “Night Rally” of Hillsong Conference 2012, Houston began by welcoming guests, before moving straight into a discussion of how to give to Hillsong.<sup>118</sup> Basing much of his talk on 2 Corinthians 8-9, he asked people to “enter partnership with us”, saying that the “fellowship” of giving is important. Houston further emphasised the connection between individuals as donors and the organisation by stressing that “giving” at Conference offers the chance to donate as part of a group; individuals would experience the “joy” of giving in “fellowship”.<sup>119</sup> The power of the group for religious experience alongside financial giving is not a theme exclusive to Hillsong. A 1998 article in *Harvest*, the magazine of the Assemblies of God in Victoria and Tasmania, noted, “Working Together Makes Cents!”<sup>120</sup> To provide further chances for financial “partnership,” the AOG offered various services for its members. The back cover of a 1996 issue of *Harvest* advertised the AOG “Superannuation Fund”, AG “World Travel”, and AG “Church Insurance”, all under the slogan “serving Australian Pentecostal churches”, with the aim of “working in partnership to extend the Kingdom of God”.<sup>121</sup>

Russel Evans, founder of Planetshakers Church—Melbourne’s answer to Hillsong—also discussed the relationship between individualism, money and the church. In his selfpublished work *Profile of a Planetshaker* (2004) Evans explored similar themes to those Samways discussed:

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<sup>118</sup> Evening sessions of the conference are referred to as rallies and are open to all, free of charge, regardless of whether they have registered for any other conference sessions.

<sup>119</sup> Note that my language here is deliberate. Houston and other speakers talked of “Hillsong Conference” or just “Conference”, it was never referred to as “the Conference”.

<sup>120</sup> Assemblies of God in Victoria and Tasmania, *Harvest*, Summer (1998), 7.

<sup>121</sup> Advertisement on back cover of Assemblies of God in Victoria and Tasmania, *Harvest*, Winter vol. (1998), back cover.

Shackled by shallow living that never says enough, a billion young people stumble in the dark. A whole generation spiralling out of control—endlessly pursuing empty dreams that have already been plundered by the enemy. The glittering prize of effortless self-satisfaction, wealth and pleasure without responsibility inevitably evaporates like a mirage, leaving millions of good-hearted young dreamers trapped by disappointment, boredom, depression, drugs, alcoholism, sexual abuse and even suicide.<sup>122</sup>

Evans' dramatic account of the challenges young people face in Australia does not focus on high rates of youth unemployment, the inheritance of environmental problems, and the increasing burden of an aging population. Rather than seeing the current neoliberal world order as the source of the discontents he highlights, he perceives the key difficulty as a lack of individual responsibility. A problem that, somewhat ironically, has an individual solution: "through simple accounting you might just find the priorities of your heart".<sup>123</sup> The Planetshakers founder shares similar views to those of Brian Houston, outlined above. Evans is not critiquing the accumulation of wealth, but rather criticising people who expect to prosper "without responsibility". Evans again gives agency to individuals, and by arguing that "shallow living" has caused modern problems, he suggests that a lack of individual vision or effort on the part of the "good-hearted young dreamers" can be remedied to overcome social issues.<sup>124</sup>

Evans said that Planetshakers "shout to the Lord with our lifestyle", and went on to explain that this means: "that you shout with your finances and those with a joyous shout in their lives don't care about people teaching on giving. In fact, they actually enjoy it because it reinforces who they are and why they give of their money, effort and time".<sup>125</sup> He acknowledges that there is public criticism of the prosperity gospel, writing:

I get so tired of people saying that the church is after your money. They complain about people teaching on offering. But these same people sit in front of their television for hours, watching advert after advert as big companies (whose only concern is profit) try to get people to hand over their money... These people are OK with that, but as soon as a leader says sow your money into the house of God... oooh that's wrong. Well I say that you shout with your finances and those with a joyous

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<sup>122</sup> Russel Evans with Dave Reardon, *Profile of a Planetshaker* (Box Hill: Planetshakers Ministries International, 2004), 5.

<sup>123</sup> Evans, *Profile of a Planetshaker*, 67-68.

<sup>124</sup> Evans, *Profile of a Planetshaker*, 5.

<sup>125</sup> Evans, *Profile of a Planetshaker*, 67-68.

shout in their lives don't care about people teaching on giving. In fact, they actually enjoy it because it reinforces who they are.<sup>126</sup>

By making the church analogous to any other business, Evans implies that while the church's motives are altruistic, it should operate in much the same way as any business, which would advertise, market itself to potential consumers, and expect a return. Rather than engaging with the complaint outsiders make about his church being business-like, he fatuously suggests that they apply their criticism to businesses themselves. He ignores the fact that a church may operate in similar ways to businesses, but has fundamentally different aims. In deflecting critiques, Evans, as the Houstons did too, reveals the limited logic used to defend the prosperity gospel. This logic rests on a sense of victimisation. In the face of what are seen, therefore, as unjustified attacks, many Pentecostals offer only vague statements about being misunderstood. Evans' only attempt to explain, and not just defend, the prosperity gospel is a ambiguous signaling that giving to the church helps individuals build a firmer Christian identity and understanding of "who they are".

Personal observation at a variety of Pentecostal and charismatic churches has led me to conclude that the segment of the service dedicated to "teaching on offering"—where the preacher usually invites a guest speaker to read Bible passages and explain to the congregation why it is important that they make an "offer" to Jesus (on top of the portion of their income already tithed)—is not dissimilar to the television advertisements that Evans referred to above. This segment of services, which all the churches I have attended have had, usually immediately follows the opening worship session.<sup>127</sup> A guest speaker typically reads a Bible passage and ties this to personal testimony about someone overcoming problems (often financial, such as difficulty paying their bills or mortgage, finding employment, or being able to afford a family holiday) after sowing a "seed" in their church. Attendees are encouraged to think about their problems and to make an offer, usually tied to a particular personal difficulty. The offering at services is often directed towards a specific imitative or philanthropic effort on the part of the church, and this is communicated by a speaker on stage—and sometimes a short video clip about the church's charity work—usually while the worship band plays quiet instrumental music in the background. Before service start, "giving envelopes" are generally placed on seats so that individuals have the chance to write down

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<sup>126</sup> Evans, *Profile of a Planetshaker*, 67-68.

<sup>127</sup> The following is based on the author's observations while attending church services and conferences from 2011 to 2015.

their credit card details if this is their preferred payment method. The envelopes usually also offer information on how attendees can BPay or make direct deposit payments at home. As well as the envelope, the churches still use collection “buckets”, which volunteers hand around and then collect. There seems to be no stigma attached to simply passing the bucket to the next seat though making an offer is strongly encouraged.

Even the language of “offer” suggests that individuals have a business-like relationship with God. They can make an “offer” with the implicit understanding that if God looks favourably on their offering, then they will be rewarded. While the teaching on offering will nearly always include specific stories of believers reaping a financial or material reward after giving, promises are never made that this will necessarily happen to the audience today. To avoid disappointing congregants, speakers also mention other rewards such as good health and fulfilling relationships. The rewards for believers’ financial contributions are often kept vague, as was the case when Dean Sweatman spoke on offering at C3 Presence Conference 2014: “miracles do happen when we give”.<sup>128</sup> Similarly, a preacher at Hillsong London in August 2011 spoke nebulously of the potential for financial reward during his teaching on giving, and concluded that, “poverty isn’t a virtue”.<sup>129</sup> As a further caveat, although it is not referenced by churches this way, the teaching is usually tied to a story that involves the giving not just making an offering to their church, but also working towards their goal over time. This strikes me as a way for churches to manage the expectations of their congregation, while providing a positive message about the ways the giver is helping others (through the church’s charity efforts), helping their church itself (when offerings are directed towards church building funds or similar), and are empowered through their ability to help themselves.

The fundraising methods of churches that preach a version of the prosperity gospel offer a radical departure from previous forms of giving. Proponents of the prosperity gospel do not rely on the most common historical motivations for donations in Protestant churches, which included “necessity, shame, duty, biblical command, justice to God, guilt, gratitude”. Instead, the prosperity gospel instructs its followers that they should give to get. They should make financial donations not only to “be blessed in a future state of rewards, but in the here

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<sup>128</sup> Dean Sweatman, speaking at ‘C3 Presence Conference 2014’, Qantas Credit Union Arena, Sydney. 25 April 2014. Presence 2014 ran from 14-17 April. Based on author’s observations.

<sup>129</sup> Hillsong Church London, Dominion Theatre, London, UK. 7 August 2011.

and now. God will not bless those who hold back even a portion from Him, but those who give a tithe or more will be abundantly blessed in return by getting back all of their monetary investment and more”.<sup>130</sup> In church services, the barely concealed threat of this approach to fundraising (that if you hold back from God he will not bless you) is usually overshadowed by emphasis on what believers *could* and *should* get as a reward for not only their faith but for living their lives the way the churches recommend. If they work hard and live well, God will reward believers for their efforts.

Evans at Planetshakers distinguished between the pursuit of prosperity by individuals who attend his church and others. Those who follow the prosperity gospel have a higher purpose that he explained as being to attract other people to God. He said, “Your classmates don’t read the Bible, they read YOU!...When they look at your life and find it attractive, they are actually seeing God in you. But if your lifestyle is one of negativity, poverty and depression, people steer clear of you”.<sup>131</sup> Here we again see the celebration of the individual and clear encouragement for them to aim for financial success as visible proof of God’s grace. Religious historian James Hudnut-Beumler’s history of money and American Protestantism, *In Pursuit of the Almighty’s Dollar* (2007), explores the growing emphasis on the needs and power of individuals in modern religious life. He argues that in modern societies, particularly the US: “people have found diverse ways to be religious...when social rewards and sanctions for religious involvement in a standard brand of American piety have all but disappeared”. He calls this “Do-It-Yourself Religion”, and argues that the emphasis among these seeker-sensitive churches is on what “works” for the congregation. People are looking for a form of religion that is “authentic to their own experience”.<sup>132</sup> The emergence of a form of religion that caters to individuals wants reflects the growing emphasis on the self and the increasing power of individuals to shape their lives according to their desires and needs.

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<sup>130</sup> James Hudnut-Beumler, *In Pursuit of the Almighty’s Dollar: A History of Money and American Protestantism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 226.

<sup>131</sup> Evans, *Profile of a Planetshaker*, 68.

<sup>132</sup> Hudnut-Beumler, *In Pursuit of the Almighty’s Dollar*, 208.

## Divine health

My only direct experience of divine healing was an unsettling one, largely because I was not aware that I needed healing. At the Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference in 2011, a young Australian I spoke to during the lunch break, Ben, explained the process of a healing he had just attended: “It was, like, really, really amazing. We stood around this guy who had these really thick glasses and who was going to have an operation for something to do with his eyes”.<sup>133</sup> Ben said that they had prayed over the young man with poor eyesight and laid hands on him: “You could really feel the energy – the Spirit was working through us”. After the healing session, the young man apparently discarded his glasses, now blessed with excellent eyesight. Knowing that I was at the conference as a researcher, Ben patiently explained to process and then offered to heal me. While I hesitated, unsure how to respond, Ben put his hand on my shoulder and began to pray; eventually announcing me healed, though from what I remain unsure. That this twenty-year-old man was comfortable touching and praying over someone who was not part of his church and whom he did not know intimately seemed remarkable to me. His eagerness to recount the group healing he had been a part of and his escalation to then performing a healing on me was my first clue as to the importance divine healing plays in the Pentecostal religious experience.

Health and healing are frequent themes in Pentecostal churches and are another material expression of faith tied to the self-improvement project that is part of neoliberal aspirational culture. In broader Australian society, a focus on individual health and “wellness” has been a feature of the past few decades and is particularly common in the most affluent segments of society. This focus is evident in the expanding personal fitness classes, television series, and publications devoted to food and waves of new diets, all tracking rising concerns with growing rates of obesity, mental illness, and food allergies.<sup>134</sup> These trends share numerous features with economic neoliberalism, including an emphasis on consumption, individual self-help, competitiveness, and conformity to dominant norms. Thus, as part of the

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<sup>133</sup> Name has been changed. The following information is based on the author’s conversation with Ben on 13 July 2011 in Brighton, UK.

<sup>134</sup> For overviews of this trend and the ways that people who are perceived not to be “looking after” their health and their bodies are viewed as lazy or weak-willed see Carl Cederström and André Spicer, *The Wellness Syndrome* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015). For an analysis of how a new focus on “the body” in Western countries is entwined with capitalism see: Hervé Juvin, *The Coming of the Body*, translated from French by John Howe (London: Verso, 2010).

prosperity gospel's discourse, health and personal healing have gone from a hoped-for result of faith and pleasing God to a critical reason for particular religious behaviours.<sup>135</sup>

Just as the prosperity gospel drew from broader economic trends to maintain Pentecostals' relevance in a more acquisitive age, so too have Pentecostals embraced this new emphasis on individual health and wellness.<sup>136</sup> In some ways, this emphasis on individual healthfulness draws on older religious trends, such as the Christian Science and New Thought beliefs in divine healing outlined earlier in the chapter.<sup>137</sup> Over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the pursuit of physical health and wellness was culturally linked by those who believed in divine healing and secular health reformers to moral health and hygiene.<sup>138</sup> From the start of the movement, Pentecostalism explicitly linked salvation and healing. A 1906 edition of *The Apostolic Faith* (the journal of the Azusa Street mission) explained: "Through Jesus, we are entitled to health and the sanctification of soul and body".<sup>139</sup> In Australia too, there was an emphasis on healing from the early days of the Pentecostal movement. In 1911, Adelaide's *The Advertiser* reported on the Pentecostal Mission in North Melbourne's claim that two of its "Brothers" had "cured a woman of cancer by prayer and faith".<sup>140</sup> It was not only local Pentecostals who healed; traveling healers and evangelists also visited Australia and performed public demonstrations of divine healing. Melbourne's *The Argus* reported in 1922 that Smith Wigglesworth's visit had led to "many manifestations of healing", some by the evangelist himself when he prayed over large groups who had come to him "for aid".<sup>141</sup> Incidents of healing continued in Australia and there was a notable wave of healing revivals in the 1950s, again led by visiting evangelists including A.C. Valdez Jr. who toured the country in 1952 and Oral Roberts, who visited in 1956.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Steve Bruce, *Choice and Religion: A Critique of Rational Choice Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 164.

<sup>136</sup> For an overview of divine healing movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and their links to the development of "wellness" as a popular concept, see James William Miller, 'Wellness: The History and Development of a Concept', *Spektrum Freizeit* 27, no. 1 (2005), 84-106.

<sup>137</sup> For a history of Pentecostal healing over the twentieth century see Joseph W. Williams, *Spirit Cure: A History of Pentecostal Healing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>138</sup> Peter Conrad, 'Wellness as Virtue: Morality and the Pursuit of Health', *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 18, no. 3 (1994), 387-8.

<sup>139</sup> 'Salvation and Healing', *The Apostolic Faith* 1, no. 4 (December 1906).

<sup>140</sup> 'Can Cast Out Devils: Claims of a Melbourne Mission', *The Advertiser*, 9 August 1911, 10.

<sup>141</sup> 'Healing By Touch', *The Argus*, 22 February 1922, 16.

<sup>142</sup> Mark Hutchinson, 'The Canada Fire: Revivalist Links Between Canada and Australia', *Lucas* 29 (June 2001), 84-114.

Well-known healer-evangelists, such as Oral Roberts, took their cues from the faith movement's figurehead, Kenneth Hagin, in that they too often made their own journey to good health part of their healing narrative. They made health a "gold standard of faith" and told believers that their bodies and minds should reflect their prosperity.<sup>143</sup> Prosperity teachers over the twentieth century largely followed wider medical trends. The counterculture of the 1960s-70s and its emphasis on naturalistic or holistic healing; the increasing use of herbs, vitamins and other dietary supplements; and the favouring of Eastern medicine that developed over the century was, "a convenient middle ground between noninvasive physical treatment and healing by faith". From the 1980s onward, the focus on diet and fitness in secular culture was met with warm approval by most evangelical Christians and set new standards against which moral progress could be measured.<sup>144</sup>

Caroline Leaf, a South African evangelist who I have now heard speak at women's conferences run by C3, Hillsong, and Influencers, and who has also spoken at Planetshakers events, demonstrates the modern prosperity gospels' inheritance of the earlier belief in divine healing. Leaf echoes mind-cure beliefs in her explanation that the vast majority of physical and mental ill-health is caused by "toxic thinking". She argued that dementia and Alzheimer's are "lifestyle diseases" caused by a build up of toxicity, and purported that while "people think alcohol, depression, and homosexuality run in families" (and agrees that genetic inheritance may be a factor), people wire "bad decisions" into their brains because they do not understand that "you with your thoughts control the expression of your genes".<sup>145</sup> Leaf said that everyone has genetic weaknesses passed down to them from Adam and Eve's sins but urges her audiences to take control and learn to rewire their brains and remove toxic thoughts.<sup>146</sup> Conveniently, people can learn Dr Leaf's views on the mind-body connection by purchasing her books, or by completing her trademarked "21-day Brain Detox Plan". Leaf presented the key message of the detox simply: "Your thoughts impact your spirit, soul and body".<sup>147</sup> This embodiment of consumption, health, faith, and self-development

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<sup>143</sup> Bowler, *Blessed*, 141.

<sup>144</sup> Bowler, *Blessed*, 166-8.

<sup>145</sup> Caroline Leaf speaking at 'bU' Conference, Influencers Church, Adelaide. 11 August 2012. Based on author's observations.

<sup>146</sup> Caroline Leaf speaking at Hillsong 'Colour' Conference 2013, Qantas Credit Union Arena, Sydney. 8 March 2013. Based on author's observations.

<sup>147</sup> Dr Leaf 21 Day Brain Detox, 'The Program', *21-day Brain Detox Plan Website*. Available: <http://21daybraindetox.com/>. Accessed 10 August 2015.

symbolises the entrenchment of neoliberal concepts in prosperity thinking. Churches and congregation members both participate in co-producing an understanding of Christianity that draws heavily on secular trends and ideals.

As with the prosperity gospel, their embrace of wellness trends means that modern Pentecostals have updated older religious beliefs to align with a new age. Their renewed focus on health concentrates predominantly on self-improvement and individual choice and the potential for transformation. Health food, in particular, is linked to individuals being not merely healthy, but also moral because of, and in the ways that, they pursue their goal of good health. At the C3 women's conference "Everywoman Gathering" in 2014, there was a "healthy cooking demonstration" by C3 member Jane Grover, who based her cookbook, *Naked Food: The Way it was Meant to be* on her use of whole foods that are in season, locally grown, and organic and biodynamic where possible.<sup>148</sup> Similarly, Caroline Leaf returns regularly to the theme of keeping yourself not just fit, and healthy, but also wholesome. Leaf explains that this is because our brains are "neuroplastic" and can "change and regrow" based on everyday choices within our control.<sup>149</sup> This link to metaphysical understandings of health is, of course, important to Pentecostals because merely eating well and emulating secular attempts at wellness is not enough. Tom Shaw, a Newfrontiers pastor, argued that people might eat organic foods and "work out, but it's not going to save them, despite the fact that many people use it as a desperate attempt at personal salvation".<sup>150</sup> Likewise, Leaf told the crowd at Hillsong Colour Conference 2013: "I match brain science with scripture. If I can't find it in scripture I don't believe the science".<sup>151</sup>

Pentecostals place considerable emphasis on the need for Christians to "renew" their mind as a way to link their faith with their health. Leaf argues that "the verdict of science is in: the mind-body connection is real. No longer can we relegate those so-called psychosomatic disorders to the dark corners of the mind...you can learn how to control your thought life and consequently your emotions, attitudes and behaviour, ultimately leading to feeling and

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<sup>148</sup> Jane Grover Website, 'About Jane Grover', *Jane Grover Website*. Available: <http://www.janegrover.net/#!/about/c240r>. Accessed 2 June 2015.

<sup>149</sup> Caroline Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain: The Key to Peak Happiness, Thinking, and Health* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 14.

<sup>150</sup> Tom Shaw, 'Mobilise Main Session: The Fear of the Lord', speaking at Newfrontiers 'Together on a Mission' Conference, Brighton Centre, Brighton UK. 13 July 2011. Based on author's observations.

<sup>151</sup> Caroline Leaf speaking at Hillsong 'Colour' Conference 2013, Qantas Credit Union Arena, Sydney. 8 March 2013. Based on author's observations.

living better”.<sup>152</sup> There is an earnest belief that through the Spirit and the church, individuals have the power to transform themselves. Just as the prosperity gospel focused on personal appearance as a measure of godliness, Pentecostals’ updated messages on health promises followers that wholesome living (by which they mean acknowledging the connection between their minds and body and looking after both) will transform them into aspirational models of religious faith.<sup>153</sup>

## Conclusion

Australian journalist Margaret Simons spent several years attending Pentecostal and charismatic church services as research for her book, *Faith, Money & Power: What the Religious Revival Means for Politics* (2007). At the beginning of her research she wondered—as most outsiders do—why attendees spent such a large part of the service with their hands raised to the sky. Simons could only assume that these people were literally reaching out to be closer to Jesus. At the end of her research, after conducting many interviews, she came to a different conclusion: “I think I understand, now, why they raise their hands to heaven. I can’t get up there. Pick me up. Pick me up”.<sup>154</sup> This conclusion embodies one of the most interesting contradictions inherent in the prosperity gospel. The success, wealth, achievement, and desires of individuals are celebrated, but are combined with reliance on church structures, and more broadly, on the individual’s personal relationship with Jesus. Do the predominantly middle-class people who attend Hillsong do so because there is a place for their ambitions and wealth there? Or do they have ambition and personal wealth because the church directs them to this end? I would argue that it is a combination of the two. The fit between the health and wealth gospel and the secular host culture is so comfortable that it becomes hard to distinguish whether churches use prosperity theology to attract people, or if people are so comfortable with Pentecostal churches’ focus

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<sup>152</sup> Leaf sells a series of products to help people “control your thought life”. The book *Switch on Your Brain* is sold alongside Leaf’s “21-Day Brain Detox Package” which is also offered as an online package accessible via computers, tablets, and mobile devices through a specially created app. The books are available online, in hard copy, and as audio books.

<sup>153</sup> For a more comprehensive view of international Pentecostal healing, not only as they relate to Australia and/or the prosperity gospel, see: Candy Gunther Brown, *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>154</sup> Simons, *Faith, Money & Power*, 102.

on individual success and ambition, on individual health and wealth, because it echoes what broader society says about health and wealth. This has been particularly important in Australia, where this form of Pentecostalism developed relatively recently and so emerged and grew in a well-educated society that was dominated by the middle class and accepting of their social and economic aspirations. Pentecostal leaders, themselves fitting this description, have encouraged the private aspirations of church members and have linked them to their faith in a way that further promotes the seeking of health and wealth as virtuous. A neoliberal embrace of consumption, materialism, aspiration, individualism, and prosperity with a *purpose* (a purpose aligned with the church's values and aims), thus defines contemporary Australian Pentecostal and charismatic religion.

## Chapter Three: God Made Adam First

I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

1 Timothy 2:12-15 (NIV).

Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (NIV).

Lily was shocked by the way a pastor at Grace City Church (a Newfrontiers church) spoke about women in leadership during a preach in July 2015.<sup>1</sup> She was surprised that he thought women leaders in the church was a controversial issue that needed discussing and was uncomfortable with his scriptural explanations for restricting the roles women play. Smart, driven, and thoughtful, Lily is a twenty-three-year-old woman from Sydney's affluent Northern Beaches currently completing her Honours year in Agricultural Economics at the University of Sydney. She works part-time for a local real estate company, and as well as volunteering at her local church, she also works for Soul Survivor, a Christian ministry group that facilitates worship opportunities for young adults around New South Wales.<sup>2</sup> Lily comes from a strongly Pentecostal background. Her parents were ordained through the Association of Faith Ministries and Churches when she was young, and they planted a church of their own in Manly. She helped run the youth ministry of her parent's church until congregation numbers grew too small to sustain it, and the church stopped meeting. After this, she went "church hunting" and found Grace City eighteen months ago. Although she noticed it was more conservative than her previous churches, and told me that individuals had "less freedom" in its services, she said: "I super, super love it". She said she knew from

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<sup>1</sup> Name has been changed. The following information is based on the author's conversation with Lily on 1 August 2015 in Sydney, Australia.

<sup>2</sup> Soul Survivor NSW, 'About', *Soul Survivor NSW Website*. Available: <http://www.soulsurvivornsw.org.au/>. Accessed 2 August 2015.

the outset that Newfrontiers in the UK did not put women in leadership positions but thought that

Grace City made room for female leadership, if not “headship” or “eldership”. To Lily, this distinction seemed important. She implied that the fact that women could not officially head a church or be titled a church elder was not as important to her as recognising that in the day-to-day running of the church, women had authority and a leadership role to play.<sup>3</sup> Lily thought the most important part of gendered power structures in her church was that men and women should work together, if under a leadership structure that was nominally male. Male church elders argue that scripture confers authority on them because of their gender, yet Lily believes that women have just as much moral authority and that their experiences of the Spirit—and thus their ability to “spread the Word”—are just as meaningful. “After all”, she told me, “Jesus trusted the news that he’d risen to two of his closest friends, Mary and Martha. And they were women”.<sup>4</sup>

After hearing her preacher outline a verse letter by Paul in Corinthians as the reason there should only be male eldership in a church, Lily was unsettled. So too were other members of the church. She told me that one family later left the church altogether, but she felt that such drastic action was not called for in her case. Instead of leaving, Lily took her concerns to her “Connect” group, made up of both men and women. While the group did not all share her views, they were supportive of her questions. She also did her own research and explained to me that Paul was trying to convey a message to a particular group, and so performed a “market appraisal” and wrote to appeal to his audience, who were conservative.

Lily said that “Paul wrote lots of letters” and their “context” has to be taken into account, something she insinuates the Grace City pastor—whom she has a deep respect for and who, she believes, like all humans cannot help being imperfect—did not do. Lily has since

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<sup>3</sup> A common justification accompanying restrictions on women’s leadership in churches is that male and female are equal beings but have different functions and that this limits women’s ecclesial functions. Lisa Stephenson argues that an “underlying dualistic theological anthropology” is thus the key contributor to restrictions on women. Lisa P. Stephenson, *Dismantling the Dualisms for American Pentecostal Women in Ministry: A Feminist-Pneumatological Approach* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 155.

<sup>4</sup> Work of some scholars of the early church and its literature matches Lily’s interpretation. April D.

DeConick argues that “women were an active and powerful part of his [Jesus] mission”. She argues that Luke says Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna were “the patrons of Jesus’ movement, financing the entire operation”, and says that the gospels of Matthew and Mark support this position and notes that women were some of Jesus’ learned disciples and actively sought his teaching. April D. DeConick, *Holy Misogyny: Why the Sex and Gender Conflicts in the Early Church Still Matter* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 46.

connected with a woman from a local Baptist church who is interested in running an interdenominational women's ministry that would meet in members' homes. The aim of the meetings would be to give women a chance to "pray and talk in a way they can't in their current churches". Though unsure if she can fit this commitment into her busy schedule, Lily thought this was a reasonable solution. She presented it to me as one of the ways Christian women are empowered enough to take action, though she acknowledged she was troubled by the fact that they had to do so outside the confines of their church.

I strongly got the impression that Lily's decision not to leave her church after this particular teaching was grounded in the relationships she had built there and her genuine respect for the pastor. It was also, I believe, at least partly because she feared this would send a signal about the "type of woman" she was. She explained: "I think there are three types of women. Angry feminists who don't love men [problematic to her because Jesus was a man]; girls who go with whatever her pastor says; and then those like me. I sometimes get offended by teachings, but I know it's okay to question things and think for myself". Her reluctance to be identified as an "angry feminist" sat alongside her dismissal of the "girls" who always submitted to the will of their pastor.<sup>5</sup> Lily's categorisation of women reveals the logic many Pentecostal women use to explain their place in their church and society.<sup>6</sup> The "angry feminists" outside the church are dismissed as unfeminine and unreasonable, yet wider social changes in attitudes to gender have seemingly permeated the group enough that women viewed as being "doormats" (those who do not think for themselves or make their own decisions) are held in contempt. The middle ground, then, is filled with the women who feel liberated and empowered enough to ask questions of church elders and critique their views, though importantly, this is done within the structures of the church. That most church elders are male and that Newfrontiers, like many conservative evangelical churches, is organised

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<sup>5</sup> Anger as an emotion has been important to the feminist movement as a framework and motivation for collective action. However, in the culture of many Western countries anger is seen negatively; it is considered "emotionally deviant. This helps explain first the visibility of the "angry" feminist, and second the reluctance of many women to identify themselves this way. See Cheryl Hercus, 'Identity, Emotion, and Feminist Collective Action', *Gender and Society* 13, no. 1 (1999), 34-55. The trope of the angry feminist is problematic because it "makes antifeminism and misogyny a routine element in everyday speech and written argument" by positioning these women as unreasoning, perverse, and man-hating. It puts the supposed anger, resentment, and animosity of feminists (their character flaws) ahead of their arguments and restricts productive discussion of ideas. See Barbara Tomlinson, *Feminism and Affect at the Scene of the Argument: Beyond the Trope of the Angry Feminist* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 1, 100.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that there are Pentecostal women who work towards bringing feminist pneumatology and Pentecostalism into dialogue, arguing that the two are not mutually exclusive. See Andrea Hollingsworth, 'Spirit and Voice: Towards a Feminist Pentecostal Pneumatology', *Pneuma* 29, no. 2 (2007), 189-90.

around male headship implies a submission to male authority, even if questions are permitted to be asked about it.

Lily has three brothers and told me that other churches she attended made her feel “just as capable” as them: “We all have different giftings...they are gifted musicians, and I have more of an ability to pastor”. She has heard many female preachers and thought they were wonderful. She is an admirer of key female Christian leaders and thinkers, including Australian activist and evangelist, Christine Caine, and British pastor and author, Jo Saxton. Modern life is still very hard for women, Lily said, because they have been “so suppressed over time”. She believes society is making progress in fixing this imbalance, and said that what she is struggling with is that, “The world tells me I can be a CEO, but my church says no”. Despite implying here that she admires broader social moves towards redressing gender imbalances and is looking for gender equality in her church, Lily rushed to tell me “men and women aren’t the same. I’m not a feminist; I’m one-hundred percent sexist”. When I asked what she meant, Lily explained that she is very happy to cook for her younger brother, but then she expects him to take out the garbage; men and women have different skills and roles, she as woman is a nurturer. Yet Lily went on to tell me that she had been to and “couldn’t stand” Hillsong Colour Conferences because they have a “girly and flower-power feel” she does not identify with. “Don’t box me in”, was how she told me she responded to this environment. She suggested that for women like her—who are not married with children, and have no immediate plans to become so—Hillsong Colour does not necessarily hold great appeal. She shrugged this off as part of the “eighty-twenty” rule; you cannot please everyone. Lily here outlined a contradiction common in Pentecostal understandings of gender and sex differences. That there *are* differences is accepted by virtually all members of the Pentecostal and charismatic movement. Agreeing on what these differences are, or what they mean for the running of churches and the actions of individuals is not so clear. As Lily notes above, Hillsong’s version of femininity is different from her own. Despite this tacit recognition that women are actually different from each other (“don’t box me in”), she has an equally strong avowal that women, as a group, are “different” to men. This logic assumes that women must all be a certain way, as must men. Pentecostal explanations of gender and sexual differences are regularly marked by these paradoxes, which are not often engaged with or even acknowledged.

Lily's understanding of gender and her discomfort at the way her sex limits her potential in the eyes of her church, reveals many of the struggles modern Christians face. Scriptural explanations of gender and the historic place of women in the church are both open to interpretation. That women are "caring" and "nurturing" while men are "strong" and "action-oriented" is widely agreed upon by evangelical Christians and is seen as God's intention.<sup>7</sup> Gender differences are assumed to be sex or biological differences, and leaders use them to account for the different positions of men and women in society and the church. Importantly for Pentecostals, both genders can experience the Spirit and, as Lily put it, "men and women both love Jesus" and have an active role to play in supporting their church and spreading the Gospel.

Contemporary Pentecostals accept some tenets of modern gender relations (that women should be educated, financially independent, and able to make their own choices) and also share concerns about the effects of this female independence with wider society (as seen in a reluctance among secular women to identify as feminists and in debates about what modern gender roles mean for social and economic life). Pentecostal leaders are able to use the Bible to offer explanations for and solutions to these modern dilemmas, while those outside the church do not have such easy answers. Of course, there are also the "twenty" percent of Pentecostal women and men who struggle to accept their church's dictating of gender roles, a group that Lily seems to fall into. For this "twenty", there is a disconnect between empowering young women as individuals through their education and encouraging their aspirations, and then constraining their futures by having a clear path they are expected to follow (marriage and children and an ideological and practical submission to the needs of their husband and family) and by limiting the role they can play as leaders in their church. Similarly, men are expected to be leaders not only in their own lives but in their family's too. They must conform to the common secular conflation of masculinity with physical and emotional strength and breadwinner capacity, and behave accordingly.

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<sup>7</sup> Evangelicals, and their organisations, promote attitudes of essential gender differences leading to different expectations and roles for men and women. For more on their "complementarian gender ideology" see Alyssa N. Bryant, 'Negotiating the Complementarian Gender Ideology of an Evangelical Student Subculture: Further Evidence From Women's Narratives', *Gender and Education* 21, no. 5 (2009), 549-65. It should be noted that men are also associated with a desire to be nurturing both inside and outside evangelical cultures. "Responsible fatherhood based on traditional Christian values" involves the father working to provide for his family during the week, but sees him at home on weekends caring, nurturing, and bonding with his children. Michael S. Kimmel, 'Foreword', in William Marsiglio ed., *Fatherhood: Contemporary Theory, Research, and Social Policy* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1995), vii.

Conformity to gender roles is an imperative; a recognition of the Pentecostal reading of the Bible's supposed biological determinisms. Caroline Leaf, speaking at Influencers 'bU' Conference in Adelaide in August 2012 expanded on this theme when she discussed homosexuality. Leaf started with the caveat that she was not going to "get political", and then explained that she saw homosexuality as a "decision"—often the result of "trauma"—that is "wrong". She said, "It's not part of the gene code...God made male and female. He did not make confusion".<sup>8</sup> To Leaf gender roles, and therefore sexuality, are simple concepts; there is male, and there is female, and there is heterosexual relation between the two. Nothing else. Leaf did not explain what she meant by saying that homosexuality was not in the human "gene code", but her doctorate, her work in neuropsychology, the books she has published, and her immense charisma as a speaker seemed to be enough to convince the audience of the truth of her argument. The room we were in was filled with "amens" and the enthusiastic nodding of heads. What struck me as a reductive explanation that conflated sex and gender (not to mention outdated science, given the overwhelming consensus within the scientific community that the genetic basis for homosexuality has not been determined conclusively one way or another) was met with enthusiasm by most other attendees. Perhaps the very simplicity of Leaf's explanation held appeal. Certainly, her marriage of science and scripture impressed the women attending.

Gender within Pentecostal churches has attracted a limited amount of scholarly attention, and much of the existing literature is based on broad generalisations or biographical accounts of female leaders.<sup>9</sup> In surveys of Pentecostalism, scholars point out that the majority of

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<sup>8</sup> Caroline Leaf speaking at 'bU' Conference, Influencers Church, Adelaide. 11 August 2012. Based on author's observations. It is unclear how Leaf would then interpret intersex people who exist "in nature" as well as individuals with various genetic abnormalities.

<sup>9</sup> The existing literature on women in Pentecostal churches is limited. Examples include Roxanne Mountford, who in *The Gendered Pulpit: Preaching in American Protestant Spaces* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003) examines the Holiness Movement as part of her project considering female preachers in Protestant churches. Similarly, Margaret Lamberts Bendroth looks at gender in Pentecostal churches as part of wider work on fundamentalism in *Fundamentalism & Gender, 1875 to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). R. Marie Griffith considers Pentecostal women as part of a broader Evangelical movement in *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) as does John P. Bartkowski in *Remaking the Godly Marriage: Gender Negotiation in Evangelical Families* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001). There are slightly more books on women leaders in Pentecostal churches, such as Elaine Lawless' *Handmaidens of the Lord: Pentecostal Women Preachers and Traditional Religion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988). Lawless did, however, attempt to recover a wider range of female voices in *God's Peculiar People: Women's Voices & Folk Tradition in a Pentecostal Church* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988), though both works are now dated. And finally, there are several biographies of Pentecostal women leaders, such as Daniel Mark Epstein's *Sister Aimee: The Life of Aimee Semple McPherson* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1993).

adherents are women (one study cites a figure of three or more Pentecostal women to every two men) but research concentrating on female experience specifically is negligible.<sup>10</sup> For instance, Anderson, in his impressive and comprehensive *Introduction to Pentecostalism* (2004), says, “the use of women with charismatic gifts was widespread throughout Pentecostalism. This resulted in a much higher proportion of women in Pentecostal ministry than in any other form of Christianity at the time”.<sup>11</sup> Yet the index of the original edition of his work lists only three pages out of 300 as being related to “gender issues”.<sup>12</sup> When outlining the early history of Pentecostalism, Anderson acknowledges women’s exceptionally high involvement in Pentecostal ministry, but he is perhaps unable to unpack their experiences separately to men’s because of the lack of research on the topic. In contrast, Australian religious historian Mark Hutchinson suggests that: “Pentecostalism was originally a religion of socially marginalised rugged individualist—masculinism (or at least a self-denying missionary persona among women) was a natural ally”.<sup>13</sup> Considering that most contemporary Pentecostals could not be considered “socially-marginalised”, the work of both Anderson and Hutchinson leaves two important questions unanswered: why has this form of religion remained attractive and persuasive to women, and how can we learn about this?<sup>14</sup>

It is impossible to understand the operation of Pentecostal churches if the majority of church adherents—usually assumed to be women—are ignored. The limited focus on women is

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<sup>10</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 93.

<sup>11</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 273.

<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that Anderson devotes a whole chapter to “Women and Family” in his more recent *To the Ends of the Earth* which redresses the emphasis placed in the work of other scholars on male leadership in the early days of Pentecostalism. While his chapter points to the barriers Pentecostal women leaders face, it does so by arguing that while “women are not liberated from the larger embedded structures of patriarchy in church and society... liberation often takes place through the reordering of relative participation in the most intimate sphere and in the basic building block of the larger society—the family”. As so, he argues, “the liberation of women in pentecostal churches is all the more profound and transforming. But there is still some way to go”. Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 93-117 (quotation from 117). This chapter will build on Anderson’s ideas and argue that there is indeed a long way to go for both women in churches and scholar’s study of them, and that it is important to separate women’s experiences from the family to gain a more complete picture of the ways women are not liberated by their Pentecostal faith.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Hutchinson, ‘The Contribution of Women to Pentecostalism’, in Shane Clifton and Jacqueline Grey eds., *Raising Women Leaders: Perspectives on Liberating Women in Pentecostal and Charismatic Contexts* (Chester Hill: Australasian Pentecostal Studies, 2009), 191.

<sup>14</sup> In answering these questions this thesis adopts an explicitly gendered approach which means my focus is on practice, processes, and power. As Ambrose and Payne put it, the focus in gendered accounts is on what Pentecostals did and do. Linda M. Ambrose and Leah Payne, ‘Reflections on the Potential of Gender Theory for North American Pentecostal History’, *Pneuma* 36, no. 1 (2014), 50.

particularly problematic in the Australian literature, where there are few attempts to explore their experiences. Cheryl Catford's 2007 doctoral thesis focused on the role of women pastors in the Christian Revival Crusade and, more recently, Marion Maddox has explored gender in Hillsong churches. The only other Australian research that pays significant attention to gender is an edited collection from 2009 on women leaders in Pentecostal and charismatic churches by Shane Clifton and Jacqueline Grey, both of Alphacrucis College.<sup>15</sup> Beyond this, the literature is almost non-existent.

The power dynamic that keeps women unstudied seems to operate at and across numerous levels. Pentecostal churches themselves marginalise the role of women leaders. Their voices are not as prominent as men's in either church services or church publications, and the sources available for studying women's perspectives are fewer.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the audience of the works women in churches author is often understood to be *for* other women, for example, Bobbie Houston's *I'll Have What She's Having: The Ultimate Compliment for any Woman Daring to Change her World* (2008). Bobbie Houston's other book, *Heaven is in this House* (2001) may not be addressed to women specifically, but it includes sections written by her husband that provide the "male perspective."<sup>17</sup> Male leaders do not tend to publish work directed at only their gender. Brian Houston, for instance, has the moral authority to publish works such as *Get a Life: Principles for Success and Enjoyment in Every Area of Life* (1999).<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the idea that women have unique viewpoints and experiences worthy of scholarly study—viewpoints and experiences shaped not by immutable nature, but by a historically contingent gender order—tends to be discounted by researchers who accept Pentecostal teachings. The problem in the secondary material is thus two-fold: most studies focus on leaders, who have predominantly been men; and most studies assume that everyone—regardless of gender—has the same motivations,

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<sup>15</sup> See Cheryl Catford, "Explaining the Recent Increase in Numbers of CRC women pastors", PhD dissertation, Deakin University, 2007; Shane Clifton and Jacqueline Grey eds., *Raising Women Leaders: perspectives on Liberating Women in Pentecostal and Charismatic Contexts* (Chester Hill: Australasian Pentecostal Studies, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> For instance, Brian and Bobbie Houston are both described as the "Senior Pastors" of Hillsong Church, yet a visit to the online Hillsong store reveals that the church is currently selling three books authored by Brian, and only one by Bobbie. See: 'Hillsong Store', *Hillsong Church Website*.

<sup>17</sup> Bobbie Houston, *I'll Have What She's Having: The Ultimate Compliment for any Woman Daring to Change her World* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008); Bobbie Houston, *Heaven is in this House* (Castle Hill: Maximised Leadership, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> Brian Houston, *Get a Life: Principles for Success and Enjoyment in Every Area of Life* (Castle Hill: Brian Houston Ministries, 1999).

experiences, or beliefs. This is the implicit justification for the focus on men's experiences. It seems unlikely that this problem will be resolved if few attempts are made to understand the gendered power dynamics of institutions that leave its majority membership, women, disenfranchised.

This chapter will, therefore, explore Pentecostal understandings of sex and gender, focusing on the experiences of women, recognising that they are different to men's and are not immutable. It argues that women have played a significant role in the history of evangelical and Pentecostal churches, one that is often overlooked. Using participant observation to outline the ways churches enact gender dynamics, the chapter will demonstrate that contemporary Pentecostal understandings of sex and gender are justified using scripture but also represent part of a secular response to broader social changes to, and concerns about, gender roles and the feminist movement. Examining the roles female church leaders play, and their acceptance of a theology of submission, reveals the ways churches answer these concerns. By focusing on the value of traditional or "natural" roles for women, Pentecostals limit the choices available to them. Churches then suggest that having fewer choices is not a limitation, but an example of the "power" of submission, whereby the embrace of femininity allows women to "be themselves" and liberates them from secular society's expectations. They have the freedom to choose a religion that, ironically, offers them freedom from choice.<sup>19</sup> While Lily said she did not want Hillsong to "box me in", I have found that many other Pentecostal women are happy to accept constraints, mostly because their church has explained to them that gender roles do not limit, they liberate.

## Women in early international Pentecostalism

The years preceding and immediately following the Azusa Street revival saw significant changes to evangelical churches' social and religious expectations relating to the role of women. The emerging Pentecostal movement had strong affinities with several nineteenth-

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<sup>19</sup> Contrary to assumptions in self-determination theory, many scholars now argue that conditions where less choice is provided lead to increased motivation and engagement with the subject of the decision as well as increased satisfaction with outcomes and confidence that the best decision has been made. See Alexander Chernev, 'When More is Less and Less is More: The Role of Ideal Point Availability and Assortment in Consumer Choice', *Journal of Consumer Research* 30, no. 2 (2003), 170-83; Barry Schwartz, *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005).

century religious movements founded by women, including the Christian Science movement (founded by Mary Baker Eddy in the 1870s), and the Theosophical Society (co-founded by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky in 1875).<sup>20</sup> In Britain, women—particularly working-class women—were involved in church work to a greater rate than men, and they made significant contributions to church philanthropic work. Bebbington notes that in some Evangelical denominations, women occupied official positions.<sup>21</sup> By the 1880s, evangelical schools and Bible colleges were training women as missionaries, and many became well known—both in the United States and internationally—for preaching to mass audiences. These women included Phoebe Palmer, Catherine Booth, Carrie Judd Montgomery, and Maria Woodworth-Etter, with both of the latter women joining the Pentecostal movement. The surge in female missionaries reflected rapid changes in women’s roles in western societies more broadly; many women sought training and looked for specific “careers”, rather than merely obtaining paid work as a necessity.<sup>22</sup> Men still dominated the ecclesiastical world, and this was particularly the case within the Church of England in Australia, where women were confined to the roles of “matron, maid and missionary”.<sup>23</sup> And so, missionary work represented one of the only career choices for women wanting to labour in this field.<sup>24</sup>

Women were not just missionaries but also church leaders during this period. Charles Barfoot’s and Gerald Sheppard’s study of the changing role of women in Pentecostal American churches argued that “prophetic female figures were central to the genesis and subsequent growth of the movement”.<sup>25</sup> They point to Florence Crawford, founder of the Apostolic Faith Mission in America, and Aimee Semple McPherson, founder of the Church of the Foursquare Gospel, as examples of prophetic female figures significant in the early days of American Pentecostalism. That these women were considered prophetic by their contemporaries is important as Pentecostals see prophecy as coming with the spiritual power of the New Testament Church, which allows room for God’s supernatural intervention.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Barry Chant, “The Spirit of Pentecost: Origins and Development of the Pentecostal Movement in Australia, 1870-1939”, PhD Thesis, Macquarie University, 1999, 427.

<sup>21</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 129.

<sup>22</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 94.

<sup>23</sup> Ruth Teale, ‘Matron, Maid and Missionary: the Work of Anglican Women in Australia’, in Sabine Willis ed., *Women, Faith and Fetes: Essays in the History of Women and the Church in Australia* (Melbourne: Dove Communications, 1977), 17-28.

<sup>24</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 94-5.

<sup>25</sup> Charles Barfoot and Gerald Sheppard, ‘Prophetic vs. Priestly Religion: The Changing Role of Women Clergy in Classical Pentecostal Churches’, *Review of Religious Research* 22, no. 1 (1980), 2.

<sup>26</sup> David Middlemiss *Interpreting Charismatic Experience* (London: SCM Press, 1996), 129.

Prophecy, as a Gift of the Spirit, thus comes with moral authority; an authority that women missionaries and evangelists wielded from the start of the Pentecostal movement.

Outside the missionary world, there was less acceptance of other roles women played in churches. In 1920, Frank Bartleman, one of the key contemporary chroniclers of the Azusa Street Revival, responsible for producing more than 550 articles, 100 tracts, and six books on the subject, wrote that, “a female ministry is naturally a weak ministry”.<sup>27</sup> In his publication *Flapper Evangelism: Fashion’s Fools Headed for Hell* (1920), he went on to say, “God is not changing His order, raising women to equality with man in the ministry. The Apostles were men. The early church is our example. God made Adam first. Then woman for his helper”.<sup>28</sup> Bartleman was not suggesting that gender limited women’s spiritual experiences. Indeed, in his autobiography he recounted that one of the first “signs” he had that the Pentecostal revival centred on Azusa Street was about to begin was when a woman—“a black sister”—spoke in tongues.<sup>29</sup> Rather he was arguing that their position as the “weaker” sex would affect women’s ability to minister and lead churches. Bartleman’s reasoning emphasised the ways women’s experiences were constrained to particular roles in line with social mores and biblical explanations from the early days of the Pentecostal movement.

Bartleman based his arguments about women’s roles on scripture, such as the verses from Timothy and Corinthians given at the start of the chapter, though this scripture can be used to support multiple views. Timothy is one of the Pastoral Epistles (commonly called deutero-Pauline), supposedly letters written by Paul.<sup>30</sup> Echoing Lily’s earlier intuition that scripture needed to be contextualised, biblical scholar Clare Drury argues that many New Testament writers made repeated points about women’s behaviour—encouraging modesty, particularly in public—partly because the successful continuation of the Christian faith and the

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<sup>27</sup> Frank Bartleman, *Azusa Street* (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 1982), 171; Frank Bartleman, quoted in Lisa P. Stephenson, ‘Prophesying Women and Ruling Men: Women’s Religious Authority in North American Pentecostalism’, *Religions* 2, no. 3 (2011), 415.

<sup>28</sup> Frank Bartleman, quoted in Stephenson, ‘Prophesying Women and Ruling Men’, 415.

<sup>29</sup> Bartleman, *Azusa Street*, 39.

<sup>30</sup> Note that the style and eschatological approach of these letters are different enough that many scholars doubt that Paul authored them. They find it more plausible that an unknown author used the figure of Paul—which had assumed authority for many churchgoers by the end of the first century—to craft an image of the Gentile church. Clare Drury, ‘The Pastoral Epistles’, in John Barton and John Muddiman eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1220.

avoidance of persecution was reliant on preserving the status quo.<sup>31</sup> To avoid undue attention and harassment, Christian women needed to behave in a “seemly” manner in public; they could not be perceived to instruct, or to wield authority over men. The justification used was Satan’s temptation of Eve and her subsequent fall, though the author of Timothy departs from the Genesis narrative by ignoring the fact that Adam also ate the fruit and was punished.<sup>32</sup> This teaching about women’s subordination should not be taken out of context. In Romans 16:1 Paul praises Phoebe, a female deacon, and in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, Paul’s commentary suggests that by the middle of the first century, women were commonly acting outside the bounds that church leaders had set for them.<sup>33</sup> Theology, however, can clearly be used to support a range of positions.

Other men in the early Pentecostal movement held similar qualms to Bartleman about female leadership in Pentecostal churches. E. N. Bell, the first Superintendent of the AOG in America wrote an article titled ‘Women Leaders’ for the AOG’s journal, *The Christian Evangel* in 1914 in which he noted:

The New Testament, as well as the Old, gives also some examples of prophetesses. For instance, it is prophesied in Joel as quoted in *Peter*, in *Acts 2:17*, that God would put his Spirit on “daughters and they shall prophesy”. So one of the direct results of the out-pouring of the Spirit in these last days in that women shall, under the power of the Spirit, prophesy.<sup>34</sup>

Bell pointed out that to prophesy is more than merely speaking one’s thoughts; to prophesy is to become “wholly the mouthpiece of God”. However, he went on to say:

This should not drive us to a fanatical extreme as to women preaching. Occasionally God may deem it expedient to lay his hand on some good sister who is experienced in the Word of God not only to proclaim his word to a congregation of believers, but also to take temporary oversight of them till more permanent arrangements can be made.<sup>35</sup>

Bell also had concerns regarding female missionaries, whose contribution he valued, but whom he felt should not work as itinerant evangelists or run missions of their own. Bell noted that women were “recognized in the New Testament only as ‘helpers in the gospel,’

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<sup>31</sup> Drury, ‘The Pastoral Epistles’, 1223.

<sup>32</sup> Drury, ‘The Pastoral Epistles’, 1224

<sup>33</sup> Drury, ‘The Pastoral Epistles’, 1224.

<sup>34</sup> E.N. Bell, ‘Women Elders’, *The Christian Evangel*, 15 August 1914, 2.

<sup>35</sup> Bell, ‘Women Elders’, 2.

as Paul puts it”. He further argued that “God has blessed” the work of women who had opened up missionary stations of their own, but that itinerant women missionaries should aim to find permanent work in a station “under the proper oversight of some good brother whom God has placed in charge of the work”.<sup>36</sup> A 1908 article printed in *Apostolic Faith* also suggested that it was “contrary to the Scriptures that woman should not have her part in the salvation work to which God has called her”. The anonymous author went on to write that men had “no right to lay a straw in her way, but to be men of holiness, purity and virtue, to hold up the standard and encourage the woman in her work.” He qualified this support, however, by noting: “no woman that has the Spirit of Jesus wants to usurp authority over the man”.<sup>37</sup> Women could thus have the same religious experiences as men and could contribute to evangelistic efforts if God called them to do so, but this did not mean that they could be in permanent positions in which they had power over men. The explanation that a true Christian women would not want to “usurp” male authority is an early example of Pentecostals encouraging women to limit themselves relative to men by explaining that this is somehow natural, or what God would want.

When the American AOG formed in 1914, one-third of its ministers and two-thirds of the missionaries working on the Assembly’s behalf were women.<sup>38</sup> Yet, when the General Council of the AOG met for the first time, it adopted a resolution in the organisation’s constitution that reflected Bell’s reactionary views. The resolution outlined that: “we recognize their (women’s) God-given rights to be ordained, not as elders, but as Evangelists and Missionaries, after being approved according to the Scriptures”.<sup>39</sup> Although there were female delegates at the meeting, they could not vote on this or any other resolution. In 1920, the AOG permitted women to become assistant pastors, largely so that wives could pastor their husbands’ congregations when the men were travelling. In 1931, the AOG passed a resolution declaring: “ordination certificates of women shall clearly state that women are ordained only as evangelists”.<sup>40</sup> It was not until 1935 that women could become pastors in their own right, although significant restrictions still existed.<sup>41</sup> Women’s missionary activity

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<sup>36</sup> E.N. Bell, quoted in Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 112.

<sup>37</sup> Anon., ‘Who May Prophesy?’, *Apostolic Faith* 1, no. 12, January 1908, p. 2. Reprinted in *Australian Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Available online via Alphacrucis College WebJournals: <http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/ojs/index.php/ADPCM/>. Accessed 23 June 2012.

<sup>38</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 274.

<sup>39</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 112.

<sup>40</sup> Barfoot and Sheppard, ‘Prophetic vs. Priestly Religion’, 10.

<sup>41</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 112.

and their work ministering to the women in their husbands' congregations had a very practical element. Women pastors and missionaries could reach segments of the population that their male counterparts could not: other women and their children. This is perhaps the reason the male hierarchy accepted a formal, though limited, role for women pastors. While the work of women as missionaries jeopardised their femininity and sexuality by making them publicly accessible, it also gave churches access to a group of potential converts (women) who would most likely be comfortable with, and accepting of, other women. The desire to reach more converts combined the Pentecostal belief in the "priesthood of all believers" and the empowering and legitimating experience of the Spirit—which is open to all, regardless of gender—influenced female participation in, and leadership of, Pentecostal churches.<sup>42</sup> These dual beliefs allowed women to exercise some religious authority in early American Pentecostalism but from the start, this was based on a scriptural and theological obligation to submit to male authority, as God allegedly intended.

## Women in Australian Pentecostalism

Just as women were active in early American Pentecostalism, in Australia women played a similarly important role in the development of the movement here. Beyond the obvious example of Janet Lancaster, key women included evangelists and church leaders such as Florence Mortomore, Pauline Heath, Ellen Mather, Mina Ross Brawner, Edith Anstis, Ruby Wiles, Heather Burrows, Winnie Andrews, and Leila Buchanan (Lancaster's daughter).<sup>43</sup> The influence of these women extended beyond being the wives or daughters of pastors: they preached, taught, and led congregations in the early stages of Australian Pentecostalism. However, as Pentecostal churches grew, so too did the expectation that women would submit themselves to male (usually their husband's) authority.

Women were highly active in early forms of Australian Pentecostalism, both in leading congregations and in spreading knowledge about the movement. Hutchinson suggests that the American evangelist Minnie Abrams took word of events in the Mukti Mission in India

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<sup>42</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 93.

<sup>43</sup> For a biographical sketch of each of these women and their work see Chapter 11 of Chant, *The Spirit of Pentecost*, 263-300.

to Australia.<sup>44</sup> Abrams was, however, more than just a missionary. She wrote the first theological defence of Pentecostalism published in Australia—*The Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire*—in 1906, after seeing the work of the Indian Christian reformer Pandita Ramabai and her Mukti Mission.<sup>45</sup> Much as women were trusted to prophecy and reveal God’s will, they were also trusted to spread it through their writing and their missionary work. Other significant Australian Pentecostal women included Isabella Hetherington, whose goal was to spend her life establishing and running Pentecostal missions for Aboriginals in Victoria and Queensland; Florrie Mortomore, who followed Leila Buchanan—Lancaster’s daughter—to Brisbane, where Mortomore established her own mission; and Mary Ayers, who travelled regularly between Australia and the United States, working with Carrie Judd Montgomery and A. C. Valdez Sr.<sup>46</sup>

The tractability of Pentecostals when it comes to understandings of gender and female leadership is particularly evident in women’s early missionary efforts. There was a need for women’s labour, and so there was scope to negotiate their place. Pentecostal understandings of gender may be entrenched, but within their understandings, there is a surprising degree of flexibility based on the needs of the group at the time. Hutchinson makes a compelling argument about why Pentecostals were comfortable with female missionaries, even those who established missions:

While they remained missionaries, and so were mobile inhabitants of a spiritual frontier on which power relations could be finessed or sidestepped, women were both welcome additions to the Pentecostal workforce and indubitable purveyors of spiritual gifts and authority. Gender was not considered to be a biological issue but a creation-versus-culture issue, and so its claims could be negotiated.<sup>47</sup>

Here at the frontier, there would also have been an intersection between gender, race and class that is important to acknowledge in describing the missionary work of female Christians. Their “whiteness”, as well as their predominantly middle-class respectability, would have affected the socially acceptable ways they performed their gender. Acting in a

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<sup>44</sup> Hutchinson, ‘The Contribution of Women to Pentecostalism’, 192.

<sup>45</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 105.

<sup>46</sup> Hutchinson, ‘The Contribution of Women to Pentecostalism’, 198.

<sup>47</sup> Hutchinson, ‘The Contribution of Women to Pentecostalism’, 199.

manner that was male or female would, at times, have been subordinate to other categories, particularly race and class.<sup>48</sup>

When the frontier settled, missions became churches, and churches sought broader denominational affiliation which meant changes to the leadership positions women could occupy. At this point, Hutchinson argues, issues of gendered “respectability” became important. Owning property, competing with other Christian churches in a public space, and creating intellectual and doctrinal rationales meant “cultural norms of gender relationships increasingly impinged upon the way that Pentecostal experience was worked out”.<sup>49</sup> And so, when Lancaster’s Good News Hall became the Apostolic Faith Mission, Lancaster—the founder of Pentecostalism in Australia—accepted a new title. She became the Secretary of the Mission while her husband became the lead pastor.<sup>50</sup> Lancaster’s decision to diminish her title to make her role in her church seem more in line with scripture and more palatable to conservatives was not unique. *Apostolic News* reported that Pauline Heath, who had led an Adelaide congregation from 1927 until 1933, changed her title from pastor because “a woman is not permitted to be a pastor according to the Scriptures. So Sister Joy, who has humbly, under God, led this work for some years, laid down that title nearly a year ago, and took instead the title of evangelist”.<sup>51</sup> Female leadership within Pentecostal and charismatic churches was never seen as entirely socially or religiously acceptable. The language being used at the time is one of the few ways historians can access contemporary attitudes, and the changing title of female leaders, if not their roles, points to broader attitudes to women in positions of authority.

Lancaster was not the only female Pentecostal leader in Australia. By 1925, women had founded and were leading eleven of the eighteen existing Pentecostal churches planted in the country. A mere five years later, women had started twenty of the thirty-seven Pentecostal churches (for which information is available) in Australia.<sup>52</sup> These numbers are

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<sup>48</sup> Pirjo Markkola, ‘Male and Female’, Hugh McLeod ed, *Cambridge History of Christianity vol. 9: World Christianities c. 1914-c.2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 563.

<sup>49</sup> Hutchinson, ‘The Contribution of Women to Pentecostalism’, 199.

<sup>50</sup> Hutchinson, ‘The Contribution of Women to Pentecostalism’, 199.

<sup>51</sup> *Apostolic News*, quoted in Hutchinson, ‘The Contribution of Women to Pentecostalism’, 202.

<sup>52</sup> Chant, “The Spirit of Pentecost”, 428.

impressive, particularly considering that in 2007, just 5.7 percent of senior pastors in Australian AOG churches were women.<sup>53</sup>

Religions tend to evolve through stages in which gendered power is differently distributed. According to sociologist Max Weber's model of religious evolution, an early "prophetic" stage marks most religions. In the early stage, women have greater scope for full involvement and leadership in a system based on "personal" authority vested in the charisma of individuals. Such egalitarianism, however, rarely extends beyond the first stage of a religious community's formation. As the community develops, and its needs change, the charismatic element of the group becomes dissociated from individuals and is linked instead to "an objective institutional structure". Weber believed that when this happens, "a reaction takes place against pneumatic manifestations among women, which come to be regarded as dishonorable and morbid".<sup>54</sup> He argued that as religious movements become organised, their new structure may leave authority with charismatic leaders, but also shift some power to "priestly" figures. Despite men and women being theoretically equal in Christian theology (that is, equal in the eyes of God), Weber believed the shift away from the power of charismatic prophets came with the "complete monopolization by men of the priestly functions, of law, and of the right to active participation in community affairs".<sup>55</sup> Being called by God and receiving the Spirit was no longer enough. Individuals now had to prove that they were qualified to preach and teach God's message, and it was assumed that men had the necessary qualifications, something that was reinforced by the conferral of ecclesiastical authority on them and their ability to be trained and be ordained.

Drawing on Weber's model, Barfoot and Sheppard argue that during the 1920s, the symbolic function of Pentecostal leadership shifted from a "prophet" model to a "priestly" model—where leadership became more strictly structured and regulated as this religion became formally organised. As a result, leadership positions for women began to decline, which fits

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<sup>53</sup> Catford, 'Women's Experiences', 27.

<sup>54</sup> Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, 104.

<sup>55</sup> Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, 104.

into Weber's "routinization of charisma" theory.<sup>56</sup> They contend that three key factors characterise the Prophet stage of Pentecostalism. First, a "calling" was understood to be the main difference between church leaders and the lay congregation; second, this calling was confirmed through the community's recognition of this person's charisma; and, third, there was a broad belief within the Pentecostal community that "latter rain" was being experienced.<sup>57</sup> One of the characteristics of latter rain is outlined in Joel 2:28 as a period when "your sons and your daughters will prophesy" (NIV). Thus, there was a scriptural basis for women to experience the Spirit in the same way as men. It is therefore possible that the surprising degree of equality between the sexes in early church leadership was due to a belief that the period of latter rain was underway, and so the community was able to confer authority on both men and women based on their experiences with the Spirit. However, the 1930s in Australia was the beginning of the end of this "prophet" model, and there was a noticeable shift towards male leadership.<sup>58</sup> The 1960s saw the first dramatic increase in Pentecostal numbers, and it was in this decade that several important Bible colleges were founded, including the AOG's Alphacrucis College (formerly Southern Cross College), indicating that Australian Pentecostalism was increasingly formalised and had firmly moved into the "priestly" phase.

While the prophet/priest model is useful for understanding changes to Pentecostal organisational structures, it also bifurcates the position of women in these churches. The model does not acknowledge the overlapping challenges women faced before and after the move to male leadership in the 1930s. The model presents these challenges as being about displacement, rather than coexistence. Women's religious authority certainly changed as Pentecostal congregations grew and formalised their authority structures, but "Pentecostal women have always had access to prophetic functions, and always struggled with access to priestly functions".<sup>59</sup> These struggles became particularly strong from the start of the second wave of charismatic religion in the 1960s. In his autobiography, *No Well Worn Paths* (2007),

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<sup>56</sup> This routinisation signals a shift to "everyday forms" by a religion that was based on charismatic, and "out of the ordinary" experiences. This entails a move to more institutionalised settings and the development of new obligations and the growth of new followers as power is no longer restricted to the original group experiencing charismatic gifts. For more, see Gerard Roelofs, 'Charismatic Christian Thought: Experience, Metonymy, and Routinization', in Karla Poewe ed., *Charismatic Christianity as Global Culture* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 228; Barfoot and Sheppard, 'Prophetic vs. Priestly Religion', 4.

<sup>57</sup> Barfoot and Sheppard, 'Prophetic vs. Priestly Religion', 4.

<sup>58</sup> Chant, *Heart of Fire*, 290.

<sup>59</sup> Stephenson, 'Prophesying Women and Ruling Men', 412.

Virgo tells readers that gender roles have been contentious since he first started working as an evangelist in the 1960s. In 1968, he recalled, “it was noticeably the ladies who took the lead” and were willing to speak out and embrace the Spirit. He mentions several women—whom he implies were rather eccentric—as being particularly open to receiving the Spirit. He found this difficult, particularly when a married couple left his house church because they were uncomfortable with public prayer by women: “they felt that if women were going to pray publicly in the meeting they could no longer be part of the church. It was a truly painful moment. They were a beautiful and beloved couple but their conscience would not allow them to break with their understanding of the Scripture’s requirements regarding women”.<sup>60</sup> It seems that the place of women was not just limited by the charismatic movement’s formal hierarchy and by men’s dominance of it. In this anecdote, Virgo suggests that part of the reluctance for women to be in positions of (informal) spiritual authority came from the lay population. The fact that the leader of Newfrontiers, a church whose conservatism still does not accommodate female eldership, was seemingly comfortable with this female spiritual authority is indicative of the need for us to recognise how diverse explanations and expectations of gender roles are among Pentecostals, and the need to look beyond Weber’s theory when analysing how complicated these roles were, and still are.

## Pentecostal understandings of sex, gender, and feminism

Pentecostal churches use Bible verses critical of the role of women as teachers and in positions of church authority in their understanding of appropriate gender relations. This use of scripture, however, is not inevitable: there is precedent in the Bible for female teachers and ample evidence of women preaching and acting outside their assigned gender roles. Women’s historical attraction to Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity is commonly attributed not to a gendered reading of the Bible, but to its emphasis on direct and personal religious experience, opportunities for social support and women’s ministries, and the spontaneous and emotional style of worship.<sup>61</sup> Theologian Lisa Stephenson argues that: “understanding authority as legitimated power, Pentecostal women gain access to a realm of

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<sup>60</sup> Virgo, *No Well Worn Paths*, 62-3.

<sup>61</sup> Katy Tangenberg, ‘Culture, Social Relationships and Self-perceptions of Pentecostal Women’, *International Social Work* 50, no. 2 (2007), 230. See below for discussion of whether more women than men actually participated in early Pentecostal churches and why current historiography assumes this is the case, without a strong evidential base.

religious authority because of their experience of Spirit baptism”.<sup>62</sup> This means that, because of their interactions with the Spirit, Pentecostal women have the power to minister in certain areas. However, this authority does not usually translate to holding leadership positions, which are still synonymous with masculine responsibilities in a way that is reminiscent of nineteenth-century public and private sphere divisions.<sup>63</sup> The idea that women had, and continue to have, spiritual and moral authority (even if they wield their authority behind the scenes), is one that the Australian public is familiar with, even if not everyone accepts female subordination as necessary or acceptable.

To outsiders, there seems to be a clash in explanations of gender. On one hand, there is a belief in Spirit legitimating—and conferring authority on—the experiences of *all* believers, often based on Paul’s words in Galatians 3:28 (NIV) suggesting that Baptism in faith sets aside all social and gendered distinctions: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” On the other hand, conservative interpretations of biblical gender roles argue that this applies to salvation, not the ability to hold church office. This clash makes Pentecostal explanations of gender, sex and sexuality, and the family complicated.

Pentecostals were able to make their interpretations of gender politics palatable to members because of broader Australian social and political conditions.<sup>64</sup> Critiques of second wave feminism led many Australians to embrace a return to the conservative endorsement of the

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<sup>62</sup> Stephenson, ‘Prophesying Women and Ruling Men’, 411.

<sup>63</sup> Public and private sphere divisions in nineteenth century Britain, America, Australia, and other culturally similar countries were based on what were understood to be the innate differences in the interests and abilities of men and women. The chief ways women could acceptably enter the public sphere was through artistic endeavours (for example, their writing or artwork) or through their philanthropic efforts. As much of nineteenth century charitable work was directed through churches or at least used Christian metaphors to explain its aims, there is a considerable body of literature on women who were publicly visible and active in the nineteenth century. For example, see Stewart J. Brown’s discussion of Anglican sisterhoods: Stewart J. Brown, *Providence and Empire: Religion, Politics and Society in the United Kingdom 1815-1914* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2008), 170-74. For more explicit discussion of separate spheres see: Alison Twells, ‘Missionary Domesticity, Global Reform and “Woman’s Sphere” in Early Nineteenth-Century England’, *Gender and History* 18, no. 2 (2006), 266-84.

<sup>64</sup> There is limited academic work on attitudes to sexuality among Pentecostals although Philip Hughes wrote an article on the topic in 2010, see Philip Hughes, ‘Attitudes to Issues of Sexuality’, *Pointers* 20, no. 4 (2010), 13. For a broader study (looking at Protestants, Catholics, Buddhists, and Muslims) see Richard O. de Visser, Anthony M.A. Smith, Juliet Richters, and Chris E. Rissel, ‘Associations Between Religiosity and Sexuality in a Representative Sample of Australian Adults’, *Archives of Sexual Behaviour* 36, no. 1 (2007), 33-46. For a discussion of sexuality, particularly homosexuality, in American Christianity see Mark D. Jordan, *Recruiting Young Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

family as the nation's central social and economic unit.<sup>65</sup> These reactionary views corresponded with rigid gender roles within the family—based on supposedly fixed physiological differences between men and women—as essential for a well ordered, moral society.<sup>66</sup> Marion Maddox draws a link between the founding of Hillsong in 1983, and its enormous growth in the 1980s and 1990s, and the “antifeminist backlash” that occurred during this period.<sup>67</sup> Female sexuality, autonomy, and authority were and still are fraught both inside and outside Pentecostal churches, partly because of the neoliberal orientation on individual responsibility, which diminishes structural inequalities to examples of demand and supply, or explains them as the result of the choices made by multiple individuals.<sup>68</sup> In light of this, it is not surprising that at the start of this chapter, Lily (as a Pentecostal who is also part of the post-feminist generation) railed most strongly against the fact her church was limiting her *choices*. During the two hours I spent talking to her, she did not bring up the ratio of Pentecostal male to female leaders, and she was keen to dissociate herself with the feminist movement, as are many other young women of her generation. Instead, Lily based her concerns about women's role in her church on how this restricted *her* choices: “The world tells me I can be a CEO, but my church says no”. Like many secular Australian women, Lily's experience of inequality was expressed through rhetoric linked to freedom, choice, and empowerment.<sup>69</sup>

Pentecostal women's experiences are strongly linked to that of their husbands and families. Any understanding of the roles women have played in Pentecostal churches necessarily involves examining the ways Pentecostals and charismatics talk about and promote the family and marriage as critical to social cohesion, spiritual well-being, and individual happiness. In the course of my research, I have found that marriage, family, household and

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<sup>65</sup> See Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonard: Allen and Unwin, 1999).

<sup>66</sup> For more on biological essentialisms and the ways they are contested see the following papers, whose authors have contrasting views on the concept and language of biological essentialism: those who critique the concept include John P. DeCecco and John P. Elia, ‘A Critique and Synthesis of Biological Essentialism and Social Constructionist Views of Sexuality and Gender’, *Journal of Homosexuality* 24, no. 3-5 (1993), 126. For a defence of the concept, see: Michael Devitt, ‘Resurrecting Biological Essentialism’, *Philosophy of Science* 75, no. 3 (2008), 344-82.

<sup>67</sup> Marion Maddox, ‘Rise Up Warrior Princess Daughters: Is Evangelical Women's Submission a Mere Fairy tale?’, *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 29, no. 1 (2013), 25.

<sup>68</sup> Anastasia Powell argues that the politics of choice embodies here are an example of the neoliberal and postfeminist narrative. Anastasia Powell, ‘Young Women, Activism and the “Politics of (Sexual) Choice”’: Are Australian Youth Cultures Post-Feminist?’, in Sarah Baher, Brady Robards, and Bob Buttigieg eds., *Youth Cultures and Subcultures: Australian Perspectives* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 217.

<sup>69</sup> Powell, ‘Young Women’, 217.

home, motherhood, sex roles, and family values have become keywords firmly linked in both academic and Pentecostal discourse discussing women and religion. Elizabeth Brusco has argued that the most significant part of the worldwide appeal of Pentecostalism is the “aggressive focus on the family, on marital and parental roles and responsibilities”.<sup>70</sup> “Mother” and “wife” have become terms almost synonymous with “woman”. Writing about her attempts to reveal the sometimes hidden world of Pentecostal women, Brusco argues that within Pentecostal and charismatic churches, efforts to research the role of women are strongly linked to broad gender stereotypes.<sup>71</sup> I would suggest that this is a reflection of the language used by Pentecostal women themselves. Brusco argues that while the roles of women and men in relation to the home and family articulated by Pentecostal and charismatic churches tend to be conservative, these churches also provide a template for directing men back to the family and the domestic realm. For a female field researcher, evidence of this phenomenon is difficult to access.

Unable to attend events directed solely at male members of the church, I must instead rely on women’s conferences and limited published conference proceedings, as well as tracts published by Pentecostal men. However, this redirection to the home also occurs in broader church sermons and talks, with preachers often using this concept to reinforce a conservative ideal of the differences between men and women’s authority. Churches emphasise conservative social attitudes for women *and* men, and pastors regularly tell male congregants to get married, to commit to family life, and to support their wives and children, not to treat women as sexual objects. This message has appeal to some women (and men) who are uncomfortable with changing norms of manhood, which is increasingly associated with casual sexual encounters and marriage later in life, after multiple partners.<sup>72</sup>

In 2011, at the Newfrontier’s ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference’, Terry Virgo, the church’s founder, and various other speakers discussed changing gender roles and challenges to the nuclear family, though not in such explicit terms. P. J. Smyth, a visiting South African pastor, spoke to these issues when he addressed the “teens and twenties” who

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<sup>70</sup> Elizabeth Brusco, ‘Gender and Power’, in Allan Anderson et. al. eds., *Studying Global Pentecostalism, Theories and Methods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 76.

<sup>71</sup> Brusco, ‘Gender and Power’, 77.

<sup>72</sup> See Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Jennifer K. Bosson and Joseph A. Vandello, ‘Precarious Manhood and its Links to Action and Aggression’, *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 20, no. 2 (2011), 82-6.

made up a substantial part of the 6,000 member audience. He said that getting married and starting a family is one of the most exciting and important roles people have in life.

Unfortunately, Smyth argued, men today are “wet blankets” who wait until they are in their thirties to get married. His response to this was: “take a wife and have a kid, it’s not rocket science”.<sup>73</sup> Smyth’s gendered language indicates that though he may have been speaking to a mixed audience, he was clearly addressing the men in particular, viewing them as the actors here, the ones who need to “take” a wife.

Smyth’s advice to the crowd was: find a good Christian man or woman who you love, marry them, and have as many children as you can as quickly as you can. After the conference, I interviewed Ben, a twenty-year-old Australian. I asked him what he thought about Smyth’s sermon, and if his advice matched Ben’s perception of his future.<sup>74</sup> Ben told me that this is what he intended to do: that there is no need to make things complicated and dramatic by dating various people as you see characters do on television. He said he planned to make a decision about whether the girl he was currently seeing is suitable—do they love each other? Do they share the same commitment to God?—and if the answers are yes, they will be married, and then together they will build and pastor a church in Western Sydney. When I joked that he might need to ask if this is the future his girlfriend envisions, he calmly said that while men and women are equal in relationships, women need to recognise male authority when it comes to important decisions. If his girlfriend loves him and loves God, she will understand this. So, I asked, what if he and his future wife disagree over something, such as where to send their children to school? Ben told me that they would pray together but that ultimately, he would be making the decision. This was not only because scripture tells him that this is his role, but also because while females are only accountable for their actions, men are held responsible by God for themselves *and* their family.

The lack of work focusing on the relationship between Pentecostalism and masculinity in Australian culture makes understanding the diversity of male experiences difficult. Brusco’s work on Colombian Pentecostalism found that women are often first to convert, with their families converting soon after. Brusco argues that this establishes women as moral leaders

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<sup>73</sup> P.J. Smyth ‘Mobilise Main Session: Suffering’, speaking at Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference, Brighton Centre, Brighton, UK. 14 July 2011. Based on author’s observations.

<sup>74</sup> Name has been changed. . The following information is based on the author’s conversation with Ben on 14 July 2011 in Brighton, UK.

of the family. Wives, therefore, have the power to redirect to the home household resources that their husbands might otherwise have spent on activities frowned upon by the church, such as drinking, smoking, or gambling. This has the effect of raising the standard of living for the whole household, even while it is still largely dependent on the income of these men.<sup>75</sup> Brusco writes of this phenomenon in *The Reformation of Machismo: Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Colombia* (1995), the title of the book providing a strong indication of what she believes to be the effects of Pentecostalism on Colombian society.

Again, the lack of academic research on masculinity and Pentecostalism in Australia makes comparison difficult, and there is a similar lack of work exploring the phenomenon in countries that are more culturally similar to Australia than Colombia. Where Brusco and Anderson talk of the “liberation” of Pentecostal women based on findings such as those outlined above, in Australia where women largely have a greater degree of autonomy and agency, contemporary Pentecostalism has not necessarily had the same “liberating effect”. In fact, the opposite is often true.

Pentecostal churches constrain women by presenting a particular version of femininity or “womanhood” that their congregation then enacts, under the guidance of the church, particularly at women’s conferences. As Lily suggested above, Hillsong Colour Conferences provide a particularly aggressive and limited articulation of female identity. When I attended the Colour Conference in 2013, girls with flowers woven through their hair blew bubbles into the air as they waited for the day’s program to begin, while older women had their hair blow-dried, or make-up done.<sup>76</sup> Loud chatter, gossip, and laughter filled the air; thousands of women were milling around the Sydney Entertainment Centre’s foyer, lining up patiently but excitedly for the start of the conference.<sup>77</sup> At times, it seemed as though we were there for a stadium show. As the conference started, loud music and bright lights reverberated around the huge conference space. Female singers and musicians in glass boxes suspended from the ceiling were lowered to the stage (see image below). They appeared to be in

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<sup>75</sup> Elizabeth Brusco, *The Reformation of Machismo: Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Colombia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 35.

<sup>76</sup> Hillsong ‘Colour’ Conference 2013, Qantas Credit Union Arena, Sydney. 7 March 2013. Based on author’s observations. Colour 2013 ran from Thursday 7 March - Sunday 10 March. For more see: Colour Conference, *Conference Official Blog*. Available: <http://blog.colourconference.com/>. Accessed 14 September 2013.

<sup>77</sup> Note that although officially called the Qantas Credit Union Arena, the facility is commonly referred to as the Sydney Entertainment Centre (its former name).

diamonds, as if partially reinterpreting strip-club culture: they were attractive young women in cages (they were literally in the boxes Lily disliked so much) but they were encased in glass in the shape of a precious gem, somehow mitigating these other connotations.



Figure 17: Opening night, Colour 2013. Image author's own, taken 7 March 2013. The women on stage and in the glass boxes are singers/dancers who are performing the opening act for the conference.

Once the glass boxes reached the stage, lights flashed, and well-dressed women picked up their microphones and started to sing. Over the next few days, prizes were given away, guest speakers inspired the audience, and Bobbie Houston repeatedly talked about the need for women to put on their “stomping shoes” and live up to their potential. In fact, a remarkably large portion of Bobbie’s preachings over the next few days were made up of shoe analogies and metaphors to do with female empowerment, but the message I took away from the conference was mixed.

Having been to women’s conferences run by other large Pentecostal or charismatic churches in Australia—notably Planetshakers in Melbourne and Paradise Community Church in

Adelaide—I was particularly interested in one session at the Hillsong Colour Conference. It was about female leaders in the church; how they got where they are, how they balance work with families, what particular challenges they face because of their gender, and the role gender plays in their religion. Bobbie Houston was on the panel, as was one of her daughters and her daughter-in-law. Donna Crouch, who in 2009 became the only woman on the national or state executive of the Australian AOG, spoke eloquently and engagingly.<sup>78</sup> The aspect I found most interesting is that Brian Houston hosted the session. He led discussion, sat at the head of the table, and was the one asking questions and directing answers (see image below). Hillsong chose to frame the discussion of women’s leadership in male terms; this was the moment chosen for a man to intrude in the female sphere. That this understanding of gender roles was performed in such a public way sent a strong message to attendees about male leadership and submission to husbands and churches.<sup>79</sup> This intrusion had not occurred at the women’s conferences run by Planetshakers or Influencers I attended in 2012, which were otherwise similar affairs. Men did not head any discussion at the Influencers ‘bU’ women’s conference, though one guest speaker, Caroline Leaf, chose to have her husband on stage with her as an assistant during her session (see image below). At the Planetshakers ‘Beautiful Woman’ Conference, men did not speak at all and were only involved as “attendants”. Dressed in suits and tuxedos, these men “served” the women attending the conference by volunteering to help women around the facility, to set up the venue, and to act as ushers. The considerable diversity in the way gender roles are enacted, perhaps even performed, within Australian Pentecostal and charismatic churches warrants further exploration.

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<sup>78</sup> ACC, ‘Donna Crouch, Executive Member’, *Australian Christian Churches, Assemblies of God in Australia* Website, Available: <http://www.acc.org.au/AboutUs/OurLeadership/DonnaCrouchExecutiveMember.aspx>. Accessed 29 September 2013.

<sup>79</sup> Judith Cassleberry argues that public exchanges inform members’ views, and also indicate that submission “occurs on negotiated terrain that both men and women acknowledge”. Judith Cassleberry, ‘The Politics of Righteousness: Race and Gender in Apostolic Pentecostalism’, *Transforming Anthropology* 21, no. 1 (2013), 80.



Figure 18: Brian Houston speaking at Colour 2013. Image author's own, taken 7 March 2013.



Figure 19: Caroline Leaf, one of the invited speakers at bU Conference (Influencers Church) 2012 chose to have her husband on stage with her as an assistant. 11 August 2012. Image is author's own.

The rigid assertions of gender distinctions maintained by Pentecostal churches means that they have long acknowledged that even if they can have the same experience of the Spirit, men and women's other experiences and attributes are different, and need to be dealt with separately. The gendered assumptions and structures of the churches are an object of study that requires explanation. Pentecostal churches not only segregate men and women physically at conferences, but also intellectually, through the increasing volume of resources and programs aimed at men and women separately. Hillsong created its "Shine" curriculum in 1997 as a "personal development and mentoring tool" for women. The advertisement for Shine Women on Hillsong's online store explains: "Shine has been used globally by thousands of organisations in various settings including schools, refugees, ethnic & indigenous communities, religious groups, rural communities, correctional centres and girls [sic] homes".<sup>80</sup> The church has since developed "Strength" as a group mentoring tool for men and boys. Aside from these programs, there is a growing body of literature directed

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<sup>80</sup> Hillsong Church, "ShineWomen" in 'Hillsong Store', *Hillsong Church Website*.

towards women specifically, much of it echoing the style and message of secular self-help books aimed at female readers. The key themes of these books are valuing and improving oneself (physically, mentally, and spiritually) with the understanding that the pursuit of these goals will lead to greater satisfaction and happier lives for readers. These programs are not a huge leap from those run by the AOG at Klemzig (now Influencers) in 1978, which included a

“Charm course for young ladies” and a “Young Man’s discipleship” course”.<sup>81</sup> Gender distinctions have been, and continue to be, so prominent in Pentecostal discourse and actions that the assumption that women and men have different experiences and roles has become self-fulfilling. By repeatedly telling women that they are different to men and by consistently treating them differently to men, it seems Pentecostals have created an environment where women actually *have* differing experiences.

The body of literature these churches direct at women demonstrate that Pentecostal language describes submission as a way for women to liberate themselves. Lysa TerKeurst’s *What Happens When Women Say Yes to God* (2007), in which she talks about the need for “radical obedience” to God, is an example of Pentecostals viewing freedom as the result of submission. She said that, “pursuing obedience and saying yes to God has been the most fulfilling adventure I have ever let my heart follow”.<sup>82</sup> TerKeurst writes for women, based on her experiences as a woman. She peppers her writing with references to her family, and most of her teachings draw on anecdotes from her life as a wife and mother. She talked about her “sweet daughter” and her own “new outfit fund”, in a teaching about money, and went on to describe the “American Dream” experience of her friends: “Dane was an orthodontist with a thriving practice. He was a dedicated family man, leader in our church, and avid outdoorsman. Kema was a terrific mother of four adopted children and busy making plans to build their dream home”.<sup>83</sup> TerKeurst’s valuing of Dane’s “masculine” qualities—his success, his pursuit of outdoor recreation, and the emphasis on him being a family *man*—is paralleled in her appreciation of Kema as a nurturer. TerKeurst not only believes there is space for women to consume texts written explicitly for their gender, as President of “Proverbs 31 Ministries—“a non-denominational, non-profit Christian ministry that seeks

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<sup>81</sup> Assemblies of God, *Contact: A Weekly Publication to Keep you in Contact*, 19 February 1978, 2.

<sup>82</sup> Lysa TerKeurst, *What Happens When Women Say Yes to God* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2007), 81.

<sup>83</sup> TerKeurst, *What Happens When Women Say Yes to God*, 129-32.

to lead women into a personal relationship with Christ”—she actively directs them into a separate space to learn about and worship God.<sup>84</sup>

Janine Kubala—who runs Kubala Ministries, part of C3 Oxford Falls, with her husband Andrew under the oversight of Senior Pastors Phil and Chris Pringle—wrote a similar book to TerKeurst’s, with the aim of helping women uncover their “female identity”. In *Princess*, subtitled “Become Everything You’ve Been Created to Be”, Kubala argues that “God is calling women across the earth to rise up and to embrace their feminine identity; to take their place alongside men; and to align themselves with the eternal purpose of making God’s name great throughout the earth”.<sup>85</sup> Kubala thus wants women to rise to be alongside—not above or equal to men—with the aim of evangelising the world. Note her early emphasis on women rising up while maintaining their “feminine identity”, a further example of the ways Pentecostals understand there to be fundamental differences between male and female. Kubala is particularly concerned with how this female identity interacts with and is undervalued by, secular society. She prefaces the book with the following:

When I see women in our cities, out in the dark and cold, wearing close to nothing, selling themselves for just a couple of dollars, my heart breaks and I think,  
‘Princess, don’t you know who you are?’

When I read in magazines and newspapers about women who are starving themselves, committing a slow and miserable form of suicide, my heart breaks and I think,  
‘Princess, don’t you know how you are?’

When I see beautiful women trying to disguise their beauty and soothe their lonely, aching hearts with food, my heart breaks and I think,  
‘Princess, don’t you know who you are?’

When I hear about women cutting and hurting themselves, trying to somehow balance the pain that overwhelms them on the inside, my heart breaks and I think,  
‘Sweet Princess, don’t you know who you are?’<sup>86</sup>

Kubala’s writing illustrates the things she believes a “female identity” is not. It does not involve revealing clothing, “selling” oneself, focusing on weight (though she clearly believes women should be neither too thin nor too fat), or self-abuse. Here Kubala implies

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<sup>84</sup> Proverbs 31 Ministries, ‘Who We Are’, *Proverbs 31 Ministries Website*, 2015. Available: <http://proverbs31.org/about/#who>. Accessed 12 May 2015.

<sup>85</sup> Janine Kubala, *Princess* (Frenchs Forest: Janine Kubala, 2008), 193.

<sup>86</sup> Kubala, *Princess*, np.

that a female identity, apart from being attractive, involves being caring and kind, both to one's self and to others. The book emphasises that she believes a misunderstood female identity to be at the root of many problems women experience, and her work echoes historical ideas about women as moral guardians, which is how she sees herself.<sup>87</sup> The message is again individualist. Kabula implies that women hurt themselves not because they live in a society that routinely devalues and disrespects them, but because they do not "know themselves"; they simply need to turn inward and make better decisions. It is this turn inward that feminist scholars point to as problematic: women who are given, or who feel they are given, little power over the outside world turn abuse inwards and harm themselves, whether by starving, cutting, or selling themselves.<sup>88</sup> These acts of self-harm are typically performed by people who feel powerless to control external circumstances and so take control of the only thing they can call their own, an idea Kabula does not acknowledge.

By presenting her book as an exercise in self-actualisation, a guide, and an invitation to learn life skills, Kubala is able to overlay her Pentecostal understanding of gender on her explanation of what it means to be a modern woman. She promotes the idea that women are so physically and emotionally different to men that they must face different problems. Kubala suggests that for women, the solution to their problems is to accept that their female identity revolves around the themes outlined in the chapters of her book: beauty, influence, alignment (with the "Desire of a Man's Heart" and the "Power of Submission"), authority, and "the call".<sup>89</sup> Most significantly, in encouraging women to take their place beside men, she is reinforcing the idea that female and male identity need to be understood as opposing, but complementary, ideas. Kabula asserts that women who accept their female role will know who they are and thus be happy and healthy. Women who align themselves with male desires and embrace the "power of submission" do not have to address the problems and

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<sup>87</sup> Kubala also fundamentally divides women into two groups: those who behave in a manner she approves of and are thus happy and good, and those who do not. Kubala argues that the (immoral) actions of the latter group are the source of their emotional and physical pain. This division echoes the one Anne Summers argued is part of the Judeo-Christian tradition of dividing women into two categories: good and immoral. See Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police* (Camberwell: Penguin Books, 2002).

<sup>88</sup> There is a vast body of feminist literature exploring the relationship between self-harm and power in women, particularly adolescents and women under thirty. For key examples see: Sue McAndrew and Tony Warne, 'Cutting Across Boundaries: A Case Study Using Feminist Praxis to Understand the Meanings of Self-harm', *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing* 14, no. 3 (2005), 172-80; Liz Frost, *Young Women and the Body: A Feminist Sociology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Jennifer J. Muehlenkamp, Jenny D. Swanson and Amy M. Brausch, 'Self-Objectification, Risk Taking, and Self-Harm in College Women', *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2005), 24-32.

<sup>89</sup> Kubala, *Princess*, contents page.

tensions that plague society today, they are empowered, in Kabula's language, as Princesses, and are thus also protected from the world.<sup>90</sup> Kabula is part of the Pentecostal body of literature that may not have answers for complex gendered and sexual inequalities, but offers a simple and apparently appealing solution: women should find power in submission and their traditional gender roles. It is never made clear what this power is, but it seems telling women they have power and are performing the role God created for them is enough.

The inability of Pentecostals to move beyond a circular logic of submission leading to power for women is surprising in the context of their increasing integration with secular socioeconomic norms, as outlined in the previous chapter. Pentecostal women, particularly leaders, are increasingly approaching and crossing the boundaries between feminism, an engagement with—and rejection of aspects of—consumer society, scriptural conservatism, and church hierarchies. Natasha Bedingfield provides a clear example of this trend. Bedingfield, the daughter of missionaries from New Zealand, is heavily involved in the Hillsong London music recording program. She publicly announced that she did not want to associate her femininity with the “musical poledancing” of the secular music industry.<sup>91</sup> London journalist, Liz Jones, described Bedingfield as full of contradictions, being “sweet and steely, shy and super confident, ordinary and a bit starry”.<sup>92</sup> Hutchinson argues that the challenge for successful women such as Bedingfield, is that historically their Pentecostalism and associated conservative values makes them wary of the word “feminist”. And so, Hutchinson argues, “becoming a successful performing artist is—rather like the women who became ‘medical doctors, college presidents, social workers, community organisers, and politicians’ around the time of *fin-de-siecle* first wave feminism—one way of becoming indispensable in the mission of contemporary Pentecostalism”.<sup>93</sup> Pentecostal churches need and want to embrace successful women within their community, but this does not sit easily with their conservative biblical interpretations and teachings.

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<sup>90</sup> Marion Maddox has written about the “Princess theology” of Pentecostal churches and its relationship to submission. See: Marion Maddox, ‘Rise Up Warrior Princess Daughters’, 9-26.

<sup>91</sup> Hutchinson, ‘The Contribution of Women to Pentecostalism’, 212.

<sup>92</sup> Hutchinson, ‘The Contribution of Women to Pentecostalism’, 212.

<sup>93</sup> Hutchinson, ‘The Contribution of Women to Pentecostalism’, 212.

Some feminist-evangelicals have an interpretive theology that says that their gender not only makes them indispensable, but may also be the basis of their emancipation.<sup>94</sup> Amanda Antcliff, a “trainer” at C3 College and regular speaker at C3 events and conferences, authored *Women Rising: A Challenge to Stand Up and Step Out into a Life of Influence* (2010) when the “Holy Spirit planted this message into my heart, and I felt a strong burden and commission to write this book”. Antcliff said, “Women, it truly is our time. It is our time to rise, and it is our time to shine. It is our time to stand up, and it is our time to step out”. Antcliff acknowledged that society, through institutions and culture, places “shackles” on women, but countered her empowering message with a clear declaration that hers was not a feminist piece: “This book is about women rising, but it’s not about a feminist uprising. My vision and my message is the promotion of partnership: men and women working side by side in marriages, ministry, and the marketplace”.<sup>95</sup> In many ways, this message is confusing. Antcliff wants women to “rise” to a position where they can work with men as partners in marriage, religion, and the commercial world, but she shies away from identifying herself or her book as feminist. Perhaps because for all the “potential and purpose” Antcliff describes women as having, she does not understand them as being equal to men. Antcliff does not think less of women than men, but believes their purposes and roles to be so fundamentally different that there is no point engaging with feminist ideals of equality.

Contemporary female church leaders do not always reject feminism’s call for gender equality outright; rather, they articulate a version of this call that they find palatable, one that means it is problematic to label them as feminists. The version of “equality” they outline is similar across churches: a woman must value and prioritise her husband, children, and family, but her priorities can also encompass a career. Since men are not presumably supposed to prioritise their families and wife, in the same way, then this is also not a feminist demand. In *I’ll Have What She’s Having*, Bobbie Houston argued, “being a woman of strong conviction has nothing to do with misguided feminism. Feminism in its purest origin is the emancipation of wrongly imprisoned womanhood”. Houston sees this “misguided

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<sup>94</sup> Johanna Stuckey, *Feminist Spirituality: An Introduction to Feminist Theology in Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Feminist Goddess Worship* (Toronto: Center for Feminist Research, York University, 1998), 1720.

<sup>95</sup> Amanda Antcliff, *Women Rising: A Challenge to Stand Up and Step Out into a Life of Influence* (Lake Mary: Creation House, 2010), 2-3.

feminism” as women “trying to be men, when God created them women”.<sup>96</sup> Houston encourages women to discover their “position” in life, because “no one can be mum to your child quite like you can. No one can stand beside and complete your husband like you can. No one in the body of Christ can fill your individually designed position as perfectly as you”.<sup>98</sup> Houston sees women as holding a complementary place to men; she advocates clear gender roles and there is little room in her explanation of these roles for women who do not see their “position” in life as involving marriage and motherhood. Virgo, who explicitly said, “God has made us different and has given us different roles”, echoes this conception of the sexes being separate but equal.<sup>97</sup> Houston tries to co-opt feminism here for her own purposes, telling women that “real” feminism is about “the emancipation of wrongly imprisoned womanhood” and not about “trying to be men.”<sup>98</sup> This quotation acknowledges that there *were* issues in the past: women had been “wrongly imprisoned”—presumably by unequal laws, unequal wages, and the like—but suggests these problems are now fixed, so women should focus on their unique propensities.

Houston does not suggest that women cannot have successful careers, as she does herself. Rather, she articulates a form of femininity and womanhood where women need to accept that God has created separate sexes, with distinct gender roles, and thus keep their hearts “pure” and “live a generous and hospitable life”, as well as understanding that their role is to be “embracing”.<sup>99</sup> As an example, Houston says that “faith” of “women with conviction regarding the bigger picture...causes them to react beautifully and generously when, for example, that lovely husband or child brings home a few unexpected guests”.<sup>100</sup> In Houston’s understanding of gender roles, she did note that financial independence is important for women. She used 1 *Timothy* 3:3 to argue that while Godly women should not love money, they should “have an understanding of healthy biblical prosperity” and “know that God desires women to be resourced so that we can make a difference in the world”.<sup>101</sup> Note that Houston does not refer to the need to be financially independent of men; rather, women are to be independent so that they can “make a difference”, the implicit assumption

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<sup>96</sup> Houston, *I’ll Have What She’s Having*, 111. 98

Houston, *I’ll Have What She’s Having*, 112.

<sup>97</sup> Virgo, *No Well Worn Paths*, 237.

<sup>98</sup> Houston, *I’ll Have What She’s Having*, 111.

<sup>99</sup> Houston, *I’ll Have What She’s Having*, 118-9.

<sup>100</sup> Houston, *I’ll Have What She’s Having*, 119.

<sup>101</sup> Houston, *I’ll Have What She’s Having*, 122.

being that their money could *care* for others less fortunate. Explaining Houston's understanding of gender differences requires moving beyond what Linda Moorhead describes as the "sex war stance" commonly associated with second wave feminism, and disregarding the idea that there is a simple dichotomy between men (as oppressors) and women (as victims).<sup>102</sup> Yes, Bobbie Houston wants women to act in a way that many outside the church would see as limiting, but she herself has profited from spreading this message. Ironically, women look to Bobbie (and the other women writers whose work is outlined above) as a source of authority and a role model when it comes to understanding their own limited power in their family and their church.

## Leadership and submission

While women have long been prominent in the Pentecostal movement, publicly promoting women as leaders within the Pentecostal community (note that church leaders are not always church elders or pastors) is a more recent phenomenon. Catford's research into female leaders demonstrates that while there are a growing number of Pentecostal and charismatic women being ordained, there are still theological, social, cultural, and organisational barriers.<sup>103</sup> Where early Pentecostal leaders were characterised by, and noted for, their "access" to spiritual power, there has been a broader shift in leadership so that, along with charisma, Pentecostal leaders such as the Houstons and the Pringles are noted for their "authenticity" and immediacy.<sup>104</sup> For contemporary women leaders, these traits are only valued when accompanied by visible and overt femininity.<sup>105</sup> The key differences between early female Pentecostal leaders, such as Lancaster, and contemporary leaders, such as Hillsong's Darlene Zschech, is their relationship to the public and their broader cultural relevance. Hutchinson argues, "part of the role of women in Pentecostalism has been to relativise ruling social boundaries and create mechanisms by which Pentecostalism can cross them with relative impunity".<sup>106</sup> Here Hutchinson is alluding to broader changes in the

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<sup>102</sup> Linda Woodhead, 'Feminism and the Sociology of Religion', in Richard K. Fenn ed., *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 69-70.

<sup>103</sup> Catford, 'Women's Experiences', 32.

<sup>104</sup> Hutchinson, 'The Contribution of Women to Pentecostalism', 191.

<sup>105</sup> Hutchinson, 'The Contribution of Women to Pentecostalism', 191.

<sup>106</sup> Hutchinson, 'The Contribution of Women to Pentecostalism', 192.

relationship between Pentecostalism and wider Australian culture (as outlined in Chapter Six). The dichotomy of male versus female values has shifted in broader Australian culture, but there has been less of a change within Pentecostal culture.

Today the AOG in Australia claims to have over 250,000 members, and twenty-five percent of credentialed members (that is, those with ministerial or pastoral credentials) are women.<sup>107</sup> David Cartledge argues that Pentecostal encouragement of women in ministry is one of the reasons for the movement's growth and success, yet there does not seem to be a strong enough evidential base to prove that this is necessarily the case, or that there is a causal link between female leadership and overall church numbers.<sup>108</sup> Cheryl Catford's examination of the challenges facing female Pentecostal leaders highlights that outside of women's and children's ministries, women are underrepresented in denominational leadership positions. Furthermore, women who have become part of ministry teams do not generally fill the same church governance positions as would be expected of their male counterparts.<sup>109</sup> Clearly, barriers remain for women as leaders of Pentecostal or charismatic churches in Australia.

An examination of the history of the movement, and particularly of female involvement in early Pentecostalism, demonstrated that while women were certainly active in, and leaders of, the early movement, this has not translated to contemporary official authority or power. When discussing leadership, Newfrontier's Virgo was explicit: "you will not find women in governmental leadership in NFI churches".<sup>110</sup> He acknowledged that social change and the gospel have shown that women should be accepted in churches as the equals of men, but argued that male leadership was taught and practiced in scripture:

Jesus, who, as a rock of offence and a stone of stumbling, fearlessly cut through the traditions of his day and attacked all mere conformity to established norms, nevertheless chose twelve *men* to be apostles. A tax collector, who would not only have been hated but also socially and religiously unacceptable and outcast, plus a member of the extremist Zealots, was invited, demonstrating that Jesus was not simply keeping within what was politically correct in his day.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Catford, 'Women's Experiences', 27.

<sup>108</sup> David Cartledge Personal Papers, held in the Pentecostal Heritage Collection of Alphacrucis College, Parramatta.

<sup>109</sup> Catford, 'Women's Experiences', 31.

<sup>110</sup> Virgo, *No Well Worn Paths*, 235.

<sup>111</sup> Virgo, *No Well Worn Paths*, 235-36.

Here again, we see the need to look past scriptural explanations for gender roles, indeed, this is what these churches are doing themselves. Virgo argued that restrictions on women in leadership positions do not mean they cannot be actively involved in ministry. He noted that his wife helps lead a cell, speaks at women's conferences, writes books, leads an Alpha table, prophesies, lays hands on the sick, and casts out demons. However, when it comes to women in church government and headship, Virgo argued, "we would regard these as territory forbidden to women by Scripture, not simply through what some people are pleased to interpret as the supposed caprice of a hard-faced, antiwoman, ex-Pharisee like Paul".<sup>112</sup> Virgo is setting himself up as the reasonable party here. He recognised that some would criticise the restrictions placed on women in his organisation, but implied that criticism will be based on the critic's misunderstanding of Paul's position, and Virgo thus undermined the validity of critiques without really engaging with them.

As noted above, Pentecostal churches are more likely to give women leadership positions in ministries that are either creative or caring. For these churches, there is an important and repeated emphasis on the particular role women can and should play in the family. Unfortunately, this has often led to women's roles being conflated with issues of "the family" in the literature about these churches. Bernice Martin coined the term "Pentecostal gender paradox" based on her work on South American Pentecostalism and her explorations of countries where machismo culture dominates. Martin argues that in these societies, Pentecostal women are empowered to institute family discipline—including disciplining their husbands—because these actions are "sanctioned and effectively policed by the church community, which puts the collective needs of the household unit above the freedom and pleasures of men".<sup>113</sup> Martin suggests that the valuing of the family's needs over the father's freedoms "has called an end to the long-tolerated double standard of sexual morality".<sup>114</sup> While Pentecostal churches in Australia also place emphasis on the needs of the family unit, this does not necessarily translate to a curtailing of male freedoms or female liberation. In

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<sup>112</sup> Virgo, *No Well Worn Paths*, 236.

<sup>113</sup> These pleasures refer mostly to sexual gratification, gambling, and drug and alcohol use, which were seen by these churches being more tempting to men than women, thus placing on women the burden of policing and punishing their husband's when their behaviour falls outside the moral and social bounds set by the church.

<sup>114</sup> Bernice Martin, 'The Pentecostal Gender Paradox: A Cautionary Tale for the Sociology of Religion', in Richard K. Fenn ed., *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 54.

fact, Pentecostal women understand and provide for the male “need for pleasure”, as one of the needs of the household unit and as part of their wifely responsibilities.

Despite a focus on the family unit and the valuing of both men and women’s work in that unit, Pentecostalism rarely challenges patriarchy or power structures that designate women as unequal to men. As Anderson argues: “Through its emphasis on conversion and holiness, Pentecostalism often creates a different type of man, a domesticated man, and thus obliquely offers a socio-political critique resulting in the empowerment, liberation, and equality of women. Well, almost”.<sup>115</sup> Anderson goes so far as to argue that many Pentecostal churches deliberately legitimate these structures.<sup>116</sup> Similarly, the literature dealing with women and the family often does the same, and so itself legitimises the Pentecostal conflation of the two. But how can we separate women’s agency from the family? Should we do this? Have Pentecostals made the two so synonymous that this is impossible? What about unmarried women or women who cannot have children? How are they received and represented within Pentecostal churches? And then there are broader structurally-based concerns faced by women in developed countries including Australia and, US, and the UK, such as lower rates of savings, high rates of domestic violence, the sexualisation of very young women, and the spread of internet pornography and rape culture. Many of these issues are rooted in the law, politics, and institutions traditionally (and still heavily) dominated by men, which means that issues specifically affecting women are often unaddressed or under-addressed. There are, of course, Pentecostal, evangelical, and Christian women who fight to have such issues addressed, and often do so within a strongly Christian framework and logic, but many of the answers Pentecostal give to these questions are based around the ideology of submission.<sup>117</sup>

A theology of female submission creates barriers for women hoping to obtain positions of leadership within many Pentecostal churches. One of the limitations of the Pentecostal logic in justifying the constraints on women is a tendency to merely point to the existence of female leaders in churches without explaining where they derive their power: from their submission to their husbands and their church. Couched in positive language is clear evidence of the different ways men and women are valued by their churches. None of the

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<sup>115</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 115.

<sup>116</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 115.

<sup>117</sup> See for example Deborah Meroff, *True Grit: Women Taking on the World, for God’s Sake* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media, 2004).

women's conferences I have attended have included earnest critiques of the challenges women face in obtaining leadership positions. At the session on female leadership at Colour 2013 (outlined above) Brian Houston said, "we don't have any issues whatsoever about women having key roles in church life", but went to say that he "thanks God" that Bobbie does not try to be anything other than what God calls her to be and is grateful that she adds femininity to his male leadership style. He pointed out that male church leaders across Hillsong's Australian churches report to Julia A'Bell, who is Lead Pastor of Hillsong Australia.<sup>118</sup> He did not, however, emphasise that Julia A'Bell is a co-pastor with her husband, Joel. Nor that both the A'Bells ultimately fall under Brian's authority. Many churches circumvent the issue of female elders and explicit discussion of submission by appointing married couples to leadership positions. Yes, Julia has authority, but it is predicated on her position as a wife, and on acknowledging that ultimately, the head of her church is male.

Even the language used to introduce the A'Bells on the Hillsong Website is telling of the gendered understanding of their different roles:

Joel is an innovative thinker, leader and communicator. His fresh leadership ideas and style have helped shape Hillsong's flourishing multi-campus church. Julia is responsible for the outworking of the vision in the Australian campuses, including Hillsong Sisterhood. She has an enthusiasm for life which is evident in her communication style.<sup>119</sup>

Joel's intellectual and leadership skills are lauded on the Hillsong website while Julia is noted primarily for her work with other women. Where Joel is an "innovative" communicator, Julia is an "enthusiastic" one. This is not to deny that Joel and Julia can have different skill sets; of course they can. The point to be made here is, rather, that the representation of these church leaders by Hillsong fits within a wider Pentecostal gendered discourse. The churches' rhetoric reveals that they consider it important, particularly for women, that both sexes work together, but that their different capacities are understood as unassailable. The literature the churches produce binds men and women together and

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<sup>118</sup> Author's own observations based on attendance at 2013 Hillsong 'Colour Conference', Sydney Entertainment Centre, Thursday 7 March - Sunday 10 March, 2013. *Conference Official Blog*. Available: <http://blog.colourconference.com/>. Accessed 14 September 2013.

<sup>119</sup> Hillsong Church, 'Joel & Julia A'Bell', *Hillsong Church Website*. Available: <http://hillsong.com/contributor/joel-julia-abell/>. Accessed 13 August 2015.

encourages them to partner together while ideologically separating their roles and experiences within the church.

Other Pentecostal churches also view marriage as a way to empower women, while still reinforcing their place relative to men's. Newfrontiers church is more conservative than Hillsong and does not allow women to be elders at all. David Devenish, who worked alongside Virgo in founding Newfrontiers and who is now one of the church's leaders, wrote *Fathering Leaders, Motivating Mission* (2001), which is a guide to forming apostolic teams and networks of churches.<sup>120</sup> In a section titled "How Then are Apostolic Teams to be Formed Today?" Devenish outlines what he sees as the role of women in such teams. They should, he writes, be involved primarily as wives:

Our wives are to be involved with us in our mission. ... I have found it very helpful for Scilla and me to travel together. Not only do I value her personal support and companionship, particularly on longer trips, but I also find that the two of us together are able to offer more effective support and counselling to leadership couples we visit in different places. Travelling as husband and wife also makes it easier for us also to have other women travelling as part of the team. This would not normally be appropriate otherwise.<sup>121</sup>

This conception of women having a critical role to play as wives of church leaders again indicates the ways women's roles are defined and restricted. Similarly at the Paradise 'Beautiful Woman' 2012 conference Sam Evans, wife of the church's Senior Pastor, Russell Evans, introduced a guest speaker in a very gendered way. She described Wendy Perez as "an anointed woman of God", saying "she doesn't just have a frilly little preach – she has the Word of God". Perez's power, in Evans' description, does not come from being "frilly" or "little", which I understood to be synonymous with feminine. Evans went on to assure the audience that Perez "stands in agreement with a man of God", her husband, Benny. The authority of Pentecostal women, even those with leadership positions, is constantly referenced as being relative to a man.

Church leaders' written and oral testimonies conceal gendered constraints in the language of freedom and choice, as seen above. However, more than this, they present the secular

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<sup>120</sup> Newfrontiers has sixteen elders, all of whom are men. See Newfrontiers, 'Leadership of Newfrontiers', *Newfrontiers Together on a Mission Website*.

<sup>121</sup> David Devenish, *Fathering Leaders, Motivating Mission: Restoring the Role of the Apostle in Today's Church* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media Ltd., 2012), 229. <sup>124</sup> Houston, *I'll Have What She's Having*, xiii.

world and those who follow its tenets as being the true source of women's limitations. Bobbie Houston's *I'll Have What She's Having* argues that the "ultimate compliment" is for someone to see your lifestyle, attitude, and sense of purpose, and then want those same things.<sup>124</sup> The book is advertised as an "encouraging handbook" in which "Bobbie shows you how you can break out of your limited ideas of who you are into the glorious freedom and joy of the daughters of the Kingdom of God".<sup>122</sup> The implication here, and throughout the book, is that the secular world and women's self-doubt have limited them, but that God is ready to free women and it is now up to them to allow Him to do so.

Houston does not seriously challenge gender norms established by the majority of Christian churches. As one of the key female figures in Australian charismatic Christianity, her views speak to broader understandings of the role of women in the church and society. Houston suggests that there is an archaic perception of Christian women as being drab, colourless, and lacklustre. She deliberately presents herself in way that counters this perception at conferences and in publicity material. For example, on the front cover of *I'll Have What She's Having*, Houston looks slim, fit, and tanned. She is laughing, her blonde hair is freshly done, her cheeks bronzed and her lips glossy (see image below). There is nothing drab or colourless about Bobbie Houston.

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<sup>122</sup> Hillsong Church, Promotion material for "I'll Have What She's Having" in 'Hillsong Store', *Hillsong Church Website*.

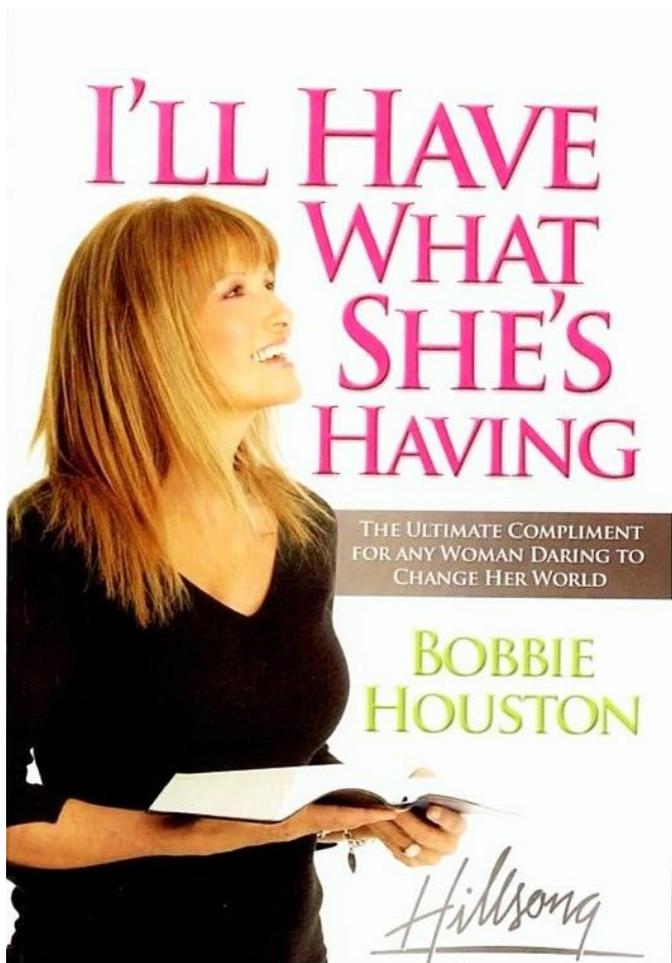


Figure 20: Scan of front Cover of Bobbie Houston, *I'll Have What She's Having*.

She argues, “single, married, divorced, or widowed is not a status that affects your destiny”, although this affirmation is somewhat undermined when she claims to know “literally dozens of women who are single, active, and achieving so much in life”. Implicit in this casual remark is that women should be congratulated “achieving so much” without a male partner.<sup>123</sup> She urges readers to look for equal partnerships, and explains that she sees herself as husband Brian Houston’s equal, even though this means they have distinct roles that limit her authority relative to his.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Houston, *I'll Have What She's Having*, 150.

<sup>124</sup> Houston describes herself as being “Evenly (Equally) Yoked” to Brian, and tells readers: “Carry the vision together with your spouse”. Houston, *I'll Have What She's Having*, 154.

Brian Houston has openly said that he does not believe women are obliged to submit to their husbands. Speaking about gender roles in a 2005 interview, Houston explained:

Bobbie works alongside me. We're very much a team. In a sense, I've got a conservative, biblical idea that a man should take a role of leadership in his life, but I certainly don't adhere to the mentality that a woman must submit or that she should be pushed down. I absolutely believe that there's a sense of walking together in life.<sup>125</sup>

Brian seems unaware of the paradox in his explanation of his relationship with Bobbie; he is the leader, but that does not mean she must submit. The closest Bobbie Houston comes to addressing the inequalities in submission is when she explains that “all of us [not just women] can forfeit our destinies by refusing to grow and expand, by refusing to submit and be Christlike”.<sup>126</sup> Because submission is presented as “Christlike”, Bobbie makes it hard for women of faith to challenge the ways this might limit them and echoes her husband's earlier justification that he bases the importance of male leadership on a “biblical idea”.

## Conclusion

Women may exercise authority in churches, a reflection of dramatic changes to broader social authority structures primarily during the 1960s, but that does not mean that they are necessarily seeking a new liberation theology. Many of the women Elaine Lawless spoke to during her field research in Missouri who had risen to positions of power and authority within Pentecostal churches, were able to do so because they embraced a conservative fundamentalism that did not dramatically challenge the familiar authority structures. Lawless argues that in their preaching, these women use maternal and reproductive images as strategies “to strip their presence behind the pulpit of its most threatening aspects”.<sup>127</sup> This is why it is so important to consider the historical contingency of the arguments Pentecostals make, and move beyond their theological explanations. If we do this, it becomes apparent that Pentecostals echo some views held in secular society. Both are concerned with what the feminist movement means for gender and family roles. Both are concerned with how women's education and career ambitions will fit with their putatively natural nurturing

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<sup>125</sup> Brian Houston, in ‘The Life of Brian’, *Australian Story*.

<sup>126</sup> Houston, *I'll Have What She's Having*, 112.

<sup>127</sup> Lawless, *Handmaidens of the Lord*, 145.

role, particularly as mothers. Moreover, men in both sectors are anxious about being displaced by women in positions of leaderships, as well as how this might change organisations and society more broadly.

The dissonance between the message of empowerment preached by female leaders and the restrictions that others, and they, place on their power seems striking to an outsider. That female Pentecostal leaders do not see a paradox in the fact that they may pastor a church and act as role models for other women, while submitting to their husbands' authority, makes this phenomenon even more fascinating. Broad social changes to women's roles within the family and wider society have not transformed their roles within their churches. While Bobbie Houston may have encouraged women in the audience at Colour 2013 to put on their "stomping shoes" and live up to their God-given potential, she and other Pentecostal churches clearly articulate and define what that potential involves. An education? Yes. A career? If one chooses. Self-confidence and a strong sense of self-worth based on your relationship with Jesus? Absolutely. But most importantly, a family and submission to the ideas of the church.

One of the key problems Pentecostal women face as a result of the Pentecostal gender paradox is not just that churches deny women equal leadership and urge them to submit to men, even as they permit them to be models for other women and to exercise certain forms of authority. It is that within neoliberalism, men and women are supposed to be unconstrained by structures, even ones like gender. The secular world decrees that Lily and other young women are not to be told that they *have* to love flowers, shopping, and makeup or any other "typically" feminine trope. They are free to decide what they are actually interested in; the choice is theirs. Thus in Pentecostalism on the one hand, there is an assertion of narrow "female" and "male" stereotypes; on the other, an increasing embrace of neoliberal individualism that suggests (in line with feminism) that such stereotypes are not rooted in biology. That Pentecostal churches do not engage with these critiques in any detail has so far meant that scholars have not either. The agency of Pentecostal women is limited both by their churches and also in academic discourse. Recovering their experiences and understanding Pentecostal interpretations of gender, submission, and feminism helps explain that while Bobbie wanted the women at Hillsong Colour to put on their stomping shoes, she does not want them to stomp too hard.

## Chapter Four: The Road Leads Home

“One road leads home and a thousand roads lead into the wilderness.”

C.S. Lewis, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, 1933.<sup>1</sup>

At seven p.m. on a surprisingly warm English summer's night, 5,000 people filed into the Brighton Centre, a purpose built exhibition and conference venue. “Youth and twenties” members of the audience stood in front of the stage and started inflating beach balls and pulling out glow-in-the-dark sticks to use as necklaces and headbands. Tiered seating lined the back and side walls, and a large stage took up the front of the hall. The stage was set up for a twelve-person rock band and adorned with the flags of the sixty countries represented here. Huge screens were hung on either side of the stage, projecting live video of the crowd and performers. A mosh pit quickly formed at the front of the hall, while the “Welcome Team” directed those who preferred to sit to the arena-style seating. The atmosphere was one of barely suppressed excitement, even giddiness.

People chatted and gossiped as they got out their Bibles and notebooks. Some pulled national banners out of their bags, and the woman seated in front of me proceeded to drape herself in a Canadian flag. Cameras started to flash as the lights dimmed; what the organisers described as the “party” was ready to begin.<sup>2</sup> The floor vibrated as the band on stage started playing the Black Eyed Peas' *I Gotta Feeling*, and the audience roared in response that “tonight's gonna be a good night”. The “apostles”, or “elders”, of the church walked onto the stage and the congregation greeted them with booming applause and the high-pitched squeals usually associated with the entrance of a film star on the red carpet.

Terry Virgo, the founder and leader of this church, invited the audience to “feel the presence of the Spirit” and encouraged them to do so by speaking in tongues. The ensuing thrum built until some attendees began to wail in apparent rapture or cry in seeming ecstasy. The noise

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis (1933) *The Pilgrim's Regress* (Grand Rapids: W.m. B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 156.

<sup>2</sup> The session was formally titled ‘Prayer and Offering Evening’ but during the seminars and main session talks over the previous few days the evening was repeatedly referred to as “the party”.

disappeared as the night's "preach" (in this context, essentially a series of biblical lessons for the modern world) started. Later in the evening, an elder yelled at the crowd — his hands wildly gesturing and his face turning puce — that he had "never felt so close to revival". They roared their approval back at him; seemingly, neither had they.

These 5,000 Christians are part of the Newfrontiers family of churches, which represents over 850 churches in more than sixty different countries. They were in Brighton at the "Together on a Mission" Conference to celebrate the end of Newfrontiers' "Missionary Phase". Virgo explained the next phase of the Church as a consolidation of Newfrontiers' foothold in countries where it has already planted churches. This goal was to be achieved by targeting new audiences within these countries, or, as the elders referred to it, by "touching unreached people groups". And so, this was the final time these people would come together on this particular mission. Enthusiasm for the change in direction was certainly not lacking.

By the end of the night, Newfrontiers had raised 925,000 pounds sterling for the church's new phase.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 'Prayer and Offering Evening' (hosted by David Holden) at Newfrontiers 'Together on a Mission' Conference, Brighton Convention Centre, Brighton, UK. 14 July 2011. Based on author's observations. Conference ran from Tuesday 12 – Friday 15 July.



Figure 21: Prayer and Offering Evening hosted by David Holden, at Newfrontiers 'Together on a Mission' Conference, 2011. Image author's own, taken 14 July 2011.

Virgo and his church demonstrate the fact that Pentecostals are aware of the globalising form they take (indeed, that they must take) as evangelical bodies aimed at spreading the Word. The missionary focus of this church is not surprising given the missionary origins of the Pentecostal movement outlined in Chapter One. The "Great Commission" given by Jesus to the eleven disciples in Matthew 28:16-20 forms the basis of this goal. Pentecostal churches follow Jesus' instruction to: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20). The commission provides the basis of their twin aims: to plant new churches, and to plant people more strongly within existing churches. Evangelicals must, therefore, present a message and worldview that is easily exportable, but that is also cohesive with local contexts, leading them to constitute

“part-cultures”.<sup>4</sup> Pentecostalism, like other forms of Christianity, expects to come into contact with and then reject other worldviews. Its twin aims of outreach and retention are based on the edges of contact between it and other views; recognising other understandings and rejecting them occurs simultaneously.<sup>5</sup>

There is a threefold tension common in evangelicalism. Churches must create “home like” communities that speak to individuals’ specific contexts, while proving the need for a new community in these settings, while simultaneously reaching the entire world with a single message. It seems paradoxical both that Virgo wants to speak to people in their own idiom while rejecting aspects of their local culture, and that he wants to expand his local appeal while reaching a global audience. However, while attacking local worldviews as a way of demonstrating the superiority of Pentecostal religion, Pentecostals are in fact accepting the ontologies of other cultures.<sup>6</sup> They are thus able to root themselves locally by critiquing the local. They do this most successfully by making their churches and religion the true “home” of constituents; the church is a place relevant to the modern world that also offers refuge from it. By planting people strongly within existing churches, Pentecostals are then able to focus on global expansion.

What Virgo and other Pentecostals thus represent is a new form of de-territorialised Christianity.<sup>7</sup> People are always redirected back to their church and encouraged to make it central to their identity. Their church is home; all roads lead there. Hillsong reflected this redirection to the church when it made a film for its “Sisterhood” called ‘The Road Leads Home’. The film tells the story of three young women who found their pathway home by recognising that the “greatest humanitarian need in the world is ‘the human heart in search of truth’”.<sup>8</sup> Hillsong also sells clothing bearing slogans about the church being home (see images below), further emphasising the importance the church places on this message. I argue that Pentecostal churches have become increasingly successful at negotiating local and global needs as they have become more organised and a part of a more ecumenical

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<sup>4</sup> Simon Coleman, ‘Studying “Global” Pentecostalism’, *PentecoStudies* 5, no. 1 (2006), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Joel Robbins, ‘Anthropology, Pentecostalism, and the New Paul: Conversion, Event and Social Transformation’, *South Atlantic Quarterly* 109, no. 4 (2010), 648.

<sup>6</sup> Joel Robbins, ‘On the Paradoxes of Global Pentecostalism and the Perils of Continuity Thinking’, *Religion* 33, no. 3 (2003), 223.

<sup>7</sup> José Casanova, ‘Religion, the New Millennium, and Globalization’, *Sociology of Religion* 62, no. 4 (2001), 417.

<sup>8</sup> *The Road Leads Home* (2015) for sale via ‘Hillsong Store’, *Hillsong Church Website*.

movement. They are overwhelmingly concerned with efforts to include and welcome as wide a group of people as possible.



Figure 22: “Love Lead Me Home T-Shirt”, advertised for sale at ‘Hillsong Store’, *Hillsong Church Website*.



Figure 23: “The Road Leads Home T-shirt”, advertised for sale at ‘Hillsong Store’, *Hillsong Church Website*.

These churches can make religion “home” in a variety of modern contexts. At first, this seems to be evidence of the ways these churches are flexible. In fact, Pentecostals and evangelicals broadly, particularly when it comes to doctrine, are often less liberal and flexible than other Christian churches when it comes to many aspects of modernity.<sup>9</sup> Their success has been in using certain tools—particularly technology, therapeutic culture, fashion, music, and business practices—to make their message *seem* modern. Just as

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<sup>9</sup> Candy Gunther Brown argues that “[e]vangelicals, almost by definition, tend to be theologically and morally conservative...many contemporary evangelicals are bible literalists”. Candy Gunther Brown, ‘Conservative Evangelicalism’, in Stephen Hunt ed., *Handbook of Global Contemporary Christianity: Themes and Developments in Culture, Politics, and Society* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 49, 52. This is not to imply that Pentecostals are necessarily fundamentalists (and indeed, there has been prominent criticism of the Pentecostal movement from fundamentalist) but rather to point to the fact that Pentecostals, particularly in America, are firmly associated with conservative Christianity. See Veli-Matti Karkkainen, ‘Pneumatologies in Systematic Theology’, in Allan Anderson et al. eds., *Studying Global Pentecostalism, Theories and Methods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 238.

critiquing local contexts roots Pentecostals in them, by constituting themselves in modernity, they have authority *over* modernity.<sup>10</sup>

The Newfrontiers “party” mentioned above is an example of a church situating itself in modernity in order to critique the secular world. The venue itself struck me as a symbol of modernity, one the church was very comfortable using. The 1970s brutalist concrete structure sits at the heart of Brighton (see image below). On one of the city’s main roads, the Brighton Centre is surrounded by shops, hotels, restaurants, and entertainment facilities, and directly across from Brighton’s famous beach and pier. Inside the facility, the flashing lights, music, feel good mottos, and the celebrity treatment of church elders were seen not as the trappings of the modern secular world, but a way to make a conservative message feel and appear modern.



Figure 24: Exterior of the Brighton Centre from Brighton Beach. Image is author’s own. Taken 15 July 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Tamar Gordon, ‘Introduction: Visual Cultures of Pentecostalism’, *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* 1, no. 3 (2005), 310.

Having discussed the *place* of Pentecostalism in contemporary Australian history in terms of its fit with the secular host culture, this chapter looks at the *form* the movement has taken historically and the one it adopts now. The chapter makes four key claims. First, adherents' identities have been tied to religion from the start of the Pentecostal movement; tied both to individual churches and to a broader Christian identity. Second, despite the creation of a home or identity that was not located in the physical world, Pentecostals were always aware of the importance of the mobilising power of local and national contexts. Third, to resolve tensions between local needs and wider missionary aims, and to continually reinforce religion as home, Pentecostals "freed" people from the worldly demons represented by national and racial identity. Finally, the chapter demonstrates that because they do not imagine home as a physical place, Pentecostals and charismatics can adapt the ways they enact their religion, and the locations in which they perform it, based on contextually specific needs. The evolution of Pentecostalism in Australia as a suburban movement provides an example of the ways it bridges seemingly archaic religious experiences with "hypermodern" cultural practices and behaviours.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout this discussion of global and local contexts an important question arises: what is particularly Australian about all of this? The answer is very little. Pentecostals around the world embrace the transformative power of modernity, acknowledging that globalisation has possibly created "multiple modernities".<sup>12</sup> Attempts to adapt to and incorporate Australian culture into Pentecostalism are part of an effort by the churches to plant themselves more strongly within the local community. Australian Pentecostalism burgeoned later than its international counterparts and it packages itself differently for the local market by celebrating Australian national holidays, such as Australia Day and ANZAC Day (see image below). However, the product it continues to provide is not significantly different from its international equivalents. This is why Australian churches have found it so easy to plant campuses overseas, and why the ability of Pentecostal churches to challenge the outside world by locating themselves within it has contributed greatly to their success.

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<sup>11</sup> Jean-Pierre Bastian, 'The New Religious Economy of Latin America', in Jörg Stolz ed., *Salvation Goods and Religious Markets: Theory and Applications* (Bern: Peter Lang Academic Publishers, 2008), 180.

<sup>12</sup> Sean McLoughlin, 'Religion, Religions, and Diaspora', in Ato Quayson and Girish Daswani eds., *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2013), 125.



Figure 25: ANZAC Day service during C3 Presence Conference, Sydney. Image is author's own. Taken 25 April 2014.

## ‘A religion made to travel’: locating identity in faith

It is common for histories of the Pentecostal and charismatic movement to begin in California in April 1906. While events in Azusa Street were certainly important, and the previous chapters demonstrated that they shaped the character of modern Pentecostalism, the Australian part of this story will start with John MacNeil, who was born more than fifty years before the revival in Azusa Street. MacNeil was born in 1854 in Scotland, but his family's decision to migrate to Australia meant he grew up in rural Victoria. He returned to Scotland to study theology at the University of Edinburgh and was ordained as a Presbyterian minister in 1879. After his ordination, MacNeil started his work as an evangelist across the Australian colonies in booming mining towns such as Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie.<sup>13</sup> MacNeil's attendance at the Keswick Conventions had exposed him to the Higher Life movement, which stressed beyond the initial conversion experience, individuals should continue to feel the Holy Spirit moving through their lives and thus achieve “entire

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<sup>13</sup> John Alexander Ferguson, *Bibliography of Australia*, vol. 6. (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1977), 561.

sanctification”, and this was the message he preached as he travelled Australia.<sup>14</sup> Writing before Lancaster had established her mission in Melbourne, MacNeil argued that: “a wide and more or less intimate acquaintance with the Churches of Australasia has shown me...so many of God’s children are living on the wrong side of Pentecost, living on the same plane as that on which the disciples were living before they were ‘filled with the Holy Ghost’”.<sup>15</sup> H.B. MacCartney Jr., incumbent of St Mary’s, Caulfield, said of MacNeil in his introduction to *The Spirit Filled Life*, “he is not the famous Evangelist from Edinburgh; his is just our own dear, eloquent, original, fervent fellow-colonist”.<sup>16</sup> Here we see the competing claims on an individual identity that charismatic religion involved from its earliest days. MacNeil moved between national “homes”, and while MacCartney may have been eager to claim him as an Australian, MacNeil’s greatest loyalty was to his religion. His work as an evangelist comprised the core of his identity, even when moving between physical locations.

To MacNeil, the experience of New Testament signs and wonders transformed an individual completely. In 1894 book, *The Spirit Filled Life* he asked his audience: “Reader, are you a BA? This little book is only for those who possess that degree from the King’s College. If you are not ‘Born Again’, please put it aside...you have no right by birth to this, the chiefest [sic] of New Testament blessings”.<sup>17</sup> Harvey Cox, theologian and historian of Christianity, argues that Pentecostalism, from its early days, “was a religion made to travel, and it seems to lose nothing in the translation”.<sup>18</sup> MacNeil’s life straddled two continents, yet here and throughout the book he identifies himself most strongly by his faith. He provides an example of the way charismatic Christianity has always been a geographically mobile religion, but one where believers’ identities are tied to religion more than place.

MacNeil was not alone in straddling two continents throughout his life, and contemporaries of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century revivals interpreted their existence on both sides of the Atlantic (or in this case, from Europe to Australia) as a sign that “the universal, millennial spread of the gospel might be imminent”. A belief in the urgency and universality

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<sup>14</sup> For more on the Keswick movement and its influence on Pentecostalism see Vinson Synan, ‘Pentecostalism: Varieties and Contributions’, *Pneuma* 9, no. 1 (1986), 31-49; Charles Edwin Jones, *The Keswick Movement: A Comprehensive Guide* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> John MacNeil, *The Spirit Filled Life* (Melbourne: McHutchinson Publisher, 1894), np.

<sup>16</sup> H.B. MacCartney, ‘Introduction’, in MacNeil, *The Spirit Filled Life*, 1894, xi.

<sup>17</sup> MacNeil, *The Spirit Filled Life*, np.

<sup>18</sup> Cox, *Fire From Heaven*, 102.

of their work and their cause was the base from which Methodism and other early evangelical movements' spread, largely owing to their ability to integrate a broad range of groups into their networks and societies.<sup>19</sup> This ability was critical in Pentecostal missionary work and comprises an important part of the inheritance it gained from Methodism. However, Pentecostalism's emphasis on personal experiences with the Spirit meant that rather than focusing on integrating other groups into their own, individuals joining Pentecostal congregations had a clear event with which to mark their transition from one community or culture to another. MacNeil was clear: being born again defined who he was and marked him apart from other Christians.

Pentecostalism's transnational and international origins meant that from the movement's earliest days, adherents and missionaries had to negotiate their identity between the places they lived, the multitude of places Pentecostal literature and preachers came from, and their growing ideas about what it meant for them to be a Pentecostal.<sup>20</sup> This was complicated by the transnational origins of the movement. Revivals occurred not only in Azusa Street, but also in Wales in 1904-05, and in western India's Mukti Mission in 1905.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the Azusa Street revival was itself multiracial, something that early Pentecostals were aware of. The writers of the revival movement's monthly periodical, *Apostolic Faith*, demonstrated the importance of being open to people of all races in all countries when they wrote in 1906, "there are a good many Spanish-speaking people in Los Angeles. The Lord has been giving the language, and now a Spanish preacher, who, with his wife, are preaching the Gospel in open air meetings on the Plaza have received their Pentecost".<sup>22</sup> The next few paragraphs of the newsletter were in Spanish. The same issue talked about the importance of international missionary work, primarily in Europe, Africa, and China saying:

Quite a number have been baptized with the Holy Ghost and have received the foreign tongue. One young girl received the baptism Friday night and she spoke in German. God sent us a German to interpret. He said he could understand everything perfectly. Sister Jennie Evans has also received the German language, and speaks it very fluently.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Walsh, "Methodism", 19, 29.

<sup>20</sup> See below for definition of transnationalism.

<sup>21</sup> Allan Anderson, 'The Azusa Street Revival and the Emergence of Pentecostal Missions', *Transformation* 23, no. 2 (2006), 110.

<sup>22</sup> Anon., 'Spanish Receive the Pentecost', *The Apostolic Faith*, vol. 1, no. 2, October 1906.

<sup>23</sup> Anon., 'Pentecost in Danville, VA.', *The Apostolic Faith*, vol. 1, no. 2, October 1906. Reprinted in Keith Davenport, *Azusa Revisited* (New York: Lulu Publishing Company, 2008), 12.

Speaking in and understanding “tongues” here had a literal component. The passage referred to tongues as a foreign language rather than the melange of noises that requires someone with the “gift” of interpretations to translate. These diverse beginnings meant that any attempt to include more people in the community of the saved had to recognise the diversity of potential converts while also creating a narrative that unified them and bound them to this new expression of religion.

To Pentecostals, the miscellany of the movement was not an obstacle but a blessing that gave them the chance to reach a wider group of converts both locally and through missionary work. The next issue of *Apostolic Faith* quoted and endorsed a Methodist layman from Los Angeles who said:

I bless God that it did not start in any church in this city, but in a barn, so that we might all come and take part in it. If it had started in a fine church, poor colored people and Spanish people would not have got it, but praise God it started here. God Almighty says He will pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh.<sup>24</sup>

To this layman and other early Pentecostals, their premillennial eschatology meant they understood their experience of Spirit baptism was part of a “fire” that would spread around the world as a last-days revival.<sup>25</sup> They further believed that Spirit revivals were occurring around the world simultaneously and that missionary work was the best way to take advantage of this spread. By 1908, “spirit led missionaries” — those who felt called by the Holy Spirit to serve God by spreading his word overseas — had left Azusa Street and the similar churches that blossomed around it during the revival. Although at the time travel was expensive and time-consuming, within three years these missionaries had reached places as diverse as China, India, Japan, Argentina, Brazil, Palestine, Egypt, Somaliland, Liberia, Angola, and South Africa. Anderson describes this group as “Pentecostal migrants”, an apt term that could still be used to describe the work of many Pentecostal and charismatic missionaries today.<sup>26</sup> The international focus of the early Pentecostal movement was a

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<sup>24</sup> *The Apostolic Faith*, vol. 1, no. 3, October 1906, quoted in Allan Anderson, ‘Spreading Fires: The Globalisation of Pentecostalism in the Twentieth Century’, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 31, no. 1 (2007), 9.

<sup>25</sup> A premillennial eschatology represents a belief that there will be a “Second Coming” by Jesus who will return to Earth before ruling over a thousand year period of peace. Anderson, ‘Spreading Fires’, 8.

<sup>26</sup> Anderson, ‘Spreading Fires’, 10.

reflection of the fact that although Azusa Street was an importance centre, Pentecostalism was not tied to Los Angeles as a place or to traditions localised there.<sup>27</sup>

During the mid-twentieth century, Australian Pentecostals had similar successes to early missionaries by continuing to prioritise expanding their base of followers in Australia and spreading their faith overseas simultaneously. In the 1947 update of its constitution, the AOG in Australia listed the “Objects” of the assembly. The first object was “the full-gospel evangelization of Australia, in obedience to the great commission of Matthew 28:19-20” while the fifth was “to send out missionaries to foreign lands with the same objects in view”.<sup>28</sup> The organization saw its missionary work within and outside of Australia as being of equal importance. The “Home Missions” section (Article 21) noted that, “Pioneer Mission work in the Commonwealth shall be encouraged with utmost urgency”. However, it was then explained that this was because “by building up the work on the home fields we are thus enabled to increase our Foreign Missionary activities”.<sup>29</sup> Here, the tension between local and global needs and priorities is not actually resolved. Instead, the AOG reframed them as being about the aims of the AOG itself.

Connecting with international evangelistic efforts and building a global Christian identity became an increasingly important priority and a way of allowing believers to feel that they belonged to a transnational home. When celebrating its “Jubilee 50” edition in 1987, *Australian Evangel*, the official magazine of the Australian Assemblies of God, chose to focus the edition on international missions and evangelistic efforts. In an article titled ‘All Systems Go’, George Forbes (Director of the AOG in Australia, Division of World Missions) explained: “we are alive in a time of greater diversity of preparation and participation in terms of ministries and methods from east and west, than ever known before. Divine and human activity is increasing”.<sup>30</sup> As a reflection of the increasingly common

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<sup>27</sup> Robbins, ‘On the Paradoxes of Global Pentecostalism’, 222.

<sup>28</sup> Assemblies of God in Australia, *United Constitution of the Assemblies of God in Australia* (Bendigo: Commonwealth Executive Presbytery, 1947), 3.

<sup>29</sup> Assemblies of God in Australia, *United Constitution*, 23.

<sup>30</sup> George Forbes, ‘All Systems Go’, *Australian Evangel: Jubilee 50 1937-1987*, 44, no. 5 (1987), 6. Korean Pentecostal minister Paul Yonggi Cho, is the Senior Pastor and founder (now disgraced and convicted of tax evasion) of the largest Pentecostal congregation (and indeed, of the largest congregations of any denomination) in the world, the AOG affiliated Yoido Full Gospel Church. Christopher Landau, ‘Will South Korea Become Christian?’, *BBC News*, 26 October 2009. Available: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8322072.stm>. Accessed 14 April 2012; Phillip Connor, ‘Six Facts about South Korea’s Growing Christian Population’, *Pew Research Centre*, 12 August 2014. Available: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/08/12/6-facts-aboutchristianity-in-south-korea/>. Accessed: 23 December 2014.

move from east to west—remembering that international revivals meant that Pentecostals never saw themselves as a Western cultural product—the same issue of *Australian Evangel* included an extract titled ‘Principles for Revival’, taken from Paul Yonggi Cho’s book, *More Than Numbers* (1984).<sup>31</sup> Cho was one of the leading figures in the explosion of Protestant and particularly Pentecostal Christianity in South Korea from the 1960s-80s and the founder of the Church Growth International Ministry in 1976.<sup>32</sup> This Korean connection became important in Australia when increasing numbers of students came from South Korea to Australia for ministry and theological training from the 1980s. Alphacrucis College now offers several of its courses, including the Bachelor of Applied Theology, Advanced Diploma of Ministry, and its Master of Arts and Master of Theology degrees, in Korean.<sup>33</sup> Pentecostals continued to emphasise that believers were part of important worldwide networks embedded in various local contexts. Their discourse draws their members’ attention from local contexts to the goal of spiritual transformation globally.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Paul Yonggi Cho, ‘Principles for Revival’, *Australian Evangel: Jubilee 50 1937-1987* 44, no. 5 (1987), 1618.

<sup>32</sup> Andrew E. Kim, ‘Korean Religious Culture and its Affinity to Christianity: The Rise of Protestant Christianity in South Korea’, *Sociology of Religion* 61, no. 2 (2000), 117.

<sup>33</sup> For more information on the Korean language program visit Alphacrucis College, ‘Welcome to Korean Students’, *Alphacrucis College Website*. Available: <http://ac.edu.au/korean-students/>. Accessed 4 June 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Brian Howell, ‘Practical Belief and the Localization of Christianity: Pentecostal and Denominational Christianity in Global/Local Perspective’, *Religion* 33, no. 3 (2003), 240.



Figure 26: Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea. Image is author's own. Taken 10 February 2012.

Further emphasizing the importance placed on the international connections of these churches is the fact that at the Australian AOG 'Twenty-fifth Biennial Commonwealth Convention' in April 1985, the Chairman chose to start with a "Greeting to Sister Fellowships". Minutes from the conference reveal that Andrew Evans offered greetings from the AOG to New Zealand Fellowship, UK Fellowship, USA Fellowship, Papua New Guinea Fellowship, "Our Missionaries" (through the Division of World Missions), and Dr Paul Yonggi Cho.<sup>35</sup> Australian Pentecostal churches today go further by integrating missionary work into their broader philanthropic work. The founder of Hillsong's New York campus Carl Lentz, when speaking at a session titled "Effective Evangelism Today" at Hillsong

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<sup>35</sup> Assemblies of God in Australia, *Conference Minutes: Assemblies of God in Australia 25th Biennial Commonwealth Conference-Convention, 22nd-26th April, 1985* (Melbourne: Assemblies of God in Australia, 1985), 8.

Conference 2012, demonstrated Hillsong's AOG heritage and its emphasis on missionary work by explaining how important evangelism is to the church. Yet, he criticized the many American churches who have a specific outreach department, saying "this is who we are, it shouldn't be an add-on, this is what we do, the gospel is designed to be given".<sup>36</sup> The lyrics of much of Hillsong's music also make this priority clear:

that Jesus lives  
Tell the world that, tell the world that  
Tell the world that he died for them  
Tell the world that he lives again  
C'mon, C'mon we'll tell the world about You<sup>37</sup>

International and local expansion are understood by Lentz and through these lyrics as the core of the Pentecostal project, an imperative that is inseparable from any other church aim.

The ways Australian Pentecostal churches approach this evangelistic work reflects their heritage in the decentralised or loose organisational structures typical of early Pentecostal churches, as outlined in Chapter One. For some, this led to concern that Pentecostal churches, with their overwhelming focus on individualism and flexibility, were not always effective tools for evangelism. For example, in the early 1970s, John Blacker, a Methodist pastor and founding Director of Australian Renewal Ministries, edited a collection called *Power for Mission: A Panorama of the Dynamic and Effect of the Holy Spirit Movement in the Seventies* (1973). The contributors to this work came from a variety of Christian denominations, but said that they all "acknowledge the primacy of the guiding power of the Holy Spirit".<sup>38</sup> In his contribution, Arthur Blanksy (Director of the Institute of Lay Training and Evangelicalism in the Victorian and Tasmanian Methodist Conference) argued that the re-emergence of New Testament experiences was characterised by "individualism, divisiveness, and competitiveness" and that there "is a tendency to argument. It [the Pentecostal and charismatic movement] lacks the unity to discipline it and direct it to the building up of the corporate body of the fellowship. Everyone can do his own spiritual

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<sup>36</sup> Carl Lentz, 'Session One: Effective Evangelism Today', speaking at Hillsong Conference 2012, Allphones Arena, Sydney. 3 July 2012. Based on author's observations.

<sup>37</sup> Hillsong United, Lyrics to 'Tell the World'. Myspace video, 4:04. Released October 9 2004. Available: <https://myspace.com/hillsongunited/music/song/tell-the-world-2644234-28251130>. Accessed 12 March 2015.

<sup>38</sup> John E. Blacker ed., *Power for Mission: A Panorama of the Dynamic and Effect of the Holy Spirit Movement* (Sunshine: Mannamedia Gospel Communications Australia, 1973), preface (np).

‘thing’, without reference to the whole”.<sup>39</sup> Examination of more recent Pentecostal discourse reveals that there is still not a large degree of unity or discipline within the contemporary Pentecostal movement (for example, ACC churches remain self-governing).<sup>40</sup> I would argue that just as Pentecostalism encourages individuals to do their “own spiritual thing” within the church, it suits the churches themselves that they are not tightly bound to an overarching body. Freedom results in churches that can direct their efforts as they wish, and rather than the argument that Blanksy predicted, there is a large amount of cooperation.

Pentecostals continued to focus on faith as the locus for identity, but increasingly, this was faith tied to a broader Christian identity. Pentecostal churches adopt a language of ecumenism where they see themselves as part of a larger Christian community. Belonging to this community allows them to construct an even stronger “us” versus “them” identity and demonstrates the ways they see non-Christians as “the other”. Unity within the church and a sense of ecumenical duty as part of a wider Christian duty are prominent themes at Pentecostal Church conferences. For example, to open the Hillsong Conference in July 2012, the church held a night rally at the Allphones Arena in Sydney Olympic Park. As people entered, Bob Marley boomed over the speakers singing *One Love*. Given the choice to play a popular song to start the rally and the conference, rather than beginning with a song by Hillsong United, the following lyrics seem particularly important:

Let them all pass all their dirty remarks (One Love!); there  
is one question I’d really love to ask (One Heart!):

is there a place for the hopeless sinner, who has hurt  
all mankind just to save his own beliefs? One  
Love! What about the one heart? One Heart!  
What about - ? Let’s get together and feel all right.<sup>41</sup>

The use of a widely popular song—written by someone who was deeply religious, albeit Rastafarian—by Hillsong is not unusual; other churches do this too. The founder of Planetshakers, Russell Evans, explains that this is because it is important for Christians to

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<sup>39</sup> Arthur Blanksy, ‘Seen Any Good Charismatics Lately?’, in John Blacker ed., *Power for Mission: A Panorama of the Dynamic and Effect of the Holy Spirit Movement* (Sunshine: Mannamedia Gospel Communications Australia, 1973), 81.

<sup>40</sup> This thesis is not intended as a discourse analysis, although such a project would reveal much about the contemporary Pentecostal movement and how the churches that comprise it view the movement as a whole, and each other.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Opening Night Rally’ at Hillsong Conference 2012, Allphones Arena, Sydney. 2 July 2012. Based on author’s observations.

develop the ability to “hear the voice of God” and “pick it out” from what you might hear on the radio, see in films, or read in a fashion magazine rather than rejecting secular cultural products outright.<sup>42</sup> What is most important to Evans is that Christians come together to give back to Jesus passionately and to support the growth of the church. He repeatedly talks about church growth throughout his book, *Profile of a Planetshaker* (2004), but does not make the phrase synonymous with the growth of his, or indeed any, Pentecostal church. It is important to Evans to emphasise the power of Christianity broadly, as well as the attraction of his church.

One of the first themes discussed by Brian Houston as he opened Hillsong Conference 2012 was the concept of “Church together”. Houston spoke of the need to think not about any one denomination, but to see “the Church of Jesus Christ flourish”.<sup>43</sup> Highlighting not only the necessity of ecumenism but also the importance placed on international connections is the fact that one of the first guest speakers was Pastor Joseph Prince of New Creation Church in Singapore. Prince garnered a huge response from the crowd, partly because there was a large delegation from his church present. He punctuated his words by calling out imperatives such as “shout his name”, to which the crowd enthusiastically roared “Jesus!”<sup>44</sup> Although the pastors were using Jesus as a call for Christians to come together, they (through their celebrity and charisma) are also unifying figures within the Pentecostal movement. People had come from many different states in Australia and from many countries around the world to hear these pastors speak, recognition of the global networks of information and ideas which Pentecostals are part of.<sup>45</sup>

In his introduction to a booklet for new congregation members, *We Welcome You*, the then Senior Pastor of Paradise Assembly of God Andrew Evans made it clear that his assembly welcomed people from various denominations. He wrote, “we are a church made up of Christians from all walks of life, denominations and nations, who flow together in Christian

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<sup>42</sup> Evans, *Profile of a Planetshaker*, 69.

<sup>43</sup> Brian Houston speaking at ‘Opening Night Rally’ at Hillsong Conference 2012, Allphones Arena, Sydney. 2 July 2012. Based on author’s observations.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Prince speaking at ‘Opening Night Rally’ at Hillsong Conference 2012, Allphones Arena, Sydney. 2 July 2012. Based on author’s observations.

<sup>45</sup> On the transnational nature of contemporary religion and the need for a corresponding approach that looks at the “networks” of people and ideas Manuel Vásquez argues: “widespread flows of people, capital, goods, and ideas make it increasingly untenable to map the world according to the tidy logic of one nation, one culture, one language, one religion, one history, and one self-contained social formation”. See Vásquez, ‘Studying Religion in Motion’, 152.

love. This love we extend to you, no matter what your belief or background may be". He went on, "our church is the community to be of service to people of all ages...I trust that you will enjoy the informal and friendly atmosphere".<sup>46</sup> Evans here stressed the flexibility of his Pentecostal church to include people from various denominations, the church's emphasis on involving people with different national backgrounds, and his desire to create an inclusive atmosphere. The message about the importance of ecumenism may also lessen any sense of guilt or discomfort new converts may experience about leaving their previous denomination to attend Influencers, a Pentecostal church. These new converts, nonetheless, need to undergo a break from their previous social and cultural identity to become accepted members of the church. New identities are created within specific historical and institutional sites, and sociologist Stuart Hall argues that in a globalised world, "identity" focuses more on marking what it is different to or excluded from a group, rather than assuming there is a "naturally-constituted unity".<sup>47</sup> Applied to the Australian religious context, this idea seems pertinent. For Pentecostals, there is an increasing focus on marking themselves as apart from broader society in key ways. Hall sees this as a reflection of the fact that "identity" is now a "meeting point, the point of *suture*" between the discourses and practices of a group, and the processes of broader society, a society affected deeply by globalisation.<sup>48</sup>

Not only do Pentecostal churches promote themselves as a home to new converts from other denominations, they are keen to emphasise that their work encompasses a wide variety of regions and that there is space for a broad range of converts to undertake this work. The missions arising from the early Pentecostal and charismatic revivals were based on "outpourings of the Spirit" and were promoted as a form of Spirit baptism.<sup>49</sup> This idea retains its resonance today. At the 2011 Newfrontiers 'Together on a Mission' Conference a 'Global Zone' was set up in the foyer, where talks were held about the challenges and benefits of planting churches in different regions. Young people were particularly encouraged to consider if they had felt the Spirit calling them somewhere during the conference, or else encouraged to pray that this calling would come upon them. Virgo sees contemporary missionary work as a definitive experience in young adults' experience of religion and,

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<sup>46</sup> Paradise Assembly of God, *Paradise Assembly of God Welcome You*, 1.

<sup>47</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Introduction: Who Needs "Identity"?', in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: SAGE Publications, 2005), 4.

<sup>48</sup> Hall, 'Introduction', 5.

<sup>49</sup> Anderson, 'Spreading Fires', 10.

indeed, in the apostolic and prophetic foundations of his church. He said, “we don’t despise theological training. It’s brilliant. But there are things it doesn’t do—people need to be sent on their mission, they need to be commissioned by heaven”.<sup>50</sup> In the final “Mobilise” youth session of the conference, the guest speaker, Andrew Wilson, displayed a map titled

“Progress of the Gospel by People Group”. The map contrasted “reached areas” (regions where church planting movements exist) and “unreached” areas (those where there are no replicating churches that are vibrant and viable.) Wilson saw the vast unreached areas as inspiration for the attendees to ask God for a calling to missionary work. To Wilson, they needed “activism” (desire to go and do God’s work) but equally, if not more important, was waiting for “God to give us the grace to go”. He said that anyone was capable of living a “life of service”, no matter what his or her age or financial situation might be and encouraged those interested to speak up and take action.<sup>51</sup> The “Great Commission” of these churches is their priority, and they have been successful in expanding internationally and domestically because of their ability not only to include wide groups of people, but also to make these people feel that this is their commission too; it is the key to their identity and is the road that leads them home.

## ‘The Great Commission’: local and national contexts

Despite their global evangelistic goals and their desire to tie their convert’s identity to faith rather than place, Pentecostals have always been aware of the mobilising power of local and national contexts. They recognise that these form an important part of the identities of potential converts and that to keep people within their confines, churches must be embedded in local communities and acknowledge their importance. Early Australian Pentecostals demonstrated a strong awareness of the British heritage of Australian churches and Australian culture in general. Philip Duncan, Chairman of the Australian AOG from its inception in 1945 until 1947, wrote *Pentecost in Australia* at the end of his time as Chairman.

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<sup>50</sup> Terry Virgo, ‘Main Session Six’, speaking at Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference, Brighton Centre, Brighton, UK. 14 July 2011. Based on author’s observations.

<sup>51</sup> Andrew Wilson, ‘Mobilise Main Session: We Persuade Others’, speaking at Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference, Brighton Centre, Brighton UK. 15 July 2011. Based on author’s observations.

In this short book he gave a history of Pentecostalism in Australia, beginning with the Spanish setting out in 1605 to find what they, as “devout Papists”, called “Tierra Australia del Espiritu Santo”, or “The Southern Land of the Holy Spirit”.<sup>52</sup> He expressed relief that “Australia didn’t fall into the hands of the Spanish Papists with their religious superstition”:

We away in Pacific isolation have much to thank God for that we belong to Wycliffe’s England, Cromwell’s England, Wesley’s England. Our tradition now is reckoned in the family tree of England’s mighty line, but our richer inheritance is found in our kinship with a nation that gave birth to reformers, founders of Missionary enterprises, freers of slaves, and revivalists who have swayed every generation with the power of the Gospel.<sup>53</sup>

Duncan here indicated that while he was the leader of a denomination that considers itself to have a purpose that transcends national and temporal boundaries, he also recognised the importance of local context.<sup>54</sup> He believed that he and his organisation have achieved their successes because of Australia’s British heritage and here celebrates these national connections.

As an analytical tool, the nation remains a way for Pentecostal and charismatic leaders to target specific areas and measure their progress. Rick Warren is a highly influential American evangelical leader, and his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, is the highest selling nonfiction work in the United States authored by an American.<sup>55</sup> He suggests that there are more Christians in China than America; more Anglicans in Nigeria than England; and that Pentecostals are “exploding” in Africa, Asia and Latin America. He argues that the future of evangelicalism “is the developing world”.<sup>56</sup> While it is hard to obtain concrete numbers, many academics agree that growth of Christianity in developing countries has been remarkable, and Pentecostals themselves are aware of this fact. The US Centre for World

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<sup>52</sup> Philip B. Duncan, *Pentecost in Australia* (Sydney: Assemblies of God, c. 1947), 3.

<sup>53</sup> Duncan, *Pentecost in Australia*, 3.

<sup>54</sup> The importance of the connections between Australian and British history is emphasised here as one of the common critiques made of Australian historiography is that it is too inward looking. Stefan Berger, in *Writing the Nation*, argues that, “after the initial orientation towards Britain had been rejected, there was no reorientation towards the wider space that Australia inhabited in the globe but, on balance, an inwardlooking, self-absorbed concern with Australianness”. Stefan Berger, ‘Introduction: Towards a Global History of National Historiographies’, in Stefan Berger ed., *Writing the Nation: A Global Perspective* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 16.

<sup>55</sup> Pew Research Centre, *The Future of Evangelicals: A Conversation with Rick Warren*, Event Transcript from The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 13 November 2009, <http://pewforum.org/Christian/Evangelical-Protestant-Churches/The-Future-of-Evangelicals-AConversation-with-Pastor-Rick-Warren.aspx>. Accessed 22 August 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Pew Forum, *The Future of Evangelicals*.

Mission demonstrates this growth by running the “Joshua Project” which, by providing maps and national breakdowns of “unreached people groups”, aims to bring “definition to the unfinished task”.<sup>57</sup> National boundaries also offer a chance to measure success in purely numerical terms. For example, C3 Global promotes its central aim as international expansion predicated on a target number of churches it will build or plant. In fact, C3’s website presents this expansion not just as an aim, but also as a statement fact: “by the year 2020, we will see 1000 C3 Churches in cities all over the world”.<sup>58</sup> At the C3 Presence Global Conference (held in Sydney in April 2014), the church’s founder, Phil Pringle, reaffirmed his belief that his church was destined to be international, saying, “Just like Joshua knew he could take the land of Canaan, so we know that we can build a church around the world”.<sup>59</sup>

Given the growing numbers allied to the Pentecostal and charismatic movements internationally, and the fact that leaders are cognizant of the global nature and reach of their churches, it is important that academics reflect this in their understanding of evangelicalism and the Pentecostal and charismatic movements. As Birgit Meyer argues, the transnationalism of Pentecostal discourse is “central to its global identity”, and acknowledging this fact will “further our understanding of the appeal of contemporary Pentecostalism”.<sup>60</sup> This global identity, which is important for Pentecostals and charismatics, again indicates that a *religious* identity is the focus of the movement, rather than a specifically Australian or national one. The transnational history of Australian Pentecostalism is strongly linked to international developments, although there are points of divergence.<sup>61</sup> The story of Australian Pentecostalism is interesting not just because it has rarely been told, but because it offers a chance to see that while it emerged in a different

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<sup>57</sup> Joshua Project, ‘Homepage’, *Joshua Project Website*. Available: <http://joshuaproject.net/>. Accessed 16 August 2015.

<sup>58</sup> C3, ‘About C3 Church’, *C3 Global Website*.

<sup>59</sup> Phil Pringle speaking at ‘C3 Presence Conference 2014’, Qantas Credit Union Arena, Sydney. 25 April 2014. Based on author’s observations.

<sup>60</sup> Birgit Meyer, ‘Pentecostalism and Globalization’, in Allan Anderson et al. eds., *Studying Global Pentecostalism, Theories and Methods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 127.

<sup>61</sup> In the 2006 *American Historical Review* ‘Conversation: On Transnational History’, British historian C. A. Bayly argued that what distinguishes transnational history is that the very word *transnational*, which he claims “gives a sense of movement and interpenetration. It is broadly associated with the study of diasporas, social or political, which cross national boundaries”. American historian Sven Beckert’s contribution to the conversation argued that while “global history” points to the international breadth of study of “connections that transcend politically bounded territories and connect various parts of the world to one another”, historians are not necessarily attempting to write history that is global in scope. C.A. Bayly and Sven Beckert, in C.A. Bayly et al. eds., ‘Conversation: On Transnational History’, *American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (2006), 1442, 1446.

timeframe, there is not, in fact, a distinctively *Australian* interpretation of this contemporary form of Christianity.

Pentecostal and charismatic churches around the world do not represent a homogenised group, yet their origins, evolution, and contemporary forms are similar enough that there is much to be gained by holding them together in a group and submitting them to comparative and historical analysis. A transnational focus is particularly useful here because diaspora and migration are common themes in Pentecostal studies. Mobility is one of the defining features of Pentecostalism and is one of the reasons that it is so suited to contemporary culture. This mobility means that Pentecostalism represents a challenge to “all established faiths based on local identity and historic continuity” because it is capable of living “in interstices”.<sup>62</sup> It is a form of religion willing to adopt and adapt local ideas, without relying on them as the base of its appeal. It is by combining an approach that singles out Australia as a neglected area of study with a unique history of Pentecostalism, while simultaneously recognising that the Australian story is part of a broader phenomenon, that we have the best chance of understanding the history of Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Australia.

## Networks of social integration

One of the reasons Pentecostals find it easy to reconcile their aims of entrenching people in their local church while also making them feel part of a broader Christian project is by creating networks of social integration that do not necessarily rely on ethnic, racial, or national identity. In the early Australian context, missionary focus was on converting Aboriginals, Torres Strait Islanders, and Pacific Islanders. Governments and humanitarian organisations often supported Pentecostal missionary work through funding as part of a broader colonial and later national assimilation project. Therefore Pentecostals needed to assimilate people not only into their own religious culture but, in order to attract external funding and support, this had to be overlaid on efforts to integrate them into wider Australian culture.

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<sup>62</sup> David Martin, ‘Evangelical Religion and Capitalist Society in Chile: Historical Context, Social Trajectory and Current Political and Economic Ethos’, in Richard H. Roberts ed., *Religion and the Transformations of Capitalism: Comparative Approaches* (London: Routledge, 1995), 28.

The early missionaries who went out from the Good News Hall in Melbourne saw their efforts to convert Indigenous Australians as a natural extension of their urban evangelistic efforts directed at other Australians.<sup>63</sup> Euphemia and Ernest Kramer, who met at Lancaster's mission, provide an example of these efforts. Euphemia described her first experience at the Good News Hall and her conversion to Pentecostalism in 1910 after feeling the Spirit enter her body as a homecoming where "the Lord changed my little heart and I was so filled with joy and laughter". Euphemia had already thought of doing missionary work and Ernest had worked as an evangelist for the Hall around Melbourne. When married, the couple worked in a destitute men's home in Melbourne, before Ernest felt called to "take the gospel to aborigines' [sic]" and Euphemia realised she had to "surrender" her husband to God's service until her pregnancy was over, and she could join her husband "among dark people".<sup>64</sup>

The disorganisation of, and divisions in, early Australian Pentecostalism (outlined earlier) meant that Pentecostals here took a considerable amount of time to create strong organisations or "homes" in which converts would remain, something that made evangelism difficult. In the 1920s, the Kramers' mission was hindered, according to Euphemia, by "splits and divisions in all the Pentecostal Assemblies" which she felt made missionary efforts among Aboriginal Australians a low priority.<sup>65</sup> The Kramers then began collaborating with the Aborigines Friends Association, with Ernest reporting back to this multi-denominational humanitarian organisation on their travels while Euphemia preached

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<sup>63</sup> The relationship of Indigenous Australians with evangelical and Pentecostal missionaries in the early days of the Pentecostal movement has been discussed by several academics, mostly anthropologists and historians, as well as a subject for research by Christian Churches themselves. For more see: Akiko Ono, 'You Gotta Throw Away Culture Once You Become Christian: How "Culture" is Redefined Among Aboriginal Pentecostal Christians in Rural New South Wales', *Oceania* 82, no. 1 (2012), 74-85; Howell, 'Practical Belief and the Localization of Christianity', 233-248; Peter Sutton, 'Aboriginal Spirituality in a New Age', *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 21, no. 1 (2010), 90-109; Hans Mol, *The Firm and the Formless: Religion and Identity in Aboriginal Australia* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1982); Peter Sherlock, 'Missions, Colonialism and the Politics of Agency', in Amanda Barry et al. eds., *Evangelists of Empire?: Missionaries in Colonial History* (Melbourne: eScholarship Research Centre in collaboration with the School of Historical Studies, 2008), 13-22; *Religion in Aboriginal Australia: An Anthology*, Max Charlesworth et. al. eds. (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1984); Russell Guy, *Baptised Among Crocodiles: A History of the Daintree Aboriginal Mission 1940-1962* (Mossman: Assembly of God, 1999); David Thompson, *Bora is like Church: Aboriginal Initiation Ceremonies and the Christian Church at Lockhart River, Queensland* (Sydney: Australian Board of Missions, 1985); Robert Kenny, *The Lamb Enters the Dreaming: Nathanael Pepper and the Ruptured World* (Carlton North: Scribe, 2007).

<sup>64</sup> Amanda Barry, "'A Longing Desire in my Heart": Faith, Family and the Colonial Frontier in the Life of Euphemia Kramer', in Amanda Barry et al. eds., *Evangelists of Empire?: Missionaries in Colonial History* (Melbourne: eScholarship Research Centre in collaboration with the School of Historical Studies, 2008), 217-18.

<sup>65</sup> Barry, 'Faith, Family and the Colonial Frontier', 222.

to Aboriginals who had settled in Alice Springs.<sup>66</sup> In the Kramers' account, we see not only the straightforward extension of missionary work from group to group, but also the tension between outreach and retention efforts. When divisions between Pentecostal groups sidelined their efforts at specifically Pentecostal missionary work, the Kramers transferred their allegiance to a multi-denominational group instead. For the Kramers, their conversion experience within the Good News Hall was so transformative that their sole focus became sharing this transformation with others. However, the divisions between the Good News Hall and other Pentecostal groups were enough that these churches no longer presented a stable home. Thus the early form of the Pentecostal movement, with its small numbers and public disagreements, was not overly successful in embedding people within its organisations or community. The Kramers thus represent an instance where the competing demands of the local (the Kramer's loyalty to a particular church) and global (the Pentecostal desire to spread *their* message, not just a broader Christian message) were not fruitfully negotiated.

Later Pentecostal missionary efforts aimed at Indigenous Australians were more successful, partly because the Pentecostal movement was more cohesive and partly because it recognised the challenges modernity presented. In 'Mission Church and Sect: Three Types of Religious Commitment in the Torres Strait Islands' (1978) anthropologist Jeremy Beckett argued that the Torres Strait Islanders and other Indigenous Australians struggled in the early twentieth century to adjust to the "new opportunities and experiences" that surrounded them and the new wealth that Beckett saw accompanying these experiences. They "found themselves members of a migratory labor force that did not belong anywhere", he suggested, but "they were rescued by a Pentecostalist sect, the Assemblies of God, which had first emerged among uprooted and displaced rural folk in North America".<sup>67</sup> Beckett thus linked the lack of belonging experienced by Indigenous Australians to what he saw as the displaced origins of early American Pentecostals. He suggested that the enthusiastic and inclusive nature of Pentecostal services appealed to Islanders and Aboriginals, and that "the assembly made warm approaches", noting "the friendliness of the white 'brothers and sisters' who

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<sup>66</sup> Barry, 'Faith, Family and the Colonial Frontier', 221-22.

<sup>67</sup> Jeremy Beckett, 'Mission, Church and Sect: Three Types of Religious Commitment in the Torres Strait Islands', in J.A. Boutier ed., *Mission, Church and Sect in Oceania* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1978), 222.

welcomed them into their halls and even their homes. This was proper love”.<sup>68</sup> Although not offering explanations of the struggles Indigenous Australians faced, Pentecostal missionaries offered them solace and opened their homes.

Beckett argued that Pentecostal missionaries were more successful than from other churches because of their inclusivity and their embrace of the vernacular. He undertook a case study of Murray Island, noting that it “held up a mirror not only to Torres Strait political conflicts but to cultural conflicts as well”. He saw the Anglicans and Pentecostals there as representing the two key groups in, and responses to, this “bicultural society”. He argued that Pentecostals “stressed modernity and Europeanism. They went to church wearing pants and shoes, whereas the Anglicans continued to wear waist cloths and go barefoot. They sang English-language choruses instead of vernacular hymns of Samoan origin”.<sup>69</sup> Beckett concluded that “black Pentecostals were the same as white Pentecostals” and that smoking, drinking, and “entertainment” were not permitted to all members of Pentecostal churches. What is perhaps most significant here is that in his defence of Pentecostalism, Beckett is reinforcing one of the key reasons Pentecostals understood themselves successful: they created a feeling of inclusion (whereby Indigenous peoples were invited into the homes of white Pentecostals) and appealed to groups through a different, and perhaps more relaxed, style of worship. All of this was done, of course, while encouraging a subtle degree of conformity (in terms of clothing and behaviour). Since Beckett and other Western anthropologists provide the key sources of information about these encounters we do not know if this represented the reality of the situation. From the perspective of Torres Strait Islanders, Pentecostal missionaries might have been appealing or not for any number of reasons. This work shows that Pentecostals themselves understood inclusivity as important ways to attract converts, even though they were in fact demanding assimilation to their norms in terms of language, clothing, and the embrace of modernity.

Pentecostal efforts to convert Aboriginals represent a “non-ethnic pathway” into social integration. Networks not based on ethnicity recruit and empower those from other cultures, who then adopt the cultural practices and beliefs of the particular network they are now part

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<sup>68</sup> Becket, ‘Mission, Church and Sect’, 222.

<sup>69</sup> Becket, ‘Mission, Church and Sect’, 224.

of, over and above their old or new ethnic or national identities.<sup>70</sup> The strong and recurring metaphor of Pentecostals being “born again” marks a break a convert’s life, and conversion often means leaving behind parts of the previous culture that Pentecostals consider inappropriate or even sinful. This may lead to converts viewing their new church as an alternative cultural community, and in cases where ethnicity forms a strong part of the previous cultural community, Droogers argues, “the brothers and sisters of the church may form a new ‘tribe’, as it were”.<sup>71</sup> More recent attempts at assimilating groups through into Pentecostal culture through these non-ethnic pathways have involved migrants to Australia. From the 1980s-1990s much of the focus in these churches has been on converting minority groups in the suburbs and inner-city sections of Australia’s biggest urban areas.

The key difference to earlier attempts to assimilate Aboriginal Australians is that there is not a strong focus on the need to assimilate migrant groups into broader Australian culture, for example, through encouraging the adoption of English as a first language. Pentecostals instead place primacy on their religion as the host culture. This means converts from different migrant backgrounds need to break with some (but not all) aspects of their culture, the same way that converts from Australian or other Western backgrounds experience a disruption of their identity. Their core loyalty is now to their faith, and their first few encounters with the Spirit lead to a moment that defines them. This is the moment when they are saved and born again and so emerge with a new identity.

One of the first steps of assimilation efforts involves attracting people from different ethnic backgrounds to attend Pentecostal church services. Churches have been successful in attracting various communities through the provision of translations during services or by creating “extension” services for these groups. In a 1996 booklet written to welcome new congregation members Paradise Assembly of God noted that it ran “Night Home Fellowships” which involved the “relaxed atmosphere of a smaller group meeting in a home near you”. These fellowships cater for “speciality groups” including “Hungarian, Sri

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<sup>70</sup> Nina Glick Schiller, Ayse Caglar, and Thaddeus C. Gulbrandsen, ‘Beyond the Ethnic Lens: Locality, Globality, and Born-Again Incorporation’, *American Ethnologist* 33, no. 4 (2006), 626.

<sup>71</sup> Andre Droogers, ‘Globalisation and Pentecostal Studies’, in Andre Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani eds., *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 45.

Lankan, Asian, Deaf, Young Marrieds, Singles, [and] Business Forum”.<sup>72</sup> These groups provide an example of niche marketing and reflect a broader, consumerist impulse to capture a wider share of a market, bringing the marketing strategies of these churches in line with the positioning strategies of secular businesses and organisations. This niche marketing has become increasingly important in a rapidly changing, globalised business environment, where increasingly diverse markets and advanced technology provide both the need and opportunity to cater to wider groups of people.<sup>73</sup> The adoption of these marketing strategies is a reflection of Pentecostal ability to employ modern tools to deliver a conservative message while also offering a global identity in a local idiom.

Pentecostal churches continue to cater for ethnic groups through extension services in areas with dense migrant populations and by offering translation and interpretive services for language groups that are strongly represented within congregations that have a greater degree of cultural and ethnic diversity. There are “Chatswood Chinese” and “Hills Chinese” extension services, where Hillsong services are run in English and Cantonese, or English and Mandarin.<sup>74</sup> The Chatswood Extension Service was established in 1993, and for the first twenty-two years, was led by Pastor Gordon and Susana Lee. In February 2015 Pastors Allen and Renee Yam took over as the church’s leaders.<sup>75</sup> Meanwhile, Hillsong Burwood Extension Service provides Korean translation services for its second service on Sundays; though the group is not as overtly composed of migrants as are the Chinese services.<sup>76</sup> Planetshakers’ main campus in Melbourne also offers various translation services: Spanish, Korean, Sri Lankan, and Mandarin.<sup>77</sup> These services allow for the participation in religious rituals alongside the wider church community and may facilitate the development of a strong sense of kinship based on religion, as opposed to the country or culture migrants are originally from, something that would not necessarily exist, for example, at Hillsong’s Chinese Extension Services. The use of extension services—which combine Pentecostal

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<sup>72</sup> Paradise Assembly of God, *We Welcome You*, 3.

<sup>73</sup> Tefik Dalgic and Maarten Leeuw wrote about this as early 1994. See their: ‘Niche Marketing Revisited: Concept, Applications and Some European Cases’, *European Journal of Marketing* 28, no. 4 (1994), 39-55.

<sup>74</sup> Hillsong Church, ‘Extension Services’, *Hillsong Church Website*, Available: <http://hillsong.com/extensions>. Accessed 1 March 2015.

<sup>75</sup> Brian Houston, ‘Heart and Soul’ (video recording of service), 10 February 2015, Hillsong Chatswood Chinese Extension Service Official Facebook Page. Video uploaded 10 February 2015. Available: <https://www.facebook.com/hillsongchinese>. Accessed 12 March 2015.

<sup>76</sup> Hillsong Church, ‘Extension Services’, *Hillsong Church Website*.

<sup>77</sup> Planetshakers Church, ‘Melbourne City’, *Planetshakers Church Website* 2015. Available: <http://www2.planetshakers.com/australia/> Accessed 13 March 2015.

ecclesiastical homogeneity with a familiar ethnic or linguistic homogeneity—may allow converts to traverse any conflict between their old and new cultures without having to undertake complete cultural breaks. The only break truly required is religious conversion.

Churches present themselves as a liberating force that frees believers not just from the clash between old and new cultures, but also from whatever demons plague them. These demons may include old gods, spirits, and witchcraft, or demons that also exist in the secular world including poverty, and ill-health.<sup>78</sup> British Newfrontiers elder David Devenish spoke at a conference in Sydney in November 2011 named after his book *Demolishing Strongholds* (2002). He explained that Christians, and particularly charismatic Christians, needed to help each other within their local church, to “be free”; to realise that fellow church members came from many different backgrounds and often had emotional trauma attached to their religious experiences. He based this understanding on his work in Russia and “the Muslim world” where new converts had “to be freed not only from Islam and the Orthodox Church but also from superstitions”. However, he went on to explain that this was also true in Australia. “Demons don’t only live in Africa” or in other cultures, he argued, but also existed within Australian and British society and needed to be subject to the same “spiritual warfare”.<sup>79</sup> Liberation from demons through spiritual warfare again involves assimilation to Pentecostal culture and a rejection of other aspects of converts’ identities.

## Modernity and megachurches

Nowhere is the Pentecostal adoption of modern tools—that are then adapted to convey a traditional religious message—more obvious than in the suburbs of Australia’s biggest cities. Because home has never been physical, Pentecostals have changed the places their religion is enacted based on the needs of the time. As we saw earlier, Piggin argues that following the First World War, Australian evangelicals removed themselves from other

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<sup>78</sup> Birgit Meyer, ‘Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches’, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004), 455; R. Andrew Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil: The Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 16, 84.

<sup>79</sup> David Devenish, speaking at ‘Demolishing Strongholds’ Conference, Newfrontiers Church. Held at Grace City Church, Collaroy, Sydney, 18 November, 2011. Author attended the conference (and the above is based on her observations) but recordings are available: [http://www.gracecitychurch.net/Groups/1000085290/Grace\\_City\\_Church/Resources/Demolishing\\_Strongholds/Demolishing\\_Strongholds.aspx](http://www.gracecitychurch.net/Groups/1000085290/Grace_City_Church/Resources/Demolishing_Strongholds/Demolishing_Strongholds.aspx)

social movements.<sup>80</sup> But the early evangelical impulse to withdraw from modernity for fear of being tainted by it has, for Pentecostals at least, been replaced by a recognition that situating themselves in modern structures offers members of the church a sense of familiarity with the outside world. More importantly, Pentecostals can critique this other world using its language and forms, making the message more palatable and easily digestible. They do not seem as though they are a fringe group of fanatics because they occupy a prominent place in modern society, even as they offer members refuge from it.<sup>81</sup>

Pentecostals have embraced the modern tendency to social differentiation, where social life is broken into specialised roles and institutions. But while Steve Bruce argues that this fragmentation involves multiple functions and institutions displacing the previous tendency for just one such body to carry out various functions, I argue that Pentecostals provide a degree of specialisation and fragmentation within their organisations that allow them to embody multiple, specialised roles.<sup>82</sup> They see modernity as a chance to stress their fit with the secular host society, and to expand the base of their appeal. Coming to a Pentecostal church in Australia does not mean giving up the comfortable trappings of modern life. On the contrary, to reach as many potential converts as possible and to make attending church as easy as possible, Australian Pentecostals took their religion to the people; they took their churches to the suburbs. And so, the “vision of the disinherited”, a religion that prided itself on not starting in a “fine church” but somewhere where “poor” people of all races could meet, became firmly entrenched in the suburbs; areas firmly associated with white, middleclass, or at least aspirational working-class, Australians.<sup>83</sup> As Ross Cameron, a Liberal Party Member of Parliament from 1996-2004, wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 2011, Baulkham Hills, the home of Hillsong’s main church:

[I]s an emblem of prosperous, conservative, Sydney. It’s a whitebread culture, and any Liberal candidate’s dream. As urban planners scheme to attract the “creative

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<sup>80</sup> Piggin, ‘Towards a Bicentennial History’, 25.

<sup>81</sup> Christine Jackson, a journalist writing for *The Australian* wrote in 2011 that young evangelicals, only a short while before, “might have been dismissed as Jesus freaks; but freak implies something out of the ordinary”, suggesting that secular commentators were aware of the growing prominence of the movement, but that they did not feel it represented a rupture with broader Australian culture. Christine Jackson, ‘JC and the Cool Gang’, *The Australian*, 5 March 2011. Available: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/life/weekendaustralian-magazine/jc-and-the-cool-gang/story-e6frg8h6-1226015838817>. Accessed 30 March 2011.

<sup>82</sup> Bruce, *Choice and Religion*, 8.

<sup>83</sup> Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited; Apostolic Faith*, vol. 3 (November 1906), 1, quoted in Anderson, ‘Spreading Fires’, 9.

class” who fuel innovation, drink good coffee and go to work in designer jeans, you might not pick this dormitory suburb as an epicentre of creativity exports, but you should.<sup>84</sup>

Marion Maddox argues that there was a wider move by Australian conservative politicians, under the leadership of then-Prime Minister John Howard, to ally themselves with socially conservative and capitalist-friendly churches, which the public had previously dismissed as Christian fringe groups.<sup>85</sup> Being present in the very world they are critiquing has, ironically, offered greater weight to Pentecostal critiques of modernity.

The local context in which these churches operate has changed dramatically from the early days of the movement, which were focused on inner city congregations that, in turn, sent missionaries to rural locations. From the 1980s-90s, there was a focus on the suburbs as the key religious site for Pentecostals, and the “megachurch” became the norm and symbol of Pentecostalism. The increasingly globalised world that emerged at this time made church expansion faster and easier; the production and distribution of resources quicker and cheaper, and it was now simpler to reach a mass audience. Globalisation also “unsettled” the identities of populations and cultures around the world, allowing for a much easier perforation of Pentecostalism into new populations that, interestingly, included the very settled middle-classes of the Australian suburbs. The main campuses of Pentecostal megachurches now physically reflect this new demographic, and often operate as conference centres which the public can hire.<sup>86</sup> They come complete with conveniences such as cafes, catering facilities, and ample parking (see image below).

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<sup>84</sup> Ross Cameron, ‘The Hills Are Alive with the Sound of Music—And it’s Uplifting’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 July 2011, 11.

<sup>85</sup> Maddox, *God under Howard*, 163.

<sup>86</sup> The “Hillsong Convention Centre” in Sydney’s Norwest Business Park can hold 3,300 people in its auditorium, has parking for 1300 vehicles, and has “state-of-the-art sounds, lighting and TV equipment”. See: Event Connect, ‘Hillsong Convention Centre’, *Event Connect Website*. Available: <http://www.eventconnect.com/venue/finder/1733/Hillsong-Convention-Centre/>. Accessed 27 May 2015. The C3 Oxford Falls Campus offers hire of its studio facilities as well as its control room and editing facilities. The C3 Silverwater Campus has a 700 seat auditorium, a function room, and twelve smaller “breakout rooms” and describes itself as “a popular venue for a variety of cultural concerts, dance events as well as business conferences”. See C3 Church, ‘Venue Hire’, *My C3 Church Website*. Available: <http://www2.myc3church.net/category/venue-hire>. Accessed 27 May 2015.



Figure 27: Parking lot at the front of Influencers Church, Paradise. Image is author's own. Taken 11 August 2012.

Globalisation allowed Australian Pentecostals to transplant a very American style of religion—with its focus on the size of the congregation, the building, and spectacle—to Australia.<sup>87</sup> In America, megachurches, which were and are intimately linked with prosperity theology, experienced rapid growth and increased social power from the 1970s. They further thrived throughout the 1980s and “success followed those ministers who learned how to combine media mastery, church-growth formulas, and openness to independent Pentecostalism”.<sup>88</sup> Achieving social saturation through mastery of secular media forms has become a characteristic of Pentecostals around the world and is well studied

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<sup>87</sup> I am certainly not the only scholar to suggest that there is an affinity between globalisation and the growth of Pentecostal churches during the closing decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, anthropologist Simon Coleman has written a book titled *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity* (2000), which takes the Word of Life movement in Sweden as its case study. Coleman presents the “affinities and connections between Charismatic culture and globalisation” by juxtaposing “charismatic understandings of their calling with social scientific analyses of broader developments that are also occurring on a world-wide scale”. Simon Coleman, *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity: Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 49. <sup>88</sup> Bowler, *Blessed*, 78.

in many contexts, especially the American, Brazilian, and sub-Saharan African (particularly Ghanaian and Nigerian) instances.<sup>88</sup>

Australian Pentecostals are similarly eager to harness social media for church growth efforts. A recent example of this effort can be seen in Hillsong's "Cross Equals Heart/Love († = ♥)" Easter campaigns. Hillsong Communication Director Jay Argaet explained that since 2008 the church has "used the symbols to brand out Easter services". He went on, "I truly believe that God is in the detail and He can use the simplest things (such as this design) to draw the unsaved to Him".<sup>89</sup> Not only does the church use the modern concept of graphic design to reach people in this example, but the design is also saturated across social media channels. Hillsong Youth created a "Cross Equals Love #crossequalslove" music video that depicted young adults in an urban area painting the design on a building wall, an example of the church using social media tools such as hashtags to encourage members to brand themselves as part of the group.<sup>90</sup>

Hillsong members are invited to spread the "Cross Equals Love" message and reach as many people as possible every Easter. The church has achieved this outreach by placing the symbols in iconic and obvious spots in large cities, such as in the sand at Sydney's Bondi Beach and in the sky over other beaches in the Eastern suburbs (see images below). Argaet explains, "Every year our aim at Easter is to reach as many people as possible with the symbols of †=♥. Our hope is that when people see these symbols written across the city they will have a real moment where they personally consider, 'What does this mean to me?'" In 2015, the church also made transparent flags with the symbols placed in the centre which they sent out to each of their major global campuses to be flown in and over their cities. Hillsong chose to use flags because:

Throughout history, flags were used to inform the owner of the land (proclaim a possession) and represent the governing authority over the people (sovereignty). With this thought in mind, we landed on the idea of using flags with the symbols of †=♥ to proclaim Jesus in our cities and mark His greater sovereignty over this land...we are boldly stating that even if other kingdoms have made claims over this

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<sup>88</sup> For more on transnational Pentecostal mass media and its appropriation of well-established media forms see Gordon, 'Introduction: Visual Cultures of Pentecostalism', 308-12.

<sup>89</sup> Jay Argaet, 'Cross Equals Heart', *Hillsong Collected Blog*. 23 March 2012. Available: <http://hillsong.com/collected/blog/2012/03/cross-equals-heart/#.VdCGIfmqpBc>. Accessed 30 April 2015.

<sup>90</sup> Hillsong Youth, *Cross Equals Love #crossequalslove* Video. Published 6 March 2012. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDfP0o086II>. Accessed 15 July 2015.

city, we declare the message of Christ above it. With our flags flying over these iconic cities and nations we are proclaiming the Kingdom of Jesus is here.<sup>91</sup>

The church bound modern symbols and technologies to broadcast their evangelistic message. Combining an acceptance of individualism (“what does this mean to me?”), modern technology (the church created an application users could download to their phones to superimpose the symbols on any photographs they took), global outreach, and national symbols, the church has created a message designed to unite its followers and call them to action.



Figure 28: Hillsong Church Facebook Page, ““†=♥ #crossequalslove” at Bondi Beach’. 1 April 2015.

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<sup>91</sup> Jay Argaet, ‘† = ♥ FLAGS’, *Hillsong Collected Blogs*. 11 March 2015. Available: <http://hillsong.com/collected/blog/2015/03/%E2%80%A0%E2%99%A5-flags/#.VdCFzPmqpBc>. Accessed 30 April 2015.



Figure 29: Hillsong Church Facebook Page, “+ = ♡ #crossequalslove” 29 March 2015.

Campaigns designed to create a bond among the faithful are part of Pentecostal efforts to build social capital in increasingly secular communities, efforts that are otherwise most obvious in the physical location of the churches. Pentecostal churches, and particularly megachurches, are largely situated in the (outer) suburbs of large cities, leading to the northwestern suburbs of Sydney, and more recently the south-west of the city, increasingly being described in the Australian and international media as the “Bible belt”.<sup>92</sup> The Bible belt has Hillsong’s main campus in Baulkham Hills as its epicentre. Pentecostals deliberately moved into these areas, which have large and expanding populations but few long-established churches. This is part of a broader attempt to reverse the decline of local neighbourhood life, and to take advantage of the youthful demographic of these suburbs and their mistrust of hierarchy and the mainline churches, as well as their favouring of charisma, emotion, and participatory worship.<sup>93</sup>

The rooting of churches in suburbs on the fringes of large cities is also important for what the suburbs represent: an empty moral space. If the post-secular, modern city is a site of

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<sup>92</sup> For examples see: Matt Wade, ‘Bible Belt’s Out: Sydney has a Band of believers’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 28 2012. Available: <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/bible-belts-out-sydney-has-a-band-ofbelievers-20120727-22zma.html>. Accessed 31 July 2012; Phil Mercer, ‘Calls to Ban Brothels in Australia’s “Bible Belt”’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 June 2010. Available: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10367831>. Accessed 31 July 2012.

<sup>93</sup> Connell, ‘Hillsong’, 318.

potential degradation that takes social, moral, and economic forms, the suburbs are a physical and spiritual buffer zone. In this zone, there is a void left by traditional religions and “secular” organisations, including the state; a void that newer religious groups fill.<sup>94</sup> Pentecostal churches are eager to connect with the people who are left disconnected from the state and mainline churches, and who are also exposed to modernisation, materialism and secularisation, all tropes associated with the suburbs.<sup>95</sup> Recognising the creative and assimilative power of the suburbs (and the large number of potential converts who live in them) Pentecostals have centred themselves in in these areas. They deploy seemingly positive and simple messages (that the cross equals love) using modern tools.

## Conclusion

Hillsong created a live blog for the 2015 Colour Conference in Sydney. On day two, the blog featured a quotation from *The Pilgrim’s Regress* by C.S. Lewis: “One road leads home and a thousand roads lead into the wilderness”.<sup>96</sup> Written after his conversion to Christianity, the hero of Lewis’ book navigates the trials of modern life and sees how easy it is to be led astray by contemporary vices and other religions.<sup>97</sup> The message of Pentecostal churches to existing and prospective members has been, and remains, similar to Lewis’: Christianity is embedded in modern life, and is also a refuge from it. To tend to both the local and global needs of a church is no easy thing, but Hillsong and other Pentecostal churches’ success in doing so is predicated on presenting themselves as the one road home for their adherents, or even as the home itself.

From the outside, Pentecostal churches can seem rigid, doctrinaire, inflexible, even antimodern, with their biblical literalism and conservative attitudes toward sexuality and gender relations. But these churches have expanded so rapidly due to their ability to yoke modern forms—from rock music and social media to consumer culture and sisterhood—to

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<sup>94</sup> Orlando Woods, ‘The Geographies of Religious Conversion’, *Progress in Human Geography* 36, vol. 4, (2012), 442.

<sup>95</sup> Claire Dwyer, David Gilbert, and Bindi Shah, ‘Faith and Suburbia: Secularisation, Modernity and the Changing Geographies of Religion in London’s Suburbs’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38, no. 3 (2012), 403.

<sup>96</sup> C.S. Lewis quoted in Hillsong Church, *Colour Conference 2015 Blog*. 20 March 2015. Available: <http://www.24liveblog.com/live/1285795>. Accessed 12 August 2015.

<sup>97</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Pilgrim’s Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason and Romanticism* (London: Bles, 1946).

seemingly timeless doctrine. Likewise, they have become adept at negotiating or assimilating local cultures while striving toward global expansion in a way that other churches, with their continuing embrace of traditional forms of worship and belief structures, have not. Making religious identity more important than physical homes, Pentecostals tie peoples' loyalty to their churches and broader Christianity. However, this does mean Pentecostals have ignored the mobilising power of national contexts. Instead, they have used the nation as an analytic tool and a way to target new groups. They are then able to "free" people from the worldly demons represented by national and racial identity and physically locate their hyper-modern churches within the suburbs of major cities. It is this last image that is the most powerful reminder of the way Pentecostals harness modernity for their own purposes.

## Chapter Five: Attracting and Keeping Members

“Free this weekend? Join us in church!  
We are unashamedly passionate about the House of God. We welcome visitors at Hillsong  
Church and would love to have you join us in church this weekend”.

Hillsong Church Website Homepage.

Early in the first session on day one of Colour Conference 2013, Bobbie Houston told the women present that they were about to experience “forced fellowship”. We were told to talk to those sitting near us for three minutes, and to introduce ourselves to people we did not already know.<sup>1</sup> Though this was the only time I heard it termed thus, “forced fellowship” was a regular feature of church conferences and sometimes even church services I attended, and not just those directed at women. The aim seems simple enough: to put people at ease and make them feel included and welcome. Certainly, this kind of icebreaker is not exclusive to religious groups. However, this “forced fellowship” embodies one of the central aims of contemporary charismatic and Pentecostal churches. They want people to feel they are welcome, that they are connected to other people, and that they *belong* in church.

The way Hillsong frames its Colour Conferences is indicative of how much they want people to feel they belong to the church community. At these conferences, women are invited to join the “Colour Sisterhood”: “a company of everyday women, who desire to make a difference & make the world a better place. The heart of The Colour Sisterhood is that every woman can find an important & critical level of partnership”.<sup>2</sup> These women are encouraged to find companionship in each other and, more than that, they are taught that as a group (if they channel their energy through the church) they can “make a difference” in the wider world: “Something special happens when women gather in an inclusive environment,

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<sup>1</sup> Author’s own observations based on attendance at Hillsong Colour Conference 2013, 8 March. Sydney Entertainment Centre.

<sup>2</sup> Hillsong Colour, ‘The Colour Sisterhood’, *Hillsong Colour Website*. Available: <http://hillsong.com/colour/sisterhood/>. Accessed 18 August 2015.

equipped with a message that speaks of value and worth and mobilises them to find their purpose”.<sup>3</sup>

Besides their fellowship and humanitarian aims, church conferences are also unabashedly promoted as being fun. The invitation Hillsong sent me to Colour 2013 described the event as “the party”.<sup>4</sup> The invitation listed some of the things women could expect if they attended, including: “energy, inspiration, fun, life, laughter, lunacy, music, pamper, connection, friendship, [and] warmth” (see image below).<sup>5</sup> The friendly, welcoming, inspiring, and inclusive environment Hillsong and other Pentecostal churches seek to create provides an insight into one of their key goals: attracting and keeping members. This chapter examines the ways Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Australia organise and structure themselves to achieve this goal. The chapter also has a second purpose—to demonstrate that there is, in fact, a tension between these goals. That while Hillsong may indeed “welcome visitors”, it can not always entice them to stay.

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<sup>3</sup> Colour Sisterhood, ‘SHINE: Gather, Equip, Mobilise’, Hillsong Collected Blog, 22 August 2014. Available: [http://hillsong.com/collected/blog/2014/08/shine-gather-equip-mobilise/#.VeEJU\\_mqpBd](http://hillsong.com/collected/blog/2014/08/shine-gather-equip-mobilise/#.VeEJU_mqpBd). Accessed 18 August 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Note that this echoes the language used by Newfrontiers at the closing night of their 2011 conference, indicating how important enjoyment and fun are to Pentecostals and charismatics.

<sup>5</sup> The invitation to Colour Conference 2013 was a series of professionally designed and expensively produced postcards with images and text describing the event along with a registration form. The invitation was sent to my home address, presumably captured by Hillsong after my attendance at other church events over the previous two years. This outreach is itself an interesting example of the aggressive and costly marketing strategy of the church.



Figure 30: Invitation to Colour Conference 2013 (as sent to author).

Churches aim to attract new members and make them part of, and possibly reliant on, the church community. Megachurches, in particular, recognise that connecting on a personal or individual level with adherents is difficult, so they aim to bring them into the fold by focusing on three key areas: creating communities, fostering belonging in those communities, and encouraging self-development. These churches offer a comprehensive social system where members are, at least partially, insulated from the broader community; an impetus more reminiscent of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century “model villages” than modern secular organisations.<sup>6</sup> I use the word “insulated” rather than isolated because these

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<sup>6</sup> Model villages were a predominantly British phenomenon, built by wealthy landowners from the late eighteenth century and then increasingly by wealthy industrialists in the nineteenth century. For more information see: W. Ashworth, ‘British Industrial Villages in the Nineteenth Century’, *The Economic History Review* 3, no. 3 (1951), 378-87. These villages were self-contained communities for the rapidly expanding populace, with housing, local amenities, and workplaces all close together. Jeremy Burchardt argues that these social considerations (housing and work were close together) were mostly incidental; landowners wished to embellish and increase the value of their estates, much the way Pentecostal megachurches attempt to increase the size of their congregation by providing a complete social system. Jeremy Burchardt, *Paradise Lost: Rural Idyll and Social Change since 1800* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2002), 58.

churches do not aim to offer a complete break with the outside world. Rather, they provide an upbeat and positive message about how to live a life leading to salvation, a message that is attractive because it provides a sort of “nostalgia for the future”. Many members are happy to, and indeed *want* to submit to the discipline of churches because the messages they receive via church teachings helps both to explain and to critique the modern world. These messages simultaneously reconcile members’ enjoyment of modernity’s pleasures with concerns about its materialism and inequalities, albeit in ways that are not always internally consistent.<sup>7</sup>

However, Pentecostal churches have serious problems retaining members because belonging to the community on offer requires sacrifices in terms of an individual’s time, money, and identity. As will be demonstrated below, turnover rates in these churches are very high because the strategies these churches adopt to attract converts present problems when it comes to keeping them. Their strategies, moreover, are only effective in embedding a core group within the church; that is, those who have enough time and money to devote to their church and partipate in the community it creates. Perhaps this is an unvoiced objective on the part of churches and there is, not surprisingly, no outright church commentary to support this proposition. While churches present their community as filling the needs of all members and helping them overcome the challenges of the modern world, the ways churches cater for these needs and challenges are often superficial.

Furthermore, the real “needs” of members may not align with churches’ understandings of them. Churches, after all, make their own critiques of modern social life and necessarily believe that these are universally applicable. This universality works well for some members, particularly in the short term. Amaka Okeke wrote a piece in *Abrupt*, the magazine of Hillsong Church in London, demonstrating the appeal of assuming church goers needs are universal: it makes complicated concepts seem simple. Okeke, the daughter of a black clergyman, said:

[Y]ou might wonder what led me to walk through the doors of a church where the majority of people were white. The answer is that I was looking for a good church to attend, somewhere I would feel at home. For me, this sits above everything else. Christians should be united by faith and not by creed or colour. Of course, this is a

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<sup>7</sup> Charles Piot, *Nostalgia for the Future: West Africa after the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 162.

simplistic view, but often simplicity is what is needed. The ability to make someone feel like they belong should not be the preserve of a few but the requirement on all.<sup>8</sup>

Okeke is open about the appeal of “simplicity” and for her the feeling that she belonged in the church was the most important part of Hillsong’s appeal. However, feeling that she belonged to the church community came at the cost of another part of her identity: her ethnicity. To feel at home in Hillsong meant sacrificing other parts of herself, and whether this is sustainable in the long term seems doubtful for many church goers.

This chapter explores the tensions between outreach and retention arguing first that churches present themselves as communities, not just institutions, and so aim to be present in every aspect of members’ lives. This presence is part of an effort to create a degree of self-reliance or self-sufficiency where members’ most meaningful and significant social connections are within the church. Second, the chapter demonstrates that churches also attempt to establish a sense of connection to the larger church group, particularly through the use of emotional and enjoyable worship music which helps foster a sense of belonging to the group. Finally, the chapter argues that the prosperity gospel of churches has led to a perpetual logic of self-development. Under this logic, Pentecostals encourage adherents to transform themselves for the better, particularly in relation to their appearance and their education. The simplicity of this message is understandably appealing in its reassurance and positivity about the potential of people. The paucity of this message is that it does not engage with the realities of systemic social inequalities; not everyone has access to education or the financial security required to pursue self-development through education or any other means (self-development nearly always involves the sacrifice of time and or money). By analysing these three aspects of the ways churches structure and organise themselves, the chapter will demonstrate that Pentecostals’ focus on bringing people into the group comes at the expense of keeping them there. For seeker-sensitive churches (those aimed at providing “innovative, customer-sensitive” programs to reach the unchurched), this is problematic.<sup>9</sup> Those who

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<sup>8</sup> Amaka Okeke, ‘Ethnic Diversity in Church’, *Abrupt*, Issue Five: Generations (2010), Hillsong Church London, 52.

<sup>9</sup> Kimon Howland Sargeant, *Seeker Churches: Promoting Traditional Religion in a Nontraditional Way* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 4. See also Wade Clark Roof’s work on the “spiritual marketplace” and the possibility that spiritual renewal (across various denominations) is occurring in Western countries among “a generation of seekers” (the baby boomers). Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

have actively sought out this particular type of religious experience may then just as easily seek out an alternative if they are dissatisfied.<sup>10</sup> And, indeed, it seems they do just that.

## Retaining members

Scholars and churches pay far more attention to the success of Pentecostal churches in attracting new members than examining whether the churches *keep* their members. Little literature deals with retention rates in these churches and much of the limited discussion conflates retention with recruitment, assuming that if a church can be innovative and attractive enough to entice new members, it will also keep them.<sup>11</sup> Just as the churches themselves are focused on growth, many scholars consider church growth strategies in detail without much reflection on whether and why people move from the liminal phase of church seeker to actual church member.<sup>12</sup> My conversations as a participant-observer at church services and conferences over the last four years indicate that membership is more complicated than it appears. For example, Lily—who we met in Chapter Three—has been attending services at Grace City Church for over eighteen months but told me she is not officially a member. When I asked her what she meant, she explained that she had not done the “new members course”. The course runs over two days and explores the “core beliefs of the church and what we are committed to building here in the Northern Beaches and around

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<sup>10</sup> Evangelical megachurches are often associated with this seeker sensitive approach to attracting new converts, which draws heavily on a neoliberal faith in demand and supply to produce the best “religious products”. Accepting the premise that they must offer services and experiences that are different to mainline churches and are thus appealing, these megachurches must also accept that if consumers become unhappy with the religious product on offer, churches must either innovate to keep the market, or risk losing members. See Stephen Ellingson, *The Megachurch and the Mainline: Remaking Religious Tradition in the Twenty-first Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 11, 55.

<sup>11</sup> For example, see Stephen Ellingson, ‘Packaging Religious Experience, Selling Modular Religion: Explaining the Emergence and Expansion of Megachurches’, in François Gauthier and Tuomas Martikainen eds., *Religion in Consumer Society: Brands, Consumers and Markets* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013), 67; and Peter Bentley, ‘The City is my Parish? Understanding the Hillsong Model’, *Pointers* 22, no. 3 (2012), 12-16.

<sup>12</sup> For example, from the perspective of Pentecostals themselves see Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Wisdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); and Donald A. McGraven, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990). For the way academics reflect this priority see Marion Maddox, “‘In the Goofy Parking Lot’: Growth Churches as a Novel Religious Form for Late Capitalism”, *Social Compass* 59, no. 2 (2012), 146-58; and Connell, ‘Hillsong: A Megachurch’, 315-32.

the world as part of Newfrontiers”.<sup>13</sup> Not only is the depth of peoples’ membership hard to gauge, in the sense that different people devote widely varying levels of time and energy to church activities, but membership itself is also hard to quantify in the simpler sense that churches do not regularly count and publish membership statistics. While Hillsong may put a rough number of worshippers in on its website (“approaching 100,000 weekly”) it does not, understandably, provide a breakdown of how many of these worshippers are visitors and how many are there each week.<sup>14</sup> The lack of concrete information about membership numbers is perhaps why there is little academic work considering membership rates.

Surveys conducted by National Church Life Surveys (NCLS) Research reveal the challenges these churches face in terms of retention.<sup>15</sup> The National Church Life Survey is conducted every five years, and it represents the only objective measure of retention available. It should be understood that these surveys were not peer reviewed or sponsored by disinterested parties.<sup>16</sup> Even so, the sponsors had no self-interested reason to support survey designs or interpretations that indicate low retention rates. The surveys indicate that in AOG churches, only fifty-eight percent of those surveyed at the end of the period (1996) were also members at the start of the survey period (1991). The biggest inflow of new members (twenty-seven percent of the total population) came from “switchers in” who, as the name suggests, switched to AOG churches from other churches. “Newcomers”, those who did not previously attend church, accounted for ten percent of the population. Over the same period, the corresponding number of “switchers out”—those who left for another denomination—

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<sup>13</sup> Based on author’s conversation with Lily, 1 August 2015. For more on Grace City’s membership course see: Grace City Church, ‘New Members Course’, *Grace City Church Website*. Available: [http://www.gracecitychurch.net/Groups/1000095296/Grace\\_City\\_Church/Events/New\\_Members\\_Course/New\\_Members\\_Course.aspx](http://www.gracecitychurch.net/Groups/1000095296/Grace_City_Church/Events/New_Members_Course/New_Members_Course.aspx). Accessed 2 August 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Hillsong Media, ‘About Hillsong Church’, *Hillsong Church Website*. Available: <http://hillsong.com/media/>. Accessed 22 August 2015.

<sup>15</sup> NCLS Research has four major partners: Uniting Mission and Education, NSW & ACT; Anglicare Diocese of Sydney; Australian Catholic Bishops Conferences; and the Australian Catholic University. Churches “opt in” to the survey (they order surveys from NCLS, have members complete them, and return them to NCLS) on the understanding that the results will be helpful in analysis of the health and vitality of their church. Participants in the 2011 survey included twenty-two Christian denominations, 3000 local churches, 260,000 adult attendees (aged fifteen and over), 10,000 child attendees (eight to fourteen years), and 6,000 church leaders. See: NCLS Research, ‘Who is NCLS Research?’, *National Church Life Survey Website*. Available: <http://www.ncls.org.au/default.aspx?sitemapid=7086>. Accessed 22 March 2015.

<sup>16</sup> NCLS makes survey results available first to participating churches and then the public. They release selected information to the public progressively but the last complete set of survey results comes from 2001.

was twelve percent.<sup>17</sup> “Drift out”, those who no longer attend any church, was twenty percent. From 1996-2001, AOG/ACC churches experienced similar inflow and outflow trends. There was just a slight increase in newcomers, to fourteen percent, and a decrease in drift out, down to sixteen percent.<sup>18</sup>

NCLS Research also published results to the inflow and outflow for Pentecostal churches more broadly, and they revealed that it is not only AOG churches who have a relatively transient membership. The 1991-1996 data was based on four Pentecostal groups: the AOG, Apostolic Church, Christian Revival Crusade, and Foursquare Gospel. The 1996-2001 data included the AOG, Apostolic Church, Christian Revival Crusade, Vineyard, and Christian City Churches (C3), and thus included all of the churches of this thesis, excepting Newfrontiers. This survey revealed patterns similar to the first survey’s results (which only looked at AOG churches). The most salient points of difference in the study looking at the broader group of Pentecostal churches were that, from 1991-1996, switchers in represented twenty-eight percent of attendees, while switchers out were fourteen percent. The only statistically significant difference between the two data sets is in the lower number of drifters out (fifteen percent). From 1996-2001, newcomers increased to fourteen percent, but otherwise, the results were very similar.<sup>19</sup> The key difference is that the overall attendance rate in the wider survey (those who attended a Pentecostal church in both 1991 and 1996) was lower, being fifty-three percent, rather than fifty-eight percent in the AOG sample.

The turnover rates outlined above indicate that these churches have relatively unstable populations. People come in and out of Pentecostal churches regularly and the proportion of the congregation who have been attending for five years or more never rises much above half of the total population. When explaining this retention problem, NCLS Research highlights the mobility of Pentecostal church attendees; they move in from other churches at high rates and switch or drift out at high rates than other Protestant churches. NCLS

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<sup>17</sup> The survey measures “switchers out” (people who leave for other churches) by asking those who complete the survey to indicate how long they have been at their current church and which church they attended previously.

<sup>18</sup> NCLS, ‘Assemblies of God Inflow and Outflow’, *Research: Who Goes to Church, Church Size and Growth*, NCLS Research 2015. Available: <http://www.ncls.org.au/default.aspx?sitemapid=213>. Accessed 22 March, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> NCLS, ‘Pentecostal Inflow and Outflow’, *Research: Who Goes to Church, Church Size and Growth*, NCLS Research 2015. Available: <http://www.ncls.org.au/default.aspx?sitemapid=5911>. Accessed 22 March 2015.

Research report writers explain this mobility by suggesting that perhaps people come to Pentecostal churches to “try out” this style of religion.<sup>20</sup>

These retention figures should not be confused with overall attendance rates. In fact, attendance rates increased overall during this period: from 1991-96 by ten percent, and from 1996-2001 by eighteen percent.<sup>21</sup> Whereas this story of overall growth is the one that tends to attract the most attention, Pentecostal churches’ difficulty in retaining members is equally significant to their operations. Survey results from other Christian denominations suggest that retention problems are particularly significant for Pentecostals. While other Protestant denominations did not have a growth rate as high as Pentecostal churches, their retention rates were much higher: they retained eighty-five percent of members over the period where Pentecostals only retained fifty-three percent.<sup>22</sup> Clearly the lack of research into Pentecostal retention rates is problematic, and the assumption that because churches are growing rapidly they must be not only be attracting but also keeping members is flawed.

## Creating communities

The key churches of this study all emphasise that community, fellowship, friendship, and belonging important concepts to their organisations, as demonstrated in their ‘Vision Statements’. In 1993, ten years after he and Bobbie planted the Hills Christian Life Centre, Brian Houston outlined his vision for the church in a statement called ‘The Church I See’. Houston explained: “I see a Church so compassionate that people are drawn from impossible situations into a loving and friendly circle of hope, where answers are found and acceptance is given”.<sup>23</sup> The ‘Vision’ of Influencers Church has a similar emphasis on love, family, and connection. “[O]ur vision is simply this, to influence the hearts of people towards greater connection with GOD, using the generous resource of God’s love in the context of God’s

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<sup>20</sup> NCLS, ‘Pentecostal Inflow and Outflow’.

<sup>21</sup> NCLS, ‘Pentecostal Inflow and Outflow’.

<sup>22</sup> NCLS, ‘Protestant Churches Inflow and Outflow’, Research: Who Goes to Church, Church Size and Growth, NCLS Research 2015. Available: <http://www.ncls.org.au/default.aspx?sitemapid=5911>. Accessed 22 March 2015.

<sup>23</sup> Brian Houston, ‘The Church I See’, originally published in 1993, republished on Hillsong Church Website, Australia. Available: <http://hillsong.com/vision>. Accessed 12 March, 2015.

family, the local church”.<sup>24</sup> Planetshakers, the daughter church of Influencers, describes itself as, “empowering generations to win generations”, which is appropriate, given that the son of Influencers then head pastor originally planted this church.<sup>25</sup> C3 has a similarly simple key aim, “We have a united vision to build the church by connecting people to God, connecting people to people and also empowering people for effective, joyful service. Come visit a C3 Church today and live Your Best Life!”<sup>26</sup> Finally, Newfrontiers describes itself as: “A group of apostolic leaders, together with our teams and churches, united on global mission, and by core values, and genuine relationships”.<sup>27</sup> These statements reveal the churches’ explicit focus on creating a community and reinforce the argument above that this is usually framed in terms of then being able to “win” or “influence” more people. The focus on outward evangelism is hardly surprising in these churches, but may paradoxically go some way in explaining why people do not necessarily stay.

Churches justify their focus on creating a community by suggesting that secular communities do not fulfil people’s needs. Rick Warren, for example, devoted a chapter in his *Purpose Driven Life* to ‘Cultivating Community’, arguing that secular society and families can be characterised by “unhealthy relationships”. He did not provide extensive discussion of why this might be the case but instead suggested that people turn to the New Testament, which will teach people “how to get along with and relate to others in God’s family”.<sup>28</sup> Providing a clearer critique of the failings of secular communities was an article in *Abrupt* magazine which argued that modern technology creates loneliness:

19 new emails. All Facebook notifications. Lizzie’s tagged me again and Kate keeps posting videos on my wall. Josh has messaged me about bills. And all the other notifications are people commenting on my status. All this is happening within my laptop screen, in a virtual world. In reality, I sit at my desk with my heart crying, an unwanted feeling surrounding me that feels like bleak dense emptiness.<sup>29</sup>

In this quotation the author of ‘Beating Loneliness’ suggests that technology does not connect people to each other in a satisfying way. Although the writer is clearly part of a

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<sup>24</sup> ‘Vision’, *Influencers Church Website, Australia*. Available: <http://influencers.church/vision>. Accessed 17 March 2015.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Home’, *Planetshakers Website, Australia*. Available: <http://www2.planetshakers.com/>. Accessed 17 March 2015.

<sup>26</sup> ‘About C3 Church’, *C3 Church Sydney Website*. Available: <http://www2.myc3church.net/aboutc3church>. Accessed 19 March 2015.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Homepage’, *Newfrontiers Together*. Available: <http://newfrontierstogether.org/>. Accessed 17 March.

<sup>28</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 145-6.

<sup>29</sup> Michelle Ruda, ‘Beating Loneliness’ *Abrupt*, Issue Five: Generations (2010), Hillsong Church London, 50.

community, one that is actively reaching out to her, it is not enough. The implicit assumption, given the place the article was published, is that the church can provide more meaningful opportunities to connect with other people than the secular world.

Pentecostal churches offer their own communities as an alternative to those they suggest the secular world fails to provide. Churches integrate members in and bind people to their community through social outlets. “Connect groups” (small groups that meet informally to study scripture, pray, and discuss faith and life) provide a striking example of their efficacy. One young Pentecostal woman I spoke with at Hillsong Conference 2012 had not grown up in a religious family, but was now in a serious relationship with a man who regularly attended Hillsong. Church was important to him and she agreed to “check it out”.<sup>30</sup> Samantha said that at first going to the church was very exciting. She was new to church in general, and found people friendly and the services fun, but explained that it was through her connect group that she really felt that she had become a “member” of the church, and not just a visitor. Her connect group was composed of people mostly her age (people in their mid-twenties), and was hosted by a young married couple, although all the other members of the group were single professionals. They held their meetings on Wednesday evenings and alternated between formal sessions (where they discussed recent sermons and talked about how church teachings applied to their everyday lives) and more relaxed, social meetings. Meetings lasted for an hour or two and Samantha said she enjoyed both types of meeting equally. While she loved to “catch up” with her church friends, she also liked hearing stories about how people applied the advice from sermons and the Bible to their everyday lives. Samantha said that through her connect group she was “growing in her faith”. Connect groups thus offer a way to mediate between members’ secular and religious lives, as well as literally connecting them to other people within the church.

Connect groups are one of the ways churches such as Hillsong seek to organise members, though the concept behind them is not new. These groups hold echoes of the small cellbased groups run by other historic Christian denominations, such as the Methodist class meetings founded by John Wesley in London in 1738 or the “bands” held by the Moravian Nicolaus

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<sup>30</sup> Conversation at Hillsong Conference 2012, at Session One, ‘Effective Evangelism Today’, Tuesday 3 July, 2012.

Zinzendorf in the same decade.<sup>31</sup> Connect groups offer a similar cell-based model for organising members, one particularly useful in churches that have thousands of congregants and a relatively small number of pastors.<sup>32</sup> C3, for example, runs ‘Connect Leader Training’ courses which “cover how to start, grow and multiply a group as well as practically empowering you to move in the Spirit through healing and the prophetic. This course is a prerequisite for all those who wish to lead or assist a connect group”.<sup>33</sup> C3 here has formalised the meetings of connect groups under its rules, but by offering training programs, it hands over the practical responsibility for running these groups to the laity. This highly efficient way of organising members has the dual effect of folding people formally into the church community while easing the practical burden on the organisation the community represents.

The primary function of these “connect” groups is to create a time and space for people to meet outside of church services, to socialise and talk about God. Hillsong describes this as “making church small” and “a great way to meet other people and build authentic relationships. No matter what your age, interest or situation”.<sup>34</sup> You can search for a connect group through myhillsong.com, but only if you are a member with an account. Influencers Church explains the purpose of connect groups as being similarly singular, “to bring people together. We believe God created us to live in relationship with others and only then can we live the full life He intends for us”.<sup>35</sup> Participation in these groups is positioned as part of God’s plan for individuals. The website goes on to explain, “sharing life through community is part of our design, but meaningful relationships aren’t always easy to find. That’s why connect groups exist—to make these life-changing relationships relevant”.<sup>36</sup> The clear

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<sup>31</sup> Peter Bentley, ‘The City is my Parish? Understanding the Hillsong Model’ *Pointers* 22, no. 3 (2012), 14; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 24; David Lowes Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting: Its Origins and Significance* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 77-79.

<sup>32</sup> Cell groups in Pentecostal and other Protestant churches tend to be organised geographically, and have around ten members. The groups typically meet in the home of a member, often the leader of the group who is given a fairly large amount of autonomy on how the meeting will run. The groups ease the work of church pastors by integrating ministering to the sick or tending to those with personal problems into the function of the cell group. Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 191-93.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Connect Leader Training’, *C3 Church Website*. Available: <http://www2.myc3church.net/category/connect-leader-training>. Accessed 23 March 2015.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Connect Group’, *Hillsong Hills Centre Website*. Available: <http://hillsong.com/hills/connect-groups>. Accessed 23 March 2015.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Connect Groups’, *Influencers Church Adelaide North Campus Website*. Available: <http://influencers.church/adelaidenorth/groups>. Accessed 15 March 2015.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Connect Groups’, *Influencers Church Adelaide North Campus Website*. Available: <http://influencers.church/adelaidenorth/groups>. Accessed 15 March 2015.

allusion to the lack of “community” in modern life, and the way the church makes connect groups part of *its* community, indicates a desire for members to become embedded in each other’s lives outside of the shared experience of church services.

C3 also emphasises the fact that its connect groups physically meet outside of the church and often meet in public spaces. The church says these groups “provide an opportunity outside of our church services to get together and talk about God”, and notes that they meet in a diverse range of locations including homes, cafes, workplaces, schools, universities, and retirement villages.<sup>37</sup> Most interesting here is the way the church encourages members to organise themselves and meet within other (secular) institutions, creating a space for the church to operate within the broader community, even if only in an informal way, in line with their missionary goals. Newfrontiers connect groups similarly meet in various suburbs “on different days and times of the week” as part of the church’s “Word and Worship” goals.<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, Planetshakers calls its connect groups “Urban Life groups”, but similarly describes them as “a great way to get connected into the life of Planetshakers City Church. It makes a big church small by catering for all the needs of individuals for all ages”.<sup>39</sup> This church is even more explicit about the fact that these groups are designed to bring people into the church and, once there, integrate them into it theologically and socially. The conversation is still framed by an emphasis on how the individual can be served, but the aim is surely to expand the church and cement the place of people within it.

It is problematic that almost no academic research exists on connect groups.<sup>40</sup> These groups constitute one of Pentecostal churches’ most fruitful and efficient strategies for including people in the church community. Everyone is strongly encouraged to join a group and no one need fear rejection since members are never asked to leave because others do not like

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<sup>37</sup> ‘About Connect Groups’, *C3 Church Australia Website*. Available: <http://www2.myc3church.net/aboutconnect>. Accessed 15 March 2015.

<sup>38</sup> ‘Connect Group – Word and Worship’, *Grace City Church Website*. Available: <http://www.gracecitychurch.net/Calendar/eventDetails.aspx?id=1000855615>. Accessed 29 March 2015.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Urban Life’, *Planetshakers Australia Website*. Available: <http://www.planetshakers.com/urbanlife/>. Accessed 20 March 2015.

<sup>40</sup> While some academics mention “connect groups” in their work, there is no work going into considerable detail about the groups with the exception of works such as a 2011 dissertation as part of Doctor of Ministry by Mark Combs at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This work was an active intervention on the part of Combs, who aimed to “establish an effective small group ministry at Salem Baptist Church”. Mark Combs, “Developing an Effective Small Group Ministry at Salem Baptist Church, Salem, Kentucky”, D. Ministry dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001. Available: <http://hdl.handle.net/10392/2864>. Accessed 25 March 2015.

them. They provide inbuilt friendship groups for church members. While I have made no statistical analysis of church members' experiences within connect groups—and as an outsider was unable to attend the groups as an observer—the anecdotal evidence I built up while completing this study strongly suggests the importance of these groups in attracting members. Newcomers to churches often complete an “Alpha Course” (a short interdenominational course offering an introduction to Christian faith) and these are advertised by Hillsong as a “great way to meet people and get connected in church. It’s free, supper provided”.<sup>41</sup> Connect groups offer an extension of this concept. Violet, a nineteen-year-old girl from Brighton and a Newfrontiers member, told me that being able to have “really open” conversations with people in her connect group about “life, death and everything in between” was a bonding experience. She said “I can ask them anything, like, whenever I have a problem with church or my life, but we also have loads of fun. It’s awesome”.<sup>42</sup> She said that her fellow group members are now some of her best friends and shyly told me that she met her boyfriend there.<sup>43</sup> The importance of this social component in members' experiences of church life cannot be overstated. It seems that these groups, with their focus on authentic and intimate relationships linked with a discussion of faith do connect members; both to each other and to their church.

Beyond connect groups, churches offer a wide variety of social and group activities for members and have done so since the start of the contemporary Pentecostal movement. The Assemblies of God in Klemzig (now Influencers) published *Contact: A Weekly Publication to Keep you in Contact* in the 1970s, demonstrating that they understood the need to make

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<sup>41</sup> ‘Alpha’, *Hillsong Hills Campus Website*. Available: <https://hillsong.com/hills/courses/>. Accessed 19 August 2015. The Alpha course was originally a collaboration of 4000 British churches in 1998 who sought to create an ‘evangelizing course designed specifically for the contemporary age’ that would, over a period of weeks, introduce newcomers to Christianity. Stephen Hunt, ‘The Alpha Program: Charismatic Evangelism for the Contemporary Age’, *Pneuma* 27, no. 1 (2005), 66.

<sup>42</sup> Based on author’s conversation with Violet (name has been changed) at Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference, Brighton, UK. 14 July 2011.

<sup>43</sup> The promotion of romantic relationships between church members was another common theme I noticed as a participant-observer. Speaking at one of the youth sessions (Mobilise) of the Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference Pastor Tom Shaw said that Mobilise would continue as a youth conference, even though the “whole church” conferences would not. He noted that many “students and twenties” were looking for a partner and said that at next year’s Mobilise Conference, “we’ll take plenty of time” and create the “right environment” for “special friendships”. This drew raucous laughs from the audience as well as lots of cheers, clapping, and jostling of the young adults who were audience members. That churches encourage these relationships is suggestive of their attempts to embed members more fully into the church community. Author’s observations during at: Tom Shaw, ‘Mobilise Main Session One’, *Newfrontiers Together on a Mission Conference*, Brighton, UK. 13 July 2011.

members feel included and connected. The pamphlet regularly outlined social activities for church members, including “Wreckreaction Nite” which comprised a variety of sports activities including billiards and table tennis: “It’s a great nite [sic] to invite your unsaved friends, so go to it”.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, they organised a “Girl’s Night Out at Church!” which they advertised as a “WONDERFUL FILM AND FELLOWSHIP evening”. The “ladies” of the church were asked to “contact working ladies who don’t have the opportunity for day-time fellowship”.<sup>45</sup> The church here refused to allow the demands on members’ time by their work commitments to infringe on an opportunity for fellowship. It was further offering secular activities (billiards, table tennis, and movies) to do this. Pentecostal churches are aware of the importance of feeling connected to a community; they openly acknowledge that this is something they aim for and it seems that through small group activities, they are effective in achieving this objective. Adherents seem to view the investment of time and emotional energy that churches require as reasonable, in fact, the investment serves to embed them within the community even further. Members become reliant on their church, and the small groups in it, for their key relationships and as a way to explain the world. This then, is an example of where Pentecostals are most effective in both attracting and keeping members. Other efforts are not so successful.

## Fostering belonging

“Praise the Lord! Within those three words is the powerful beginning and foundation of a blessed life. It starts with knowing who God is and praising Him”, so says Brian Houston.<sup>46</sup> To Houston, praise means thankfulness, and church services begin with songs of praise as a way of giving thanks. These songs are not only a religious experience; they are also a pleasurable one. Houston argues that praise offers people the chance to see God as “Father and Friend” and to “enjoy the blessing of a close, intimate relationship with Him...No matter what situation you may be in, you are not alone”.<sup>47</sup> In reaching out to those who feel they need help, Houston implies that God is not the only one they can turn to; the church and the people in it, including leaders such as himself, also stand ready to offer warm fellowship.

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<sup>44</sup> Assemblies of God, *Contact: A Weekly Publication to Keep you in Contact*, 26 February 1978, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Assemblies of God, *Contact: A Weekly Publication to Keep you in Contact*, 19 February 1978, 2

<sup>46</sup> Houston, *How to Maximise Your Life*, 19.

<sup>47</sup> Houston, *How to Maximise Your Life*, 19.

This fellowship is a critical to the worship experience: music in Pentecostal churches helps make the congregation feel connected to their church and other members.<sup>48</sup> Music is perhaps the most significant way Pentecostals attempt foster a sense of belonging among church members, both new converts and long-time members. However, as will be shown below, that people enjoy the music produced by a church does not correlate to an appreciation of their teachings or theology. Furthermore, the use of worship music—with its high production values and emotional intensity—requires constant effort on the part of churches and constant and possibly exhausting stimulation of members. While music certainly attracts people to Pentecostal churches, it does not keep them there.

Members embody the pleasure experienced during the praise and worship music of a Pentecostal service.<sup>49</sup> Psychologist Silvan Tomkins argues that the link between bodily sensation and effect is important: “affect is self-validating with or without any further referent”, she notes.<sup>50</sup> Tanya Levin, a former Hillsong member who wrote a memoir, *People in Glass Houses: An Insider’s Story of a Life in and out of Hillsong* (2007), describes entering Hillsong’s conference “stadiums” and being in “a completely controlled sensory zone”, where the music was key.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, when attending church services I have noticed that, by the end of the first worship session, which is usually at least thirty minutes, I have spent more time looking at the faces of the band members—particularly the bass and keyboard players, who rarely leave the stage—than on the pastor or any other speaker.<sup>52</sup> At church conferences, the music is part of a highly produced performance and is accompanied by colourful and flashing lights, choreographed dancing, and a whole range of special effects and props (see image below). Yet while it is enjoyable to enjoy music, and exciting to be

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<sup>48</sup> Pentecostals themselves see “worship” and “praise” as intimately connected to, if not synonymous with, music. The sacred sounds produced during worship make it not just a social practice (to be experienced within the church community), it is a devotional one too. Monique M. Ingalls, ‘Introduction: Interconnection, Interface, and Identification in Pentecostal-Charismatic Music and Worship’, in Monique M. Ingalls and Amos Yong eds., *The Spirit of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), 1-16.

<sup>49</sup> Matthew Wade, ‘Seeker-friendly: The Hillsong Megachurch as an Enchanting Total Institution’, *Journal of Sociology* (Online First: March 2015), 1-16.

<sup>50</sup> Silvan Tomkins quoted in Henriques, ‘Sonic Dominance’, 463.

<sup>51</sup> Tanya Levin, *People in Glass Houses: An Insider’s Story of a Life in and out of Hillsong* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2007), 137.

<sup>52</sup> Church services typically open with a worship session of thirty to forty-five minutes which is then followed by church announcements, the pastor’s teaching, and possibly a guest speaker to talk about church projects or upcoming events. Services then usually close with another worship session which can sometimes be as emotional and intense as the first (particularly if the sermon was particularly emotional) but which is more often a slightly less formal worship session – people chat and start to drift out of church after a song or two.

excited by this experience, is this enough to keep people within Pentecostal and charismatic congregations? This may be an effective way of mixing ethereal or spiritual experiences, with physical sensations and material culture, but it is not necessarily enough to keep people in the church over the long term. It would seem that music is an important way for members to brand themselves as part of their church's community, for example, by purchasing and playing albums.



Figure 31: The spectacle of musical performances at church conferences is immense and deliberately creates a sensory overload. Photo from evening session of Colour Conference 2013, 7 July. Image is author's own.

Worship music has always been important in Pentecostal services, which saw their underlying oral liturgy expressed through music, originally Methodist hymns from the nineteenth century Evangelical and Holiness traditions.<sup>53</sup> From the 1960s, there was a new burst of charismatic song writing in the UK and the UK, and the 1980s saw Vineyard songs, which followed the rhythms of Country and Western music, become increasingly popular.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Cheryl J. Sanders, *Saints in Exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 53-55. For more on the Pentecostal oral tradition see Allan Anderson, 'The Gospel and Culture in Pentecostal Mission in the Third World', *Missionalia* 27, no. 2 (1999), 220-30.

<sup>54</sup> Anne Dyer, 'Worship Introduction', in William K. Kay and Anne E. Dyer eds., *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, A Reader* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 144.

These newer music forms produced from the 1960s onward had a focus on intimate and personal worship experiences, and, being historically linked as they were to jazz and rock music, were also dissimilar in terms of genre to the strident evangelical hymns that had come before.<sup>55</sup> Anne Dyer argues that the 1980s were also marked by an increasing willingness on the part of Pentecostal churches to experiment with leadership and music. From this point, she notes, it was increasingly common to find musical groups who also had a member who was recognised formally as a worship leader. These worship or creative pastors were seen differently to the church's "elder" pastors, and the positions did not come with the same weight.<sup>56</sup> This change signalled the shift towards churches structuring and organising themselves in ways that are highly professionalised, with labour divided according to the ability to enhance the product on offer and its reach. Hillsong thus sees worship music as far more than mere entertainment; it is a way for individuals to build and deepen their relationship with the church and particularly with the Spirit.<sup>57</sup>

Worship is not just listening to music, it involves connecting with God through active praise. Members participate by singing along to the lyrics displayed screens (see images below) and by clapping, dancing, swaying, and most commonly, lifting their hands and faces upward.<sup>58</sup> By worshipping, Pentecostals have a spiritual, emotional, and group experience that helps them feel they belong to their church.

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<sup>55</sup> For an exploration of the links between popular music and Pentecostalism and a historical overview of this type of music see Mark Jennings, 'Imagining Jesus doing a Whole Lotta Shakin': Pentecostal Worship, Popular Music and the Politics of Experience', *Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 15, no. 2 (2014), 211-26.

<sup>56</sup> Dyer, 'Worship Introduction', 145.

<sup>57</sup> Daniel E. Albrecht argues that Pentecostal and Charismatic worship constitutes a "ritual" which "by nature dramatizes and effects the life of a people" which helps "vitalize the spirituality of a community". Albrecht thus sees music as having a dramatic personal effect on individuals that also invigorates the group worshipping. Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 22-23.

<sup>58</sup> For an ethnographic description of Pentecostal worship in an Australian church see Mark Jennings, "'Won't you Break Free?'" An Ethnography of Music and the Divine-human Encounter at an Australian Pentecostal Church', *Culture and Religion* 9, no. 2 (2008), 161-174.



Figure 32: Emotional worshippers close their eyes and raise their hands as they sing along with the band at evening rally of Hillsong Conference 2012. Image is author's own.

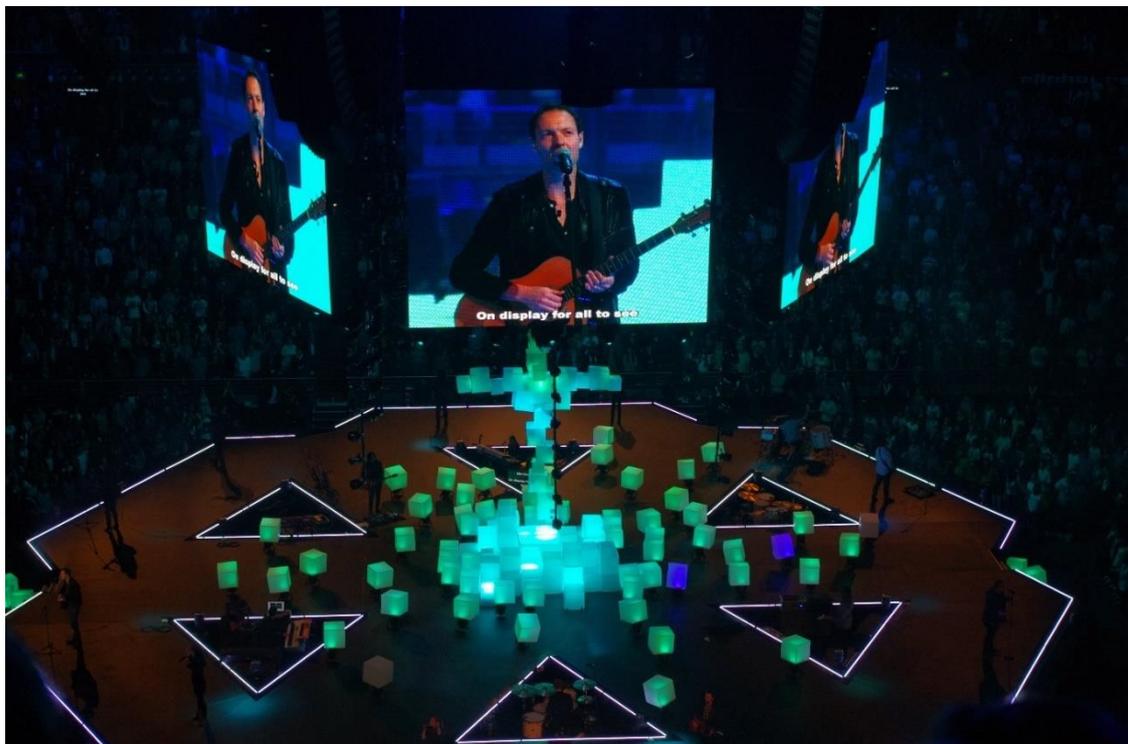


Figure 33: Band plays at 7 July evening rally of Hillsong Conference 2012 with lyrics displayed on the screen for worshippers to read and sing along. Image is author's own.

Individuals may further their sense of belonging by purchasing worship music to play outside of church, and indeed, many of them do this. The pleasurable act of individually consuming music as a product, as well as experiencing it in a live group setting, further generates the sense of belonging to this particular tribe. It is another way to buy into and embody Hillsong or other Pentecostal churches as a brand, and to show belonging to the community and wider Christian culture.<sup>59</sup> Speaking at ‘Together on a Mission’, Abi Marlotie explained that “we have been called by God to transform the culture around us” and need to “create an environment or culture which reflects God and then we can bring people in”. She said that Christian art and music are “great” ways to do this, noting: “we don’t want to create just a social gospel”.<sup>60</sup> By supporting their churches’ production of worship music, Pentecostals are thus supporting a broader Christian mission.

Music can connect and empower people. Ben Fielding, one of Hillsong’s music and creative leaders, explained in a 2012 interview with *Eternity Christian Newspaper* that “an important distinction must be made between the emotional experience of music and the presence of God; they are not synonymous, but nor are they mutually exclusive...in musical worship we can experience change, be convicted by the Spirit, and importantly, develop unity as we agree in Jesus’ name”. He argued that “music reflects the creativity and beauty of God; its ultimate purpose is to bring enjoyment and cause us to draw near to our Creator”.<sup>61</sup> Here we see an explicit recognition of the ways music can both generate emotional and spiritual experiences, as well as prove a bonding and unifying experience. Worship music, representing as it does a spiritual experience, is open to *all* members of the congregation. It empowers them and makes them feel they are part of the church project. That churches openly acknowledge this is a reflection of their desire to use music, or any tool available, to bond people to the church as an organisation by also connecting them to other people within the group.

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<sup>59</sup> For an overview of the way Hillsong uses music, branding, and marketing in the pursuit and production of spiritual experiences and the formation of an individual’s Pentecostal identity see Tom Wagner, “Hearing the Hillsong Sound: Music, Marketing, Meaning and Branded Spiritual Experience at a Transnational Megachurch”, PhD dissertation, Royal Holloway University of London, 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Abi Marlotie, ‘To Transform the World’, Mobilise Seminar at Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference, 14 July 2011.

<sup>61</sup> Ben Fielding, ‘Part Two: Can Music Bring you Closer to God? Ben Fielding says “Yes”’, *Eternity Christian Newspaper*, Bible Society of Australia. 8 July 2012. Available: <http://www.biblesociety.org.au/news/part-two-can-music-bring-you-closer-to-god-ben-fielding-says-yes>. Accessed 23 March 2015.

The *group* is critical to this worship experience. In New Zealand, psychologists Mandi Miller and Kenneth Strongman's survey of Pentecostalism and music found that congregation members believed that worshipping together via music would facilitate the presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>62</sup> The "hyperarousal" of music and the accompanying sensory overstimulation makes space for dissociation, and Hillsong's strong use of gently thrumming and building bass and keys in the background of sermons might be linked to Julian Henriques' arguments about sonic dominance and religion using music to elicit trance states.<sup>63</sup> To adapt Henriques' argument, the sonic dominance of music and praise during sections of Pentecostal church services allows attendees to connect the spiritual side of their faith to their bodies, to other bodies nearby, and to their spatial and temporal environment.<sup>64</sup>

There are, of course, those who see potential problems with this experiential style of worship, including the fact that its effects may be temporary. Chris Bowater (a British Christian songwriter and worship leader who co-founded Worship Academy International and is the Senior Pastor of New Life Church Ministries) wrote about the benefits but also the dangers of the charismatic approach to worship in his 1986 book, *Creative Worship: A Guide to Spirit-Filled Worship*. He argued that this style of worship may lead to people having an emotional experience "that is merely [a] response to an atmosphere".<sup>65</sup> This is what Bowater sees as "worshipping worship – the new songs the atmosphere". The exciting atmosphere means some are distracted from "dwelling together in unity" under "leadership with vision, a sense of direction, tuned into the heart and plan of God". In these instances, "even the songs themselves, intended to be vehicles for our own worship become intrusions".<sup>66</sup> Newfrontiers elder David Holden sees this as part of a bigger problem with the experiential nature of Pentecostal worship:

When the Spirit first breaks out in a church, He comes like a match to wood...The Spirit lights a fire in people's hearts and it blazes for several weeks. Then everyone

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<sup>62</sup> Mandi M. Miller and Kenneth T. Strongman, 'The Emotional Effects of Music on Religious Experience: A Study of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Style of Music and Worship', *Psychology of Music and Music Education* 30, no. 8 (2002), 9.

<sup>63</sup> F.D. Goodman quoted in Miller and Strongman, 'The Emotional Effects of Music', 9; Julian Henriques, 'Sonic Dominance and the Reggae Sound System Session', in M Bull and Les Back eds., *The Auditory Culture Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 451-80.

<sup>64</sup> Henriques, 'Sonic Dominance', 458.

<sup>65</sup> Chris Bowater, *Creative Worship: A Guide to Spirit-Filled Worship* (1986), partially reprinted, in William K. Kay and Anne E. Dyer eds., *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, A Reader* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 158.

<sup>66</sup> Bowater, *Creative Worship* in William K. Kay and Anne E. Dyer, *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, A Reader* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 158-59.

starts to become over familiar with the exhortation to “come forward and receive a fresh touch from God”. The powerful experiences seem to die down and become the norm, and people begin to question, “Why do I need to keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit?” There are two issues here: the lights of the fire and the fanning of the flame. Once the fire has been lit, you can’t just keep on lighting it over and over again. In order to move on, you have to fan the flame. But how? By speaking the Word of God to your people.<sup>67</sup>

Holden’s words offer one of the clearest explanations I have seen of the difficulty in sustaining the excitement of a Spirit-filled experience. Keeping the fire burning for converts is far harder than sparking it in the first place.

Holden and Bowater echo Fielding’s point about the difference between having an emotional response to music and feeling the presence of God. While churches certainly desire the latter, the former is perhaps just as effective in “getting people through the door”, and the emotional responses generated are certainly part of the appeal of the music that churches such as Hillsong produce. However, attendees who come to church mostly for the music and the momentary rush it provides are unlikely to stay. As Bowater suggested, music does not always connect attendees to the church’s teachings in a profound way. Nor does this music necessarily allow members to experience the ups and downs of a spiritual journey. Instead, the focus is on a constant state of stimulation where worshippers value the atmosphere and their own intensely emotional responses over the church’s teachings or doctrine.

The music of Hillsong Church is hugely popular in Australia and internationally, and examining its evolution provides a clear example of the way the church understands music to function as a tool for fostering belonging, albeit only temporary. In 1988, *Spirit and Truth* became the first tape released by Hillsong. While the music pastor, Geoff Bullock, had first been employed under that title in 1985, he originally sourced the church’s music from a Melbourne band called ‘Rosanna and the Raiders’. Desiring worship music that was not just heavy rock, he started writing his own music and then recording albums and touring Australia.<sup>68</sup> When Bullock left the church in 1994, he was replaced by Darlene Zschech, who was worship pastor until 2007 and is still probably the most well-known Hillsong worship leader. Zschech sees music as a way of helping people “walk through fiery trials

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<sup>67</sup> David Holden, ‘What Should Leaders be Thinking?’, in Terry Virgo, David Holden, John Hosier, *From Refreshing to Revival* (Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications Ltd., 1995), 53-54.

<sup>68</sup> Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner, ‘The Evolution of Hillsong Music: From Australian Pentecostal Congregation into Global Brand’, *Australian Journal of Communication* 39, no. 1 (2012), 22.

without being burned”, again pointing to the intensity associated with praise music.<sup>69</sup> She quotes Psalm 46, which is addressed to the chief musician, and says, “I love how the Word of God puts value on the highly skilled in the areas of music and arts”. She says that in First Chronicles 15:20, when Zechariah, Eliab, and Benaiah are told to praise the Lord with “psalteries on Alamoth” (KJV) that this may mean to “worship with fresh sounds in the Spirit rather than by old habit or by falling into the trap of singing in only one key. Instead, we are to bring worship with intelligence, joy, and thankfulness, to craft praises that appropriately express the fullness of the occasion”.<sup>70</sup> Zschech argues that worship makes it feel as though God is “present” and allows people to sense how near His help is.<sup>71</sup> Again, music is emphasised for the way it makes people feel. Zschech may use scriptural references, but she does so to justify the high value Hillsong places on music.

Reflecting on the importance of music to Hillsong, Brian Houston noted in 2005 that Hillsong was the name of the music before it was the name of the church. He described Zschech as a “great lady” and pointed to the international popularity of her songs, saying that *Shout to the Lord* is sung by 35 million Christians around the world at church each week.<sup>72</sup> Hillsong’s music also helps other Christians and the broader public identify the Hillsong brand. One of the most striking things about *Shout to the Lord* (1993) and other Hillsong songs are their simplicity in terms of both lyrics and message. Most recordings of the song run for nearly five minutes, yet the lyrics are not lengthy, rather the song repeats the following:

My Jesus, My Saviour  
Lord, there is none like You  
All of my days I want to praise the wonders of Your mighty love.

My comfort my shelter  
Tower of refuge and strength  
Let every breath all that I am Never  
cease to worship You.

Shout to the Lord all the earth let us sing;

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<sup>69</sup> Zschech, *The Art of Mentoring*, 118

<sup>70</sup> Zschech, *The Art of Mentoring*, 118.

<sup>71</sup> Zschech, *The Art of Mentoring*, 119.

<sup>72</sup> Brian Houston, quoted in ‘The Life of Brian’, *Australian Story*.

Power and majesty  
Praise to the King  
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar at the sound of Your name.  
I sing for joy at the work of Your hands  
Forever I'll love You forever I'll stand,  
Nothing compares to the promise I have in You.<sup>73</sup>

These lyrics are also an important reflection on what is perhaps most important to Pentecostal churches, promoting and celebrating the relationship between an individual and God. The lyrics are overwhelmingly positive and filled with a message of hope. Zschech said in a 2005 interview that whether the music or the church came first is a “chicken or the egg” situation, but argued that, “the music would not have been as strong as it is without a strong church and without a strong teacher. You know, a lot of the songs would come straight from Brian’s messages. Um, and he does inspire ordinary people to dream big”.<sup>74</sup> Hence, worship music not only lets people feel they belong to a bigger group, but it is also a chance to reinforce the messages of their leaders and to express their beliefs. That Zschech here points to Brian Houston’s message about how “ordinary people” can “dream big” echoes not only the prosperity theology of the church, as outlined previously, but also the aspirational message of Pentecostal churches broadly.

The music Pentecostal bands currently produce is strikingly similar across churches. While Zschech may have been an extremely prominent worship leader and creative director, today, Hillsong music is more strongly associated with Hillsong United, which started as the church’s youth band and began writing original music in 1998. Hillsong United today is led by Joel Houston, the son of Brian and Bobbie. Hillsong London also releases its own albums, and those recorded at the Sydney church are now released as Hillsong LIVE, to distinguish them from the other products put out by Hillsong Music Australia.<sup>75</sup> Distinguishing Hillsong’s various music streams is challenge enough, but their music is strikingly similar to that produced by other Australian Christian churches. In an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald’s* “Good Weekend” in 2013, journalist Peter Munro noted that, “it’s difficult to distinguish the music produced by Hillsong from other local megachurches such as

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<sup>73</sup> Darlene Zschech, *Shout to the Lord*, Hillsong Music Australia. Reprinted in William K. Kay and Anne E. Dyer, *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, A Reader* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 165-66.

<sup>74</sup> Darlene Zschech, quoted in ‘The Life of Brian’, *Australian Story*.

<sup>75</sup> Riches and Wagner, ‘The Evolution of Hillsong Music’, 24.

Planetshakers, in Melbourne, and C3, in Sydney's north".<sup>76</sup> Munro interviewed C3's music director, Ryan Smith, who told him that constructing a contemporary worship song was "probably one of the hardest things in the world", and noted that "A lot of people are quite 'Christian-ese' about it, where you use words like 'mercy', 'consecration', 'forgiveness', 'crucifixion'".<sup>77</sup> The notion that a "Christian-ese" language is developing is an indication of the pervasiveness of Christian music. That all of these churches have music directors and large bands is another indicator of the important they place on music and praise as part of the religious experience. That the music they produce is not terribly distinct may make it hard for worshippers to connect to *that* particular church, and the homogeneity of Pentecostal church services helps explaining why people move between Pentecostal denominations with relative ease.

The success of Hillsong music globally is not to be underestimated. It not only increases the financial power of the church but also raises its profile. While this may seem obvious, the number of people who listen to Hillsong music each week in churches from other denominations is significant, particularly when it comes to examining "switchers in". Miller and Strongman found that the extent to which a person enjoys and connects with music is heavily reliant on their familiarity with the song, a conclusion supported by earlier studies by Berlyne in 1970, Eagle in 1971, and Hargreaves in 1984.<sup>78</sup> Ben Fielding, reflecting on the importance of Hillsong's music in bringing people closer to God:

Song has historically proven a popular and effective means of inter-generational storytelling and communication. Just as by repetition the many feasts and dates on the Christian calendar serve as a reminder of God's goodness, so the writing and repetition of song serves as an integral part of a godly community. I can remember so many of the songs I grew up singing, though only very few of the wonderful sermons...As church songwriters, we are contributing to the shaping of theology within our churches.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Peter Munro, 'Raising Hell for Jesus', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 May 2013. Available: <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/music/raising-hell-for-jesus-20130520-2jver.html>

<sup>77</sup> Ryan Smith quoted in Munro, 'Raising Hell for Jesus', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 May 2013. Available: <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/music/raising-hell-for-jesus-20130520-2jver.html>. Accessed 30 May 2013.

<sup>78</sup> Miller and Strongman, 'The Emotional Effects of Music', 21.

<sup>79</sup> Ben Fielding, 'Part Two: Can music bring you closer to God? Ben Fielding says "Yes"', *Eternity Christian Newspaper*, Bible Society of Australia. 8 July 2012. Available: <http://www.biblesociety.org.au/news/parttwo-can-music-bring-you-closer-to-god-ben-fielding-says-yes>. Accessed 23 March 2015.

Fielding here highlights the importance of “a godly community” as a way to tell stories and instil church messages. While at first this seems to point to the ability of people to connect with theology through music, it is also a privileging of the emotional experience of singing and songwriting over the intellectual experience of listening to a sermon or preach.

Hillsong is not the only Australian church with an emphasis on music and praise, nor the only one to have achieved success in this field. Just as Hillsong Church took its name from its music, so too did Planetshakers Church in Melbourne. The first Planetshakers (Awakening) Conference, held in 1997, saw the formation of the Planetshakers Christian Worship band. Originally from Adelaide, the band is now based in Melbourne at Planetshakers City Church. Since 1997, the band has produced twenty albums that have been sold around the world. It has toured the US, UK, Europe, South Africa, South East Asia, as well as Australia and New Zealand. In fact, there are now two “teams” in the band who perform and record Planetshakers’ music around the world.<sup>80</sup> Planetshakers band has a strong focus on young adults, and pastor Rob Bradbury explained in 2007, “it is important we connect with youth culture” and sees music as a key way to do this.<sup>81</sup> The founder of the church, Russell Evans, said, “it’s not that hard to attract young people...You’ve just got to speak their language and present things in a way they understand. When you do that, they come”.<sup>82</sup> The messages of Planetshakers’ songs are similarly positive, and when reflecting on this, Russell Evans noted that this was an explicit aim, and that *Planetshakers Kids, in particular*, was focused on providing “Christ-centred, positive, and uplifting music, where kids of all ages can not only have fun listening to the music, but also worship God and feel encouraged”.<sup>83</sup> There is clearly a deliberate resonance between experiencing or worshipping God, and enjoying the music physically.

Worship music is also understood by pastors as a tool for evangelism. Evans also argued that it was important “to give kids music they are comfortable showing their unchurched friends, music that is just as relevant as what they might hear on any radio station...Jesus spoke the language of his day. He was culturally relevant, but He didn’t water down the

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<sup>80</sup> ‘Planetshakers Band’, *Planetshakers Website Australia*. Available:

<http://www2.planetshakers.com/music/#discography>. Accessed: 29 March 2015.

<sup>81</sup> Rob Bradbury quoted in Michael Lallo, ‘Young Believers Pray and Sway to a New Beat’, *The Age*, April 8 2007. Available: <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2007/04/07/1175366538300.html>. Accessed 29 March 2015.

<sup>82</sup> Russell Evans quoted in Michael Lallo, ‘Young Believers Pray and Sway to a New Beat’.

<sup>83</sup> Russell Evans, *The Honor Key: Unlock a Limitless Life* (Springfield: My Healthy Church, 2014), 228.

gospel message”. He goes on, “it is our prayer that as your kids, grandkids, or friends listen to the music we have created, they will be drawn closer to God and biblical truths will be embedded deep in their lives”.<sup>84</sup> Church leaders thus understand music as a way to bring the church into people’s lives in a broad sense. Not only is it to be experienced in church, but it can also be taken away and shared, thereby also sharing the message of the church. By participating in this ritual of buying, playing, and sharing the music of the church, members are once again making their religion a strong part of their identity; they are marking out their church as a community they belong in, and critically, one which others can join.

The fact that Hillsong, Planetshakers, and other Pentecostal churches have been so successful in exploiting the shift from traditional church music—which was strident and rational, and accompanied by an organ or piano at most—to a more emotional worship and praise style that reflects the secular music genres of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century West is a broader reflection of the church’s emphasis on Spirit as the ultimate source of power or authority. This is evidence of wider shifts in authority sources in modern churches. Architecturally, there is not always the same moral and physical distance between the worshippers and the clergy as there was in the past, nor is the music always provided by a choir which is also distanced from ordinary church attendees.<sup>85</sup> Pentecostals’ focus on experience means that they do not distance the divine from the ordinary. In fact, this absence is important to them; it defines their worship style and their approach to belief more broadly. It is an important way of generating emotional connections between congregation members, and of binding them to the church. Praise and worship music conflate “earthly and heavenly communities”.<sup>86</sup>

In the attempt to foster belonging there is no simultaneous attempt to isolate members from the wider community beyond perhaps the idea that the church is providing an alternative to commercial music consumption; an alternative based on church values. This is seen in the “About the film” section of the *Hillsong – Let Hope Rise* website. In its description of Hillsong United’s success the website says:

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<sup>84</sup> Evans, *The Honor Key*, 228.

<sup>85</sup> Bouma, *Australian Soul*, 88.

<sup>86</sup> Monique M. Ingalls, ‘Singing Heaven Down to Earth: Spiritual Journeys, Eschatological Sounds, and Community Formation in Evangelical Conference Worship’, *Ethnomusicology* 55, no. 2 (2011), 265.

The music of Hillsong is so popular it is estimated that on any given Sunday, more than 50 million churchgoers around the world are performing their songs. Routinely performing to sold-out stadiums, the 11-member band, led by Joel Houston, are all volunteers or employees of Hillsong Church.<sup>87</sup>

Having established this success, the website goes on to explain that the band has sold more than sixteen million albums, and then links such sales to church values, not through the lyrics of the songs, but by reference to philanthropy:

Music and merchandise sales enable Hillsong Church...to support both local and worldwide charity that includes feeding and educating children in the slums of India, holistic community development in Africa, rescuing and rehabilitating victims of human trafficking and sponsoring children living in poverty around the world.<sup>88</sup>

Purchasers of Hillsong's music are assured not only of their connection with the theological or religious teachings of the band but also of their connection to a wider charitable project run by the church. Hillsong has created belonging by mixing the opportunity to consume—an important part of the prosperity gospel—with the experiential nature of Pentecostal worship, and with the church's missionary and social goals. Yet the above has shown that for all the enthusiasm music creates, the sense of belonging that accompanies worship music is specific to particular moments: the time one spends worshipping during a Sunday service, the moment of pleasure when buying an album, the satisfaction of introducing your church's band to someone else. But the fact that these moments are fleeting, combined with the loose theological base of the music and the fact that it is not particularly distinct between churches, indicates the potential for a sense of temporary belonging, without necessarily a deep, lasting connection to a church.

## Encouraging self-development

The theme of self-development is common throughout Pentecostal literature and has been from the early days of the Pentecostal movement when much missionary activity was focused on “improvement”. Today, churches place similar emphasis on this theme, particularly when it comes to improving one's career (see Chapter Two). Of interest to this

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<sup>87</sup> Hillsong Church, 'About the Film', *Hillsong – Let Hope Rise Website*.

<sup>88</sup> Hillsong Church, 'About the Film', *Hillsong – Let Hope Rise Website*.

particular story, is the focus on the power for church and personal faith to transform individuals. Book III of Houston's *How to Maximise Your Life* is "How to Flourish in Life—principles for building a thriving, productive life". As noted earlier, the close links between Pentecostal churches and the prosperity gospel are often displayed in the use of words such as "thrive" and "flourish", and this attitude to wealth is the area of Hillsong's church life that garners the most attention from the press. In explaining how people should flourish, Houston says that he has two "great passions. One passion is to build the Church of Jesus Christ, and the other is to help God's people fulfil their potential in life" because "when God's people flourish, they instinctively build His Church".<sup>89</sup> On the subject of appearance and behaviour, Houston uses an extended analogy to nature study experiments. There are, he writes, "three specific tell-tale signs that reveal whether or not someone is truly flourishing"; appearance ("the countenance of those who are flourishing will be radiant and shine with His joy. Everyone likes to be around such people"); behaviour ("those who are flourishing will lean towards life and worship God with a sense of wholeheartedness"); and fruit ("[i]f you are bearing fruit, you should be seeing increase and expansion across the spectrum of your life – clear evidence that God is working in your life").<sup>90</sup> To Houston, it is obvious whether a person is "flourishing" and he sees personal growth as not only easily measurable but also as evidence of God rewarding those who live their life right.

All of the churches in this study aim—either implicitly or explicitly—to have church members "brand themselves", that is to display physical markers of their Christian belief and to represent their church through their behaviour. Planetshakers founder Russell Evans, for instance, encouraged those who attend his church to show outsiders how wonderful their lives are and thereby exhibit what these non-church goers are missing:

The way we live, the way we talk and the actions we take must shout that God is the Lord because our lives are a walking advertisement of what our God is like (scary thought isn't it). Your classmates don't read the Bible, they read YOU! They look at your life and they ask themselves the question: do I want to be like them or not? When they look at your life and find it attractive, they are actually seeing God in you. But if your lifestyle is one of negativity, poverty and depression, people will steer clear of you.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Houston, *How to Maximise Your Life*, 89.

<sup>90</sup> Houston, *How to Maximise Your Life*, 95.

<sup>91</sup> Evans, *Profile of a Planetshaker*, 67-8.

Evans admonished those whose “lifestyle” reflects the fact that they are poor or depressed because this is not how he wants his church represented or advertised. While some argue that religious-secular competition means that traditional, institutionalised motivators for religious activity (social stigma for those who did not attend; a chance to meet spouses, friends, and business partners; and a place to display social status through appearing publically in one’s “Sunday best”) have been destroyed or seriously damaged by modernisation, this is not evident in examination of contemporary Pentecostalism.<sup>92</sup> Evans was encouraging members to demonstrate social status to those outside the group. Indeed, he was indicating that members of his church have an obligation to make such comparisons. The outsiders Evans was trying to attract are thus expected to relate to the cultural values attached to the lifestyle of those who “shout to the Lord”.<sup>93</sup>

Church members are not simply consumers; contemporary Pentecostals treat them as though they are a product that help market the church’s offerings. At Hillsong Conference 2012, Pastor Carl Lentz told his audience that they did not need to drive a particular model car or to wear an expensive brand of jeans. Instead, they had to make sure their car was always well maintained and cleaned, and that their jeans were always washed and ironed.<sup>94</sup> He said, “you have to do everything in your power to project the best image of Jesus”, though he qualified, “this isn’t about having stuff, it’s about having Him”. As Bobbie Houston explained in her 2008 book, *I’ll Have What She’s Having*, the “ultimate compliment” is for someone to see your lifestyle, attitude, and sense of purpose, and then want those same things. This is not just a compliment, but a “*mandate* [original emphasis] that belongs to every Christian woman, young or mature, regardless of whether she is in actual leadership or not”.<sup>95</sup> Church leaders themselves, through their celebrity, are also a product used to market their churches, and adherents celebrate their charismatic leaders for the way they

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<sup>92</sup> Jörg Stolz and Jean-Claude Usunier, ‘Religions as Brands: New Perspectives on the Marketization of Religion and Spirituality’, in Jean-Claude Usunier and Jörg Stolz eds., *Religions as Brands: New Perspectives on the Marketization of Religion and Spirituality* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 7.

<sup>93</sup> Jochen Hirschle, ‘Adding Imaginative Value: Religion, Marketing, and the Commodification of Social Action’, in Jean-Claude Usunier and Jörg Stolz eds., *Religions as Brands: New Perspectives on the Marketization of Religion and Spirituality* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 128; Gerry Johnson, Richard Whittington, Kevan Scholes, and Steve Pyle, *Exploring strategy: Text & Cases*, 9th ed. (Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2011), 154-56.

<sup>94</sup> Carl Lentz speaking at Hillsong Conference, ‘Session One: Effective Evangelism Today’. Sydney, Australia. Tuesday 6 July 2012.

<sup>95</sup> Houston, *I’ll Have What She’s Having*, xiii.

increase the visibility of the group and reshape its public image.<sup>96</sup> In other words, self-presentation matters to Pentecostals. You need to be something that outsiders can aspire to and, in many ways, you must represent the prosperity that forms an important part of your religion. In essence, Hillsong members embody the Hillsong brand.

In addition to changing one's appearance in order to improve the self, Pentecostals value the acquisition of formal education. Indeed, Brian Houston describes wisdom as "the key to everything you could ever want in life".<sup>97</sup> Quoting Proverbs 4:7 he argues: "Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom".<sup>98</sup> A significant challenge for churches of all denominations in increasingly secular Western societies is how they will pass their values and belief, their culture, to the next generation. Sam Hey notes that this is particularly difficult to do while also equipping younger congregation members with the attitudes and tools to engage with broader society.<sup>99</sup> Speaking about the challenge of passing church knowledge and forms between generations, Zschech argued: "I've seen that there exists a great divide when it comes to one generation being even aware of the next. I've spoken to many leaders who have outstanding dedication to the things of God and yet seem to lack revelation about raising the next generation to Him".<sup>100</sup> This perceived challenge has led to a trend of family members inheriting leadership positions, and to focus on creating "generations" of leaders, usually within the same family or dynasty.<sup>101</sup>

Pentecostals have also attempted to remain relevant to a younger generation—while planting them firmly in the church community—through the creation of megachurch schools as part of the low-fee Christian schools movement that spread through Australia from the 1970s.<sup>102</sup> Pentecostal schools provide a space where these Christians can understand the modern world in a relatively sheltered environment and, importantly, they can then go out and attract more

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<sup>96</sup> Edith L. Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 256.

<sup>97</sup> Houston, *How to Maximise Your Life*, 121.

<sup>98</sup> Houston, *How to Maximise Your Life*, 123.

<sup>99</sup> Hey, *Megachurches*, 167.

<sup>100</sup> Zschech, *The Art of Mentoring*, 13.

<sup>101</sup> For a movement that does not have the same strong authority structures as larger denominational organisations like the Anglican and Catholic Churches, leadership is complicated. In most cases, current leaders have the most authority within Pentecostal churches, and they decide who will become the next leader of the congregation and the organisation.

<sup>102</sup> Hey, *Megachurches*, 167-8.

converts.<sup>103</sup> The newsletter of The Christian Revival Crusade in Adelaide, *Centre News*, wrote about the importance of Christian schools in 1980, saying that they “are not merely a reaction to State Schools. They are an outworking of Biblical concepts for education...a Christian school is not merely sheltering your child from the world. It is helping your child understand the world, make inroads into the world and conquer the world for Jesus”.<sup>104</sup> The website of Oxford Falls Grammar School (established in 1984 and attached to C3 Church) on Sydney’s Northern Beaches expounds on similar themes.<sup>105</sup> The current headmaster, Geoffrey Fouracre, describes the school as focusing on the “development of the whole child—body, mind and spirit” by providing an education that is “underpinned by a solid Christian foundation”.<sup>106</sup> The school website describes its “mission” as “proclaiming the Gospel message and lifestyle through Christ-centred educational excellent, encompassing the spiritual, physical, emotional and academic development of each student”.<sup>107</sup> These schools thus demonstrate that Pentecostals think it is important to understand the outside world—albeit from within a Christian framework—in order to “conquer” it, and this necessarily involves separating Pentecostal children from their peers; something that seems at odds with other expressions of church outreach.

Even more important than schools to Pentecostal education efforts are their “colleges”, designed primarily as places of adult education. The Australian AOG established the Commonwealth Bible College in 1948 as its national training college. The Bible College became Southern Cross College in 1993, and in 2009 changed its name to Alphacrucis College.<sup>108</sup> The College, through its various iterations, was presented as more than just a place for ministry training. It also presented itself as a place of fellowship where students would build connections, achieve “personal growth”, and form relationships, goals clearly

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<sup>103</sup> Other churches, including the evangelical Sydney Anglicans have also been “school planting” to attempt to catch a new, often very aspirational, demographic. For an overview of the history and current place of religious schools in Australia see Marion Maddox, *Taking God to School: The End of Australia’s Egalitarian Education?* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2014).

<sup>104</sup> *Centre News – Christian Revival Crusade Sturt Street* (Adelaide: Adelaide Crusade Centre), 1 June 1980, np.

<sup>105</sup> Phil Pringle founded what was then Northside Christian School in 1984 and it originally attracted only twenty-four students. Today the school runs from Kindergarten to Year Twelve (the final year of secondary schooling in Australia) and has over 1000 students. ‘Our Heritage’, *Oxford Falls Grammar School Website*.

Available: <http://www2.myc3church.net/ofgs/>. Accessed 20 March 2015

<sup>106</sup> ‘Oxford Falls Grammar School’, *C3 Church Website*. Available: <http://www2.myc3church.net/ofgs/>. Accessed 20 March 2015.

<sup>107</sup> ‘Our Mission’, *Oxford Falls Grammar School Website*. Available: <http://www2.myc3church.net/ofgs/>. Accessed 20 March 2015.

<sup>108</sup> ‘AC History’, *Alphacrucis College Website*. Available: <http://ac.edu.au/about/history/>. Accessed 20 June 2015.

seen in the advertisement for the College (see image below) printed in *Australian Evangel* in 1984.

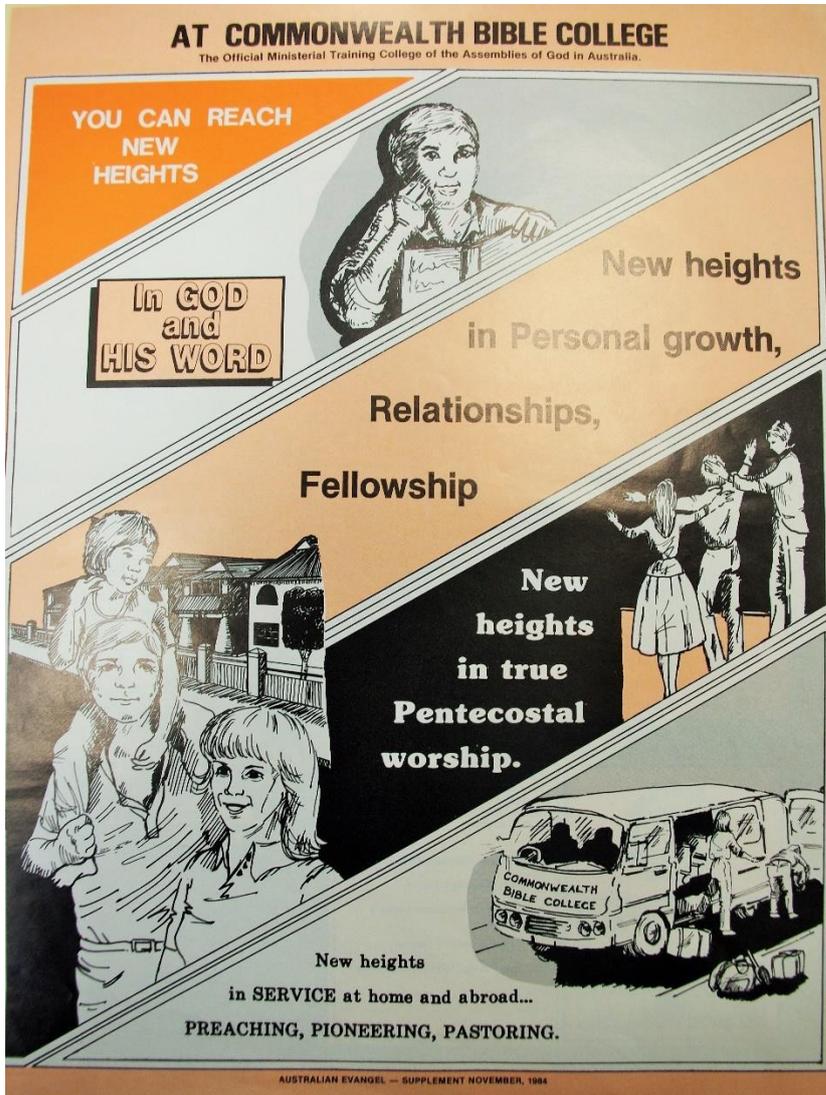


Figure 34: Advertisement for Commonwealth Bible College in November 1984 Supplement of *Australian Evangel* (newsletter of the AOG).

Embracing the theme of self-development, the advertisement above repeatedly proclaims: “you can reach new heights”. The advertisement also, by featuring happy looking people with friends and family, emphasises the themes of “relationships” and “fellowship” and demonstrates that the College was positioning itself as a social opportunity and a way to make connections within its religious community, as much as an opportunity to learn about pastoring.

Megachurches in Australia no longer rely on the AOG's Bible College. In the early 1980s, Pringle helped to establish the Creative Arts and Bible College, which has since graduated over 8,000 students. The College (since rebranded as C3 College: Creative Arts & Bible College) now also runs some of its courses online as well as offering evening courses, which puts it in competition with secular adult education providers.<sup>109</sup> Hillsong has a similar college, which forms a significant part of the church's income stream. Houston sees wisdom as "God's Word applied." On the Hillsong College Website, he and Bobbie tell potential students: "we believe in your God given potential" and "we invite you to prayerfully consider how investing one or more years at Hillsong college could prepare you for your God-given destiny".<sup>110</sup> The Houstons are at once encouraging individuals to take action and acquire knowledge while simultaneously talking about the "destiny" they had already been given.<sup>111</sup> Questions of individual agency aside, Hillsong International Leadership College is one of the key ways the church seeks to offer career and self-development to members while also binding them to the church community. According to the College website, while studying there, "you'll learn life, leadership and ministry" and experience "a vibrant College community" which will equip "you to lead and impact in every sphere of life".<sup>112</sup> Students can study Pastoral Leadership, Worship Music, TV & Media, Dance, Production, or can undertake a Bachelor of Theology, offered in conjunction with Alphacrucis College.

Hillsong College, established in Sydney in 1986, provides the church with a way to bind students to the community through requiring them to participate in the church's social networks as well as in its rituals.<sup>113</sup> Part of an attendee's time at Hillsong College is spent doing "Fieldwork", where students "get the opportunity to serve in church life". Students are required to be part of "connect groups to build relationships outside of College" but, importantly, also keep relationships contained within the church. College students are also involved with organising and volunteering at Church conferences, which often also involves recording albums for Hillsong Music Australia, as well as "heart and soul nights" where

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<sup>109</sup> 'C3 College: For Creatives, For Leaders, For Believers', *C3 College Website*. Available: <http://www.c3college.com/>. Accessed 29 March 2015.

<sup>110</sup> *Hillsong College Homepage*. Available: <http://hillsong.com/college>. Accessed 20 March 2015.

<sup>111</sup> This has obvious echoes of the classic Christian struggle between predestination and free will. For more on this see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

<sup>112</sup> *Hillsong College Homepage*. Available: <http://hillsong.com/college>. Accessed 20 March 2015.

<sup>113</sup> Hillsong Church Australia, 'Hillsong 2012 Annual Report', 28. Available: <http://retro.hillsong.com/assets/Annual-Report.pdf>. Accessed 1 April 2015.

“Pastor Brian gets the core of the church together to talk leadership and vision”.<sup>114</sup> For those with children, the church offers to connect them with “college couples” who can assist them “in finding schools or day care centres”, and presumably also social connections.<sup>115</sup> As Hillsong publically committs itself to “championing the cause of the local church”, it does not offer a job-placement scheme at the end of college life. Rather than a secular “job hunting model,” they aim to have students connect themselves so intricately into “the life of your home church” that “the leadership is compelled to put you on staff because of the responsibility, excellence and ownership you lead with”.<sup>116</sup> Attending Hillsong College may help integrate people into the church community, but it requires a considerable sacrifice of time and money without the guarantee of employment at the end.

College is not just for future pastors; it is also for those who want to apply Hillsong’s wisdom to all aspects of their lives and have the time and money to do so. In fact, one of the church’s evening course streams comes simply under the heading of “Life: Addressing everyday challenges”. The “Life” courses, which are typically 10 weeks, include: “mastering your money”, “the pre-marriage course”, “the marriage course”, “boundaries in marriage”, “divorce recovery”, “valiant man”, “woman to woman”, “parenting children”, and “parenting teenagers”.<sup>117</sup> For those who are interested and invested in the church and its community, all aspects of their personal life are addressed at College. Importantly, while this is happening, students are connected to others within the college and the church. This again points to the many ways in which the “core” or potential “core” members of the church are catered for. They are supported and encouraged, and while no one is excluded here, by choosing to enrol, this group is effectively self-selecting. These are not the new and enthusiastic converts first discovering Pentecostalism. Moreover, and more importantly, they are not those who attend weekend services semi-regularly and perhaps the occasional conference. The church does not seek to cater to this middle group when it comes to the getting of wisdom through formal education structures.

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<sup>114</sup> ‘College Life’, *Hillsong College Website*. Available: <http://hillsong.com/college/college-life>. Accessed 20 March 2015.

<sup>115</sup> ‘FAQ’, *Hillsong College Website*. Available: <http://hillsong.com/college/faq>. Accessed 20 March 2015.

<sup>116</sup> ‘FAQ’, *Hillsong College Website*. Available: <http://hillsong.com/college/faq>. Accessed 20 March 2015.

<sup>117</sup> ‘Evening College Life Courses’, *Hillsong College Website*. Available: <http://hillsong.com/college/evening-college-life-courses/>. Accessed 21 March 2015.

Perhaps the churches' willingness to allow this middle group of members to "help themselves" is a reflection of their belief in the prevailing neoliberal economic ideal of individuals seeking to better themselves. The church provides limited support through its social opportunities, as outlined above, but also through an extensive self-help network (of which *How to Maximise Your Life* is a key example) that relates to health, career, behaviour, and almost any aspect of their lives readers may have questions about. Perhaps it is more accurate to describe Pentecostal opportunities for self-development as operating on two levels. At the first level, there is the more obvious, neoliberal style self-help of the kind that has become almost a religion in itself since the 1980s, where individuals purchase products according to their perceived problems and needs.<sup>118</sup> On the second level, Pentecostal and charismatic churches, through connect groups and colleges, offer the kind of self-help that available in the eighteenth century mutual improvement clubs and friendly societies operated by Protestant groups including Quakers and Methodists.<sup>119</sup> However, of course, these modern self-development opportunities operate in a for-profit environment, and they do indeed make significant amounts of money for these churches. For example, Hillsong College is registered business that trades as Hillsong International Leadership College.<sup>120</sup> According to the Hillsong 2013 Annual Report's "Statement of Comprehensive Income", the total revenue generated by the College that year was \$8,155,639.<sup>121</sup> Individuals who attend Hillsong College thus are provided with the opportunity for self-development in a way that is socially and financially profitable for the church, a reflection of the strong marriage of neoliberalism to prosperity churches.

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<sup>118</sup> For more on the connections between self-help and neoliberalism see: Erhard Berner and Benedict Phillips, 'Left to their Own Devices? Community Self-help between Alternative Development and Neoliberalism', *Community Development Journal* 40, no 1 (2005), 17-29; Heidi Marie Rimke, 'Governing Citizens through Self-help Literature', *Cultural Studies* 14, no. 1 (2000), 61-78.

<sup>119</sup> For more on mutual societies see: David T. Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890-1967* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Simon Cordery, *British Friendly Societies, 1750-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Christopher Radcliffe, 'Mutual Improvement Societies and the Forging of Working-class Political Consciousness in Nineteenth-century England', *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 16, no. 2 (1997), 141-55.

<sup>120</sup> The college is Hillsong Church Ltd trading as Hillsong International Leadership College, ABN: 37 002 745 879. See 'FAQ', Hillsong College Website. Available: <http://hillsong.com/college/faq>. Accessed 12 May 2015.

<sup>121</sup> Hillsong Church Australia, 'Hillsong 2013 Annual Report', 18. Available: <http://hillsong.com/media/1299193/annual-report-4814v27-lores.pdf>. Accessed 21 December 2014.

## Conclusion

In 2014, Hillsong's band, United, released a musical version of the Apostles' Creed titled, "This I Believe (the Creed)". The chorus of the song repeats "Our God is Three in One" and the Hillsong Worship team describes it as one of their most "unifying" songs.<sup>122</sup> In much the same way, Hillsong and Pentecostal churches attempt to be all things, to all members, even if they do not always succeed. By creating increasingly connected internal communities, Hillsong attempts to ensure its members are strongly "planted" in the church, which necessitates a degree of isolation from the broader community. After all, to be "planted" (the word they use) evokes an understanding of one's roots as being within the church. However, the isolation and self-sufficiency that churches seek to engender via their efforts at community building and belonging may also clash with their conversionary aims. Equally, prioritising bringing people into a community may conflict with the desire to keep these converts within the church, which could explain why Pentecostals have had difficulty retaining their converts.

There is undoubtedly excitement in attracting new members, and this can easily become the primary focus of churches. New converts require action and they are inspiring – they are also easily measured. The easy quantification of new converts is appealing to both church leaders, who can celebrate the lives they have touched, as well as to the wider congregation, who feel part of a big and successful movement. Gaining new church members is, however, costly in terms of finance and time for both the church and individuals. Retaining members may not generate the same excitement as gaining them and it appears that Pentecostal and charismatic churches do not gear themselves to this goal, which goes a long way in explaining why they have such trouble keeping visitors in the church and transforming them into long-term members. Furthermore, these churches do not offer a strong enough critique of the outside world (and offer only superficial answers to their critiques) to make members feel that they need to look to the church as a self-sufficient alternative. Indeed, churches encourage members to interact with the outside world to "sell" their brand of religion and thus place a considerable burden on congregation members. To truly be part of the church community requires members give time, money, and emotional energy. Members must

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<sup>122</sup> Hillsong Worship, 'This I Believe (The Creed) Song Story' Video, *Hillsong Collected Blog Website*, 3 July 2014. Available: <https://hillsong.com/collected/blog/2014/07/this-i-believe-the-creed-songstory/#.VdUuePmqpBc>. Accessed 25 August 2014.

always be positive, well-groomed, and constantly tend to their self-development as part of a perpetual neoliberal cycle of self-improvement. Pentecostal churches require much of their adherents, and it is not clear that they always offer enough in return to make the transactional relationship they have created between their “customers” and themselves as a service provider, worthwhile.

## Chapter Six: Pentecostals and their Critics

“Hillsong thinks itself a contemporary and culturally relevant church. Perhaps it is. But as Christians, we don’t get to define what ‘relevant’ means in terms that are unquestioning of what our culture means by ‘relevant.’ I submit that Hillsong is a church in retreat. A church in retreat doesn’t give answers. It doesn’t storm the gates of Hell... This is, as I’ve written elsewhere, a gentrified fundamentalist withdrawal rooted in the belief that the foreignness of Christianity can’t overcome the tired intellectual patterns of cultural decay. At the end of the day, I think Hillsong’s non-answer answer is rooted in an embarrassment about what the Bible teaches and the church has held since the time of Jesus. The good news is that the truth of Christianity outlasts the untruths of man’s applause.”

Andrew Walker, ‘A Church in Exile’, *First Things*, 2014.<sup>1</sup>

Tanya Riches believes that the Australian media “doesn’t get Hillsong”. Herself a member of the church, Riches is studying Pentecostalism as part of her doctorate at Fuller Theological Seminary in California. She argues that global interest in Pentecostalism is fuelling local interest in Australia, driven particularly by the regular “exposés” run by programs such as *Today Tonight*. In an interview with an ABC reporter, Riches noted that growing up on Sydney’s North Shore—a relatively wealthy and predominantly white suburb—meant that her school friends “considered Hillsong a cult”. She felt that mentioning the church “risked a slanderous tirade” by her peers. As for the media, she complained that those who are “irreligious” talked about Hillsong as “money hungry, a sham, flamboyant, corrupt”.<sup>2</sup> Far from offering an accurate representation of her church, Australian journalists indulged in “scandal-trading” when writing about religious groups, she claimed, producing “stereotypes that were then regurgitated time and time again, regardless of the facts or the changing realities”. Riches suggested that in response to this media and social antagonism, church leaders became “hurt, defensive and irate. It caused them to decry ‘intellectuals’ and ‘academics’ and ‘education’ – because this seemed to be the problem.”<sup>3</sup> For Riches, then, Pentecostals are a beleaguered and misunderstood

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Walker, ‘A Church in Exile: Hillsong Shifts on Homosexuality’, *First Things*, 17 October 2014. Available: <http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2014/10/a-church-in-exile>. Accessed 22 October 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Tanya Riches, ‘Why the Media Doesn’t Get Hillsong: Reflections of an Australian Pentecostal’, *ABC Religion and Ethics Website*, 7 January 2014. Available: <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2014/01/07/3921786.htm>. Accessed 9 January 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Riches, ‘Why the Media Doesn’t Get Hillsong’.

minority and her words reveal a tacit strategy on the part of Pentecostals to create a sense that is “us against the world”.<sup>4</sup>

Riches is correct in her assessment of the types of media attention typically directed at Hillsong. However by setting up church leaders as “hurt”, and by repeatedly referring to journalistic efforts as “slandorous” or “libellous”, she engages in the type of adversarial behaviour that she claims is problematic.<sup>5</sup> She also implies that the media confines “scandaltrading” to religious groups, or is part of an attempt to attack religion in Australia, rather than being part of a broader trend in reportage around the world. Jacqueline Grey, then the Academic Dean of Alphacrucis College, wrote in a similar vein in 2012 about what the Australian media “doesn’t get about Pentecostalism”. She argued that “the conception of Pentecostalism embedded in the imagination of Australian media is that of a weird, fringe movement within Christianity”.<sup>6</sup> She went on to explain the origins of the movement, and to highlight what she believes the media understand to be the biggest flaws in Pentecostalism: the treatment of women and attitudes to money. By contrast, Grey saw these “flaws” as strengths of the movement. She argues that Pentecostal women are increasingly involved in senior ministry and leadership, and on the issue of money, provided an example of a Pentecostal working for World Vision who “rejects the bourgeois conservatism of so much contemporary Christianity, choosing instead to advocate and practice peace and Christ-like compassion among the world’s poor”. Only by acknowledging these strengths could Pentecostalism be understood, she claimed.<sup>7</sup> Grey’s argument that there is a fundamental divide between the media’s portrayal of Pentecostalism

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<sup>4</sup> Riches, in a 2010 article, singled out not only the secular press, but that of other churches too: “this Pentecostal church is occasionally besieged by Sydney’s influential secular media (and some religious organisations, such as Sydney Anglican media)”. Tanya Riches, ‘06 Next Generation Essay: The Evolving Theological Emphasis of Hillsong Worship (1996–2007)’, *Australasian Pentecostal Studies* 13 (2010), np.

<sup>5</sup> Riches’ engagement with this debate may be part of a broader attempt at legitimising her religion. Beth Singler argues that in the UK, Jedi discourse, both internally and with external groups, is an example of an interaction that confers legitimacy. The dialogue created within and between groups forms a “tradition” that Jedi consciously refer to in their attempts at legitimation. While Pentecostalism is not a New Religious Movement, it is nonetheless a relatively recent movement in the history of Christianity, and Pentecostals and Charismatics still sit outside mainstream Christian churches. Singler’s argument about attempts to legitimise Jedi faith through dialogue could therefore be applied to Pentecostal discourse internally and externally. It has synergy with the Pentecostal oral tradition and the importance of testimony and narrative within this faith, and responses to the movement, and Pentecostal interpretations of these responses, builds a tradition other adherents can follow, and confers authority on the experts who speak for the movement. See Beth Singler, “‘See Mom it is Real’: The UK Census, Jediism and Social Media”, *Journal of Religion in Europe* 7, no. 2 (2014), 150-168.

<sup>6</sup> Jacqueline Grey, ‘What John Safran Doesn’t Get about Pentecostalism’, *ABC Religion and Ethics*, ABC Website, 23 April 2012. Available: <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2012/04/23/3487308.htm>. Accessed 9 January 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Grey, ‘What John Safran Doesn’t Get about Pentecostalism’.

and what the movement “really” is, resonates with the ideas expressed in Riches’ article and, indeed, in the work of many other Pentecostal church leaders and commentators.

Pastor Carl Lentz, of Hillsong’s New York campus, used social media in June 2013 to talk about the ways Pentecostals were judged and misunderstood by the media and public. Lentz posted a picture of himself on Instagram with singer Justin Bieber and Bieber’s tour manager and stylist, Ryan Good, with the caption:

[S]ure do love my friends [@ryangood24@justinbieber](#). ..discussing things such as: sometimes it SEEMS like although all us “Christians” live in GLASS HOUSES, people(especially social media “Christians”) still develop an uncanny propensity to be olympian [sic] level expert rock throwers and criticism/foolish judgement is far to prevalent...the TRUTH is that Jesus outweighs em all.. there is so much GOOD, so many GRACE FILLED/KIND/HUMBLE people in this world that our job is to simply “tune out the noise” from the world and “turn up the volume” on the voice from HEAVEN..life is GOOD when you can hear from GOD! [#occupyallstreets](#) [#churchinthewild](#)[#leavemymanJBaloneandcleanupyourownlife](#) [#shouldkeepyouobusy](#) [#loveyoueitherway](#) [#twerk?](#) [emphasis, abbreviations, and punctuation are Lentz’s own].<sup>8</sup>

Lentz links the noise he, as a Christian, wants to “tune out” to the attention and criticism Bieber, as a celebrity, had faced after the American press reported that the police had repeatedly been called to investigate speeding offences by the singer, culminating in a report that Bieber had hit a pedestrian on June 18 2013.<sup>9</sup> Bieber allegedly pinned a photographer between his Ferrari and another car after the photographer blocked the roadway. No charges were laid, and the photographer was treated for only minor injuries.<sup>10</sup> Lentz’s use of the hashtag “#leavemymanJBaloneandcleanupyourownlife”, followed by “#shouldkeepyouobusy”, compares the judgements made about Christians with those made about celebrities, though Lentz tempers his aggression towards critics with the hashtag, “loveyoueitherway”. Lentz clearly believed Bieber to have the moral high ground, and was more concerned with the fact that critics needed to “clean up” their own lives than with the merit behind their criticisms. Yet, Bieber deliberately injured another person, even if no charges were laid. Clearly Lentz and other Pentecostals use a variety of platforms to create a discourse where *they* are the victims who,

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<sup>8</sup> Instagram post by Carl Lentz on 23 June 2013. Available: [https://instagram.com/p/a4oiZl\\_R7/?takenby=carllentz](https://instagram.com/p/a4oiZl_R7/?takenby=carllentz). Accessed 30 March 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Todd Leopold, ‘Justin Bieber in Accident Involving Pedestrian’, *CNN*, June 18 2013. Available: <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/06/18/showbiz/celebrity-news-gossip/justin-bieber-accident/> Accessed 30 June 2013.

<sup>10</sup> BBC News, ‘Justin Bieber Hits Photographer with his Car’, *BBC News UK Website*, 18 June 2013. Available: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/22954131>. Accessed 30 June 2013.

although rebutting their critics, will demonstrate their magnanimity and “love” their critics either way. To Pentecostals, the outside world does not understand them and targets them unfairly and must be turned out.

Pentecostals are right to say they are garnering increasing attention from the public, the media, and other churches, much of which is negative. So far, there has been very little scholarship considering the relations between Pentecostals and other churches or secular society, most of the emphasis is on charismatic expressions within other churches.<sup>11</sup> As has been the case throughout this thesis, Australia is particularly underrepresented in the existing body of work, yet there have been strong reactions to Pentecostalism in this country. Both the Australian public and other churches understand Pentecostals as forming a cohesive and largely unwelcome movement. While other Christian churches might acknowledge theological differences between various charismatic churches, they nonetheless see these churches as part of a single whole with more similarities than differences vis-à-vis non-Pentecostal churches. Similarly, the secular Australian public views Pentecostalism as something of a social movement, typically seeking to explain the appeal of specific Pentecostal churches by examining the social and cultural experiences or traits that Pentecostals supposedly share. For outsiders, moreover, this is no ordinary movement. For many non-churchgoers, it is part of a disturbing trend, offering a potent challenge to secular rationality and a host of advances that followed the hard fought social movements of the 1960s. For some in non-Pentecostal churches, the movement poses a hazard to their denomination size. While other Christians view the movement as an expression of genuine revival, and are eager to ensure that their denomination takes advantage of this, which has led to the charismatic movement within mainline churches. The ways the public and other churches view Pentecostal and charismatic churches are important because they provide strong evidence of the growing influence, scope, and power of these churches from the 1970s onwards.

Pentecostals often fail to respond to critiques made by outsiders and do not often engage in substantive intellectual or public debate. Andrew Walker, a writer and researcher from the Southern Baptist Convention, accused Hillsong of refusing to answer difficult questions about its position on homosexuality in his words at the start of this chapter. He said that Hillsong

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<sup>11</sup> There is some literature on the importance of renewal and charisma in mainline churches but it tends to focus on the perceived continuity from the early days of Pentecost to today. It is a way to justify their position in, and importance to, the wider Christian faith. For an example, see ‘Chapter Two: The Charismatic Tradition in Church History’, in Mark Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit: The Charismatic Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2006), 33-50.

represents a type of evangelicalism “that makes Christianity an obsequious servant to whatever the reigning zeitgeist is...it isn’t Jesus who is sitting at the right hand of the Father. Culture is”.<sup>12</sup> I would argue that instead of representing the type of pliable evangelicalism Walker refers to, Pentecostal churches are so convinced that the outside world does not “get” them that they believe there is little point to engaging substantively with critiques. Nor is there reason to answer questions to the satisfaction of those outside the group. They instead turn inward. Pentecostals explain to adherents that others simply do not, and perhaps cannot, understand them. This explanation has the effect of creating a strong divide between “us” and “them”; between insiders and outsiders.<sup>13</sup> Pentecostals use combative language to acknowledge that they are competing with other churches as well as secular institutions for followers. They see themselves as engaged in a spiritual war in which they are victims or martyrs, an idea they then use to marshal adherents as evangelists and also to create a bonding narrative within the group.

## Charismatic renewal within other churches and Pentecostal responses

For some Christians, the atmosphere of revival surrounding the modern charismatic movement represented a chance to revitalise their own denominations. Through the 1960s and 1970s—when the second “wave” of Pentecostalism led to an explosion in charismatic Christians around the Western world—there was a corresponding growth of charismatics *within* the Catholic Church.<sup>14</sup> In November 1969, a special commission reporting to a US Bishop’s Conference estimated that 40,000 Roman Catholics in America had been “caught up in the new

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<sup>12</sup> Walker, ‘A Church in Exile’.

<sup>13</sup> This divide is not unique to Pentecostals. As Stephen Hunt argues, “cultural identity is continually being produced and modified within the framework of similarity and difference. This renders cultural identity as a constantly shifting position and with points of difference providing the multiple focus of reference”.

Acknowledging this, I argue that although Pentecostal cultural identity is constantly shifting, it needs to be studied because Pentecostals actively intervene in an attempt to direct or shape this identity. Their efforts are of as much interest as the results they produce. See Stephen Hunt “‘Neither Here nor There’: The Construction of Identities and Boundary Maintenance of West African Pentecostals’, *Sociology* 36, no. 1 (2002), 148.

<sup>14</sup> In 1969, Catholic Charismatic theologian Kevin Ranaghan and his wife, Dorothy, wrote a history and explanation of Charismatic Catholicism. For more on the movement, see their work: Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan, *Catholic Pentecostals* (Paramus: Paulist Press, 1969). A shorter edited collection, also focused on America, was published in 1977: Jan Kerkhofs ed., *Catholic Pentecostals Now* (Canfield: Alba Books, 1977). For the Australian context broadly see a short volume published by the Australian Catholic Truth Society: T.A. White, *Pentecostal Catholics* (Melbourne: ACTS Publications, 1972). For information on South Australia specifically see also: Yew Meng Cheng, “Catholic Pentecostalism in South Australia”, MA dissertation, Flinders University, 1981.

Pentecostalism”. The commission said: “The movement should at this point not be inhibited, but allowed to develop”.<sup>15</sup> The Catholic Church here demonstrated here that it felt that they ultimately had control of the movement because it was not “natural”. The Church said it would *choose* not to inhibit the movement, but suggested that it saw the potential for attracting new converts based on the appeal of the experiential worship associated with charismatic Christianity.<sup>16</sup>

Many Catholics co-opted aspects of Pentecostal belief and practice as a way to prevent members leaving the Catholic Church for Pentecostal and charismatic congregations. The American Catholic Bishop Joseph Hogan, in ‘Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church’ (1973), said: “the Catholic Pentecostal Movement began as a spark in 1967 at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, and since then has grown with amazing speed throughout the Midwest and the entire country, and increasingly, through the whole world”. After recognising the growth in the number of Pentecostal Catholics, Hogan went on to argue that among Catholic Pentecostals, the “second” or “experiential” baptism “is neither a new sacrament nor a substitute sacrament. Like the renewal of baptismal promises, it is a renewal in faith of the desire to be everything that Christ wants us to be”.<sup>17</sup> By claiming this Pentecostal practice as their own, Catholics created space and justification for the burgeoning number of charismatics in the Catholic Church to remain in the Catholic Church.

Pope John Paul II also appropriated renewal and charismatic practices as Catholic in 1992, when he celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the beginning of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) movement, which is recognised by the Catholic Church, but is not an official part of the Church.<sup>18</sup> The Pope said:

I willingly join you in giving praise to God for the many fruits which it (the CCR) has borne in the life of the Church. The emergence of the Renewal following the Second

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Scott McPheat, ‘The Pentecostal Movement’, in John Blacker ed., *Power for Mission: A Panorama of the Dynamic and Effect of the Holy Spirit Movement in the Seventies* (Sunshine: Mannamedia Gospel Communications, 1973), 23.

<sup>16</sup> McPheat, ‘The Pentecostal Movement’, 23.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph Hogan, ‘Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church’, in John Blacker ed., *Power for Mission: A Panorama of the Dynamic and Effect of the Holy Spirit Movement in the Seventies* (Sunshine: Mannamedia Gospel Communications, 1973), 61-62.

<sup>18</sup> CCR prides itself on not having a single founder and on not having a membership list. The movement is instead made up of prayer groups and other small groups within parishes and communities. CCR represents itself and its history this way to make it seem an organic response to renewal that necessitates no organization since it grows and flourishes naturally. Of course, by remaining without an official leader, it poses little threat to the rest of the Catholic Church. See: CCR, ‘About Us: History’, *Catholic Charismatic Renewal New South Wales Website*, 2011, Available: <http://www.ccrnsw.org.au/about/history>. Accessed 12 November 2014.

Vatican Council was a particular gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church...At this moment in history, the Charismatic Renewal can play a significant role in promoting the much-needed defence of Christian life in societies where secularism and materialism have weakened many people's ability to respond to the Spirit and to discern God's loving call.<sup>19</sup>

The Pope's words indicate that Catholics accepted the appeal of charismatic Christianity and saw its use in attracting converts in a modern world. More significantly, it shows the way he sought to link renewal and charismatic practices as being Catholic traditions and as having a significant place in the Catholic Church, even if not an official one.<sup>20</sup>

Many Protestant churches also saw the opportunity the charismatic movement and associated renewal represented for revitalising existing congregations. The Australian Methodist Church, for example, had a particularly active Charismatic Fellowship in the 1970s. On 28 June, the church's fellowship held a "Charismatic Fellowship Rally" in Melbourne's West Mitcham Methodist Church, with speakers from Sydney and Melbourne. The previous month's rally took place in South Australia's Hope Valley, and the following month it was held at Maughan Church in Adelaide.<sup>21</sup> The pamphlet advertising the upcoming Melbourne Rally discussed the "healing emphasis" of the Hope Valley rally and noted that a seminar on "The Renewal of the Local Church" would follow.<sup>22</sup> When seen alongside the interstate location and speakers at these rallies, these pamphlets reflect the tendency for charismatics within established churches to view themselves as part of a widespread movement that was nonetheless rooted in an evangelising mission.

Methodists were also concerned about losing members to Pentecostal churches. Ronald Foulkes, a Minister of the Morwell Circuit in Victoria, wrote in 1973 that Methodists:

[H]ave lost many fine people to the Assembly of God, Christian Revival Crusade and smaller Pentecostal groups; people who, because of their experience, could have enriched our

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<sup>19</sup> Video and text of speech by Pope John Paul II republished at CCR, 'About Us: History', *Catholic Charismatic Renewal New South Wales Website*.

<sup>20</sup> The CCR in Australia now has three groups in Queensland, one in NSW, one in Victoria, and one in Western Australia. Although the Catholic Archdiocese that represents the areas containing CCR groups has recognised the movement, they have also made clear that it is not officially part of the Catholic Church. For example, the website of the Archdiocese of Sydney provides contact information and a brief overview of the CCR in Sydney, but notes in bold red text, "this organisation is not a service of the Archdiocese of Sydney". See: CCR, 'About Us: History'; Sydney Catholic Archdiocese, 'Our Works: Catholic Charismatic Renewal', *Sydney Catholic Archdiocese Website*, 2014, Available: [https://www.sydneycatholic.org/works/other\\_organisations\\_in\\_sydney.asp?ID=56](https://www.sydneycatholic.org/works/other_organisations_in_sydney.asp?ID=56). Accessed 12 November 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Methodist Church of South Australia, 'Charismatic Fellowship Rally' pamphlet, 1975. Held at State Library of South Australia.

<sup>22</sup> Methodist Church of South Australia, 'Charismatic Fellowship Rally'.

churches immeasurably, and who would personally have benefitted had they been encouraged to continue their association, and to use their gifts within the mainstream of Church life.<sup>23</sup>

Foulkes' words show that he saw benefits to keeping charismatics *within* the Methodist church. In responding to claims that Pentecostals and charismatics were creating division in his church, he argued: "It was three times said of Jesus, 'There was division...because of Him' (John 7:43, 9:16, 10:19)", and added: "it always takes two (or more) to cause division".<sup>24</sup> Foulkes is notable among the authors discussed in this chapter for acknowledging that fault for the divide between Pentecostals and others lay on both sides. It was a divide that he clearly felt led to the loss of members to Pentecostal churches and provided the impetus for his call for the Methodist church to take advantage of renewal or risk losing members: "If we don't seize our opportunity, let's face it – God will keep moving, in spite of us!"<sup>25</sup>

A pamphlet advertising the June 1975 Charismatic Fellowship Rally within the Methodist Church went as far as to actively position the fellowship as being in line with Pentecostal and other "cool", and un-traditional, evangelical groups. The pamphlet featured a cartoon (see below) of a Salvation Army officer approaching a young man, whose long hair, beard, peace sign necklace, and jeans and t-shirt identify him as a hippie. The young man replied with a smile: "Thank you for your concern about my soul. Actually I'm a Presbyterian youth evangelist".<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ronald Foulkes, 'Charisma and the Local Church', in John Blacker ed., *Power for Mission: A Panorama of the Dynamic and Effect of the Holy Spirit Movement in the Seventies* (Sunshine: Mannamedia Gospel Communications, 1973), 85.

<sup>24</sup> Foulkes, 'Charisma and the Local Church', 87.

<sup>25</sup> Foulkes, 'Charisma and the Local Church', 93.

<sup>26</sup> Methodist Church of South Australia, 'Charismatic Fellowship Rally'.

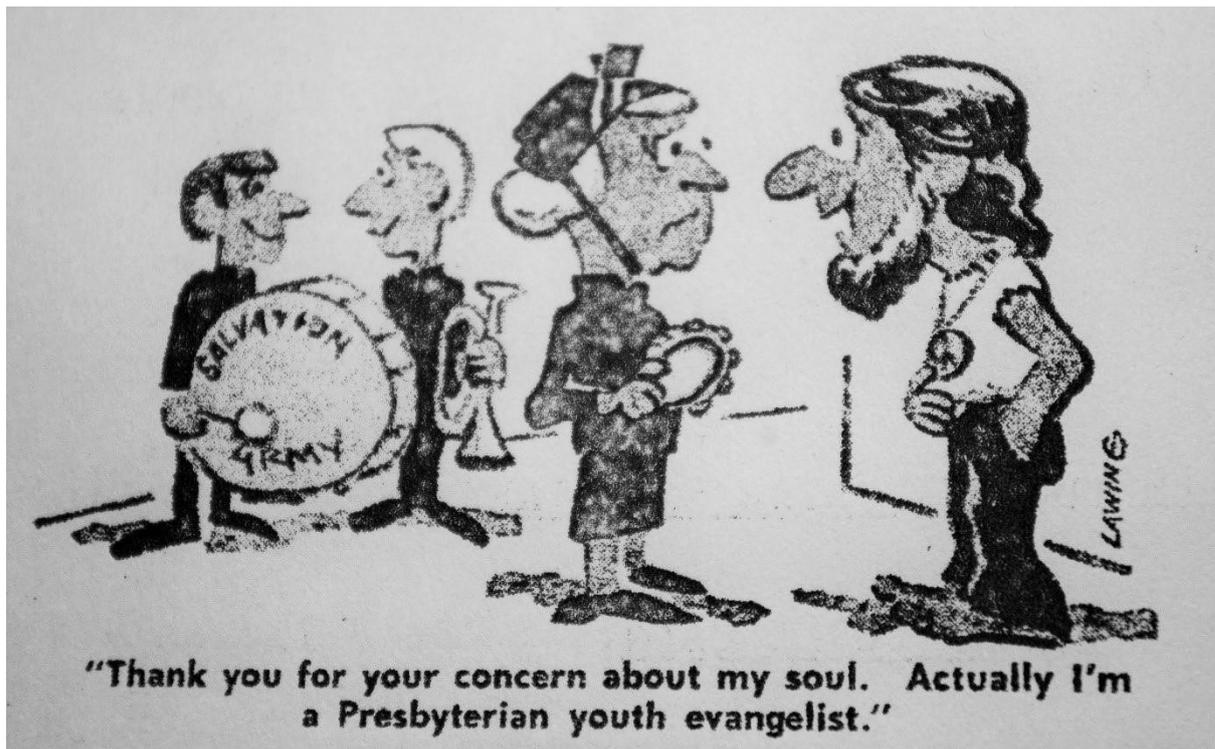


Figure 35: Cartoon published in Methodist Church of South Australia, 'Charismatic Fellowship Rally' pamphlet, 1975.

The youth evangelist pictured here has strong echoes of the “Jesus freaks” that emerged as a new demographic in evangelical culture in the 1960s and 1970s and, based on his appearance, the Salvation Army officer had not understood that this young man was a Christian.<sup>27</sup> Jesus freaks rejected “old-fashioned” Christian interpretations of acceptable clothing, jewellery, and personal grooming, instead adopting a style much more akin to the hippie movement, though very strongly based on consumption.<sup>28</sup> Charismatics within the Methodist Church thus saw adopting an aesthetic more akin to the emerging evangelical groups, one strongly associated with charismatic Christianity, as a way to mark them apart from other more conservative evangelicals.

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<sup>27</sup> Jesus freaks were one of the first Christian groups to appropriate the idea of “cool” and apply it to Christianity. Since then, many evangelical churches (particularly Pentecostal churches) have prioritised being “cool” as a way to make themselves relevant. Commentators today regularly call the current incarnation of this attitude “hipster Christianity”. See Brett McCracken, *Hipster Christianity: When Church and Cool Collide* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010), 12-13.

<sup>28</sup> Heather Hendershot, *Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelical Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 21.

The Uniting Church in Australia had a similarly strong internal charismatic movement, one that was at least partially aimed at ensuring the church did not lose members to the emerging Pentecostal and charismatic congregations. The church established the “National Fellowship for Charismatic Renewal” within the Uniting Church in 1977 and also published a journal titled *Renewing of the Holy Ghost: Journal of the National Fellowship for Charismatic Renewal* from 1976-82.<sup>29</sup> The subtitle of the publication—“For interested persons within the Uniting Church in Australia”—makes it clear that this journal focused on charismatic experiences within the Uniting Church. However, the June 1978 issue contained information about an “Ecumenical Charismatic Conference” to be held in Adelaide later that year, featuring speakers from and sponsorship by “Charismatic renewal fellowships within the Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran and Uniting Churches”.<sup>30</sup> Significantly, charismatics within these churches were predominantly focused on each other, not on bridging gaps with purely Pentecostal denominations. This ecumenism was also evident in the December 1979 issue of the journal where one writer said that the world cried “God is dead” in the 1960s, and that Pope John XXIII cried “Oh, for a new Pentecost...[I]n the [19]70s the world has seen the beginnings of God’s answer to that cry”. She noted that in 1978 at the Lambeth Conference, the Archbishop of Canterbury prayed for “the death of the charismatic movement”. His “electrified audience heard him go on to explain that he wished renewal to be so integrated into the life of the Church that the separate identity of the charismatic renewal movement would be lost”.<sup>31</sup> The Uniting Church wanted the charismatic movement firmly embedded within mainline churches, and was prepared to adopt an ecumenical position (though not with specifically Pentecostal or charismatic churches) to achieve this.

The Church of England also thought it important to keep members within its fold while embracing the most popular aspects of charismatic religion. In a Church Missionary Society (CMS) Newsletter, the Reverend Dr John Taylor, who would later go on to become Bishop of Winchester and the Chairman of the Church of England Doctrine Commission was critical of Pentecostalism and maintained that “for historical and psychological reasons Pentecostalism has more often than not appeared in conjunction with revivalism, fundamentalism, Adventism

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<sup>29</sup> Uniting Church in Australia, *Renewing of the Holy Ghost: Journal of the National Fellowship for Charismatic Renewal*, issue 8, June 1978, 8.

<sup>30</sup> Joan B. Dost in Uniting Church in Australia, *Renewing of the Holy Ghost: Journal of the National Fellowship for Charismatic Renewal*, issue 14, December 1979, 2.

<sup>31</sup> Dost in Uniting Church in Australia, *Renewing of the Holy Ghost: Journal of the National Fellowship for Charismatic Renewal*, issue 14, December 1979, 2.

and sectarianism”. However, Taylor believed that Pentecostalism offered “relevance of a kind”. He argued that the Church of England should recognise that “most of our talk of relevance is a demand for a method which gets results” and that “mankind is not going to find God through such a cerebral religion as the Christianity they have so far encountered”.<sup>32</sup> He went on to endorse Hollenweger’s scholarly interpretation of Pentecostalism. Offering a rather backhanded compliment, Taylor praised Hollenweger’s ability to be “critical of the dogma—or, as he would say, the lack of theology—in the classical Pentecostal movement,” while remaining “Pentecostal in practice”.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Taylor appears to have found Hollenweger’s work acceptable largely because he offered a rare insider account that was nonetheless critical of Pentecostal theology. This point of view would surely have appealed to the Church of England as a way of encouraging charismatics to stay within the church to achieve optimal theological teaching in a place where the growing charismatic movement also offered a chance for Pentecostal or charismatic styles of worship.

By 1983, many traditional churches seemingly took a charismatic focus on Gifts of the Spirit for granted. The Archbishop of Adelaide, Keith Rayner, said: “In our own day the Pentecostalist [sic] churches and the charismatic movement within our own church have drawn urgent attention once again to the gifts of the Spirit”.<sup>34</sup> Importantly here, Rayner not only accepted the charismatic movement within his church but also credited it, as much as the Pentecostal churches themselves, with the growth of Gifts of the Spirit, particularly healing. He did note that manifestations of Spirit at times led to “congregations being split down the middle” but countered that the Anglican Church was not alone in experiencing this trend, arguing “even in the Pentecostalist [sic] churches, where these gifts are welcomed and prized, schismatic divisions are not uncommon”.<sup>35</sup> We see here, again, that contemporary Pentecostalism emerged in the late 1970s and, by the early 1980s, other churches accepted this as an important part of Australian Christianity. The disruptive power of Pentecostal and charismatic religion is also clearly evident in the material above. Gifts of the Spirit led to divisions among other Protestant denominations about the place this charismatic idea held in their churches.

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<sup>32</sup> John V. Taylor, ‘CMS Newsletter’, in John Blacker ed., *Power for Mission: A Panorama of the Dynamic and Effect of the Holy Spirit Movement in the Seventies* (Sunshine: Mannamedia Gospel Communications, 1973), 38, 43-44.

<sup>33</sup> Taylor, ‘CMS Newsletter’, 40.

<sup>34</sup> Rayner, *The Spirit and His Gifts*, 1.

<sup>35</sup> Rayner, *The Spirit and His Gifts*, 25.

Pentecostals tended to respond negatively to other Christians adopting charismatic practices, expressing a considerable degree of exceptionalism – this was their domain. Rather than viewing this adoption as a further sign of renewal, many Pentecostals were sceptical that other churches were in fact truly embracing New Testament church practices, practices that had become synonymous with *their* form of Christianity and which had garnered them much criticism. Ken Chant, a pastor with the CRC in Launceston and brother of Pentecostal historian Barry Chant, wrote in 1973 that “thousands of pastors and people from virtually every Christian denomination are today exercising the same gift”. Referring to gifts of the spirit, Chant went on to say that Pentecostals were left feeling “bewildered. For some forty years they felt they had a kind of monopoly on the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and on the sign of speaking in other tongues”. Further, “several millions of them in past years were thrown out of their churches, branded as being ‘of the devil’, or just plain mad”. That many churches later embraced a Christian experience based on Acts 2:1-4, Chant thought, was “a bit rough! I mean, we feel like we’ve been betrayed. It’s rather unfair of God to bless our enemies quite so openly!”<sup>36</sup> Chant here reinforces the idea that Pentecostals were not only unhappy with the charismatic movement in other churches, but they were fundamentally different to other Christians. Different even to other charismatic Christians, who he went as far as describing as “our enemies”.

Pentecostals not only felt a sense of ownership over charismatic practices, but some also questioned the authenticity of charismatic experiences within other churches. Chant asked:

“How can people who worship Mary, or who follow modern liberal theology, be really baptized in the Holy Spirit? Surely their glossolalia is spurious”.<sup>37</sup> He believed churches needed to ensure that people were experiencing a “true manifestation” of the Spirit, and not merely being caught up in the excitement of charismatic-style worship experience.<sup>38</sup> To ensure a “true” experience was occurring Chant advocated dialogue across denominations:

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<sup>36</sup> Ken Chant, ‘Three Peas in a Pod’, in John Blacker ed., *Power for Mission: A Panorama of the Dynamic and Effect of the Holy Spirit Movement in the Seventies* (Sunshine: Mannamedia Gospel Communications, 1973), 67.

<sup>37</sup> Chant, ‘Three Peas in a Pod’, 67.

<sup>38</sup> Charismatics within other churches were also hesitant about the authenticity of some of their adherents’ experiences. The United Presbyterian Church of USA set up a select committee, which spent two years investigating the Holy Spirit movement. It reported to the 182<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of the Church (1970), and published a booklet, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* which argued that charismatic practices, particularly manifestations of the Holy Spirit, needed to be viewed with “sensitivity”. The authors said: “we are not unmindful that the problems of discrimination between the true and fraudulent are considerable, but we must not allow the problems to paralyse our awareness of His presence”. See: Excerpts from *The Work of the Holy Spirit: Report of the Special Committee on the Work of the Holy Spirit to the 182<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (1970), in United Presbyterian Church of USA,

It is impossible to be satisfied with a situation which leads to thousands of people in various denominations being filled with the Spirit, and speaking in other tongues, but remaining isolated from one another, or remaining in churches where no scope is given for the collective development and use of all the gifts of the Spirit.<sup>39</sup>

Beneath his advocacy of ecumenism, Chant implied that churches that were not strictly Pentecostal would not satisfy charismatics in other denominations for long, especially given that charismatic fellowships represented only part of the congregation of traditional churches, who were thus unlikely to embrace the “collective development” of gifts of the Spirit that Chant advocated. Chant displayed a belief in Pentecostal exceptionalism when it came to spiritual gifts, even though he couched this in ecumenical language. In emphasising that Pentecostal churches were the best place to experience these gifts, he provided an example of the ways this movement sets itself up as being in a competitive relationship with other churches.

## Pentecostalism as a threat to other Christian denominations

Just as there were Christians who embraced aspects of the Pentecostal movement, there were many who rejected it outright, or at least saw it as a threat to the future growth of their own denominations. Presbyterian minister Dr Scott McPheat, in an October 1972 address at St Andrew’s Church in Brisbane, told the congregation that while Pentecostals in Australia had not experienced as much success as their international counterparts, the growth of the movement was still “impressive by Australian evangelical standards”. He argued that Pentecostals, as well as the “Charismatic renewal movement” within other churches, was “increasingly impinging on the traditional churches”.<sup>40</sup> He went on to quote an editorial from *Church Scene*, the Australian national Anglican newspaper, which declared, “the time has come to acknowledge that Neo-Pentecostalism has touched the lives of all the Australian churches...Clergy and administrators throughout the country are having to decide now how to accept this confusing, sometimes upsetting, new drive”.<sup>41</sup> Having used the view of another denomination to reinforce his argument that Pentecostals represented a threat, McPheat pointed the finger at what he saw

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‘General Assembly Report’, in John Blacker ed., *Power for Mission: A Panorama of the Dynamic and Effect of the Holy Spirit Movement in the Seventies* (Sunshine: Mannamedia Gospel Communications Australia, 1973), 31.

<sup>39</sup> Chant, ‘Three Peas in a Pod’, 70.

<sup>40</sup> Scott McPheat, ‘The Pentecostal Movement’, in John Blacker ed., *Power for Mission: A Panorama of the Dynamic and Effect of the Holy Spirit Movement in the Seventies* (Sunshine: Mannamedia Gospel Communications, 1973), 18.

<sup>41</sup> McPheat, ‘The Pentecostal Movement’, 18.

as the Pentecostal tendency to *take* members from traditional churches. Using a jocular tone that did little to hide his obvious vexation, he noted: “in the Catholic Bible Jesus commanded Paul to ‘Feed my sheep’”, and Catholics thought Pentecostals interpreted this as “Steal my sheep!...And at sheep-stealing they became masters”.<sup>42</sup> McPheat adds the weight of another denomination to his criticism here, all to reinforce his point that Pentecostals represented a menace for mainline churches who were losing members to these “sheep stealers”.

The Presbyterian Church of Australia continued to voice concern over the place of charismatic religion within their church through the 1980s and into the 1990s. They related concerns to the broader growth of the movement generally, fearing that if they did not embrace it, they would lose members. In 1988, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church elected a committee to present a statement “about whether the doctrine and practices of the neo-Pentecostal or charismatic movement are consistent with the Scriptures and the Subordinate Standard of the Presbyterian Church of Australia”.<sup>43</sup> Alison Sherrington, the Deaconess Candidate of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, produced a book in early 1991 titled *Word and Spirit: Coming to Terms with the Charismatic Movement* seeking to preempt the findings of the committee, which were to be presented at the General Assembly held in September that year. She noted that charismatic practices posed doctrinal problems but argued that her church could not afford to alienate charismatics any longer. Speaking of the “persecution meted out to charismatics” within her church and by other denominations, Sherrington agreed that charismatic revelations lacked the “infallibility, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture”. However, she argued, “in the face of the phenomenal worldwide growth of the charismatic churches, the Presbyterian Church of Australia cannot continue straight ahead along its present road of uncertainty or intolerance punctuated with persecution”.<sup>44</sup> It is not clear what persecution she believes charismatics had faced, but presumably it was akin to Chant’s argument that they had been sidelined within mainstream churches.

Reflecting the perception of Pentecostals as a threat to other denominations, the key reason Sherrington gave for Presbyterians to embrace charismatics was that failure to do so risked losing adherents. Very prosaically she argued:

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<sup>42</sup> McPheat, ‘The Pentecostal Movement’, 22.

<sup>43</sup> Alison J. Sherrington, *Word and Spirit: Coming to Terms with the Charismatic Movement* (St. Lucia: Alison Sherrington, 1991), preface, np.

<sup>44</sup> Sherrington, *Word and Spirit*, 7, 38, 41.

Let us, however, consider the longer-term effects of any kind of official anticharismatic stand within our denomination. Even now there are numerous families in which the parents attend the Presbyterian Church and the young people attend a Pentecostal or charismatic church. This trend would escalate, and could not be stopped merely by changing a few external features of our service, such as singing choruses as well as hymns.<sup>45</sup>

Sherrington's concerns over the dangers of an "anti-charismatic" stand outweighed her worries about doctrinal issues. That she recognised Pentecostals had experienced "persecution" is interesting because she is one of the only writers from outside the Pentecostal movement to do so. To her, Pentecostals were both a threat to the future size of her denomination and a group on the fringes of Christianity, subject to insecurity and maltreatment by other churches.

While other Christian churches were certainly concerned about losing members to the Pentecostal and charismatic movement, they were also frustrated by the way the movement refused to engage in ecumenical organisations. The Australian Council of Churches (now called the National Council of Churches) began its ecumenical work in 1946, representing the Anglican Church and various Protestant denominations.<sup>46</sup> Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches joined, and, after the second Vatican Council, so did the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>47</sup> There are now some evangelical churches with membership, but no Pentecostal congregations.<sup>48</sup> In 1973, the Australian Council of Churches published a three-part volume titled *Churches and Councils—Australia and the World: Three Statements on the Ecumenical Situation Today*. In the "Report to Councils and Churches from the World Consultation of Christian Councils Held at Geneva, June/July 1971", a section titled "Enlarging the Fellowship" dealt specifically with the growth of "Conservative Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches". The report said, "we can never be complacent about situations where any churches are conscientiously unable to collaborate with their fellow-Christians... We recommend that councils continue to search for the appropriate next steps towards fuller fellowship with

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<sup>45</sup> Sherrington, *Word and Spirit*, 7, 38, 43-4.

<sup>46</sup> The Australian Council of Church is not to be confused with the Australian Christian Churches (the ACC or AOG) which is a purely Pentecostal body.

<sup>47</sup> National Council of Churches, 'A Brief History of the NCCA', *National Council of Churches in Australia Website*. Available: <http://www.ncca.org.au/about/story>. Accessed 3 November 2014.

<sup>48</sup> Current membership consists of: Anglican Church of Australia, Antiochian Orthodox Church, Armenian Apostolic Church, Assyrian Church of the East, Chinese Methodist Church in Australia, Churches of Christ in Australia, Congregational Federation of Australia, Coptic Orthodox Church, Greek Orthodox Church, Indian Orthodox Church, Lutheran Church of Australia, Mar Thoma Church, Religious Society of Friends, Roman Catholic Church, Romanian Orthodox Church, The Salvation Army, Serbian Orthodox Church, Syrian Orthodox Church, and the Uniting Church in Australia.

Conservative Evangelical and Pentecostal churches”.<sup>49</sup> The report blamed Pentecostals for “conscientiously” refusing to work with “their fellow-Christians”, and yet argued that it is other churches’ responsibility to change this situation.

Another section of the 1971 Australian Council of Churches Report demonstrated that not only did other Christians see Pentecostals as uncooperative, they also saw them as an isolated group. The report noted: “alongside the growing co-operation between Anglicans, Protestants and Roman Catholics, the participation of churches sometimes referred to as ‘sects’ must also be mentioned” and specified that Pentecostals were included in this category.<sup>50</sup> It went on to say that the Pentecostal movement was “significant” but that particularly in Australia, they were “not engaged in the ecumenical movement”.<sup>51</sup> As noted above, this trend has continued today, and no Pentecostal churches are currently part of the Australian Council of Churches. Most Pentecostal churches are instead members of the ACC, where each church remains self-governing, but “commits itself to work together with other churches in the movement for the purpose of mutual support and the spread of the gospel in Australia and the world”.<sup>52</sup> It seems the report’s authors were right in arguing that Pentecostals were not actively engaged in formal ecumenical dialogue. Importantly, the decision not to engage was a deliberate one, based on the Pentecostal understanding that their experiences of the Spirit were unique. That they were (and still are) members of the ACC and not the Australian Council of Churches demonstrates that it is more important for them to engage with churches within their movement than to seek broader cross-Christian dialogue.

Some charismatics within other denominations chose to identify increasingly strongly with Pentecostals rather than with their own church. Methodist Minister John Blacker explained: “I am increasingly disturbed with much contemporary comment made about the NeoPentecostal and Charismatic Movement, by those who do not hold the same view”. Blacker argued that “scholars who do not hold” Pentecostal views tend to reinterpret belief and “emu-pick”

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<sup>49</sup> Australian Council of Churches, ‘Report to Councils and Churches from the World Consultation of Christian Councils Held at Geneva, June/July 1971’, in D’Arcy Wood ed., *Churches and Councils— Australia and the World: Three Statements on the Ecumenical Situation Today* (Brickfield Hill: Australian Council of Churches, 1972), 20.

<sup>50</sup> Division of Studies and Communication of the Australian Council of Churches, ‘Changes in Relations Between Australian Churches’, in D’Arcy Wood ed., *Churches and Councils: Australia and the World: Three Statements on the Ecumenical Situation Today* (Brickfield Hill: Australian Council of Churches, 1972), 44.

<sup>51</sup> Division of Studies and Communication, ‘Changes in Relations Between Australian Churches’, 48-49.

<sup>52</sup> ACC, ‘Who We Are’, *Australian Christian Churches Website* 2014. Available: <http://www.acc.org.au/about-us/>. Accessed 3 November 2014.

quotations from Pentecostal writings. He further hinted that attempts by scholars to comment on the “subjective experience of the Holy Spirit in people’s lives” were misguided.<sup>53</sup> In a bid to establish a more positive body of work on the movement, he compiled and edited *Power for Mission: A Panorama of the Dynamic and Effect of the Holy Spirit Movement in the Seventies* (1973).<sup>54</sup> This collection featured mostly the views of contributors who acknowledged “the primacy of the guiding power of the Holy Spirit”.<sup>55</sup> Unlike the other views outlined above, Blacker here conflated the experience of being Pentecostal (which he terms Neo-Pentecostal) with being a charismatic in a traditional church, as he is himself. He accordingly adopted the Pentecostal tendency to believe that those outside the church wilfully misunderstand it. He attributed the (presumably critical) contemporary comment he was seeing to the fact that scholars who are not Pentecostals adopt a selective approach to evidence. Blacker apparently could not imagine the possibility that one might read Pentecostal writings comprehensively and yet still adopt an adverse view of the movement. And perhaps this is the larger point made by his work. Pentecostals often believe their experiences are unique; so different from those of other Christians, in fact, that they *cannot* be understood by outsiders. Other Christian groups may share many elements of their faith, but Pentecostals’ focus on experience supposedly opens a gap in understanding which they believe cannot be bridged by anyone outside the church.

Specifically Pentecostal groups were aware of the attention other denominations paid them and the divisions they engendered. The United Pentecostal Church International—of which the United Pentecostal Church of Australia had been a member since 1953—held a “Symposium on Oneness Pentecostalism” in January 1986 in Missouri, US.<sup>56</sup> In the conference publication,

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<sup>53</sup> John Blacker, ‘Introduction’, in John Blacker ed., *Power for Mission: A Panorama of the Dynamic and Effect of the Holy Spirit Movement in the Seventies* (Sunshine: Mannamedia Gospel Communications, 1973), 11-12.

<sup>54</sup> This collection provided a key set of sources for this chapter. Official responses to Pentecostal churches by other Australian churches are limited. There is a much stronger focus on charismatic experiences within their own denomination. Some churches, such as the Anglican and Uniting Churches, had Charismatic Fellowships within their churches, and these fellowships produced journals that provide insight into how the churches responded to the growing Pentecostal movement. The Uniting Church in Australia published *Renewing of the Holy Ghost: Journal of the National Fellowship for Charismatic Renewal* in Adelaide from

<sup>55</sup> John Blacker, ‘Preface’, in John Blacker ed., *Power for Mission: A Panorama of the Dynamic and Effect of the Holy Spirit Movement in the Seventies* (Sunshine: Mannamedia Gospel Communications, 1973), 7.

<sup>56</sup> The Oneness Pentecostal movement (initially also referred to as “New Issue”, “Jesus Name”, and “Oneness”) emerged in the early twentieth century following a 1913 baptismal sermon at the Worldwide Pentecostal Camp Meeting near Los Angeles where a preacher argued that baptism could occur in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, thus rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity. Oneness Pentecostals teach that God’s name is one and his nature is too. The movement, because of its rejection of Trinitarian beliefs and its practice of rebaptism remains outside the mainstream of Pentecostalism. For more see: Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 47-49; and David A. Reed, ‘Then and Now: The Many Faces of Global Oneness Pentecostalism’, in Cecil M. Robeck Jr. and Amos Yong eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 52-70.

the Symposium Committee explained that the aim of the event was to “promote a scholarly exploration of the various aspects of Oneness Pentecostalism and to bring unity and spiritual refreshment from the study of God’s Word”.<sup>57</sup> C.H. Yadon, a Pentecostal minister, wrote in the same publication that many mainstream Protestant denominations experienced Pentecostal revival as a “trauma”. He quoted Carter Linberg’s 1986 publication, *Charismatic Renewal and the Lutheran Tradition*, as evidence of this: “Lutheran churches throughout the world have been confronted both by the phenomenal growth and missionary power of the Pentecostal churches without, and by the often painful rise of charismatic movements within”.<sup>58</sup> This publication indicates that Pentecostals were aware of the attention and tensions they generated within other Protestant denominations. It is not hard to see that the growth of Pentecostalism posed a threat to Protestant churches, both externally through the threat of adherents leaving for Pentecostal churches, and internally, through the divisions that charismatic movements created in terms of doctrine and worship.

Some Pentecostals, when accused by other Christians of “stealing” their flock, were forthcoming about the fact that they were competing with other denominations. They reasoned that they were offering people a more appealing and attractive form of Christianity than was available in other churches. A 1988 article in *The Australian Women’s Weekly* examined the changes that had “shaken the Christian churches in Australia” from the 1960s. Having interviewed representatives from a broad range of denominations, the reporter noted that many “accused the Pentecostal Churches of ‘stealing’ others’ sheep”.<sup>59</sup> When the reporter interviewed Frank Houston—then head of the Christian Life Centre—he said that the primary concern of his church was evangelism. He responded to accusations that this church was “poaching” members from other congregations by saying that the Christian Life

Centre was focused primarily on the unchurched. He did, however, go on to say: “We have very contemporary services with live bands, members of whom have, in many cases, come from rock bands. We try to get back to the church of the New Testament – the raw church. We think we give young people some answers they are not finding in the traditional churches”.<sup>60</sup> To Frank

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<sup>57</sup> United Pentecostal Church International, *Symposium on Oneness Pentecostalism 1986* (Saint Louis: United Pentecostal Church International, 1986), 7.

<sup>58</sup> United Pentecostal Church International, *Symposium on Oneness Pentecostalism 1986*, 299.

<sup>59</sup> Meryl Constance, ‘The Changing Face of Christianity in Australia’, *Australian Women’s Weekly*, December 1988, 127.

<sup>60</sup> Frank Houston quoted in Constance, ‘The Changing Face of Christianity in Australia’, 128.

Houston, it seemed that this was a simple matter of supply and demand. People wanted to experience the kind of services his church offered, and if that meant other churches lost members—particularly young ones—this was simply a reflection of other denominations not being able to meet their adherents’ demands.

## Secular critiques and Pentecostal responses

The Australian press has paid increasing attention to Pentecostal churches from the 1980s owing to the rapid growth of the Pentecostal movement internationally and the increasing size of the local movement. Whereas earlier media reports had positioned Pentecostals as a fringe group, the press has increasingly come to recognise the movement as having a significant impact on Australian Christianity and culture.<sup>61</sup> A 1985 article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* was explicit about this transformation in perceptions of Pentecostalism and the impact the movement was having on the “religious revival” that had “swept the Western world, during the last five years”. The reporter, Tracey Aubin, said: “Pentecostals, the same people many dismissed several decades ago as a deprived, and sometimes depraved, fringe group of Christianity, are largely responsible for the boom”.<sup>62</sup> However, the size of the movement did not stay the focus of the press for long. With growing numbers of followers came increasing cultural influence, financial resources, and political and social visibility.<sup>63</sup> Anderson argues that Pentecostals have not always felt comfortable with “relating to the wider society, but this is something that is gradually changing”.<sup>64</sup> In Australia, Pentecostals are indeed becoming increasingly comfortable relating to wider society, but an ability to relate themselves to outsiders does not always mean that there is understanding between the groups. Indeed, this ability to engage with and relate to

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<sup>61</sup> Marion Maddox argues that Australia has a tradition of churches providing independent voices in the public sphere but argues that governments have recently reduced the space for participation by religious groups. See Marion Maddox, ‘Religion, Secularism and the Promise of Public Theology’, *International Journal of Public Theology* 1, no. 1 (2007), 91.

<sup>62</sup> Tracey Aubin, ‘The Boom of Tongues’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 June 1985, 7.

<sup>63</sup> Pradip Thomas points out that contemporary Pentecostals are aware of the power of media to communicate their message and that “the mobile commodity form is an expression of capitalism’s accommodation with religion in search of audiences”. Pradip Thomas, ‘Selling God/Saving Souls: Religious Commodities, Spiritual Markets and the Media’, *Global Media and Communication* 5, no. 1 (2009), 60. Given that they acknowledge and harness the power of contemporary communication forms, particularly the internet, social media, and television, Pentecostals are also actively encouraging this increased visibility as a way to connect with a larger audience in line with their evangelistic goals.

<sup>64</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 261.

the outside world (that is, to project an understanding of it without necessarily agreeing with its views) is one of the ways Pentecostals here have been able to create a strong group identity.

While all of the churches featured in this thesis have increasingly been subject to critiques by the media, none has received the level of attention paid to Hillsong as Australia's largest and best-known megachurch. Hillsong acknowledges this in the 'Media' section of its website that opens with the following explanation: "Because growth and increased visibility invariably invites questions, we have developed the following Q&A. We hope this helps you to gain a better understanding about the heart of our church and our pastors".<sup>65</sup> At a roundtable session at Colour Conference 2013, Brian Houston introduced Karalee Fielding to the audience, placing theatrical emphasis on her work for Hillsong as a "media relations officer". The audience responded to Houston's cue, and histrionic groans went around the vast conference venue.<sup>66</sup> Fielding and Hillsong's media relations team have a difficult job; they must counter criticism of the church but do so in a manner that reflects the church's desire to present a positive and attractive image to outsiders. In recognition of the difficulty in achieving this balance, Houston describes Fielding as "the smiling assassin".<sup>67</sup> Hillsong's media statements come across as a mixture of reasonable and reactionary. For example, in 'Bobbie's and My finances - A letter from Brian Houston', Houston began by calmly explaining why he felt the need to write on the topic:

The truth is, Hillsong's profile means that there are levels of scrutiny on myself and my family, which quite frankly, does not seem consistent with any other minister of religion or charity CEO in Australia. For that reason, I want to share with you a bit about my world and perhaps bring some clarity to areas of our ministry that you may or may not have wondered about.<sup>68</sup>

Houston, however, later said the church was "too often subject to misguided and unfair and cowardly attacks" and said it was "the "tall poppy" victim of misguided innuendo".<sup>69</sup> Houston's use of the word "attack" is significant. To him, the church must battle with those outside who

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<sup>65</sup> Hillsong Media, 'About Hillsong Church', *Hillsong Church Website*. Available: <http://hillsong.com/media/>. Accessed 22 August 2015.

<sup>66</sup> Author's own observations based on attendance at Hillsong Colour Conference 2013, 8 March. Sydney Entertainment Centre.

<sup>67</sup> Brian Houston quoted in Hillsong Church, 'About Karalee Fielding', *Hillsong Collected Blog*. Available: <https://hillsong.com/contributor/karalee-fielding/>. Accessed 23 November 2014.

<sup>68</sup> Brian Houston via Hillsong Media, 'Bobbie's and My Finances: A Letter from Brian Houston', *Hillsong Church Website*, 13 August 2010. Available: <http://hillsong.com/media-releases/bobbies-and-my-finances-aletter-from-brian-houston/>. Accessed 22 August 2015.

<sup>69</sup> Houston, 'Bobbie's and My Finances', np.

seek to undermine its work because they fail to understand that its success (and the reason it is a “tall poppy”) is because God is rewarding the faith of its adherents.

Critiques of Hillsong have primarily engaged with the church’s financial and tax statuses, with its social outreach programs, and with its position on contemporary social issues.<sup>70</sup> While the scope of the thesis limits the amount of media coverage that can be analysed, examination of press reportage on these matters—and especially Hillsong’s responses to them—reveals the way the church consistently sees itself as the victim. Hillsong regularly argues that the outside world, and particularly the Australian media, wilfully misunderstand the church and its goals to engage in scandal-mongering. In his ‘Correction of Misinformation’ offering “clarification on comments about Muslims” Houston claimed his detractors took his words out of context: “I realize that some critics WANT to believe their interpretation, but my prayer is that reasonable people will take my comment in context, accept my acknowledgment that I did not explain this sentence as I intended, and judge me on 40 years of pointing people to Jesus – not one sentence [original emphasis]”.<sup>71</sup> By simultaneously offering an attack on the perverseness of his critics and adopting taking a position of *mea culpa* Houston is positioning himself as a reasonable man who, although partially responsible for the misinformation, cannot be blamed for people’s reactions. This narrative of victimhood is actively constructed by the church and directed mostly inward at its members as a way to soothe any anxieties at the issues raised by critics. The narrative also helps bond members firmly to the church and inculcates them with the church’s view of the outside world.<sup>72</sup>

The Australian press regularly lambast Hillsong for the church’s prosperity preaching and because of the huge income the church generates each year; income that is mostly exempt from taxation because of the church’s status as a charity.<sup>73</sup> There have been several cases where Hillsong’s charity efforts themselves have come under scrutiny from the press and public. A

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<sup>70</sup> Hillsong’s leaders are aware that much criticism relates to money matters. The main webpage of the ‘Media’ section of Hillsong’s website has a series of questions answers ‘About Hillsong Church’ to help readers “again a better understanding about the heart of our church and our pastors”. Out of the ten questions featured in this section, six relate the church’s finances, including “Why do Australian churches not pay tax?”, “Is Hillsong Church financially transparent?”, and “How is Pastor Brian Houston paid?” See: Hillsong Media, ‘About Hillsong Church’.

<sup>71</sup> Brian Houston via Hillsong Media, ‘Correction of Misinformation’, *Hillsong Church Website*, March 2014. Available: <http://hillsong.com/media-releases/correction-of-misinformation/>. Accessed 22 August 2015.

<sup>72</sup> Pentecostals position themselves as the outsiders in this narrative. This is not dissimilar to the ways conservative Protestants in America began to self-consciously shape themselves as “outsiders” from the 1920s to position themselves as a minority fighting for survival. See R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 63.

<sup>73</sup> See Chapter Two for more on Hillsong’s tax status and examples of the way the press have commented on this.

notable example is the controversy over Hillsong's partnership with Riverstone Aboriginal Community Association (RACA) in an application for federal grant money.<sup>74</sup> Hillsong was accused of misleading the RACA and later bribing the group, allegations that were never proven and which the church denied. Of interest to this chapter is the two core ways Hillsong responded. Hillsong Church dissociated itself from Hillsong Emerge (the charity that wrote the grant application) saying the two were separate entities. *The Australian* newspaper reported that it had asked Hillsong Emerge if the proposed committee members in the application were members of the church, but Maria Ieroianni, a spokesperson for Hillsong Emerge did not comment.<sup>75</sup> Refusal to comment represents the second significant aspect of Hillsong's response: withdrawal from public engagement on controversial issues.

*The Australian* reported that there had been a "ban" on talking to the press and noted that the church was disobliging when it came to answering questions and would not "co-operate in any way". The church, in the 'Media Release Archive' section of its website, features a subheading 'RACA Letter of Apology' from April 2007 but clicking on the link does not reveal any statement by the church itself. Instead, there is a scanned copy of a letter to Hillsong from Gavin Gibbs, Chairperson of the RACA, apologising for "inappropriate accusations" by "a self-serving group of individuals".<sup>76</sup> Hillsong Church withdrew from public debate by dissociating itself from Hillsong Emerge, by refusing to engage with the press, and by posting the RACA letter, presumably as a way to let the "facts speak for themselves". Hillsong's refusal to engage with the issue sits at odds with its argument that outsiders do not understand the church and is

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<sup>74</sup> The case drew the attention of the press and parliamentarians after allegations that Hillsong had misled the public and Riverstone Aboriginal Community Association (RACA) over a grant application (which was successful) for Federal funds to be spend on a crime prevention program. It was alleged that Hillsong had misled the RACA by withdrawing a joint application the church and RACA had co-written and submitting another in its place. Hillsong denied this allegation and offered the community \$280,000 as part of the grant, but the grant money was later withdrawn by the government. See: Jonathan Pearlman, 'Hillsong Denies Bribe Allegation', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 December 2005. Available: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/hillsong-denies-bribe-allegation/2005/12/22/1135032135696.html>.

Accessed 29 April 2013; and ABC News, 'Hillsong Accused of Misleading Indigenous Community', *ABC News Website*, 15 February 2006. Available: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2006-02-15/hillsong-accused-of-misleading-indigenous-community/799184>. Accessed 29 April 2013.

<sup>75</sup> Ean Higgins, 'No Faith in Charity', *The Australian*, 19 November 2005, 27.

<sup>76</sup> Gavin Gibbs, 'Letter to Leigh Colman Re: RACA: Hillsong Relationship', 17 April 2007. Reprinted at Hillsong Media, 'RACA Letter of Apology', *Hillsong Church Website*, April 2007. Available: <http://hillsong.com/media-releases/raca-letter-of-apology/>. Accessed 29 April 2013.

indicative that the church does not really want to be understood by outsiders and so makes limited efforts to engage with criticism in any substantive way.<sup>77</sup>

Hillsong employed a similar tactic of distancing itself from scandal when negative publicity led to the closure of the charity Mercy Ministries, in which several prominent church members were involved. Mercy Ministries was designed to be a residential treatment for young women suffering from eating disorders, self-harm, previous physical or sexual abuse, addiction, or unwanted pregnancy.<sup>78</sup> These are all issues many Pentecostals believe can be resolved with positive thinking and religious conversion, despite the fact that many studies argue that religious resources may be more helpful for problems originating outside the individual (for example ill health or financial stress) rather than from stressors perceived and positioned as personal failures.<sup>79</sup> Controversy erupted when several women claimed that Mercy Ministries did not offer the range of professional treatments advertised and instead instructed the women in Pentecostal doctrine, told them of their sins and their need to repent, or even conducted exorcisms. Furthermore, some women claimed they were forced to hand Centrelink (government) benefits to Mercy Ministries and were not allowed to leave the treatment centre

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<sup>77</sup> Hillsong's tendency to dissociate itself from scandal, while understandable, was particularly troubling when it came to Hillsong's response to media attention paid during the church and Brian Houston's participation in the 'Royal Commission – Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse', which investigated the response of Sydney Christian Life Centre, Hills Christian Life Centre, and the AOG to allegations of child sexual abuse made against then Pastor Frank Houston. Brian Houston was then the National President of the AOG and was in the process of rebranding Hills Christian Life Centre as Hillsong. Brian Houston's possible conflict of interest at the time the incident was reported to the AOG (given his position at National President and his personal relationship with the accused) was considered as was his response to the victim's disclosures at the time. (See Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. *Public Hearing into the Response of the Australian Christian Churches and Affiliated Pentecostal Churches to Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse*. Case Study 18. 'Opening Address of Counsel Assisting', October 2014). Hillsong released media statements on 7 and 14 October 2014 confirming its support for the objectives of the Royal Commission. In the second statement, written after a large volume of reportage on the topic, Brian Houston said "I wanted to take a moment today to help you understand what this is about, because it's difficult to get a true picture from media reports". He later made a strong effort to dissociate himself and Hillsong from any wrongdoing by saying "Hillsong was asked to appear not because of anything that happened here but because of the abuse suffered by children at the hands of my father around 40 years ago when he was based in New Zealand", a clear effort by Houston to distance himself from the events by time and geography, even though the incident in question happened in Sydney during Frank Houston's regular visits here from New Zealand. Houston went on to say "there was no allegation of abuse against anyone at Hillsong Church and no one was on trial. This was a hearing, not a trial". (See Hillsong Media, 'Statement from Brian Houston, Senior Pastor, Hillsong Church Re: Royal Commission – Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse', *Hillsong Church Website*. 7 and 17 October 2014. Available: <http://store.hillsong.com/media/statement-regarding-the-royal-commission-into-institutional-responses-to-child-sexual-abuse>. Accessed 28 October 2014).

<sup>78</sup> John Weaver provides a good overview of Mercy Ministries in Australia (including press responses) which he situates in the context of Mercy Ministries international operations. See John Weaver, *The Failure of Evangelical Mental Health Care: Treatments that Harm Women, LGBT Persons and the Mentally Ill* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2015), 86-105.

<sup>79</sup> Harold G. Koenig and David B. Larson, 'Religion and Mental Health: Evidence for an Association', *International Review of Psychiatry* 13, no. 2 (2001), 70.

in Baulkham Hills except for visits to Hillsong Church on weekends.<sup>80</sup> The organisation sought to isolate these women from the wider community and make them reliant on this evangelical group for an explanation of how they had ended up in this position, for treatment, and for guidance as to how to re-enter the outside world. Some women refuted these allegations and reported that their experience at Mercy Ministries had been positive. They tended to frame their explanations in the language of victory over personal circumstance that is so common in Pentecostal discourse, particularly when it comes to health and wealth.<sup>81</sup> One young woman who had been treated for anorexia said: “when you first enter that program you know that it’s a Christian-based program”.<sup>82</sup> Her words were buttressed by an acceptance of individual responsibility and choice: the women at Mercy Ministries had chosen to be there and understood the nature of the program.

Mercy Ministries was investigated by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and its directors found responsible for misleading the women who participated in Mercy Ministries, although Hillsong distanced itself from the scandal while the investigation was underway.<sup>83</sup> The ACCC obtained court enforceable undertakings for seven Mercy Ministries former directors that required apologies and voluntary payments of \$1050 to those affected by the organisation’s misconduct.<sup>84</sup> While the matter was under investigation, but before the ACCC obtained the undertakings, Hillsong Church said it had “cut ties with Mercy

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<sup>80</sup> Other women claimed that handing Centrelink payments over was a choice and that students were only prevented from leaving the facility on weekdays See Barney Zwartz, ‘Cult-rescue group “Concerned about” Mercy Ministries’, *The Age*, 18 March 2008. Available: <http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/exorcism-healers-totally-misguided/2008/03/18/1205602343838.html>. Accessed 23 May 2013; and Meredith Griffiths, ‘Bad PR Forces Hillsong Counselling Closure’, *ABC News*, 28 October 2009. Available: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-10-28/bad-pr-forces-hillsong-counselling-closure/1120536>. Accessed 24 May 2013.

<sup>81</sup> The prosperity gospel in particular is focused on a message of victory, success, and overcoming obstacles. For more see Bowler, *Blessed*, 178-225.

<sup>82</sup> Sarah Goodson quoted in Griffiths, ‘Bad PR Forces Hillsong Counselling Closure’.

<sup>83</sup> The ACCC investigated Mercy Ministries for “reported allegations of misleading and deceptive conduct by Mercy Ministries in its dealings with vulnerable young women suffering from mental, health and life issues” for implications under the *Trade Practices Act 1974*”. See: Brian Cassidy, ‘Letter to Craig Emerson Re: Mercy Ministries’, 18 December 2009. Published on Australian Competition and Consumer Website Freedom of Information Website. Available: [http://foi.accc.gov.au/sites/foi.accc.gov.au/files/repository/ACCC%20FOI%20Request%2061-2013%20-%20Document%201\\_0.pdf](http://foi.accc.gov.au/sites/foi.accc.gov.au/files/repository/ACCC%20FOI%20Request%2061-2013%20-%20Document%201_0.pdf). Accessed 25 May 2013.

<sup>84</sup> The directors were Mark Zschech, Peter Irvine, Mark Caldwell, Stephen Crouch, Young Pil (Phil) Sohn, Darlene Zschech and Clark Pearson. See Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Media Release NR 311/09, ‘Undertakings Remedy Mercy Ministries Misleading Conduct’, 16 December 2009. *Australia Competition and Consumer Commission Website*. Available: <https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/undertakings-remedy-mercy-ministries-misleading-conduct>.

Ministries around the world”.<sup>85</sup> The church released a statement explaining: “Hillsong is not under investigation, but a number of key people from Hillsong Church over the years have been involved in Mercy Ministries. It is wrong that anything Mercy Ministries may or may not have done could overshadow so much of what we as a church stand for: Loving God and Helping People”.<sup>86</sup> Again Hillsong chose to distance itself from scandal (making it clear that the church itself was not under investigation) rather than engaging in serious debate about the purpose and methods of Mercy Ministries. In its statement above the church reinforced that it was the victim by highlighting the fact that the controversy would “overshadow” the church’s goals of “Loving God and Helping People”.

Hillsong’s relationship with the television program *A Current Affair* has become particularly vitriolic and offers an example of an instance where the church actively engages with critics, if not the substance of their critique. *A Current Affair* ran nine programs featuring Hillsong from 6 October 2014 to 30 June 2015.<sup>87</sup> Hillsong has offered several media releases in response to these television programs claiming that they have been “full of misinformation and clearly had an anti-church agenda”.<sup>88</sup> After a recent program, Brian Houston used Twitter to reach a broad audience and create a sense of shared victimhood with his church community. Houston (@BrianCHouston) said: “When *A Current Affair* lie and malign @hillsong (which they have done regularly) they insult the intelligence of the thousands who attend”.<sup>89</sup> Here Houston sought to build solidarity with church members and help them identify with the church; after all, he told them, they had been insulted too. *A Current Affair* said that Hillsong had declined to comment on the piece, which Hillsong denied.<sup>90</sup> Matters took a personal turn when Houston challenged Ben McCormack, a reporter for the program, saying: “@benmccormack9 Hey.. [sic] How about coming to have a coffee with me one day? You got the guts to do that? Just

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<sup>85</sup> Hillsong Church quoted in Ruth Pollard, ‘Mercy Ministries Home to Close’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 28 2009. Available: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/mercy-ministries-home-to-close-20091027hj2k.html>. Accessed 12 June 2015.

<sup>86</sup> Statement from Hillsong Church quoted in Griffiths, ‘Bad PR Forces Hillsong Counselling Closure’.

<sup>87</sup> Video recordings accessible on the program’s website via *Ninemsn Video*. Available: <http://aca.ninemsn.com.au/video.aspx?vq=hillsong>. Accessed 10 July 2015.

<sup>88</sup> Hillsong Media, ‘Statement from Hillsong Church Re: A Current Affair’, *Hillsong Church Website*, 18 February 2013. Available: <http://hillsong.com/media-releases/statement-from-hillsong-church-re-a-currentaffair/>. Accessed 10 July 2015.

<sup>89</sup> Brian Houston, Twitter post, 22 April 2015, 2:28 p.m. Available: <https://twitter.com/BrianCHouston/status/590990488259420160?nav=true>. Accessed 22 August 2015.

<sup>90</sup> A full account of the disagreement was given in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. See Patrick Begley, ‘A Current Affair Versus Hillsong: The Coffee Challenge’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 April 2015. Available: <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/tv-and-radio/a-current-affair-versus-hillsong-the-coffee-challenge20150427-1muarj.html>. Accessed 22 August 2015.

you and me”.<sup>91</sup> Houston, in another tweet, refused to be interviewed by the program, claiming that he had no problem answering questions put by the program, “It’s your skewered [sic] editing & underhanded tactics that are the problem”.<sup>92</sup> Much as Lentz wanted to “tune out” the world earlier in the chapter and told critics they needed to look to their own lives, here Houston refused to engage constructively with criticism arguing, perhaps correctly, that his opponents would deliberately misconstrue his answers.

Hillsong’s refusal to engage with the media and answer questions when pressed to may be the church’s prerogative, but it is also a deliberate strategy aimed to obfuscate the church’s position on serious issues—especially those where their opinions may attract further questions and concerns over the church’s conservative biblical interpretations over the ways people should live their lives.<sup>93</sup> Hillsong and its leaders have particularly been pressed on their stances towards gay people and marriage equality. The answers have been ambiguous, largely because of a recognition that their conservative stance risks alienating more liberal members of the population but also in acknowledgment of the fact that fundamentalist Christians and many other evangelicals do not see this as a matter for debate or interpretation. Houston explicitly admitted the difficulty of taking a firm stance on the topic in August 2015:

Hillsong Church welcomes ALL [original emphasis] people but does not affirm all lifestyles. Put clearly, we do not affirm a gay lifestyle and because of this we do not knowingly have actively gay people in positions of leadership, either paid or unpaid. I recognise this one statement alone is upsetting to people on both sides of this discussion, which points to the complexity of the issue for churches all over the world. I love and accept people on a personal level and if I lived next to a gay couple I would treat them with the same embrace I would any other neighbour because – surprise, surprise – not all my neighbours think like me. Everyone has the right to pursue happiness.<sup>94</sup>

Houston confirmed in the statement that gay parishioners were welcome to attend, worship, and participate as congregation members “with the assurance that you are personally included and accepted within our community”. But he was resolute that leadership roles were reserved for heterosexual people. He also acknowledged that the church needed to remain relevant in the

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<sup>91</sup> Brian Houston, Twitter post, 23 April 2015, 7:44 p.m. Available: <https://twitter.com/brianchouston/status/591432513668648960>. Accessed 22 August 2015.

<sup>92</sup> Brian Houston, Twitter post 23 April 2015, 8:17 p.m. Available: <https://twitter.com/brianchouston/status/591440836493115392>. Accessed 22 August 2015.

<sup>93</sup> Evangelical Protestants tend to have the most conservative attitudes towards homosexuality among Christian groups reflective of their theological beliefs. See Laura R. Olsen, Wendy Cadge, and James T. Harrison, ‘Religion and Public Opinion about Same-Sex Marriage’, *Social Science Quarterly* 87, no. 2 (2006), 342.

<sup>94</sup> Brian Houston, ‘Do I Love Gay People?’, *Hillsong Collected Blog*, 4 August 2015. Available: <http://hillsong.com/collected/blog/2015/08/do-i-love-gay-people/#.VdhZiPmqpBc>. Accessed 5 August 2015.

context of “gay marriage”, which was already legal in two states in America where Hillsong had churches.<sup>95</sup> Retaining cultural currency is important to evangelicals, but so too is adhering to their interpretation of scripture. The competing priorities put the church in an uncomfortable position. We have seen above that they construct an insider-outsider culture, but this is premised on making those inside feel welcome and valued. While Houston wants to remain relevant and uses positive language (he says he loves and accepts people on a personal level) his fundamental message remains the same: people identifying as gay will never receive equal treatment in his church. He is aware that his stance on this topic will alienate people from both sides and so he seeks to take the path of least offence leading to some, such as Walker above, to criticise him as offering a vapid “non-answer”.<sup>96</sup>

One problem with attempting to please both sides on the topic of equal rights within the church is that issues in morality politics are highly salient, yet people are happy to participate in debate with little information.<sup>97</sup> Everyone has an opinion, and everyone considers themselves an expert. Where previous generations of Christians maintained an often unvoiced, but always understood, rejection of homosexuality “today’s believers are engaging in an open debate and reconsideration of how sexuality merges with Christianity”, an exchange that is widely covered in the secular and religious press.<sup>98</sup> Of course, evangelical churches’ opinions on this and other sensitive topics are internally diverse, adding to Houston’s problem.<sup>99</sup> Houston and Hillsong are so uncomfortable with the issue because while they can claim their views have been misrepresented in attempt to deflect criticism, they also acknowledge that these views will cause some people individual pain. The Pentecostal tendency to spiritualize or individualise social problems represents a withdrawal from “worldly issues”.<sup>100</sup> However, this withdrawal becomes harder when a social issue becomes increasingly visible and when wider support for an oppressed group grows. Encasing a deeply conservative view towards a group in society in

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<sup>95</sup> Houston, ‘Do I Love Gay People?’.

<sup>96</sup> Walker, ‘A Church in Exile’.

<sup>97</sup> Donald P. Haider-Markel and Kenneth J. Meier, ‘The Politics of Gay and Lesbian Rights: Expanding the Scope of the Conflict’, *The Journal of Politics* 58, no. 2 (1996), 333.

<sup>98</sup> For an analysis of testimonies by gay Christians in evangelical frameworks and an overview of the challenges non-heterosexual Christians face in challenging heteronormative frameworks see Jim Y. Trammel, “‘Homosexuality is Bad for Me’: An Analysis of Homosexual Christian Testimonies in Christianity Today Magazine”, *Journal of Media and Religion* 14, no. 1 (2005), 1-14 (quote from page 1).

<sup>99</sup> R. Stephen Warner, ‘Evangelicals of the 1970s and 2010s: What’s the Same, What’s Different, and What’s Urgent’, in Brian Steensland and Philip Goff eds., *The New Evangelical Social Engagement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 283.

<sup>100</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 261.

words of love and acceptance does not change Houston's stance. As Walker points out, the church does not decide what is culturally relevant. This issue will surely prove an increasingly contentious topic for the church in the years to come.

## Pentecostal victimhood

Pentecostals construct discourses in which they are not only the victims, but in which they often approach the position of martyrs: they exist in situations where they are opposed and believe they are persecuted, and they see their choice to take action (admittedly not action that will lead to their deaths) against this persecution as necessary and noble.<sup>101</sup> In 1947, Philip Duncan, one of the founders of the Australian AOG, compared contemporary Pentecostals with martyrs and apostles who had led other Christian crusades, saying: "Reproach and ridicule, even for a righteous cause, is mighty hard to bear, but the vanguard of any and every great movement was ever called to face these—the fiercest of all enemies".<sup>102</sup> In a more recent setting, Jon Newton (Tabor College) wrote in 2008: "It may be time for us to develop a Pentecostal-charismatic martyrology for the twenty-first century" in light of the suffering and persecution some contemporary Pentecostals faced, even in Western countries.<sup>103</sup> Most Pentecostals and charismatics in Western countries today may not need to literally martyr themselves and die for their beliefs, but they certainly use the language of war and battle to excite and engage their supporters, often euphemistically as Duncan and Newton did above.

The language of martyrdom is not always metaphorical, and Pentecostals use stories of contemporary martyrs in other countries, where physical violence and even death can be the result of evangelising. In 2010, a Newfrontiers elder in Russia, Artur Suleymanov, was fatally shot when leaving his church office. Suleymanov had been pastoring Hosana Church in Dagestan, an Islamic area. The one-year anniversary of the death coincided with the 2011 Newfrontiers 'Together on a Mission' Conference and so, at the final session of the conference,

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<sup>101</sup> These represent two of Droge and Tabor's identifiers of martyrdom. See Arthur J. Droge and James D. Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992), 75.

<sup>102</sup> Phillip Duncan, 'Pentecostal Comparisons', *Australian Evangel and Glad Tidings Messenger*, February 1944, 7.

<sup>103</sup> Jon Newton, '02 Towards a Pentecostal Martyrology', *Pentecostal Charismatic Bible Colleges Journal*, 2008 edition, no. 1, np.

Terry Virgo encouraged all present to pray for peace in the area and presented Suleymanov and other church leaders working in “unreached areas” as undertaking brave and significant work. Virgo gave no sense that the church might be disrupting the peace or causing unrest in the area through proselytising, and he was certainly not suggesting that any of the worshippers present in Brighton were in danger of being gunned down for their beliefs. Nonetheless, Virgo’s telling of the story had an electrifying effect on the audience, many of whom became quite emotional.<sup>104</sup> His language of self-sacrifice, bravery, and heroism served to convince those gathered of the worth and importance of their cause. It united them in the face of opposition, even if most people present would never encounter the kind of violent opposition that had led to Suleymanov’s death.

Later at the Newfrontiers 2011 conference, Terry Virgo’s son Joel also used the language of a struggle or battle when speaking to the young adults at a “Mobilise Seminar” as a way to unite them against outsiders. Attendees needed to “learn to fight battles in prayer”, he asserted. “I used to preach everywhere before I was allowed to preach inside a church,” he told listeners, “on buses, in nightclub lines, in town squares”. Joel Virgo assured his audience that if they too participated in these “battles”, together they could “change history”.<sup>105</sup> The cry that they could “change history” was intended to encourage and unite listeners, so they were prepared engage with the outside world while maintaining their loyalty to his group and staying true to their faith. Tom Shaw, an elder of City Church in Canterbury, England, further set up this divide with the outside world saying that “even though your neighbours might be sinful and you may not particularly like them, you need to remember that God loves them, so put fear in your tool kit” and help “bring them” to God.<sup>106</sup> These neighbours may not only be sinful, they may resist evangelistic efforts or even reject the evangeliser themselves. Virgo thus devoted a chapter of his book *Start* to the topic of “persecution”. He said that while Christians should do “all they can” to avoid persecution, “if it does come, welcome it. God’s glory rests on you if you’re

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<sup>104</sup> Terry Virgo, ‘Main Session Seven’, speaking at Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference, Brighton Centre, Brighton, UK. 15 July 2011. Based on author’s observations.

<sup>105</sup> Joel Virgo, ‘Mobilise Seminar: Hudson Taylor’, speaking at Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference, Brighton Centre, Brighton UK. 13 July 2011. Based on author’s observations.

<sup>106</sup> Tom Shaw, ‘Mobilise Main Session: The Fear of the Lord’, speaking at Newfrontiers ‘Together on a Mission’ Conference, Brighton Centre, Brighton UK. 13 July 2011. Based on author’s observations.

insulted for Jesus' sake", and quoted 1 Peter 4:14 to reinforce his point.<sup>107</sup> Pentecostals describe the necessary struggle for converts as confrontational, yet also potentially empowering.

Terry Virgo, further reinforced this divide between his adherents and others by arguing that outsiders could never understand his group. Virgo said a "true believer can't be understood by others who have no understanding of their relationship with God".<sup>108</sup> Others in his congregation blame the lack of understanding on the part of outsiders on current Western culture. At another Mobilise Seminar, Abi Malortie argued, "our culture as a whole is not amenable to hearing about Jesus", because people do not want to think about the future and the consequences of their actions.<sup>109</sup> Again, the outside world is seemingly to blame for the divide between Pentecostals and others.

Pentecostals deliberately cultivate an image of themselves as misunderstood outsiders and in fact, many do not want to be understood. There is a belief that their faith makes their experiences and lives so fundamentally different from non-believers and other Christians that *of course* others do not "get" them. I saw evidence of this at the Newfrontiers "Demolishing Strongholds" Conference held in Grace City Church, Sydney, in November 2011. David Devenish, a British church elder, told an anecdote of a man he had met who was "fed up" with Devenish's efforts to help him through spiritual counselling. To the audience's cries of "Preach it!" Devenish went on to explain that this man tried to "do us [the group that Devenish was part of] in". This man attempted to hit members of the group, and every time he tried, his hand swung back, and he punched himself in the face because "the demonic influence was strong in him".<sup>110</sup> Alongside his telling of this comedic story, Devenish acted out events, relying heavily on slapstick humour. The audience laughed and clapped appreciatively, but also nodded their heads and took down notes.<sup>111</sup> The reality of the anecdote mattered less than the lesson. The message the Newfrontiers members appeared to take from this part of the conference was that someone who

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<sup>107</sup> Terry Virgo, *Start: An Interactive Study Guide to Help Christians Grow in their Faith* (St Louis: Newfrontiers USA, 2008), 124.

<sup>108</sup> Terry Virgo, 'Main Session Four', speaking at Newfrontiers 'Together on a Mission' Conference, Brighton Centre, Brighton, UK. 14 July 2011. Based on author's observations.

<sup>109</sup> Abi Malortie, 'Mobilise Seminar: To Transform the World', speaking at Newfrontiers 'Together on a Mission' Conference, Brighton Centre, Brighton, UK. 14 July 2011. Based on author's observations.

<sup>110</sup> David Devenish, speaking at 'Demolishing Strongholds' Conference, Newfrontiers Church. Held at Grace City Church, Collaroy, Sydney, 18 November, 2011. Author attended the conference (and the above is based on her observations) but recordings are available:

[http://www.gracecitychurch.net/Groups/1000085290/Grace\\_City\\_Church/Resources/Demolishing\\_Strongholds/Demolishing\\_Strongholds.aspx](http://www.gracecitychurch.net/Groups/1000085290/Grace_City_Church/Resources/Demolishing_Strongholds/Demolishing_Strongholds.aspx)

<sup>111</sup> Based on author's observations at 'Demolishing Strongholds Conference', 18 November, 2011.

cannot understand their religion and lashes out must be under “demonic influences”. Fortunately, Devenish and his compatriots’ faith protected them, and this man ultimately was the one who ended up getting hurt. The story, alongside Devenish’s dismissal of secular counselling services—he said, “I don’t believe in digging around in people’s pasts” and instead suggested people should use “discipling services” within churches—is illustrative of the fundamental difference that Pentecostals believe exists between their world and the world outside.<sup>112</sup> It also suggests that Pentecostals view violence and harm as acceptable, and perhaps inevitable, outcomes of this difference.

Churches convey their insider-outsider narrative and the need to engage in battle in a variety of formats, and the message is particularly stark when represented visually. Hillsong London, in 2013, published a “Bible and Bible Study Guide” under the title *Word*. While the majority of pages are simply a reproduction of the New Living Translation (NLT) of the Bible in an innovative format, the editors have sectioned out some verses of scripture to highlight to readers. One example is seen below:

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<sup>112</sup> David Devenish, speaking at ‘Demolishing Strongholds’ Conference, Newfrontiers Church. Held at Grace City Church, Collaroy, Sydney, 18 November, 2011. Author attended the conference (and the above is based on her observations) but recordings are available: [http://www.gracecitychurch.net/Groups/1000085290/Grace\\_City\\_Church/Resources/Demolishing\\_Strongholds/Demolishing\\_Strongholds.aspx](http://www.gracecitychurch.net/Groups/1000085290/Grace_City_Church/Resources/Demolishing_Strongholds/Demolishing_Strongholds.aspx)

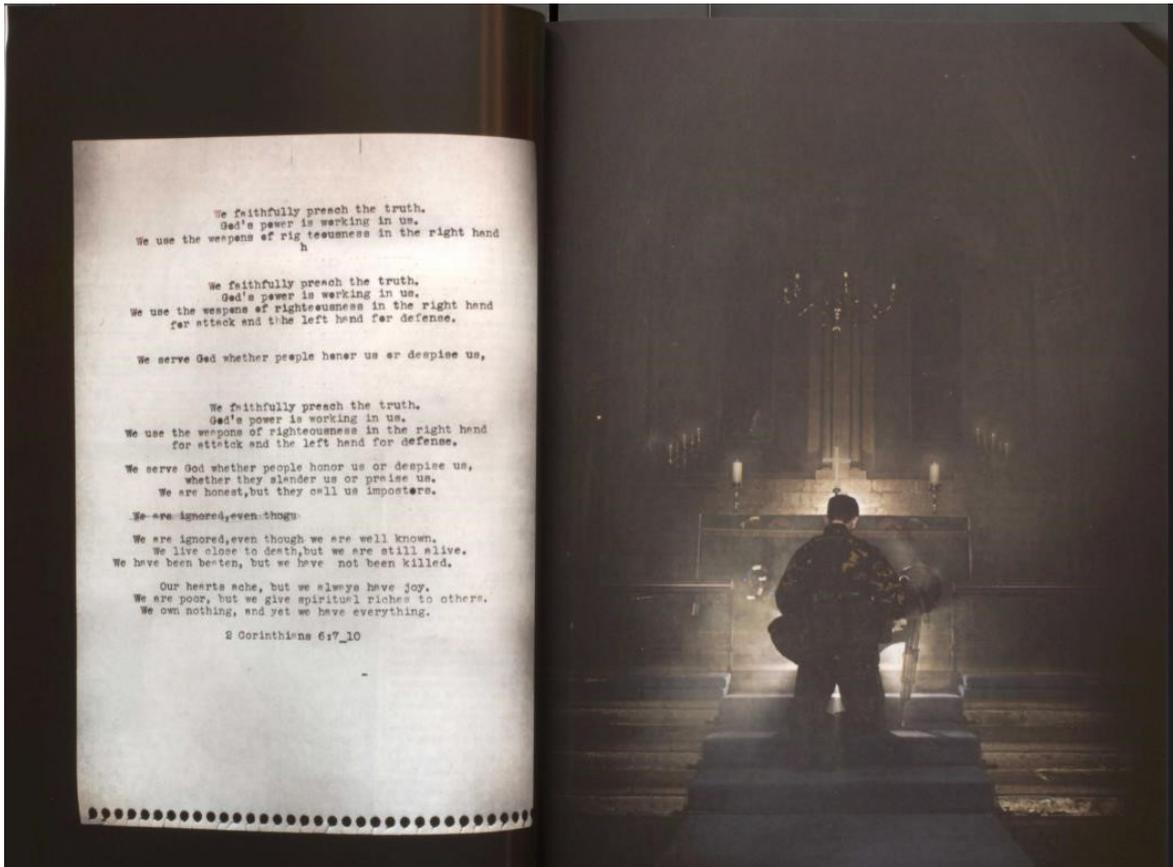


Figure 36: Hillsong Church London, *Word* (London: Hillsong Church London, 2013), np.

Two things are interesting about the image above. First, the way the verse is broken down and repeated creates a sense of drama and emphasises the importance of the text:

We faithfully preach the truth. God's power is working in us. We use the weapons of righteousness in the right hand for attack and the left for defense [sic]. We serve God whether people honor [sic] us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. We are honest, but they call us impostors. We are ignored, even though we are well known...<sup>113</sup>

By choosing to devote an entire page to 2 Corinthians 6:7-10 Hillsong London clearly defined the antagonism the church faced from non-believers, and possibly other churches, as an important part of its identity. The full page image opposite this text—of a soldier in camouflage, his helmet resting on his gun as he kneels before a dimly lit altar, under a cross and bracketed by candles—mixes religious and martial symbols. Second, it emphasises the antagonism Hillsong London feels towards the outside world and sets this up as a battle. The use of the

<sup>113</sup> Hillsong Church London, *Word* (London: Hillsong Church London, 2013), np.

“Christian soldier” metaphor is fascinating because of its lack of subtlety. It indicates that Hillsong, for all the ways it tries to make itself palatable to the public, interprets itself in a combative relationship with the outside world. More importantly, it indicates that the church feels strength is and appropriate response, and that, unsurprisingly, they have not only might, but also right on their side.

This modernised edition of the Bible further encourages readers to think in terms of a violent conflict in a two-page spread featuring a young boy wearing camouflage, holding a handgun and rosary beads (see below):



Figure 37: Hillsong Church London, Word (London: Hillsong Church London, 2013), np.

That the boy is white means that this does not fit the obvious or stereotypical image of child soldiers in African or Middle Eastern settings. The image demonstrates clear potential for violence, yet the youth of the child and his disconsolate expression directs readers to empathise with him. Using this type of image seems extreme: what message are readers to take, other than the acknowledgment that there is the potential for violence in spiritual warfare? Pentecostals and charismatics popularised the language of spiritual warfare, traditionally used to describe

Christian's battles with evil spirits, in evangelical discourse.<sup>114</sup> A key problem with this language is that apart from evoking and sometimes resulting in violence, it externalizes problems and makes the enemy absolute. Further, it removes responsibility from either individuals or structures for creating social problems in lieu of a mentality that simply specifies that insiders represent "good" and outsiders represent "bad" or even evil forces.<sup>115</sup>

## Conclusion

There is a fundamental lack of understanding between Pentecostals and other Christian and secular groups, something that Pentecostal churches cultivate deliberately by setting themselves apart from other churches and secular society. In a c.1970 edited collection titled *Revival*, published by the Assemblies of God Evangelistic Society in Britain, one contributor argued that "you cannot explain revival, there is too much of God in it". David Owen continued: "There are some attempted book-explanations, I think, but when they have said it all, revival still remains one of Heaven's delightful mysteries".<sup>116</sup> Owen's words indicate how deeply ingrained in Pentecostal rhetoric is the concept of insiders versus outsiders. The deliberate cultivation of a sense of shared victimhood supports Pentecostals' perceived outsider status and is used by Pentecostals and charismatics to bind members of their group to each other and to the church by constantly telling congregants that they are in the right. The church sends the message that it is engaged in spiritual battles and needs help, a message that seems to be appealing.

Owen's dismissal of attempted "book-explanations" of spiritual movements represents another key theme in contemporary Pentecostalism: it is a phenomenon that insiders believe is commonly misconstrued. Having set up a dichotomy between who is in and who is out of the group, Pentecostal churches are then careful to make it clear *they* are outside the mainstream; they represent a besieged minority and an easy target for those who do not share or understand their views. In many ways, this defensive position is used to avoid entanglement with

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<sup>114</sup> Michael Harper's book, *Spiritual Warfare*, in 1970 did much to mainstream the use of this term. In the book he drew comparisons between the early New Testament church saying that the "principles of spiritual warfare remain the same, even though Satan dresses himself up in new disguises". Michael Harper, *Spiritual Warfare* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970), 5.

<sup>115</sup> E. Janet Warren, "'Spiritual Warfare': A Dead Metaphor?", *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 21, no 2 (2012), 291.

<sup>116</sup> David B. Owen, 'What is Revival?', in George Newsholme ed., *Revival—A Series of Articles by Well Known Writers* (South Park Hill: Assemblies of God Evangelistic Society, 1970), 5.

controversial issues. By turning inward and accusing those outside of either being unable to comprehend or deliberately choosing to misunderstand, church positions on complicated topics, churches avoid having to engage in substantive debate in many areas. These “otherworldly” Pentecostals are far more likely to engage with the public arena when it comes to “warfare against secularism”. They comment on other topics, perhaps in recognition that the growing size of their movement comes with increased social responsibility, but they are far less likely to call for social or political action on secular issues because they actively deny equality to large groups within their churches, notably women and people whose sexual orientation falls outside hetero norms.

Pentecostals do not aim to engage people on their own terms. The Pentecostal solution to navigating their simultaneous needs to have broad appeal (which must accept diversity) and to present a strong Christian identity (which seeks unity and follows scripture to determine what this one identity will be) is to return again and again to the church as a refuge. Yet an acceptance of diversity means understanding that two things can be equally “good” or “moral”. The essence of this type of evangelicalism is to challenge this logic, both strategically and epistemologically. Most scholars in our post-modern world accept that there can be no such thing as a single truth: truth is relative and perspectival, not in the sense that facts do not exist but in the sense that truthfulness at one time or place is not necessarily the truth for those with varying histories, interests, or issues. Evangelicals are fundamentally anti-modern in their search for an overarching truth. A key challenge for Pentecostal churches in years to come will surely be that those with different truths now increasingly answer back.

## Conclusion

“Today’s intellectuals rebel against the Scriptures. ‘It’s not sensible to believe and obey the Bible,’ they say. Humanly speaking they are right. But they are judging its contents on the basis of logic. While they are working everything out rationally, God is doing His thing in a completely different way”.

Terry Virgo, *God’s Amazing Grace*, 1993.<sup>1</sup>

Sarah moved from New Zealand to Sydney to attend university, and when she finished her degree, she decided to “do Europe”.<sup>2</sup> She had been living and working in London for three years when I met her on a Sunday morning in August 2011. When she arrived in the United Kingdom, Sarah was lonely. It was hard making local connections while she worked temporary office jobs, so she took every opportunity to go out. Sarah started drinking; regularly, and a lot. One Sunday morning she found herself in a bathroom cubicle in a nightclub, her head spinning and her stomach heaving, and she told me that she whispered, “This isn’t right”. And then she looked up. On the back of the cubicle door was a poster inviting visitors to attend a service at one of Hillsong’s London churches. She had not been to church since she was young but thought, “Why not”? She attended her first Hillsong service that Sunday and has been nearly every week since. She made friends through her church, began participating in volunteer work in the church’s community, and found a permanent job. Renewing her British working visa, Sarah prepared to live in the UK permanently, telling me, “I’m so blessed”.

Sarah’s journey from New Zealand to Sydney to London echoes the path of Hillsong and C3 Churches. In fact, all the churches I studied are highly mobile and mirror the conversion narratives that they praise in individuals, where individuals can overcome personal circumstances and emerge triumphant, if only they trusted that this was God’s plan.<sup>3</sup> Sarah’s open and frank response to my simple question (“When did you start coming to Hillsong?”) reflected a pattern in other conversion narratives I heard, which all ended in affirming people’s faith and explaining their place in the world: the telling of these stories had become a ritual.

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<sup>1</sup> Terry Virgo, *God’s Amazing Grace* (Lake Mary: Strang Communications Company, 1993), 52.

<sup>2</sup> Name has been changed. The following information is based on the author’s conversation with Sarah on 7 August 2011 at a Sunday service in Hillsong Church London, Dominion Theatre, London, UK.

<sup>3</sup> Victory forms an important motif in Pentecostal discourse. See Bowler, *Blessed*, 178-225.

Over the four years I have attended Pentecostal and charismatic churches to conduct this study, it became evident to me that building a personal conversion narrative is critical to the conversion experience. Sharing those stories is almost a compulsion, or talisman. The words spill out, revealing how important these stories, both oral and written, are to Pentecostals. For individuals, they define their identity while also binding them to a group as members of a community with a shared experience.

For scholars, conversion narratives allow us to view those we write about as agents, not just subjects.<sup>4</sup> Despite this, few have sought to unpack the worldview of Pentecostals in a way that connects their history and theology to their understanding of and interactions with the secular world. Situating myself within Pentecostal culture allowed me to redress this balance; to listen to peoples' stories in order to understand how they think about themselves, their church, and the world—a critical task when studying a religion so heavily focused on experience and on the power of an individual's mind and thoughts—while also reflecting on how and why churches and their members shape particular kinds of stories with real-world effects.

Scholars often interpret the growth of Pentecostalism through its most obvious characteristic appeal: from its early days, the movement was open to all and included minority and disenfranchised groups in reconciliatory ways. Its message was upbeat and highly active missionaries, both men and women, quickly planted churches around the world. Waves of “revival” followed, which galvanized many traditional Christian churches. The movement was flexible, adaptable to local contexts. In each context, it gave individuals hope that they could transform their lives through the marriage of hard work and faith.<sup>5</sup>

These characteristics were indeed important in the growth of the movement, though they are unsatisfactory as an explanation of its growth. The history of Australian Pentecostalism is not the straightforward story of triumph and development told by Pentecostal leaders, marred (in their view) only by the odd controversy. Listing the movement's appealing qualities does not explain, for example, why so many Australians joined but did not stay in those churches for

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<sup>4</sup> Kate Bowler, 'Daily Grind: The Spiritual Workaday of the American Prosperity Gospel', *Journal of Cultural Economy*, advance online publication (2015), 2, 6.

<sup>5</sup> For examples of accounts that adopt some or all of the elements of this framework see Hollenweger, 'The Black Roots of Pentecostalism', 36; Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith*, 11-34; Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 289-94.

long, either leaving for another church or drifting out of church life altogether.<sup>6</sup> There seems to be a critical missing piece of the puzzle of Pentecostal churches' appeal that can only be attained by analysing this movement from an explicitly "outsider" perspective.

This external perspective helps me to identify some significant internal contradictions in the Pentecostal movement. There is no disputing the fact that Pentecostal churches have been remarkably successful in Australia, judged by membership figures, financial wealth, number of churches, cultural and political reach, number of employees and parachurch organisations, revenue, media attention, or international expansion. But this needs to be understood in terms that go beyond revival, renewal, and miracles, framing Pentecostalism instead as a broad social movement that appeared in Australia in a particular historical moment.

Contemporary Australian Pentecostalism emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s and is best understood through four key tensions, or paradoxes. First, there is a focus on the agency and importance of individuals that conflicts with the Pentecostal tendency to subjugate the needs of these individuals to the group and make their religious identity the most important part of their lives. Second, Pentecostals seek to prove themselves culturally and socially relevant to a world that they, by definition, critique. Third, Pentecostal discourse is dominated by its promise to liberate individuals from a variety of demons, but it often does this by attempting to restrict choice or individual autonomy, dismissing the idea that humans are absolutely equal even as church leaders discuss equality in the abstract. Finally, Pentecostals, like other communities, actively define who is inside and outside their group and believe that outsiders wilfully misunderstand them. But for Pentecostals, their evangelistic efforts are based on the assumption that those outside their community are not living their lives in the right way. This contributes to a self-reinforcing logic: since non-Pentecostals do not share their views, they do not and cannot understand Pentecostalism. Criticism will only ever be evidence of the critic's need for redemption.

Beginning with the first paradox, Pentecostal churches are ultimately focused on the redemption of individuals, or more correctly their souls, but to achieve this redemption they must bring

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<sup>6</sup> Eden Alfred Knight's forthcoming thesis (University of Queensland, 2015) 'Hillsong Spirituality: The Divine Experience in a Modern Church' (working title) will be an important contribution to research on Australian Pentecostalism. Knight is also participant observer but is a member of the church. He has conducted a qualitative study of members' spiritual experiences, which, while focused on spiritual, may offer suggestions as to why so many people leave Hillsong, for other churches, or entirely.

people inside a group. The key Pentecostal message is this: spiritual faith will lead to material rewards. This attitude is best seen in Australian expressions of the prosperity gospel, which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s amongst the enormous political and economic changes that followed the collapse of the post-war global economic consensus, marking the gradual emergence of neoliberalism. Pentecostal embrace of neoliberalism buttressed its prosperity message. In turn, it also contributed to church prosperity by asking members to direct their consumption, their philanthropy, and attribute their success to the church. The church is similarly assessed by neoliberal values: attracting members (and money) proves its appeal and relevance. Likewise, individuals are empowered by choice, and their choices (like those of the idealised market) reflect their needs and lead to the best outcomes for society.

Pentecostal enthusiasm for free market enterprise and individual action within institutions that were transnational, multiracial, and cross-class, however, has clearly not led to equality. For all that Pentecostals share a common bond, individuals within these churches still stand in very unequal relationships to each other.<sup>7</sup> Individual aspiration, self-improvement, and personal fulfilment is the primary way to measure one's success in the group – and thereafter, the success of the community as a whole.<sup>8</sup> Former Liberal MP, Ross Cameron, expressed this view succinctly in 2011:

Last week, four Australian Hillsong campuses and 12 extension services tipped \$6.8 million into the plate. That kind of coin does not change hands unless someone is confident value is being created...There is a base level of morality to capitalism that says if you don't deliver a product, you go broke[, w]hich is the story of most Australian Christian denominations. Whatever they are offering, the punters aren't buying.<sup>9</sup>

And yet, the community pulls and coheres these neoliberal desires. One's insider status requires members to put the needs of the church first. This is fundamentally different from the rational liberalism to which Cameron refers. While Pentecostals encourage individualism and choice, churches also require people to make choices that serve the group. Whether by consuming church music, branding oneself with clothing produced by the church, or paying for evening classes in a church's college, individuals are constantly being directed to demonstrate the

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<sup>7</sup> Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 268.

<sup>8</sup> Belk, 'Pimps for Paradise', 337-40.

<sup>9</sup> Cameron, 'The Hills are Alive', 11.

rightness of their individualised choice by putting the needs of the group first. The willingness of members to tithe—that is, to voluntarily tax themselves—is a good example of this.

There is therefore a constant tension between supporting individuals and binding them to a community. Churches insist upon individualistic strategies for success, even as they also insist upon prioritising the needs of a community. This community becomes an end in itself. It deflects its focus back to individual needs rather than, for example, social, environmental, and economic issues that rest on complex structures. It achieves this through connect groups, self-development courses, and whole church conferences with guest speakers who tell individuals how to live their lives. Emerging from the 1960s alongside their secular counterparts, these extended self-help forums help members help themselves, while also obligating them to do so in certain ways if they are also to feel connected to and part of a bigger community.

Pentecostals' neoliberalism reveals a second paradox: how can churches prove their relevance to a culture they criticise and reject as inferior? On one hand, churches link their effectiveness to an immediate cultural relevancy. Their pull on members' identities is achieved by situating themselves in the modern world, yet they ultimately reject this world. They seek to speak in local idioms and use modern tools, particularly technology, music, and therapeutic practices, to make themselves seem modern and thus relevant. And yet, much of the Pentecostal message is fundamentally anti-modern. Brian Houston, reflecting on his visit some of Europe's famous cathedrals said that "these churches, as beautiful as they are, have become tourist attractions admired more for their architecture than for the presence of God and his people. This is contrary to the Father's plan for his church. He has called the church to be a powerful influence in our world". Tourists' cameras record the vaulted ceilings, stained glass windows, and intricate decorations of the world's famous Christian churches and this, to Houston, was a symbol of the failure of these churches. He explained that "churchgoers today do not want form; they want substance and authenticity. They want to express themselves in worship...believers want to *be* the church, not just *go* to church [original emphasis]".<sup>10</sup> In this way, Pentecostals are much like their earlier missionary forebears: they translate their message into local contexts.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Brian Houston, *For this I was Born: Aligning your Vision to God's Cause* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 18-19.

<sup>11</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 15.

However, as evangelicals, Pentecostals also posit that the values and systems of local contexts are flawed; theirs is the “true” explanation of how to live and the road to happiness. As Terry Virgo explained: “The world searches high and low for life – security, love, joy, peace, purpose and hope. All these things are yours in Christ”.<sup>12</sup> Pentecostalism at first seems similar to what sociologist Christian Smith calls “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism”. This increasingly common *de facto* religion among America’s youth shares a belief in a creator God, who orders the world and wants people to be good and moral, but who is not particularly involved in their lives unless there is a problem. Being good, Smith’s research found, involves “being nice, respectful, responsible, at work on self-improvement, taking care of one’s health, and doing one’s best to be successful”.<sup>13</sup> While there are obvious echoes with Pentecostalism, the difference is that Pentecostals fundamentally reject other approaches (approaches that dominate modern pluralistic societies such as Australia) to being “good”. The church, or rather its belief systems, thus becomes a refuge—provided by a higher authority who cannot be challenged—from engaging in self-doubt or critical analysis that would challenge a persons’ strongly held view of the world.

This leads to a third paradox that defines modern Pentecostalism. Despite its ethic of individual choice, freedom means also being free from self-doubt. Liberation from this and other “demons” requires individuals to submit to the authority of their church. Barbara Ehrenreich argues: “Belief is intellectual surrender; ‘faith’ a state of willed self-delusion”. This is the thinking Pentecostals also use.<sup>14</sup> In submitting to the church and to God, believers will find happiness: “God has already worked out all the details of what your obedience will accomplish—and it is good. We need not fear what our obedience will cause to happen in our life. We should only fear what our *dis*-obedience will cause us to miss” [original emphasis].<sup>15</sup>

Such surrender occurs within a priesthood of all believers (which sees everyone as having the potential to personally experience the Spirit), which is often seen by academics as freeing, a “Pentecostal theology of liberation”.<sup>16</sup> Scholars sometimes imagine this has defied “barriers of

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<sup>12</sup> Virgo, *Start*, 12.

<sup>13</sup> Christian Smith, ‘On “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” as US Teenagers’ Actual, Tacit, *De Facto* Religious Faith’, in Sylvia Collins-Mayo and Pink Dandelion eds., *Religion and Youth* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 41-46.

<sup>14</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich, *Living with a Wild God: A Non-Believer’s Search For the Truth About Everything* (London: Granta Books, 2014), 232.

<sup>15</sup> TerKeurst, *What Happens when Women say Yes to God*, 45.

<sup>16</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 261.

race, gender and class, and challenged the exclusive preserves of ordained male, foreign clergy”.<sup>17</sup> But in fact the priesthood of believers created a *narrative* of inclusion, but kept those barriers firmly in place nevertheless. Women were told they could be liberated and embrace their “true” womanhood if only they would recognise the ultimate authority of both their husband and their church. Women were further told what it *meant* to be a woman, just as men are told what it means to be a man: both sexes are expected to behave in particular ways and have different rights and responsibilities. Those whose relationships fall outside the heterosexual norm were told that they are welcome in the church, but they could never expect to participate in leadership structures or engage in a same-sex relationships that would be recognized as legitimate or moral by fellow church members. Migrant and ethnic groups were given a new community and told that this was what they should adhere to now. This seems contrary to the idea of liberty and equality that the neoliberal ethic of individual choice ought to support in secular contexts. Pentecostal beliefs that individuals have *different* rights and responsibilities create a language of freedom that nevertheless reinforce old barriers.

Like other churches, however, Pentecostals are nevertheless concerned with some types of global inequality. The evangelist and activist Christine Caine wrote a blog post for Hillsong Church telling readers: “As Christians we cannot sit back and ignore the injustices that are happening all around us. We must rise up and stand against injustice as the prophet Isaiah repeatedly exhorts us to do”.<sup>18</sup> Hillsong, for example, has—and partners with—a variety of ministry initiatives focused on these inequalities, such as the A21 Campaign (concentrated on combatting human trafficking) and the Hillsong Africa Foundation (which, among other things, helps fund women’s shelters, disaster relief, and equipment for people with disabilities).<sup>19</sup> And so, Pentecostals often frame inequalities in global terms. Inequality is therefore able to be sold to Pentecostal parishioners as something that happens overseas and not within Australian churches, a position supported by their theology of liberation.<sup>20</sup> The theology of liberation thus not only constrains some individuals, it refuses to acknowledge that restrictions placed on their

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<sup>17</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 250.

<sup>18</sup> Christine Caine, ‘Silence is Deafening’, *Hillsong Collected Blog*, 10 November 2010. Available: <http://hillsong.com/collected/blog/2010/11/silence-is-deafening/#.VdwU2vmqpBc>. Accessed 23 October 2014.

<sup>19</sup> For information on these and Hillsong’s other charitable programs see: Hillsong Media, ‘Fact Sheet’, *Hillsong Church Australia Website*. Available: <http://hillsong.com/fact-sheet/>. Accessed 12 October 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*, 271.

lives are important. Faith will free individuals from secular demons, but churches require individuals to behave in particular ways to demonstrate that faith.

Behaviour deployed to define who is inside and outside the group is thus used to mobilise supporters, and this brings us to the final paradox of Australian Pentecostalism. Pentecostals do not want to be understood. They argue that those outside the group can never understand them—because they do not share Pentecostal beliefs—but then refuse to engage with them. These Christians perceive their movement to be divine in origins and so are certain of their moral authority, refusing the notion that secular logic could be used to access such divine knowledge. Phil Pringle uses 2 Corinthians 3:14 to argue that those who do not believe are “veiled” and their minds “blinded”. He says: “Jesus told us that unless we are born again we cannot ‘see’ the Kingdom of God”.<sup>21</sup> Yet, as we saw in Chapter Six, Pentecostals often blame outsiders for *wilfully* misunderstanding the group, a group many Pentecostals posit could never be understood by those outside the faith.

Their claim presents unique difficulties to an external researcher. Institutional records are virtually non-existent and those that do exist seldom reflect the views of ordinary church members. This is partly due to the decentralised and informal nature of many Pentecostal groups at their outset: they met in private homes and rented spaces rather than in church buildings, and seldom bothered to keep records.<sup>22</sup> Church leaders have been far more likely to record their experiences than congregants, often in the form of personal tracts or autobiographies, but oral history interviews would have been an ideal way to broaden my source base. As noted earlier, this avenue was closed to me as a result of difficulties in gaining appropriate permissions and access as an “outsider”. I hope in future to conduct a more comprehensive ethnographic study of Australian Pentecostal churches, both in their Australian and international iterations, which would broaden the scope of this study.

Despite being an outsider however, I became not only aware of the paradoxes that define the movement, but could also see its appeal. Pentecostalism offers security, comfort and a positive outlook, leadership, shared experiences, explanations that help people navigate their place in the world, and a reason to keep striving: those with faith, after all, are entitled to more. While

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<sup>21</sup> Phil Pringle, ‘Unveiled’, *Phil Pringle Blog*. 10 July 2013. Available: [http://philpringle.com/blog/unveiled#.Vd0h9\\_mqpBc](http://philpringle.com/blog/unveiled#.Vd0h9_mqpBc). Accessed 26 July 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Chant, ‘The Spirit of Pentecost’, 59.

the allure of good health, wealth and clear moral guidelines are undoubtedly important, members evidently mostly value the community, inclusiveness, and belonging that these churches engender. Optimism is crucial as well: optimism about the future, one's own worth, and that of other people.<sup>23</sup> In the Pentecostal message, this optimism centers around individuals feeling loved: "The moment you become aware that you have a friend, a 'comforter' as the Bible puts it, you can't help but be moved by His love and compassion".<sup>24</sup> Similarly Ashley Evans said: "I want you to know something: You are valuable to God. You may not think you are, but God loves you. He created you with you in mind. He wants to give you so much more than you already are and have".<sup>25</sup>

The Pentecostal "imperative to perform happiness" and always feel valued and positive prevents those who are sick, poor, or unhappy from engaging in this aspect of Pentecostal worship and it does not help them explain their circumstances.<sup>26</sup> Phil Pringle applies the logics of the prosperity gospel to suffering too:

Jesus tells us to bear our trials quietly, privately. We don't need go around making a great noise about how much we have suffered for the Lord and how painful our life is. Let's clean our face, look bright, dress our best and hide our suffering for Christ. The temptation is enormous to tell everyone how terrible our situation is and how heavy the pressure is, but we should resist it. I fear that like giving, we destroy the power of the seed of suffering when we use it to gain admiration or sympathy. The seed of suffering is destined to grow a great tree of blessing. We need that seed to stay underground, to sprout and grow. Don't dig it up to show it off to everybody.<sup>27</sup>

By arguing that "God enables us to enjoy public success born of privately successful living", Pringle denies the reality of many structural causes of suffering. It also requires members to avoid the "demon" of self-doubt that might result from a more critical evaluation of capitalism's ills, reinforcing (again) the movement's link to neoliberal values.

Pentecostalism thus relies on an abdication of personal responsibility for anything but one's own success, absolving individuals of the need to look for explanations for injustice. Writing about his mother's death, Russell Evans said he could have chosen to feel angry or confused,

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<sup>23</sup> Bowler, *Blessed*, 232.

<sup>24</sup> Hillsong Team, 'You Have a Friend', *Hillsong Collected Blog*. 12 October 2012. Available: <http://hillsong.com/collected/blog/2012/10/you-have-a-friend/#.VdwWtfmqpBc>. Accessed 26 February 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Evans, *No More Fear*, 160.

<sup>26</sup> Bowler, *Blessed*, 232.

<sup>27</sup> Phil Pringle, 'Wisdom 4 Life', *Phil Pringle Blog*. 15 January 2014. Available: <http://philpringle.com/blog/wisdom-4-life#.Vd0iDPmqpBc>. Accessed 23 January 2015.

but instead responded: “God, you’re good. I press into you. I don’t understand everything, but that’s not my job. My job is to believe, it’s not to make excuses for why certain things happen or don’t happen”.<sup>28</sup>

This then, has been a story of Pentecostalism in Australia focused not only on explaining how it has become so successful but on *understanding* it. This was necessary to identify the place of Pentecostalism understood alongside wider social and economic changes. Such shifts since the 1970s created an environment that made Australians particularly receptive to the doctrine, style of worship, and social interactions offered by these churches. These in turn also assured its membership’s ongoing support of Australian neoliberal political and economic culture in the 1980s and beyond.

Australian Pentecostalism is a very Western expression of Christianity, and it emerged with obvious links to social, economic and cultural patterns in Australian secular life. But is this a particularly Australian story? Anderson argues: “What is not often appreciated is the extent to which Pentecostalism takes on distinctive forms in different contexts. One of the main reasons for the growth of Pentecostalism has been its ability to adapt itself to different cultures and societies and give contextualized expressions to Christianity”.<sup>29</sup> I am not convinced that this has been the case in Australia. The Pentecostal and charismatic movement here repackaged ideas found elsewhere for an Australian audience. It made some small amendments, but these are a reflection of the adaptability of the movement, rather than anything particularly “Australian” about its expression. The blandness of Australian Pentecostalism, and the fact that it lacks a distinctly national flavour, is due to its diverse historical influences (mostly from the UK and US). These in turn allowed Australian churches to export themselves overseas, also without making significant changes to their message or form.

“Home” conjures an image of retreat from the outside world, its pressures and demands; it is a place of comfort and safety. Home is also a place of origin; somewhere not just to return to, but a point from which an individual goes out into the world. Home is a powerful idea, one that churches harness in their messages. To call a Pentecostal church home is to see that church as the grounding point of an individual’s life: there is no place like it. It provides not only a moral compass, but a set of moral imperatives for individuals, telling them how to be successful

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<sup>28</sup> Evans, *The Honor Key*, 104.

<sup>29</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 250.

and how to measure that success. It tells them how to understand and enact their gender and what this means for family life. The church tells them that their home is modern and filled with people who will love and support each other in a way no other community could, but that this home is under attack and must be protected at all costs. In short, a Pentecostal home shapes every aspect of individuals' lives, telling them how to understand the outside world, how to engage with it, and when to retreat from it. A happy, hopeful place, though for some it is also demanding and restrictive. But the idea of home articulated by these churches is just that—an idea; it relies on members *making* the church their home, and while many Australians come to visit, the paradoxes embodied in Pentecostalism means they do not necessarily stay.

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## Appendix A: Definitions

The key terms this thesis is engaged with—Pentecostal, charismatic, evangelical, renewal, and Spirit—are problematic. There are no clear or simple definitions for these terms and academics have engaged in extensive debate as to their meaning. Similarly, the media and general public's use of the labels “evangelical”, “charismatic”, and “Pentecostal” is not consistent and is often rather haphazard. Further, not even those within these or other churches hold a consistent or universal definition of their churches. Definition debates are thus perhaps the first difficulty a scholar of the Pentecostal and charismatic movement encounters. Allan Anderson argues,

“because of the great diversity within Pentecostal and charismatic movements, it is very difficult to find some common unifying features of distinctiveness by which they might be defined, and this is certainly the case”.<sup>1</sup> Andre Droogers goes further and suggests that defining any religious phenomenon is “necessary, explorative and useful” but is also “superfluous, impossible and ethnocentric.”<sup>2</sup> There is truth in these claims; the Pentecostal and charismatic movement is so diverse that finding clear edges which define groups within the movement is difficult. Yet, there are enough commonalities between groups to make these labels worthwhile.

My aim is not to dwell on theological differences between evangelicals, Pentecostals and charismatics, but to look at them as a broader social movement and to understand their origins and influence. My question is a historical one: as Cornelis van der Laan argues, consideration of the origins (and current form I would add) of this movement “should receive a historical answer”, not a theological one, because “secular historiography simply does not have the appropriate tools to include God”.<sup>3</sup> I would suggest that secular historians do not lack the tools to include God, but rather assume that any phenomenon produced by humankind is (ideally at least) amenable to scrutiny, analysis and explanation. Where an evangelical student might assume that the rise of evangelicalism does not need explanation because the phenomenon was obviously produced and driven by supernatural causes; as a secular student, my assumption is

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Andre Droogers, ‘Defining Religion: A Social Science Approach’, in Peter B. Clarke ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 263.

<sup>3</sup> Cornelis van der Laan, ‘Historical Approaches’, in Allan Anderson et al. eds., *Studying Global Pentecostalism, Theories and Methods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 208.

that the origins of this movement are human and so demand historical explanation. What follows is therefore an explanation of some of the key religious terms used in this thesis focused on how religion is experienced and practiced, and not just on doctrinal differences, reflecting my understanding of the Pentecostal and charismatic movement as a social one.

### *Evangelicalism*

Understanding evangelicalism as a phenomenon is important for this study because of the nineteenth-century British and American evangelical heritage of Pentecostalism.

The term

“evangelicalism” can be understood in several different ways. One understanding is based on a historical sense of “evangelical” as a “fairly discrete network of Protestant Christian movements that arose during the eighteenth century in Great Britain and its colonies”.<sup>4</sup> David Bebbington articulated a further understanding in his pivotal 1989 study: *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*. He defined evangelicalism as having four key characteristics: first, Biblicism, or a literal interpretation of the Bible alongside a belief that it provides the final source of religious authority; second, conversionism, or a stress on the importance of a “new birth” experience both for oneself and others (who require active conversion); third, activism, characterized by a strongly individual and energetic approach to religious responsibility and the belief that the gospel needs to be expressed in action; finally, crucicentrism, or a focus on the importance of the crucifixion in atoning for human sin and enabling salvation.<sup>5</sup>

### *Pentecostalism*

Neither within churches or among academics is there an agreed social or theological definition on the term Pentecostalism, or accord over who should be identified as a Pentecostal. Scholar of Pentecostalism, Walter Hollenweger, sees Pentecostalism not as “the radical wing of Protestantism, but a kind of popular [C]atholicism minus the juridical framework of the Vatican which Pentecostals replace with their own rules and regulations”.<sup>5</sup> While this definition may seem flippant, he points to the strength of Pentecostalism today in traditionally Catholic

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<sup>4</sup> Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk, ‘Introduction’, in Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington and George A. Rawlyk eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 6. <sup>5</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 3-26.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Hollenweger, ‘An Introduction to Pentecostalism’, *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 25, no. 2 (2004), 128.

countries in South America, and the fact that the Vatican was the first traditional church authority to engage with modern Pentecostalism.<sup>6</sup>

Academics from various disciplines have tried to explain Pentecostalism using differing approaches. Phillip Hughes of the Australian Christian Research Association takes a theological approach, suggesting that: “modern Pentecostals see themselves as restoring the character of the New Testament church, which they believe was lost in the concern with dogma and order”.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, historian Edith Blumhofer argues that while Pentecostalism is a term “in constant flux”, what unites different Pentecostals is not a formal theology but a belief that the “person of the Holy Spirit, longs to overwhelm each of us in a crisis experience that uplifts, enlightens, empowers and transforms”.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, historian Robert Mapes Anderson, best known for *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (1992) describes Pentecostalism as “concerned primarily with the *experience* of the Holy Spirit and the *practice* of spiritual gifts”.<sup>8</sup> The commonality that emerges from these definitions is that Pentecostals are marked out from the broader evangelical movement by the overwhelming focus on experience and Spirit.

### ***Holy Spirit, Baptism in and Gifts of***

Since the focus on experiences with the Holy Spirit (or just Spirit) are what marks out Pentecostals, it is worth examining what these experiences, usually described as Gifts of the Spirit or Baptism in the Spirit, encompass. It was representatives of the early Christian Church in the first century being “filled” with the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues that marks the feast of *Pentecost* as the key New Testament event from which the Pentecostal movement derives its name. Modern Pentecostals identify with this particular moment, as recorded in Acts 2:1-4, as one that defines their religious practice. As anthropologist Simon Coleman argues, they traverse or even bypass history “to embody the beliefs and practices of an original, authentic Christianity”.<sup>9</sup> Acts 2 begins with a major theophanic event; the coming of the Holy Spirit and subsequent speaking in other tongues. This is followed by Peter’s address in Acts 2:14-23 (NIV), to the crowd

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<sup>6</sup> Sandidge and Karkkainen, in Walter Hollenweger, ‘An Introduction to Pentecostalism’, 128. <sup>8</sup> Hughes, *The Pentecostals in Australia*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith*, 17.

<sup>8</sup> Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Coleman, *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity*, 21.

of onlookers who assumed the speakers had imbued too much wine. The biblical passage dealing with this event explains:

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

‘In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will  
prophesy, your young men will see  
visions, your old men will dream  
dreams.

Even on my servants, both men and  
women, I will pour out my Spirit in those  
days, and they will prophesy.

I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the  
earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun  
will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the  
coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And  
everyone who calls  
on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

“Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him...

This oft-quoted section of Acts, which is a repetition of the Old Testament’s Joel 2:28-9, is central to the Pentecostal understanding of the importance of Gifts of the Spirit. It is also central to the tension between them and other Christian denominations; with the former asserting that a “restoration” of the true church is signaled by Gifts of the Spirit and the latter seeing the event described in Acts as singular and not to be repeated. Sociologist Margaret Poloma argues that paranormal experiences of the Spirit—which go beyond glossiola, or speaking in tongues, to prophecy, vision, miracles and other “gifts”—are “normative” for Pentecostals and charismatic Christians.<sup>10</sup>

Classic Pentecostals see the first experience of the Gifts of the Spirit as an important moment of individual transformation or a “second blessing”. This “Baptism in the Spirit” is one of the ways classical Pentecostal doctrine identifies who is “inside” their movement; it is a tool of categorisation based on a particular experience. As David Middlemiss argues in *Interpreting*

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<sup>10</sup> Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, 6.

*Charismatic Experience*, this schismatic tendency has been used by classical Pentecostals to create a division between themselves, who as “true Christians” have had a charismatic experience of the Spirit, and mainline church followers, who have not.<sup>11</sup> However, new varieties of Pentecostalism look to a continual filling of the Spirit over the life of a believer, rather than a categorical “baptism” event, as a doctrine that is less exclusive of those who have had a different religious experience.

### ***Charismatic***

Academics such as David Barrett, Todd Johnson, Patrick Johnstone, and Jason Mandryk have suggested that “charismatic” refers to those who exercise gifts of the Spirit and believe in the renewing experience of the Holy Spirit, but who are not affiliated with a specifically Pentecostal denomination.<sup>12</sup> By using a definition based so strongly on denominational affiliation, however, scholars risk becoming too reliant on self-identification on the part of churches. There is also a risk of marginalizing smaller, independent churches, which may follow a Pentecostal theology, without having a formal affiliation with a Pentecostal organisation. This movement is sometimes referred to as “second wave” Pentecostalism, and its members emerged in significant numbers in the 1960s and 1970s, as part of what they considered to be a necessary spiritual renewal within older churches. In some cases, this move to renewal resulted in a break with an existing church and the creation of a new organisation which, although having Pentecostal characteristics, was defined and formed primarily by its charismatic leadership and aims of restoring or reforming established churches.

### ***Renewalist***

The Pew Forum on Religious Life stresses that the “Pentecostal and charismatic movements” can be grouped together as comprising the “renewalist movement” because of their common belief in the spiritually renewing gifts of the Spirit.<sup>13</sup> Although the conception of “renewalist”

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<sup>11</sup> Middlemiss, *Interpreting Charismatic Experience*, 10, 33-34.

<sup>12</sup> David Barrett, Todd Johnson, Patrick Johnstone, and Jason Mandryk quoted in Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Pew Research Centre, *Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals*, The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, October 2006, Available at: <http://pewforum.org/Christian/Evangelical-ProtestantChurches/Spirit-and-Power.aspx> (Accessed 21 August, 2011), 1. The Pew Research Centre is a non-partisan “fact tank” that conducts research primarily into social issues or questions that intersect with political and public life primarily in America, but also around the world. See website above for more information.

is useful, it is perhaps a little vague as a definition. Anderson's definition has the advantage of being as inclusive and flexible as the movement itself, and so his is the taxonomy I will use.

## Appendix B: Participant Observation Criteria

Participant observation is “a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture”.<sup>1</sup> This ethnological approach requires the observer to be a “professional stranger”.<sup>2</sup> The observer and the group being studied both recognise the participation of the observer, who shares in the interests and activities of the group, although, remains an outsider.<sup>3</sup> As a synchronic method, participant observation was particularly helpful in my attempt to understand the current form of Australian Pentecostalism, although unfortunately for a historian, it is not a method that allows for an understanding of change over time.<sup>4</sup> Ideally, oral history would have complemented these observations, but as explained above, this was not possible for this project.

My observation criteria was based around the key question of this this: how can we understand the place and form of contemporary Australian Pentecostalism? I started by thinking about where I was (the physical locale and characteristics of the venue), what was happening (the purpose of the event being observed) and who the other participants were (demographics) as well as why they were there (their purpose in attending). I then looked for behaviours that conformed with, or deviated from, what I would expect at a Pentecostal event or service, particularly the use of Gifts of the Spirit, the use of music, and the style of the service. A key part of my system was to observe and take notes on the preaches, paying attention to the key themes, Bible passages referenced, testimony and personal anecdotes given, and the audience’s response to all of this.<sup>5</sup> While this is more reminiscent direct observation, I would then talk—

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<sup>1</sup> DeWalt and De Walt, *Participant Observation*, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Agar, *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).

<sup>3</sup> See Florence R. Kulckhohn’s dated but oft-cited ‘The Participant-Observer Technique in Small Communities’, *American Journal of Sociology* 46, no. 3 (1940), 331.

<sup>4</sup> DeWalt and De Walt, *Participant Observation*, 125.

<sup>5</sup> I acknowledge here that participant observation is a labour intensive and time consuming method, and that the observer will miss much and can never hope to record everything that is said and done. This is why having at least a loose observation protocol is important. I am lucky, in that many of the conferences I attend are recorded and made publically available, either for free or to purchase, online. For some of the limitations of participation observation and the criticism that it is time consuming see Herbert J. Gans, ‘Participant Observation in the Era of “Ethnography”’, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 28, no. 5 (1999), 544.

often at the urging of the speaker—to the participants around me about what we had just heard.<sup>6</sup> Because I had such a wide approach to what I would observe in terms of sermons and preaches, I was able to compare my notes from various events and see what key themes emerged and were repeated, indicating their importance. As outlined in the introduction, this was what led to my chapter on the gender dynamics in Pentecostal churches.

In terms of my interactions with other participants, I would always reveal the purpose of my visit if asked about my attendance at church or if I was having an in-depth conversation. If my contact with attendants was fleeting or momentary, I did not disclose my position as an outsider. Barbara B. Kawulich notes that rapport between a researcher and the community they are studying is built over time, and I felt I was able to achieve this at Peter Brook's Grace City Church, a Newfrontier's Church.<sup>7</sup> However, the size of the other churches being studied and the sheer number of attendants at services and conferences made this impossible for the four other churches of this study, and since participant observation was not my core research technique (this thesis relies far more on written sources) this was not a problem. I was still able to gain a strong contextual understanding of contemporary Pentecostalism, particularly when it came to rules, norms, and routines. Including this method in my research allowed me to redesign my research as I gathered data.

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<sup>6</sup> For more on the distinction between direct observation and participant observation see Danny L. Jorgensen, *Participant Observation: A Methodology for Human Studies* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1989), 78-9. <sup>7</sup> Barbara B. Kawulich, 'Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 6, no. 2 (2005), np.

# Appendix C: Ethics approval and letter of consent



**RESEARCH INTEGRITY**  
**Human Research Ethics Committee**  
Web: <http://sydney.edu.au/ethics/>  
Email: [ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au](mailto:ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au)

**Address for all correspondence:**  
Level 6, Jane Foss Russell Building - G02  
The University of Sydney  
NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA

Ref: MF/PE

30 June 2011

Dr Frances Clarke  
Department of History  
Faculty of Arts  
Quadrangle – A14  
The University of Sydney  
Email: [frances.clark@sydney.edu.au](mailto:frances.clark@sydney.edu.au)

Dear Dr Clarke

Thank you for your correspondence received 27 June 2011 addressing comments made to you by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

I am pleased to inform you that with the matters now addressed your protocol entitled “**A Planting of the Lord'- Evangelicalism as a Social Movement in Australia**” has been approved.

Details of the approval are as follows:

**Protocol No.:** 13850  
**Approval Period:** June 2011 to June 2012  
**Authorised Personnel:** Dr Frances Clarke  
Miss Elizabeth Miller

**Documents Approved:**  
Participant Information Statement Version 2 21/6/11  
Participant Consent Form Version 2 21/6/11  
Survey Version 2 21/6/11  
Letter of Invitation Version 1 23/5/2011  
Group Topics Version 1 23/5/2011

The HREC is a fully constituted Ethics Committee in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans-March 2007 under Section 5.1.29.

The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans. A report on this research must be submitted every 12 months from the date of the approval or on completion of the project, whichever occurs first. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of consent for the project to proceed. Your report is due by **30 June 2012**.

**Chief Investigator / Supervisor's responsibilities to ensure that:**

1. All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC within 72 hours for clinical trials/interventional research.
2. All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.

**Manager Human Ethics**  
Dr Margaret Faedo  
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ABN 15 211 513 464  
CNIC05 00026A



3. Any changes to the protocol must be approved by the HREC before the research project can proceed.
4. All research participants are to be provided with a Participant Information Statement and Consent Form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee. The following statement must appear on the bottom of the Participant Information Statement: *Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager, Human Ethics, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); + 61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or [ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au](mailto:ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au) (Email).*
5. You must retain copies of all signed Consent Forms and provide these to the HREC on request.
6. It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.
7. The HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the Approval Period stated in this letter. Investigators are requested to submit a progress report annually.
8. A report and a copy of any published material should be provided at the completion of the Project.

Please do not hesitate to contact Research Integrity (Human Ethics) should you require further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

**Dr Margaret Faedo**  
**Manager, Human Ethics**  
*On behalf of the HREC*

Copy: Elizabeth Miller    [emil5602@uni.sydney.edu.au](mailto:emil5602@uni.sydney.edu.au)

23/5/2011

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to acknowledge my awareness of Elizabeth Miller's research project 'Evangelicalism as a Social Movement in Australia.' I understand Elizabeth's project as follows:

"This study seeks to understand the factors contributing to the evangelical ascension in Australia, with a particular focus on the last thirty years. The history of the evangelical movement in Australia will be studied alongside the current form of the movement in order to gain a greater understanding of evangelicalism's place in Australian society and culture. The project will explore the themes of youth, popular culture, transnationalism, socio-economic patterns and emotion as well as examining the broader evangelical engagement with academic history, as well as history's engagement with evangelicals."

Elizabeth will be attending the Newfrontiers conference 'Together on a Mission' in July 2011, and I and other members of my church will assist her endeavors to interview and survey a small selection of conference attendees about how they define and practice their religion, how their religious life intersects with their everyday life and some of the themes above.

Elizabeth has explained to me that participation is entirely voluntary and that consent can be withdrawn at any stage without affecting participant's relationships with the University of Sydney or their church. Participation will be anonymous and I understand the data collected will only be used in Elizabeth Miller's PhD and publications arising from it.

I have no hesitation in allowing Elizabeth access to individuals for the purposes of research and believe that she will conduct herself with absolute integrity and appropriate sensitivity.

Should you require any other information from me please do not hesitate to contact me on my mobile[0434225522].

Yours sincerely,



Peter Brooks  
Senior Pastor  
Grace City Church  
Newfrontiers

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Newfrontiers Grace City Church Incorporated

