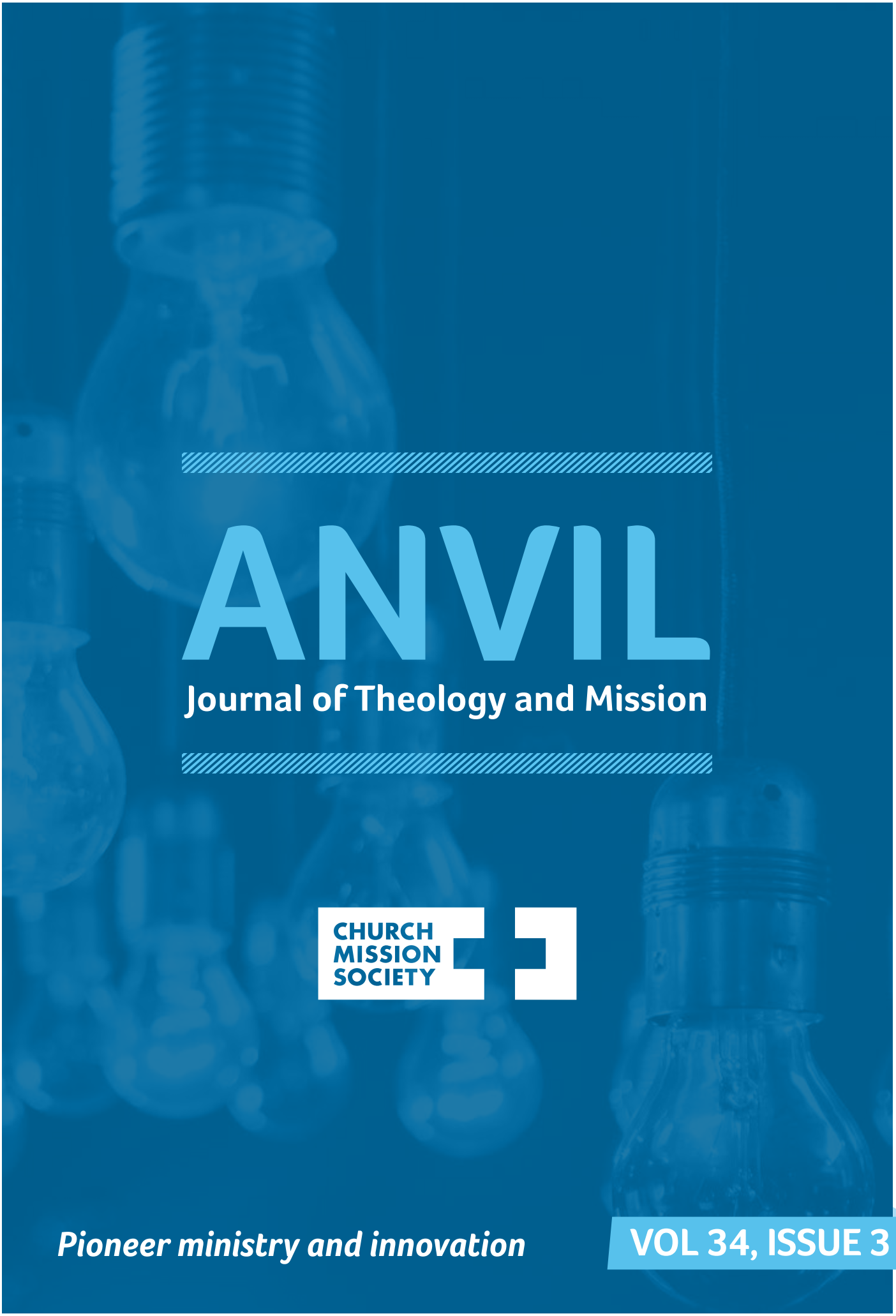

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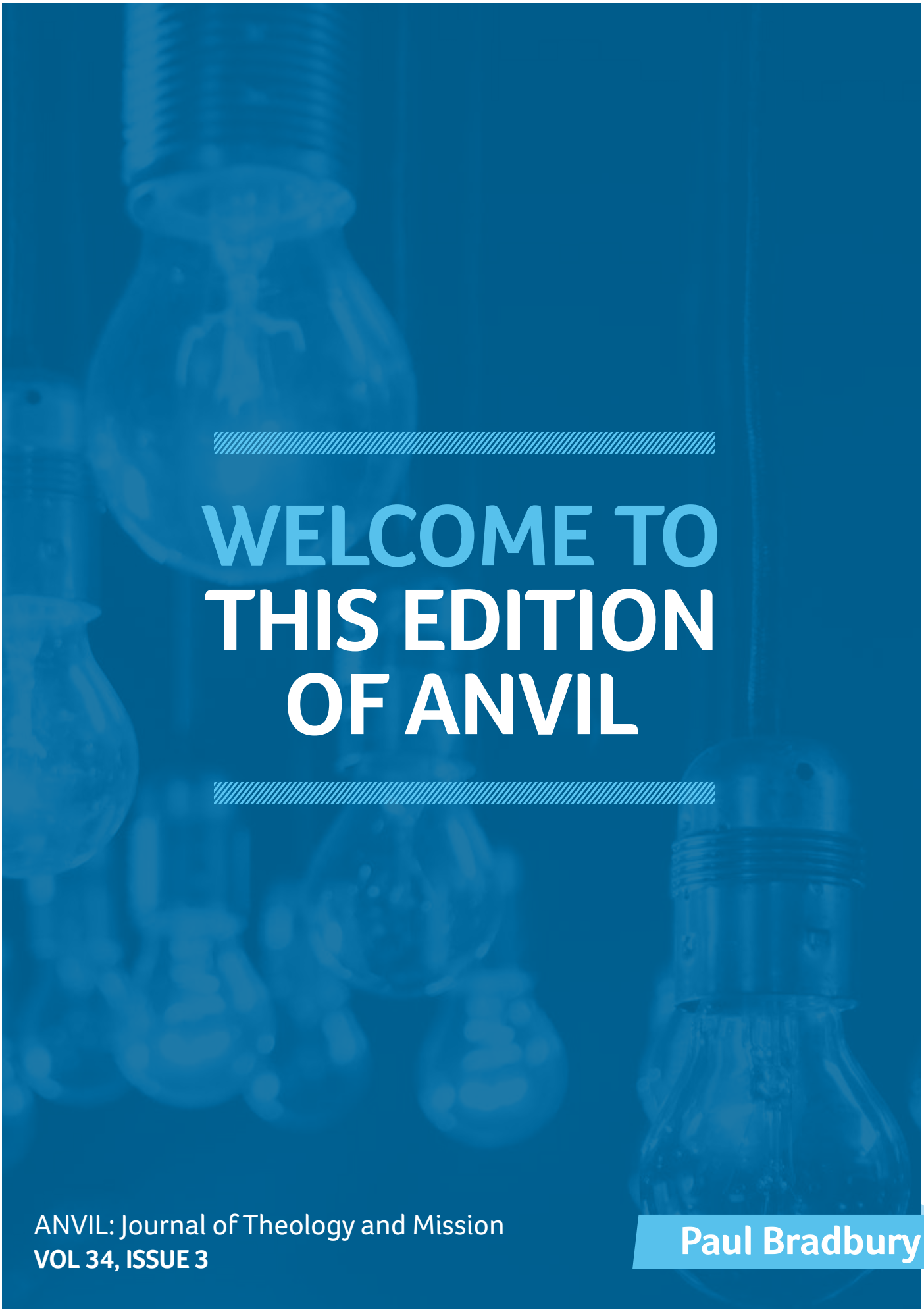

WELCOME TO THIS EDITION OF ANVIL

ANVIL: Journal of Theology and Mission
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Paul Bradbury

THE EDITORIAL

Welcome to this edition of Anvil, which has as its theme pioneer ministry and innovation. You could argue that innovation and pioneer ministry are, at least in the context of the church, two ways of saying essentially the same thing. Pioneer ministry is the term we use for ministry that is innovative, breaks new ground and challenges the status quo. Perhaps. But for many involved in pioneering, innovation is not so much an objective as a product or consequence of a response to the deeper motivation of a call to mission.

The language and science of innovation is much more deliberate and developed in other fields, such as business and organisational studies. In these fields much is being learned, not just on how to innovate but also how to foster and embed innovation into the culture of any organisation.

The church has had a rather difficult relationship with innovation. Historically it has been suspicious, even violently opposed to innovations that threaten orthodox belief and practice. Innovation has come from the margins, initially discredited or rejected, before finding space to flourish and embed within the wider economy of the church.

In a post-Christendom context of dizzyingly rapid change, perhaps we are moving towards a place where dialogue between innovators and those responsible for the traditions of the church is more welcome. In this context, exploring the study of innovation from other fields and asking how they can inform the ministry of the church is important. This is precisely what Michael Moynagh has turned his attention to recently. His article presents a framework for innovation drawn from the insights of this field of study and explores how this maps on to some examples of pioneer ministry in today's church.

Innovation of course happens at various levels: at the local but also the organisational. And these two are connected. Often it is the locally generated innovation whose new answer to a question others are asking invokes a wider movement. In her article Lucy Moore reflects on the incredible story of Messy Church, from its beginnings as a response to issues in her local parish church to the global movement it is today. Similarly, Katrina Moss tells the story of two innovative ideas that have amplified from dreams to reality, and questions whether we are really embracing the degree of creative and innovative talent latent in the church. Richard Passmore reflects from his experience as a fresh expressions adviser in the Diocese of Carlisle. He explores how space can be given for innovation within an institution of the church, while at the same time enabling that innovation to have a renewing impact on the traditional. And Greg Bakker writes on a vocation within this dynamic that seems increasingly important: pioneer advocacy, the ministry of those called to enable innovation by championing the pioneer in the local and wider institution.

Finally, with reflections from wider society, and from practice, it seemed important to root innovation somehow in the narrative of Scripture. So as something of an innovation for Anvil, I have contributed a reflection on a vision from Ezekiel as a biblical framework for innovation. Our growing emphasis on innovation as a church, of which the growth and development of pioneer ministry is one expression, is a response to a sense of urgency and even crisis. The people of God have been there before – not least in the exile, when the traditional ways of expressing life and faith had to be reinvented. In this context Ezekiel emerges as a model for innovative leadership, holding together in fiercely realistic hope a vision for the future alongside a responsibility for the tradition. It is from that same place that these articles emerge too, seeking to bring encouragement, insight and energy to the ongoing process of faithful innovation in the life of the church.

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Michael Moynagh

HOW CAN THE CHURCH HOLD TRADITION AND INNOVATION TOGETHER? AND WHAT PROCESSES OF INNOVATION ARE INVOLVED?

On the one hand we have tradition, which is established ways of doing things – accepted customs, beliefs, practices and so on. On the other is innovation, which changes the rules of the game.

You can have radical innovation. The first Messy Church radically changed the rules of the game for doing all-age worship, for example. And you can have incremental innovation, which involves small changes to the rules of the game. In a Messy Church, you might change the sequence of craft activities, worship and food.

How do these two forms of innovation relate to tradition? To help answer that, I shall lay some theological foundations, describe six processes of innovation, contrast the managers' and the innovators' mindsets, and suggest when the second of these is more appropriate. The connecting thread will be how innovation and tradition reinforce each other.

But first, how has innovation been understood?

UNDERSTANDINGS OF INNOVATION

Denning and Dunham summarise the main descriptions of how innovation works.[1] Each approach or set of approaches has strengths and weaknesses. One, for instance, highlights *the gifted individual*. Innovation is the work of "heroic" entrepreneurs who have the right character traits and talents, and often a bit of luck. This perspective can generate inspiring and instructive stories, but underestimates the relational processes involved. Teams and partnerships play a central role.[2]

A second approach views innovation as the result of *compelling ideas*. Pipeline models, for example, portray innovation as a linear sequence of steps. These steps transform researchers' ideas into products accepted by the market. The diffusion model, on the other hand, describes how innovative ideas spread from their source to others. It has caught some people's imagination by distinguishing between innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. The trouble with both these examples of "compelling ideas" is that relatively few innovations move in an orderly way from idea to product. Often innovations are "spontaneous reactions to breakdowns: people do them first and call them ideas later... Many innovations seem to arise spontaneously without a definite source. Various leaders pop up, advance the innovation, then disappear. Blogging is a modern example."[3]

A third set of approaches sees innovation as *new practices*. Peter Drucker, for example, argued that managers produce innovation through searching for opportunities, analysis, listening, focused execution and leadership (e.g. mobilising people and markets to support the innovation). He paid particular attention to identifying opportunities, which he believed was the biggest challenge. He encouraged managers to look for opportunities in breakdowns, problems, threats and changes in business methods and demographics.[4] This perspective has the advantage of focusing on practices that can be learned. A weakness is that it tends to privilege analytic techniques, such as market research to assess the opportunities. Attention is drawn away from human relationships, trust, intuition and building political support.

To correct this imbalance, Denning and Dunham have proposed *eight practices* for innovation: sensing, envisioning, offering, adopting, sustaining, executing, leading and embodying. These practices happen in conversations and contain skills that can be acquired. This highlights what innovators can learn, but in concentrating on innovators, the approach – like Drucker's – tends to be individualistic. It does not say enough about the systemic processes of innovation. After all if, as Denning and Dunham recognise, the emergence and spread of innovations often take people by surprise, how does the Spirit blow through the church to harness this "accidental" process?

No one approach can capture all the complexities of innovation. A pragmatic mixing of approaches to fit

[1] Peter J. Denning and Robert Dunham, *The Innovator's Way: Essential Practices for Successful Innovation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2010), 49–76.
[2] See Thomas M. Cooney, "Editorial: What is an entrepreneurial team?,", *International Small Business Journal* 23 (3), (2005), 226–27; David A. Harper, "Towards a Theory of Entrepreneurial Teams," *Journal of Business Venturing* 23 (6) (2008), 614; Read et al., *Effectual Entrepreneurship* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).
[3] Denning and Dunham, *The Innovator's Way,* 64–65.
[4] Peter F. Drucker, *Innovation and Entrepreneurship* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

the context probably makes most sense. In this vein, the processes of innovation described below, which are drawn from complexity thinking[5] and the effectuation school of entrepreneurship studies,[6] are offered as a further framework to complement the others.

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

If we want to root innovation in God, where might we start? Creation could be a tempting answer. It might be said that God innovated when he created the universe. However, Christians have traditionally believed that this was creation from nothing. God used no pre-existing materials to form the universe. And this is a problem in relation to innovation because innovators do not start with nothing. They start with what they've got.

Indeed, innovation typically involves bringing together two or more elements that were previously kept apart. Goldstein, Hazy and Silberstang quote Kary Mullis, Nobel Laureate in Chemistry: "In a sense, I put together elements that were already there, but that is what inventors always do. You can't make up new elements, usually. The new element, if any, it was the combination, the way they were used."[7] Cafe and church would be an ecclesial example.

Before creation, there were no "rules of the game" for God to change, and so innovation by definition was impossible. A better theological starting point may be the *new* creation, where there are "rules of the game" to be altered. The kingdom of God is innovation on a cosmic scale. Under the lordship of Christ, the Spirit is recombining the elements of creation so that they more fully accord with God's will. These new combinations are innovative. They radically change the rules. When this process of recombination – of innovation – is complete, God's reign will be revealed in full.

Building on theologies of hope,[8] Godly innovation is what happens when the divine future comes head-to-head with the present. The Spirit brings new possibilities from the kingdom into the here-and-now. These possibilities are a source of hope because they do not depend on the fallibilities of the human journey so far: they arise from God's reign. Equally, they are not impositions that take no account of the past. They fit and burrow into the traditions generated by history, while also leading in a new direction.

It should go without saying that it is in the nature of tradition to innovate, not least within the church. An unchanging tradition risks becoming detached from reality because reality never stands still. Especially in an age of rapid change, to stay relevant a tradition must keep up with the changes round it.

That is one of the themes of the book of Job. Job's so-called comforters base their responses to his suffering on what they have learned from their tradition. Their tradition says that the righteous will be blessed and the unrighteous cursed. Here is Job apparently being cursed. Therefore, according to their tradition, he must be unrighteous. But Job protests his innocence, a claim affirmed by the narrator.[9]

As David Ford points out, the reader is left asking, "What happens when the tradition no longer works? What do you do when the tradition no longer accords with everyday experience?"[10] The answer is that you start to innovate. Innovation is born when the tradition stops being effective and people wrestle with their response. Innovation arises from a felt need for tradition to catch up with experience.

However, innovation cannot turn its back on tradition. To take root, innovation must connect to the tradition. Years ago, my doctorate was in the field of South Pacific history. I remember reading how the first missionaries in the region encouraged their converts to practice generosity. Among the islanders, generosity was a means of gaining status. The more you gave, the higher your status. So giving often occurred very publicly.

The missionaries cottoned on to this and encouraged Christians during worship to throw their offerings into the middle of a circle. (Not something that would work in the UK, I suspect!) People would see how much everyone else had given, and the person who gave most would have their social status confirmed. As so often in the church's history, one reason the islanders embraced Christianity was that those who brought the gospel connected this innovation to the pre-existing tradition. Relating the new to what currently exists enables people to own it.

So, on the one hand innovation happens when the tradition seeks to catch up with changes in social experience. On the other, innovation survives when you

[5] For example, Margaret J.Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*, 3rd edition (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2006).

[6] Saras D. Sarasvathy, *Effectuation: Elements of Entrepreneurial Expertise* (Cheltenham: Edward Edgar, 2008).

[7] Jeffrey A. Goldstein, James K. Hazy and Joyce Silberstang, "A Complexity Science Model of Social Innovation in Social Enterprise," *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship* 1 (1) (2010), 111.

[8] For example, Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press, 1967).

[9] Job 1:1.

[10] David F. Ford, *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 174.

connect the new to the tradition already present. The issue is not either tradition or innovation, but how the two are combined and feed off each other.

This is illustrated in the six processes I believe are essential to innovation. These processes are not sequential. They interweave in and out of each other, and are mutually dependent. They demonstrate how innovation and tradition exist in a dynamic relationship, and in many ways require one another. I shall illustrate these processes through the story of Caroline, who led a fresh expression of church in north-west London and about whom I have also written in *Church in Life*.[11]

DISSATISFACTION

The first process of innovation is dissatisfaction. Innovation does not happen unless there is dissatisfaction with the status quo. Note the role played by jolts and crises, which invite new ideas.[12] Equally, as Goldstein, Hazy and Silberstang suggest, dissatisfaction may begin with a growing realisation that "business as usual" does not work.[13]

You would never do anything new unless you were discontent with the present. Perhaps the present isn't working, or you can see better ways of doing something. You feel dissatisfied because the present could be improved.

That was Caroline's experience. She was a schoolteacher. An increasing number of immigrants and others from ethnic minority backgrounds were moving into the area. Caroline felt frustrated because her local church – her local Christian tradition – had so little contact with this changing population. This discontent fuelled her determination to do something about it.

Innovation starts with a "holy dissatisfaction" or a "prophetic discontent". It's a dissatisfaction that says, "The tradition as we've got it is not working as well as it might." The old is revealed as inadequate before the new is born. This is a challenge to those who think that the main task of leadership is to keep everyone happy. If you want improvement, you need some people not to be happy.

EXPLORATION

A second process is exploration – exploring how something new might work within your tradition. Caroline, for example, began to explore how her church might make connections with its new neighbours. How might it start something new to build relationships with them, while remaining faithful to the tradition it had inherited? Caroline's exploration involved four processes.

First, as Sarasvathy found in her study of commercial entrepreneurs,[14] Caroline started with what she had:

- who she was – a primary schoolteacher,
- what she knew – how to teach and that many mothers could not speak English, and
- who she knew – people in the church who might help her.

Secondly, she began to ask herself, "What if?" "What if I did this?" Or "What if I did that?" In his book on design thinking, Nigel Cross describes how engineers, architects and other designers approach design problems by thinking about possible solutions. They keep asking "What if..." until a solution emerges.[15]

Caroline appears to have done something similar. She was designing a solution to the problem of ethnic minority women not being able to speak English. So she began to think about possible solutions, such as a language course. But she realised that this would involve writing course materials, setting assignments, and that she would probably need qualified helpers. It would take too much time. So she dismissed the idea.

Eventually, she asked herself, "What if we run a weekly language cafe – invite the women to an English afternoon tea, sit round small tables and invite them to discuss a topic in English?" Maybe she exclaimed "Wow!" at this point, because often when you keep asking "What if?" and finally get the answer, "Wow!" is the natural response. Then she tried the idea to see if it would work. What if? What wows? What works?[16]

Thirdly, Caroline listened carefully to the people she hoped to serve, some of whom she knew. Much of this listening seems to have been implicit. She imagined asking people what they thought of an idea and their replies. In particular, she imagined inviting these mainly Sri Lankan mothers to afternoon tea in the church hall. And as she did so, she realised that many would find it quite daunting – the church was not part of their housing estate. So she decided to use the community hall instead. The facilities weren't as good, but it was familiar territory for the women concerned.

[11] Michael Moynagh, *Church in Life: Innovation, Mission and Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 2017), 51–53, 299–306.
[12] Julie Battilana, Bernard Leca and Eva Boxenbaum, "How Actors Change Institutions: Towards a Theory of Institutional Entrepreneurship," *The Academy of Management Annals* 3 (1) (2009), 65–107.
[13] Goldstein, Hazy and Silberstang, "A Complexity Science Model of Social Innovation in Social Enterprise", 105.
[14] Sarasvathy, *Effectuation: Elements of Entrepreneurial Expertise*, 74–81.
[15] Nigel Cross, *Design Thinking: Understanding How Designers Think and Work* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).
[16] Jeanne Liedtka, Andrew King and Kevin Bennett, *Solving Problems with Design Thinking* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

As well as this implicit listening, Caroline also consulted some of the Sri Lankan women as her plans took shape. Then, fourthly, when she had a concrete plan, she tried it out. She did a trial run and modified the arrangements in the light of what her team learned.

Caroline started with what she had, she kept thinking of possible solutions, she listened attentively and she experimented. By starting with what she had, she didn't waste time coming up with ideas that were beyond the resources available to her. Nor did she innovate in a field that was outside her expertise – she built on what she knew. By brainstorming different solutions, she widened her thinking to embrace an unexpected possibility. By listening carefully, she checked her idea would work and shaped it round the women involved. And by experimenting, she took nothing for granted. This is the essence of the exploration process.

SENSE-MAKING

The third overlapping process of innovation is making sense – to yourself and to others – of the idea that begins to emerge. This is a more subtle process than just coming up with a vision. As Simon Teasdale shows, it is about telling different yet consistent stories to the people involved – stories that will convince them by connecting with their histories.[17]

This is what Caroline did. She told a story first to herself. She had read *Mission-Shaped Church* (2004). She was very taken by its incarnational theology. So she told herself the story, "Just as the Son of God went out to the culture of first-century Palestine, so in a small way I am trying to go out to the people from Sri Lanka."

To her local church, she told a slightly different story: "For over 100 years we have supported overseas mission. Overseas has now come to us. What are we going to do about it?" Then to the Sri Lankan women she told a different story again: "We want to be good neighbours and welcome you to this part of London. We'd like to invite you to tea, and help you practice your English."

Each of these three stories, all consistent with each other and with a common thread, connected with the tradition or history of its audience. Caroline's story to herself connected with her tradition of missional concern. She was passionate about the church reaching out. Her story to the church connected with its tradition of supporting overseas mission. And her story to the Sri Lankan women connected to their recent history of arriving in the UK.

Storytelling is vital to winning support for innovation. Analysis may excite the mind, but stories offer a route to the heart.[18] Many innovators tell stories instinctively. But might their stories be improved if innovators were more intentional – if they thought more carefully about how their stories connect with the traditions of the various audiences they address?

AMPLIFICATION

The fourth process is amplification. It is the process by which innovation grows and spreads. Central to this is the role of networks. An innovation will spread through networks if people are well connected, but if they are not the innovation will spread more slowly.

This means that when authorities decide whether to support an innovator and look at the person's track record, they should bear in mind the network context. The innovator may have had limited impact not because of lack of competence or because the idea was not much good, but because people are in small, isolated networks or scarcely linked at all.[19]

Especially important is the role of connectors: people who know plenty of others and whose views are taken seriously. In mission circles, they are often known as "people of peace".[20] They pass on the innovation to their friends and contacts. Caroline was almost certainly something of a connector herself. Through her teaching, she knew many of the Sri Lankan families she wanted to reach.

If Roberts and Sims[21] are right that people follow stories rather than leaders, key skills that aid the spread of good innovation stories include:

- ***Naming*** what is observed.
- ***Connecting*** people to one another.
- ***Nourishing*** those who are inspired by the story, in particular by creating opportunities for them to learn together.
- ***Illuminating*** the emerging paradigm through face-to-face advocacy and on a variety of platforms.[22]

Yet, as I have already emphasised, innovation stories will only embed themselves in a pre-existing network if they resonate with the network's tradition. Being sensitive to

[17] Simon Teasdale, "Explaining the Multifaceted Nature of Social Enterprise: Impression Management as (Social) Entrepreneurial Behaviour," *Voluntary Sector Review* 1 (3), (2010), 271–92.
[18] Stephen Denning, *The Leader's Guide to Storytelling; Mastering the Art and Discipline of Business Narrative* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011),
[19] Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited," *Sociological Theory* 1 (1983), 201–33.
[20] Luke 10:6.
[21] Vaughan S. Roberts and David Sims, *Leading by Story: Rethinking Church Leadership* (London: SCM Press, 2017).
[22] Margaret Wheatley and Debbie Frieze, "Leadership in the Age of Complexity: From Hero to Host" (2010). Available from www.margaretwheatley.com.

the network's history will enable the innovation to take a form that honours the network's accumulated learning, its identity and its "core behavioural patterns".[23]

EDGE OF CHAOS

The fifth process of innovation is what complexity writers describe as staying on the edge of chaos.[24] This refers to the boundary between chaos and order. An organisation too far in the orderly direction tends to become rigid and stuck. By contrast, travelling towards chaos involves moving away from order and towards change. The danger is that the organisation travels too far, falls over the cliff and lapses into chaos.

Innovating teams must keep a balance between order and change. They must not change too much too quickly, otherwise people will feel overwhelmed – it will all feel too chaotic – and in a church context, they will stop volunteering to help. Equally, they should not stray too far in the direction of order, lest order stifle change and they miss the opportunity for further innovations to enhance what they have started. They shouldn't get into a rut.

When Caroline's language cafe began, it could easily have settled into a weekly routine – every Thursday afternoon serve tea, encourage guests to discuss a topic in English and clear up afterwards. But Caroline wasn't content with that. She kept looking for something more. She remained on the edge of chaos.

I remember meeting Caroline when she was training for ordination. After describing her language cafe, she said, "We've got a bit stuck. We don't know how to move to a next stage. We want to be able to share the gospel appropriately, but we don't know how." Here was an attitude that was distinctly open to further change.

I suggested that her team invite the women to submit prayer requests and offer to pray for them. Caroline took the suggestion to her team, who decided to set up a prayer board. The women pinned their requests to the board, and then began talking about them. This helped to raise the spiritual temperature of the cafe. In time, the team followed this up with an Alpha course, at a different time of the week, specifically for the cafe's guests.

This particular innovation, the language cafe, was developing its own weekly tradition: afternoon tea, discussion round tables, clear up afterwards. But, staying on the edge of chaos, Caroline refused to be limited by that tradition. She remained open to further change.

When an idea for an incremental innovation was put to her, the team adapted the idea so that it would fit with the cafe's emerging tradition. The prayer board was new, but it was not intrusive. And the idea of prayer was familiar to many of the Sri Lankan women, who had a religious background. The prayer board could "take" because it fitted into the tradition of the cafe and its guests, even though the tradition of the cafe was relatively short. Complexity thinkers sometimes describe this embedding process as "path dependency".[25] Novelty takes root within the path of tradition.

Edge of chaos is about sitting on the boundary between being faithful to the tradition, including the developing tradition of your innovation, and being open to change. Some people find this an uncomfortable state because they are not in control. Caroline was open to change, but didn't know what to do. All she could do was to wait and ask questions. She didn't know where the answer would come from, nor even if she would get an answer. The answer was beyond her control.

So often leaders of innovation want to control what happens. They close down possibilities, and in so doing they impose too much order on their initiatives. Theologically, to leave room for the Spirit to act, innovators have to give up a significant amount of control, leave the future open and be willing for change to come from unexpected quarters.

TRANSFORMATION

As the last of the six processes, innovation involves transformation, particularly in the identity of those involved.[26] Some of Caroline's Sri Lankan women attended the Alpha course and continued to meet for regular Bible study. Who knows what changes in outlook, behaviour and self-perception resulted from that? Caroline's volunteer helpers gained confidence and began to see themselves as being more capable.

Not least, before starting the cafe Caroline viewed herself as someone in the pews with gifts. After successfully launching the cafe, she came to see herself as having the ability to lead something new.

Her local church began to see itself differently, too. It gained confidence in mission, and in a small way this

[23] Todd H. Chiles, Alan D. Meyer and Thomas J. Hench, "Organizational Emergence: The Origin and Transformation of Branson, Missouri's Musical Theaters," *Organization Science* 15 (5) (2004), 499–519.
[24] For example, Lesley Kuhn, *Adventures in Complexity: For Organisations Near the Edge of* Chaos (Axminster: Triarchy Press, 2009).
[25] Jochen Koch, Martin Eisend and Arne Petermann, "Path Dependence in Decision-Making Processes: Exploring the Impact of Complexity under Increasing Returns," *Business Research* 2 (1), (2009), 67–84.
[26] Donde Ashmos Plowman et al., "Radical Change Accidentally: The Emergence and Amplification of Small Change," *Academy of Management Journal* 50 (3) (2007), 515–43.

contributed to the start of a Messy Church and a debt counselling centre. The church still came from the same tradition, but it began to articulate that tradition in new ways. Innovation need not be a threat to tradition. It can enable a tradition to find new means of expressing itself.

TWO MINDSETS

These processes of dissatisfaction, innovation, sense making, amplification, edge of chaos and transformation produce what I call "the innovators' mindset". This is very different to "the managers' mindset".

Managers

- Facilitate the status quo
- Have clear objectives, and devise plans with timelines to achieve them
- Avoid mistakes by developing processes, protocols and codes of behaviour that standardise practice
- Work within the organisation's story and try to take it forward
- Seek permission from their seniors
- Value certainty, and seek to reduce uncertainty by sticking to the plan and controlling the environment where possible
- Try instinctively to preserve what they have got.

Innovators

- Are dissatisfied with the status quo
- Explore and experiment, which clarifies their objectives, instead of writing long-term plans
- Value failure as a means of discovery, using trial and error to provide feedback, from which they learn
- Create new stories more than working within existing stories
- Seek permission not from above, but positive feedback from those they serve (and other partners)
- Live on the edge of chaos and make the most of unexpected opportunities, instead of worrying about uncertainty
- Transform the status quo through their efforts.

Of course, you need both! Whether at the centre or on the edge of an organisation, sometimes you need a managerial approach and at other times you need the innovators' mindset.

WHICH MINDSET IS APPROPRIATE WHEN?

Snowden and Boone's *Cynefin* (pronounced ku-nev-in) decision-making framework points to an answer.[27] They describe four contexts that require different types of decision making.

- *Simple contexts* are situations where the rules for what to do are easily followed – for instance, setting out a hall for worship or making an insurance claim.
- *Complicated contexts* are situations where the rules are known, but have to be applied with some skill. Preparing a sermon might be an example.
- *Complex contexts* are situations where there are no rules, or at least they are not known. Cause-and-effect relationships are unclear, and can only be identified in retrospect. You have to feel your way through to a solution. This is what Caroline was doing. There were no rules for how her church could engage recent immigrants from Sri Lanka. She and her team had to make it up as they went along.
- *Chaotic contexts* are crises, such as a fire, where leaders have to take control, stabilise the situation and then work out what to do next.

Clearly, the managers' mindset is most appropriate in simple and complicated contexts, whereas the innovators' mindset is just right for complex contexts. You need to explore, make sense of the situation and, when you have found it, amplify a solution that works. However, amid these complex contexts, the managers' mindset will be appropriate at times – for example, when the decision has been taken to try an experiment. Then, objectives will be set, timelines drawn and other aspects of the managers' mindset will come into play.

CONCLUSION

Complex contexts are especially prevalent within the church. That is because the church is different to most other organisations, which are run mainly by paid personnel and where senior staff, quite rightly, set objectives, write these objectives into job descriptions and do all sorts of things that minimise uncertainty. At

[27] David J. Snowden and Mary E. Boone, "A Leader's Framework for Decision Making," *Harvard Business Review*, November 2007, 1–8.

times, staff still have to operate in complex contexts, but these are well bounded.

By contrast, the church relies heavily on volunteers, and volunteers increase the number of complex contexts. Not least, volunteers come and go. A local church may build a plan around a volunteer who is well-connected to a nearby school, only to find that the person unexpectedly leaves for family or other reasons. The church cannot afford to advertise and pay for a replacement. It depends totally on who, if anyone, joins the congregation. Perhaps a new member is passionate about homeless people. Completely by surprise, the church develops a mission among rough sleepers.

Long-term planning can still play a role, but it is a more limited one than in most other organisations. Complex contexts tend to be more numerous, which means that we need church leaders who are at ease with them.

Leaders don't have to be innovators themselves. In Mary Uhl-Bien's language, they need not be *generative leaders,* who produce the new ideas. They can be *enabling leaders* who help the organisation make room for these ideas. Or they can be *administrative leaders,* who loosen structures and procedures to accommodate the new.[28]

Whatever the role of *the* leader, more than most other organisations because of its voluntary nature, the church requires a combination of leaders who respond positively to the complex contexts it is inclined to face. Such leadership will combine *generative, enabling* and *administrative* roles, and ministers may be called to any of the three.[29]

This leadership will be more likely to emerge in churches that have a strong kingdom theology of innovation. For the kingdom, among other things, is the presence of innovation. God is *dissatisfied* with the existing creation.

In a process of *exploration,* the Spirit starts with what the Spirit has got, the world as it is, to bring about a new order – God's promised future.

Scripture contains multiple stories that help to *make sense* of this future. One of these stories is about the kingdom being like a mustard seed. The seed grows into one of the largest trees in the garden. The kingdom *amplifies*. It is always on the *edge of chaos*. It brings things that are new, but they are integrated into what exists. So Revelation can talk about "a new heaven and a new earth".[30] The kingdom is both new and similar to the universe with which we are familiar. It is not so orderly that little change occurs, nor so dramatically new that the old evaporates into chaos. When we enter the kingdom, our identities are *transformed* into children of God, into being brothers and sisters of Christ.

The result is not the obliteration of tradition, but its renewal. In the kingdom, history receives new life. Innovation fertilises the tradition, and tradition is the soil in which innovation grows.

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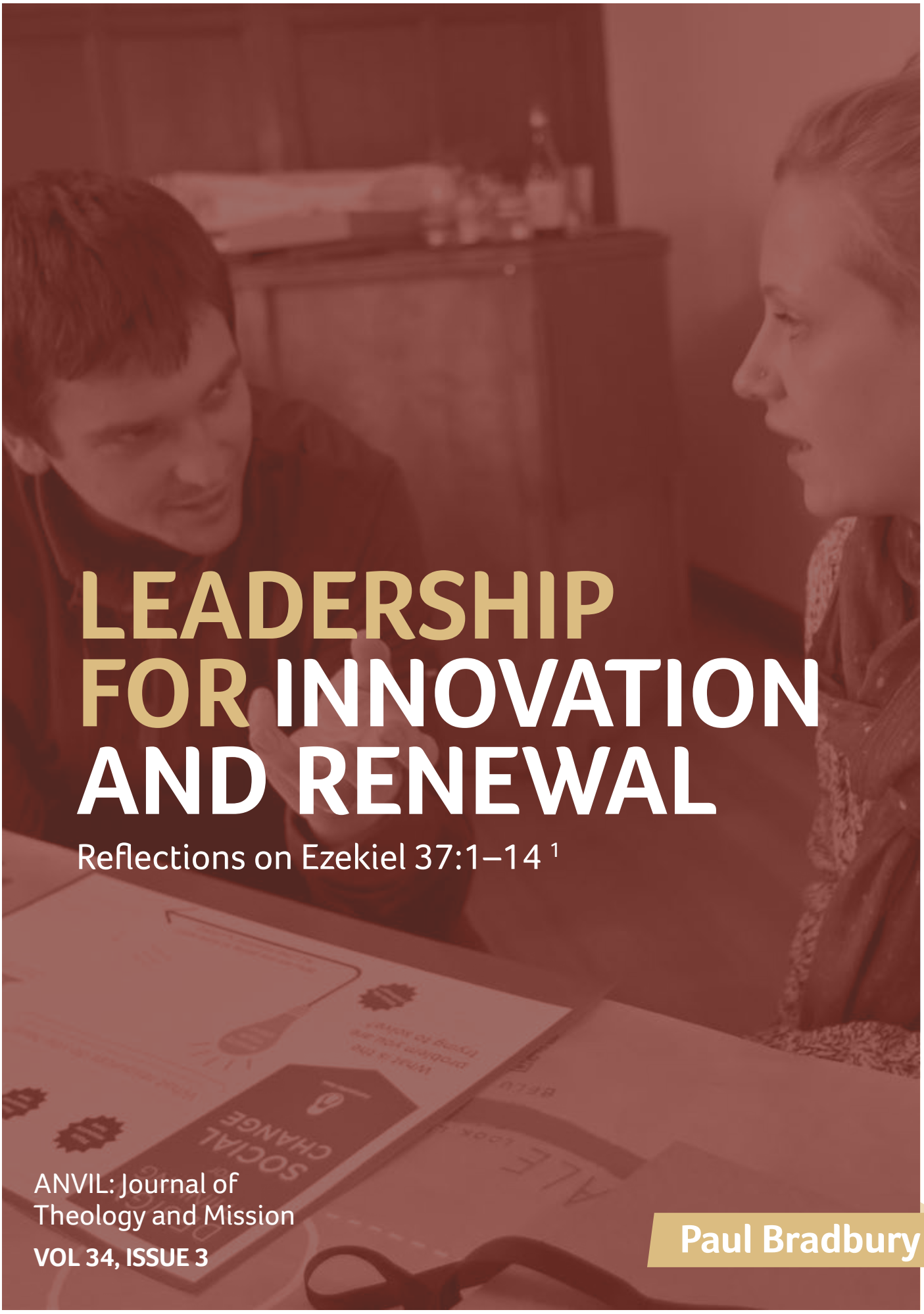
[28] Mary Uhl-Bien, Russ Marion and Bill McKelvey, "Complexity Leadership Theory: Shifting Leadership from the Industrial Age to the Knowledge Era," *The Leadership Quarterly* 18 (4) (2007), 298–318; Mary Uhl-Bien and Russ Marion, "Complexity Leadership in Bureaucratic Forms of Organizing: A Meso Model," *The Leadership Quarterly* 20 (4) (2009), 631–50.
[29] Moynagh, *Church in Life*, 95–97.
[30] Rev. 21:1.



LEADERSHIP FOR INNOVATION AND RENEWAL

Reflections on Ezekiel 37:1–14 [1]

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Paul Bradbury

WHAT DOES THE BIBLICAL WITNESS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT LEADERSHIP IN A TIME OF INSTITUTIONAL DECLINE AND CULTURAL UPHEAVAL? WHAT INSIGHT MIGHT THE BIBLE OFFER TO GIVE GROUNDING TO THOSE CALLED TO INNOVATE WITHIN THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE CHURCH?

In exploring answers to these questions, I have been drawn more and more into the Old Testament literature of the exile. Most recently I have found the book of Ezekiel and the vision experienced by Ezekiel, described in Ezek. 37:1–14, a compelling text to reflect on these questions.

The literature of the exile speaks powerfully into our situation as a metaphor for the cultural context in which the church of the West in particular is now called to live out the gospel. Not that we should overplay this comparison. For Israel the exile was a catastrophe of immense suffering and loss; the loss of land, culture and institutions is accompanied by the reality of a huge loss of life – exile brings a new and challenging reality but also invokes an experience of trauma that needs to be acknowledged. Similarly, the exile metaphor must not devalue the pain and trauma of modern exiles, asylum seekers and refugees, whose dislocation and loss is a daily experience of pain and injustice.

Nevertheless, in exploring exile as a metaphor for our experience as the church in the West, we can connect with an experience of dislocation, disorientation and even despair that characterised the experience of those wondering how to "sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land"[2] in Babylon in the sixth century BC. Walter Brueggemann describes this as a "sense of the loss of a structured, reliable 'world' where treasured symbols of meaning are mocked and dismissed".[3] It is fundamentally a world where the shaping story is no longer our story; indeed, a world without any agreed sense of a shaping story. It is also a post-Christian world, not just in the sense that the western world has moved on from the Christian story as a foundation for communal, cultural and political life, but that its life is often expressed in *contradiction* to this story that in a variety of ways is now discredited and dismissed. It is in this context that the church experiences a kind of exile for which the literature of the Old Testament exile provides powerful connections and insight.

In this article I want to explore the leadership of Ezekiel as a model for Christian leadership today. The vision that Ezekiel receives in the valley of dry bones acts as a focus, a concentrated image, to bring his witness to our attention and allow it to offer insight to our own task as leaders in our own contexts. The article will therefore use the framework of this vision as it unfolds to offer some reflections on the nature of leadership and innovation.

HONEST ENGAGEMENT WITH THE REALITY OF EXILE

> The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry.
> Ezek. 37:1–2

By the time we get to the vision of chapter 37, Ezekiel's life has come to embody the story and experience of exile. He was born in Jerusalem at a time of hope and reform. It was the year that the book of the Law had been rediscovered: an event that appears to have energised and encouraged the programme of reforms of King Josiah.[4] Ezekiel was also born into a priestly family. From his first moments of life a vocation within the traditional priestly institution of Israel was anticipated, and he was nurtured and trained for such a role. However, this stability and predictability was thrown into disarray by

[1] Elements of this article are adapted from Paul Bradbury, *Home by Another Route* (Abingdon: BRF, 2019 (forthcoming)).
[2] Ps. 137:4.
[3] Walter Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 2.
[4] 2 Kings 22.

the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians during the reign of Jehoiakin in 597BC. The first wave of Babylonian exiles, some 10,000 members of the nobility, priestly, military and skilled classes, were deported. Among them was Ezekiel.

The institutions of the Temple and the priesthood had directed Ezekiel's life, shaped his mind and heart, and given him identity, status and purpose. His experience of exile is emblematic of the experience of the whole community, dislocated from the city of Jerusalem, the Temple, the rhythms and rituals of social, political and religious life, and divorced from the symbols of the assurance of God's presence among them and their status as his covenant people.

It is as an exiled priest that Ezekiel heard a call to a new ministry as prophet to Israel. "Among the exiles by the Kebar river"[5] he sees overwhelming visions of God and is sent back "in bitterness and in the anger of my spirit, with the strong hand of the Lord on me"[6] to speak the word of God to the beleaguered house of Israel in Babylon. Ezekiel's call confronts him with the pain of exile and the loss of his own vocation, future and status. This call is a personal death, evoking feelings of bitterness and anger as he returns to his community. But it is only in this personal confrontation with the death of his identity, status and purpose that Ezekiel is able to bring hope and a faithful vision of renewal to Israel. Dying to his own assumptions and attachments to a particular course for his own calling enables Ezekiel to confront the reality of death for the whole community. This is what happens as the vision of Ezekiel 37 begins with this extraordinary tour of the valley of dry bones.

You could be forgiven for thinking that the visual force of an overview of the valley "full of bones" would have enough of an impact. Yet we are told the Spirit leads Ezekiel back and forth among them. Why? A significant reason is that Ezekiel, walking up and down the rows and rows of bones in this vast valley, is enacting the critical importance of lament in the process of renewal. Confronting and articulating the reality of the death of what has gone is the first step in the journey towards renewal and innovation. That is what lament does – it provides a form that can enable us to make the journey from despair to hope, from loss to new life. And it does so, not by shirking or avoiding the pain of loss, but by engaging with it and using it.

Loss is crucial for renewal and innovation for loss is personal and transformative. It arrests us to the limitations of our own hopes and plans for renewal and confronts us with a new and often more challenging perspective on our predicament. It also stalls us, stopping us in our tracks long enough and profoundly enough to create the kind of space in which new ideas can emerge – ideas less tainted by our own ego, and liberated from vain hopes of a return to the past.

A dream or a vision has to die. Leadership in our own exilic context therefore needs to be the sort of courageous leadership that confronts and names the losses, that fosters "communities of honest sadness".[7] That means taking time to walk among the bones of our situation, the reality of decline, the truth of the dismissive context and the discredited position we start from as a religious institution in a post-Christian society. It means recognising and detailing the losses. It means telling stories that are true even though they are tough, not resorting to false stories that shore up hopes of restoration and return rather than renewal and innovation. Stories of harsh reality, rather than depressing us further, actually open up the possibility of a way forward, making it possible to move on well and begin to create alternative possibilities. As Lee Beach says:

> [D]efining reality is an act of empowerment, because it orients people in a way that allows them to proceed with the facts as they currently stand. Without this act of truth telling, a legitimate hope can never emerge.[8]

LEADING FROM A PLACE OF RELINQUISHMENT

> He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"
> I said, "Sovereign Lord, you alone know." Ezek. 37:3

Emerging from the tour of the bones, Ezekiel is asked a question. Is it rhetorical? After all, surely the point of the detailed inspection of the bones was to press home the emphatic reality of the situation for Israel. There was no going back. The military solution was a dead end. Responding to those voices urging patience and awaiting some kind of restoration of the fortunes of Israel, Ezekiel is silent, and falls instead on the wisdom and initiative of God.

This posture is one that might be described as relinquishment and, like naming loss, is a precursor to renewal and innovation. The key characteristics of this posture of relinquishment are described by Ezekiel's answer – "Sovereign Lord, only you know"; they are humility, restraint and attentiveness. These elements

[5] Ezek. 1:1.
[6] Ezek. 3:14.
[7] Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home*, 4.
[8] Lee Beach, *The Church in Exile: Living in Hope After Christendom* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2015), 144.

characterise a posture and spirituality for leadership that offers hope and renewal in the context of exile.

1. Humility

"Sovereign Lord" is a phrase used throughout the book of Ezekiel. It subverts our tendency to co-opt God to our own plans and purposes. Properly, it is a term of worship, a restatement of the right order of our allegiances. It is the testimony of Ezekiel that God is free to be who he will be. He will not be used.

This is a huge challenge to our own very utilitarian culture, where everything must have its purpose and its use. Ministry and leadership suffer from the same malaise, under pressure from ourselves and those we are accountable to, to generate results, outcomes, returns. "Sovereign Lord" as a worship statement is the practice that moves us beyond utilitarian images of God to one that embraces the uncertainty of his initiative and will. We move to a place beyond enterprise or fantasy and beyond working harder at the same things in the hope of achieving better results.

2. Restraint

"... only you know." Restraint is related to humility. It concerns knowing the limitations of our leadership and ministry. One of the great pressures of leadership is to be a fount of knowledge. There is a fear inherent in saying "I don't know". While the western tradition has been influenced by the Enlightenment's pursuit of knowledge, the Orthodox church in the East has maintained a greater tradition of openness and acceptance towards not knowing. This apophatic approach works its way into a leadership posture that embraces rather than resists the human limitations of our leadership. This in turn evokes greater participation and responsibility among those we lead. And that opens up space for creativity and for a more diverse set of responses to common issues and challenges.

Knowledge and competence are at the heart of the way we train leaders in the western church. While these are important, they need to be balanced by a value for character, faith, wisdom and maturity. Steve Addison points out that the phenomenal growth in the Methodist movement tips into decline around the same time that the movement began formally educating people for leadership.[9] The implication is clear – training people to be experts in certain forms of knowledge as a basis for leadership may have the collateral effect of reducing the churches' capacity to adapt and innovate into new contexts. Without a kind of holy restraint in the light of God's sovereignty and our own human limitation, we shouldn't be surprised to get a church of human enterprise rather than divine surprise.

3. Attentiveness

Restraint relates closely to attentiveness. For in surrendering our attachment to knowledge as a means of control, our commitment is directed by a conviction that "only you know". We become leaders whose primary task is the seeking of God's knowledge and will. John V Taylor wrote that "the prophets and apostles were obsessed by divine revelation or the lack of it; we are obsessed by human response or the lack of it".[10]

We foster attentiveness through another restraint implicit in this short answer from Ezekiel: the restraint of speech. It is the silent refrain from speech, and the focus of our silent attention on God, that allow an attentiveness to the presence of God to grow.

Yet even this can be open to exploitation. Attentiveness does not earn the right for leaders to speak in the manner of Moses descending from the holy mountain. The role of our attentiveness is to foster attentiveness in others. Twice in the book of Ezekiel God charges him as a "watchman" for the house of Israel.[11] The role assigned to him is to watch and to warn. To watch, to hear God's voice, to speak it and then to leave the people to respond in their own responsibility. In other words, the role of watchman is to point people to the source of that which you have been called to be attentive to. The leader cannot be faith for people, cannot be responsible for what people do in their own response to the presence of God; she can only watch, listen and point those she leads to the same presence, the same voice that is the basis of her life and leadership.

This posture of relinquishment described by this response of Ezekiel is part of the foundation for the vision of renewal that will now be given. But too often these attitudes, a mixture of character, posture and spirituality, are skated over. We are in a hurry to renew, to innovate and reimagine and hope that a course, a conference or a book will provide a short cut to what we long for. Ezekiel's witness is clear. We must lead renewal from a place of relinquishment, recognising that the revelation of God for his people must be our primary source of knowledge for the way forward.

CREATING THE SPACE FOR PARTICIPATIVE RESPONSE

> Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will

[9] Steve Addison, *Movements that Change the World* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 87–92.
[10] John V Taylor, *The Go-Between God*, 2nd edition (London: SCM Press, 2004), 69.
[11] Ezek. 3:17–21, 33:7–11.

make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.'"

So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet – a vast army.

Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.'"

Ezek. 37: 4–14

As this prophecy unfolds, an unfolding dialogue between God's instruction and Ezekiel's response, it is clear that there is a poetic drive and rhythm to its language and structure. Repeated motifs and repeated words offer insight into the interpretation of the passage. The structure of the passage can be laid out schematically like this:

"Then he said to me, 'Prophesy... and say'" (v4)
Oracle of hope (I will x 4) (vv5,6)
"Then you will know that I am the Lord"(v6b)
"So I prophesied as I was commanded"(v7)
Oracle of hope fulfilled (vv7b–8)

"Then he said to me, 'Prophesy...and say'" (v9)
Oracle of instruction (v9b)
"that you may live" (v9c)

"So I prophesied as he commanded me" (v10a)
Oracle of instruction fulfilled (v10b)
A vast army! = the people of Israel whose hope is gone (v11)

"'Therefore prophesy and say'" (v12a)
Oracle of hope (I will x 7) (vv12b,13,14)
"Then you will know that I the Lord has spoken" (14b)

The arrangement shows how the passage divides into three distinct sections, each propelled by the phrase "prophesy... and say". The first two sections then follow with the content of the prophecy or prophetic act. This is followed by the consequence, "that you will know that I am the Lord (v6)", "that you may live" (v9c). Then Ezekiel carries out the instructions he has been given and they are fulfilled.

The third section however breaks with the first two in a couple of significant ways. Firstly, the scene of the vision moves from the battlefield to the graveyard. As it does, the vision makes clear that this vast army, without hope, is nothing less than "the people of Israel". In other words, the focus for any blame, or indeed hope, is not an institution, be it the army or the priesthood or the royal dynasty. The focus for hope must be in a collective rediscovery of what it means to be the people of God. The hope for Israel lies not in revitalised structures of power but in the renewal of identity and purpose.

This point is then reinforced and built on by the second break in structure in this last section. In the first two sections of the vision, the consequence of the prophecy, "that you will know...", "that you may live" is immediately followed by Ezekiel's enacting of the instructions and their fulfilment. In the final section, this does not take place – instead, the passage comes to an end, as though leaving a space into which someone may come and carry out the prophecy that has been given. Who will be that someone? Surely the invitation is for it to be "the people of Israel", stepping into their identity and purpose as the renewed people of God. Here then is an invitation for all Israel into the same dynamic participative relationship with God that Ezekiel models in the first two sections.

What is playing out in the renewal of Israel through the exile is the invitation to choose God over and against the lure of institutional power and authority. The way of restoration was imagined as a reinstatement of these fundamental constructs of Israel's life. But the passage makes it clear that this route is blocked. The only means of restoration is through a more creative and risky process of renewal, trusting in the person of God and his renewing Spirit.

This trust dynamic between the person of God and the institution that has grown to represent and enable the witness of his people is of course the one we wrestle with today. And all the more so because of the way in which western culture has exiled religious institutions to a peripheral place in society. Might it be that we in the western church have for too long lived out our faith in the context of institution that has, by and large, spoken and acted on our behalf, through its representatives, the clergy? And might it be that we too, in the context of exile,

are being invited to a deeper trust and participation, as a whole people, in the renewing work that God has for us?

John V Taylor explored this same dynamic years ago. He asked what kind of structure fosters a participative life in the Spirit and guards against the tendency towards intuitionalism and control. Taylor argues that the answer lies in the testimony of the early church, which displays a consistent participative quality throughout the New Testament. This can be seen in the word *allelon*, "one another", which punctuates the New Testament "like a peal of bells".[12]

Taylor goes on to argue that "the ideal shape of the church is such as will provide [this] 'one-another-ness' with the least possible withdrawal of Christians from their corporateness with their fellow-men in the world".[13] That size and shape will therefore likely be small – small enough to allow for "one-another-ing" within and protecting against the alienating effect that large structuring inevitably brings. Taylor therefore argues for the renewal of the "little congregations" as a shape and size of church that is better able to embody the participative spirit of the early churches' witness of *allelon*.

I would argue too that it is in that smallness of form that the church is better able to foster an attentiveness of the whole community to the leading of God's Spirit. Being small and communal in the context of a particular network or neighbourhood guards against the way in which the church so easily delegates the call to listen to the Spirit at work in the world to a cohort of experts or professionals. Our "one-another-ing" must extend into the community or context we are present in so that the whole community is engaged in the spiritual task of listening for the signs of God's Spirit at work. Again Taylor sums this up by saying that "it is the 'little congregations' which must become normative if the church is to respond to the Spirit's movement in the life of the world".[14]

Consequently our leadership must be one that sees participation as a key indicator of a healthy community. The default indicator of numerical growth seems sometimes more akin to the modern economist's fixation on GDP as an indicator of progress. As with GDP, numerical growth is not value neutral. If growth inhibits the key value of *allelon* then it inhibits the church's ability to listen attentively to the Spirit, both within the community and in the world. The longer-term effects of this will be decline in adaptability and the potential to innovate. And in a constantly changing social context, this cannot be ignored.

CREATING THE SPACE FOR THE INNOVATIVE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Creative renewal for Israel will come about therefore if they respond to the invitation to participate as a whole community in the new life that God is offering, rather than delegating this trust to the old institutions. However, this must come in partnership with a renewed reliance on the work of God's Holy Spirit.

The presence of the Spirit is a theme that weaves its way through the whole of the vision of the valley of dry bones. The passage is saturated with God's Spirit. The Hebrew word *ruach*, usually translated "Spirit", is used no less than 10 times in this 14-verse passage. There are two things in particular worth noting about the testimony of the Spirit in this passage.

Firstly, the coming of the Spirit is meant to signal not just renewal, but resurrection. The first stage of the vision results in a resuscitated army whose bones have been refurnished with tendons and flesh but who lack one thing: breath (*ruach*, v8). As the vision continues, the word *ruach* is invoked no fewer than five times in just three verses (vv9–11), translated variously "wind", "breath", "breathe" and "Spirit", and the army is then reanimated and stands up in a new kind of life.

But what is this new kind of life? Is it a resuscitated life? A return to the past? I suggest the passage invites us to see this as resurrection. The two-fold process of reconstruction and reanimation reminds us of the second creation narrative, where matter is first given form and then given "breath".[15] This clear echo of creation then invokes a foretaste of re-creation, of resurrection. Here we are in a place of bones and hopelessness, outside a city governed by foreign and pagan forces, and in which the people of Israel are displaced and struggling to assert their identity and autonomy. And here a process of re-creation is described, just as John describes the resurrection of Jesus as a re-creation process and has Jesus' first act on appearing to the disciples as that of breathing the Spirit into them.[16]

[12] Taylor, *The Go-Between God*, 126.
[13] Taylor, *The Go-Between God*, 148.
[14] Taylor, *The Go-Between God*, 149.
[15] Gen. 2:7.
[16] John's illusions to the creation framework for the resurrection are clear. We begin in a garden (19:41) on the first day of the week (20:1). Thus John interprets the resurrection as the first day of a new age in which the creation is being recreated and brought into its renewed identity and purpose within the sovereign will of God.

Chris Wright therefore comments:

> The most significant echo of Ezekiel [37] comes in a locked room on the very evening of his resurrection, when, we read, "he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" The Lord of life himself, freshly risen to his feet from where he had lain among the bones of the dead, adopts simultaneously the posture of Ezekiel in summoning the breath of God, and the posture of God himself in commanding the breath of the Spirit to come upon the disciples.[17]

The vision therefore propels Israel forward, urges them to avoid nostalgic visions of restoration and begins to imagine renewal as a radically new thing that God will do with the elements of the old to resurrect Israel into a people of the future.

A NEW KIND OF LEADERSHIP

This refounding of the mission of the people of Israel, therefore, invites a new kind of leadership: one that enables the stewarding of the participation of the whole community in the life of the Spirit; one that is committed to avoiding the controlling and over-organising tendencies of heavy institution. There is something about the language used to describe the work of the Spirit in this vision that points to the unpredictable and uncontrollable nature of the Spirit. The word *ruach* is multivalent and fluid, playful and indistinct, sometimes noun (e.g. breath, wind) and at points verb (breathe). It is as though the language of the Spirit is itself inviting a leadership that is humble and more peripheral in the light of this new initiative of God's Spirit, which in its form cannot be too closely defined. It invites a leadership less in thrall to strategies, plans, outcomes and measurables; after all, as Taylor puts it, "the Holy Spirit does not appear to have read the rubric".[18]

I suggest there are two key characteristics that will help to describe the nature the kind of leadership needed to participate in the innovating work of the Holy Spirit. They are discernment and stewardship.

Innovative leadership will value revealed knowledge as much, if not more, than received knowledge. It will place huge emphasis on seeking the leading and wisdom of the Spirit in community. Consequently, discernment becomes a key task of leadership. It is not the task of the leader to roll out the predetermined, pre-packed plan over a fixed term, using the community as resource to achieve this. Instead, it is the leader's task to model a discipline of attentiveness to God's Spirit as a means of discerning where the Spirit is at work and how the community can participate. Our images of leadership may need to change therefore from the hero or CEO to the sage, from the likes of Jason Bourne or Warren Buffett to those of Dumbledore or Gandalf – leaders who may well be noted for their absence rather than their presence, but whose discerning wisdom gently guides and affirms those participating in the drama of God's Kingdom life.[19] The differentiation of these leaders from the need to be at the centre of things, driving the agenda, makes for a space in which attentiveness to the Spirit and discernment for the direction of the community can flourish.

This places a much greater emphasis on the character and spirituality of leadership rather than on strategic ability or natural authority. A vision for charismatic innovation invites a leadership that can foster the creativity and initiative of a whole community through prayer, discernment and wise guidance.

This leads to the second characteristic – of stewardship. Leadership that fosters the innovation of the Spirit will be leadership that stewards the context and resources of the Christian community to enable the flourishing of its life and mission. The role of the leader can be understood, Graham Tomlin suggests, as one whose call is to bless the church, not in some top-down pseudo-magical way, but in the biblical sense of fostering its vocation as a community called to bless the world.[20] This will be expressed as stewardship, as the careful encouragement, affirmation and guidance of individuals and a community to fulfil their potential in the vocation that God has given them. Tomlin, drawing on the early church father Basil the Great's writing on priesthood, points to two metaphors for such leadership: the gardener and the parent.[21] Both are concerned with stewarding the best environment for growth and work with the context and resources at hand to enable the flourishing of life. Both are founded on a deep trust in the life already at work, either in the soil, the plant or the person. In the same way, leaders whose aim is to foster innovation in the church must take their place more humbly and peripherally in a space, trusting that the wind of the Spirit is already present and at work to foster creativity and innovation, and enabling the church to fulfil its call to be a blessing to the world.

[17] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel: A New Heart and a New Spirit* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2001), 310.
[18] Taylor, *The Go-Between God*, 120.
[19] David Runcorn cites Gandalf and Dumbledore as model of a less anxious, more peripheral kind of leadership – "both bring the gifts of widely lived and well-processed experience. Both are significant mentors and guides to younger characters... both are able to function peaceably without being the centre of the action". David Runcorn, *Fear and Trust: God-centred Leadership* (London: SPCK, 2011), 57.
[20] Graham Tomlin, *The Widening Circle: Priesthood as God's Way of Blessing the World* (London: SPCK, 2014).
[21] Tomlin, *The Widening Circle*, 148–152.

CONCLUSION

Ezekiel's journey through the valley of dry bones and the vision he receives embody a journey towards a leadership that can foster the creative power and insight of the Holy Spirit at work in the world and in the body of Christ. Such a journey begins with an honest confrontation with what has died, and an accompanying relinquishment of hubris and human-centred enterprise, which is so often the default mode of the people of God when it is allowed to settle into a position of power.

The presence and primary initiative of the Holy Spirit invites a leadership that creates space for participation in the church. This will mean careful stewarding of the nature of size of Christian community with the chief aim being that of participation in the life and work of the Spirit. This requires leaders with the humility and committed spirituality to lead from the edge rather than the centre: to be leaders for whom a key practice is discernment; to be leaders whose wise and often peripheral presence creates the kind of trusting and affirming space for people to cooperate with the renewing work of God's Holy Spirit.

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SPREADING MESSILY...

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Lucy Moore

ONE OF THE ACTIVITIES IN *MESSY CHURCH DOES SCIENCE* IS EXTRACTING HUMAN DNA.

Dr Dave Gregory, author of the book and Baptist Union President, took great glee in extracting the Archbishop of York's DNA, dangling it in a glistening strand from the end of a stick. It's probably the closest we get in Messy Church to cloning. (Is the world ready for a battalion of Sentamus to be unleashed?) We might not be cloning, but God is undoubtedly creating new life in other ways in and through Messy Church.

AN ENVIRONMENT FOR GROWTH

What factors have caused Messy Church to grow over the last 14 years? We all know there's nothing new about the different elements of Messy Church: for years churches have cooked meals, been creative, had a heart for families. There are several factors that have made the Messy Church concept fly, the first few being cultural:

- The timing, arriving as it did at the same time as the permission given by the Church to reimagine church after *Mission-Shaped Church.*
- The culture of desperation felt by so many churches around their lack of under-16s.
- The growing understanding around the need to be intergenerational if we want our children to grow up as confident disciples and members of church.
- The desire of parents and carers to spend time with their children, not split off from them in church, after a working week.

The structural factors include:

- The generosity of BRF (The Bible Reading Fellowship, home of Messy Church) in taking the risk of investing in the ministry.
- The growth of internet access and social media platforms, making it possible to communicate the concept with relatively limited resources.

The spiritual factors include:

- The Holy Spirit blowing where he wants to.
- The latent skills and leadership qualities of lay people in our churches desperate to be used in God's service.

Will it carry on growing? (We're currently registering on average one new Messy Church a day with an attrition rate of 10 or so a month.) Will it "work" for a season then fade away like the Sunday School Movement has? Does it actually matter, as long as churches are equipped and enabled to meet the needs of families in their communities *today*, the moment we have been called into? "I've really missed Messy Church over the summer," a mum said to me recently at my own Messy Church.

People often ask, "When you started Messy Church, did you expect it to get this big?" When we started, it was just to be a blessing to our own community. So... no. Was it a surprise? Every day.

Some ideas for mission are great and their owners might ask us for help with "going big". One thing I feel strongly about is that an initiative should be created with total integrity, tailor-made for the people it's trying to serve rather than trying to prove an abstract concept, or, indeed, to aim to head up an organisation. If you're genuinely concerned for the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of the 90-year-old limbo-dancing, ketchup-drinking, hornpipe-dancing inhabitants of a remote island off the Lincolnshire coast, you'll create something very focused on those people, rather than creating something around geriatric ecclesiology in the hope that the result might be transferable elsewhere. When we created Messy Church, it was not about "How can we get the whole Church to be all-age?" but "How can we be a church for and with that family waiting at the bus stop in our suburb? How do they want to worship God? What was the good news of Jesus for them? When were they free? What could we give as a church that they wouldn't get anywhere else?" (Hornpipes didn't really come into it. Ketchup did.)

FROM INNOVATION TO REPLICATION

What have we learned about replication as the network has grown from one example to around 4000 in 20 to 30 countries? On the negative side, registering trademarks and logos is a hideously costly necessity, once things grow beyond a certain size. "Brand" is a dirty word in Christian circles. Christians hate – *really* hate! – being told, "Sorry, no, you can't..."

The tension between creative improvisation around Messy Church and naming anything that involves children, pasta or glue sticks a "Messy Church" is a real one. Any apparent protectionism around the name is actually about avoiding misunderstanding: about helping families understand what to expect, whether they go to their local Messy Church in Manchester or visit one on holiday in Melbourne.

But as the Messy Church concept spreads into different spheres, how to keep the clarity of the original concept while acknowledging that calling something "Messy..." might (weirdly) help that initiative succeed? A church ran a "Family Fun" that was dying; they rebranded it as Messy Church and it thrived from that day on. We find "Messy Toddlers" starting up, for example: is this actually Messy Church, as the logo and name may imply? Or is it actually toddler crafts, piggybacking on the success of the Messy Church name, but creating confusion on the wider horizon by associating Messy Church with small children, paper-plate crafts and a biscuit, when Messy Church itself is inherently all-age, involves far more than craft and always has a sit-down meal?

Does it matter if, locally, Messy Church itself becomes identified solely with under-fives? How big is "local"? Just in that village, county, district, country? How soon in its development should anyone from BRF suggest this wonderful but distinct ministry chooses a different name? It's extremely difficult to be wise!

People assume size means raking in the cash and that surely we sell so many books that we're making plenty of money. The fact is that while the network and its needs keep growing, the sources of funding are drying up and BRF works unbelievably hard to finance the support it gives local Messy Churches. Seed funding from trusts is no longer available. Selling affordable books makes peanuts. Where should the money come from to keep the website running, to keep the training sessions affordable, to have someone available to answer the queries from Teddington, Truro or Trinidad? Sustainability of something sizeable is tough.

More positively, the best advice about growth that we were given in the early days was from George Lings, author of *Reproducing Churches*[1], who told us not to worry about the shape of Messy Church as it spreads, but to concentrate on the *values* behind it, and let the shape look after itself. This has proved excellent advice and has enabled us to give a very generous understanding of what Messy Church is. The values are defined as Christ-centred, hospitable, all-age, creative and celebratory. This has given permission for churches to be flexible with what order to put on the component parts, what day of the week or time of day to choose, what themes to explore, what weight to give to their own particular churchmanship. In short, each church can contextualise these values for their own setting while keeping the integrity of the concept. It could mean it helps to make it future-proof too; time will tell.

MAINTAINING THE FLOW OF THE MESSY RIVER OF LIFE

We've discovered that the Messy ministry is a bit like a river fed by tributaries. As riverbank managers, our tiny team has a certain amount of routine maintenance to do on the robust structures that help people begin and continue well. These structures enable people to register if they want to, answers FAQs made easily discoverable online and find available training. But most of all, relationships must be maintained around the world and across the denominations: all in the day-to-day running of God's happily gushing initiative.

On top of that, you can imagine the dredging and weeding that needs doing to keep the river flowing. And our small "central" team insists on being involved in the running of a local Messy Church too, in order to stay real – this is also part of that non-pioneering, unglamorous "pressing on towards the goal".[2] Our recent intern's first job was to go and meet the leader of the Messy Church she wanted to join.

The main river is refreshed and nutrients added to it by different tributaries that feed into it. These are the short- or long-term projects and initiatives, people and organisations that have a beneficial effect on the body of the river and keep it fresh and flowing – and might even steer it into a slightly different direction. The Messy Church Does Science initiative is one of these, as is Messy Vintage, the #RealMe campaign, the collaboration with Southwark and Hereford Dioceses, Messy Liturgy, the Messy Church International Conference, our Messy Intern commitment and so many more. Without them, the maintenance alone would run the risk of the river becoming a stagnant pond. With them, we meet inspirational people from a range of backgrounds and are given the opportunity for fresh insights from different sources.

For individual Messy Churches, the possibilities for innovating, pioneering and experimenting are endless. If, as a pioneer, you start getting fed up with maintenance – the plod of running a church rather than the high-energy of organising a one-off event – don't give up on it, dig a deeper channel! As George Lings said, "Don't tinker with the shape: develop the values."

1 George Lings, *Reproducing Churches* (Abingdon: BRF, 2017).
2 Philippians 3:14.

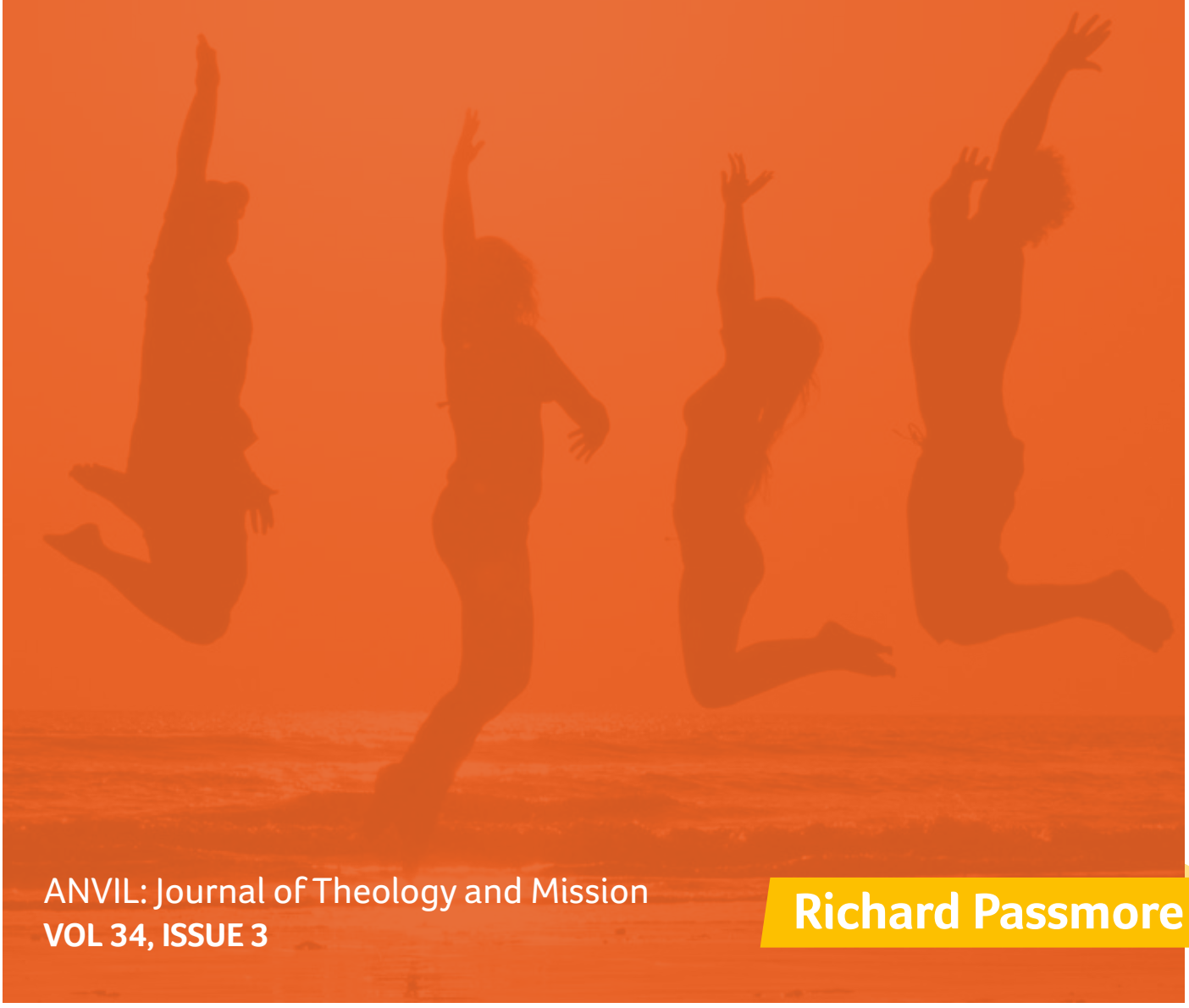
How does your initiative, Messy or not, encourage discipleship among its members? How is your team growing in faith? How are your members learning to express faith at home, school and work? What are you doing with your teenagers or they with you? There's so much to develop and pioneer with integrity at a local level, bringing in your own God-given vision, your own insights and those of the fast-changing culture we live in to create something unique to the specific groups with whom you are called to work.

If the insights you gain are useful to the wider Church, that's wonderful; if they're uniquely helpful only to those in your community, that's something awesome to celebrate too.

With or without ketchup.

Lucy Moore is founder and team leader of Messy Church at The Bible Reading Fellowship and author of several of the Messy Church books. www.messychurch.org.uk, FB, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram: MessyChurchBRF

TRANSPARENT OPERATIONS, REAL RELATIONSHIPS AND CONSTRUCTIVE DISRUPTION



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Richard Passmore

IN 2015 I MOVED FROM THE FRONTIER YOUTH TRUST TO MY CURRENT ROLE AS FRESH EXPRESSIONS ENABLER IN THE DIOCESE OF CARLISLE.

This move, from an organisation that has always been on the edge and committed to being in a liminal space to follow a call to work within the institution, was something I was always going wrestle with.

I knew that if I was going to do so, and have any chance of surviving as a pathfinding dissenter and pioneer, I needed to find a space with an "authority dissenter" and find ways to pioneer into the structure as well as the wider culture.[1] In Carlisle diocese I not only found a great authority dissenter in Bishop Robert Freeman but an ecumenical approach to mission and church that was on the cusp of taking seriously the need to change (see www.godforall.org.uk).

The county was reorganising around the God for All vision, which states that "by 2020 every person in Cumbria of all ages and backgrounds will have had an opportunity to discover more of God and God's purpose for their lives, so that they will discover more of Jesus and the Good News and become followers of Jesus within a Christian community".[2] They were moving towards genuine ecumenical mission communities and reorganising the support systems in training and development around four "Reach" areas:

- MeReach – ways Christians share their faith and life through the events, encounters and opportunities of ordinary life.
- InReach – ways to support, strengthen and innovate what churches are already doing (or might be doing) to become more welcoming and attractional, and to make the most of the opportunities that are already there.
- OutReach – ways to help churches and Christians reach out into their communities and beyond their circle of friendship, and evangelise and make contact through loving service or working for justice beyond the immediate sphere of activity of the existing church. This includes developing "fresh expressions" such as Messy Church and Network Youth Church.
- BigReach – Cumbria-wide marketing, initiatives and projects that stimulate people to think about where God is in their life, and encourage them to explore further. BigReach aims to connect with people who have little or no contact with church.

The four areas of IN, ME, BIG and OUT have helped set the context of evangelism and the establishment of a new training department. A team to support the Reach elements and move to mission communities started the process towards the evangelisation of Cumbria and the turn towards mission so needed in the church.

However, for a church rooted in a structural paradigm, developing a system that was going to be able to respond to the current cultural context and growing understanding of mission in post-Christian culture was always going to be challenging. At my interview, I was honest with the bishop that I thought fresh expressions were the institution's attempt to control the emerging church. Despite this I was still offered the post and so, coming from an emerging church rather than a fresh expressions background, I needed to find a space to develop a more experimental approach.

THIRD SPACE FRESH EXPRESSIONS

Utilising the growing capital of fresh expressions language, much of my early work was around developing third space fresh expressions that were deliberately not connected with local mission communities and churches. These were set up to be pathfinders, to constructively disrupt, to be innovative, to playfully push the boundaries of orthodoxy and to embrace the heretical imperative of challenging the status quo both in terms of thinking and practice.

Two examples of this are Mountain Pilgrims and Maranatha Yoga. Mountain Pilgrims developed out of discussions with local ultra-long distance fell runner John Fleetwood. The initial project was putting together a Lakeland Pilgrimage designed by John, who knows the Lakes well. As the Lakes lends itself as a great setting for outdoor-focused reflections, the next natural step was the development of Mountain Pilgrims.

[1] Gerald Arbuckle describes dissenters as those "who offer alternative ways of acting to a group". Pathfinding dissenters are those innovating and pioneering in a more local context within the framework of a particular institution. "Authority dissenters" hold appointed positions in institutions and have the power to give permission for innovation and change. They are key to enabling pathfinding dissenters to fulfil their call. See Gerald Arbuckle, *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), 6–7, 110.

[2] "God for All – Our Vision," www.carlislediocese.org.uk/our-vision (accessed 20 September 2018).

Mountain Pilgrims is not affiliated to any church; it has developed organically. Those who attend help shape the focus and direction of the group, whether this is a more family-focused approach, such as 4th Sunday Adventure Mini Pilgrims, or a contemplative edge, such as Abbey, who meet in a little-used rural church building.

At an event I met Christine, a yoga teacher who had faced opposition to the idea of yoga in a Christian context in the past. By supporting and encouraging Christine, Maranatha Yoga was born and we now have regular monthly groups in Kendal, Cumbria. Christine has also put her knowledge and extensive experience of practising yoga as a Christian into a book on Maranatha Yoga, which we hope to have published soon. The Wheel of Yoga have requested a postgraduate module be written to train others in Maranatha – how's that for a bit of constructive disruption?

FOSTERING INNOVATION IN THE WHOLE CHURCH

The growth of these early developments made clear the need to invest in developing work with people outside of the structures and possible cultural reach of church as we know it. An increasingly pressing question was how to foster an appropriate space and climate for pioneering to thrive that benefits both traditional church and those outside.

To foster the innovation needed two key levers; transparent operations and real relationships were utilised. Most missiologists would suggest the maximum reach of the church (due to cultural and sociological ties) is around 5–15 per cent of the population within which the church exists. This is because IN reach is based on people reaching out to their friends and family, and them in turn reaching out. However, as people like to meet people with similar interests and values, this reach is limited.

Pioneering is about the space beyond the IN reach that is possible through traditional church and the transformation of the world outside. Currently the church still gives the impression that ministry is an "in church" activity rather than a gift for both church and world. Pioneer ministry is ministry at the liminal edge between church and world. It's about engagement with the unchurched and dechurched majority.

As such it needs a different structural organisation than the more hierarchical operating system often used by the church, and the third spaces hinted at what this might be. The majority of pioneer ministers so far identified by the church are lay, and this emphasis fits in well with the "God for All" strategy. Historically, the church functions best when these "sodal" mission-focused ministries work alongside the "modal" organised church.[3]

The growth and focus meant that in Cumbria we quickly reached a stage of development where it was vital that strategic choices were made about the kinds of pioneer ministry that should be prioritised for resourcing, and how they should be nurtured, supported and reproduced.

Implementation of "God for All" led to a growing appetite on the ground for resources, and training, particularly targeted at people in groups and settings that would be seen as pioneer contexts. The use of transparent operations and real relationships has led to a distinct correlation between the growth of the third space fresh expressions and local churches becoming bolder and more imaginative in reaching the fringe – so much so that the growth of fresh expressions has surpassed expectations with roughly one new FX bubbling up every month with a growing diversity. The challenge ahead is how to not only nurture the breadth of growth but establish a depth to the pioneer charism that is sparking into life, and nurture discipleship within fresh expressions.

GROWTH WITHIN THE EXISTING OPERATING AND ORGANISATIONAL SYSTEM

Thus far, significant resource investment in reach and training has created supporting structures for the process of transition to mission communities. This has seen the church begin to expand into the potential 15 per cent of its reach, using existing structures that have been described by John Kotter as "Operating System 1" (hierarchy).[4] While it is important that we encourage all people and clergy to be more pioneering, we must recognise that pioneering outside the church is a particular gift, and spotting the gaps outside the church and making the most of them is also a gift to church. As pioneers are released to act on the opportunities, they themselves are pushed towards the edge, and ever more towards creative imaginative mission that in turn helps the church move.

[3] See for example Ralph D. Winter, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission," available at www.undertheiceberg.com/wp-content/uploads/2006/04/Sodality-Winter%20on%20Two%20Structures1.pdf (accessed 20 September 2018).

[4] John Kotter, *Accelerate: Building Strategic Agility for a Faster-Moving World* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2014).

DEVELOPING THE RIGHT OPERATING AND ORGANISATIONAL SYSTEM TO SUPPORT PIONEERING

Arbuckle argues that "the new belongs elsewhere"[5] and while the evidence on the ground across Cumbria is that fresh expression ministries are growing, there is also clear evidence that when pioneering is nurtured and supported in its own dedicated space or community both the depth and breadth of evangelism can flourish, particularly when in relationship with other churches and networks.[6] These spaces have often been seen throughout church history as religious communities, with a second order of formation and discipleship. Kotter would suggest that in times of huge change an organisation also needs a second Operating System (see figure 1): a system that makes the most of the opportunities as they present themselves, doesn't take no for an answer and finds new ways to reach new people. The second system is akin to what Rooke and Torbert call the Alchemist leadership approach; "What sets Alchemists apart from Strategists is their ability to renew or even reinvent themselves and their organizations in historically significant ways".[7] This is something the church needs to do and if Phyllis Tickle is correct in her book *The Great Emergence*, it is something the church is in midst of anyway.[8]

While this paper is not specific to a particular pioneering community, evidence from a recent report on the CMS pioneer leadership course shows that dedicated support of pioneer leaders directly impacts growth of that ministry. 40 per cent of the pioneers started something new and 50 per cent added something new to their existing work. CMS pioneers spoke of a growing confidence, community, language and tools for imaginative mission. They also reported a growing sense of vocational awareness and that CMS was an environment in which they could flourish.[9] These outcomes come from the sense of community that grows through the time spent together, the theological education and formation process that a dedicated programme and space of support offers.

Figure 1

Informal networks of change agents

operate under the hierarchical radar to make something new happen faster.

The processes in this network look less like management and more like

mobilised leadership.

This type of experience was often mirrored by what we were seeing in Cumbria. One minster stated (referring to one of the third space fresh expressions), "I might not be doing anything as mad as Richard, but I'll give this a go!" So to be effective in reaching the 85 per cent of the population of Cumbria beyond the church's immediate reach we are now fostering a second operating system, which maintains good relationships with the first but is creating and nurturing the pioneer charism that is evident. By operating the third space fresh expressions in such a transparent way, and nurturing real relationships

[5] Arbuckle, *Refounding the Church*, 119–20.

[6] Good examples of this happening elsewhere are Church Mission Society, StreetSpace, Incarnate.

[7] David Rooke and William R Torbert, "Seven Transformations of Leadership," *Harvard Business Review*, April 2005, https://hbr.org/2005/04/seven-transformations-of-leadership (accessed 24 September 2018).

[8] Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012).

[9] Andy Schofield and Liz Clutterbuck, "Pioneer Mission Leadership Training: Five Years On – An Evaluation for CMS," Cocreate Consulting, Sept 2015, available to download at pioneer.churchmissionsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/PMLT-Report.pdf.

with local churches and then ensuring the stories from the frontier are fed back, we hopefully will continue to see confidence and innovative mission action locally.

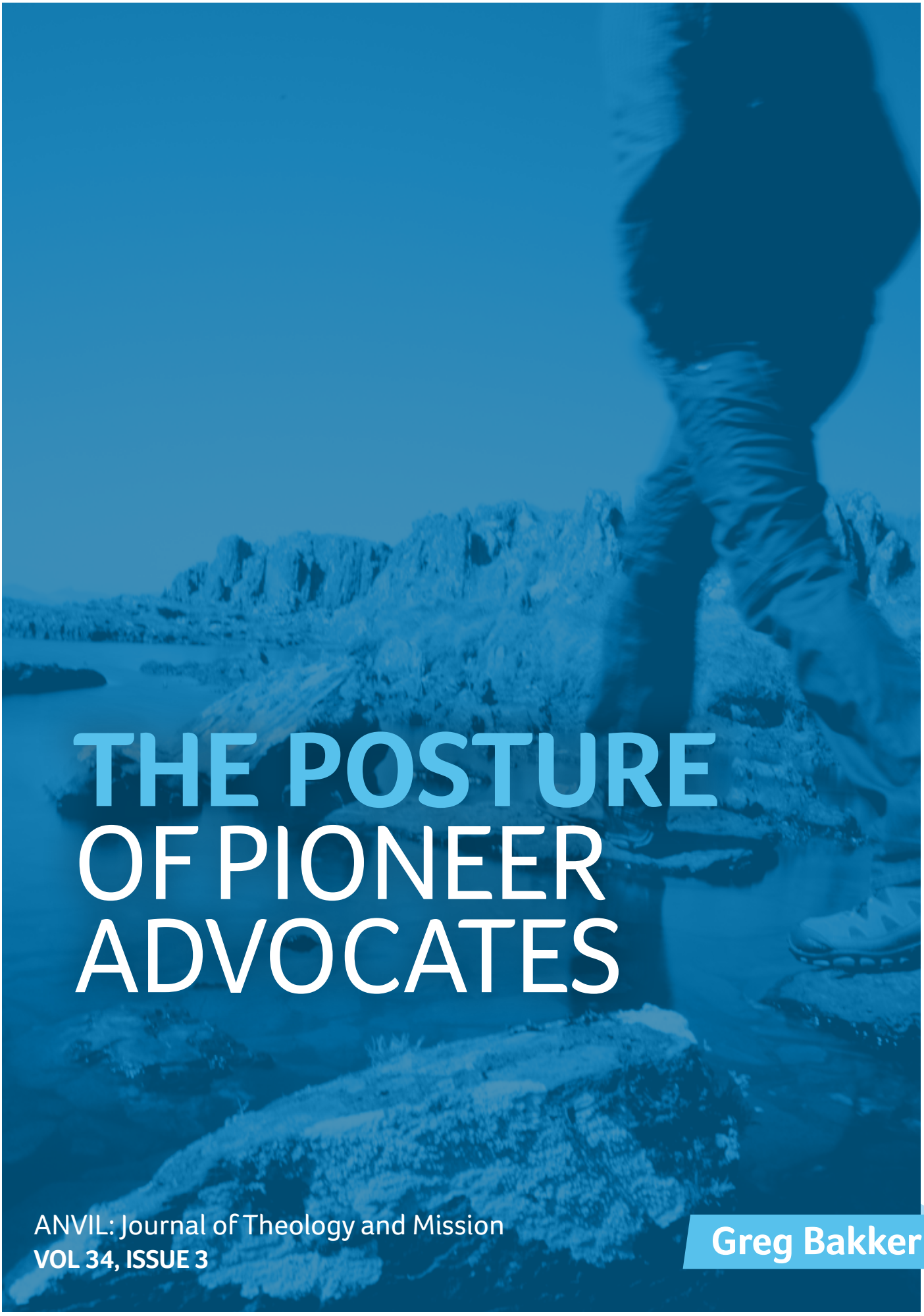
PIONEERING A PIONEERING OPERATING SYSTEM

We are now developing a multichannel network of pioneer practitioner enablers and a new northern pioneer learning centre to support a pioneer ministry that mirrors the agility and imagination that it seeks to encourage. However, we know that it needs to maintain close links with, and be of benefit to and benefit from, the inherited system we are seeking to evolve. Indeed, you could argue that church history shows us that the inherited system cannot evolve without an effective sodal enterprise. This is important as the pace and scale of change being sought locally will mean any system supporting pioneers will need to be able to pivot according to needs and developments as they occur and cope with the scale of growth being experienced.

While the new system will focus on Cumbria, learning from other established pioneer communities also shows the need to foster a community that is more regional and highly networked. The Church Army reports highlight many of the issues raised, and the report by Andy Weir particularly raises the need for structure to be more creative, imaginative and discerning in the way it uses money and other resources to support fresh expressions of Church.[10] It is also clear that the context and demand for pioneer work offers a unique opportunity to foster pioneer networks across the north that will improve the reach and sustainability of pioneering locally and help mission communities turn towards mission as the two operating systems work together.

Richard Passmore is fresh expressions enabler for Cumbria. He previously worked with Frontier Youth Trust, heading up the StreetSpace community and teaching youth work, mission and theology with the Centre for Youth Ministry. He is the author of several books, most recently *Here Be Dragons* which was co-authored with Lori Passmore and James Ballentyne and is available via FYT.org.uk. Now in Cumbria he is helping the churches across the region develop a range of regional fresh expressions including Mountain Pilgrims, Maranatha Yoga, Network Youth Church and a host of local variations.

[10] Andy Weir, "Sustaining young Churches: A qualitative pilot study of fresh expressions of Church in the Church of England" (Sheffield: Church Army Research Unit, 2016), available at: https://www.churcharmy.org/Articles/516318/What_we_do/Research_Unit/Fresh_expressions_of.aspx (accessed 24 September 2018).



THE POSTURE OF PIONEER ADVOCATES

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Greg Bakker

PIONEER ADVOCATES ARE "KEY PEOPLE FOR THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH".[1] THIS IS A WEIGHTY AFFIRMATION FOR ALL THOSE WHO LABOUR WITHIN PAROCHIAL SETTINGS.

This paper will outline the important role of advocacy by exploring the posture of pioneer advocates and describing the challenges of perception they may experience.

OUTLOOK AND ATTITUDES

Posture, metaphorically speaking, is about the outlook, attitude and behaviour of a person or an organisation. Initially, I thought of pioneer advocacy in terms of strategies and techniques to be mastered. I quickly discovered that this role is far more about posture. The way in which advocates see and act defines their role in supporting pioneers.

What does the posture of pioneer advocates look like? Primarily, pioneer advocates seek to influence, support and resource pioneering through the influencing of parochial and diocesan structures. Pioneer advocacy involves commitments to the following:

- championing equality within the mixed economy
- building bridges between established and new forms of church, and
- wrestling with personal perceptions of pioneer ministry.

CHAMPIONING EQUALITY WITHIN THE MIXED ECONOMY

Pioneer advocates champion equality between the established and new expressions of church. While there has been much talk about the mixed economy since the release of the *Mission-Shaped Church* report, the weight of privilege, status and resources is still heavily tipped in favour of the inherited structures.

In her book, Barbara Brown Taylor writes of her experience of *Leaving Church*:

> If I developed a complaint during my time in the wilderness, it was that Mother Church lavished much more attention on those at the centre than those on the edge.[2]

The inherited church often pulls inordinate amounts of energy, talent and finances to the centre in order to meet its own internal needs. Even when parish churches start supporting fresh expressions, there can sometimes be the underlying assumption that pioneers will fill the pews for us again. It is difficult for those in the centre to conceive that the parochial organisation may not directly benefit from any pioneer project.

Pioneer advocates seek to rebalance the level of attention given to those on the inside of a church community. They take up this challenge by redirecting people and financial resource towards the engagement of people on the margins. They are robust in asserting that pioneering projects and fresh expressions are not extensions of the parish church nor for its benefit. Pioneer advocates insist that fresh expressions have a "legitimacy of existence" in their own right, regardless of their stage of development.[3]

Invariably, giving greater attention to those on the edge will make some at the centre deeply uncomfortable, perhaps even leaving them with a sense they are no longer important. To adapt an old adage, "When you're accustomed to all the attention, equality feels like oppression."[4] Pioneer advocates will need to employ multiple strategies when championing the rebalancing required to reach greater parity within the mixed economy: gentle reassurance, patient listening, recognising ordinary problems as amazing opportunities, relentlessly inviting parish churches to look outward and shaping a new consensus.

[1] Dave Male, "Pioneer Ministry: Proposal for a working definition of pioneer" (London: Archbishops' Council), 4.

[2] Barbara Taylor Brown, *Leaving Church: A Memoir of Faith* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2011), 175.

[3] My pioneer colleague Jon Oliver often uses this phrase in conversations with those working in the established structures.

[4] Based on an unattributed quotation. See Chris Boeskoll, "When You're Accustomed to Privilege, Equality Feels Like Oppression", *Huffington Post*, 3 December 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/chris-boeskool/when-youre-accustomed-to-privilege_b_9460662.html.

Ultimately, the commitment to championing equality within the mixed economy means that advocates will think strategically about what can be done for pioneers and fresh expressions to receive the "gifts of security and assured identity".[5]

BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN THE ESTABLISHED AND THE NEW

The expectation of the institutional church has been that pioneers are the bridge between the established and the new. Often this meant that pioneers were held responsible for managing the relationship between fresh expressions and the inherited model of church. More recently, some pioneers have begun to challenge this assumption. Jon Oliver, for example, asserts that it is appropriate for advocates to be the bridge, for they understand the structures of the inherited form of church and appreciate the need for the entrepreneurial spirit of pioneers.[6]

As bridge builders, pioneer advocates then take the lead in creating space for those participating in the inherited and new models of church to engage constructively with one another. From these conversations flow the possibility of shared understanding and appreciation for the other expression of church. Even more importantly, this engagement may reveal ways in which both models of church may be able to support the other in fulfilling its missional call.

WRESTLING WITH PERSONAL PERCEPTIONS OF PIONEER MINISTRY

Collaborating with pioneers requires advocates to deal honestly with the discomfort that often arises when working alongside pioneers.

One widespread complaint about pioneers and fresh expressions is that the inherited church is no longer valued. In fact, some parish clergy feel redundant and marginalised. For advocates, it can be deeply painful on a personal level to see everything through the eyes of a pioneer. Yet the parochial still has a significant role to play. Pioneering ideally should inspire vibrant parochial ministry. There are ample opportunities available to us if we dare to work through the questions of value/significance and rise to the challenge of greater outward-looking ministry.

In addition, advocates can often feel lonely within the inherited model. When I describe how I collaborate with pioneers, I frequently get pushback from those working exclusively within parochial circles. Pronouncements generally come in the form of assertive questions:

- "How can you let pioneers get away with that?"
- "What gives pioneers the right to do that? Who do they think they are?"
- "Why aren't pioneers committed to the Church of England's worship and structures?"
- "Why aren't your pioneers helping you with services and occasional offices?"

Advocacy means working constructively through the isolation that comes from engaging with others who are perhaps feeling vulnerable about their own roles.

Another common complaint within parochial circles is that pioneers are sheep rustlers, stealing the best volunteers. Often, this isn't the case at all. What many pioneers do well is sell a vision. In my particular case, volunteers approached our pioneers because they were excited about the opportunities on offer. No requests for volunteers had been made. It is easy to blame pioneers for being attractive. There is a simple solution for the parish church: raise your game.

Lastly, there is a perception among parochial clergy that pioneers have a better quality of life. Often while looking at social media, I glimpsed how pioneer colleagues were enjoying their lives. It looked like pioneers have a pretty great gig. They had all kinds of space for friendship, people and weekend outings to beautiful places. My response was grumpiness. Initially, I turned off social media so I wouldn't see it any more. Then a better solution occurred to me. If I want more of the things that feed me as a person, I have to work less and say "no" more.

SIGNIFICANCE

Pioneer advocates do indeed play a key role in helping to shape the future of mission. Advocacy is a vocation to release, resource and protect the calling of pioneers.

[5] George Lings, *Encountering The Day of Small Things* (Summary Volume) (Sheffield: Church Army, 2017), 24–25. Lings reveals that 88 per cent of fresh expressions have no legal status. One all too common problem is what happens to fresh expressions in a parish context when a new incumbent arrives. Some new incumbents assume the role of "the wicked step-father". An alternative metaphor employed by the Church Army Research Unit to spark discussion on this topic is to describe fresh expressions as "ecclesial immigrants". Fresh expressions are "immigrants doing good work who have not yet been given leave to remain, let alone acquire British citizenship", Church Army's Research Unit, *Church Growth Research Project Report on Strand 3b: An analysis of fresh expressions of Church and church plants* (Sheffield: Church Army, 2013), 95.

[6] Jon Oliver, *Pioneering & Participating* (2017) (private paper).

Advocacy presents challenges that call forth the best in those who engage in its work. The role also demands an authenticity about dealing with the personal perceptions around pioneering that naturally rise to the surface. Pioneer advocacy is a deeply uncomfortable vocation. Yet I now recognise that pioneer advocacy is the most significant role I've ever undertaken as a leader in supporting God's mission.

Greg Bakker is Vicar of Sholing in Southampton. He is committed to nurturing and negotiating space for pioneers and pioneering to flourish.

RESTORING THE PLACE OF CREATION AND CREATIVITY AS TOOLS IN MISSION

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Katrina Moss

GOD IS A GOD OF AWE AND WONDER, WHO REVEALS HIMSELF IN A MYRIAD OF WAYS, BUT HIS FIRST DEMONSTRATION WAS THROUGH THE CREATION OF THE WORLD:

> God's splendour is a tale that is told; his testament is written in the stars. Space itself speaks his story every day through the marvels of the heavens. His truth is on tour in the starry vault of the sky, showing his skill in creation's craftsmanship.[1]

> For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature.[2]

So we see that creation itself testifies to God's power, his divine nature and his creativity.

In this visual age we live in, with the huge popularity of YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, people constantly crave visual stimulation, slavishly accessing their phones and tablets. However, it is all too rare to see creation and creativity being used by the church as a tool in mission.

Yet the first person in the Bible God chooses to fill with his Spirit is not a leader, a teacher, a preacher or a priest, but a skilled creative: Bezalel, the chief artisan of the Tabernacle, who was in charge of building the Ark of the Covenant, the place where the presence – the glory of God – would reside.

> Then the Lord said to Moses, "See I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills – to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts."[3]

One of my passions is finding ways to communicate God's heart in creative ways to those who don't know him. I think we totally underestimate his desire and ability to speak to us in unusual, original and surprising ways.

We all hear from God in many different ways. The two projects I feel that have produced the most Kingdom fruit have come in a single download each time and involve God using creation and creativity as mission tools to communicate his heart.

GOD OFTEN SPEAKS AT UNEXPECTED TIMES

The first one came in April 2009 when my husband and I were travelling home from a weekend church conference. We had made a detour to TK Maxx, and a misunderstanding resulted in an unpleasant row. Instead of escalating the argument, I started talking to God and he began to give me the idea for a new evangelistic tool. My husband probably thought I was sulking in silence, but I was actually concentrating, listening attentively to what I felt God was saying to me.

After writing down the original idea, which became the Ruach Blessing Cards,[4] I then spent the next 12 months talking to different church leaders, praying, listening, designing and redesigning the 84 different cards. For me, the idea and making it into reality is often the most enjoyable part. I love the research part, planning how things should take shape and thinking outside of the box. I then made one set of the Ruach Cards for my own use. After seeing some interest from a few Christians with a heart to reach spiritual seekers, I then decided to take the plunge and get them printed. My first order was for 100 sets of cards. I also started running a day's training course on how to use them, giving biblical foundations and ensuring people were using the cards in the right way, with the right motivation to communicate God's love for the people they would be reaching. The initial course was a success and was the first of many. Fast forward nearly 10 years: there are three additional trainers, and many Christians across the UK have been trained in their use. This very visual and prophetic evangelistic tool has now reached hundreds of spiritual seekers with God's heart for them at psychic fairs, music festivals and church outreach events in the UK and overseas.

I have felt challenged and humbled on many occasions that the people I trained have been more engaged than I have with God's heart while using the cards, and I think this is part of the role of a pioneer – to bring to birth

[1] Ps. 19:1 (The Passion Translation).
[2] Rom. 1:20 (New Living Translation).
[3] Exod. 31:1–5 (New International Version).
[4] For more information of the Ruach Blessing cards, visit www.ruachcards.co.uk.

and ground the process, but allow God to use others to develop the vision and carry it forward.

HOW THE CHURCH CAN ENCOURAGE INNOVATION

I believe God is looking for people with a willing heart, an availability and a readiness to step out. Knowing how God speaks to you and knowing that he wants to use the passions, skills and gifts he has given to you is key in judging whether this is a "God idea". It's hard to imagine a God who takes such a personal interest in every detail of our lives, wires us the way we are – who would then expect us to walk in a completely different set of skills than those he has blessed us with.

Figure 1: People engaging in the exhibition of works shortlisted for the Chaiya Art Awards.

One of the ways the church can encourage innovation is by helping their people go deeper in their understanding of God's true nature and helping them to uncover his heart for them. Then they can begin to grasp that he has a specific plan and purpose for their life, which he has tailor-made for them and only they can fulfil. I found serving others in the areas I was excited by – creativity, prophecy and evangelism – released growth in me in those areas over many years.

WORKING IT OUT WITH OTHERS AND WITH GOD

The second idea came in the summer of 2016 while my sister and I were helping my mother, who had terminal cancer. I was praying for what to do with the next season in my life and the day my mother died, I woke up with a vision I felt was from God: to start a national art competition with a £10,000 top prize, to bring art and spirituality based on Christian themes back into the mainstream arena. Some of the world's greatest painters – including Rembrandt, Caravaggio, Vermeer, Delacroix, Gauguin, Bosch, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo – were inspired to recreate Bible stories and biblical themes in their work. The aims of the awards were to engage with today's artists, spark their imagination to explore the mystery of God and to create work that carried the splendour and presence of God. The awards provided opportunities for the public to encounter thought-provoking and Holy Spirit-inspired creativity, by making it intriguing and accessible to all – those from the Christian faith, those from other faiths or those with no faith at all.

After waiting for confirmation from God that this was an idea from him and discussing it with wise counsel, artists and art organisers, I realised that to launch a new national art initiative, to put on an exhibition in a mainstream London gallery with an accompanying coffee table-style book in an 18-month time frame, was a very tall order. It would need respected art judges, a curator, a venue, a publisher, sponsorship and a team to help implement publicity, administration, etc. However, I always think you should aim for excellence and aim high. It was not something I could make happen on my own, like the Ruach Cards. I knew I had to rely on God for all aspects, but I felt very confident that he had given me the vision, the relevant skills, passion and enthusiasm, and

that he would provide everything I needed, if I worked together with him.

And that for me is key: truly working in partnership with God. In the past I have taken on a project and then sought to use my God-given skills to make it happen – not excluding God, but not really involving him in the process

people to follow. You have to deal with a lot of scepticism and negativity (often from surprising sources). A good friend of mine says "know your tribe". Find those people who understand you and your areas of passion. We all need wise counsel, and you need to seek it out from people you not only respect, but people who will also

Figure 2: Detail of the winner of the Chaiya Art Awards: "A Thousand Bottles of Tears" by Deborah Tompsett.

to the extent that I think he wants or is beneficial. It is so easy when I am tired and/or stressed to take back the yoke and try to do it in my own strength, which can often result in high levels of stress, worry, anxiety, fear and even depression.

God lives in community with Jesus and the Holy Spirit and he wants us to live and work out our faith in relationship with others. As an innovator of projects, I find it challenging to find the balance between having the vision and yet staying open to the input of others, being confident in your God-given wisdom and not slipping into pride. I am often too focused on the end result and yet I know God is much more interested in my process on the journey, how I treat others and how I interact with him. This includes how you talk with people who don't share your perspectives, passions and calling, without resorting to being defensive.

To make an idea come to reality, you have to fight on a number of fronts. Usually with a pioneering innovation it hasn't been done before, so there are no road maps or

challenge your ideas and cause you to go back and seek God to gain greater depth and insight. I have felt absolutely blessed by the encouragement of others with faith and without who have generously given me their time and their advice. The outcome has been far richer as a result of their input.

HARD WORK, PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE

I launched the Chaiya Art Awards[5] in October 2017 on Movement Day at Westminster Central Hall with the theme "Where is God in our 21st Century World?". The competition deadline for artists was 31 January 2018. By December we had 87 entries, but in the next four weeks it shot up to 453! Then followed a frantic two months of judging, choosing the 43 exhibition pieces, working on the book, designing and preparing the exhibition, the private view with the BBC filming and then opening to the public. I have never read an account of anyone who achieved anything significant for God that said it came

[5] You can read more about the awards and see the winning exhibits, alongside thought-provoking word pictures and quotes in the accompanying book *Where is God in Our 21st Century World* (Watford: Instant Apostle, 2018), available from www.chaiyaartawards.co.uk or online via Instant Apostle instantapostle.com/books/where-is-god-in-our-21st-century-world.

Figure 3: Winner of the Chaiya Arts Public Vote Award: "Left Out" by Maxwell Rushton.

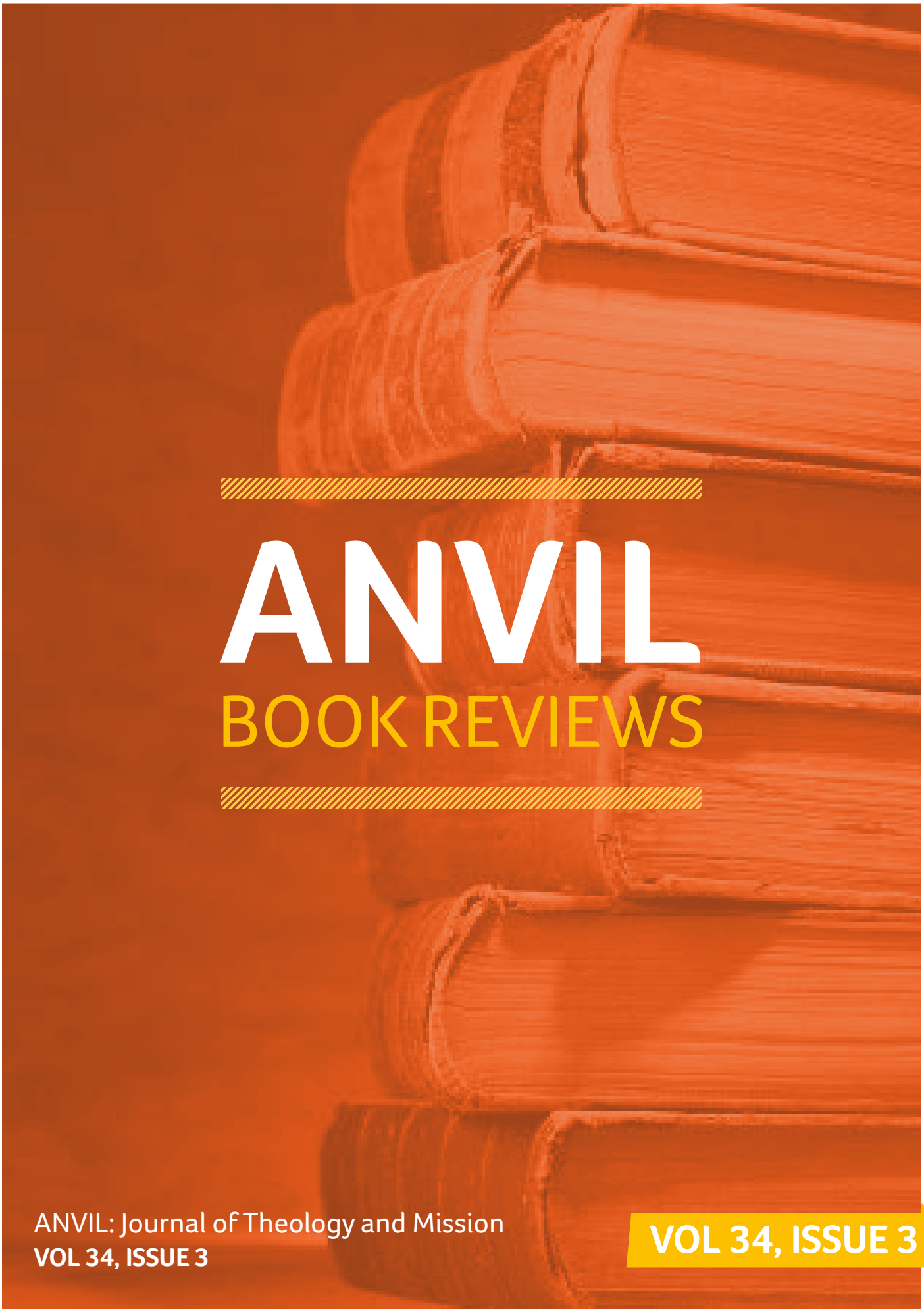
without trials or hard work. God's timing on provision never seems to quite match up with my anticipated timetable and yet he is never late. To pull together such a major new initiative in the short time frame was staggering, and that it was achieved was due to the kindness and encouragement of others, continual prayer support and the help of the team and my husband. Reading Grayson Perry's recent account of putting together the Royal Academy Summer Show this year, with the huge team and resources at their disposal, made me realise afresh what a miracle of provision God had accomplished.

I don't know whether the Chaiya Art Awards achieved all our aims, and maybe in years to come we will see the fruit of the seeds sown. However, we ended up with a fantastic exhibition of painting, sculpture, textiles, photography and video, bursting with richness and diversity, vulnerability and exploration, colour and fragility, treasure and beauty. Over 10 days we had over 2,700 visitors to the exhibition.

God blessed this project in numerous ways, including sponsorship from The Jerusalem Trust and the Bible Society, who also funded the Bezalel Award! Bezalel – Holy Spirit-anointed and empowered craftsman – should remind us all of the importance and value that God places on creation, creativity and beauty when displaying his majesty and splendour. It is mostly music that epitomises the arts in church. Yet the arts are so much more – painting, sculpture, textiles, video, ceramics, craft, dance, drama, poetry, etc. So many people in churches are gifted in these areas but have no outlet where they can explore or express their spirituality through their God-given talents. Contrast this to when Bezalel was building the Ark of the Covenant – people had to be asked to stop helping him and his fellow craftsmen![6] I hope that the Chaiya Art Awards will continue to evolve and flourish, and that it will inspire churches to support those with creative gifts and to provide encouragement to develop their skills and provide spaces for them to worship God with their gifts. As Degas said, "Art is not what you see, but what you make others see."

Katrina Moss is the founder of the national Chaiya Art Awards. They have a top prize of £10,000 and celebrate inspiring art that explores the depth and mystery of God. Although the competition has its roots in Christianity, these awards are about engaging with people of all faiths, those who have no belief in God and everyone in between. www.chaiyaartawards.co.uk

[6] Exod. 36:1–7.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1. NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016)

This classic commentary from James Dunn takes us into the world of what Dunn describes as "the most exciting book in the New Testament, probably in the whole Christian Bible" (p. ix). The Eerdmans edition is a revision of Dunn's 1996 original and has a nice look and style to it.

Dunn uses a tried and tested formula, breaking the book of Acts into workable sections and then analysing line by line. His introduction gives a good and punchy account of authorship, recipients, date and context – and we are never far away from Dunn's thorough brand of biblical scholarship – but his focus becomes the bread and butter of the text and he analyses this methodically and purposefully.

In the foreword, Scot McKnight acknowledges this approach and its value to preaching. He tells us how Dunn's commentary is the first he goes to and often he finds it thorough enough to not need more (p. viii). This kind of accolade is merited for a scholar of Dunn's weight but I wonder if it hits at the centre of the problem with this book.

Dunn's microscopic detail provides a valuable tool for an exegetical preacher working through Acts passage by passage, Sunday by Sunday. It also gives you everything you need to get to grips with the classic passages such as the Pentecost narrative in Acts 2, both to unpack the text but also to uncover the keys of its literary style.

What it possibly lacks is a strong enough overall narrative of Acts itself and explorations of the big themes. Dunn does write a short essay at the beginning of each section, but as each chapter concluded I found myself hopeful of a discussion of the sweeping themes of Acts – of the mission to the Gentiles, of the ecclesiology of those early churches, of the emergence of Paul's ministry.

For example, I was interested as a pioneer to hear Dunn's thoughts on Paul's contextualised gospel at the Areopagus in Athens. Dunn begins with a suggestion that here we find the "first principles of a natural theology" (p. 225), but then, other than occasional journeys into the detail of stoicism and an interesting discussion on Jewish vs Greek thinking (p. 233), we remain largely in Dunn's verse-by-verse style, which leaves this question of contextual readings of the gospel a little underdone.

Sadly, I was often left wanting more as the style and setup of the book meant we continued into the detail of each verse and each new section. In conclusion, I found myself agreeing with McKnight that, where a preach was required, this book would be perfect. However, the systematic scholar wanting a little bit more to uncover Acts' key themes and threads may end up a touch disappointed.

Andy Freeman, Sheffield

Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015)

Michael Gorman's *Becoming the Gospel* builds upon his two previous studies of Paul – *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (2001) and *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (2009) – but readers do not have to be familiar with these earlier works to appreciate and learn from *Becoming the Gospel*.

According to Gorman, Paul's aim is that the churches that he founded and continued to influence should not simply believe the gospel; rather, they should embody the good news that they have come to believe. When Christians embody the gospel, they become partners with God in mission. Paul's letters to the churches are intended to help believers develop a missional consciousness in every aspect of their lives so that, individually and corporately, they express the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:1–11 is a key text both for Paul and for Gorman). Once they are formed by the mind of Christ, Christian communities become the gospel. Church is intended to not simply be a sign of God's kingdom but an anticipatory participation in that kingdom.

To participate in and embody the gospel is to live lives that are visibly and publicly distinctive and different; as a consequence, Christians will begin to attract the notice of family and neighbours. Faithful Christian living entails the rejection of the gods of family, city and empire. Those who choose to turn from these rival gods and cultic practices will not only come to the attention of others – they will inevitably begin to face criticism and come into conflict. To follow Christ exclusively means participating in the public life of the community in a visibly very different way and at times not sharing in that communal life at all.

Gorman argues that proclamation of the gospel in the Early Church happened more by this "embodying" of the gospel than by public announcement or preaching. On page 43, he describes the church as the "living exegesis" of the gospel. This is something for the church today to aspire to.

Gorman wants the church today to learn from the Pauline churches' sharing in God's mission by becoming the gospel that we proclaim. To this end he concludes each chapter with a look at a contemporary community or ministry that he regards as embodying the gospel.

Based upon careful exegesis of a number of Paul's letters (1 Thessalonians, Philippians, Ephesians, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans), Gorman challenges the church today to not simply believe and preach the gospel, but to become God's Christ-like (cruciform) agents in our world, sharing with the cruciform God in mission to that world.

Becoming the Gospel is highly recommended. Gorman sent me back to read Paul's letters with a deeper appreciation of what it means to be a church and to proclaim Christ, not just in Paul's day but in every generation. It challenges the contemporary church to become more Christ-like in its life and mission: to become, in Gorman's words, once again a "living exegesis" of the gospel.

Tim Gill, Sheffield

Alicia D. Myers, *Blessed Among Women? Mothers and Motherhood in the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017)

Myers's book is a thorough and detailed analysis of both the medical and philosophical understandings of Greco-Roman and ancient Israelite cultures regarding sex, gender, pregnancy and parenthood, and their relevance to deconstructing the attitudes, depictions and metaphors regarding women and motherhood in the New Testament.

The preface provides an interesting insight into the writer's own life and experience of motherhood. She speaks of her own disinterest in parenthood before conceiving her first child, and alongside this, her own sister's more nurturing character: presumed a natural mother, yet she subsequently had the painful experience of infertility. Some readers may feel this an example of American "oversharing", but it reveals some important points of consideration regarding the complex and ambiguous feelings women can have towards their own experiences of motherhood, as well as the familial and cultural context in which we all grow up and experience parenthood, and how this shapes our understanding on many levels.

The book is divided into progressive chapters: introduction, the cultural context, Gospels, Epistles, the Early Church and conclusion. Myers's approach is to analyse the topic from the perspective of contemporary writings on medicine and philosophy and then to apply them to explaining the approach and implicit understandings of the New Testament writers. With consistent thoroughness, she unpicks the underlying attitudes to enlarge our knowledge of the relevance and depth of meaning of the imagery the biblical writers use.

One of her main contentions is that maternal imagery is not merely metaphorical, but that anatomical understandings create a deep embodied theology. She considers in detail the ancient seed theories of birthing and how breastmilk was understood. These ancient biologies also impact the construction of both the family and societal order, and lead Myers to conclude that the writer of the pastorals uses these constructs to redefine true submission and order within God's creation.

Consequently, as Myers identifies from the start, there is an ambiguity in New Testament writers' thinking on the place of women in Christianity. The deeply held cultural assumption of women's inferiority to men made Jesus' and Paul's teachings on equality difficult for Christians to hold in tension. Myers captures this struggle well in her careful argument, and the conclusions she makes, particularly regarding Mary (focusing on her obedience, not her maternity), are convincing and raise questions regarding her subsequent veneration that are not within the scope of the book to address but are a worthy contribution to this subject for those whose interest lies in this area.

For me, as a practical theologian, the book is a useful addition to taking forward a scripturally based and informed understanding of the assumptions within its earthly writers that shape its theology and how that then might be applied to pastoral theology and feminist theology. However, by concentrating on the Gospels and, mainly, the pastoral Epistles, Myers does not really grapple sufficiently with Paul's theology of equality, e.g. in Galatians, and how this might be integrated into a more comprehensive theology of the New Testament given her explanations.

Stylistically, the book has another more American tendency – that of undue verbosity. Structurally Myers has a habit of telling the reader what she is going to say, saying it and then summarising what she has said. The first few chapters at times feel rather repetitive on aspects of Greco-Roman thought, and a more bullish editor would have removed some of these excesses of admittedly careful rephrasing, which can at times seem over-laboured, even if different words were used.

Overall, this book is an excellent resource for both biblical scholars and practical theologians seeking background knowledge. It provides well-informed research into the background anthropologies of the time that would have informed the biblical writers' assumptions and understandings that would have lain under their presentation of women, motherhood and maternal imagery. I will certainly never again gloss over Pauline breastmilk analogies as purely images, without appreciating more the anatomical understandings implicit to him within them. Myers's argument that greater understanding of these issues enriches and potentially even questions Christian theology and

experience (and impinges on Mariology too) is a strong one. The work is definitely a monograph requiring wider reading to consider its implications, but it is still an insightful piece unearthing the contemporary culture's assumptions that broaden and question how we continue to interpret these important passages today.

Jo Winn-Smith, Guildford

Tom Wright, Paul: *A Biography* (London: SPCK, 2018)

Having read most of Tom Wright's published work, I found myself on familiar territory with this book. This is vintage Wright and I was carried along by his characteristic enthusiasm and verve. The book is divided into three sections, preceded by a substantial introduction.

Part one: Beginnings, comprising four chapters, covers the period from Tarsus to Antioch. The first chapter, entitled "Zeal", illustrates Wright's ability to depict an era of Paul's life for which we have no evidence apart from Paul's own comments in his letters. He offers an entirely plausible account of the young Paul's life in a zealous Jewish family.

Part two, by far the longest, covers the bulk of Paul's missionary career from Cyprus and Galatia through to Jerusalem, using Acts as the basic story. Wright's method is to weave together Paul's journeyings with the letters in a way that provides substantial commentary on Paul's developing theology together with insights into his character, both as a man and as a theologian. The result is a masterly portrayal of the man and his message. Wright is a strong proponent of an Ephesian imprisonment, and argues the case drawing particularly on 2 Corinthians with its emphasis on Paul's references to extreme suffering and near despair (e.g. 2 Cor. 1:8). Wright knows the story so well that I was impressed by the strong probability of his argument. His account of Paul's arrival in Jerusalem with the proceeds of the collection for the Jerusalem church is a real page-turner too.

Part three covers Paul's journey from Caesarea to Rome, which includes a colourful account of the shipwreck. Wright's blunt comment about this episode is that "Paul comes across as bossy"! Again, Wright's storytelling skills are brilliantly deployed in his accounts of Paul's appearance before the Roman governors Felix and Festus. He also speculates on the possibility that at some point Paul may have been released to enable him to carry the gospel to Spain.

It will be evident from this review that I found this biography of the apostle Paul both convincing and at times thoroughly entertaining. Clearly, Tom Wright loves his subject and this enthusiasm is communicated on every page. I have some reservations, however. Wright's biography can in many respects be read as the distillation of a lifetime's study of Paul, and having read his massive tome *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, I was left wondering where Pauline studies go from here. His treatment of Paul is so comprehensive that it almost comes across as a template for understanding New Testament theology as a whole. There are also aspects of his treatment of Paul that to my mind don't sit easily with other New Testament writings. There is no space here to develop this line of thought, but I hope that Tom might devote his energies to this issue – perhaps in retirement!

That said, I thoroughly recommend this biography, which anybody with a modicum of biblical knowledge will benefit from enormously.

Howard C Bigg, Cambridge

2. EARLY CHRISTIAN STUDIES

Thomas A. Robinson, *Who Were the First Christians? Dismantling the Urban Thesis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017)

Recent statistics show that on an average Sunday 40 per cent of those worshipping in the Church of England do so in a rural setting. Yet less than 20 per cent of the population of England lives in rural areas, and most of the clergy work in urban settings. It is therefore easy to see why English rural churches may feel neglected in comparison to their urban counterparts, but they are certainly not the first rural Christians who may claim to have been overlooked. Among historians of early Christianity it has become commonplace to assume that the Early Church was an urban movement, and that Christians were centred in cities. But such a consensus has emerged on the basis of remarkably little evidence, as Thomas Robinson demonstrates clearly in this impressive and engaging book.

The thrust of his work is necessarily negative, for in most of the book Robinson sets out to "dismantle" (his word) the very flimsy foundation on which the urban thesis is built. He succeeds in showing not only how the figures quoted in support of the thesis fail to stack up, but also how little we can say with confidence about the size of the population of the Roman Empire, Christian or otherwise. And he does so with such care and precision, and with such cumulative effect, that words like "dissect" and "demolish" might be just as appropriate as his careful and modest "dismantle".

Academically argued, and academically priced, his book may not be widely available outside major libraries, but it is beautifully written and a very good read, so nothing

about the author's content or style should make it inaccessible. Robinson takes on the widespread view that early Christianity was essentially an urban movement, and that its adherents may have accounted for about 10 per cent of the population of the Roman Empire by about 300AD, and demonstrates beyond any reasonable doubt how little evidence may be adduced in support of either claim. He also succeeds in setting out the reasons why it seems likely that early Christians were to be found in rural areas as well as in cities, and in bringing together ancient evidence that supports this thesis.

His work is exemplary in its attention to detail, its clarity of expression and its irenic tone. It takes account of what we know of the spread of the Early Church, but also of what we do not and cannot know, given the gaps in the evidence that survives, and it deserves to be widely read. Although aimed at historians of early Christianity, it may also be of interest to missiologists and others with an academic or personal interest in church growth and the spread of Christian faith today, especially those familiar with the work of Rodney Stark and others, whom Robinson effectively rebuts.

Andrew Gregory, Oxford

Steve Walton, Paul R. Trebilco and David W. J. Gill, eds., *The Urban World and the First Christians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017)

The chapters of this edited collection are grouped under two themes. First, the impact of the urban environments on the development of early Christianity, and second how early Christians thought and theologised about their engagement with urban and city environments. As with any edited collection, particular essays will appeal more to different readers. Given my professional interest in interfaith relations, I was especially interested in Anthony Le Donne's essay, where he discusses options for translating *Ioudaioi*, arguing that "Second Temple *Ioudaioi* were poliscentric with varying ways of expressing their orientation towards Jerusalem" (p. 4). It is a neat solution to a complex translation problem, sidestepping issues of Johannine polemic against "the Jews", but the question of how this is communicated to a wider audience remains. David Gill's chapter on early Christianity in the cities of the Eastern Empire was another highlight: an accessible and useful chapter for those trying to understand the urban world in which Paul preached. Volker Rabens's discussion of Paul's mission strategy in an urban landscape does a similar job equally well, albeit at a more generic level. By contrast, while Helen Morris is correct in her discussion of how Paul subverts the body metaphor common to his day, redirecting its focus on the ecclesial community, not the state per se, I was unsure why this was a particularly urban phenomenon.

In the second section of the book, Anders Runesson's examination of Matthew's attitude to Jerusalem was particularly striking, especially his suggestion that Matthew's critique of the Temple and Jerusalem should be understood as a very Jewish thing to do. Similarly, Walton's discussion of Paul's use of his Roman citizenship as a missiological tool in service of his heavenly citizenship was cogent and clear. By contrast, Paul Cloke's discussion of Colossians makes only a modest contribution to the field of enquiry. His main argument appears to be advocating the value of Walsh and Keesmaat's *Colossians Remixed*, which I support while remaining unclear why it required a separate chapter to argue this case. David Horrell's essay on 1 Peter and Ian Paul's on Revelation are both solid, and well worth reading.

The Urban World is a useful collection of essays for scholars of the New Testament. It is a worthy addition to theological libraries, and individuals with specialist interests will want to take note of the arguments advanced in the different chapters. Moreover, this is an affordable paperback, and therefore anyone wishing to think about how Christianity was transformed in the transition from the more rural world of the Gospels to the urban world of Acts and the Epistles would benefit from reading this work.

Tom Wilson, Leicester

3. HERMENEUTICS

Barbara E. Reid, *Wisdom's Feast: An Invitation to Feminist Interpretation of the Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016)

This book aims to provide an introduction to feminist hermeneutics in the form of a bit of a tasting menu for beginners. As such, Barbara Reid aims to cover a vast amount of ground at a glance, with occasional forays into greater detail. Such a format is an intriguing and inviting one, and definitely opens up the subject to the new reader and to those who are theologically interested but maybe not formally theologically educated.

She writes from the perspective of a Dominican sister, and as such provides a refreshing angle upon the use of Scripture, especially in preaching, from a tradition, gender and role which is rarely heard in a British, Anglican setting. Her location in Roman Catholicism means that the questions raised as she looks at stories of women ministers in the New Testament inevitably

is one of swimming against the official tide in a hierarchical denomination. Her use of Mary as a model of strength challenges our understanding of her role beyond historical doctrinal disputes, and illustrates well the process of finding role models when they are not immediately or officially visible in church structures.

By far the greatest strengths of this book are found in looking again at narratives from the Gospels. In particular, her handling of the Samaritan woman at the well and the anointing of Christ by the woman with the perfume are stellar. She appears most at home in exploring these familiar yet puzzling stories, and harnesses the power of story to expose the impact of the often baseless assumptions we all too frequently bring to these texts. There are some occasions where the lines between imagination and hermeneutic are somewhat blurred, yet these also serve to illustrate the temptation that many of us fall into in ignoring the wider lives of those whose stories feature in the Bible.

She clearly finds far more challenge to her approach in dealing with texts from the wider New Testament. As an introduction to feminist hermeneutics, it would be helpful to have some more background on her understanding of the doctrine of Scripture as she approaches some of the more contentious passages in the Epistles. There were moments where it seemed that she made some assumptions about the theological literacy of her reader, which seemed to be beyond what might be reasonably expected for a book which very deliberately places itself on the "beginner" end of the spectrum. Although understandable, this is unfortunate given the debate around these passages and a little more time taken to deal with questions around the nature of Scripture, the nature of the Epistles, authorship and canon would have been very beneficial at this point.

That said, this is definitely a recommended read, and is especially helpful as a very broad introduction from a very different theological perspective to the one you may be familiar with.

Kate Seagrave, Community of St Frideswide

4. MISSIOLOGY

Paul A. Pomerville, *The Third Force in Missions: A Pentecostal Contribution to Contemporary Mission Theology*, Revised Edition (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2016)

First published in 1982, this edition contains updated notes, expanded reflection on the Kingdom of God and an epilogue written in 2015. The original text itself remains relevant and illuminating today. *The Third Force* attempts to provide an understanding of Pentecostalism as a global phenomenon, both in terms of empirical data and (more significantly) in terms of theology and unity. Pomerville's contention is that, based on size alone, Pentecostalism is to be recognised as a "Third Force" alongside Protestantism and Catholicism, especially given its continued growth since 1982. However, since much of this growth has occurred in the southern hemisphere and often without any clear historical link to the Western church, the significance of Pentecostalism has been overlooked. This is partly due to a lack of connection to the West, but also to a failure to recognise an "ethno-centricity" in Western theology that devalues (even patronises) the contributions of southern hemisphere Pentecostals. Pomerville's argument flows in three stages: first, to provide an understanding of Pentecostalism as a global phenomenon when understood in terms of shared theology rather than shared history; second, to explore that theology and present it as a challenge to the "rationalisation" of Western theology influenced by post-Reformation scholasticism; third, to describe the distinctive contribution Pentecostalism makes to missiology.

Pomerville defines Pentecostalism as a "renewal movement" united around the conviction that the New Testament is normative for the experience of the church in every age and that the contemporary experience of the Spirit is the renewal of the Kingdom of God seen in the New Testament. This challenges definitions of Pentecostalism as historically connected to the Azusa Street revival in 1906, which fails to account either for charismatic/Pentecostals within other denominations or for those in the southern hemisphere, especially churches that have grown "spontaneously" from the work of the Spirit through Scripture. He goes on to argue from this that Pentecostalism provides a dynamic view of theology as a process in which the Spirit leads the church in understanding afresh the revelation of Scripture in new contexts. This view challenges Western scholasticism that emphasises theology as "information" and forms a primary contribution of Pentecostalism to mission. On the basis of this Pomerville argues that "mission strategy" should be understood as "theologizing" in which the received revelation of Scripture and understanding of systematic theology from within a particular tradition is applied by the missionary to the new context in which they are called to live. Pomerville shows how recognising these two phases to theology and the role of the Spirit within them, helps to overcome the dangers of drawing on strategy and falling into mere subjectivism or rendering theology static and abstract.

In the final two chapters Pomerville applies this understanding to contemporary issues in missiology in a discussion poignant for today. His describes how a renewed emphasis on social justice combined with a

lack of confidence in the present activity of the Spirit, led to a distortion of mission theology. Concepts like "kingdom" and *missio Dei* became terms for a general sense of "everything that God intends for creation" and hence mission was understood as joining in with how God is already working in the world to the betterment of humanity. In this understanding evangelism is subordinated, a unique role for the church is removed, and the needs of the world (rather than Scripture) dictate the priorities of mission, while "signs and wonders" are interpreted in social terms (e.g. stories of miraculous healings points to the importance of medical provision). In contrast, Pomerville argues for a clear understanding of the role of the Spirit in mission revealed in Scripture. The "kingdom" is twofold as the redemptive death of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit; God's priority for mission is the proclamation of the gospel accompanied by signs and wonders, through the new community called church created and empowered by the Spirit. Pomerville affirms the importance of social justice, but no longer at the expense of allowing Scripture and the work of the Spirit to lead in mission.

This is an excellent book recommended to anyone, but particularly those wanting greater understanding of Pentecostalism and the role of the Spirit today.

Sam Pollard, Loughton

Cathy Ross and Stephen B. Bevans, eds., *Mission on the Road to Emmaus: Constants, Context and Prophetic Dialogue* (London: SCM Press, 2015)

The book is well laid out and well-structured with 15 contributors, of whom six are female. The contributors represent a variety of international voices and denominational backgrounds with credible experience and knowledge. *Mission on the Road to Emmaus* is an apt title for a book about discovering and seeing Christ revealed in multiple contexts through a critical appreciation of the posture of prophetic dialogue. It encourages readers to go further on their own journey to adopting a posture of deep listening to people within their own contexts and seeing how Christ and his mission can be adapted appropriately.

The six constituent parts of this book embrace the constants in mission advocated by Bevans and Schroeder in their excellent book *Constants in Context*. These are: the centrality of Christ (within the Trinity), the ecclesial implication of mission, the eschatological and soteriological perspectives of the missioner, and an awareness of what it means to be human and to live in particular cultures. The editors have also sought to "thicken this approach" by including the six elements examined briefly in the final part of *Constants in Context*: witness and proclamation, liturgy, prayer and contemplation, justice, peace and the integrity of creation, inter-religious dialogue, enculturation and reconciliation. It sounds complicated and it is – there is a multi-layered approach to reading this collection of essays that can be rewarding to those who persevere.

Each article, in its own right, has merit and can be appreciated sufficiently without the wider reading. There is enough material included to appreciate the basic stance of *Constants in Context* but it is not so repetitive as to be irritating. There is a significant amount of missiological jargon and a rather dense academic style, which will remain baffling or unnecessary for readers who wish to read a more popular text. Overall I think the editors have done a good job in helping the reader engage with the material.

I really appreciated the varied contributions and the depth of analysis, but think the book would have benefitted from more concrete extended examples to consider. There are some very strong contributions in the book and each contributor has a following in her or his own right. The book is replete with apt quotations and rich missiological thinking which, if considered, can lead to radical practice through "earthing" prophetic dialogue in practice.

There are also some useful summaries of thought and I particularly liked the anthropology section, "Mission and what it means to be human". Emma Wild-Woods chapter on "Mission, Ecclesiology and Migration" resonated strongly with my own understanding and convictions/prejudices, and succinctly outlines the needs for a much more nuanced approach to migration and its ecclesial implications. Cathy Ross's chapter on hospitality is so rich that I will dine out on it for years to come. I particularly appreciated the embracing of both the mutual and asymmetrical aspects of hospitality, its links with risk and the context of the margins and migration. Fascinating chapters by both Joe Kapolyo and Jonny Baker provide fresh insights and understanding into different contemporary cultures.

Overall I have underlined, ticked and marked this book over a period of weeks, which means for me it will become a resource book of ideas and thoughts to draw on further. Bevans and Ross have edited a stimulating collection of themed essays that deserve further consideration and discussion by Christian learning communities and mission practitioners.

Paul Thaxter, CMS

5. PENTECOSTAL STUDIES

Daniel Castelo, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017)

In Castelo's own words, "this work assumes that the most theologically fruitful approach to Pentecostal beliefs and practices is through the language of spirituality and mysticism" (p. x). Even more emphatically, "Pentecostalism... is decisively *not* a Protestant tradition generally and *not* part of an amalgam known as evangelicalism particularly" (p. xiii). As one who first experienced Pentecostalism as a young Anglo-Catholic ordinand, I concur, though I recognise along with Castelo that the Pentecostal phenomenon cannot be subsumed under one global description.

The first chapter, on "The Challenge of Method", builds on Stephen Land's pioneering work on Pentecostalism as spirituality. It is a complex methodological argument that examines the anti-intellectualising tendencies of Pentecostal reflection and the difficulty of talking about a Pentecostal systematic theology. Positively, "one's theologizing is only as legitimate and as truthful as one's own spiritual journey... and the life of piety is the essential and orienting grounding for one's work of theological reflection" (p. 20). Castelo says all the right things, but he speaks in the language of the academe rather than allowing Pentecostalism's subversive spirit to emerge.

This is followed by a chapter on "The Mystical Tradition", which for me spends too much time discussing what mysticism is and not paying enough attention to the mystical elements of Pentecostalism itself. Pentecostal spirituality is a heartfelt, experiential one in which intimacy with God is the highest goal. Castelo ends the chapter with an analysis of the tradition using the classical threefold schema of purgation, illumination and union, but I find his conclusion that "[t]he ultimate goal is a sense of the divine that is... transformative" rather limp (p. 82). Of course "Pentecostals value experience-based encounters with God because they have the potential to transform believers" (ibid), but the question hangs over the whole chapter about what kind of encounter is desired or privileged.

The grandly titled third chapter on "The Epistemological Form of Evangelical Theology" makes the key point that Pentecostalism is not a subset of evangelicalism. For many evangelical Anglican readers, this may come as a wake-up call. Charismatic Christianity in the English Anglican tradition has become over-associated with a form of evangelicalism, even though Anglo-Catholic charismatic groups are alive and well. Both in sacramental theology and in a spiritual aesthetics, a case can be made for the easier association of Pentecostal and Catholic spiritualties, as is the case with sixteenth century Radical forms of Christianity and the spirituality of the Wesleys in the eighteenth. Castelo is of course writing in the North American context, which is very different, but this is a useful discussion. "Whereas I have made the case here that the Christian life on the whole trades on holy mysteries, the American evangelical movement, although citing Scripture as its one true authority, has significantly failed to account for the mystery-laden qualities of this life" (p. 84f). The conclusion here is not that Pentecostals take Scripture less seriously (although some do!), but that their scriptural hermeneutic is put to the service of a "spirit-filled life".

The remaining chapters are on Spirit-baptism and the Spirit-baptised life. On the former, Castelo posits a strong link between glossolalia and the apophatic tradition. As a teacher of spirituality, I have frequently made this connection, and I have little doubt that Michael Harper's journey from charismatic Anglicanism to Eastern Orthodoxy in the latter years of the last century owes much to this synergy. The latter explores the "purpose" of Spirit-baptism and invites Pentecostalism to move away from a desire for spiritual attainment towards a greater spiritual expectancy, where "bounty and aridity" can coexist in fruitful tension.

This book contains some fascinating insights and invitations to further lines of enquiry, some of which call on Pentecostal practitioners to move into a new phase. It is a shame that it is made dull and a little ponderous by an over-academic style, and that so much time is spent over-analysing key terms like "mysticism". Is it worth reading? I'm glad I've read it, but it could have been presented more tersely and much more warmly, as befits even an academic study in this field.

Adrian Chatfield, Ilkeston, Derbyshire

6. THEOLOGY

William Edgar, *Created and Creating: A Biblical Theology of Culture* (London: IVP, 2017)

William Edgar undoubtedly sets himself a mammoth task in the title of this book, and he is clearly aware of its scope. The subtitle raises questions throughout, in response to which Edgar attempts to construct an apologia for what he sees as cultural engagement, rather than establishing a biblical theology of culture. Given his background as an apologist this should not come as a surprise.

The challenge he sets himself is an ambitious one and is also either the greatest weakness or the point of greatest interest in the book (depending on your point of

view). Edgar is very aware that each one of these words "biblical", "theology" and "culture" are open to all manner of interpretation and definition. His awareness of this is refreshing; his response is, however, sometimes patchy and confused.

His treatment of "biblical" from a reformed theological approach is the most thorough of the worked definitions, but also possibly the easiest win given his background and, one assumes, his intended readership. His inconsistent definition of "culture" is a serious weakness, which at points threatens to undermine his argument. At varying points, and even within paragraphs, "culture" refers to the arts (such as in his fairly detailed examination of T. S. Eliot or references to Bach's cantatas), at other points it refers to socio-economic and moral trends or political philosophy. He does take time to outline his definition early in the book, which makes this later vacillation all the more surprising when the reader encounters it.

The most striking distinctive of this book is, however, the way in which some of the concerns he references are so specific to internal debates within Reformed Christianity in certain parts of the USA. He refers a number of times to the Quiverfull movement as an example, which is not really on the radar of most Christian readers in the UK and I suspect a niche concern on the other side of the Atlantic too. Its presence in his writing clearly indicates that in his circles this demands engagement, yet for the UK reader it feels as if he is attempting to answer questions that we are not asking.

The construction of the book as an apologia for any form of cultural (whatever that means!) engagement whatsoever seems to be addressing an issue that is simply not such a pressing one here. Finally, in his occasional references to Marxism, feminism, colonialism, racism and socialism it is very clear that he is writing from the point of view of a white American male of a certain generation. He tries to engage, but his descriptions and explanations often did not match what would be assumed outside of his own immediate social, political and Reformed theological circle.

To see this in a positive light, I found it a fascinating insight into how he sees the world, even if that was not his primary aim in writing. In a much more critical light, his dismissals of certain stances were disappointingly lacking in proper engagement.

With rave reviews and Reformed heavy-weight endorsements, I am well aware that my reading of this book is a minority view. If you are interested in understanding some of the tensions in American Reformed theology, then I recommend this as an insight. If you want to engage with questions of theology and the arts, sociology or political trends, then I would maybe suggest you look elsewhere.

Kate Seagrave, Community of St Frideswide

Kelley Nikondeha, *Adopted: The Sacrament of Belonging in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017)

Being, for many years, the only member of our household who was not adopted, the theme and title of this book were of more than mere academic interest. I was not disappointed. It is a book I would readily recommend to anyone considering adoption or wanting to reflect on their own experience of adoption. It is beautifully, at times poetically, written, deeply personal and honest, and offers some profound theological reflection while resisting the temptation to over sentimentalise or idealise the ups and downs of adoption. I loved the notion of adoption as imbuing belonging with an elasticity (p. 28), as a "thin place" (p. 4).

However, it would be a mistake to limit the intended audience to those with first-hand experience of adoption. Rather, the experience of adoption provides a central thread, a metaphor, from which to explore wider themes of justice, identity, reconciliation, family, community and belonging. At one point the observation is made that "Adoption stretches beyond parents and children. It is how we embody family, welcoming others into relationships that give them a place to be accepted and safe. It is how we cultivate belonging in our neighbourhoods, churches and communities. Each adoptive gesture contributes to the repair of the torn places of the world" (p. 129). It is this wider perspective on adoption that makes this such an interesting read.

Kelley Nikondeha draws on both her own experience of being adopted and on her and her Burundian husband Claud's experience of adopting two Burundian children. Their life is lived between Burundi and the USA and this crisscrossing of cultures and contexts is a major theme of the book. It is international in its perspective, weaving into its narrative characters and stories from Africa, Latin America, Israel/Palestine and the USA.

The book is divided into eight chapters all beginning with the letter R. Having got over my initial irritation at seemingly unnecessary alliteration, the chapter headings, developing from Roots to Relatives, broadly speaking seem to work. At the heart of the book is the notion that the experience of adoption offers us a way of understanding more deeply our shared humanity. Kelley Nikondeha is cofounder of Amahoro Africa, an ongoing conversation between theologians and practitioners in Africa, and the book beautifully illustrates that inner dialogue between theologian and practitioner. The author is a storyteller and it is perhaps that quality which both adds a wonderful creativity to the writing but also risks moments, particularly in discussion of the biblical text, where the storyteller seems to lose sight of the theologian.

A description of Jesus at his baptism wading into the river "hungry for a cleansing" was just one of a number of comments which seemed to go beyond poetic licence.

This book is imbued with a sense of generosity, openness and grace. Adoption is taken beyond the private world of the household to be offered to us as a metaphor, a sacrament, of both belonging and resistance in a broken world. It is well worth a read.

Colin Smith, CMS

7. THEOLOGY AND MENTAL HEALTH

Mark Meynell, *When Darkness Seems My Closest Friend* (London: IVP, 2018)

This is an honest and compelling account of Mark's personal, ongoing struggle with depression that every Christian minister ought to read. It is accessible and clear, forthright without being overly direct or blunt, rooted both in faith in Jesus Christ and also in daily life. The book begins with a short chapter on the mask that Mark wears. We all wear some kind of mask, disguising some of what we are thinking or feeling, and Mark explains something of how he masked his depression over the years.

Part one then ventures deeper into the darkness, exploring different metaphors that describe the experience of depression. As someone who has never personally experienced depression as Mark has, but has family members who do and has pastored others suffering in this way, I found these chapters really helpful. There is a lot of refreshing common sense in his explanations, a clear honesty about what did, and did not, help him and a challenge that we remain committed to pastoral care, even if people do not get "better" (whatever that might mean). Part two, "Venturing Towards the Light", offers hope for the future, not in a neat and tidy, "everything is sorted because of Jesus" sort of cliché, but a realistic, clear, honest portrayal of what living with depression can be, what working as a Church minister who struggles with depression could be like. The appendices offer Meynell's personal reflections on what has helped him manage his symptoms, both practical actions and also in terms of what music he listens to and books he reads.

When Darkness Seems is worked through with biblical reflections, helping the reader root personal experience with depression in a lived Christian faith. This is one of the two great strengths of the book. The other is Mark's astute analysis of the distinctions and inter-relationships between guilt, shame and depression. It is an easy and engaging read, useful for anyone engaged in pastoral ministry, who has depression themselves or who wants to love and care for a friend or relative who struggles with their mental health.

Tom Wilson, Leicester

8. BIOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

Andrew Finstuen, Grant Wacker, Anne Blue Wills, eds., *Billy Graham: American Pilgrim* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

As I have been in the process of writing this review a row has blown up here in Lancashire concerning a forthcoming mission by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in September 2018. The debate has centred on the publicly expressed views – concerning Muslims, homosexuals and Donald Trump – of Billy Graham's son, Franklin, who is due to lead the mission. Whereas Franklin seems to be bringing strife and division to the local church, the contrast with his father could not be greater. Though Billy Graham made mistakes – and not just in his younger days – to read and reflect on this book about Billy Graham is to step back into a different era. That said, for readers looking for a new biography of Billy Graham – this is not it. Essentially it is a collection of standalone essays in a single volume. It has no fewer than 14 contributors, three of them also its editors. Nevertheless, multiple authorship is beneficial to the extent of providing a wide spectrum of assessment and the obvious lack of collusion means that there is neither mindless hagiography nor traducing the reputation of someone not in a position to respond.

After a general introduction, the book is divided into three sections: religion, politics and culture. Graham emerges less as a preaching machine and more as a human being with a faith and a mission. That faith was, not surprisingly since he was nurtured in the Southern Baptist tradition, a conservative one. Inevitably for Christians whose faith is not so conservative Graham's invariable insistence that "the Bible says..." devoid of nuance or interpretation can be an issue.

Yet the public persona he cultivated defines the man as much as the message he tirelessly preached for well over half a century. Graham's obvious faith, sincerity and desire to bring others to faith in Christ shines through, as does a certain naivety and lack of critical awareness that not everyone is as scrupulous in their personal dealings with others. Always on his guard against sexual temptation, Graham was more naïve about the possibility of being used or even manipulated by the great and the good.

Though in the sections on politics and culture we see a man who makes mistakes, we also see someone who is able to learn from them. Though he never entirely

sloughed off his early theological conservativism, he was often more progressive in other areas. His commitment to racial equality, for example, should not be forgotten. In both the segregationist South and in South Africa it did little to endear him to other religious conservatives who felt they had biblical support for white supremacy.

His occasional forays into the world of politics, to the extent of both irritating Harry Truman and associating with Richard Nixon, has probably done more harm to his reputation than anything else. But this is perhaps less easy for us to understand in the UK where the Head of State and Head of Government are two separate people and the Head of State is above politics.

The book concludes with an examination of Graham's legacy and he compares very favourably both with other contemporary US evangelists and with his son Franklin. And yet the question is never really asked as to whether the form of mass evangelism that Graham made his own has had its day. Essentially a Victorian invention of Dwight D. Moody – though having its roots in Primitive Methodist camp meetings – does this particular form of evangelism have a place in the twenty-first century? Studies show that most of those who "make a commitment" at a Graham rally are already on the church's radar and mass crusades make little impact on the unchurched.

But I need to declare an interest: as a teenager I went with a coach party from my school to hear Billy Graham. For me it was a formative occasion when my own faith took a leap forward and I began a lengthy journey of vocational discernment that eventually led to my ordination. Though I personally regretted Graham's association with Nixon and other senior Republicans and though I have come to regard an unqualified "the Bible says" as simplistic in the extreme, I have never had cause not to be grateful for the couple of hours I spent listening to Billy Graham on that hot June night 50 years ago. For all his limitations, Graham had the ability to bring individuals to reflect and act on God's claim on their lives.

This volume is as balanced an assessment of the man and his work as is currently available.

John Darch, Ellesmere

Rowan Strong, *Victorian Christianity and Emigrant Voyages to British Colonies c.1840 – c.1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

To me, one of the most evocative artworks of the Victorian era is Ford Madox Brown's *The Last of England*. Painted in the mid-1860s it shows a young couple looking back to the English coast from the emigrant ship that is taking them to the other side of the world. The voyage would take months and they would in all likelihood never return.

It is on the spirituality of the emigrants on these life-changing voyages which Rowan Strong focuses in this volume, and in particular the way in which official and unofficial chaplains – both at the port of embarkation and on board ship – ministered to their needs. Both chaplains' documents and emigrants' diaries form the basis of this research.

Two chapters focus on the work of the chaplains, which began unofficially when Thomas Childs, Vicar of St Mary's Devonport, sought to minister to those who were emigrating via the docks in his parish. In due course this ministry gained official status when the Church of England appointed an emigrants' chaplain to work in the Liverpool docks, caring for vulnerable migrants who were at risk of exploitation even before they set foot on their ship. Strong then looks at the ministry of "religious professionals" (mainly comprising emigrating clergy and ministers and also a group of Roman Catholic nuns) on board ship.

Turning from clergy to laity he continues with chapters on the beliefs and practices of the two main social groups of emigrants: the largely middle class "cabin passengers" and those at the bottom of the social scale who travelled in steerage. Strong concludes that one benefit of being on board ship was that individuals were brought into contact with a much wider group of Christians, and consequently a wider variety of religious understanding and practice, than would ever have been the case at home, where Victorian sectarianism effectively prevented such ecclesial and spiritual cross-fertilisation. He sees this improvement on contemporary practice in the UK as a prime cause of the more tolerant religious attitudes that came to prevail in the colonies of settlement.

A strength of the book is that emigrant faith and practice are not viewed in isolation. Strong places them firmly in the evolving religious context of the nineteenth century and his short summaries of the wider religious picture could helpfully be used by many teachers who need to explain the integral place of the Christian faith and churches in Victorian Britain.

John Darch, Ellesmere

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