Reshaping the Australian Church Experience: The Impact of Church Growth and Emerging Missional Church on Evangelical Ecclesiology in Australia

A project submitted to the Australian College of Theology

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of

Doctor of Ministry

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Certification

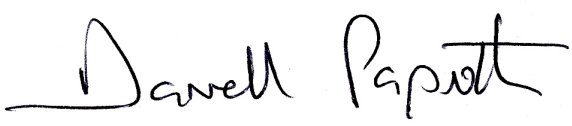
Candidate

I certify that the substance of this project of 43 903 words has not been previously submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree. I also certify that any assistance received in conducting the research embodied in the project and all sources used have been acknowledged in the text or notes.

Peter E M Roennfeldt
11 November 2013

Supervisor

I consider that this project is in a form suitable for examination and conforms to the requirements of the Australian College of Theology for the Degree of Doctor of Ministry.



Dr Darrell Paproth
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This research could not have been achieved without the willing participation of key players in the Church Growth and Emerging Missional Church movements within Australia over the last four decades. Gordon Moyes and Peter Corney welcomed me to their homes to share their experiences in cultivating Church Growth theory and practice; and, Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, among Australia's foremost advocates and practitioners of Emerging Missional Church, willingly shared candid memories of their discovery and involvement in this phenomenon. I thank each for their cooperation and willingness to subject themselves to questions about memories, emotions, feelings, influences and experiences. I have not always agreed with their conclusions, but have great admiration for their leadership and passion for God's mission and church.

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Peter Roennfeldt
11 November 2013

Contents

List of Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian College of Theology
AFCG	Australian Fellowship for Church Growth
Afericasia	Africa, Latin America and Asia
APEST	Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd, Teacher
CG	Church Growth
CRA	Christian Research Association
EC	Emerging Church
EMC	Emerging-Missional Church
EMCM	Emerging-Missional Church Movement
Eurica	Europe and North America
Forge	Forge Mission Training Network
Fuller	Fuller Theological Seminary
GOCN	The Gospel and Our Culture Network
MC	Missional Church
mDNA	Missional DNA
MST	Melbourne School of Theology
NCLS	National Church Life Survey
Northern	Northern Communities Church of Christ
PhR	Phenomenological Research
SWM	School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary
UCMS	United Christian Missionary Service
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
WCC	World Council of Churches

Tables and Diagrams

Abstract

Church Growth (CG) and Emerging Missional Church (EMC) purport to be models of growth aimed at renewing the church. It is my contention that these responses to the dilemma of evangelistic ineffectiveness in Australia have reshaped the experience of church and evangelical ecclesiology, changing the essence of church. Both challenged inherited forms, contributing to a populist ecclesiology. Chapters 1 and 2 set out the problem, the challenge of evangelistic ineffectiveness, and describe my thesis, the phenomenological research method chosen and the process that was followed to gather and analyze the data. Chapter 3 outlines the Australian and evangelical context into which CG was introduced and EMC emerged.

Chapters 4 and 6 explore how Donald McGavran and Brian McLaren shaped CG and EMC respectively. The purpose is not to critique these movements but to understand how Australians experienced them. Interviews (chapters 5 and 7) demonstrate it was neither McGavran's CG that shaped Gordon Moyes and Peter Corney, nor McLaren's emerging church (EC) that defined Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch's experience of EMC. While reflecting their passion for mission, the style and content of these chapters resonate with their individual personalities, perspectives and convictions. Their multiple experiences provided the data for my reflection (chapter 8).

The final chapter concludes that these phenomena are interdependent, not simply competitive. McGavran's early CG theory was missional and the extent to which it was co-opted and redefined provides a warning for EMC. McGavran favored simple populist church forms, and EMC proactively fosters a populist ecclesiology. In this sense EMC is anti-church, however, being forged by *missio Dei*, centered in Christ, empowered by the Spirit and reflecting the inner relationship of the Trinity, a missional ecclesiology gives high value to the gospel for society. The changing experience of church represents a reshaping of the evangelical message.

Chapter 1
Introduction:
Responding to the Challenge of Evangelistic Ineffectiveness

Australia's heritage is primarily Christian (Piggin 2008:1) and Christianity continues as the predominant religion. However, the proportion of the population affiliated with Christianity continues to decline. Traditional evangelistic methods have not stemmed this tide, and nor have Church Growth (CG) and Emerging Missional Church (EMC) theories implemented over the last forty years. The nation's religious profile, which Gary Bouma contends 'is primarily a function of migration history and only secondarily a function of conversion or changing religious identification' (Bouma 1997:1), has diversified. The great social changes that accompanied the protest movements of the 1960s – with demands for racial and gender equality, environmental protection, and an end to the Vietnam War and the White Australia Policy – have contributed to a diversity of cultures and religions, a redefinition of spirituality, and a decline in those affiliated with Christianity within Australian society.

But not only have the numbers affiliated with Christianity declined by 25.1% to 61.1% between 1971 and 2011 (ABS 2012), with attendees now more multi-ethnic, it is my contention that the CG and EMC phenomena have reshaped the experience of church and evangelical ecclesiology, changing the essence of church in Australia over the last four decades. They represent two mind-sets purporting to be models of growth or restoration to renew the church, but characterize different models of theological reflection; and both movements, in different ways, have challenged inherited forms and ecclesiology. This thesis addresses the impact upon church experience and evangelical ecclesiology, including shortcomings in presuppositions that might devalue ecclesiology and their message, exacerbating the dilemma of evangelistic ineffectiveness they are seeking to address.

Understanding the challenge: Australian churches in decline

A downward trend in regular church attendance was already evident before Billy Graham's 1959 and 1969 campaigns, which represented a traditional evangelical approach. Monthly attendance by 44% of Australians in 1950 had dropped to 41% in 1960, the year after Graham's four-month evangelistic campaign, and to 36% by 1970, the year after his second visit. This decline continued, to 17% in 2007. (See Table 1.)

Table 1: Monthly church attendance of Australians[1]

1950	44%
1960	41%
1970	36%
1980	25%
1990	25%
2000	20%
2007	17%

By the mid-1970s there were also clear shifts in religious affiliation. While affiliation to Christianity remained relatively constant from 1933 (86.4%) to 1971 (86.2%), a steady decline followed – to 78.6% in 1976, 68.0% in 2001, and 61.1% in 2011. (Table 2)

Table 2: Major religious affiliations of Australians, 1901-2011[2]

	Christianity							
	Anglican	Catholic	Other	Total	Other religions	No religion	Not stated/ inadequately described	Total
Census year	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	'000
1901	39.7	22.7	33.7	96.1	1.4	0.4	(a)2.0	3 773.8
1911	38.4	22.4	35.1	95.9	0.8	0.4	(a)2.9	4 455.0
1921	43.7	21.7	31.6	96.9	0.7	0.5	(a)1.9	5 435.7
1933	38.7	19.6	28.1	86.4	0.4	0.2	12.9	6 629.8
1947	39.0	20.9	28.1	88.0	0.5	0.3	11.1	7 579.4
1954	37.9	22.9	28.5	89.4	0.6	0.3	9.7	8 986.5
1961	34.9	24.9	28.4	88.3	0.7	0.4	10.7	10 508.2
1966	33.5	26.2	28.5	88.2	0.7	0.8	10.3	11 599.5
1971	31.0	27.0	28.2	**86.2**	0.8	6.7	6.2	12 755.6
1976	27.7	25.7	25.2	78.6	1.0	8.3	11.4	13 548.4
1981	26.1	26.0	24.3	76.4	1.4	10.8	11.4	14 576.3
1986	23.9	26.0	23.0	73.0	2.0	12.7	12.4	15 602.2
1991	23.8	27.3	22.9	74.0	2.6	12.9	10.5	16 850.3
1996	22.0	27.0	21.9	70.9	3.5	16.6	9.0	17 752.8
2001	20.7	26.6	20.7	**68.0**	4.9	15.5	11.7	18 769.2
2006	18.7	25.8	19.3	63.9	5.6	18.7	11.9	19 855.3
2011	17.1	25.3	18.7	**61.1**	7.2	22.3	9.4	21 507.7

In the last decade Australia's population grew by 14.6% (2 738 500 people), but the numbers affiliated to Christianity by just 385 900 – with the 2001-2006 decline of 78 800 offset by a growth of 464 700 in 2006-2011. The decline in major denominations, Anglican (-5.2%), Presbyterian and Reformed (-6.0%) and Uniting Church (-14.7%), representing a total loss of 422 100 between 2001 and 2011, may have contributed some to the 70.9% increase of those identifying as 'Other Christian' (352 900) as well as to the 65.1% increase in the 'No Religion' category (1 890 800) in the same period. Losses were partially offset by immigration, contributing to increases for Catholic 8.8% (437 600), Orthodox 6.4% (33 700), Baptist 14.0% (43 300) and Pentecostal churches 22.3% (43 400). (Table 3)

[1] Powell 2009.
[2] Collated from ABS 2010, Table 14.38 and ABS 2012.

Table 3: Changing religious affiliations of Australians, 2001-2011[3]

	2001		2006		2011		Change
	'000	% of pop	'000	% of pop	'000	% of pop	% 2001-2011
Christianity							
Anglican	3 881.2	20.7	3 718.2	18.7	3 680.0	17.1	-5.2
Baptist	309.2	1.6	316.7	1.6	352.5	1.6	14.0
Catholic	5 001.6	26.6	5 126.9	25.8	5 439.2	25.3	8.8
Churches of Christ	61.3	0.3	54.8	0.3	49.7	0.2	-18.9
Jehovah's Witnesses	81.1	0.4	80.9	0.4			** -0.2
Lutheran	250.4	1.3	251.1	1.3	251.9	1.2	0.6
Orthodox	529.4	2.8	576.9	2.9	563.1	2.6	6.4
Pentecostal	194.6	1.0	219.7	1.1	238.0	1.1	22.3
Presbyterians and Reformed	637.5	3.4	596.7	3.00	599.5	2.8	-6.0
Salvation Army	71.4	0.4	64.2	0.3	60.2	0.3	-15.7
Uniting Church	1 248.7	6.7	1 135.4	5.7	1 065.8	5.0	-14.7
Other Christian	497.9	2.7	544.3	2.7	850.8	4.0	70.9
Buddhism	357.8	1.9	418.8	2.1	529.0	2.5	48.0
Hinduism	95.5	0.5	148.1	0.8	275.5	1.3	189.0
Islam	281.6	1.5	340.4	1.7	476.3	2.2	69.0
Judaism	84.0	0.4	88.8	0.5	97.3	0.5	15.8
Other religions	92.4	0.5	109.0	0.6	168.2	0.8	82.0
No religion	2 906.0	15.5	3 706.6	18.7	4 796.8	22.3	65.1
Not stated/inadequately described	2 187.7	11.7	2 357.8	11.9	2 014.0	9.4	-7.9
Total Australian Population *	**18 769.2**	**100.0**	**19 855.3**	**100.0**	**21 507.7**	**100.0**	**14.6**

* Totals have been rounded up
** 2011 figures are included in 'Other Christian'

No religion. Census data indicates that the most dramatic change to 'religious identification' has been the increase of those registering 'no religion'. While always including a question on religious affiliation, the instruction 'if no religion, write none' was introduced in 1971. That year there was more than an eight-fold increase in the proportion of Australians stating they had no religion – from 0.8% of the population in 1966 to 6.7% in 1971.[4] This proportion progressively increased to 22.3% in 2011, or 4 796 800 people. Between 2001 and 2011, 1 890 800 Australians changed their 'religious identification' to 'no religion'.

While acknowledging decline in Christian denominational affiliation and church attendance, Piggin refuses to agree that Australian society is secular or truly multi-faith. He contends that the 2004 Australian government funded Cahill report, in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, which sought to demonstrate 'that we now live in a paradoxically secular and multi-faith society' was in the end compelled by 'the logic of the situation' to 'advocate building a multi-faith society *around its Christian core'*. (Piggin 2008:6; see Cahill 2004:126) He agrees this does not suggest a Christian society, nor evangelical – 'but Christianised' in values, institutions, business and governmental structures. (Piggin 2008:6)

[3] Collated from ABS 2010, Table 14.39; ABS 2012; and, Cahill (2012).
[4] This increase may also reflect some who had not adequately stated their religion previously, for the category 'Not stated/inadequately described' declined from 10.3% in 1966 to 6.2% in 1971. (ABS 2010)

The age profile of adherents, however, highlights the challenge of declining affiliation and church attendance – raising doubts about Piggin's contention that Australia has the potential to become 'more Christian,' retaining and building 'on the values of Jesus'. (Piggin 2008:1) In 2006, while 80% of persons aged 65 years and over identified themselves as Christian, only 55% of 18-24 year olds did so. (ABS 2008) The average age of church attendees is 53 years. (Powell 2009:3) Fewer young people attend worship services than in the past, with 48% of Generation Y indicating they do not identify with any religion or denomination and only 6% raised without a religion later joining one. (Mason, Singleton, Webber 2007:78, 138) There is no indication in this research that the decline or aging will be reversed in the foreseeable future, nor that Australia is likely to be 'more Christian' in the decades ahead.

Evangelicalism. While evangelicalism is the focus of this research the term itself is questioned (Dayton, Johnston 1991:245), for it is 'more descriptive than definitional'. (Weborg in Dayton, Johnston 1991:175) It grew out of the Protestant Reformation and Continental Pietism, and was shaped by the religious and political milieu of eighteenth and nineteenth century revivalism.[5] Common historical and experiential attributes suggest a 'family resemblance'. (Dayton, Johnston 1991:255)[6] David Bebbington identified 'a quadrilateral of priorities' or shared attributes that describe evangelicalism: biblicism, conversionism, crucicentrism, and activism in sharing the gospel. (Bebbington 1989:3)[7] Stuart Piggin's categories are not the same, and they need not be for 'family resemblance' (Dayton, Johnson 1991:255), but his are of particular significance to this paper for he examines evangelical Christianity in Australia. He describes evangelicalism as 'experiential, Biblicist, and activist,' (Piggin 1996:vii) noting: 'evangelicalism is passionate about three of Christ's concerns: his Word, his Spirit, and his mission'. (Piggin 1996:vii)

Employing the category of 'family resemblance', those affiliated with Baptist, Churches of Christ, Pentecostal and Salvation Army are evangelical. (Table 4) Historical connections also qualify Lutheran, Presbyterian, Reformed and Uniting Church adherents as evangelical – with their varying levels of commitment to Bebbington's quadrilateral and Piggin's trio of concerns. The same could be said of Anglican adherents although Sydney Anglicanism defines itself as evangelical while other dioceses do not.

[5] See Noll 1994:59-64 and McGrath 1994:11-14.
[6] Also Mervis, Rosch 1981:99.
[7] Wikipedia, 'David Bebbington'.

Table 4: Evangelical affiliation in Australia, 2001-2011[8]

	2001		2006		2011		Change
	'000	% of pop	'000	% of pop	'000	% of pop	% 2001-2011
Christianity							
Anglican	3 881.2	20.7	3 718.2	18.7	3 680.0	17.1	-5.2
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Presbyterians and Reformed	637.5	3.4	596.7	3.00	599.5	2.8	-6.0
Salvation Army	71.4	0.4	64.2	0.3	60.2	0.3	-15.7
Uniting Church	1 248.7	6.7	1 135.4	5.7	1 065.8	5.0	-14.7
Evangelical sub-total	*6 654.3*		*6 356.8*		*6 297.6*		*-5.4*
Other Christian	497.9	2.7	544.3	2.7	850.8	4.0	70.4
Total evangelical affiliates	**7 152.2**	**38.1**	**6 901.1**	**34.7**	**7 148.4**	**33.2**	**-0.1**
Total Australian Population	**18 769.2**	**100.0**	**19 855.3**	**100.0**	**21 507.7**	**100.0**	

If we use the totals of this broad definition of evangelicalism, including the 'Other Christian' category, the overall decline (-3.5%) of evangelical adherents between 2001-06 (251 100) was almost negated by a similar increase (247 3000) in 2006-2011. (See Table 4.) However, if the *Evangelical sub-total* in Table 4 is used for calculations (without 'Other Christian') there was an overall decline (-5.4%) between 2001-11 of 356 700 evangelicals in Australia. While the increase of 14% for Baptists and 22.3% for Pentecostals brought 43 300 and 43 400 more affiliates respectively, the loss of 5.2% by the Anglicans represents 201 200 adherents and 14.7% for the Uniting Church, 182 900. Greater percentage losses suffered by the Salvation Army (-15.7%) and Churches of Christ (-18.9%) represent only 11 200 and 11 600 members respectively for the memberships are smaller.

So using the broadest categories possible evangelicalism declined 3 800 (-0.1%) in the last decade, while using the *Sub-total* calculations (Table 4) there were 356 700 (-5.4%) fewer evangelicals in Australia in 2011 than 2001 – while the population grew. The truth may be somewhere in between, or even a greater decline. This has been particularly disturbing for evangelical Christians compelled to spread the good news of Jesus Christ by all means available and convinced that continued growth is evidence of faithfulness to the gospel commission. (Matt 28:18-20) Having developed within an environment of revivalism, confidence and progress, the evangelical culture or psyche had been engrained with the conviction that faithful witness equates numerical growth.[9]

[8] Collated from ABS 2010, ABS 2012, and Cahill 2012.

[9] Eighteenth and early nineteenth century post-millennialism reflected a Darwinian culture of progress and development, paralleling colonialism; while late nineteenth century pre-millennialism – which had a negative view of culture and the world, gauged progress in terms of the exploding missionary movement, also paralleling colonialism.

Identifying responses: Church Growth and Emerging Missional Church

Gordon Moyes, author of the first Australian CG book *How to Grow an Australian Church* (1978), hoped that CG principles introduced in the 1970s-1980s would reverse the trends by making the church more appealing and evangelistically effective. While observing that 'opinion polls showed … an increase in the numbers of people that thought the Church was losing its influence from 14% to 67%' in the ten years 1960 to 1970 (Moyes 1978:9), Moyes drew attention to the rapid expansion of Christianity in Africa, South America and Korea – and the appearance of mega churches in America. (Moyes 1978:10-11) Acknowledging that 'the Australian scene [was] different [to] the American culture' (Moyes 1978:11), Moyes was adamant that 'the principles of Church growth can still work here'. (Moyes 1978:12)

However, in spite of 'the popularization' of the CG movement – described by Piggin as 'a fiercer pragmatism' that 'entered the courts of the church' (Piggin 1996:187) – the decline and aging of the church in Australia continued. By the early 2000s some mission networks, and even denominational observers, were saying CG as well as established church models were flawed and ineffective; that entirely fresh, emerging-missional expressions of church were needed to reach Australian society. (Frost and Hirsch 2003: ix) The early EMC spokespersons – including Australians Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch – were 'activists and missionaries' (Frost and Hirsch 2003:xi) in western societies.

Their response to the dilemma of continuing evangelistic ineffectiveness was radically different. While well aware of the 'massive long-trended decline' of the church in the West, they were not interested in tweaking existing church system to cultivate growth. (Hirsch 2006:16) Their agenda was 'the important work of rediscovering a New Testament mandate for the church in the twenty-first century,' looking for 'audacious new versions of Christian communities within unchurched subcultures' based upon a fundamentally different view of church and mission. (Frost, Hirsch 2003:x, xi)

Exploring the impact: changing the experience of church

While CG practitioners sought to grow the existing church with few ecclesiological questions asked, the implementation of their theories revamped the experience of local church and generated internal wars over worship music, leadership styles and sacred buildings. On the other hand, while professing to make the Kingdom of God accessible to unchurched people, EMC activists blatantly challenged inherited ecclesiology. CG and EMC protagonists have cast aspersions upon the evangelistic effectiveness and ecclesiology of the other. For EMC advocates CG theory was *reformatio in peius* – a change of Christendom church for the

worse, while for CG, EMC theory is naïve *restitutio in integrum* – the credulous belief that pre-Christendom forms of church might be evangelistically effective today.[10]

John Skrzypaszek's[11] research demonstrates that when expectations for quantitative church growth are not realized, there is a 'resulting anxiety' that drives some denominations to 'frantic activities of program-oriented ministry'. (Skrzypaszek 2009:152) Such activity allows little opportunity for theological reflection, creates an environment where attention is diverted from what is really happening, and cultivates a culture of frustration and recrimination among administrators, pastors and members seeking to lay blame for failure. But while traditional program-oriented evangelism has been ineffective, so have innovative approaches. Michael Frost (2008) researched seven Australian Forge related initiatives to assess how missional they really were, while Phillip Brown's 2011 case study of five EMCs confirmed Darren Cronshaw's 2009 findings from four Melbourne groups that 'reality does not yet match their rhetoric' in evangelism (Cronshaw 2009:1) – 'that fewer non-church people are being reached than the EMC rhetoric would suggest'. (Brown 2011:xi)

These studies give no direct attention to the impact of the CG and EMC phenomena upon reshaping evangelical ecclesiology and how church is experienced. However, in his comparison of 'the ecclesiological conceptions of the western *Emerging-Missional Church Movement* (EMCM)' with 'the core ecclesiologies' of Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), John Zizioulas and Miroslav Volf, Graham Hill found the EMC movement 'contributes significantly to the development of a meaningful missional ecclesiology for contemporary western culture'. (Hill 2008:6) He references David Bosch who quotes Emil Brunner's adage, 'The church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning', (Hill 2012:151; Bosch 1995:32) to introduce his chapter entitled, 'The Mission-Forged Church: Participating in the Mission of God', (Hill 2012: 151-179) in which he explores the contribution of *missio Dei* for a missional ecclesiology.

Hill observes: 'The influence of the EMCM on the shape of contemporary church cannot be ignored' (Hill 2008:25) but he does not consider the influence of CG theory upon the EMC movement and ecclesiology, nor their collective contribution to any disarray over the nature of church and mission. This thesis addresses this lack, with Hill's missional ecclesiology – forged by *missio Dei*, centered in Christ, empowered by the Spirit, and reflecting Trinitarian

[10] *Reformatio in peius* is a Latin phrase used in law of a decision amended or changed to one that is worse (Wikipedia, 'Reformatio in peius'); and *restitutio in integrum* is a Latin maxim meaning 'restoration to original condition' (Wikipedia, restitutio in integrum').

[11] Skrzypaszek is a lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education, an educational institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

community (Hill 2012:151-262) – providing a matrix by which to reflect upon their influence, including a reshaping of church experience towards a populist ecclesiology.

Personal perspectives

As an evangelical who has actively applied CG principles and cultivated missional church plants, I am a participant-observer in this research. My ministry (1971-) has spanned the development of these movements. Experience in pastoral-evangelism, church planting, and as a Ministerial Secretary/Global Mission Coordinator for the Seventh-day Adventist Church,[12] has involved evangelistic preaching and church planting in Australia, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand, mentoring pastors, coordinating their professional growth to meet continuing education requirements, and equipping planting teams in the United States, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Pakistan – including contextualized faith groups within Islam and Judaism. A critical issue has been ecclesiology: what is church? When can it be said that a church exists? And, do the forms and expressions of church redefine its message?

Through early involvement in the founding team of the *Australian Fellowship for Church Growth* (AFCG), being a participant-presenter in missional dialogues, and equipping new church planting teams in Australia and internationally, I have met many proponents and practitioners of both theories. This project therefore reflects my own perspectives, as well as theirs. However, as far as possible I seek to allow the data and findings to speak for themselves. In this research I am an observer, not an advocate. While not claiming complete objectivity, my current role as a consultant-coach for church planting teams and mission agencies provides an ongoing context for observing the practical issues involved. It also serves to protect me from the illusion of individual or corporate solipsism – 'the view that the only reality is my own experience.' (Pugh 2009:8)

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This research responds to the need for an insider's understanding of the CG and EMC movements. It draws theorists and practitioners from both into dialogue rather than acrimonious debate, providing their perspectives on these phenomena. It contributes to the

[12] See Website: Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists, for these roles held at the headquarters in St Albans, England, from 1996-2005. A Ministerial Secretary serves the professional needs of pastors as a mentor, providing pastoral care and encouragement, ministry resources and in-service educational opportunities. A Global Mission Coordinator strategizes and cultivates plans to plant new churches in un-entered territories for unreached people groups.

discussion of what effective Australian churches could look like. The following chapter introduces the CG and EMC responses to the decline of Australian churches and the research focus – my thesis and method.

Chapter 2
The Thesis:
Reshaping the Australian Church Experience

The thesis

This thesis argues that CG and EMC responses to the dilemma of evangelistic ineffectiveness reshaped church experience for Australian evangelicals. Using the lens of phenomenological research (PhR) it provides an insider's perspective by exploring the experiences of theorists and practitioners who played a role in introducing these movements to Australia. It probes the influence of these phenomena upon church experience, including influences towards a populist ecclesiology, suggesting revised theories and practices that arise from theological reflection upon the experiences of these phenomena. (See Table 5)

Table 5: Evangelistic ineffectiveness: CG and EMC responses and outcomes

Dilemma 1:	Aging and decline in Australian church attendance
Assumption	Churches need to adapt twentieth century forms and marketing
Response 1:	Pragmatic CG and health principles Modern progressive positivist church forms will be effective
Theories	CG phenomenon
Outcomes	Professional, market-driven, multi-staffed church - new institutionalized forms
Dilemma 2:	Continued aging and decline in the Australian church
Assumption	Modern church forms are flawed and unbiblical
Response 2:	Pragmatic EMC deconstructionist principles Postmodern deconstruction will renew the church
Theories	EMC phenomenon
Outcomes	Organic, conversational, simple church - new anti-institutional and deconstructed forms

The method

Research into these theories fits within the methodological tradition of practical theology which Swinton and Mowat define as 'critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world with a view to ensuring faithful participation in the continuing mission of the Triune God.' (Swinton, Mowat 2006:25) Further, to specifically understand the experience and impact of the CG and EMC movements, PhR will be used to gather the data needed to examine the validity of my thesis.

The phenomenological approach has been chosen for its congruence with my research. Rather than simply summarizing, analyzing and adding to the numerous critiques of CG and EMC theories, my aim is to understand the experience of the CG and EMC phenomena through the memories of prominent participants. PhR facilitates this, for it 'aims to understand the experience of a phenomenon … through the senses of an individual'. (Pugh 2009:7) Second, it regards 'every horizon or statement', relevant to the theme, as of 'equal value'. (Pugh 2009:25) Just as Thompson argues that 'any attempt to understand the church in Acts must keep the church in its narrative place' (Thompson 2006:241),[13] so attempts to understand these phenomena must take into account each player's experiences. Superficial judgments on apparently contradictory descriptions are withheld, for perceptions of reality change as a phenomenon is experienced. Further, it is intentionally heuristic, seeking to shed 'light' upon experiences, 'often of a problematic or distressing nature.' (Pugh 2009:7) Subjective experiences and meanings are critical data (Pugh 2009:7, 18), and the researcher is compelled to draw back from dogmatic pre-judgments. By viewing CG and EMC through the experiences of key theorists and practitioners these phenomena might be viewed differently.

A fourth reason for using PhR is that it is concerned with essences. It 'goes beyond identifying, appreciating and explaining current and shared meanings. It seeks to critique those meanings.' (Crotty 1996:5) Pugh notes that 'the critical work' of PhR 'is to uncover "themes" or recurrent structures.' (Pugh 2009:22) To evaluate whether these responses to the dilemma of evangelistic ineffectiveness have changed church experience and even contributed to a populist ecclesiology that devalues the church, it is crucial that we identify essences and themes. Lastly, the phenomenological approach takes cognizance of my intense interest, convictions, experience and participation in these CG and EMC phenomena. PhR fits.

Research phases. The project design intentionally places key Australian players in CG and EMC theory, practice and debate in dialogue. The three phases of this PhR design are (1) preparation, (2) data collection, and (3) analysis and organization. (Moustakas 1994:58-59)

During the *preparation phase* the social and evangelical context of both CG and EMC phenomena in Australia is surveyed, the purpose is defined, professional literature reviewed, and research participants located. For both phenomena the writings of the primary theorist and practitioner have been selected for review: Donald McGavran, 'the

[13] Peterson 2009:47, 48 drew attention to Thompson 2006.

Father of Church Growth' (Conway 2012), for the CG phenomenon; and Brian McLaren, the 'elder statesman' of 'emerging church' (EC),[14] for the EMC phenomena. Table 6 identifies this process of review.

Table 6: Preparation phase: participants and professional literature review

Phenomenon 1:	CG theories and movement
Literature Review:	1. Donald McGavran – 'the Father of Church Growth' 2. Professional literature – the experience of CG
Phenomenon 2:	EMC theories and movement
Literature Review:	1. Brian McLaren – the 'elder statesman' of 'emerging church' 2. Professional literature – the experience of EMC

It could be argued that Lesslie Newbigin would better represent the EMC phenomena, for he remains the 'recognized father' and 'tacit authority in much missional and emergent church literature'. (Goheen 2010:64) However, I have chosen McLaren for he popularized emerging church whereas Newbigin's emphasis was missional, he represents a new generation while Newbigin was McGavran's contemporary, and his is a 'conversation about postmodern ministry' (McLaren 2012) rather than ministry for postmoderns. While Newbiggin is a principal dialogue partner in this research, it is important to also be fully *au fait* with the EC stream of the EMC phenomenon.

While this review was being conducted participant interviewees for the second phase were selected and preliminary contact made by phone and email. The Letter of Introduction (Appendix A) and Consent Form (Appendix B) were sent to each.

For the *data collection phase* four Australians were selected on the basis of their involvement as theorists, practitioners, writers and presenters. Gordon Moyes and Peter Corney were selected for CG and Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch for EMC. For 27 years Moyes was Superintendent of Wesley Mission Sydney, and from 2002-11 was a member of the New South Wales Legislative Council. He was the first Australian to publish a book applying CG theory to the Australian evangelical church.[15] Corney, then vicar of St. Hilary's

[14] Website: Time.
[15] Moyes 2003.

Kew – a vibrant Anglican church in Melbourne – and proponent of CG principles, was the featured speaker at the first *Building a Church for Lost Aussies Conference* at Macquarie University in 1993. Frost and Hirsch, co-founders of the Forge Mission Training Network (Forge)[16] in 1998 and co-authors of *The Shaping of Things to Come* (2003), are the most prominent Australian proponents and practitioners of EMC. Frost has published another three books of significance to this research since 2003, and co-authored another two with Hirsch. Hirsch has written another, and co-authored five, including the three with Frost. Hirsch is now based in America and Frost is the Vice Principal of Morling College in Sydney and founding Director of the Tinsley Institute, a mission study centre. As well as these four, Phil McCredden – senior minister at Northern Communities Church of Christ,[17] Preston, Victoria (2000-2012) and co-founder of *Ecclesia Consulting*[18] – has been interviewed for he has espoused both phenomena. Table 7 identifies these interviewees.

Table 7: Data collection phase: interviews in dialogue with published writings

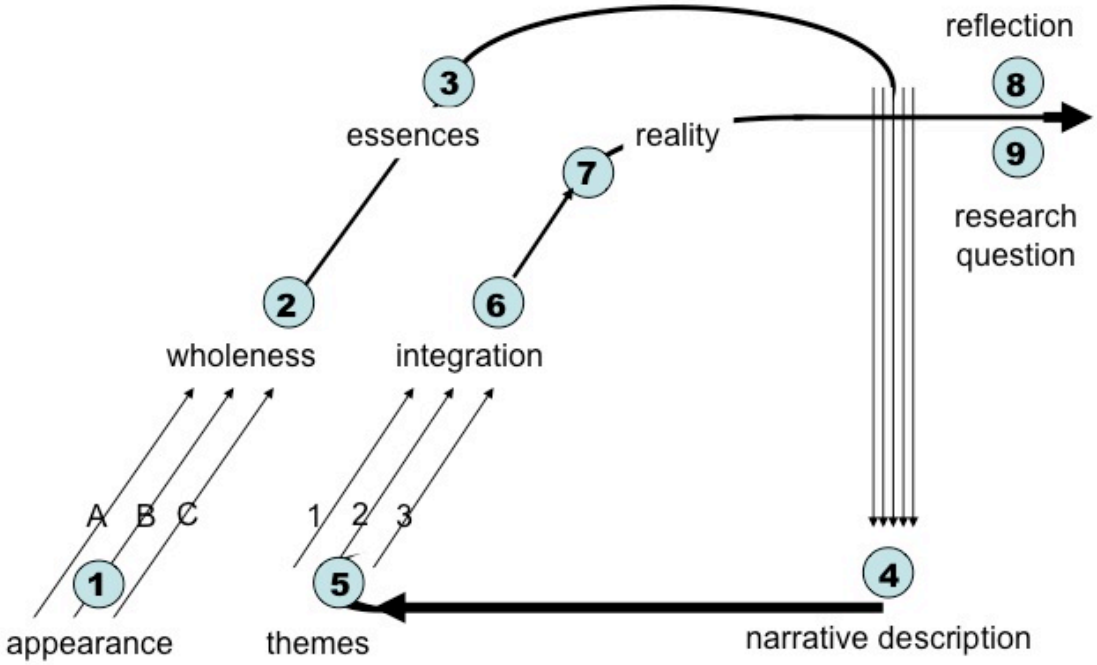
Phenomenon 1:	CG theories and movement
Interviews:	Australia theorists, practitioners, authors and presenters: Gordon Moyes, Peter Corney
Perspectives:	Phil McCredden (I)
Phenomenon 2:	EMC theories and movement
Interviews:	Australian theorists, practitioners, authors and presenters: Michael Frost, Alan Hirsch
Perspectives:	Phil McCredden (II)

Semi-structured interviews (see Appendix C), both heuristic and iterative, have been used to gather personal perceptions of the experience of each phenomenon. The interview process was explained in writing, with advice that interviewees were free to withdraw at any time. It was also explained that they would be identified in the research, with their permission sought and agreed upon. A summary of the research will be provided upon completion as requested. All audio and transcribed records have been securely stored and remain confidential.

[16] Also see Website: Forge Canada.
[17] Website: Northern Communities Church of Christ.
[18] Website: Ecclesia.

The *analysis and organization phase* has involved 'horizontalization' – making all data or 'elements in a situation equal' (Rehorick, Bentz 2008:16), allowing meanings and themes to be identified and textural descriptions to be developed. Table 8 illustrates Moustakas' nine core facets of this research phase. (Moustakas 1994:58-59) The primary focus of the interviews was learning how theorists and practitioners experienced the phenomena. Each had their own perspectives, the variety being represented by arrows A, B and C. It was through an examination of these many sides, perspectives or experiences that the wholeness of each phenomenon became evident. (Moustakas 1994:58)

Table 8: Core facets of Phenomenological Research



The narratives of these theorists and practitioners, exploring their subjective experiences of the CG and EMC phenomena together with the principles, sources of inspiration and dependencies suggested patterns in presuppositions, prescriptions and practices. From what these phenomena appeared like to them (#1)[19], my research sought to identify 'wholeness of meaning' (Moustakas 1994:58) (#2) to arrive at the essences (#3) – the shared fundamental ideas, concepts, judgments and understandings of both CG and EMC. In that the goal of this research has been a descriptive evaluation of the experiences of CG and EMC in reshaping the forms of church, rather than explanations or prescriptions, the multiple essences identified were framed into a narrative description (#4) accentuating the underlying meanings and themes (#5).

[19] A hash sign and number (#1, #2 etc) is used to denote the circled numbers in Table 8.

Themes of particular interest to the impact these phenomena have had upon shaping how church is experienced were identified. Also, how participant interviewees perceived they have shaped evangelical churches in Australia through their involvement in CG and/or EMC provided important themes. In these themes, as throughout the process, the integration (#6) of subjective experiences with the objective is perceived as reality (#7).

The data of experience, intuition, judgment and reflection (including theological) found in literature reviews or expressed by participant interviewees (#8) is primary evidence. (Pugh 2009:19) Their theories, feelings, attitudes and reactions to their involvement were categorized,[20] and the relationships with and between these categories used to enrich the data.[21] Throughout this process the research question (#9) has remained sharply in focus, that is: How do theorists and practitioners of CG and EMC describe the impact of these phenomena upon their experience and in shaping evangelical ecclesiology in Australia?

Approach to Literature

While no PhR study of CG and EMC movements has been identified, related literature provides a rich source of how participants have experienced these phenomena. I have analyzed primary publications of McGavran and McLaren in chapters 4 and 6; and the publications of Moyes, Corney, Frost and Hirsch in chapter 5 and 7. McGavran's biographer Vern Middleton,[22] along with Gary McIntosh (2005) and Ed Stetzer (2005) in papers presented at meetings of the *American Society for Church Growth*, reference some of McGavran's correspondence otherwise only accessible through physical searches in the USA. In his books McLaren openly shares his feelings and responses. Consistent with PhR the review of this literature focuses upon how they experienced the phenomena – their presuppositions, principles, practices and perceptions of the changing forms of church.

As well as providing the context for these phenomena in Australia, chapter 3 also reviews EC and missional church (MC) literature, demonstrating their evolution. Gibbs and Bolger's substantive 2005 study of fifty EC practitioners, identifying nine key EC practices (see Table 14, page 33) used by both Hill (2008) and Brown (2011) in their respective research into ecclesiology and discipleship, are placed in contrast with the twelve MC qualities (see Table 15, page 36) as identified by Newbigin and *The Gospel and Our Culture Network* (GOCN),

[20] This first level of categorization is called 'open coding.' (Pugh 2009:78)
[21] This level of categorization is called 'axial coding.' (Pugh 2009:81)
[22] Vern Middleton served in India from 1965 to 1976. He was a student and long-term friend. He began his biography in 1983 when McGavran was still alert, 'primary archives were still readily accessible', and, 'Several of his contemporaries were still alive to be interviewed'. (Middleton 2011:xix)

clarifying a divergence between the EC and MC streams of EMC theory and practice that is not identified by other researchers.

An omission from Hill's extensive study of EMC literature is Ray Anderson's *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches* (2006). Anderson was Professor of Theology and Ministry at Fuller Theological Seminary (Fuller).[23] In his doctoral dissertation, published as *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God: a Christological Critique* (1975), he recognized 'the profound theological anthropology and ecclesiology' of the Greek Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas (Kettler 2009), one of Hill's subjects of research. Aware of syncretism within the EC movement, Anderson contrasts the Antioch church with that in Jerusalem and challenges EC to be 'the church ahead of us' (Anderson 2006:200) – arising from God's mission, the gospel of Jesus Christ and the activity of the Spirit; seen in kingdom living, the work of God and the community of the Spirit. Whether this has become reality, is a part of this research.

Limitations and Outline

My research is limited by its focus upon the experiences of just six primary theorists and practitioners who played a role in introducing CG and EMC theory and practice to Australia. It is therefore specific to their experiences and does not provide a comprehensive theoretical or theological evaluation of these movements. In that respondents selectively reinterpret the past to legitimate their journeys, 'some distortion in their narratives' can be expected, however, their personal memories are their experiences of the phenomenon. (van Otterloo 2012:242) It is limited by its reliance upon primary published works and, in the case of the Australians, interviews. For Donald McGavran and Gordon Moyes, I have also been able to access biographies, but not their letters or emails which could be a rich source of memories, frustrations and triumphs. In focusing upon qualitative experiential data my research is also limited in its biblical treatment of ecclesiology, with, for example, no analysis of either the validity of EMC genes or the claims of renewal of the Spirit through the mass technology of contemporary worship in CG influenced churches.

The chapters reflect the phases of this research. Chapter 3, 'The Context: Environments for Growth and Emerging Missional Responses', is the *preparation phase* providing a survey of the social and religious context at the time CG and EMC theories and practices were introduced into Australian evangelicalism.

[23] See website: Fuller, a multidenominational evangelical seminary in Pasadena, California.

Chapters 4 to 7 constitute the *data collection phase*, with the first facets of *organization and analysis*. Chapter 4, 'Donald McGavran: Shaping the Church Growth Web', and chapter 6, 'Brian McLaren: Living in the Postmodern Web', analyze the writings of 'the Father of Church Growth'[24] and the 'elder statesman' of 'emerging church'[25] to discover how they experienced these movements. Chapters 5 and 6, 'When Church Growth Migrated to Australia' and 'When Missional Church Emerged in Australia', are key to the thesis, for the argument is found primarily in the experiences of the first Australian theorists and practitioners. These chapters explore participant's stories to gain a view of what the phenomena appeared like to them.

In chapter 8, 'Theological Reflection: When is Church, Church?' the multiple experiences of the theorists and practitioners are synthesized, with descriptions of their impact upon local church experience. These form the basis for reflection upon 'what makes church church' (Kärkkäinen 2002:14) and the competing ecclesiology of these phenomena in relation to mission, forms and church planting. Using grid-group analysis of church types, enriched by types of theological reflection, enables us to view the complexities of CG and EMC ecclesiology to ascertain competitiveness and populist tendencies that might devalue the church.

Finally chapter 9, 'Conclusion: Findings, Implications and Possible Alternatives', suggests revised theories and fresh practices for ecclesiology and mission that arise from the inspiration and experience of these movements.

*****

To arrive at a 'synthesis of the meanings' (Moustakas 1994:144) for CG and EMC theorists and practitioners, and their significance for evangelicalism in Australia, the next chapter explores the social and evangelical contexts for the manifestation of these phenomena. Thus chapter 3 explores key internal issues for evangelicalism at the time CG theory was introduced. It also examines the impact of postmodernism upon the context, the agitation for an entirely new EMC emphasis, and the particular expression of EMC that has been fostered in Australia.

[24] Website: Conway.
[25] Website: Time.

Chapter 3
The Context:
Environments for Growth and Emerging Missional Responses

Since the 1960s Christianity has been 'shrinking as a proportion of the total religious profile of modern Australia' while, at the same time, it has 'been changing and taking on new forms'. (Piggin 1996:172) As part of a 'global renaissance of evangelicalism' (McGrath 1994:2), by the mid-1970s in Australia it became 'the strongest movement within the Protestant churches'. (Piggin 1996:174-175) As the first phase of PhR, this chapter surveys the Australian evangelical context and the shape of CG and EMC when these phenomena appeared.

The evangelical context

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) tempered sectarian tensions between Catholics and Protestants,[26] and the 'refashioned Marxism' of the 1960s and 1970s gave baby-boomers 'a powerful vision of a transformed future'. (McGrath 1994:1) They brought their pragmatism, idealism and social conscience to church, confronting churchmen[27] and the institution with their color, style, rock-music, priorities, and values. The radical appeal of Jesus to this counter-cultural movement was momentarily reflected in the 'short-lived, complex and socially transformational' Jesus Movement (Smith 2002:49), what Bebbington referred to as 'a Christian version of the counter-culture'. (Bebbington 1989:233)

The 1970s was a decade of intentional evangelism, but also one of change, conflict and contradiction. Personal evangelism was supported with street preaching, as well as public lectures, seminars and apologetic presentations to convince people of the historicity of Scripture and Jesus Christ. Revival spread among Aboriginal people,[28] while changes to immigration policy opened the way for new migrants to bring in ancient branches of Christianity, and the formation of the Uniting Church (1977) resulted in more denominations. And, robbed of their common enemies of Catholicism and Liberalism, evangelicalism's strands separated, living 'without the restraint and correction of the other'. (Piggin 1996:175)

[26] Piggin wrote that sectarianism 'evaporated overnight'. (Piggin 1996:173)
[27] Women were virtually unrepresented in local or denominational leadership at the time.
[28] In 1971-2 I teamed with Aborigines to conduct missions and Bible reading groups in Condoblin; and in 1973 witnessed revival led by men of the Wellington, NSW Aboriginal community. Also see Piggin 1996:174.

The strength of *the Spirit* strand was seen in the 'growth of Pentecostal churches and the charismatic movement', identified by Peter Kaldor as 'the most notable' of the 'many new forms and styles of church life'. (Kaldor 1987:158) Pentecostal churches were the only ones that 'managed to avoid and even reverse the trend' of attendance decline; and in providing 'a form of Christianised existentialism' (Bebbington 1989:233) or pop romanticism, 'the most effective of the churches in attracting youth'. (Piggin 1996:173) This popularity of charismatic evangelicalism ran parallel with the counter-cultural movement. (Bebbington 1989:233)

Unfortunately, *the Word* strand was characterized by 'the dark side' of evangelicalism, that of 'intensely dogmatic attitudes'. (McGrath 1994:147, 151) There were battles over worship styles and charismatic renewal; as well as debates over inerrancy, creationism, holiness and prophetic identity. For many, it was war:

> The renaissance of Reformed theology produced a growing battalion of evangelical theologians and an army of evangelical preachers, with Sydney increasingly recognized as one of the most fortified of the international movement's command posts. (Piggin 1996:175)

Loyalty to both *the Word* and *Spirit* strands brought acrimonious division across denominational boundaries. Whatever evangelicals disagreed with, they labeled 'liberal'. (Piggin 1996:175) Through the 1980s these battles, together with the strength of charismatic renewal, weakened *the world* strand in both evangelism and social action, heightening the pragmatic appeal of ecumenism and exposing evangelicalism's lack of cohesive ecclesiology. While they believed they belonged to 'the true, invisible church,' evangelicals 'had not spent a lot of time defining what they meant by "church"'. (Piggin 1996:175)

An influential force in the development of Reformed theology in Australia was Broughton Knox (Piggin 1996:180-184),[29] principal of the Anglican Moore Theological College, Sydney, from 1959-1985. With Donald Robinson, who joined Knox at Moore College in 1952 until he became Bishop of Parramatta in 1973, Knox vigorously cultivated an ecclesiology in which the church is primarily a heavenly gathering. For Knox, Piggin explains: 'The truest earthly manifestation of this heavenly reality is the local church; not the denomination beloved by the ecclesiastics, nor the world church beloved of the Ecumenical movement which was

[29] See also Wikipedia, 'Anglican Diocese of Sydney'.

then in full cry'. (Piggin 1996:186) For Robinson, who became Anglican Archbishop of Sydney (1982-1993), Piggin adds:

> His most controversial emphasis was that the church was not an instrument of evangelism, but is rather the result of evangelism. This refusal to put the church at the disposal of the evangelistic cause distressed many evangelicals for whom evangelism is primary. (Piggin 1996:186)

This preoccupation with ecclesiological matters by *the Word* strand – especially in such a combative environment – together with almost total obsession with their worship experiences by *the Spirit* strand, left *the world* strand largely neglected. It is little wonder that when CG theory arrived in Australia in the mid-1970s, with its proclaimed emphasis upon mission and evangelism, there was caution. It was not until the late 1980s that it gained acceptance, by which time CG had itself been tailored to meet the expectations of *the Word* and *Spirit* strands rather than *the world*.

Global South developmental response to a Global North challenge[30]

With this social context in mind, this section explores the arrival of CG theory in Australia, and its shape. Until 1972 CG was a Global South discussion. McGavran, a Churches of Christ missionary in India for 33 years, explained that between 1955 and 1970 career missionaries met in seminars and workshops to explore mission questions:

> How can churches be more faithful to God? Are missions reaping as widely as they can? Are congregations in Afericasia[31] multiplying as God desires? How can missionaries engage in more effective evangelism? What factors accelerate and what retard church growth in new denominations? (McGavran 1980:vi)

To facilitate these Global South discussions McGavran established the Institute of Church Growth at Eugene, Oregon in 1957, prior to founding the School of World Mission (SWM) at Fuller in 1965. By 1967 the first draft of *Understanding Church Growth*, published in 1970, was being used as a basic text for these discussions and lectures for equipping missionaries. (McGavran 1980:vi)[32]

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[30] Global South once designated as Third World; Global North once designated Western.
[31] Due to the lack of any convenient term to describe the areas of Africa, Latin America and Asia, Donald McGavran adopted the use of *Afericasia*; and for Europe and North America, the terms *Eurica* and its adjective *Eurican.* See McGavran 1980:xv.
[32] The 1980 edition was a full revision of the 1970 edition.

When attending the first CG workshop open to American pastors, conducted by Peter Wagner[33] and McGavran in 1972, Win Arn[34] realized the 'principles being taught to foreign missionaries … had cross-cultural applications and implications'. He suggested the co-authoring of *How to Grow a Church* (1973). (Website: CG Inc.) This 'first book in American church growth' (*CG Inc* History 2005) took the format of 'Arn asking McGavran about his church growth principles and how they might be applied to a Western context'. (Website: CG Inc.) Moyes offered his book *How to Grow an Australian Church* as a supplement 'for Australian conditions' (Moyes 1978: title page), 'one pattern for growth that works', saying: '*Great days lie ahead for you to see your church grow.* Above all, use the ideas presented here … use this book as a handbook'. (Moyes 1978:13)

In 1978 Moyes added a ninth chapter, which he entitled 'Three Years Later'. (Moyes 1978:128) By that time Arn had twice visited Australia, conducting seminars in every State attended by 'over 4 000 Church Leaders'. (Moyes 1978:128) Moyes observed: 'Church Growth thinking and a new sense of optimism in the future of the local Church is to be found'. (Moyes 1978:129) However, he also expressed his frustration that while some churches in every State were 'reporting growth', having 'been gripped with enthusiasm in the ongoing task of outreach, there are many Churches who are still doing nothing'. (Moyes 1978:129-130)

As already noted, by the end of the 1970s evangelistic enthusiasm was being dampened by in-church tensions fed by the stridency of *the Word* strand as well as the intense preoccupation of *the Spirit* strand. Moyes reflected McGavran's CG vision of outreach. However, McGavran's CG theory was undergoing major revision. Its 'American application' moved away from his emphasis upon mission (Stetzer 2005:2), and was imported to Australia as a method to grow existing local churches.

The shift in emphasis can be lost in the terms. McGavran's Global South missionary emphasis was new converts and new church plants, while the 'American application' was the growth of existing congregations. In the Preface to his 1970 edition of *Understanding Church Growth* McGavran wrote of multiplying church plants:

[33] Peter Wagner, a missionary in Bolivia, became a professor at the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller (formerly SWM) in 1971, replacing Donald McGavran as head of the faculty in 1981 – a role he held until 1998. He was Professor for CG at Fuller from 1971 to 2001.

[34] Win Arn was a denominational executive of the Evangelical Covenant Church. In 1973 he founded Church Growth Inc., formerly called the Institute for American Church Growth; Charles Arn, his son, has been president since 1989. See *CG Inc* History 2005.

> The great campaigns of evangelism are urgent. They are one way in which the Gospel advances. But, as the pages of this book show abundantly, campaigns need to be carried on in such a fashion that multitudes of new churches are established and multitudes of new converts do become reliable members of Christ's Body. (McGavran 1980:x-xi)

In 1980, under the section title 'Church Growth is Faithfulness to God' (McGavran 1980:5), he wrote: 'The multiplication of churches nourished on the Bible and full of the Holy Spirit is a *sine qua non* in carrying out the purposes of God'. (McGavran 1980:6) For McGavran, CG was synonymous with church planting. He wrote: 'for the welfare of the world, for the good of mankind – according to the Bible, one task is paramount. Today's supreme task is effective multiplication of churches in receptive societies of earth'. (McGavran 1980:41) Eddie Gibbs[35] confirmed that McGavran 'argued for a narrow definition of mission, emphasizing the goal of church planting'. (Gibbs 1985:17)

This was not the emphasis of the CG that arrived in Australia. Wagner wrote *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest* in 1990, with his 'bold and brash' introductory statement: *'The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches'.* (Wagner 1990: 11) But his prior books had emphasized the 'scientific principles' (Wagner 1976) for growing existing local churches, with the titles *Your Church Can Grow* (1976), *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (1979) *Leading Your Church to Growth* (1984) and *Strategies for Church Growth* (1987). These titles reflect the CG theory promoted in Australia in the 1980s, and it was not primarily evangelism or church planting. I recall pastors at that time saying: 'I'm not into evangelism, I'm into church growth.' (Compare Table 9)

The Christian Research Association (CRA) formed in 1985, 'to provide up-to-date and reliable information about religious faith and church life in Australia',[36] and the collation of data from the national census together with congregational surveys by National Church Life Survey (NCLS) since 1986, meant it was no longer necessary to rely on the assumption American research reflected Australian circumstances. The AFCG published a regular Bulletin (1986-91)[37] and hosted conferences with Eddie Gibbs and Carl George (1988),[38] Peter Wagner (1988), and Win and Charles Arn (1990).

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[35] Eddie Gibbs, formerly from England, is Professor Emeritus of Church Growth at Fuller.
[36] Website: CRA.
[37] Edited by Peter Moonie and Peter Roennfeldt. (Website: ANZTLA)
[38] Carl George, a Florida pastor before teaching at Fuller, founder of Leadership for Ministry.

Table 9: CG principles promoted in Australia[39]

1	**The Pastor:** must want the church to grow and hire multiple staff to grow. (Wagner 1976:52-53) The pastor is '*the primary catalytic factor for growth*.' (Wagner 1976:61)
2	**The People:** must want the church to grow – '*a well mobilized laity*' (Wagner 1976:77), who are willing to pay the cost in time, money and programs. (Wagner 1976:53-56)
3	**Church Size:** must be big enough to grow internally, by expansion (conversions), extension (planting), and bridging (planting across cultures). (Wagner 1976:97, 106-7)
4	**Structure & Functions:** producing 'peak efficiency' (Wagner 1976:35) is '*best expressed by this simple formula: Celebration + Congregation + Cell = Church.*' (Wagner 1976:111)
5	**Homogeneous Unit:** '*The fifth vital sign of a healthy, growing church is that its membership is composed of basically one kind of people*.' (Wagner 1976:127)
6	**Methods:** must be chosen because they work in making disciples – 'consecrated pragmatism.' (Wagner 1976: 159) The secret, '*find a need and fill it.*' (Wagner 1976:160)
7	**Priorities:** reflecting '(1) commitment to Christ; (2) commitment to the Body of Christ; (3) commitment to the work of Christ in the world' – evangelism and social involvement (Wagner 1976:180)

By the time of the 1993 *Building a Church for Lost Aussies Conference* at Macquarie University (Sydney) featuring Australian research and presenters, including Peter Corney, the influence of the CG movement was beginning to wane. (Stetzer 2005:12) At the very time the fierce pragmatism of CG was gaining momentum in popular conferences among Australian evangelicals a growing undercurrent of disquiet was forming. The movement had suffered relentless criticism of its 'alleged emphasis of numerical growth over spiritual growth', 'methodological tricks and techniques', and the market-driven nature of 'growing a church' (Stetzer 2005:9); but now CG loyalists, weary of the conflicts involved in implementing CG theories in established churches, also expressed their frustrations. Stetzer says that by 1996 he realized CG strategies 'were not working' in his American context. (Stetzer 2005:4) He wrote: 'Church Growth proponents gave me reliable tools to reach certain people, but these people did not live where I served'. (Stetzer 2005:5)

However, CG was not finished. In 1989 church planting was placed on the agenda in Australian CG conferences. Robert (Bob) Logan had recently planted the Community Baptist Church of Alta Loma, California[40] and his visit led to the first *National Church Planting Conference* (1992) – the year the Baptist Union of Victoria published Philip Bryant's *Church Planting Workbook*. Logan returned in 1993 for a series of *New Church Incubators*

[39] Wagner 1976:35, 187-188.
[40] Robert Logan, church planter turned consultant and founder of CoachNet International Ministries, conducted the *Church Growth Seminar* in Australia in 1989.

for New Church Plants. Rick Warren and Bill Hybels had also planted their respective mega-churches, Saddleback Community Church and Willow Creek Community Church. However, by the time of their first Australian visits (Warren 1991, 1993; Hybels 1992) most attention was given to applying *purpose-driven* and *seeker-sensitive* thinking to established churches.[41] Their struggling church-plant-beginnings were overwhelmed by the large conference experiences: theatre ambience, worship styles, professional dramas, and presentations modeling what successful churches do to grow.

Christian Schwartz proposed 'a different approach to church growth' – *Natural Church Development* – condemning earlier models as 'technocratic'. (Schwartz 1996:6-7) However, Stetzer believes Schwartz's neglect of 'matters of culture and context', giving exclusive attention to 'the internal life of a congregation,' with a 'limited Christology' and 'absent missiology,' led 'to blindness to the world outside the church walls'. (Stetzer 2005:15) Neither the new *seeker-sensitive* and *purpose-driven* CG approaches, nor the church health movement, reversed the decline or aging of the church in Australia – although the essence of church was being redefined.

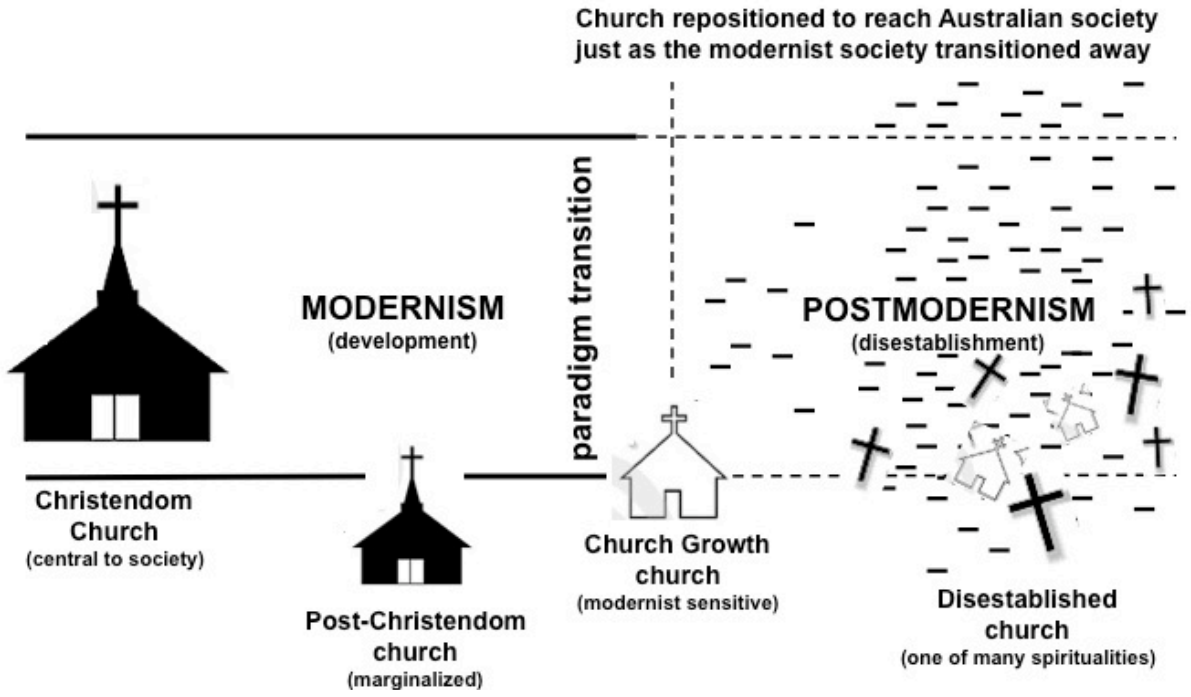
Stetzer sees a progression from CG to church health and then, when pastors and leaders realized they were each in 'a unique mission field,' they embraced 'the idea of missional church'. (Stetzer 2005:16) However, he also observes that McGavran's original CG emphasis was missional, but 'lost' in its Americanized forms. (Stetzer 2005:18) I also observed an important thread in the early 1990s. With its emphasis upon numerical growth the CG movement had drawn attention to the New Testament book of Acts. This book was again featured when the emphasis shifted to church health and spirituality. The growing interest in church planting – born out of the frustration of applying CG theories to established churches expressed in the church planter's mantra: 'It is easier to give birth than to raise the dead' (McIntosh 2012:169) – was also cultivated by the Acts narrative. The seemingly naïve simplicity of pre-Christendom, pre-modern, newly planted New Testament church communities appealed to those facing the growing gulf separating modernist churches from their increasingly postmodern unchurched societies.

It was not surprising that established inherited church models were judged to be largely ineffective, but also flawed; that entirely new expressions of church were needed. CG strategies had aimed to bring new growth by attracting people shaped by modern thought to

[41] *Purpose-driven* is associated with the CG response of Saddleback Community Church, and *seeker sensitive* with that of Willow Creek Community Church. See Warren 1995 and Hybels 1995.

a revised Christian culture. However, Australian society was slipping away, and these church forms were labeled Christendom-type. (See Table 10) As evangelicals repositioned to relate to modernist expectations the goalposts were moving as society experienced the modern-postmodern paradigm transition. It was a 'traumatic' time for Australian congregations, for 'many of the old ways no longer seemed to be effective.' (Kaldor, Bellamy, Moore 1995:x) It was a time of major transition and evangelicalism's responses to this changing social context were diverse.

Table 10: Post-Christendom church in times of paradigm transition



Transition to post-Christendom and postmodernism

In this section I explore the transitions that sidelined CG modernist sensitive churches. First, the post-Christendom era had come. Douglas John Hall identified three periods of church: early, Christendom beginning with Constantine, and 'the post-Christendom situation.' (Hall 1997:33)[42] The first Christians understood themselves to be 'resident aliens,' a 'publically subversive' 'alternative community'. (Goheen 2002:38-39) However, by the mid-fourth century they were in the majority in the Roman Empire. (See Table 11) Rodney Stark sees Constantine's conversion 'as a response' to this 'massive exponential wave in progress, not as its cause'. (Stark 1996:10) The church found itself as the 'chaplain of society, influencing the moral and private religious beliefs of the citizens.' (Goheen 2002:39)

[42] Hall (1997) was a contributor to the *Christian Mission and Modern Culture* series, with others including D.J. Bosch, W.R. Shenk, L.Newbigin, L. Sanneh and J.A. Kirk.

Table 11: Christian growth projected at 40 percent per decade[43]

Year	Number of Christians	Percent of Population (estimated 60 million)
40	1 000	0.0017
50	1 400	0.0023
100	7 530	0.0126
150	40 496	0.07
200	217 795	0.36
250	1 171 356	1.9
300	6 299 832	10.5
350	33 882 008	56.5

This privileged majority position did not last. Christianity's status as a 'tricontinental religion' crumbled in its failure to resist African and Asian rivals, and it became European 'by default' – simply because that is 'where it was not destroyed'. (Jenkins 2008:3) Isolated from other faiths and cultures Christianity became 'thoroughly European' and was shaped by both 'its alliance with state power' and its ability to ensure 'moral and doctrinal codes were enforced through law'. (Jenkins 2008:5) While resilient, this Christendom regime has now largely taken new post-Christendom forms in the Global North, including Australia.[44]

This has been a long and difficult process, and the vestiges of Christendom may never fully vanish from society. Many values, biases, sentiments and prejudices, as well as culture – art, literature, music, folk wisdom, relationships, pageantry and democracy – have their origins in Christendom. While the Renaissance, Enlightenment and modernism have dismantled the legal supports as well as the political and personal controls of Christendom, having 'lived so long as a permitted and even privileged minority' (Newbigin 1983:23) churches and denominations have fostered a compromise 'functional Christendom' where 'the legacy continues as a pattern of powerful traditions, attitudes, and social structures'. (Guder 1998:6) Those whose livelihood or identity depends upon Christendom-type systems defend their existence.

Resistance has mostly been through repressing awareness of Christendom's disestablishment. (Hall 1997:35) In this CG, perhaps unwittingly, played its part. McGavran was unequivocal that CG is 'a theological stance' (McGavran 1980:7): 'God desires it', 'God requires it', it is 'what God wants done'. (McGavran 1980:5, 7) While not all envisioned the Christianization of the nation (Moyes 2003), faithful evangelicals expected churches to

[43] Stark 1996:7, Table 1.1.
[44] Philip Jenkins forecasts a future Christendom in the Global South. See Jenkins 2002.

grow, not decline. There was expectation that Australia would become *The Great Southland of the Holy Spirit* (Geoff Bullock 1993)[45] – the unofficial theme song at Australian CG conferences expressing a Christendom-type vision. The church had lived so long within Christendom paradigms and was so enamored with the potential for progressive growth that it had all but lost its ability to discern the radical destabilizing challenges of populist postmodernism to modern civilization as a whole and the mission of church in particular.

Second, the modern-postmodern transition posed new missionary challenges. In his introductory chapter to *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement* (1995), David Dockery quoted Leigh Anderson's forecast that the 'enormous structural change' (Anderson 1992:17) sweeping western societies 'promises to be greater than the invention of the printing press, greater than the Industrial Revolution'. (Dockery 1995:13) This was more than generational change – baby boomers growing older (Anderson 1990:76-80) and baby-busters 'comparatively neglected'. (Anderson 1990:108) Dockery stated:

> Christians must be aware of changes of this significance and magnitude. As we move into the twenty-first century, a new way of viewing the world has emerged. The "modern" way of thinking, that dominated the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has become obsolete…. The twenty-first century will be characterized as the "postmodern age." This postmodern world becomes the new challenge for the evangelical church. (Dockery 1995:13)

Post-Christian, post-Christendom and postmodern, Lesslie Newbigin described this new paradigm as 'a pagan society' (Newbigin 1985:249), casting down the 'gauntlet' (Hunsberger 1996:3): 'the development of a truly missionary encounter with this very tough form of paganism is the greatest intellectual and practical task facing the Church'. (Newbigin 1985:249) Because this was 'a paganism born out of the rejection of Christianity', rather than 'a pre-Christian paganism' he described it as '*without possibility of question … the most challenging missionary frontier of our time'*. (Newbigin 1987:7, italics added)

Two years later Newbigin wrote *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (1989) outlining his 'postmodern apologetic,' calling 'churches to become missionary communities that offer a living hermeneutic of the gospel'. (Frost 2006:viii) David Bosch saw 'a new paradigm for mission' emerging (Bosch 1991:7), 'the "*postmodern*" paradigm'. (Bosch 1991:349) Working

[45] Also Adams 2006.

with Hans Küng's six major historical-theological paradigms[46] of Christian history (Table 12) as the frames for discussing 'paradigm changes in missiology' (Bosch 1991:181), Bosch argued that each epoch 'offers a distinctive understanding of Christian mission'. (Bosch 1991:182) He saw himself 'thinking and working in terms of *two* paradigms' – in the uncertain time of 'paradigm shift' from the Enlightenment to the emerging postmodern (Bosch 1991:349) for 'Postmodernism (had) not fully displaced modernism or naturalism.' (Henry 1995:40) In this context Bosch explored how major characteristics of the Enlightenment are challenged by this new paradigm. (Bosch 1991:352-362)

Table 12: Hans Küng's subdivisions of the history of Christianity[47]

1	The apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity
2	The Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period
3	The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm
4	The Protestant (Reformation) paradigm The Counter-Reformation Roman Catholic paradigm The Protestant-Orthodox paradigm
5	The modern Enlightenment paradigm
6	The emerging ecumenical paradigm

The consequences have been far-reaching for the church. Its theology, structures, forms and mission had been molded by the commitment of the Enlightenment to rationalism, causal reasoning, results, progress, development, objectivity, optimism and individualism. Bosch wrote: 'It was unthinkable that the Christian church, theology, and mission would remain unscathed.' (Bosch 1991:363) He observed a 'return to a pre-Constantinian position'. (Bosch 1991:363) Theological elements (such as the expectation of the *parousia*, gifts of the Spirit, believer baptism, priesthood of all believers, egalitarian non-hierarchical structures, and pacifism) (Bosch 1991:361-362) – absent for centuries but fostered 'in marginal Christian movements' (Bosch 1991:363), 'protest movements on the fringes of the "official" church' (Bosch 1991:364) – were being embraced. A number of these elements relate to ecclesiology and potential new forms of church, under the new paradigm.

[46] Küng listed eight paradigms, but two were categories of others: the Counter-Reformation Roman Catholic paradigm and the Protestant-Orthodox paradigm. (Küng 1990: 128)
[47] Bosch 1991:181, 182.

The 22 contributors to *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement* (1995) – including Thomas C. Oden, Carl F.H. Henry, and Stanley J. Grenz – seemed unaware of potential ecclesiological implications from postmodernism. They explored the threats and opportunities for theology, hermeneutics, apologetics and evangelism; but none explored how the experience of church might be changed by this 'dislocating' transition in worldviews. (Dockery 1995:14) Hall observed: 'I believe the commitment to the established institutional model of the church – to Christendom in its various institutional forms – is the single most important cause of inertia and retardation of intentional and creative response to this great transition'. (Hall 1997:7)

CG Reactions and Responses to the Paradigm Shift. Just as neither the transition to postmodernism nor the term itself can be unequivocally defined, so evangelical reactions and responses to this new paradigm and the challenge of continuing evangelistic ineffectiveness were diverse. The types in Table 13 are descriptive. Broadly, CG theorists and practitioners reacted as *loyalist and purist* (Type A1) or responded as *activist and pragmatist* (Type A2).

Table 13: CG and EMC reactions and responses to the postmodern paradigm

CG reaction and response	EMC response and reaction
Type A1 CG Reaction CG loyalist and purist • Denied the notion of postmodernism • Modernism is still the mission context • Rejection of emerging mission trends • Applied GC principles as the method • Greater diligence applying GC is needed • What crisis? We have been here before! **Type A2 CG Response** CG activist and pragmatist • Accepted postmodern influences • Modernism in crisis, mission context changing • Experimentation is needed for mission • Refined CG principles as the method • Innovative alternative approaches fostered • This is a crisis – we have not seen this before!	**Type B1 EC Reaction** EC deconstructionist = emerging • Critical of inherited modernist Christendom • Agenda shaped by postmodernism • Committed to deconstruction of inherited Christendom ecclesial structures, theological models, and theology/ecclesiology • Shaped by relevance – answering postmodern questions • Postmodernism – we change all we do and think! **Type B2 MC Response** MC constructionist = missional • Critical of inherited modernist Christendom • Agenda shaped by missio Dei • Committed to constructively cultivating missional initiatives, rediscovering Jesus, his message, and an apostolic ecclesiology • Shaped by being incarnational, messianic and apostolic • Postmodernism – we rediscover God's mission!

The CG Reaction (Type A1) was to apply the principles of CG with greater diligence, aimed at making established churches even more relevant. Some denied any transition in worldview and questioned the very notion of postmodernism, not simply whether this was an appropriate designator for a new paradigm. On the other hand, the CG Response (Type A2) acknowledged the disestablishment of Christendom and the crisis of modernism: post-Christendom and postmodernism were reality, the mission context was changed, and 'some new directions beyond church renewal and church growth' were needed. (Guder 1998:73)

Most alternatives suggested assumed 'a more complex understanding of the organizational makeup of the church' and Guder said: 'all (were) associated with the concept of effectiveness'. (Guder 1998:73) Meta-church (George 1991, 1994) was a comprehensive management model and mega-church provided the ultimate in modern professionalism. Thus thousands of Australian evangelicals attended Willow Creek Community Church, Saddleback Community Church and Hillsong[48] conferences in the 1990s.

However, as well as these sophisticated and professional models, simpler and experiential alternatives were gaining attention. The emphasis upon church health and multiplying small groups was key. In introducing John Mallison's *Growing Christians in Small Groups* (1989) Gibbs affirmed the place of small groups 'in communities which are culturally distanced from the church'. (Gibbs 1989:xii) However, Mallison, an Australian Baptist, had gone further. He wrote: 'In its infancy, *the church was a small group* in which believers gathered to support each other in growing in Christ and in witnessing to their Lord'. (Mallison 1989:4, italics added)

Logan's call to 'move beyond church growth to active involvement in church planting' (Logan 1989:17), together with a renewed interest in the Book of Acts as their manual, alerted church planters to the nature of first century missional household gatherings as the form of pre-Constantinian churches. Robert Banks, a Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for the History of Christian Thought and Experience at Macquarie University who also served as Professor of the Ministry of the Laity at Fuller, had published *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in their Cultural Setting* (1994) in 1979, and the next year (1980) first released his narrative of Publius attending the home church of Aquila and Prisca in Rome, *Going to Church in the First Century.* (1990)

[48] See Wikipedia, 'Hillsong Conferences', Hillsong conferences started in 1986.

A series of essays by Edwin A Judge, a New Zealander by birth and Professor of History at Macquarie University (1969-1993),[49] published between 1960 and 1992, provided sociological insights into the experiences of pre-Christendom faith communities. Now released under the title *Social Distinctives of the Christians in the First Century: Pivotal Essays by E.A. Judge* (Scholer 2008) these included 'The Social Pattern of the Christian Groups in the First Century' (Scholer 2008:1-56, first published by Judge in 1960) with a section entitled 'The Household Community: Oikonomia'. (Scholer 2008:20-27) In 1989 Bessie Periera left her position as Anglican vicar in Broadmeadows, Victoria, and launched *Oikos Australia*, which still supports, resources and networks home churches.[50] These represent early Type B2 (Table 13) responses to the new mission context. It is evident that while the new American CG forms formulated for a modernist context were gaining popularity among Australian evangelicals, society was shifting exponentially away from the church – calling for a radically fresh Global North response to evangelistic ineffectiveness.

Global North emerging missional responses to the challenge

Practitioners were confronted with a changing mission field and experimentation was taking place. When Hirsch started ministry in South Melbourne Church of Christ in 1989, he found himself in 'a missionary environment' as if in a sub-culture of Papua New Guinea. With 'no theoretical framework' for what they were experiencing, Hirsch says: 'We just knew that we had to take it on as missionaries, going to the different tribes in our setting'. (Hirsch 4/1/2013) Although he 'had no idea that there was even such a thing called missional church' (Hirsch 4/1/2013), his was a missional church (MC) response (Type B2). (See Table 13, page 29.)

Frost came to Type B2 from an entirely different direction. He was a Baptist pastor in Sydney's Eastern Hills, committed to the application of CG principles – and enjoying his preaching and leadership roles. One Sunday evening he was confronted with a group driving up to his church to find out whether he would be preaching, then leaving when he told them another 'very good preacher' was listed. Frost could have responded, 'Right, I've got to preach every Sunday', but although a CG *activist and pragmatist* (Type A2), 'that doesn't come from the Holy Spirit does it?' (Frost 26/6/2013) A short time later, he left the ministry and while teaching at a technical college, became aware of missional theory – also, especially through his interaction with Hirsch the practitioner, emerging as a Type B2 *constructionist*.

[49] See Website: Judge.
[50] Website: Oikos.

EMC Reactions and Responses to the Postmodern Paradigm. Type B (Table 13, page 29) responses and reactions were evident in the fresh directions of CG literature and conferences from the 1990s. As well as church health and spirituality, titles and content explored *Church Without Walls* (Peterson 1992),[51] *The Once and Future Church* (Mead 1992), *The Second Coming of the Church* (Barna 1998), *The Church on the Other Side* (McLaren 2000), and *Church Next* (Gibbs, Coffey 2001).[52] Michael Moynagh wrote: 'As the existing church feels shaken and fragile, new expressions are crawling out of the rubble. It is too early to call this a renaissance, but the tectonic plates of church are on the move'. (Moynagh 2004: 15)

The developing EMC movement reflected the divergence foreseen by American evangelical theologian Carl Henry. While he questioned whether postmodernism might be 'merely an influential episodic phenomenon' rather than 'a decisive historical turning point,' he acknowledged it was 'beginning to shape the face' of western culture. (Henry 1995:34, 35) Whatever postmodernism's longevity, he foresaw it taking either 'a hard core destructivist approach' or 'a soft core constructivist approach'. (Henry 1995:38) The descriptors for EMC responses and reactions in Table 13 reflect this lack of cohesion by specifically identifying emerging church (EC) and missional church (MC) types.

The EC Reaction (Type B1) has been shaped by postmodernism, responding to its concerns, deconstructing modernist ecclesial systems and structures, and articulating its theology within the postmodern worldview. Karen Ward first coined the term 'emerging church' in 2000. For her, a pastor and for seven years assistant to the director of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, church 'was like a machine.' (Gibbs, Bolger 2005:320) However, she found the idea of seeker-sensitive church 'really weird,' describing it as 'vampire church' with the message: 'Come and get grabbed!' (Gibbs, Bolger 2005:320) Ward developed her own website to voice these frustrations, without thinking that *EmergingChurch.com* would become the name of a movement. She told Gibbs and Bolger: '… emerging church is what is coming to the surface. It is new, unformed, still happening, emerging.' (Gibbs, Bolger 2005:321) It suggests continuity and a dynamic process, an experimental journey to something new.

EC originated in the USA where it became a brand, producing the *Emergent Village*[53] and 'emergent theology' (Anderson 2006), however, there has been neither consensus on its

[51] Green 2002, used the same title for 'a global examination of cell church.'
[52] Malphurs, Malphurs 2003, used the same title when examining internet ministry.
[53] Website: Emergent.

use nor agreement that it accurately describes the church of the future. (Moynagh 2004:14) Attempts to profile it have proven 'a daunting task'. (Gibbs, Bolger 2005: 93) Trying to categorize it, 'like trying to nail jelly to a wall'. (Moynagh 2004:14) However, from their substantive research Gibbs and Bolger identify nine key practices of EC, summarized by Phillip Brown. (See Table 14)

Table 14: Nine key practices of Emerging Church[54]

1	Identifying with Jesus. EC emphasizes the present kingdom of God – rather than the church.
2	Transforming secular space. EC rejects the sacred-secular dualism derived from modernity, recognizing that all of life is sacred. (Gibbs, Bolger 2005:66)
3	Living as community. The relational nature of church is reflected in an emphasis on people, their interactions and lives, rather than on church services focused on a place and time.
4	Welcoming strangers. Including those who are different is an integral part of faith and practice. Hospitality and shared meals is essential in building authentic relationships.
5	Serving with generosity. This includes serving strangers with hospitality and rejecting consumerism. (Gibbs, Bolger 2005:135,136) The kingdom of God is a gift and rejects spiritual consumer 'drive-through' types of spirituality.
6	Participating as producers. Social divisions are redundant as all are equal before Christ, and have a voice in decision-making and participation, including worship. 'Seeker services' are rejected for congregations are 'contributors rather than recipients of worship' (Gibbs, Bolger 2005:158) in interaction, dialogue and opportunities to share life and faith stories.
7	Creating as created beings. EC sees that creativity and the use of the imagination both in worship and spirituality express who we are as created beings of the Creator.
8	Leading as a Body. In order to allow the body to be the body of Christ, leaders must function as servants, facilitators and consensus builders - empowering rather than controlling people. It is the servant rather than the elite who rule. (Gibbs, Bolger 2005:214)
9	Merging ancient and contemporary spiritualities. Spirituality is a major focus of EC and so the individual and corporate practice of spiritual disciplines is a high priority. These are to be lived out in everyday life and embrace the past as well as contemporary culture.

EC spokespersons have criticized inherited church as a cultural accommodation to a society that no longer exists, dehumanizing, hierarchical, institutionalized, 'itself an obstacle to faith' (Gibbs, Bolger 2005:21) and an authority that has been superseded by 'personal experiences'. (Gibbs, Bolger 2005:23)[55] EC demands 'new forms of church' (Gibbs, Bolger 2005:41), even 'a postmodern form of Christianity.' (Gibbs, Bolger 2005:33)

[54] Brown 2011:24, 25.
[55] Gibbs, Bolger 2005:16-23, for the main ideas of this sentence.

The MC Response (Type B2) has been shaped differently. Hirsch thinks EC married 'the spirit of the age' and argues for a missional response that takes the postmodern context seriously while motivated and shaped by *missio Dei.* (Hirsch 4/1/2013) In descriptive terms EC is deconstructionist while MC is constructionist, albeit from a disestablished state within post-Christendom society. However, MC proponents have been just as critical of CG initiatives to revitalize inherited Christendom churches as EC theorists. Frost wrote: 'Christendom is over' and 'we too need to get over *it'.* (Frost 2006:5) He expressed a 'real hope … that the end of this epoch actually spells the beginning of a new flowering of Christianity'. (Frost 2006:7) His tone is strident:

> The death of Christendom removes the final props that have supported the culturally respectable, mainstream, suburban version of Christianity… This version of Christianity is a façade, a method for practitioners to appear like fine, upstanding citizens without allowing the claims and teaching of Jesus to bite very hard in everyday life. With the death of Christendom the game is up. (Frost 2006:7-8)

While more tempered, Hirsch agrees:

> The overwhelming majority of church leaders today report that they feel it is getting much harder for their communities to negotiate the increasing complexities in which they find themselves. As a result the church is on a massive long-trended decline in the West. (Hirsch 2006:16)

His book *Exiles* is written, Frost says, for those who like him 'have no stomach for calling the church back to the old ways developed during Christendom'. (Frost 2006:27) He says twenty-first century Christians 'must reposition (themselves) chiefly, first and foremost, as people of the way of Christ'. (Frost 2006:27) In a similar vein, Hirsch defines 'the task' in *The Forgotten Ways* as trying 'to identify the irreducible elements that constitute Apostolic Genius'. (Hirsch 2006:26) Disturbed by the 'massive long-trended decline' (Hirsch 2006:16) of the church in the west, they welcomed the disestablishment of Christendom church. In *The Shaping of Things to Come*, written as a syllabus for Forge to cultivate missional theory and initiatives (Hirsch 4/1/2013), they offered 'hints of the way forward' in 'the important work of rediscovering a New Testament mandate for the church in the twenty-first century'. (Frost, Hirsch 2003:xi) They identify with EMC while being cautious of EC. Frost wrote:

> Because so much of the literature comes from the US, where the term *emerging church* and the organisation Emergent, have great currency, it is sometimes easier to

> fall into line and refer to the new missional churches as emerging churches also. But frankly, I prefer the term missional (as does the Forge program). While it can be advantageous to be linked with Emergent and some of its leading lights, Brian McLaren, Tony Jones, Dan Kimball, Spencer Burke et al, it can also create some confusion.
>
> My own preference is to trace the roots of the missional church in Australia (MCA) back from Forge, through the GOCN in the US (Hunsburger, Guder, Roxburgh), who in turn count British writer Lesslie Newbigin as their spiritual father. In fact, the vision of both Newbigin and South African David Bosch, is closer to that of Forge (and myself) than the current Emergent writers.
>
> While the term *emerging* might describe its historical state, the term *missional* denotes its primary DNA – as a movement seeking to embody the *missio Dei* in our time and place. (Frost 2006:1)

While they both use EMC, Frost prefers MC (Frost 2006:1) and Hirsch, the 'Apostolic Genius'. (Hirsch 2006:67) A comparison of the 'Twelve Hallmarks of a Missional Church' used by GOCN and summarized by Frost and Hirsh (Frost, Hirsch 2003:11, 12; Table 15, page 36), with the 'Nine Key Practices of Emerging Church' (Table 14 on page 33), clarifies differences. Both foster identity with Jesus and his kingdom (Table 14.1; cf. 15.2), community (Table 14.3; cf. 15.8), welcoming hospitality for strangers (Table 14.4; cf. 15.9), generous service (Table 14.5; cf. 15.7), and participation (Table 14.6; cf. 15.2). However, there is a different emphasis. While both affirm the Christian's life as a witness to the gospel, MC also prioritizes proclamation (Table 15.1), emphasizes discipleship (Table 15.2), sees the Bible as normative in its life (Table 15.3), 'seeks to discern God's specific missional vocation' for the community and its members (Table 15:5), considers community worship to be 'the central act' (Table 15.10), and has a 'public witness' (Table 15:11).

Further, Frost and Hirsch propose three 'overarching principles' to 'give energy and direction' (Frost, Hirsch 2003:12) to these hallmarks. For them, MC is: (1) '*incarnational*, not attractional, in its ecclesiology', (2) '*messianic*, not dualistic, in its spirituality', and (3) '*apostolic*, rather than a hierarchical, mode of leadership'. (Frost, Hirsch 2003:12) They look for 'audacious new versions of Christian communities within unchurched subcultures' (Frost, Hirsch 2003:x) based upon a fundamentally different view of church and mission arising from *missio Dei*. The term *missional* describes a lifestyle that adopts 'the posture, thinking, behaviors, and practices of a missionary in order to engage others with the gospel

message'.[56] An essential premise is that the lifestyle of all believers, not only of professional missionaries in other cultures, be mission shaped, and that all churches in the Global North be missional in their communities.

Table 15: 'Twelve hallmarks of a Missional Church'[57]

1	It 'proclaims the gospel'.
2	'All members are involved in learning to become disciples of Jesus'.
3	'The Bible is normative' in its life.
4	It 'understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death, and resurrection of its Lord'.
5	It 'seeks to discern God's specific missional vocation for the entire community and all of its members'.
6	Its missional nature is evidenced by 'how Christians behave toward one another'.
7	It 'practices reconciliation'.
8	Those within 'hold themselves accountable to one another in love'.
9	It 'practices hospitality'.
10	'Worship is the central act by which the community celebrates with joy and thanksgiving both God's presence and God's promised future'.
11	It 'has a vital public witness'.
12	It 'recognizes that the church itself is an incomplete expression of the reign of God'.

Centrifugal and centripetal forces

Bosch believed that in times of transition: 'The agenda was always – consciously or unconsciously – one of reform, not of replacement'. (Bosch 1991:367) He wrote: 'Neither extreme reactionary nor excessively revolutionary approaches, so it seems to me, will help the Christian church and mission to arrive at greater clarity or to serve God's cause in a better way'. (Bosch 1991:366) He was certain:

> There will be no attempt at propagating a complete substitution of the previous paradigm, at casting it aside as utterly worthless. Rather, the argument will be that – in the light of a fundamentally new situation and precisely as to remain faithful to the true nature of mission – mission must be understood and undertaken in an imaginatively

[56] Wikipedia, 'Missional'.
[57] Frost, Hirsch 2003:11, 12.

> new manner today. (Bosch 1991:367)

Perhaps this was Bosch's hope rather than what he knew could happen, for he acknowledged that 'both the centrifugal and the centripetal forces in the emerging paradigm – diversity versus unity, divergence versus integration, pluralism versus holism – will have to be taken into account throughout'. (Bosch 1991:367) He emphasized the 'crucial notion' of '*creative tension*' as the 'only' way to meaningfully walk through this 'force field of apparent opposites'. (Bosch 1991:367) Bosch seemed aware of the potential for a reactionary response, 'propagating a complete substitution of the previous paradigm' of mission and church. (Bosch 1991:367)

Frost and Hirsch are dogmatic: 'What the church needs is a revolutionary new approach' – a 'missional church'. (Frost, Hirsch 2003:6, 7) To be a MC, Hall argues, involves 'intentional *disengagement*', releasing 'our hold on what we have been conditioned to believe was our right' (Hall 1997:43) – '*our status of cultural establishment'* (Hall 1997:48) and 'our centuries-old ambition to be the official religion, the dominant religion, of the dominant culture.' (Hall 1997:49) Hall argues that such disengagement must not be misunderstood to imply disconnect from society, but rather disengagement from any ongoing delusion of status or importance so that the church can re-engage with society at the level of truth, justice and love. (Hall 1997:49) Hall urges: 'Today we are constrained by the divine Spirit to rediscover the possibilities of littleness.' (Hall 1997:66)

While CG arrived in Australia from Fuller, the MC stream of EMC gained its inspiration from Newbigin via the GOCN. While CG methods were formulated in the context of modernity and adopted by Australians, EMC theories were articulated in the context of post-modernity and MC reshaped by Australians. CG principles reflect a modernist progress-developmental response to the crisis of evangelistic ineffectiveness, while EMC welcomed the disestablishment of the church and encompasses the deconstructionist EC reaction as well as the intentionally disengaging and constructionist MC response for the context of postmodernism.

Faced with the aging and decline of the evangelical church in Australia, CG strategies and methods were employed to re-energize and re-grow the inherited modern and Christendom forms. On the other hand, identifying the crisis of transition from one worldview to another, EMC practitioners and theorists welcomed the disestablishment of inherited Christendom forms of church and sought pre-modern solutions. The EC stream allied itself with postmodern agendas, deconstructing modern forms of church and theology, returning to

pre-Constantinian times to rediscover pre-Christendom frames of church and spirituality. The MC stream, rediscovered *missio Dei* and sought to frame a missional ecclesiology for the new paradigm.

*****

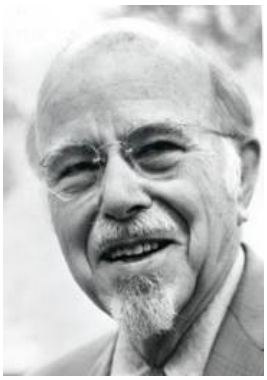
In the midst of 'long term, complex *sociocultural upheaval*' (Küng 1988:5) the CG and EMC movements brought to evangelical churches in Australia the tensions of two different perspectives on mission and church life. This was further complicated when the EMC movement formed two distinct streams, emerging church (EC) and missional church (MC). The next chapter explores how McGavran shaped and experienced the CG phenomena. What was his motivation and inspiration? In what ways were his theories or he affirmed? How did he respond to valid or emotive criticism? What was the impact upon him long-term? This is the first of four chapters that explore the stories of CG and EMC theorists and practitioners to gain a view of what these phenomena appeared like to them, arriving at shared ideas, experiences and meanings.

Chapter 4
Donald McGavran: Shaping the Church Growth Web

> … man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (Geertz 1973:5)

The metaphor of a spider suspended in its web describes both Donald McGavran, the father of CG, and Brian McLaren, the elder statesman of EC. Social 'webs of significance' (Geertz 1973:5) created by or around them, shaped them and reshaped the church. Just as spiders use enormous energy to maintain a web's stickiness and ability to capture, eating their own webs to recycle the silk proteins,[58] so both men poured themselves into maintaining social webs from which they gained meaning. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the shaping of the CG web, while chapters 6 and 7 analyze EMC responses to the web of postmodernism.

Rather than critiquing these phenomena, my purpose is to ascertain how they appeared to theorists and practitioners. I probe subjective experiences: influences and motives that shaped these theories, defenses of them – including dogmatic statements, emotive expressions of annoyance or frustration, emotional outbursts – as well as shifts and tendencies towards a populist ecclesiology. My analysis follows the PhR process outlined in Table 8 (page 14), with each facet identified in the subheadings by (#1), (#2) etc. In this chapter I analyze McGavran' experience.



Donald McGavran (1897-1990)[59] *– the father of Church Growth*

My data collection concentrated upon McGavran's primary works: *The Bridges of God* (1981, 1st edition 1954), *How Churches Grow* (1959), *Understanding Church Growth* (1980, 1st edition 1970), *Effective Evangelism: A Theological Mandate* (1988), editorials and articles in the *Church Growth Bulletin*, with other specific references to his CG journey and ecclesiology. Table 16 provides an overview of McGavran's life. Early influences (#1) shaped his whole CG experience (#2), accentuating fundamental CG ideas and judgments (#3).

[58] Wikipedia, 'Spider web'.
[59] Photographs of reseach participants are from the internet.

Table 16: McGavran's formative years, mission service and the CG movement

1897-1923	Formative years	
	1897-1910	First 12 years as a boy in India – limited home schooling
	1910-17	Formal schooling – in the USA
	1917-19	Army service – arrived in France for the declaration of Armistice
	1919	Committed to a life of missionary service – in India
	1919-23	Preparation for mission service in India
1923-35	Birth of CG thinking: mission service in India:	
	1923-24	Lived in Jabalpur: 2 years intensive Hindi language study
	1924-30	Lived at Harda mission station: denominational schools director
	1930	Daughter – Mary Theodora died in India (2 July 1923)
	1932-35	Lived in Jabalpur: UCMS secretary-treasurer for India
1936-60	Rise of the CG Movement: field work in India and international research	
	1936-54	Lived in Mungeli: UCMS evangelistic work among Satnami
	1954-57	UCMS international research
	1957-60	UCMS peripatetic professor of College of Missions
1961-71	Cultivation of CG movement	
	1961	Severed ties with UCMS (64 years of age)
		Started CG Institute at Eugene, Oregon
	1963	World Council of Churches – critique of CG
	1964	First edition of *Church Growth Bulletin* published
	1965	Founded Fuller SWM (68 years of age)
	1965-71	Equipping missionaries for Afericasia
1972-	American CG movement	
	1972	Peter Wagner held first CG conference with American pastors
	1988	McGavran wrote 'The Rise of the Church Growth Movement'
1990	McGavran died	

(#1) *Early influences that shaped CG theory*

Just as a spider's web is shaped by its situation and season, so McGavran and his theories were products of place and time – shaped by India, his denominational United Christian Missionary Service (UCMS), and twentieth century thought.

Made in India. McGavran and India were 'inseparable' (Middleton 2011:xix), conditioning his thinking, values, priorities, spirituality and behavior. (Middleton 2011:xx) Born in Damoh, India (December 15, 1897), he spoke Hindi and English, and his early education consisted almost entirely of unsupervised reading until the family returned to America in 1910. In that year he committed his life to Jesus Christ and was baptized. Possessing 'an aggressive, bold spirit' he became captain of the debate team at Butler College. His 'self-discipline' was displayed when he entered military training in 1917 and used free time to learn French. (Middleton 2011:6, 7) Discharged on January 19, 1919 McGavran returned to college and at a YMCA camp that summer 'committed himself to a life of missionary servanthood' back in India. (Middleton 2011:9) He later said: 'That decision lies at the root of the church growth movement'. (McGavran 1986:53)

Following seminary study at Yale (1920-22) majoring in religious education McGavran

married Mary Howard and together they attended the College of Missions (1922-23). They were both ordained as missionaries, setting sail for India with their two month old daughter in September 1923. By October 1924 they had completed their intensive Hindi studies in Jabalpur, where McGavran's parents then served, and moved to the mission station at the small railway town of Harda where McGavran became principal over a number of schools.

Although he did not refer to this first term of mission experience when reviewing the rise of the CG movement, focusing upon 1933-1985 (McGavran 1988:53-101); and while Arthur Glasser, Dean of the Fuller School of World Mission (SWM) (1970-1980), believed the CG movement 'began in January 1961' when McGavran established the Institute of Church Growth in Oregon (Glasser 1986:403), these early years shaped his CG theories. Middleton contends *The Bridges of God*, first published in 1954, 'could not have been written' if McGavran had not lived and worked in Harda. (Middleton 2011:40) This was the birthplace of CG terminology and concepts.

The *mission station* method developed by nineteenth century missionaries, was specific to Afericasian countries including India. Land was procured for a secure compound with homes, accommodation for helpers, and church building. Because western education was considered the means for undermining traditional practices, including caste in India, a school was established, often with an orphanage, printing press and health clinic. At Harda, McGavran inherited this century-old process of educational gradualism for the Christianization of society.

McGavran first observed *people movements* in untouchable castes agitating for better conditions. They were prepared to change religion to gain education, rights and benefits; a social movement of receptive people with whom the gospel could be shared. (McGavran 1981:11) McGavran adopted the term to describe 'any homogeneous unit where marriage and intimate life take place within the society,' a single tightly knit segment of any kind of society 'which may move into the Church'. (McGavran 1980:334) It 'is not a mass movement', but people making their decisions together. (McGavran 1980:335) He wrote:

> A people movement results from the joint decision of a number of individuals – whether five or five hundred – all from the same people, which enables them to become Christians without social dislocation, while remaining in full contact with their non-Christian relatives, thus enabling other groups of that people, across the years, after suitable instruction, to come to similar decisions and form Christian churches made up exclusively of members of that people. (McGavran 1980:335)

While McGavran saw no such movement in Harda – in fact between 1924-30 there was no record of any conversions from outside the church and he recommended closing the Harda schools (Middleton 2011:30, 31) – he did see the Satnamis people in Chhattisgarh prepared to move towards Christianity. However, their receptivity was quelled by Mahatma Gandhi's promise of upward social mobility within Hinduism. (Middleton 2011:65, Letter 13/10/1934; McGavran 1986:56)[60]

Shaped by denomination. The founders of Churches of Christ, also known as Disciples of Christ, believed a 'restoration of primitive Christianity' – 'without creeds or doctrinal statements which separate denominations' – was the key to the world's conversion and the church's unity. (Middleton 2011:15) McGavran's CG phenomena reflected this non-creedal thinking. It was also within his denominational and UCMS systems, where evangelistic zeal had waned, that McGavran wrote incessantly, arguing, cajoling, explaining and defending, to gain a hearing for his CG message. To pressure leaders for support he sometimes left them no room for disagreement, such as when he argued for a doctrinal correctness inclusive of CG or 'effective evangelism'. (McGavran 1988:28) While not always appreciated, this aggressive, argumentative and polemic style characterized his CG movement.

Some of the many sides to how the CG phenomena appeared to McGavran (#1) became evident during this first mission term. His terminology, methods and attitudes were defined by his early experiences within his denominational mission agency in Harda.

(#2) *Finding wholeness in CG practice*

In his ninety-first year McGavran wrote *Effective Evangelism: A Theological Mandate* (1988). He recalled how his CG thinking was 'greatly influenced by three rivers' of twentieth century thought: theological liberalism, together with modern models of science and industry. (McGavran 1988:54) Three painful experiences transformed the first of these 'rivers', changing him and the shape of his CG web. The death of his daughter, seven year-old Mary Theodora in 1930, challenged his perception of the gospel, deepening his evangelistic motivation. Then, hearing an Indian Sunday school class member, infected by liberalism, say the first question when reading the Bible should be 'What is there in this passage that we cannot believe?' shocked him into feeling his way back 'toward convictions concerning the Bible as infallible revelation … the rule of faith and practice of every Christian'. (McGavran 1988:56) Third, was not being re-elected as field secretary of his

[60] When McGavran's comments are from Letters or Interviews, the researcher is referenced as well as the date of the interview or letter.

denominational mission office in 1935. Hurt, he considered resignation (Middleton 2011:58, Letter 2/09/1935), however it released him to test his CG convictions among 'illiterate idol-worshipping peasants'. (McGavran 1988:56) There his liberal 'moral theory of the atonement' was replaced by evangelicalism's 'substitutionary view' of salvation (McGavran 1988:57), prioritizing for him the question of how people – not just individuals – become Christian. (McGavran 1981:1)

This theological shift, together with his utilization of the second and third rivers of thought – the science of anthropology and modern accountability models – influenced how McGavran's CG principles and practices 'took shape'. (McGavran 1980:167) His administrative term had given opportunity to associate with Waskom Picket, author of *Christian Mass Movements in India* (1933), and his 'eyes were opened'. (McGavran 1986:56) Anthropological research reinforced his conviction that people 'like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers' (McGavran 1980:62) – 'remaining ethnically, culturally, and economically themselves'. (McGavran 1988:59) By June 1936 he was using 'church growth' as a technical expression (Middleton 2001:68), with statistical data providing compelling support for what was becoming his 'crusade'. (Middleton 2011:57)

Accurate data was 'essential to understanding church growth'. McGavran wrote: 'The Church is made up of countable people and there is nothing particularly spiritual in not counting them'. (McGavran 1980:93) As director of schools at Harda he observed the inefficiency of the mission station approach. The successful operation of schools had become the primary objective of employees, rather than conversions or Christianization. Although he tried to correct this through 'appraisal, training, and improvement through research', later 'the backbone of church growth' (Middleton 2011:25, 26), it was entrenched. Few came to Christian faith, but these schools facilitated upward mobility, cultivating a privileged Hindu caste of Christian nominalism. (McGavran 1988:64)

Efficiency alone may have motivated McGavran to pursue his CG agenda, but he 'came to see that any real missionary movement must depend upon an authoritative Word of God made known in the Bible and manifested by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ'. (McGavran 1988:57) He wrote:

> This is the only theological position that makes the communication of the gospel, the discipling of *pante ta ethne*, the multiplication of congregations in every segment of all societies, essential. This is the theological conviction underlying the church growth

movement. (McGavran 1988:57)

This conviction, deeply rooted in painful personal experience, the conclusions he was drawing from anthropological and sociological research, together with the evidence of factual data, gave meaning and wholeness to his developing CG web.

(#3) *Defending the essence of CG*

For McGavran the essence of the CG phenomenon was church planting: 'the multiplication of congregations in every segment of all societies'. (McGavran 1988:57) While he used CG analysis to chart membership growth in existing churches, McGavran was unequivocal that CG or effective evangelism involved church planting: 'If God's plan for the salvation of the world is to be carried out, *a mighty multiplication of living congregations must occur in most pieces of the mosaic in most countries. ...* That is the challenge of church growth'. (McGavran 1980:75)

McGavran argued that CG or 'church multiplication must be seen as faithfulness' to God. (McGavran 1980:5, 22) He asserted: 'The multiplication of churches nourished on the Bible and full of the Holy Spirit is a *sine qua non* in carrying out the purposes of God'. (McGavran 1980:6) He was dogmatic that this is the 'paramount' or 'supreme task' facing the church, required 'for the welfare of the world, for the good of mankind – according to the Bible'. (McGavran 1980:41) He had no time for a 'narrow kind of church growth' with no sense of urgency to 'multiply sound congregations' (McGavran 1980:15), and declared any dismissal of 'church planting as an aim of mission' a 'pernicious modern tendency'. (McGavran 1980:436)

McGavran was just as dogmatic and emotive in defending the three radials or spiral threads upon which his web of CG or church planting was spread. The first of these was the gospel. Unfortunately his emphasis upon gathering '*the facts*' and '*planning all mission activities in the light of what is being achieved*' (McGavran 1986:57-58) overshadowed his gospel references, giving the impression of a technocrat with little heart for the gospel or those he sought to count. However, it was in 'light of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ', that McGavran gave evangelism priority over 'Christianizing the social order'. (McGavran 1980:25) Being God's initiative – '*missio Dei*, the mission of God' (McGavran 1980:23) – he argued that Christians must not merely announce the gospel, but 'persuade'. (McGavran 1980:31) He was dogmatic: the 'offense' of this gospel of the cross 'must not be removed' by applying CG principles. (McGavran 1980:229) He considered 'defensive thinking induced by lack of church planting' a factor that tempts 'churchmen to play down plans for the actual

communication of the Gospel'. (McGavran 1980:436) The idea that 'Christian presence' through 'kindly deeds' communicated the gospel, he considered 'sentimental supposition'. (McGavran 1980:439)

The second radial was disciple making and 'perfecting'. (McGavran 1980:439)[61] During his first mission term as a schools director, educational gradualism was the initial process of conversion – 'educating the Hindu mind into Christian beliefs and Western scientific understanding' (Middleton 2011:32); but as an evangelical, he understood people became disciples by accepting Jesus Christ and 'perfecting' became the post-conversion process of gradualism as illustrated in Table 17. (McGavran 1980:312, 439; Middleton 2011:32)

Table 17: McGavran's transition from pre-Christian to post-conversion gradualism

McGavran's liberal view of Christianizing society	
Gradualism - pre-Christian education	Becoming disciples (Christians)
McGavran's evangelical view of Christianizing society	
Become disciples through conversion to Christ	*Gradualism* - post-conversion 'perfecting'

The third radial, people movements, made Christianizing a society feasible for McGavran. His arguments were based upon Jesus' commission, 'reasonable' assumptions from the New Testament accounts of the spread of Christianity (McGavran 1981:vi), together with the influences of Waskom Picket (McGavran 1955:10, 55), Kenneth Scott Latourette (McGavran 1955:43, 49, 65, 125-126) and Hendrik Kraemer. (McGavran 1955:69) So convinced was he that decisions for Christ are made primarily in people movements or 'relational streams' (Roennfeldt 2011:26), he declared:

> If there are ways to make disciples of *panta ta ethne* – all nations – without People Movements, it would be interesting to hear about them. Such ways should be described and *multiplied.* It is sinful simply to object to People Movements while coming empty-handed out of ripe harvest fields. (McGavran 1981:99)

Not only did he label opposition to this principle 'sinful', but reliance upon the individualistic static nineteenth century 'Mission Station Approach' as 'suicidal'. It is 'glacial', he said, 'too slow, too vulnerable, too foreign, and too smug'. (McGavran 1980:14-15)

[61] See Spradlin 2012, for a detailed study of McGavran's understanding of 'perfecting' as the work of Christian growth after discipleship.

McGavran fashioned and refined his defense of CG evangelism or church planting, and these radials or spiral threads upon which his web was suspended, in the context of India and his own denominational mission agency's resistance. These appearances (#1), the wholeness (#2) and essences (#3) of his CG phenomena provide the data for a description (#4) that accentuates his underlying meanings (#5). These I explore through his relentless drive to establish an institute in which to equip professional missionaries.

(#4 and #5) *Gaining the upper hand for CG*

While McGavran did not use the classic Pauline 'witchcraft accusation' (Neyrey 1990:183, cf. Douglas 1996:67, 117), 'Who has bewitched you?' (Gal 3:1), when under attack he described others and their methods as twisted, suicidal and sinful compared to his CG stance as faithfulness. Jerome Neyrey observes that in competitive situations the apostle Paul used such 'labeling' as a 'social weapon' to gain the upper hand (Neyrey 1990:186) and shore up his leadership (Neyrey 1990:206) by discrediting the opposition. (Neyrey 1990:222) Such tactics were most used in 'witchcraft societies,' those cultures where boundaries of good and evil are frequently used to categorize people. (Neyrey 1990:184-185) This was true of both the Indian society and his denominational environment, where just as Paul was 'fiercely jealous of his turf' (Neyrey 1990:204), so was McGavran.

His 'polemic stance' (Glasser 1986:404), what Newbigin referred to as 'deafening barrage' and 'high-pressure propaganda' (Newbigin 1985:232) during tensions with the WCC over its 1968 Uppsala statement on mission, alienated. McIntosh believes his tone flowed from his passion for the cause of Christ. (McIntosh 2005:35-36) Glasser concurs: 'He was deeply distressed that … the WCC seemed incapable of encouraging member churches to preach the "only way" gospel to all people'. (Glasser 1986:405) McGavran believed the WCC and its member denominations were 'turning away from mission as Christianization to mission as humanization'. (McGavran 1986:54)

He ridiculed those who defended 'search theology' without a 'theology of harvest' as like shepherds who go out 'to search for lost sheep' but who 'meet at the gate to announce that they do not intend to notice particularly how many are found'. (McGavran 1980:27, 29) Those who denigrated goal setting, he called 'theological lions'. (McGavran 1980:415) He was distressed that nonproductive initiatives continued to receive funding because their ineffectiveness was hidden beneath the 'deluding cloudiness' of untrustworthy church statistics, optimistic promotions, ill-defined language and theological emphases. (McGavran 1980:87) He felt the sting of criticism for his unashamedly results-oriented movement but

considered it ‘cheap scorn’ to undermine the data of church statistics (McGavran 1980:93) – not only ‘inefficient’, but also ‘sin’. (McGavran 1980:91)

In contrast, McGavran did not employ such emotive language against opponents to his closely allied homogeneous unit principle. (McGavran 1980:223-244) When defending this principle against accusations of injustice, intolerance and segregation, McGavran was relaxed. (McGavran 1980:238-9) He said: ‘The Homogeneous Unit Principle is certainly not the heart of church growth … Apply with common sense is the rule’. (McGavran 1980:243)

This was the exception. Usually he argued aggressively. During 1947-48 he pressed his CG views upon UCMS administrators agitating for policy changes that would focus upon receptive people movements, and presenting himself as the one to ‘help channel and direct the energies of the Society’ for world wide growth. (Middleton 2011:119, Letter 28/06/1948) This campaign was rejected, but as soon as the denominational administrator changed McGavran had a letter on his desk complaining of ‘a pernicious error’ in the ‘set up’ of UCMS. (Middleton 2011:121, Letter 03/11/1951) By the time he left India in 1954 his dream for a CG institute had crystallized (Middleton 2011:133, Letter 21/03/1954) and he pursued this ‘with intensity throughout 1954 to 1960’. (Middleton 2011:122)

Although assigned the role of UCMS peripatetic professor of the College of Missions (1957-1960), he was convinced God had called him to transform the face of mission through establishing an institute where CG principles could be systematically taught. While traveling in Asia, Africa and South America in 1957-1959, surveying existing mission activities, identifying potential people movements and ascertaining receptivity, he expressed his frustration over the lack of UMCS executive support for his vision. He envisaged himself as the prophetic watchman calling his denomination to repentance. He was unwell and he became increasingly defensive, wondering whether his life work was complete and God may allow him to die. (Middleton 2011:161-163, Letters 12/06/1955, 08/07/1959)

During these years he pressed his views upon his mission agency and played one seminary against another until by 1961 at 64 years of age, after thirty-eight years with UMCS, he severed ties to obey ‘the deep conviction that his insights could change the course of mission history’. (Middleton 2011:239) A painful experience, he did this to achieve his vision, establishing a CG institute in the library at Northwest Christian College, Eugene, Oregon, with one student. During the next four years McGavran campaigned to garner support and recruit students – writing on average, Middleton found, ten to twelve letters each day. (Middleton 2011:241) Four years later (June, 1965), with a change of president at

the college, the arrangements to continue hosting the institute were terminated, but he was invited to move to Fuller as founding dean of the SWM.

(#6 and #7) *The Americanization of CG theory*

CG theory was shaped in and for the Global South. It is McGavran's story, the integration of his experiences, preferences and choices (#6), together with his research (#7). But his influence in its Americanization was counterintuitive. While developing the courses with his protégé Alan Tippett (McGavran 1988:81) and staffing SWM with career missionaries who shared his philosophy (McGavran 1988:84-87)[62] was intended to strengthened McGavran's vision, it also created a blind spot to the weaknesses of outdated anthropology, superficial theological foundations, an inadequate 'theology of the church-in-mission' (Glasser 1986:402), and dependence upon modernist pragmatic management systems.

A further downside was a faculty unfamiliar with the American context. The registration process for the SWM at first 'deliberately excluded pastors from North America' (McIntosh 2005:41), for students could only register if they had 'three years of cross-cultural experience validated by fluency in a second language'. (McIntosh 2005:42) When American churches showed interest the teachers were ill-equipped to respond and when Wagner and McGavran co-presented the first CG classes for thirty American pastors and members in the Pasadena area in 1972, the terminology honed over almost fifty years in the culture of Afericasia was a foreign language to Americans of late modernity.

In 1959 McGavran had made the point: 'The philosophy of the great successful Churches of the scientific West simply does not fit the Churches which have arisen among the masses of pre-scientific people'. (McGavran 1959:91) Further: 'much thinking profitable to churches in one land may be detrimental to churches in another'. (McGavran 1959:91) But now, CG language brought the 'cultural overhang' (McGavran 1959:91) of the Global South back to America, and even the principles needed interpretation. *Understanding Church Growth* was originally McGavran's mimeographed class-notes for missionaries, so in his 1980 revision he urged Canadian, American and European readers to 'translate these insights from the world of mission into thought forms which fit the Western scene'. (McGavran 1980:165) He stressed: 'The principles are universal' (McGavran 1980:165), but these were couched in Afericasian terminology with illustrations largely unfamiliar to American Christians trying to interpret them.

[62] McGavran invited Edwin Orr (from Oxford University, England), Ralph Winter (a missionary to Guatemala), Charles Kraft (Nigeria), Arthur Glasser (China) and, in 1971 another protégé, Peter Wagner (a missionary from Bolivia) to join the staff.

The American CG movement developed a decidedly different shape. McGavran's intention was that career missionaries receive a comprehensive understanding of his CG theory using his course, his text, taught by teachers selected by him. However, in the American context his message was revised:

- The language sounded like that of the corporate world of the time, its management systems, strategies, marketing, and measures of success. Modernist pastors related to the growth techniques and evaluation processes, which overshadowed McGavran's passion for evangelism and multiplying churches.
- The emphasis upon growing established churches appealed more than church planting. American churches were dying, but here was the promise of growth. Although the models had started as church plants, such as Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral, they had grown large and complex.
- CG had more appeal than evangelism, a strange dichotomy for McGavran had coined CG for the very reason the term evangelism had lost its meaning. (Glasser 1986:406) But there was dissonance between evangelistic reality (with few responding to outreach initiatives) and the CG promise (that CG theory would work if applied). It was assumed the two were different: one did not work (evangelism), while the other did (CG).
- Without cross-cultural experience American pastors and denominational leaders struggled to interpret the success stories from other cultures. In a strange twist, CG was reinterpreted to affirm a revised American-form 'mission station approach' – large campuses with employees offering full services (shops, malls, cafes, schools, media and counseling services) – the very method that, McGavran observed, stymied the spread of the gospel in the Global South.
- While McGavran rejected the idea that every good work is evangelism, defining mission as the task of leading people to Jesus Christ, in the American context CG became synonymous with good works that attract.
- His concept of Christianizing societies or 'total Christianity' (McGavran 1959:29) resonated with American Christians. But while he envisaged this happening only if churches multiplied 'enormously' through people movements (McGavran 1959:29), in the Global North it was anticipated as happening through renewal and growing existing churches.

In its American phase the CG movement became 'separated from its missionary roots' of church planting. (Walters 2010:17) It was this American-Fuller CG that was first imported to Australia in the mid-1970s, emphasizing the growth of existing churches. The promise that changes to facilities (buildings), programs (variety), presentation (worship music) and promotion (targeting) could remedy the situation, resonated with desperate denominational

pastors and leaders seeking to revive their dying churches. Although seemingly superficial, these changes caused deep divisions within established churches, leading to internal worship-wars and church conflicts. And, by the time *Understanding Church Growth* was revised (1980), CG was losing its technical meaning and the influence of Fuller's American CG had begun to wane. (McIntosh 2005:72, 75) The emphasis shifted to introspective renewal and church health, with the phenomena sustained more by selected case studies of success and folklore than by hard data. Books and conferences affirmed it as a movement and success story, but stories of CG not working in western contexts were rarely told.

(#8) *Reflection: disintegration and transition of McGavran's web*

For over fifty years McGavran was at the centre of a developing social web of which he was architect, the radials and intricacies of which spanned denominations and cultures. As a spider uses its body as a measuring device between radials and spirals in its web, so McGavran was the measure. He cultivated a complex faith system around growth, defining the boundaries, defending them emotively and dogmatically. He sought loyalty and control over his growth principles, convinced that this movement would change the face of mission worldwide. Those who questioned his theories were subjected to emotional language, dogmatism, vitriol, badgering, and witchcraft-type accusations. McGavran's CG movement developed a complex spiritual framework, he as the watchman and Wagner as an apostle,[63] with detractors branded as unfaithful and sinful. Such complex social and spiritual constructions are not easily passed to others. (Berger 1967:106) Much of the richness of McGavran's CG thinking was lost in complexity.

Wagner became the sole Fuller CG professor when McGavran's retired in 1981 and by the next year, McIntosh observes, students 'graduating with "church growth eyes" were more the exception … than the rule'. (McIntosh 2005:75) With Wagner came the controversy over 'signs and wonders' and 'power evangelism', generating 'a crisis within the church growth movement'. (Glasser 1986:413)[64] John Wimber[65] delivered a lecture at Fuller on 'Signs, Wonders and Church Growth' in 1981 and from 1982-85 taught 'The Miraculous and Church Growth'. Although retired McGavran provided qualified support (McIntosh 2005:78), but there was intense dissension over the claim that, 'If the church is to grow, presence

[63] Wagner is now Presiding Apostle Emeritus of the International Coalition of Apostles, see websites: International Coalition of Apostles and the New Apostolic Reformation.
[64] See also McIntosh 2005:77-78 and McGavran's response.
[65] John Wimber, formerly the keyboard player in *The Paramours* band, was converted through evangelical Quakers in California in 1963. While director of the Fuller Department of Church Growth (1974-78) the house church he planted embraced charismatic ideas and grew to be Anaheim Vineyard Christian Fellowship with him as pastor (1977-94). See Wikipedia, 'John Wimber'.

evangelism, proclamation evangelism, and persuasion evangelism are not enough. Power evangelism is what is needed'. (Glasser 1986:413)

In the early 1990s CG entered a highly popular mega church phase as American-Fuller CG and renewal influences modified and married. CG had largely forgotten its McGavran roots, the influence of the American-Fuller phase was fading, and a modified American-Wagner-Wimber emphasis was popularized under the influences of Willow Creek, Saddleback and Hillsong mega-type churches and conferences. Table 18 outlines these phases.

Table 18: Phases of CG development

Phases	Transition points and phases of development	
1 McGavran CG	1924-1972	McGavran developed CG for career missionaries
2 American-Fuller CG	Early 1970s	Began with 1st CG seminar for American pastors
		Techniques to grow existing churches larger
		Introspective renewal, church health emphasis
3 American-Wagner-Wimber CG	Early 1980s	Internal renewal: spiritual gifts, power evangelism
4 American-mega CG	Early 1990s	Modified Wagner-Wimber model popularized

In telling McGavran's history, McIntosh reproduces some of his unpublished letters and notes. From these I have found:

- McGavran resisted Wagner's 1973 suggestion that 'body evangelism' be a synonym for CG for it 'is evangelism of the existing body'. He feared it would be 'captured by the renewal people', turning CG inward. (McIntosh 2005:46, Note undated)
- McGavran thought American CG was 'leaning too far in the direction of an uncritical adaptation to other cultures, to a deification of pluralism for pluralism's sake'. (McIntosh 2005:70, Note 6/10/1980)
- McGavran argued against equating 'the Good News of the kingdom of God' with 'the whole duty of Christians' for he felt it distracted from forgiveness and salvation in Jesus, declaring: 'That, not the resulting duties, is the good news of the Kingdom'. (McIntosh 2005:73, Letter 30/10/1981)
- McGavran expressed concern about a lack of conversion growth in American forms: 'So much of the church growth going on in the United States is transfer growth or biological growth. The conversion of hard-core secularists and materialists—in short, of American pagans—is what we need to document'. (McIntosh 2005:87, Letter 12/10/1987)
- McGavran raised pointed questions about mega-churches:

> I would like to know how many of the gains in worshipers in the ten fastest growing churches were (a) children of existing Christians in that church. (b) Christians from other parts of the United States who had moved to the vicinity of the rapidly growing church, liked it very much, and joined it, and finally (c) converts. Those converts might have been secularists, humanists, agnostics, Shintoists, Hindus, Buddhists, or long lapsed Christians … Church growth too frequently occurs in new suburbs and is simply a rearrangement of existing Christians. (McIntosh 2005:89, Letter 12/02/1988)

While renewal and experiential worship compensated for the technocratic nature of CG, the success of these complex performance mega-church forms might be the death-knell of multiple smaller churches. Hierarchies undermine their potential for succession, for the volunteer culture of churches is ill prepared to select appropriate CEO-type pastors. Even for the CG movement, Wagner was no McGavran, as there have been no Schullers and few Bill Hybels or Rick Warrens. This mega-church phase might yet leave McGavran's CG web of 'a mighty multiplication of living congregations' (McGavran 1980:75) in tatters.

(#9) *Focus: the research question*

When he coined the term CG, McGavran's attention was on growth rather than the theology or forms of church. However, his writings are rich with ecclesiological implications. Two chapters are of particular interest: 'Eight Keys to Church Growth in Cities' (McGavran 1980:322-330) and 'An Ecclesiological Point of View'. (McGavran 1979:245-249) Five of his 'Eight Keys' address ecclesiological questions including: house churches; unpaid lay leaders; multiplying tribe, caste and language churches; providing a theological base for an egalitarian society; and, surmounting the property barrier. The illustrations are from the Global South and the emphasis is growth, nevertheless, from this we can distill essential elements of his ecclesiology:

1. Congregations need to assemble. (McGavran 1980:322)
2. House churches provide an affordable and natural setting, 'to which unbelievers can come with greatest ease' and where converts can lead. (McGavran 1980:323, 328)
3. Simple patterns of worship, in Global North environments, makes it possible for 'Christians in ordinary homes' to lead. (McGavran 1980:323)
4. 'Unpaid lay leaders' are a 'secret for growth'. They know their communities and through them Christianity 'looks and sounds natural'. (McGavran 1980:323)
5. Equipping or 'an apprentice system' for lay-leaders is where 'the battle is won or lost'. (McGavran 1980:324)
6. New converts are to be given responsibility for 'prayer meeting, Bible class, branch

congregation, or house church', with experienced Christians 'getting out of the way so that they can function without embarrassment'. McGavran said this 'is close to the essence of the matter', adding: 'From then on, they lead the churchlet, win new men to Christ, and instruct them in the faith. Enough contact should be maintained and enough encouragement given to sustain them in crisis; but they should realize that the enterprise is theirs under the Holy Spirit'. (McGavran 1980:324)

7. An 'intense, fervent' and 'unshakable' faith, submission to God, his revelation, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. (McGavran 1980:329, 330)

8. Churches are to 'provide the theological base for an egalitarian society'. (McGavran 1980:330, 331) McGavran argued that the 'charter of rights' enacted by the United Nations is 'congruous with the mind of Christ' (McGavran 1980:331) with implications for racial and gender equality, and the welfare of the vulnerable.

In 'An Ecclesiological Point of View',[66] McGavran argues: '*Churches … have many different faces, and each is a true face*'. (McGavran 1979:33) There is 'a theological dimension', but also 'a sociological structure'. (McGavran 1979:31) For him:

1. 'The Church is made up of the redeemed', not simply 'a gathering of good men and women engaged in moral pursuits'. (McGavran 1979:246)

2. Membership 'is an essential completing step to faith'. (McGavran 1979:246, 247)

3. 'The Church of Jesus Christ is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally One' – united in Christ as 'demanded by the biblical revelation', but diverse as 'required by local conditions' of history, language, culture and economy. (McGavran 1979:247).

4. The church 'has one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, one Book, one goal, and one Judge'; but in that 'the Churches that compose the One Church are made up of very different races and kinds and conditions of men and women, these embodied Churches take many different forms'. (McGavran 1979:247)

5. Christ 'calls and appoints leaders of each Church, gives them power and authority, and requires that their understanding of the Church in their circumstances, be determined strictly according to *His revelation in the Bible*'. (McGavran 1979:247-8)

6. Simple forms were favored for they are able 'to multiply sound churches in every people, every homogeneous unit of earth'. (McGavran 1980:456) McGavran does not define what he meant by 'sound churches', but he wrote of churches where 'perfecting' takes place: 'Be assured that the lost are never truly found until they are incorporated in the flock, obey the Shepherd, walk in His way, and are filled with the Holy Spirit'. (McGavran

[66] An appendix to McGavran's *Understanding the Church in India* (1979) first published as *Ethnic Realities and the Church: Lessons from India* (Pasadena: William Carey, 1979).

1988:125) These two, 'sound churches' and their multiplication, were essential elements of his ecclesiology.

The new 'mark' of the church

McGavran saw Christian mission as 'the process through which God makes known to all peoples His plan of salvation and calls them from death to life and responsible membership in His Church'. (McGavran 1980:443) Such membership, he explained in a letter to Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, is best found in a homogeneous fellowship for when people 'fail to find ongoing *koinonias* in their own cultural and ethnic and linguistic units' they often 'fall away'. (Spradlin 2012:29, Letter 12/07/1971) This is not an introspective fellowship, which Wagner labeled as a 'church disease', *koinonitis*. (Wagner 1996:89) It is what Charles van Engen calls the 'supreme mark of the Church'. He writes: 'If the Church is one, holy, universally catholic, and apostolic but has no love, it is nothing'. And, 'this love is to be *externalized*' in *diakonia* (service*)*, *kerygma* (teaching and preaching) and *martyria* (sacrifical witness). (van Engen 1991:91) This 'new "Mark" of the Church' was at the heart of McGavran's CG web, and Glasser believes a unique ecclesiological contribution. (Glasser 1986:412)

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Having explored McGavran's experiences, motivations, underlying suppositions and expectations for the CG web, as well as its transition into new phases – American-Fuller, Wagner-Wimber and mega CG forms – the next chapter analyses the experiences of Gordon Moyes and Peter Corney to ascertain the impact of the CG phenomenon upon evangelicalism and the shape of church in Australia. It was not McGavran's CG that reached Australia, but a modified composite form, further adapted by those who sponsored its migration as well as the context and expectations of those by whom it was welcomed.

Chapter 5
When Church Growth Migrated to Australia

In this chapter I explore how Gordon Moyes and Peter Corney experienced CG as it arrived in Australia, reflecting on its form, adaptation, and influence upon their ecclesiology. My analysis again follows the process outlined in Table 8 (page 14) with the core facets of PhR identified in subheadings by (#1), (#2) etc; only I conclude this chapter with Moyes and Corney engaged in reflective dialogue (#8) on the research question (#9). I also draw preliminary conclusions from both this and the previous chapter, providing a summary of how CG impacted the shape of the Australian evangelical experience of church.

Both Moyes and Corney were interviewed, as well as Phil McCredden, their interviews transcribed and then abridged into descriptive summaries. These, together with their books, papers and websites,[67] provide the data for this chapter. Where a paragraph includes ideas and quotations from a single reference, it is acknowledged at the end of the paragraph; otherwise each reference is noted. For Moyes, research also included his autobiography, *Leaving a Legacy* (2005), and biography by Goldie Down, *Gordon Moyes: The Man, the Media, the Mission* (2000).

Gordon Moyes: CG as it appeared to an evangelist

The Reverend Dr. Gordon Moyes (AC) wrote the first Australian CG book *How to Grow an Australian Church* (1978, 1st edition 1975). He conducted CG conferences attended by 4 000 Australian pastors and leaders, built close personal ties with American CG luminaries, including Arn and Wagner, and preached in Schuller's Crystal Cathedral, but remained critical and selective of American CG models. He discovered CG before its Americanization.

(#1) *Appearances: how CG appeared to Moyes*

From his teenage conversion he 'wanted to be an evangelist' (Moyes 2005:9) – at first, big campaign style – but his commitment to being 'both effective and efficient' drew his attention to missionary movement approaches. While preparing for postgraduate study in the USA in 1964 Moyes 'stumbled upon' reports of McGavran's missionary work in India and read *The Bridges of God.* Although 'people-groups' and 'homogeneous units' were new to him, his evangelism had been based 'subconsciously' on these principles – first, 'a people group of

[67] See Websites: Moyes, and Corney.

criminals' in 'the slums of Melbourne' and then 'dispirited young people' in Ararat, western Victoria. (Moyes 18/11/2011)

After the Ararat experience Moyes asked himself: 'Why did this work?' A drunk had convinced him that 'what the community really needed was something for kids … to give them a vision for the future', and Moyes says: 'I organized what was really an evangelistic mission' which included *Teen Week.* The community was 'attracted' with celebrity visits, BBQs, youth teas, and 'a series of lead-up meetings'. Moyes says: 'We had 261 commitments in a week'. In a shire of 8 000 'we had over 5 000 attend the meetings – which was just huge'. There were baptisms every Sunday for the next year and weekly church attendance grew from 30 to over 200. The church culture changed. For Moyes, CG was always as it first appeared to him, effective evangelism. (Moyes 18/11/2011)

(#2) *Understanding: Moyes' whole CG experience*

Moyes observed 'sloppiness in gauging the effectiveness' of the 1959 Billy Graham crusades, so when commencing ministry at Cheltenham Church of Christ[68] – a Melbourne middle class suburb – the question that absorbed his thinking was: 'How can evangelism happen that is both effective and efficient?' He analyzed the 'big tent missions in those days', found preachers addressed 'pretty rubbishy types of things' and contributed little to any statistical gain. By the end of the 1960s he 'began to put a whole lot of little pieces together' – some from McGavran and 'the mission field', and some from his own experiences. (Moyes 18/11/2011) He came to understand:

Churches cannot relate to all. In the summer of 1967-68, Moyes organized a 'beach mission' at a Frankston football oval – complete with contemporary gospel bands. Moyes recalls: 'Just as I was about to preach I could hear the roar of motorbikes'. A group of bikies rode onto the oval and 'right up in front'. Although 'four bikies made commitments to Christ and were baptized', Moyes realized that he 'didn't have the culture to welcome them'. He called John Smith, who had just started *God's Squad*, and they went to him. (Moyes 18/11/2011)

Understanding community needs is key. In 1973, the year after McGavran and Wagner had introduced CG to American churches, Moyes went to the USA where he purchased a *Greyhound USA Pass* for US$100 – giving him 100 days of travel on the Greyhound network. From Los Angeles he zigzagged across all states except Hawaii and Alaska

[68] Renamed Southern Community Church of Christ.

sleeping ‘every night, on a bus going somewhere’. Arriving at a city depot Moyes would ask: ‘If a man is in trouble, which church should he go to?’ Moyes spoke with janitors, receptionists and, ‘if the pastor was in, I’d see the pastor’. In this way he met Oral Roberts, Jerry Falwell, Rex Humbard in Akron, Ohio, Norman Vincent Peal in New York, Robert Schuller and Chuck Smith in California. He collected copies of their brochures, ‘sometimes went to pastoral staff meetings that were being held’ and summarized what he found into his ‘book of ideas’ as he traveled on to the next city. (Moyes 18/11/2011)

While those he met in the USA were ‘all doing wonderful things’ Moyes says: ‘their messages were totally mismatched’. He found: ‘There were extreme fundamentalists – Jerry Falwell, extreme pentecostalists – Oral Roberts, extreme psychologists – Norman Vincent Peal, possibility thinking – Schuller’. He observes: ‘It just didn’t seem that the theology of these people mattered. And, as far as the Scriptures were concerned, they were all over the boat’. Moyes says: ‘It’s not theology, it’s not culture, it’s not prayer – it’s not faithfulness by the ministers and the senior people in the church’. Rather, they ‘understood the needs of their area’ and ‘adjusted their ministry to fill the needs of the people of their community’. (Moyes 18/11/2011)

Needs are local. By the time he returned to Australia his ‘head was all over the place’ but he had come ‘to the conclusion that people had to understand their community’. He says: ‘It was pragmatic – and it was sociological’. This raised questions about the transferability of forms that worked for Americans. With Australian evangelicals desperate for anything that would work, Moyes was concerned about how to translate CG thinking ‘in an authentically biblical manner, which is indigenously Australian’. (Moyes 18/11/2011)

Research and planning is essential. Moyes is often told, ‘you taught me to prepare and research’. He adds: ‘I’ve never failed – not because I’m smart, but because there was little opportunity for failure because we researched it all’. Moyes learnt the value of research at Cheltenham. He sent out a group to door-knock. They found the greatest need of families were retirement and nursing homes for elderly parents and grandparents. He says: ‘Well that just changed my ministry in 1977 at Cheltenham’. Before doing the research he had assumed community needs were those of his own: ‘I thought everyone had young kids, because I had young kids’. In Sydney the research was ‘more sophisticated’ – getting reports from city council, social workers and state government’. (Moyes 18/11/2011)

Taking the initiative. After doing research he launched into an intense schedule of community activities, building retirement villages, nursing homes, running adult education

classes – attracting 41 000 attendances in 1979 in Cheltenham: 'the most amazing kind of outreach to the community, we've ever had'. (Moyes 18/11/2011) He was always looking 'for new ways in which his church could serve the community'. (Down 2000:120)

Connecting to oikos and ethne. By his early Cheltenham ministry *oikos* 'was meaning a great deal' – evangelism based upon people groups, needs and interests. This resulted in five entirely different weekly worship services. But it was ten years before he 'suddenly stumbled upon' *ethne.* He was teaching scripture classes in local high schools and discovered the first Muslims in the suburb. Just before leaving Cheltenham he connected with Chinese families through conducting a funeral and from that 'about 60 Chinese associated with the Cheltenham Churches of Christ'. On his first Sunday in Sydney Moyes announced that in four week's time he would start a Chinese service. He says:

> Before we went very far we had Chinese, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Indonesian – later on, Japanese, Sri Lankan, Tongan, Fijian, Samoan congregations – meeting every week. And, as I gathered together an ethnic community I appointed an ethnic minister as of day one … until we had about 30 odd *ethne.* But, you shouldn't limit it to ethnic groups. I discovered for example, a great need amongst homeless people – in the heart of Sydney. (Moyes 18/11/2011)

Preaching Jesus. Preparing for his second sermon as a student-preacher Moyes was convicted that he speak about Jesus. His biographer Goldie Down says Moyes 'became so fascinated with the person and doctrine of Jesus Christ' that he 'preached thousands of sermons' about him. He 'discovered that it was not dramatic preaching but the miracle of God's grace that changes people's lives'. (Down 2000:31) Dubbed 'the weekend evangelist' he conducted evangelistic meetings in over 400 towns and cities across Australia in the 1970s. (Down 2000:99) He also used the media – the press, radio and television – to convey this message. (Down 2000:185-189)

(#3 and #4) *Essences and description: fundamental concerns*

Although theology seemed irrelevant for CG effectiveness in the USA, Moyes contends 'we must always start from theological reflection'. He says: 'I believe growth grows out of theology' – a theology of New Testament church 'called to reach God's lost people' with the gospel that changes lives, while meeting 'all of the needs of the people' – physical, social, recreational, psychological, as well as spiritual. Before commencing ministry at Wesley Mission he wrote a 500-page theology of urban mission outlining what he wanted to accomplish (Moyes 1977), and before engaging an architect to develop their $300 million,

50 stories high Sydney complex Moyes and the church elders wrote a 30-page theology of their church and what they 'hoped to do in the heart of the city'. Moyes recalls: we 'got the architect to draw the lines around our theology … the building was built to reflect our growth – our concept of growth'. (Moyes 18/11/2011)

His other fundamental concern was that CG principles be applied in ways 'indigenously Australian'. When Moyes says of American CG: 'It wasn't Christianity and it wasn't applicable to Australia', he is not judging it to be non-Christian, but rather stating: American forms were not the only valid Christian expression, they were cultural expressions. Moyes thinks Schuller, Arn and Wagner, all of whom he knew well, Americanized CG 'as if the American model was the only Christian model!' He adds emphatically: 'they saw American Christianity as being *the* form'. Yet, American CG became 'rightwing conservative, fundamentalist, evangelical Christianity. Heavily influenced by Southern Baptist … heavily influenced, which was not a good influence. And influenced by terribly bad theology'.[69] He says: 'I helped indigenize it'. (Moyes 18/11/2011)

He considered 'imported' American CG forms to be of little value in Australia. Bus ministries, Sunday schools, and the 'big auditorium for the maximum number of people' – which he 'always opposed' – were American. In the same way, the evangelistic method that confronted people with the question: 'If you were to die tonight, what reason would you give for getting into heaven?' might have been appropriate in a visitation program in Fort Lauderdale, Florida – 'a retirement village for elderly Christians in America' – but, the 'wrong question' for Australia where 'people don't think about heaven, people don't think they're going to die tonight'. Moyes considered the Crystal Cathedral – a modern American *mission-station* approach, deemed an ineffective nineteenth century innovation by McGavran – 'a legitimate form of ministry to the people who live in Orange County, California', but not culturally relevant in Australia. (Moyes 18/11/2011)

Moyes says: **'**Because I believe in the homogeneous unit principle, I believe in having multiple congregations'. So he built the Wesley Center with four worship places so that they 'could have four services running simultaneously'. This grew, 'So at Wesley, by the time I had finished,' Moyes says, 'we had 56 worship services a week running – each with its own congregation and its own minister'. He adds: 'Before we even built a building we actually did our theology – and the building's a reflection of the theology'. (Moyes 18/11/2011)

[69] Moyes referred to the Scofield Bible and dispensationalism. (Moyes 18/11/2011)

(#5) *Meanings: underlying CG*

CG appealed to Moyes' calling as an evangelist and his commitment to efficiency and effectiveness. Down asserts: 'he pushed himself to the limit to attain the goal of excellence in everything he attempted'. (Down 2000:22) He admits to being entirely pragmatic, however, this was tempered by his passion for leading people to Christ, his theological 'pegs' and commitment to localized indigenization. A concept that failed in Melbourne's 'slums' and Ararat, but resulted in baptisms in Cheltenham, illustrates these two – research and evangelistic efficiency. He observed that those in poverty were uncomfortable inviting guests into their homes, country people were 'suspicious' of uninvited callers, while in the suburbs 'most men weren't *at home* at home. They were only *at home* when they were in their shed or at work'. (Moyes 18/11/2011)

On the basis of this observation, Moyes set aside Tuesday lunchtimes to visit men at their work. He experimented until he had an efficient multiplication process, with men teaming with him to visit families every Tuesday evening. From this, he says: 'I baptized over 800 adults. I'd always ask them to come to church – and at the end in the evening service they'd make a commitment by coming forward'. (Moyes 18/11/2011) For him, CG meant evangelistic efficiency and effectiveness.

(#6 and #7) *Subjective experiences, objective insights and reality*

Moyes says McGavran's use of CG for church planting was 'a disappointment', adding: 'That isn't what church growth should really be about!' He is not opposed to church planting, he planted more than fifty congregations in Sydney, but he had seen too many empty buildings and struggling churches abandoned. Also, during the 1970s and 80s, charismatics were defining planting by attracting disillusioned members of other churches to start new churches, leaving Moyes wary. He concluded 'you should be using existing churches' or buildings for multiple congregations. He emphasizes: 'So you may have the wrong environment, you may have the wrong denomination, you may have even the wrong group of people to start with – don't pack up and go off and go and start a church in your own image, work for God faithfully with what he's given you'. (Moyes 18/11/2011) For McGavran CG was church planting into unreached people groups. For Moyes the reality was different, CG was evangelism while church planting was typically the transfer of members. Corney reflects his caution.

Peter Corney: CG as it appeared to a vicar

The Reverend Peter Corney (OAM) was introduced to CG through Gordon Moyes' *How to Grow an Australian Church* (1978). He attended conferences and read books by Wyn Arn and others associated with Fuller's Church Growth Institute. In 1982 he toured America to visit churches employing CG principles and attend a Fuller summer school. There he was introduced to *The Bridges of God* – not realizing 'until that point' that 'the origins' of CG 'were really in overseas mission'. As with Moyes, the principles were not entirely new to him. Discovering that CG was about finding 'bridges into a culture', he says: 'I think somehow I had stumbled onto this earlier without the theory'. As a youth worker he had 'figured it out intuitively', learning 'very quickly how to read the youth culture and adapt to it'. (Corney 2/1/2013)

(#1) *Appearances: how CG appeared to Corney*

So thoroughly had CG transitioned from its Global South beginnings that it appeared first to Corney as American. When he visited Fuller McGavran had retired, although his influence was 'still quite profound', and the American-Wagner-Wimber CG renewal phase was blossoming. While some grasped the idea of 'working into the culture,' Corney also observes that basic CG evangelistic elements 'were lost'. Some he rediscovered through an English connection and others through implementation. (Corney 2/1/2013)

Corney's English connection was David Watson, under whose ministry St Cuthbert's Church, York, experienced revival in the late 1960s before joining with St Michael le Belfrey in the early 1970s.[70] Watson 'wasn't strictly in the church growth movement in a kind of American sense, but he was in his own English sense' with 'small groups, contemporary music and worship'. He had initiated a small group structure 'that emphasized lay ministry'. Corney explains: 'I got onto that very early – went to England and had a look, and came back and began to institute this small group system and every member ministry'. (Corney 2/1/2013)

Applying these principles led to multiple 'targeted' services at St Hilary's: youth and students, business and professional young adults, as well 'a more traditional service at 11' and a family service. 'Later,' Corney says: 'we developed a kind of Gen-X thing off-site. We started carrying the principle across to targeted cultural groups'. Since retiring as senior minister in 1999, 'the influx of immigration' has reached Kew and Balwyn and there is now

[70] See Wikipedia, 'David Watson'.

an Asian congregation, West Papuan Christian Fellowship, and a ministry to Iranian refugees – 'the nations are coming to us'. (Corney 2/1/2013)

(#2) *Understanding: sociological factors*

Corney believes a number of time specific sociological factors made Australian churches receptive to CG theory and practice. The first, 'a strong general social desire for change', reflected in Gough Whitlam's 1970 campaign slogan *It's time*, was congruent with 'changes that CG theory implied'. Second, baby boomers were coming of age – 'a large, and relatively homogeneous cohort, who were ripe for embracing change'. Churches that grew 'were mostly baby-boomer churches' – 'led by baby-boomers who had figured out … their music and their style'. While not all baby boomers were *Jesus Freaks*, all were 'immersed' in the a third social factor, the 'countercultural thing' and radical change. (Corney 2/1/2013)

A fourth dynamic was disillusionment among church people. Many were tired of mainstream churches and when 'the Pentecostals came along and said, let's plant a church over here, they drew a core of already churched people'. New churches were generated, 'more by default'. With increased mobility people 'were not restricted to their local area, they could now choose and travel'. The growth of new churches was 'mainly transfers' of 'well-trained church people'. They 'did evangelism as well', but connection with disillusioned mainstream church people was 'the foundation for a lot of that church growth through the seventies and eighties'. (Corney 2/1/2013)

(#3 and #4) *Essences and description: fundamental judgments*

A 'coalescing' of these social factors provided CG a receptive church milieu. Corney observes: 'This all led to a set of expectations about church and the group experience of worship that was very different to their parents and grandparents'. New young church leaders 'consciously or intuitively', plugged into some 'key ingredients' of this 'big cultural shift' – larger churches, music reflecting the culture, Pentecostalism's opportune appeal, senior pastors who could communicate to large groups, 'a new experience of community' – with the 'small group movement' providing 'the new intimacy the Boomers were looking for'. (Corney 2/1/2013) It was into this church environment that CG migrated.

While Moyes reflected McGavran's commitment to evangelism, American-Fuller and American-Wagner-Wimber CG represented a shift to a new style of church. Corney observes, the motivation for growth – and church planting in the 1970s and 80s – was 'renewal, revival, refreshment, we're tired of the old church'. He therefore did not at first identify 'multiple congregations' with church planting. Overshadowed by renewal, it was not

until Logan's 1992 visit that church planting 'began to take off'. But, even so, by the mid-1990s CG literature was still primarily about 'reviving or growing mid-sized churches' rather than about more churches. (Corney 2/1/2013)

(#5) *Meaning: slowing of the CG movement*

Corney believes the key factors that gave impetus to the CG movement in Australia no longer generally exist. First, 'the culture's moved another couple of steps away from the church and a culture of openness. It's more indifferent!' Also, society is more complex – boomers were 'pretty uniform' and, 'easier to reach'. There is no longer the same countercultural mood for change and experimentation, nor the large core of disillusioned but 'well-trained church people' seeking a fresh approach to doing church. Also, CG has not fulfilled its promises, the church continues to decline and the energy of CG diehards has dissipated, they are 'not hanging in any longer'. Corney observes: 'they still believe but don't go to church'. They are no longer enthused by the models, which Corney considers his most significant contribution to Australian evangelicalism. (Corney 2/1/2013)

The renewal movement that accompanied American-Wagner-Wimber CG through the 1980s, and to a lesser extent American-mega CG of the 1990s, has diminished. The sense of presence and power faded, and 'mainstream evangelical churches went back to their evangelical routine again'. Larger churches had the resources to maintain the forms, but not 'the same punch'. Those 'still hanging in,' are 'now feeling very tired and very bored'. They are still singing the same contemporary songs, 'but they don't have the same feel. And the whole thing's lost its expectation and excitement'. Corney recalls: 'Anything could happen – it was kind of exciting!' adding: 'And, it was very fun'. 'And so,' he reflects: 'I find what goes on now incredibly uncreative – and boring'. He knows 'we can't expect it to be like it was in 1970. But what I'd be looking for is some sort of vibrancy'. He wonders: 'Is it sociological? Is it spiritual?' responding: 'I don't know. I mean, often these things are combinations'. He reflects: 'It would be wonderful to see another wind of renewal sweep through the Australian church – but that's not something you can plan on, that's something God does'. (Corney 2/1/2013)

(#6 and #7) *Integration of subjective and objective provides reality*

Through the integration (#6) of subjective experiences with objective data, we observe CG reality for Corney (#7). Before the 1970s the dominant local ecclesial paradigm in Australia was an inherited English village family, parish model: 'mum, dad and the kids, all meeting together for worship on Sunday morning … cross-generational!' Changes to this 'emotionally loaded model' made many 'very nervous'. Those committed to tradition more

than the gospel or mission fought any change, exacerbated by resistance from '*quietists*' who advocated, 'just pray' and 'allow things to emerge through the work of the Holy Spirit'. CG challenged both. The conflicts were intense, and very discouraging. (Corney 2/1/2013)

Moyes and Corney dialogue on the research question

The CG phenomenon 'opened the conversation around ways of doing church'. (McCredden 16/2/2013) In this section I engage Moyes and Corney with McCredden, in virtual dialogue, reflecting on their experiences (#8) and the research question (#9): how has the CG phenomenon reshaped the Australian evangelical church experience?

(#8) *Reflections*

Churches looked different. Corney observes: 'a reasonably large baby-boomer church of the 80s and 90s looked nothing like – or very little like, a classic suburban cross-generational village church. It had moved way beyond that'. (Corney 2/1/2013) Music, worship style, preaching, décor and architecture changed. The demands of 'intentional' leaders, trained in business school principles, confronted extended family church environs. (Corney 2/1/2013) CG awoke the church to its 'declining numbers and influence' (McCredden 16/2/2013), with 'smart' churches constantly thinking: 'how do we reach the next group? What do we do next?' (Corney 2/1/2013)

Changes were not superficial. CG 'gave permission' to pragmatic experimentation (Corney 2/1/2013), but a church planted into a bikie culture or to reach Gen-Xers not only looked different to a middle class suburban church, these churches were different. Corney does not recall when, but in fostering diverse congregations to relate to multiple cultural subgroups it began to dawn: 'Now that's a change in ecclesiology'. (Corney 2/1/2013)

Ecclesiology changed. Corney asserts CG 'reinforced' his 'views about the core of church', (Corney 2/1/2013) and Moyes, who also cultivated diverse church forms, says CG 'reaffirmed' his 'gut feelings' about ecclesiology. (Moyes 18/11/2011) Moyes acknowledges his gospel emphasis shifted to 'more on the grace of God, more on the love of God', but contends that in his sermons of the last 53 years 'the ecclesiology wouldn't have changed'. (Moyes 18/11/2011) However, the variety of church forms that Moyes supported (as well as his shift in gospel emphasis) suggest otherwise, for a change in method changes the message. Corney found that such variety changed his ecclesiology.

Pentecostal renewal changed church. The flourishing of Pentecostalism in the 1970s and 80s surprised Moyes, moving from 'fringe' when it 'linked in with contemporary Christian

rock music'. (Moyes 18/11/2011) Corney believes Pentecostals had 'a strange relationship with church growth' because of their 'essential idea' that 'the Spirit of God falls or doesn't' when believers gather to worship – with renewal, not evangelism, as 'their touchstone for effectiveness'. (Corney 2/1/2013) Wimber-Vineyard conferences in the 1970s and 80s[71] introduced renewal worship and theology but Pentecostals remained largely on the edges as American-Fuller CG gained acceptance among Australian evangelicals, moving centre-stage with American-Wagner-Wimber CG and finding mainstream identity in the American-mega CG conferences of the early 1990s. Corney believes Bill Hybels and Willow Creek influenced 'them away from some of their more weird stuff to something more mainstream' for, although 'not Pentecostal in theology,' he 'could do the music and the big event better than they could'. (Corney 2/1/2013) Pentecostal renewal modified evangelical worship services, shifting the focus from preaching the Word to seeking the falling of the Spirit through contemporary praise music as illustrated in Table 19. The preliminaries to evangelical worship became the focus of renewal worship.

Table 19: Pentecostal renewal modified mainstream evangelical worship

Evangelical worship – pre-renewal	Evangelical worship – post-renewal
Worship focus – biblical preaching Preliminaries – hymns, prayer, praise Effectiveness – do members evangelize?	*Worship* focus – music/songs, prayer/praise Support - preaching Effectiveness – did the Spirit fall?

Swing to conservative methodology. When he wrote *How to Grow an Australian Church* Moyes believed the church had entered 'a new era of phenomenal growth' (Moyes 1978:9), but now, 'by and large the established church has moved to a right wing conservative Pentecostal methodology'. (Moyes 18/11/2011) Corney notes 'a general drift to a more conservative approach' (Corney 12/12/2012) and expresses disappointment in the current scarcity of creative young leaders prepared to take risks 'to do things differently' to relate faith to the fragmented cultures of today. 'There are some,' he says. 'But they're not thick on the ground. They're much more cautious'. (Corney 2/1/2013) Reshaped by renewal worship and theology, evangelical mainstream tended to become formulaic, with a sameness of style calculated to generate renewal.

[71] Wimber first visited Australia for 'Signs and Wonders and Church Growth' conferences in Canberra and Perth in October 1987. (Downes 2011:9)

Disenchantment and desperation produced further changes. While Moyes does not see missional church as a product of CG, declaring: 'I wouldn't blame Church Growth' (Moyes 18/11/2011); Corney considers the milieu of change and experimentation gave permission to EMC in Australia. His 'disappointment' is that some of the 'next wave of creative young leaders' who cultivated EMC – even though converted and given 'their first start in thinking about ministry differently in those successful churches' shaped by CG – 'left mainstream churches with chips on their shoulders'. (Corney 2/1/2013) Disenchanted, some felt these churches were 'too corporate' or 'too comfortable' with their CG success, and they were attracted to something 'small and intimate'. (Corney 2/1/2013) 'I sometimes get irritated,' Corney says, with EMC theorists who are 'so dismissive of the extraordinary work being done by very large churches'. He considers them 'very selective', 'often very critical', ignoring 'the legacy' of CG in facilitating change, giving the impression they have 'invented everything'. (Corney 2/1/2013) As a result, Corney thinks some EMC initiatives started 'with bad feeling'. Some 'attracted other young adults who were also disaffected' and he feels some initiatives failed because groups came together 'for all sorts of selfish reasons'. (Corney 2/1/2013)

At the same time Corney is sympathetic: 'they've received a lot of criticism' and 'to be fair', he adds, 'they are now living in a much more difficult environment'. (Corney 2/1/2013) When he started at St Hilary's in 1975, Corney says: 'I thought it was tough then, but not like now'. They are 'dealing with a broken culture – with not much Christian memory'. *Baby boomers* still had a memory of their Christian heritage, but today there is 'antipathy towards any kind of ethical framework'. People are 'selfishly orientated to the point of destroying their own relationships and families'. (Corney 2/1/2013)

'I'd say the missional development has come about because people are getting more and more desperate to find a silver bullet,' Moyes says. He emphasizes: 'It's a pragmatic response … but they haven't done the research … a lot of these (missional) churches are just a quick trigger response'. (Moyes 18/11/2011) Corney agrees it is pragmatic – and CG also, but bristles: 'I don't think there's anything wrong with pragmatism if its based in things that are true and not manipulative, and the motives are right'. (Corney 2/1/2013) It is a 'sociological fact' that relationships are key to working with others in functioning organizations, 'it's just the way we're wired'. (Corney 2/1/2013) Both CG and missional theories can be used 'in a very cynical, pragmatic way. But then so can most things. So I'm always a bit wary of that criticism, myself,' Corney says. (Corney 2/1/2013) But, 'there are certain people groups that you can't penetrate' with the traditional village parish church model, 'you've got to do something entirely different'. (Corney 2/1/2013)

Moyes is critical of missional alternative such as café churches, for he says: 'It's a way out of church worship, rather than a way into it. I'm very disappointed with it!' adding: 'I don't see much mission happening. There is a lot of talk about missional stuff, but when I say, "Where are the converts? Where are people worshipping God?" I don't get the answer!' (Moyes 18/11/2011) If missional is being incarnational, messianic and apostolic, Moyes claims his CG evangelistic ministry has been missional: 'No question!' (Moyes 18/11/2011) McCredden considers Moyes' criticism has some validity, but is cautious for Moyes' speaks 'from his modern experience' – a very different environment when 'cultural baptisms' were possible from many with church backgrounds. (McCredden 16/02/2013) 'There are few of these people today,' he observes. 'Evangelism is hard work. It's uncomfortable' – and both CG and missional have 'missed' on evangelistic results. (McCredden 16/02/2013)

When new models do make inroads into a particular group, however, their concerns can then no longer be discounted. Issues previously ignored, such sexual identity and gender, are 'in your face'. Corney says: 'It's a mark of success that you've reached them. But what do you do now? One of them says, "I'd like to be a small group leader"'. (Corney 2/1/2013) This impacts ecclesiological questions around membership – who and what it entails, boundaries of belief and behavior, leadership standards for who can or cannot lead, and 'the essential theological core' (Corney 2/1/2013) or 'pegs''. (Moyes 18/11/2011) Its not a question of not having a core, it is: 'how tight is the circle, or how flexible is the perimeter of the circle?' (Corney 2/1/2013)

(#9) *Research question: the reshaping of church in Australia*

With the welcome and path to becoming part of a community of Christian faith 'more flexible and open', the church must be 'clear about the core'. If these are not clear, Corney says: 'we will lose our distinctiveness'. (Corney 2/1/2013) The 'pegs' Moyes drove into the ground on this could be summarized as: a New Testament church 'called to reach God's lost people' with the gospel that changes lives, while meeting 'all of the needs of the people' – physical, social, recreational, psychological and spiritual. (Moyes 18/11/2011) Corney is unequivocal: 'the centre is Jesus' – how we define, understand and relate to him; and around him is 'a set of theological essentials' such as the Trinity, the authority of Scripture, and 'the church'. (Corney 2/1/2013) He wrote *Zombie Theology: Deathly Ideas that Stalk the Church* (Corney 2011) as 'a negative approach' to defining the limits of this core (Corney 2/1/2013), identifying six dangers 'eroding classical, creedal, orthodox Christian faith' sometimes traveling under the guise of 'progressive or emerging Christianity': *conformism*, *radical inclusivism*, *universalism*, *syncretism*, *covert Unitarianism* and *pantheism*. (Corney

2011) While the community of faith must have structure, Corney is 'totally open' and 'flexible' about its form. (Corney 2/1/2013)

McCredden, who fostered a multi-congregation (in contrast to multi-service) approach to mission and church at Northern Communities Church of Christ (Northern), identifies three qualities: community, spirituality and compassion. While these are not unique in themselves, he says: 'we worked on the basis that when a group was doing all three, then it was a church. If focused in just one or two, then it was not church'. (McCredden 16/02/2013) McCredden, who is 'very happy to be seen as a church planter', says they used 'two qualifying questions': '(1) does the wider community of Northern, leaders and congregations, see this as church? And (2) do the people in the group themselves see this as church?' (McCredden 16/02/2013) While he understands McGavran's suggestion that a society's assessment may also point to what it means to be church (McGavran 1979:23), McCredden does not see this as valid in Australia for 'even those who have never been connected to church in any sense think of the trappings of church as church, and they would say, "No, this is not church – unless there are pews and stained glass windows!"' In Australia: 'Ecclesial structures are in unchurched heads – as well as churched heads!' (McCredden 16/02/2013)

Piggins' trio of evangelical strands – 'experiential, Biblicist, and activist' (Piggins 1996:vii) – are reflected in Northern's identity with community, spirituality and compassion. (McCredden 2002:3) Piggins affirms Moyes' balanced approach to Word, Spirit and world (Piggins 1996:194), and Moyes responds: 'I've tried to be both socially aware and socially just' – providing a prophetic voice for justice 'as well as preaching the Word, the gospel'. (Moyes 18/11/2011) McCredden and Northern have also sought to be prophetic for the disenfranchised in Melbourne's northern suburbs, as well as a priestly voice of intercession. And, while he stepped aside from being senior minister in 1999 Corney observes a continuing 'commitment to evangelism, missions and social justice' at St Hilary's even though the percentage of attendees involved in small groups 'has dropped', the level of innovation to relate to the culture is 'not as strong as it was', the 'high standard of contemporary music in worship' has faded, the sense of community 'is waning', and there is reduced lay involvement. He sees a variety of factors contributing to this: 'the consumer culture has ground people down', it takes 'a long term commitment' on the part of leaders and people; and 'people's lives have got busier'. (Corney 2/1/2013)

Preliminary summary: reshaping the Australian church experience

McGavran's intention was that his CG principles for 'effective evangelism' or church

planting reshape worldwide mission. Moyes and Corney fostered 'effective evangelism' but were wary of church planting. With members of churches leaving to form new Pentecostal worship-style congregations in the 1970s, church planting was not considered evangelistic, and McCredden recalls CG as 'anti church planting'. (McCredden 16/02/2013) Moyes was aware of its Indian heritage, but like Corney initially, most Australian evangelicals were unaware that McGavran's principles were filtered and reinterpreted through American culture. Also, because renewal worship music and theology accompanied CG's migration few made any distinction between the two, unaware of McGavran's concern over the threats of Americanization and renewal. But although McGavran's CG had little lasting impact upon Australian churches, subsequent CG phases reshaped the Australian evangelical church experience. From Moyes and Corney's experience we observe:

1. The forms and structures of church life were changed. CG became a synonym for doing church differently: resonating with the 1970s social context and appealing to baby boomers – their protests against institutions, criticism of ineffectiveness, and desire for radical change.

2. New church styles became an alternative to evangelism. Evangelism was difficult and the methods ineffective. New styles of music, worship, leadership (including pastor), architecture and churches, were proposed to attract the unchurched, becoming an alternative to evangelism.

3. Renewal worship became a focus. While many were unaware of the emphasis of renewal theology, contemporary Christian rock renewal worship accompanied the migration of CG thinking into Australia. While evangelism was affirmed – 'lost people matter to God and therefore matter to us' – American-Fuller, American-Wagner-Wimber and American-mega CG conferences, were accompanied by renewal worship music seeking the falling of the Holy Spirit. Speakers urged that 'seeker services' only be organized if seekers were present, but these conferences modeled 'seeker services' without seekers, for the sake of God's presence and renewal. The church worship event with contemporary music became the measure of effectiveness rather than new disciples or evangelism.

4. New churches were planted for churched people. In the 1970s disgruntled members left churches to plant anew for themselves. And, when church planting finally came onto the Australian CG agenda in the early 1990s, while Logan's emphasis was new churches as evangelism, the effect was: new churches for churched people. The rather arrogant and judgmental maxim: 'It's easier to give birth than to raise the dead', became the CG catch-

cry, condemning faithful members, adding to the poor reputation of church planting, institutionalizing neglect for evangelism, and in many cases undermining both existing churches and the potential to plant new evangelical churches for new disciples.

5. Churches became both complex and formulaic. McGavran affirmed simple churches led by new believers, to which they could invite their community friends to participate. But in pursuing a successful renewal formula this evangelistic diversity, participation and creativity was lost. In being reshaped by renewal worship and theology, migrant American-mega CG was readily received by Australian Christians and mainline evangelical churches. Undergirded by renewal theology this model employing professional leaders, ministers and performance musicians seemed the most successful, attracting many with resources to ensure a great experience of worship and the falling of the Spirit. The legitimation of such highly professional systems is complex.

6. Churches were reshaped by popular sociological factors. Contextualizing church in a climate of radical change, influenced by a consumerist homogeneous modern baby-boomer culture with its penchant for new leadership structures and programs to produce real progress, success, and development, reshaped the church and its gospel but made it resistant to further contextualization to relate to the fragmentation of society, 'liquid modernism' or postmodernism.

7. Churches were shaped by needs. McGavran's ecclesiology was overlooked or neglected in the Americanized phases of CG. Moyes found it was not theology, prayer or scriptural faithfulness by leaders and churches, but their ability to understand and adjust 'their ministry to fill the needs of the people of their community' that resulted in growth. (Moyes 18/11/2011) The emphasis was upon growth rather than the nature of church, ensuring receptivity to modern leadership models, contemporary styles and needs-oriented programming. The transition to renewal as the measure, rather than new disciples, further reshaped evangelical churches. Then with a truncated theology of church, and no theology of the falling presence of the Spirit as evidence of effective worship, many struggling churches with no musicians or singers proficient in contemporary choruses were overwhelmed with the expectation that they adopt mega-church renewal music. No CG proponents were there to tell them that this was not CG as envisaged by McGavran.

8. Methods changed the church's message. If the church is the body of Christ, the community gains their understanding of what God is like through the appearance, structures and relationships of the church. The methods used reshape the message. And, mission

therefore impacts ecclesiological questions around membership, boundaries around belief and behavior, leadership and 'the essential theological core'. (Corney 2/1/2013)

In spite of how CG reshaped the experience of church life – and these changes will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 8, evangelical churches continued to decline. The environment created was also conducive to further change, driven by those dissatisfied or disinherited by what CG had produced, together with despair over continuing evangelistic ineffectiveness.

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The web of CG theory and practice has reached across denominations and cultures, evolving in form – being shaped by those cultures and reshaping church. It became a reason for its own existence, the method becoming the message – and messages change as methods change. In the next two chapters, attention is given to the EMC phenomenon to gain perspective on how it appeared within the web of postmodernism. I first explore how McLaren shaped and experienced the EMC phenomena (chapter 6), and then the experience of Australia theorists and practitioners, Frost and Hirsch, to understand their motivation, inspiration and experiences (chapter 7).

Chapter 6
Brian McLaren: Living in the Postmodern Web

Postmodernism is the social web within which Brian McLaren lives. In pre-modern times truth resided in people and groups, in popes and church, while modernity based belief upon logic and objectivity. (McLaren 2002:128) Referring to *The Web of Belief* (Quine and Ullian, 1978), McLaren sees postmodern belief systems as 'like a spider's web' or 'little fragments of webs, loosely connected if at all'. (McLaren 2002:128-130) Emerging church (EC) is a 'conversation about postmodern ministry'. (McLaren 2012) Neo, a fictional character in McLaren's trilogy, sees this conversation like fragments of a web: 'Instead of one foundation, it has several anchor points. … It's flexible'. (McLaren 2001:78) Rather than being the web, as CG theory became for McGavran, postmodernism is the social web within which the EMC phenomena moves.

The purpose of this chapter is to see how EMC appeared to McGavran, with chapter 7 exploring the particularity of EMC as it arose in Australia. My analysis follows the research pattern established in the previous two chapters, outlined in Table 8, (page 14). From how each phenomena appeared to McLaren (#1) we gain an understanding of his experience (#2) and identify fundamental ideas and judgments (#3). These form the basis of a description (#4) of underlying meanings of the phenomenon (#5), identifying themes of particular interest to how churches are shaped. Throughout the process the integration (#6) of subjective experiences with objective teachings are considered reality (#7), preparing for reflection (#8) on the research question (#9).

Brian McLaren (1956-) – the elder statesman of Emerging Church

Brian McLaren, like McGavran, trained as a teacher, not a pastor. At 42 years of age he became involved as the 'elder statesman' in the EC conversation that began 'among young, white, middle-class' American pastors. (Robinson 2009) This chapter explores his EMC experience through analyzing his frequent references to his hopes, frustrations and doubts as an EC activist. In that McLaren is a prolific writer, I have limited this phase of my data analysis to his thirteen books published up to 2011. I read each book in order of publication, reflected in the progression of this analysis, with each PhR facet

(#1), (#2) etc identified in the subheadings. Table 20 provides an overview of McLaren's journey.

Table 20: McLaren's journey into Emerging Church

1956-	Formative years: conservative non-denominational Christian home As a 16 yr old teenager: decided to follow Jesus (at a Southern Baptist Youth Retreat : planted a small church with friends (failed after a time) Some disillusionment during university years
1978-1986 1982	Taught college English: struck by the superficiality of Christian answers to questions – Weary of snide remarks about church: so, with friends started a group – This group grew to be a community church
1986-2006 1998 2003	Left teaching to be the pastor: Cedar Ridge Community Church (nondenominational) – EC conversation launched with first book *Reinventing Your Church* (Revised in 2000 as *The Church on the Other Side*) Deconstruction phase Reconstruction phase – faith from a postmodern vantage point
2006-	Left role as pastor: to network among 'innovative Christian leaders' – EC writing and speaking – EC conversation developed

(#1) *Activist for the EC conversation*

There was no strategy, but EC conversations first deconstructed modern faith before reconstructing faith from a postmodern vantage point. (Robinson 2009) In his 2009 debate with Bryan Hollon, professor of theology at Malone University: 'Emerging or Diverging: In What Direction is the Emerging Church Movement Headed?' McLaren outlined six stages of how the phenomenon appeared to him (#1) and his contribution. (See Table 21)

His first book, *Reinventing Your Church* (1998), revised as *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix* (2000), launched this conversation. While 'about doing ministry on the other side of the modern/postmodern transition' (McLaren 2000:8), McLaren admits the original title 'echoed the language of a 1980s church growth book'. (McLaren 2000:7) Intended as a 'portal' to postmodern ministry (McLaren 2012), it explored how modern church might emerge to participate in 'the postmodern matrix'. (McLaren 2000:8)

(#2) *Understanding McLaren's whole experience: the story behind*

While McLaren asks readers of his trilogy not to assume the characters can be 'fully identified' with him (McLaren 2001:xxvi), nor that 'their answers are always' his (McLaren 2003:xix), he admits: 'My data is my experience'. (McLaren 2001:xviii) In his books he frequently shares his experiences as the true story behind the story (McLaren 2011:xiii-

xxvii), tailoring this biographical data to the issues being addressed.

Table 21: McLaren's six stages of the EC conversation[72]

Stage	Topics of this conversation	13 books contributing to this conversation
1	How to do church for 18-30 year old - *A church for the postmodern*	*Reinventing Your Church* (1998), revised as - *The Church on the Other Side* (2000)
2	How to evangelize & disciple people - *An apologetic for the postmodern*	*Finding Faith* (1999) – republished as - *A Search for What Makes Sense* (2007) - *A Search for What is Real* (2007) *More Ready Than You Realize* (2002)
3	Philosophy: Christian faith today - *Thinking and knowing as a postmodern* - *A redeeming story for a postmodern*	*A New Kind of Christian* (2001) *The Story We Find Ourselves In* (2003) *The Last Word and the Word After That* (2005)
4	Understanding church history / tradition - *Theological reforms for the postmodern*	*Adventures in Missing the Point* (2003) *A Generous Orthodoxy* (2004)
5	Kingdom of God: justice and civil issues - *Kingdom for the postmodern*	*The Secret Message of Jesus* (2006) *Everything Must Change* (2007)
6	Cultivating spirituality - *Spirituality for the postmodern*	*Finding Our Way Again* (2008) *A New Kind of Christianity* (2010) *Naked Spirituality* (2011)

McLaren was born in Olean, New York in 1956, into a non-denominational 'conservative-Bible-believing-Evangelical-Fundamentalist Christian' home (McLaren 2011:7) 'where church planting was normal and expected and highly entrepreneurial'. (McLaren 2013) By sixteen, 'after a brief but intense period of doubt', he 'became intrigued by Jesus' (McLaren 2006:5) and 'was on the path to passionate spirituality'. (McLaren 2011:9) During a Southern Baptist youth retreat he experienced 'the great big Creator' targeting his heart 'for attention and love', experiencing 'pure happiness' in the realization that, '*God loves me!*' (McLaren 2011:11) 'From that night on,' he writes: 'I was a wholehearted lover of the Creator' (McLaren 2011:13), 'a passionately committed disciple' shaped by the 1970s 'Jesus movement'. (McLaren 2011:7) During these high school years he helped start a group that formed into a small church, but that fell apart. (McLaren 2013)

[72] Based on Robinson 2009, this table also includes McLaren's publications to 2011.

McLaren early displayed a love of nature, music and poetry. With bachelors (1978) and masters (1981) degrees in English from the University of Maryland his academic interests included modern philosophical literature. There were 'times of questioning, skepticism, and disillusionment', but he retained 'confidence that Jesus was somehow right and real and from God'. (McLaren 2006:5) From 1978 to 1986 McLaren taught college English and English-as-a-second language to adult refugees and foreign students, in the Washington DC area. (McLaren 1999:285; 2012) During this time he 'was struck by how superficial many of our Christian answers are in light of the profound questions being asked'. (McLaren, Campolo 2003:243)

He married Grace, 'a Catholic girl', and together they formed a 'fellowship group' that became a 'house church' that grew to be a community church. (McLaren 2010:x) By 1982, McLaren says: 'I got sick of myself and my friends sneering about churches, so we got together and started one'. (McLaren 1999:215) He left his teaching in 1986 to become the pastor and in 2006 he stepped aside to become 'an ecumenical global networker among innovative Christian leaders', writing and speaking. (McLaren 2012) McLaren was awarded an honorary doctorate from Carey Theological Seminary, Canada in 2004 and another from Virginia Theological Seminary in 2010.

(#3) *Identifying essences: conversations about church and faith*

McLaren relishes the transition to postmodernism. He 'wouldn't want to go back' (McLaren 2000:15), but it also frightens him. He experienced its influence in literary criticism, observing it 'already at work on the street' in how facts, events and life were processed. (McLaren 2000:69) At times he was optimistic, affirming CG practitioners trying to navigate and maximize the transition and discontinuity. (McLaren 2000:20) However, there was growing discontent and by 1994 he was 'sick of being a pastor' and 'almost sick of being a Christian' (McLaren 2001:xiii) – torn between continuing with a faith about which he had 'deep reservations' and leaving it altogether. (McLaren 2001:xiv) From the late 1990s he was 'in the middle of a lot of religious deconstruction … questioning and dismantling' inherited theological systems (McLaren 2003:vii) – seeking a new ecclesiology and apologetic, for 'if you have a new world, you need a new church'. (McLaren 2000:15) This called for:

1. *A church for the postmodern.* He considered the key to be a change in attitude toward change, not, getting it right. (McLaren 2000:23, 25) Back in 1987 his church chose to disband so those who wished could be trained to replant as a new kind of church for the majority secular in the Baltimore-Washington region. 'Thus,' McLaren said: 'began my experience with the church on the other side' (McLaren 2000:26), although his was a late American CG-type church. By the late 1990s he acknowledged ecclesiology 'too often thwarted the best … intentions' of the CG practitioners of that time (McLaren 2000:95), but he was not prepared to affirm what he called the 'anarchist ecclesiology' of 'anti-organizationalists' who 'dream of building a community unspoiled by institutionalism and organization'. (McLaren 2000:96) He advocated 'a variety of structures' (McLaren 2000:101), and took a pragmatic stance: 'the perfect structure is just about any that is flexible enough to become a better structure tomorrow'. (McLaren 2000:107) However, he did forecast 'ongoing organizational evolution – or revolution'. (McLaren 2000:101)

By November 2006 McLaren joined George Barna as co-presenter at the *Revolution Conference* in Seattle, USA. Barna's experience typified the ecclesiological revolution McLaren had foreseen. His CG books *The Frog and the Kettle* (1990) and *User Friendly Churches* (1991) had provided churches with strategies and goals for the next century. (Barna 1990:225-230) However, his continuing research and life experience converged in the publication of *Revolution* (2005) in which he describes 'an unprecedented reengineering' (Barna 2005:viii) of church life that 'is about recognizing that we are not called to go to church. We are called to *be* the Church'. (Barna 2005:39) It was 'a life-changing experience' for Barna – reshaping his 'spiritual habits' and redefining his 'beliefs about the church and the Kingdom'. (Barna 2005:123) Although not entirely evident when he wrote his first book, this is where McLaren was headed.

2. *An apologetic for the postmodern.* His first book outlined a new apologetic (McLaren 2000:73-85) while his next two, *Finding Faith* (1999) – later released as *A Search for What Makes Sense* (2007) and *A Search for What is Real* (2007) – with *More Ready Than You Realize* (2002), elaborated. Such an apologetic, McLaren proposes: 'should begin with an old-fashioned apology,' for '*our failure to bridge racial and cultural and class barriers, and our lack of acceptance.*' (McLaren 2002:48) This latter book is McLaren doing evangelism, a 'great love' of his (McLaren 2002:12); an email conversation or 'spiritual friendship' (McLaren 2002:20) with Alice (not her real name), a college student whom he met at a book

signing. While evangelism is 'one of the things that our world needs most', his derision for 'late-twentieth-century styles of evangelism' shows. Those 'selling God' have 'so bastardized' the word, he said: 'I can hardly bear to use it'. (McLaren 2002:12, 13)

His apologetic is *experiential* – intellectual engagement but also 'emotions, longings, aspirations, dreams and hopes and fears, drives, desires, intuitions'. (McLaren 1999:9, 13) He promised to help 'discover *how* to believe' rather than '*what* to believe' or even '*why* you should believe'. (McLaren 1999:18, 19) It is *relational*, found in the stories of others and, not surprising, it is *depreciating*, for embracing faith did not remove McLaren's doubts. He wrote: 'More than once I have been on the verge of giving up on God altogether'. (McLaren 1999:140) He also warned: 'some churches will hurt your search more than they will help it' (McLaren 1999:224), so '*keep your expectations low'*, *'keep your sense of humor'*, but *'get involved'.* (McLaren 1999:225-226)

In contrast McLaren's apologetic is *unequivocal about Jesus*. He said: 'No one has had a greater influence on my life than Jesus'. (McLaren 1999:281) He didn't want to make it seem he had 'Jesus all figured out' (McLaren 1999:287), and he felt: 'It would be a whole lot easier to believe in Christ if it weren't for the Christians'. (McLaren 1999:284) Also, in his conversation with Alice, McLaren shared his concern that 'the only God most of us have to offer is a thoroughly modernized one'. (McLaren 2002:52) Alice responded:

> And if I am forced to conform to the modern version of Christianity, then aren't my fears legitimate – that by becoming a Christian I will regress into a worse kind of person than I am now – "closed-minded and bigoted and brainwashed and everything bad"? (McLaren 2002:65)

'The church struggles because it is so deeply rooted in modernity,' agrees Stetzer. 'It needs to reach people in emerging postmodern culture'. (Stetzer 2006:126) However, he argues 'the church cannot become postmodern'. (Stetzer 2006:126) McLaren, on the other hand, believes the way forward is an apologetic that views faith and church from the vantage of postmodernism, knowing 'a postmodern version of Christianity will be different from the modern version'. (McLaren 2002:64)

(#4 and #5) *From the postmodern vantage point*

Having spent years deconstructing modernist faith – isolating how the emerging phenomenon appeared to him (#1), understanding his experiences (#2), and identifying the

essences of EC (#3) – in 2003 McLaren wrote: 'I don't simply want to live among the deconstructed fragments of unsatisfying systems, and I hate to see deconstruction unsettle people and cause them pain'. (McLaren 2003:vii) He says he 'lost a lot during those years of spiritual deconstruction and struggle', and even though he felt better off 'the loss was acutely painful' especially because he was 'never sure that anything would replace' what was being lost. (McLaren 2011:236-237) He explained:

> I wanted to start writing more directly about the Christian gospel itself, from a vantage point within the emerging culture, without having to describe, validate, and defend the vantage point. *The Story We Find Ourselves In* marks a turn in my work from mapping a new vantage point to describing the scenery from it. (McLaren 2003:xv)

This turn is evident in the storyline or description (#4) of his trilogy, of which *The Story We Find Ourselves In* (2003) is the second. He explores what it is to think and know as postmodern people – accentuating underlying meanings or purposes of the EC phenomenon (#5). Themes of particular interest to how churches are experienced are identified:

1. *Thinking and knowing as a postmodern.* Each character in McLaren's trilogy is caught in 'an immigration problem' – each has 'a modern faith' developed in their homeland of modernity, but they are 'immigrating to a new land, a postmodern world'. (McLaren 2001:19) In the *Introduction* to the first of his trilogy, *A New Kind of* Christian (2001), he shares the pain he experienced in mapping the modern-postmodern transition:

> People worry about you. They may think you're changing sides, turning traitor … So you keep this sort of thing like a dirty secret, this doubt that is not really a doubt about God or Jesus or faith but about our take on God, our version of Jesus, our way of faith. You let it out only when you feel you have found someone you can trust. (McLaren 2001:xxi-xxii)

When confidantes were found, McLaren discovered others felt with him: 'Maybe we're not crazy'. (McLaren 2001:xxii) But, he also understood that those finding faith 'along the path' of his apologetic 'would probably not end up just like the people waiting for them in church'. (McLaren 2001:xxiii)

Through his main characters McLaren explores the dilemma pastors face over biblical authority (McLaren 2001:75), Jesus' relationship to Christianity and other religions (McLaren

2001:107), how to save the church from 'getting into bed' with postmodernism as it did with modernity (McLaren 2001:113), balancing saving the world with personal salvation (McLaren 2001:120), and the church's function in the kingdom of God. (McLaren 2001:121) He explores the emotions of the transition: labeling as 'liberal' or 'conservative' (McLaren 2001:12), angry outbursts (McLaren 2001:95-98), vitriol (McLaren 2001:229), and misunderstanding when seeking to help churches 'through this transition without blowing up'. (McLaren 2001:205) In doing this, McLaren acknowledges he has 'probably let (his) disillusionment out more than (he) should have'. (McLaren 2001:xxii)

2. *A redeeming story for a postmodern.* In the second of his trilogy, *The Story We Find Ourselves In* (2003), McLaren's describes 'the scenery' (McLaren 2003:xv) of faith and church from a postmodern vantage point. Mostly set in the Galápagos Islands, he wrote some of the chapters while vacationing there with his eighteen-year old son Trevor, a cancer survivor. (McLaren 1999:251; 2003:xvii) Five years earlier McLaren had forecast something more revolutionary, while affirming varieties of ecclesiology within appropriate institutional and organizational frames, now he writes of faith experienced in new forms of church and diverse stories.

He tells of Sunday evenings, on a tourist boat, where Neo – a popular science teacher now ecotourism guide, a Jamaican, and Episcopalian who thinks 'evolution is one of God's coolest creations' (McLaren 2001:222); gathers friends for food, prayer, Bible reading, and conversation about 'things people don't normally talk about except with their closest friends'. (McLaren 2003:21-22) There are no sermons. Invited by a friend, Kerry – an atheist scientist, an Australian, who was urged as a teenager to choose between science and God, and at this stage a cancer survivor – said even she was 'shocked' when Neo 'opened a bottle of wine and placed a loaf of fresh-baked Ecuadorian *pan* on the table', said a few words about 'the holy supper' and invited people 'to sit in silence and pray until they wanted to come forward'. Most were crying, and Kerry 'began crying too'. (McLaren 2003:22-23)

As well as new forms of church, McLaren suggests a variety of stories. If sharing the gospel involves telling our story with God's – what Stetzer describes as a move from the meta-narrative to a mini-narrative of what God has done for you (Stetzer 2006:131) – no one version will be the same or complete. (Sweet 2003:199) It is the 'story in which all other stories can find themselves'. (McLaren 2003:36) It is the biblical story integrated with the postmodern story: the story of *creation* – a 'merging' of the biblical and scientific (McLane 2003:132); *crises* – which put 'the goodness of God's creation' at risk (McLaren 2003:76, 77); *calling* – by 'one true and living God' in a context of 'territorial' deities (McLaren

2003:89); followed by *conversation* – God's ways of communicating to his people during their 'cycles' of following and drifting. (McLaren 2003:104, 109) *Christ*, the next episode of the story, Neo shared with Kerry when, during a reprieve from treatments for further cancer, she, he and friends boated down the upper Potomac River.

Their picnic lunch that day included a spontaneous celebration of communion. Kerry participated, saying: 'Look. I have tried to … understand this from the outside. I've tried so hard. … But I don't think it's going to make sense … unless I try to understand from the inside'. (McLaren 2003:154) It was Kerry who broke the silence that followed: 'I think I should be baptized'. (McLaren 2003:156) The picnic concluded with her baptism. Her 'last birthday' came just days later. With her *community* of friends (her church) gathered in a hospital room for a party and communion, Kerry asked to be told the 'last episode'. (McLaren 2003:205) Neo called it *consummation*, explaining: 'God is out ahead, calling history homeward'. (McLaren 2003:208)

McLaren concluded his trilogy with *The Last Word and the Word After That* (2005) exploring this final episode: 'our view of God' as portrayed by 'our understandings of hell'. (McLaren 2005:xviii) This is a case study in deconstructing 'a human construction', in the hope of gaining 'an even better understanding of God's justice'. (McLaren 2005:147, 148) And while the characters of McLaren's narrative do this, God's justice, inclusion and kindness is acted out in their evolving forms of community.

3. *Church for a postmodern.* As well as his community church drawing back from the brink of fundamentalism and division, the pastor and his wife in McLaren's trilogy, start a fellowship group with neighbors and friends, including an intersexual lesbian and her partner. (McLaren 2005:174, cf. 25-37) They were also drawn into a group who meet annually in a forest cabin – a group who were 'church for each other … an informal religious order'. (McLaren 2005:182) They called it 'deep ecclesiology' (McLaren 2005:194) and 'post-Protestant'. (McLaren 2005:195) A 'deep ecclesiology' gives 'room in the Body of Christ' for those 'who do not attend our institutions,' says Andrew Jones who is attributed with introducing the term, it 'values the invisible nature of the church and not only its visible expression'. (Jones 2004:4) For this group it meant valuing 'the church in all its forms' – hierarchical, historic, congregational, mega, mini, micro, liquid, quantum, virtual, and 'everything in between'. (McLaren 2005:195)

Being 'post-Protestant' meant they appreciated the value of many practices and experiences – including public worship, communion, preaching, fellowship, prayer, silence,

learning, ritual, and monastic order – upon spiritual formation. (McLaren 2005:195) As one explained, it also means 'we're done protesting' for that can cultivate spiritual elitism and injustice. (McLaren 2005:196) For them: 'The success of a church isn't measured by the numbers who attend but by the formation of people as agents of the kingdom of God'. (McLaren 2005:196) They saw themselves as emerging 'catholic, missional, monastic faith communities'; ecumenical communities that 'seeks the good of God's whole world' and 'good practice' which points to 'good doctrine'. (McLaren 2005:214, 215) Their groups multiply into the social and ethnic fabric of their communities.

(#6 and #7) *Creative, emergent and generous thinking*

How EC appeared to McLaren (#1) – together with the wholeness of his experience (#2) and the essences (#3) of this phenomena – provide the data for his descriptive trilogy (#4) and underlying meanings or purposes (#5) of EC. Through PhR we observe the integration (#6) of McLaren's subjective experiences with objective observations being presented as reality (#7).

While writing his trilogy McLaren coauthored *Adventures in Missing the Point* (2003) with Tony Campolo, both admitting they could learn. It is not easy for individuals to change thinking and McLaren observes: 'It takes time for the church to accept a truth that contradicts traditionally held doctrines or practices'. (McLaren, Campolo 2003:42) Neither perceives postmodernism as anti-modernity nor antithetical to Christianity. Stetzer considers it antithetical to the gospel (Stetzer 2006:126), but, if postmodernism is understood as an opportunity to integrate 'rationality with things *beyond* rationality', to be 'both optimistic and pessimistic about progress', and to accept the dynamic tensions (not the divide) of reason and feeling, planning and spontaneity (McLaren & Campolo 2003:278-283), there is a valid foundation for seeing Christian faith from this perspective. This view of Christian faith from the vantage point of postmodernism suggests, even necessitates, theological reform:

1. *Theological reforms for the postmodern.* McLaren does not support 'accumulating orthodoxy', adding faith practices to those of the past, nor 'know-nothing' orthodoxy that discounts the past. (McLaren 2004:33) Nor does a 'gray porridge' or McDonaldization have appeal. (McLaren 2004:74, 286) In *A Generous Orthodoxy* (2004) he says that his is orthodox in doctrine, as contained in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. However, he discounts 'doctrinal *distinctives*' or 'secondary doctrines' distinct to particular denominations. (McLaren 2004:36)

He argues for a 'provocative, mischievous, and unclear' orthodoxy (McLaren 2004:27), but

one ultimately tested by its consistent humility, charity, courage, and diligent orthopraxy. (McLaren 2004:34, 35) He calls his a post-critical, not uncritical, approach to realigning Christianity and our lives 'at least a little bit more' with God. (McLaren 2004:22, 26) McLaren considers his approach 'both ancient/historical and avant-garde/innovative'. (McLaren 2004:22)

To illustrate, by affirming 'the resurrection of Jesus changes forever the whole equation of existence' (McLaren 2004:60) an 'emergent approach' enjoys all aspects of life. (McLaren 2004:74) And, in that his incarnation bound Jesus and his followers to all people, including those of other religions (McLaren 2004:281), McLaren proposes a 'tolerant and generous' orthodoxy that includes 'members of other religions and nonreligions not as enemies but as beloved neighbors' in dialogue. (McLaren 2004:39)

Of particular interest to this research are his chapters 'Why I am Missional', and 'Why I am Emergent'. (McLaren 2004:115-125; 313-327) As well as representing a post-colonial missiology, the other side of the postmodern coin (McLaren 2007:44), McLaren saw missional as an alternative 'beyond the conservative and liberal versions of Christianity'. (McLaren 2004:115) He illustrates this idea from his own writing. His definition of the church's mission in his first book was: 'more Christians and better Christians'. (McLaren 2004:116) The title of this book, *Reinventing Your Church* (1998), was revised to *The Church on the Other Side* (2000), and his definition of mission evolved:

> First: 'To be and make disciples of Jesus Christ' – still 'horribly individualistic',
> Then: 'To be and make disciples of Jesus Christ *in authentic community*', and
> Finally: 'To be and make disciples of Jesus Christ in authentic community *for the good of the world*' – bringing 'the essence of missional into the equation'. (McLaren 2004:116-117)

For McLaren missional 'changes everything', although he had not realized at the time how much. (McLaren 2004:118) It eliminated the dichotomies of evangelism versus social action, ministry (inside church) and mission (outside church), in-groupings and out-groupings. (McLaren 2004:118-119) He doesn't recall whether he or Doug Pagitt, pastor of Solomon's Porch church, Minneapolis, thought up *emergent* as the new name for their conversations in the late 1990s, but to move 'above and beyond current alternatives' is for McLaren, truly emergent. (McLaren 2004:326) Within ecosystems *emergents* are saplings waiting in the forest shadows for the space and light that comes when older trees fall, as well as intelligent systems that evolve when many are involved in relatively simple interactions. (McLaren

2004:313, 314) 'New levels embrace and build upon previous levels; they don't exclude them' (McLaren 2004:317), as seen in emerging portraits of Jesus and the kingdom of God.

2. *Kingdom for the postmodern.* During his time as a pastor McLaren became increasingly uncomfortable for the picture of Jesus portrayed by many Christians and sometimes his own preaching, didn't mesh with the New Testament portrait. This 'journey of doubt' culminated in the publication of *The Secret Message of Jesus* (2006), the year he stepped aside from pastoral ministry. (McLaren 2006:5, 6) With a wider understanding of the times in which Jesus lived, his 'interpretive grid' for Bible reading changed (McLaren 2006:11), and he learnt that Jesus' message was primarily about the kingdom of God not simply personal salvation. It was there all along (McLaren 2006:35), but he now found Jesus to be 'profoundly disruptive', even 'insulting', and the Sermon on the Mount couched in 'dangerous, provocative language'. (McLaren 2006:121, 122) He had previously overlooked political dimensions of Jesus' message, the Jewish context, and the revolutionary nature of his life and ministry.

The thesis of *Everything Must Change* (2007) is that this message of Jesus is not about going to heaven: 'it's about changing this world, not just escaping it and retreating into our churches'. (McLaren 2007:23) McLaren points to many dropping out of churches and claims: 'reflective Christian leaders' realize they left for 'the Christian religion appears to be a failed religion'. (McLaren 2007:33) He argues postmodernism in the global north and post-colonialism in the global south have highlighted its bankruptcy in truth and justice. (McLaren 2007:34, 45) However, his point is: if the *emergent* church allied itself with God's *emergent* message of his kingdom now, they would be participants in God's deconstruction of modern society – which he calls the 'suicide machine' (McLaren 2007:52) with its interlocking subsystems of prosperity, security, and equity. (McLaren 2007:55)

In this scenario there is no place for a violent return by Jesus. He finds such an eschatology, portraying a 'jihadist Jesus' (McLaren 2007:146), to be 'not only ignorant and wrong, but dangerous and immoral'. (McLaren 2007:144) If God cannot fix the world without 'violence and coercion', the first coming of Jesus in peace was a 'fake'. (McLaren 2007:144) He argues that 'good will prevail by peace, love, truth, faithfulness, and courageous endurance of suffering,' and not by 'violence and dominion'. (McLaren 2007:146) Just as witnesses to Jesus' resurrection could never again be controlled by Caesar's pathetic 'framing story' of power (McLaren 2007:272), so McLaren contends postmodern believers can stand up against systems today. 'Yes, this is the end of the world,' McLaren writes: 'but not end in the sense of the discontinuation of our story; rather, it is the end in the sense of

the goal toward which we move'. (McLaren 2007:297) It is his view that the apocalyptic visions of Revelation 21 speak to 'this kind of hope within history', 'a new way of living' or 'a new spirituality'. (McLaren 2007:296)

(#8) *Reflection: a new kind of spirituality for the postmodern*

By 2010 McLaren believed there was consensus that 'a defining moment' had come for 'a new kind of Christianity' to be born. (McLaren 2010:14, 23) How broad this consensus is difficult to tell for he refers only to Phyllis Tickle (*The Great Emergence*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), who argues from the limited context of North America and from within the EC conversation; and to Harvey Cox (*The Future of Faith*, New York, HarperCollins, 2009), Hollis Research Professor of Divinity at Harvard, who believes dogmas have today been displaced by spirituality. (McLaren 2010:14) In *Finding Our Way Again* (2008) McLaren draws resources from ancient traditions and practices to enrich such spiritual formation.

In *A New Kind of Christianity* (2010) he outlines his qualifications to 'unbolt long-held assumptions' with 'new possibilities' (McLaren 2010:xi): his love for 'church life', experience as a pastor, 'deep interest' in church history, 'street level experience' of the church on most continents, an insider who believes in 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church'. (McLaren 2010:x, xi) He claims a wide international audience of ordinary people gives him encouragement. (McLaren 2010:1) But the way forward, he warns, will be fraught with 'misunderstanding and criticism from some of their elders' (McLaren 2010:ix, x), whom he labels 'Christian fundamentalists'. (McLaren 2010:1) He is well aware of 'the intensity of debate' that will follow his suggestion that 'conventional paradigms' have been 'constricting', and that his exploration of these questions will not only be 'fresh' but 'highly constructive'. (McLaren 2010:xii)

His personal journey in the EC conversation – being labeled a heretic, a 'controversial religious leader', 'dangerous' and 'unbiblical' – is used as a metaphor of the conflict and *'swirl of controversy'* ahead. (McLaren 2010:1-3) His has been an emotionally distressing journey, with the questions of postmodern people 'unraveling' his theology. (McLaren 2010:8) He describes *fear* that there would be nothing left (McLaren 2010:8), *deep agony* and loneliness (McLaren 2010:8), *disillusionment* with 'a scary kind of religiously inspired bigotry' (McLaren 2010:9), and rising *anger* at the 'stridency and selectivity' of churches in prioritizing issues of the unborn, gays, male-domination, and Israel while marginalizing the poor, women and Palestinians. (McLaren 2010:8, 9) He experienced *alienation* from the 'religious establishment' and 'misguided' television evangelicals (McLaren 2010:9), *shame* for failing to speak out against them (McLaren 2010:9), and the *brutal tension* of living

'between *something real* and *something wrong* in Christian faith'. (McLaren 2010:10) For about five years, he says, his belief system was 'in shambles', a 'time of theological collapse', but his 'spirituality was intact'. (McLaren 2010:10) While his books suggest some progression of emotion – frustration, annoyance, pain, learning, coherence, expectation, through to hope expressed in *Naked Spirituality* (2011); the way in which he shares this '*new way of believing*' is no less strident than his first book published twelve years before.

(#9) *Focus: the research question*

Of particular interest to this research is the evolution of McLaren's ecclesiology and message. We see progression from the pragmatism of his first book where he argued 'the perfect structure is just about any that is flexible enough to become a better structure tomorrow' (McLaren 2000:107), but resistant to 'anti-organizationalists' who dream of faith communities 'unspoiled by institutionalism and organization'. (McLaren 2000:96) However, by the time he wrote his trilogy McLaren was wondering: 'Maybe we're imitating styles of leadership that are inappropriate to our identity or setting – that are even inappropriate to the gospel'. (McLaren, Campolo 2003:164)

He gives little attention in his writings to the shape or form of church. Descriptions of the church experiences of his trilogy characters are vague but encompass 'revolutionary' and organic fellowship on boats, riverbanks and in hospital rooms, with communion and baptisms celebrated spontaneously; 'deep ecclesiology' and 'post-Protestant' spiritual formation embracing emerging 'catholic, missional, monastic faith communities', with both invisible and visible expressions. And although attractional terminology is still evident – referring to 'bringing' friends to church (McLaren 2006:85) – in *Everything Must Change* (2007) he was writing of 'a great reversal' of 'status' (McLaren 2007:102) as the essential character of God's countercultural kingdom. McLaren later wrote of spirituality and forms of church that are 'downwardly mobile' (McLaren 2011:256) but he continued to be strident in his contrasts: describing 'modernist Christianity' as 'clueless in understanding the non-modern and postmodern people outside their stained glass windows' (McLaren 2010:11) and the Catholic response as 'bipolar … losing touch with the changing world outside their religiously gated community'. (McLaren 2010:11) This language suggests McLaren might not have laid aside the old 'suit of theological clothing' that he says doesn't fit anymore. (McLaren 2011:15) A *downward* ecclesiology would be less hierarchical, but also less antagonistic towards modern church.

A 'new' Christianity

McGavran's thesis in *A New Kind of Christianity* (2010), offered as Martin Luther's ninety-

sixth (McLaren 2010:23), is that postmodernists do not need a 'new set of beliefs, but a new way of believing', not 'new answers to the same old questions, but a new set of questions'. (McLaren 2010:23) He poses ten questions (Table 22) to 'open the way' for this 'new kind of Christianity'. (McLaren 2010:24)

Table 22: McLaren's questions: for a new kind of Christianity[73]

	10 Questions: to 'open the way for a new kind of Christianity' (McLaren 2010:24)
	Book 1: UNLOCKING AND OPENING
1	The narrative question: What is the overarching storyline of the Bible?
2	The authority question: How should the Bible be understood?
3	The God question: Is God violent?
4	The Jesus Question: Who is Jesus and why is he important?
5	The gospel question: What is the gospel?
	Book 2: EMERGING AND EXPLORING
6	The Church question: What do we do about the Church?
7	The sex question: Can we find a way to address sexuality without fighting about it?
8	The future question: Can we find a better way of viewing the future?
9	The pluralism question: How should followers of Jesus relate to people of other religions?
10	The what-do-we-do-now question: How can we translate our quest into action?

McLaren says he participates in deconstructionism for its positive outcomes, to bring out the new. Using the metaphor of birth, he describes moving to the new as difficult and painful, a slow process of learning. (McLaren 2010:17) He says: 'I was learning that there is a kind of faith that runs deeper than mere beliefs'. (McLaren 2010:10) He describes it as 'more a *new way of believing*, and less a rebuilt *system of beliefs'*. (McLaren 2010:10) In its view of God he considers his new Christianity 'more mature' (McLaren 2010:151, 156), its forms of church 'less hierarchical' (McLaren 2010:218) and its sexual ethic 'more humane … honest and robust' than the old. (McLaren 2010:254) But, the past is always present. The old still defines the way ahead, for the enemies remain modernist church, apologetics and Christendom; and McGavran's language and argument remains emotive and polemic. He describes deconstruction as 'careful and loving attention to the construction of ideas, beliefs, systems, values and cultures' (McLaren 2010:74), but the new continues to be defensive towards past enemies.

To deconstruct and reconstruct his theology (including his ecclesiology) within the EC

[73] McLaren 2010:24-29.

phenomena and postmodern matrix, with neither having fixed anchor points, means there will be evolution. The core message cannot but be reshaped by the medium (McLaren 2000:68), especially if Campolo's concern that McLaren 'may have bought into postmodern thinking just a little too much' regarding inspiration is true. (McLaren, Campolo 2003:89)

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Emergent is new life springing up in the old forest. As with renovating or rebuilding an old house, McLaren's *emergent* task is forever evolving but always frustrated by the progressively uncovered challenges in the old. When this is done within the web of postmodernism it becomes more complex, for this is not a mechanistic structure like an old building. Having explored how McLaren shaped this conversation, the next chapter examines Frost and Hirsch's experience of the EMC phenomena. While it was the migration of modified American CG forms, it was the emergence of an EMC phenomenon within Australia, with a different journey to McLaren's, that reshaped Australian evangelicalism.

Chapter 7
When Missional Church Emerged in Australia

In this chapter I explore how Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch experienced EMC as it emerged in Australia, reflecting on how they shaped its form and it impacted their experience of church. Both were interviewed, their interviews transcribed and then abridged into descriptive summaries. These, together with their books (Table 23), papers and websites, provide the data for this chapter. Where a paragraph includes ideas and quotations from a single reference, it is acknowledged at the end of the paragraph; otherwise each reference is noted. My analysis again follows the PhR process outlined in Table 8 (page 14) with the core facets identified in subheadings by (#1), (#2) etc; however, I conclude this chapter with Frost and Hirsch engaged in reflective dialogue (#8) on the research question (#9). I also draw preliminary conclusions from both this and the previous chapter, providing a summary of how EMC impacts the shape of the Australian evangelical's experience of church.

Table 23: Frost and Hirsch books: their experiences of the EMC phenomenon[74]

Michael Frost		Alan Hirsch	
2003	*The Shaping of Things to Come*	Co-author	
2006	*Exiles*	2006	*The Forgotten Ways*
2008	*ReJesus*	Co-author	
2010	*Jesus the Fool* (first published, 1994)	2010	*Untamed* (with Debra Hirsch)
2011	*The Faith of Leap*	Co-author	
2011	*The Road to Missional*	2011	*Right Here Right Now* (with Lance Ford)
		2011	*On the Verge* (with Dave Ferguson)
		2012	*The Permanent Revolution* (with Tim Catchim and Mike Breen)

The Shaping of Things to Come

It was the publication of *The Shaping of Things to Come* (2003) that 'changed the game' for Frost and Hirsch. Hirsch says the first chapter was 'a kind of revolutionary statement' which, for established churches, sounded 'pretty angry'. Hendrickson was 'nervous about publishing' and, 'sat on it for two years'. Because it had been their Forge curriculum they naively thought only church planters would read it, not leaders of established churches. For them it 'articulated what whole swathes of people were feeling,' but Hirsch admits they used 'abrasive' and 'hotheaded terms'. (Hirsch 4/1/2013)

[74] Books published since 2003, selected for their contribution to EMC ideas.

Hirsch thinks of Forge as his greatest contribution to advancing EMC in Australia and around the world. Frost points to the book. It was 'a collaborative effort' (Hirsch 4/1/2013), but he recalls: 'it was just a shemozzle writing that book'. (Frost 26/6/2013) Both wrote and then 'tried to scrunch it together' – 'just the worst way to write a book'. (Frost 26/6/2013) As a textbook for their Forge graduates, Frost felt if they 'sold a few hundred copies every year that would be great'. 'And so for that book which had such a terrible gestation and was so badly written,' Frost continues: 'I cannot explain why it's had so much impact. It just happened to say some of the right things at the right time … it has had an enormous effect!' (Frost 26/6/2013) Hirsch says no one could have been more surprised than he and Frost that it 'took off'. He thinks 'the timing' was perfect. Adding: 'I think God knows what he's doing. I trust that'. (Hirsch 4/1/2013)

Michael Frost: CG evangelist transformed by EMC

In 1987 The Reverend Michael Frost entered Baptist ministry as 'your classic church growth evangelist sort'.[75] Although motivated by gospel imperatives and love for people he was 'primordially driven by competitiveness' – advertizing 'like crazy' to 'put on a better product than the crew down the road'. This 'reached a head' one Sunday evening at Baulkham Hills Baptist Church, jolted by his reaction to a convoy of three cars leaving to find church with 'the best night happening' when they found he was not preaching. His first thought, 'I've got to preach every Sunday', proved to be the 'last straw'. 'That doesn't come from any prompting of God or desire for the mission of God,' Frost observes. 'That is, I've got to outdo these other church options!' He was 'particularly disturbed' by this first response – it 'was crushing'. (Frost 26/6/2013)

(#1) *Appearances: how EMC first appeared to Frost*

A friend recommended reading David Bosch's *Witness to the World* (1980) and *Transforming Mission* (1991). This led to Lesslie Newbigin, the 'American Newbiginians' – Guder, Hunsberger and van Gelder – and 'a journey of missional regeneration'. At first intellectual, he found himself 'retreating from the church growth paradigm', recalling: 'I felt like a kid who was discovering something new and exciting'. While he was a developing theoretical framework, he met Hirsch at a Wollongong conference and discovered he had already 'burrowed' intuitively into the cultural context of South Melbourne. (Frost 26/6/2013)

[75] Frost's ministry began at Seaford Baptist Church (1987-89), moving to Baulkham Hills (1990-1992).

But with no proscribed roadmap, in contrast to CG techniques, he could not envisage how to bring missional thinking into his church so he left ministry in 1992 and taught ideology and sociology part time at TAFE. It 'was a bit traumatic,' he was unsure of his future, but he says: 'there was also something very liberating about it'. He lost friends. 'Part of it was my naiveté; part of it was my kind of arrogance, I suppose; and, the other part was my poor communication of it'. People 'felt affronted'. Some ministry friends refused to socialize any more, 'I found that hurtful,' Frost says. His critique, even repudiation, of their ministry models 'was often read as a critique of them and their character'. He says: 'They felt I was really slamming everything they were committed to!' and confesses, 'I could have been more sensitive'. But while acknowledging his advocacy of the missional alternative was not always healthy or wise, he believes it led to his becoming a practitioner. (Frost 26/6/2013)

(#2) *Understanding: his experience of living missionally*

Accepting a part-time teaching role at Morling College while also speaking and writing about being missional, Frost 'felt some pressure' to do it. He was challenged: 'what are you doing about this? What does it look like in your context?' Frost found living missionally – 'seeking to embody the mission of God in a particular neighborhood' – to be 'time consuming', 'emotionally and relationally exhausting', but 'great fun'. Out of this came his involvement with Hirsch in Forge, 'a real tribe' with *communitas* – 'us against the system in a sense and there was a lot of camaraderie around'. At the same time Frost also thinks Sydney shaped his missional emphasis. Churches occupy the 'space' abandoned by the city, a social reformer at best, wowser at worst. In this sense he and Hirsch 'epitomize to some extent' their cities, him bringing 'a bit more of an edge' to the 'gospel imperative' and Hirsch, from his 'experience in South Melbourne among the gay community, and the homeless, and street kids,' providing a greater demonstration of 'the reign of God'. Describing his missional experience as 'an exciting ride', Frost says: 'It's something incredible when you feel as though things that you believe, God has revealed to you, and you're kind of on the side of the angels, and you feel as though people are actually sort of getting it and it's very energizing'. (Frost 26/6/2013)

(#3) *Essences: fundamental EMC ideas and judgments*

Frost identifies tribes within the broader EMC movement: (1) those strongly influenced by CG and, (2) those reacting against CG - the strain with which he identifies.[76] Among the first he sees the UK and NZ 'alternative worship' movement and 'some of the emerging discussion in America'. Frost feels these 'emerging conversations about what postmodern

[76] See Website: Sayers (2009) for Sayer's analysis of 'mini movements' of EMC.

people yearn for, or what kind of worship experience they desire,' represents CG thinking: 'Create church meetings or gatherings, which connect to those yearnings or concerns, and people will find their way back to church'. This is 'just the Gen X or Gen Y version' of CG, from which Frost distances himself. At the same time he acknowledges Hirsch and he speak of cultural distance: CG 'theory reaches people one or two iterations away from church culture, but who's going to reach those 4, 5, 6, 8 iterations away?' In this regard Frost concedes missional was 'reactive': 'look, you are failing to reach these people, we must adopt a go-to-them stance in order to reach them'. (Frost 26/6/2013)

Frost believes missional rather than emerging now dominates the EMC conversation. He observes: 'people don't really care what your worship's like' – ancient, contemporary or postmodern – 'it could be anything, it doesn't much matter'. Missional is 'very unconcerned' over new approaches or models of doing church, taking even 'fairly traditional evangelical ecclesiology' and asking: 'What does it look like for mission?' The essential concern of this 'more missional end' is not growing churches bigger, but 'greater integrity theologically' around what is being done. Among Newbiginian *theorists-practitioners*, with whom Frost identifies, 'there was a lot of repudiation of what we are not into, in an attempt to kind of clear some space, to kind of put our case'. Frost observes: 'That's *The Shaping of Things to Come* type of era'. Although 'un-cool', he states: 'if the church service is not the primary doorway to the community it doesn't much matter … how relevant or contemporary it might be'. (Frost 26/6/2013)

(#4) *Description: disappointment and surprises*

Frost 'naively' assumed that when Australian Christians saw the 'magnificent new world' of missional they would grasp it, but that 'hasn't been the case!' Most engage intellectually, but he did not anticipate the 'enormous levels of oversight and encouragement and reaffirmation' to cultivate missional living and service. 'I feel in my community I just had to say things over and over and over,' Frost says. 'I get bored with saying this'. This 'discipleship piece,' Frost points out, 'has been disappointing' and 'surprising'. (Frost 26/6/2013)

He has also been 'absolutely astonished' that new converts do not come as a 'blank slate'. He thought: 'They would come with no preconceptions and you would have this genuinely culturally fresh worship'. But even if they have had no former involvement in church, Christendom has shaped them: 'They would say, well why don't we get an organ in here or, there's a store down the road selling some old pews, do you think we should buy them? They were just so imprinted'. Frost adds: 'I don't think really unchurched people bring a

freshness in terms of thinking' about Christian meetings or how 'the Christian experience ought to be lived'. This 'was very surprising to me'. (Frost 26/6/2013)

(#5) *Meanings: the 'key' meanings or purposes*

Frost has been 'very cautious or coy,' even 'a little anxious,' about rushing to the 'end point of ecclesiology,' to discuss the shape of gatherings, worship and sacraments. While knowing that when 'the traditional model' is jettisoned it is important to ask, 'what remains?' for Frost, the 'key' missional question is: what does it mean to balance three elements – 'communion with God', 'a sense of internal community', and 'our commission to alert people to the reign of God'? He envisages gatherings 'integrally linked to the rhythms' of their context, seeking 'to both announce and demonstrate the reign of God – looking for examples or traces of God's reign that were there even before we arrived'. He sees discipleship as key, with 'high levels' of service and sacrifice – not just 'something of an add-on'. How they live and the shape of their gatherings would be 'determined by the context'. Missional church is therefore 'anchored' in 'action, engagement, service, love, justice, and peace'. (Frost 26/6/2013)

(#6 and #7) *Integration of subjective and objective suggests reception or relabeling*

From the interplay (#6) of his hopes, fears and objective observation, Frost has a growing sense of EMC's impact (#7). For 'the longest time' he wondered whether missional thinking was gaining any influence. However, the Church of England's *Mission-shaped Church* report (Cray 2004) represented appropriation by a 'traditional denomination', Ed Stetzer's work in the USA was 'the Southern Baptist version', and in 'more recent times' Sydney Anglicans have shown an 'openness to mission-shaped church material and fresh expressions of the UK'. Frost concludes: 'I think that we've now got to the stage where the more traditional larger denominations are seeking to appropriate this thinking within their frameworks'. He is gratified to 'hear missional language used much more routinely, and in some cases appropriately'. 'I think there is an emerging or creeping kind of impact,' he adds. 'When I think about the fact that some people fought tooth and nail about how terrible this all was, to now see the appropriation of these kinds of concepts and language – and to some degree practice, is quite an encouraging kind of thing'. However, now that 'every seminary has a missional program of some kind and everyone's writing books about being missional,' the missional movement could be 'derailed or co-opted'. This is an ongoing discussion between Frost and Hirsch. (Frost 26/6/2013)

Alan Hirsch: missional practitioner turned EMC theorist

Alan Hirsch admits to being 'the more geeky theorist' of the Frost-Hirsch pair, but his journey into missional 'wasn't a theoretical affair'. A South African Jew, he and his wife Debora came to the Lord 'from the fringes of society' – he as a drug addict and his wife 'from a lesbian world, deep into the drug underworld'. He says, 'I know that God worked on winning my heart,' finding church in Pentecostal circles at the Richmond Temple[77] and training for ministry at the Presbyterian Theological College and Bible College of Victoria. He began inner city ministry in South Melbourne 'where prevailing understandings of the church were never going to fit' and the 'one size fits all' was not working 'on the edges'. However, Hirsch 'knew that God wanted to reach them for that was our own experience'. (Hirsch 4/1/2013)

(#1) *Appearances: from practice to theory*

When he started in South Melbourne in 1989, Hirsch says: 'I had no idea that there was … such a thing called missional church'. He had no theoretical framework but 'just knew' that they must 'take it on as missionaries, going to the different tribes in our setting'. His recruitment to the *Department of Mission, Education and Development* for Churches of Christ (Victoria and Tasmania) gave him a 'macro-perspective' and reading Bosch, six or seven years later – and 'much later,' Newbigin and Guder – convinced him the inherited institutional church 'was not holding up'. He says: 'There were cracks in it, it was essentially non-missional, and could not achieve missionary outcomes. It was not built for that!' During this time (1998) Hirsch launched Forge, 'a movement that allowed people to think differently,' with 'about 50 000' people connecting. He was introduced to missional theory by Martin Robinson's[78] discussion of postmodernism in *The Faith of the Unbeliever* (2001) and, to him, it 'made sense'. (Hirsch 4/1/2013)

(#2) *Understanding: what 'we've inherited was flawed'* (Hirsch 4/1/2013)

Hirsch regards Christendom forms as non-missional and is convinced 'a non-missionary understanding of the church is not going to cut it'. However, he says he always viewed CG as 'quite legitimate' and considers *The Bridges of God* a seminal missional work – bypassed because McGavran 'associated with the later church growth stuff'. With his first church home 'a revivalist church growth mixture,' Hirsch is open to American mega-CG. He says: 'I've always had good experiences with mega churches. I've never had a problem with them'. However, CG 'was never going to resolve all our problems'. It was a 'stop-gap

[77] See website, Bridge Church – the name since 2009.
[78] See websites: Together in Mission – UK Director, The Missional Network – team member.

approach' to decline, adding: 'It was the gift of God to the church. It was, the last great move of God'. But, for Australia, Hirsch says 'we needed a missional response'. (Hirsch 4/1/2013)

(#3) *Essences: western Christianity's future depends on missional*

When researching *The Forgotten Ways* (2006) Hirsch discovered missional is 'latent within the church itself'. His co-author of *On the Verge* (2011), Dave Ferguson, reveals Hirsch considers this 'not merely a product of his own intellect' but that it 'came to him almost supernaturally as a gift from God for the church'. (Hirsch, Ferguson 2011:140) 'It's dormant there, it's our fundamental truth,' he declares, our 'primary story' – 'our best and our deepest scripting'. (Hirsch 4/1/2013) He believes the answer to evangelistic ineffectiveness is to be found in a 'missional ecclesiology' (Hirsch 2006:17) framed by 'Apostolic Genius,' a convergence of six inter-relating elements of 'missional DNA' (Hirsch 2006:11, 18) – which he identifies as: Jesus is Lord, disciple making, missional-incarnational impulse, apostolic environment, organic systems, and communitas. (Hirsch 2006:24-25)

This is the essence of missional for Hirsch. He rejects the suggestion that missional is just another fad, declaring: 'We're reconnecting with ancient ideas that have been forgotten'. His judgment is that 'the future of western Christianity' rides on the missional 'nest of ideas'. He says: 'If we don't get it right now, we don't have the luxury of more time. The church will continue to decline'. He worries the Australian church may miss this paradigm for he sees leaders 'insecure with their own identity and egos,' unable to celebrate or champion new approaches, and, polarized by 'charismania' – 'a very aggressive form of church growth' emanating from Sydney Pentecostalism. (Hirsch 4/1/2013)

(#4) *Description: a multiplicity of approaches, but missional!*

Hirsch's defense for his past aggressiveness towards CG – the 'immature statements' of 'an arrogant hothead' – is that in prophetic ministry 'you always overstate your case'. It was difficult he says, for his 'biggest opponents were the church growth guys'. This he found to be 'the oddest thing,' but missional 'ideas were dangerous' to their empires. In some mega-CG circles he was *persona non grata* and *The Shaping of Things to Come* 'a banned book'. Quoting Peter Drucker, 'Whom the gods would destroy they give 40 years of success', (McClelland, 2011) Hirsch suggests that for those who had invested in CG the time was not yet up. They reacted strongly for the 'whole attraction thing was being questioned'. He felt that whatever he said 'was always interpreted as: he does not like or he hates the church!' This, he protests: 'has never been the case. I've always loved the church deeply, but … I feel a sense of urgency that we cannot persist simply with just one approach for a context

that requires a multiplicity of approaches and methodologies, based on a deeper theology'. (Hirsch 4/1/2013)

(#5) *Meanings: that accentuates his underlying purposes*

In missional Hirsch has found his place. He says: 'When I came into the missional tribe I knew that's where I was made to be – really knew'. 'I was made for this moment,' he explains: 'I feel that I'm deep within my calling, what I'm doing now'. (Hirsch 4/1/2013) Researching and writing *The Forgotten Ways* (2006) changed Hirsch and he now says: 'I've fit into my mould'. While Frost has focused upon 'the communication of the gospel,' Hirsch says the 'strategic' missional focus for him has been 'experimental forms of church'. He argues that the future of the church is 'not in what you've got now,' but found in the 'platform' for missional movements – the 'space for experimentation' that produces 'the seeds of the future for the church'. (Hirsch 4/1/2013)

(#6 and #7) *Integration: alienation to acceptance, a new reality!*

Viewing his subjective experiences of 'persecution' and 'alienation' from the perspective of current affirmation (#6), provide a glimpse of the current reality for missional *(#7).* Now that missional is being adopted 'right across the board,' Hirsch believes it 'inevitable' that missional permeate 'the system'. At the same time he is frustrated that social justice has received more attention than evangelism and that it has become faddish. 'Everything becomes missional when its not,' he complains. Because the term is being appropriated in this way, instead of the Latin word mission he prefers the Greek ἀπόστολος, sent. However, he observes: 'You don't have to fight, like I had to fight,' adding, 'we were persecuted'. Many 'were too fearful to listen to the innovators' – a fear he brands as the 'alienation' or 'exiling of the apostolic'. In contrast, he now consults with churches that banned him in the late nineties. 'That's symbolic, that is hugely symbolic!' he observes. (Hirsch 4/1/2013)

Hirsch is now imagining a 'both-and' scenario, attractional and incarnational, with American mega-CG being done even better and used as a platform for missional or 'apostolic movements'. (Hirsch, Ferguson 2011:24-25) He seeks to 'maximize the potential of the twentieth-century church that found its final flower in the megachurch and multisite movements'. (Hirsch, Ferguson 2011:11) He engages with a network of thirty *Future Travelers*[79] – pastors of the 'most innovative, fastest growing, and largest' American mega-CG 'Verge' churches (Hirsch, Ferguson 2011:20-21) – representing about 250 000 people. (Hirsch 4/1/2013) Arguing now for what he calls a 'movemental ecclesiology' (Hirsch,

[79] See websites, 'Future Travelers' and 'The Forgotten Ways'.

Ferguson 2011:32) that is broad enough for all forms of church, he imagines 'the strongest attractional forces and the most vibrant missional impulses' together, multiplying 'missional communities' – a 'new life form' of church. (Hirsch, Ferguson 2011:11, 13-14) This, Hirsch and Ferguson – 'a church planter turned mega-church pastor' (Hirsch, Ferguson 2011:19) – believe presents 'the church with its first real opportunity to reverse the long-term decline in every Western context'. (Hirsch, Ferguson 2011:43) Their bold claim is that at the overlap of CG practices, incarnational missional approaches and exponential systems these Verge mega-churches will reverse decline by cultivating multisite churches, offsite missional projects, and church planting movements**.** (Hirsch, Ferguson 2011:43)

Frost and Hirsch in dialogue on the research question

Frost is cautious of Hirsch's idea that 'if you can infect these (American mega-CG) guys they can change the whole church in America'. (Frost 26/6/2013) In this section I engage them in dialogue, with McCredden, reflecting on their experiences, their views of missional (#8) and the research question (#9): how has the EMC phenomenon reshaped the Australian evangelical church experience?

(#8) *Reflections*

Affirming the twelve GOCN qualities, Frost and Hirsch declare missional to be radically messianic in spirituality, intentionally incarnational in mission, and apostolic in form. They agree that:

- *Missional demands the 'refounding' of church* (Frost and Hirsch 2009:5), not from the vantage point of postmodernism as argued by McLaren (McLaren 2003:xv), but through 're-Jesusing the church'. (Frost, Hirsch 2009:7)
- *Missional living flows from God's heart.* 'Christology (our primary theology) determines Missiology (our purpose and function), which in turn determines our Ecclesiology (the forms and expressions of the church)'. (Frost, Hirsch 2011:21)
- *Missional has alienated some of God's people.* Frost and Hirsch admit to causing offence, sometimes unnecessarily. 'Instead of taking the people of God along,' McCredden observes, 'if they didn't agree, they were cut off'. (McCredden 16/2/2013)
- *Missional initiatives have struggled*. Hirsch admits being 'so unorganized' that Forge churches were not planted. (Hirsch 4/1/2013) McCredden agrees: 'the prophetic message was brilliant, but the apostolic systems and structures have been dismal'. (McCredden 16/2/2013) Initiatives that have been sustainable have invariably received encouragement from mainstream church networks.

• *Missional activity has not led to significant conversion growth.* Frost considers this a 'fair critique'. (Frost 26/6/2013) While conversion should not be 'reduced to recruitment', he says: 'If we do believe we are engaging incarnationally and missionally, and building proximity and relationship and we're driven by gospel imperatives, then some people ought to be coming under the reign of God and finding faith'. (Frost 26/6/2013) McCredden notes: 'although the rhetoric affirmed discipleship and evangelism, I am not sure the practice matched the rhetoric'. (McCredden 16/2/2013)

Frost and Hirsch agree that missional paradigms are gaining ground among evangelicals, becoming even 'hip' and 'passé'. (Frost 2011:16) However, there is the risk that missional gets lost in a maze of shibboleths or complex formulae. Both fear derailment:

• *Missional is in danger of being co-opted.* Frost fears 'the not-quite-missional,' who simply add missional '*flavor* to the mix'. (Frost 2011:17) He is also concerned about 'the church growth guys' who, able to incorporate the charismatic, might do the same with missional. (Frost 26/6/2013) He observes that while 'resistant' to charismatic renewal in the 80s and 90s CG appropriated enough 'to appease people and carry on with business as usual'. (Frost 26/6/2013) In the same way mega-churches are 'going missional' – 'a phrase that makes my skin crawl,' writes Frost. (Frost 2011:19) *The Road to Missional* (2011), first titled *Not Yet Missional* (Frost 26/6/2013), warns of these dangers.

Frost observes that in all new movements radicals branch out (R1, see Table 24), dragging the existing (E1) with them – but, they are then co-opted (R2). The result is movement (E2), but 'not as great as the radical movement had desired'. Some are comfortable with this, but there are always those (R3) – 'and I guess I might imagine I'm one,' says Frost, 'that wants to still hold the line even in some hopeless sense'. (Frost 26/6/2013)

Table 24: Radicals are co-opted by the existing paradigms

E1 The existing (status quo) ----------	- - - - - - - - - -	- - - - - - - - - -	R1 The radicals ---------- (branch out)
	E2 The existing (moves) renewal - not as desired	R2 The radical **(co-opted)** ----------	- - - - - - R3 The radical **(holding out)**

Frost also has reservations about the 'worrisome trend' of overall decline in church attendance while American mega-CG churches are multiplying. This suggests ongoing evangelistic ineffectiveness and the death of smaller churches. (Frost 2011:19) However, he agrees 'some of us engage in a way that Alan (Hirsch) does' (M2, see Table 25) while others 'of us might continue to call out further'. (M3) In his thinking M2 and M3 'oughtn't be seen as conflictual' but 'as two legitimate expressions of what it is to be missional'. (Frost 26/6/2013) Hirsch has introduced him to some *Future Travelers*: 'And in a loving way I like to continue to provoke them' lest they 'drift back,' he says. (Frost 26/6/2013) Those he has met have no dissent with missional, but they have led their congregations into multi-million dollar building programs and they must 'keep the money coming in, which means keep the people coming in'. (Frost 26/6/2013)

Table 25: Hirsch and Frost: co-opted or calling out further?

Mega-1 Mega-church (CG status quo) ---------	- - - - - - - - - -	- - - - - - - - - -	M1 Missional ---------- (calls out)
	Mega-2 Mega-church (CG moves)	M2 Missional - Hirsch **(co-opted by CG)**	
	Missional - not as desired	----------	- - - - M3 Missional - Frost **(calling out further)**

Hirsch agrees (see Table 26) that change begins with protest (P) on the edges of the mainstream (M). One is the antithesis of the other, but neither exists without the other. In a missionary environment, the mainstream (M) is not sustainable but nor is the protest movement in its 'idealistic form' (P). Hirsch contends that while some archconservatives – 'maybe even the majority' – will never budge, some within the mainstream (M) see renewal is needed and heed the protests (P). If both M and P can be seen as God's people, 'God's truth in two forms,' Hirsch says, they can find a 'common language' or 'middle ground'. If they don't, M continues to decline and P 'in the end becomes sectarian'. While in the past he has been critical of CG for its lack of biblical resonance – and understands: 'Every movement has either been ejected or has been brought to heal within the institution' – it is now his view that mainstream church (M) together with the protestors (P) provides the platform for missional movements (MM). (Hirsch 4/1/2013)

Table 26: The interdependence of mainstream church and protest movements

(M) Mainstream	(MM) Missional movements	(P) Protest movement
Not sustainable in a missionary environment	- Space for experimentation - Common language - Middle ground	Not sustainable in its idealistic form
God's people = decline	God's people = enduring change	God's people = sectarian
The 'platform' for missional movements – 'space for experimentation'		

McCredden sees this as 'a shift' in Hirsch's thinking (McCredden 16/2/2013), while Hirsch insists: 'Really I haven't changed that much. My language has changed'. (Hirsch 4/1/2013) Frost thinks 'the jury might still be out' on what may be achieved by engaging with American mega-CG *Future Travelers*, and he is 'not quite yet happy to be co-opted'. (Frost 26/6/2013)

(#9) *Research question: the reshaping of church in Australia*

Encountering *missio Dei* changed Frost's understanding of God. His appreciation for prevenient grace and 'the unfolding reign of God' have been shaped 'by observation and practice'. This, Frost says, led to him 'rethinking' his understanding of church. (Frost 26/6/2013) He observes:

> In practice I had a view that the church was the kingdom of God and recruiting people to join that was an extension of the kingdom. And so you would do anything – if you believe kingdom is the same as church, you will do anything to get people into church, which serves a church growth kind of model perfectly. (Frost 26/6/2013)

Hirsch's ecclesiology has also been shaped by missional ideas as well as his engagement with *Future Travelers.* He now proposes a 'movemental ecclesiology' (Hirsch, Ferguson 2011:32) inclusive of different forms of church. He believes 'the institutional idea of the church can be embraced within movements,' and considers 'the future of the church lies in our capacity to embrace a bigger idea of the church'. (Hirsch 4/1/2013) Foundational to his thinking is the 'priesthood of all believers'. While Christendom 'dis-empowers the laity' Hirsch considers CG 'at least recognizes … volunteers in the equation'. (Hirsch 4/1/2013) He believes the 'Apostolic Genius' of 'apostolic movement' happens when all six missional DNA elements engage in 'multiplication church planting plus the mission of everyone

everywhere'. (Hirsch 4/1/2013) While 'Frost's emphasis is still missional incarnational,' McCredden reflects: 'Hirsch has changed. He is more into movements, using quite complex language to define and redefine his definitions'. (McCredden 16/2/2013)

Preliminary summary: reshaping the Australian church experience

McLaren's evolution to postmodern EC forms, Frost's steadfast commitment to the MC alternative, and Hirsch's imagined 'apostolic movement' through an alliance of missional with American-mega CG, represents the complexity of EMC in Australia. From their experiences I draw the following summary of its impact upon the shape of church for Australian evangelicals:

1. Information has changed the experience of church. As part of deconstructing the past EMC has disseminated research on the sociology and nature of New Testament church life, the development of 'pagan Christianity' and Christendom (Viola, Barna 2007), and it's shaping by modernism. Reports of the 'waste of resources', a lack of 'doctrinal integrity' and 'accountability' by officials, an 'expensive bureaucracy', a needed kingdom emphasis – 'not just denominationalism' – and 'secretive' 'dirty-tricks' campaigns, have smeared church systems. (Moyes 2005:66, 122-126) Moyes observation that 'What Jesus has made simple, we continue to complicate,' (Moyes 2005:131) is a damning indictment. The result: disillusionment, changes in participation patterns, and a 'silent revolution of faith' (Viola and Barna 2007:xxv) – with some leaving for missional alternatives.

2. Paradigm transitions have created tensions in church. EMC is a radical new paradigm. Advocates were from within established churches, with 34 of the 50 EC pastors surveyed by Gibbs and Bolger (*Emerging Churches*, 2005) from church attending Christian homes. McLaren was one of them. (See Appendix D) Their deconstruction of established forms, brash promotion of missional, and departure to pursue their vision, appeared as ungrateful arrogance – the 'kitchen sink realism' of 'angry young men' – leaving in their wake churches experiencing hurt, misunderstanding, even anarchy.[80]

3. Diverse forms of 'gathered church' have become normative in church experience. While some attractional terminology is still used by EMC, the forms of 'gathered church' – which has been central to evangelical ecclesiology (Manley 2009:87) – are being redefined. A picnic or BBQ becomes a celebration of the Lord's Supper, conversations result in a baptism in a backyard pool, with multiple options for gathering – mega, mini, micro, liquid,

[80] See Wikipedia, 'Angry Young Men'.

virtual, and 'everything in between'. (McLaren 2005:195) As *emergent* forest growth they build upon previous forms: gathering regularly or intermittently (even annually), some less structured, others planned, programmed, church building centered, pastor controlled or influenced. There are diverse expressions, but the missional options struggle without support networks.

4. Changing values are reshaping church experiences. Evangelicalism has been rooted in modernism, while EMC experience is influenced by postmodernism. Valuing church in all its forms – including so-called 'deep ecclesiology' for those who do not attend institutional church (McLaren 2005:194; Jones 2004:4), as well as tolerance towards other denominations and religions – impacts homes, families, and relationships. Discomfort with being right or 'protesting' – associated with spiritual elitism, injustice or triumphalism – contributes to post-denominationalism, post-Protestantism and post-evangelicalism. Ways of believing devoid of doctrinal systems – but with an integrated blend of God's story, our personal mini-stories and the fragmented postmodern narrative – suggests epistemology has also been reshaped.

5. 'Belonging before believing' is reshaping church. EMCs cultivate belonging (a sense of true membership) prior to behaving or believing as Jesus followers. Success is no longer measured in the number of members. This shift has implications for membership, core beliefs, and assessment. Manley observes that, historically for Baptists, 'belief verified through baptism' designated 'membership of a regenerate gathered church'. (Chatfield 2009:7) But, Frost explains: 'If we make the alerting of people to God's rule the *primary* task, then church membership will be a *secondary* outcome'. (Frost 2011:65)

6. Obedience to God's kingdom mission of making disciples changes church experience. This EMC focus is radical in its practical implications. In Hebrew terms, obedience 'confers knowledge of God that cannot be gained by any other means'. (Frost and Hirsch 2009:156). High levels of discipleship are seen in communion with God, sacrificial service, internal community, alerting people to God's reign, and conversion growth. (Frost 26/6/2013) Rather than being consumers and 'discerning customers' (Hirsch, Hirsch 2010:138), disciples make disciples and, Hirsch says, plant churches – 'usually not big or complex'. (Hirsch, Hirsch 2010:136) God's kingdom is the organizing principle, not 'alerting people to the address of our church building and the times of our services'. (Frost 2011:65) Kingdom themes shape the forms, but the church service is no longer the doorway to salvation. (Frost 26/6/2013)

7. Practicing the 'priesthood of all believers' reshapes church experience. EMC rejects clericalism. Hirsch labels ordination 'a doctrine of devils': a 'catastrophic', 'heinous' barrier to true discipleship, suppressing 'one of the most potent of Christian truths about the church – the priesthood of all believers'. He advocates the fivefold APEST (apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, teacher) gifting as the framework for Christian leadership in missional environments. (Hirsch, Hirsch 2010:142-144; Eph. 4:1-16) And, reflecting the essential character of God's kingdom in status reversal (McLaren 2007:102), structural hierarchies are flattened and church affirmed as 'grace-full conversation'. (Strom 2000:10)

8. Church is getting very small – but also, very big. EMC has been associated with organic, simple, traveling light, conversations, intimacy, participation, sacrificial living and witness (*martyria*) inspired by Jesus' cruciform life and Paul's *ecclesia*. But, contrary to McLaren's claim that success is no longer measured in numbers (McLaren 2005:196), mega-CG churches attract increasing numbers while overall church attendance declines and small aging congregations struggle with limited resources and personnel. Although Hirsch concludes they share the same missional DNA, encompassed by 'movemental ecclesiology', these are very divergent experiences of church.

9. Missional communities practice ancient traditions. These include fasting, silence, blessings, creative expression, 'grace' at meals, simplicity and denial, holy and Sabbath days. Practitioners engage in incarnational mission – following Christ's pattern of mission, participating in his mission presence, and joining his mission in society. (Langmead 2004:8) Gatherings may be in homes, gardens or cafés, with work associates, family, children and community friends – but always around meals. New groups are encouraged and supported in their 'relational streams' (Roennfeldt 2011:25), which Hirsch considers 'one of the best indicators' of missional. (Hirsch 4/1/2013) Church is a fresh adventurous experience, life is shared and *communitas* is ensured.

EMC has changed the experience of church life, but there are frustrations. While EMC identifies with God's mission to the world, Hirsch asserts what is needed are 'real disciples'. (Hirsch and Ford 2011:34) It is not that there are none, but evangelistic ineffectiveness weighs heavily. Also, while attention is given to God's Word in regard to kingdom, mission and *ecclesia*, unfortunately, Frost says: 'the kind of intuitive engagement with Spirit is missing'. (Frost 26/6/2013) Certainly the subjective experiences of Frost, Hirsch and McLaren have influenced the EMC phenomena, playing a role in reshaping how Australian evangelicals experience church – but missional communities are yet to balance Christ's concerns: 'his Word, his Spirit, and his Mission'. (Piggins 1996:vii)

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Hirsch imagines that the church's destiny is in 'movemental ecclesiology' encompassing all church forms, both CG and EMC. His vision is American mega-CG Verge churches multiplying in missional communities and planting movements. In these, Mike Breen says: 'We see a church that is much more like the one Jesus intended'. (Breen, in Hirsch, Ferguson 2011:12) Breen finds theological support for this attractional-with-missional model in Jesus – 'the most attractive man who ever walked the planet'. (Breen, in Hirsch, Ferguson 2011:12) His word choice seems inconsistent with Frost and Hirsch's 'wild Messiah of the missional church' (Frost, Hirsch 2009, title) or Frost's, *Jesus the Fool.* (Frost 2010) However, Breen rightly appeals to our view of Jesus, for Christology shapes missiology, which in turn determines our ecclesiology. And, Frost affirms that our picture of Jesus determines the degree to which we adopt or avoid his mission. (Frost 2006:29) Diverse pictures of Jesus illustrate the dilemma of theological reflection on the church. It is always contextual, shaped by our experiences and pictures. This is the uneasy task of Chapter 8, enquiring: *When is Church, Church?*

Chapter 8
Theological Reflection: When is Church, Church?

My thesis is that CG and EMC responses to the dilemma of evangelistic ineffectiveness have reshaped church experience for Australian evangelicals. Using the lens of PhR I have considered the experiences of six theorists and practitioners who played a role in introducing these movements. My purpose in this chapter is to critically assess the impacts they experienced, including influences towards a populist ecclesiology. I do this through analyzing: (1) the impact of CG and EMC upon local churches in mission, forms and church planting; and (2) the complexities of CG and EMC ecclesiology, their interdependence and competitiveness, using typological and grid-group constructs. While it is not the purpose of this research to provide a comprehensive theoretical, biblical or theological evaluation of these movements (see *Limitations*, page 16), identifying their types of theological reflection, together with ecclesiological type, enriches this analysis of their impact.

The impact of CG and EMC upon local church experience

The summaries of chapters 5 and 7, reflecting how research participants experienced these phenomena, provide the basis for impact statements:

(1) *CG impact statement:* CG created upheaval for many churches. Personnel, structures, ministry programs, worship styles and facilities were scrutinized for relevance to attract growth. With community needs paramount, departments identified goals, marketing plans, key performance indicators and assessment procedures. Church buildings were remodeled, or multipurpose commercial-type buildings purchased, to meet the needs of baby-boomers. Theatre seating replaced pews; an open stage replaced the preaching pulpit; guitars, keyboards and drum sets replaced organs; sound and lighting desks replaced PA systems; and projection replaced pew Bibles and hymn books. Church became a noisy place. People expected variety and their needs to be met, and churches were categorized as traditional or contemporary, irrelevant or relevant. Family members went separate ways to attend churches they liked. Attendance rather than membership became the measure of growth. Although different, church became formulaic, a kind of 'McDonaldization'[81] – with contemporary music, hands raised, eyes closed pleading for the Holy Spirit to come, and talks that related to community needs rather than sermons or Bible studies.

[81] Drane 2000 applies Ritzer's McDonaldization thesis to church. (Ritzer 1993 and 1998)

By the late-1990s, 25 years had been spent prioritizing CG methods. Local church experience was impacted, but little thought was given to the way in which methods were redefining the message. While McGavran had a high view of church, as also Moyes and Corney, his focus was its growth. He saw church as a defender of justice, racial and gender equality, and the welfare of the vulnerable, but for him, Christian mission was 'the process through which God makes known to all peoples His plan of salvation and calls them from death to life and responsible membership in His Church'. (McGavran 1980:443) He understood the church to be one, with diverse forms shaped by local conditions, but there is no indication he recognized that such diversity modified his ecclesiology – an impact recognized more readily by Corney than Moyes.

In that McGavran crafted his growth theory in the communal environments of India, it is not surprising that his understanding of 'ongoing *koinonias*' was also framed within those relational streams. Such a communal missiology and ecclesiology were at odds with the *mission station* method of the time. Moyes affirmed the need for congregations to gather, but McGavran's simple forms and house churches, with unpaid lay leaders and new converts involved, reflected an EMC ecclesiology rather than that of the CG promulgated in Australia. 'Sound churches' multiplying through church planting, an essential element of McGavran's ecclesiology, was not reflected in the Australian CG phenomena either; but his emphasis of membership being 'an essential completing step to faith' (McGavran 1979:246, 247) was not congruent with the EMC movement.

While McGavran's thinking influenced Moyes and modified Corney's CG views, it was not primarily his CG or ecclesiology that reshaped the Australian experience of church. It was the impact of the American CG phases – having the right pastor, people, church size, structures and functions, membership, methods, and priority commitments to Christ, his body, and his work in the world. (Wagner 1976:35, 187-188) Moyes never bought into Wagner-Wimber renewal theology or music, although he saw it as clever and timely contextualization, but fostered a smorgasbord of ministry options and congregations for growth. Corney used both, but neither he nor Moyes compromised on biblical preaching. However, McGavran's term for 'effective evangelism' was co-opted by both for a sophisticated *mission station* approach, the method he had found ineffective.

By 2000, early missional enthusiasts were challenging CG missiology and ecclesiology as flawed and unbiblical. CG and EMC research participants contributed equally to the following impact statement:

(2) *EMC impact statement:* Pastors and leaders were disturbed to find the next generation of creative leaders slipping away – taking others with them – to cultivate what they considered more intimate, relational, simple, organic, authentic, New Testament type *ecclesia* for the postmodern paradigm. While some churches had become very large, national church attendance and affiliation continued to decline, and they felt CG type churches were not working for them or their friends. Unlike baby-boomers who fought to change the system, they left, but not silently. Quoting historical, sociological and biblical frames of New Testament *ecclesia*, they stridently declared no desire to inherit a complex, technocratic, hierarchical, compromised, modernist, unbiblical, system of clericalism and Christendom that was inconsistent with Jesus' mission and that had proven to be evangelistically ineffective. Their work, they declared, was mission, not church, discipleship, not growth – through incarnation, not attraction. Informal conversations became the organizing principle for church, with a coffee, BBQ or meal the catalyst for determining time and place. In some cases ancient spiritual traditions and forms of community were cultivated, the Bible was read, the Lord's Supper was integrated into shared meals, social injustices were challenged, the gospel was shared, with mission and disciple making intentional. Sometimes however the rhetoric of mission, kingdom living, communitas, cruciformity, witness, and multiplying missional communities, was not reality. Critical of church forms, including recent CG models, their words and actions stung. Not only was denominationalism and membership passé, but attendance at structured church services as well. Relationships between CG and EMC stressed to breaking point.

McLaren and Corney represent transition from CG to missional. McLaren first offered an American CG alternative for the changing mission environment, progressively transitioning to a new kind of postmodern ecclesiology. Corney experimented with alternative worship services for new generations and, confronted by his own changing ecclesiology, lent toward a developing emerging missional. McGavran's early missional thinking had little influence on this transition, for his primary focus remained equipping missionaries for the pre-Christian Global South. It was Lesslie Newbigin, a contemporary and fellow missionary to India (1936-59, 1965-74), engaged in mission to western post-Christian paganism in Birmingham (England) in his retirement – who gave birth to MC principles in the Global North. Although McGavran had corresponded with Newbigin, Fuller and Wagner's CG was not tempered by the contribution of GOCN – inspired by the unexpected response to Newbigin's *The Other Side of 1984: Questions to the Churches* (1983) – and nor was the impact of CG upon the Australian experience of church until the early twenty-first century.

Understanding ecclesiological relationships

McGavran's CG focus was growth, with little attention given to ecclesiology, while Newbigin's MC agenda was mission and ecclesiology. Gibbs and Bolger identify *missio Dei*, the kingdom of God and the gospel as the meta-narratives for EMC. (Gibbs, Bolger 2005:43-45) Hill agrees:

> Their ecclesiology is shaped by the *Missio Dei*, a view of western culture as mission field, a missionary proclamation of the gospel, and a missional reading of scripture ... They engage specific cultures as a contrast society, called-out by God to give witness to his reign and the values of his kingdom, and demonstrate missionary faithfulness from a position of cultural marginality. (Hill 2008:254)

Frost and Hirsch affirm the twelve GOCN qualities of MC, identifying messianic, incarnational and apostolic as 'overarching principles'. (Frost, Hirsch 2003:6-12) They agree that forms and practices are not proscribed. Frost argues diverse forms result from being God's cruciform representation within each community; therefore the form is to represent the nature of *missio Dei*. Hirsch imagines what he calls a 'movemental ecclesiology' – encompassing the full range of forms: traditional as well as a marriage of American-mega CG with missional. Hirsch and Frost now distance themselves from emerging, identifying under the MC umbrella, but a quandary for Hirsch's broad ecclesiology is that some forms might not represent the *missio Dei.*

Using grid-group analysis[82] of sect, church, mysticism, denominational and disinherited types, enables us to view the complexities of CG, EMC and MC ecclesiology to ascertain their competitiveness and populist tendencies. Max Weber (1864-1920), German economic historian and sociologist, developed the 'analytical construct' of 'ideal types' to simplify and describe complex social relationships. (Weber 1949:78) Using this device Ernst Troeltsch 'constructed' sect and church types (Graham, Walton, Ward 2005:11), and introduced a third, mysticism. (Troeltsch 1960:993) H Richard Niebuhr added denomination (Niebuhr 1929:25), and with his detailed attention to the planting of churches by the disinherited, suggests a fifth type. (Niebuhr 1929:26) Table 27 provides summary descriptions of these.

[82] Adapted from Douglas 1996:64 and Harris 2004:26.

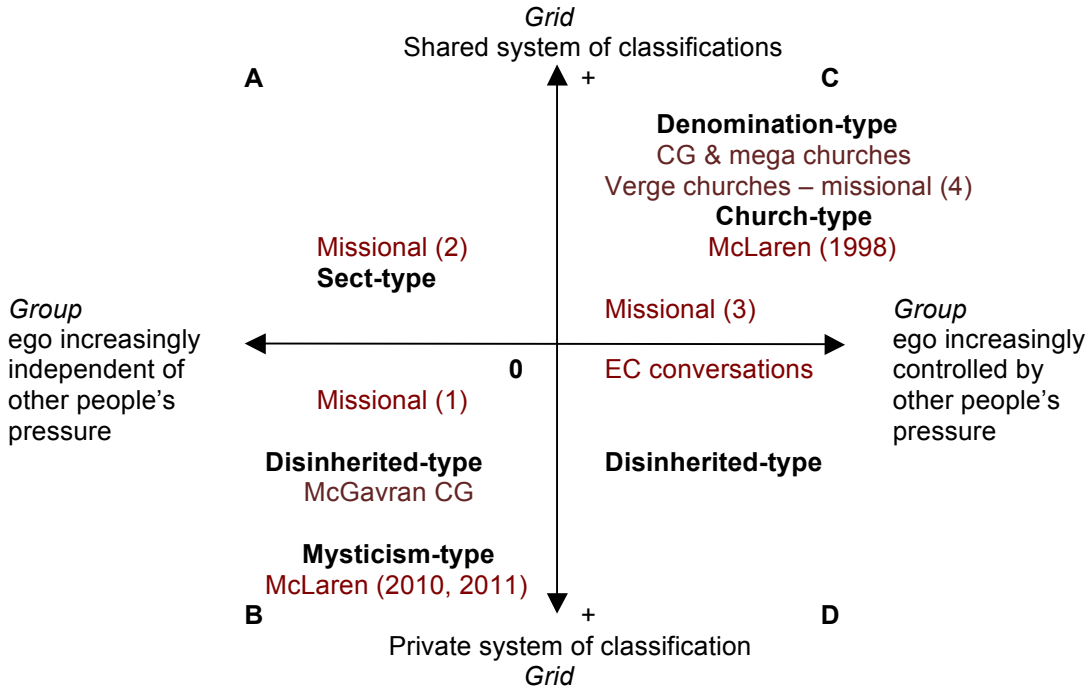
Table 27: Sociological types: sect, church, mysticism, denomination and disinherited

Type	Description of types
1 Sect-type	A **voluntary** society • Participation: by individual believers - who are born again • Emphasis: the will of God - in preparing for the kingdom of God • Society: lives apart from the world - creates own society (small groups) • Orientation: connected to lower classes - works from below • Form: relational fellowship of the committed to inward perfection
2 Church-type	An **institution** • Participation: able to receive masses of people • Emphasis: the will of God - in its universal authority • Society: adjusts to the world as integral part of secular order • Orientation: dependent on upper/ruling classes - works from above • Form: for sake of objective mission, able to ignore subjective holiness
3 Mysticism-type	A **world of ideas** • Participation: is personal - an inward experience • Emphasis: an experience of God - in simplicity • Society: lives in the world - but personalizes involvement • Orientation: tends 'to weaken the significance of forms of worship, doctrine, and the historical element'. (Troelsch 1911: 993) • Form: no permanent form - gathers only on a personal basis
4 Denomination-type	An **economic institution** • Participation: forms around economic necessity (land ownership) • Society: integral part of secular order - utilizing ruling classes • Emphasis: seeks to dominate whole life - representative of God's will • Orientation: centralized, hierarchical, authoritarian – works from above (even from isolation) • Form: ordered, regulated, legal - gathers to affirm its order
5 Disinherited-type	A **reactionary reformist** movement • Participation: personal and inward - but activist • Society: opposed to State, society and systems - but not lower class • Emphasis: seeks the will of God - as a voice for justice • Orientation: works from within the disinherited of all classes • Form: seeks participatory forms - rejects dominance and controls

As an activist for growth through people movements, McGavran was alienated by the political machinations of his denomination. His ecclesiology represented a reformist movement for growth, and he ultimately left his denominational mission agency to establish a church growth institute, which he believed would change the face of world mission. Although counterintuitive, I see McGavran's ecclesiology within the grid-group quadrant B (Table 28) as a disinherited-type. His unease with 'body evangelism', uncritical American

contextualization, and his suspicion that transfers were growing mega churches – as well as his lifetime loyalty to movements in the Global South – placed him at a distance from the church and denominational-types of quadrant C that co-opted his terminology while reinterpreting his vision and ecclesiology.

Table 28: Grid-Group analysis: the relationship between types and ecclesiology[83]



EC conversations were also those of the disinherited, yet they were defined more by what they were not (church and denominational types) and the expectations of postmodernism, thus vacillating between quadrant C and D – where the disinherited-type is also found. The ecclesiology of McLaren's first book (1998) was distinctly church-type (quadrant C), but he has moved (2010, 2011) towards a mysticism idealist type – a world of ideas, a simple experience with God, with weakened forms of worship, doctrine and the historical, in quadrant B.

As long as missional communities find identify as contrast societies to CG and mega-church forms, they might be sect-type missional (2) in quadrant A or vacillate between quadrant C and D as missional (3). Verge churches, Hirsch's hope for the future of western Christianity, places missional (4) with the stronger partner of 'movemental ecclesiology' i.e., the mega CG denomination-type. MC ecclesiology however is represented well by disinherited-type missional (1) – but leaning towards shared systems rather than private systems of

[83] Adapted from Douglas 1996:64 and Harris 2004:26.

classification. This analysis also places McGavran with Newbiginian missional thinking. His ecclesiology was distinctly missional. 'Like their Master,' he wrote, Christians 'must become incarnate in the ignorant, filthy, and sinful villages and cities of the real world. They must become "slaves" in the families of mankind'. He wrote of this as 'perhaps the most difficult faithfulness of all, but without it there is little growth. His (God's) churches, though solid with the world, must also be clearly His'. (McGavran 1980:6)

Sect types annoy with their persistent demand to be acknowledged as true people of God. Mysticism types leave. But the disinherited propose new inclusive theological and evangelistic systems – brashly cultivating fresh movements. All three arise from within church and denominational types, each to some degree parasitic, with sect and disinherited types more visible and disruptive and thus attracting more aggressive sabotage attempts. But each must learn from the other. Avery Dulles made this point, referring to his six ecclesiological types:[84] 'no good ecclesiologist is exclusively committed to a single model'. (Dulles 1988:11) Dependence upon one model can lead to exaggeration. (Dulles 1988:52) Of importance to this research, each suggests different measures of effectiveness. (Dulles 1988:15) An institution, which Dulles considered a 'deformation of the true nature of the Church,' (Dulles 1988:35) counts members, offerings and properties. On the other hand, a 'community of disciples,' (Dulles 1988:206) his sixth model, a dwelling place of the cruciform Christ Jesus by his Spirit in a postmodern mission environment, measures qualitatively. It is an alternative, contrast society. (Dulles 1988:207, 209) Frost and Hirsch believe missional finds identity in this way.

Graham, Walton and Ward identify seven types of theological reflection: (1) theology by *Heart*, (2) in *Parables*, (3) through *God's Story*, (4) in *the Body of Christ*, (5) in *Public*, (6) *Action* and (7) *Vernacular* (Graham, Walton, Ward 2005:13-14) – and align both EC and MC with *the Body of Christ* (type 4). (Graham, Walton, Ward 2005:132-135) Of course this type has not been the only theological reflection defining EMC or CG. McLaren displays rare vulnerability in writing of his *Heart* experiences (type 1); appeals to the *Parable* of Jesus' life as authority (type 2) to weave his own experiences (and those of his Trilogy characters) into 'canonical accounts' as 'continuing *revelation*' (Graham, Walton, Ward 2005:12, 48, 52); engages in *Public* theological reflection (type 5) with contemporary culture – proposing a postmodern Christianity, orthodoxy and apologetic; and argues that the Christian gospel assumes a specific postmodern *Vernacular* (type 7). Each of these reflection types poses the risk being wedded to the prevailing *Zeitgeist* – the personal *Heart* or *Parable*

[84] In his 1988 edition of *Models of the Church*, Dulles added a sixth, disciple, to his ecclesiological types – institution, mystical communion, sacrament, herald and servant.

experience, or *Public* culture or *Vernacular* – and underestimating the countercultural nature of the gospel. (Graham, Walton, Ward 2005:168) While McGavran maintained a high view of scripture and church, his engagement with the science of anthropology, sociology of movements and modern accountability models as 'raw material for divine disclosure' (type 5) and focus upon orthopraxis (effective growth) rather than orthodoxy (right belief) (type 6) posed the same threat. (Graham, Walton, Ward 2005:14, 170)[85]

Unfortunately McLaren fails to engage in *God's Story* reflection (type 3), allowing his worldview to be judged 'under' canonical revelation, accepting the life and words of Jesus as key to scripture and human history. (Graham, Walton, Ward 2005:13, 78) It is true that MC finds identity in *the Body of Christ* (type 4) – and also engages in other reflection types, including *Heart* (type 1) and *Public* (type 5) – but *God's Story* (type 3) provides the litmus test. MC draws *missio Dei* (theological reflection type 3) and *missio ecclesiae* (type 4) together.[86] The types EC and MC employ undergird differences between the 'Nine Key Practices of Emerging Church' and 'Twelve Hallmarks of a Missional Church'. (See page 35.) The discomfort between the emerging and missional streams of EMC is such that Frost and Hirsch now distance themselves from the term emerging, identifying with missional.

This critical assessment of the experience of research participants, and analysis of the types of ecclesiology and theological reflection, provides insight into the extent to which CG and EMC developed a populist ecclesiology – and the shape of this populism.

Populism and a populist church

Abercrombie, Hill and Turner observe: 'Populism is a distinctive form of political rhetoric that sees virtue and political legitimacy residing in "the people"'. Because 'dominant elites' are seen as corrupt, populism 'asserts that political goals are best achieved by means of a direct relationship between governments and the people, rather than being mediated by existing political institutions'. (Abercrombie, Hill, Turner 1994:321) M. Canovan (1981) identifies three forms: (1) 'Populism of the Little Man' – decrying progress as leading to decay, distrustful of leaders, seeking 'a return to the virtues of past eras'; (2) 'Authoritarian Populism' – 'charismatic leaders who bypass the political elite to appeal directly to the people'; and (3) 'Revolutionary Populism' – the 'idealisation of the people and their traditions by intellectuals who reject elitism and "progress"'. (Abercrombie, Hill, Turner 1994:321-322)

[85] See Roennfeldt, 'Holy Spirit Praxis: A Frame for Contextualization' (2011) for a revised theory of *praxis* reflection.
[86] See Hill 2008:22.

For decades McGavran worked from within to change what he saw as a corrupt and ineffective *mission station* system. His goal was to equip missionaries for the Global South who would serve as part of existing systems to lead people movements to Christ. With his vision frustrated he finally left his own denominational agency, equipping people to implement his CG methods – but still within such systems. Moyes and Corney were aware of the foibles of their systems, but as local ministers they used CG to cultivate the growth of their churches. Their local church structures also kept them grounded, for while gaining reputations as CG authorities they had little opportunity to act out an 'authoritarian populism' seen in some Wagner-Wimber and American CG models. In contrast to CG, EMC was a stridently populist movement.

The MC stream of EMC appealed to Jesus' model (*God's Story*) of 'populism of the little man' and 'authoritarian populism'. He decried the systems of Judaism, bypassed corrupt religious elite and appealed directly to the people to be God's kingdom. Frost and Hirsch, as also McLaren, exposed decay in Christendom and CG processes, distrusted and condemned their systems and leaders, and sought to return to the virtues of the past – 'populism of the little man'. EMC unabashedly supported a form of primitivism, the restoration of pre-Christendom spirituality and practices. This was not to deny the transition to postmodernism, but to engage this new environment EMC found identity in the *missio Dei*, revealed in the incarnation and cruciform ministry of Jesus, a Christology 'from below'. (Hill 2008:197) Strident in their criticisms of inherited forms of church they appeal directly to those alienated by clericalism, an 'authoritarian populism' bypassing church hierarchies, clothing all as 'the priesthood of believers'. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Such populism they believe does not devalue the church, but calls it to the future God desires. However, Canovan's 'revolutionary populism' poses a danger – also faced by the grassroots movement Jesus initiated. Populist movements invariably institutionalize, and in the process a few gain hero status. Institutionalization draws these heroes into revised levels of clericalism, displacing the *laos*. The accountability of Word and mission, accompanied by the initiatives of the Spirit within the body of believers, is needed – a balance, which Frost admits is not yet true for missional. (Frost 26/6/2013)

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The next and final chapter draws conclusions and suggests revised theories and practices.

Chapter 9
Conclusion:
Findings, Implications and Possible Alternatives

PhR has enabled me to cut through the critiques and acrimony surrounding CG and EMC, to gain insider perspectives from prominent participants. I have discovered their shared motivation, a desire to see people become Christians, and consensus – their sense that evangelicals may be thankful for these phenomena. They concur, CG enabled churches to engage with the social changes of late modernity and EMC continues to envision mission opportunities in spite of major paradigm transitions. However, for them, these phenomena reshaped evangelical church experience. In this concluding chapter I draw together the key findings of this research – including the influence of populism, identify implications, and suggest alternatives.

Findings and implications

This research demonstrates points of convergence between CG and EMC. First, these are interdependent movements, not simply competitive. McGavran's early CG theory and practice in India was missional in character, and while he moved to the USA – where CG lost its essential missional qualities in its Americanization – his heart remained in the Global South. It was Newbigin who birthed MC in the Global North. Constructive engagement by these two men in the 1970s might have resulted in them being *the fathers* of a singular CG-MC movement or phenomena, but that was not to be. By exploring their shared historical interdependence with CG, Australian EMC theorists and practitioners might have found allies in Moyes and Corney. Both were critical and selective of American CG forms, aware of *missio Dei*, the discipleship of πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, and the need for diverse forms.

Sociological studies demonstrate that simple faith systems become complex and difficult to hand on to others. This research confirms this for McGavran's CG, with EMC now experiencing the same. Although beginning in relational streams and with simple forms CG became a complex theory, losing its missional emphasis. Legitimation and succession became difficult, with essential ideas adapted and reinterpreted. In the same way, as EMC evolves with complex formulae and redefinitions, missional faces the danger of being devalued in shibboleths.

A third finding is that the changing experience of church represents, for research participants, a reshaping of the evangelical message. They believe essential evangelical

elements have been redefined by these phenomena, including: the nature of mission, the person of Jesus, prevenient grace, the person and activity of the Spirit, evangelism, discipleship, membership, and the relationship of church to the kingdom of God. Also, for Moyes and Corney contemporary renewal music signaled a subtle shift from evangelism to renewal theology and, for Frost and Hirsch, missional communities reflect a relational Trinity, represent the rediscovery of *missio Dei*, and foster *the priesthood of all believers* – in contrast to hierarchical and performance ecclesial models. On the other hand, Moyes and Corney question the message given by a latté-drinking-relationship-building method devoid of gospel sharing or Bible reading, let alone any invitation to become Christians.

A surprising finding has been the extent to which these phenomena have experienced reinterpretation. CG was McGavran's synonym for church planting and effective evangelism, and his 1955 thesis was that the gospel has only ever been effectively handed on through *Christward people movements* within multiple *ethne* – not through a nineteenth century *mission station approach.* Yet through the impact of it American forms, CG in Australia became anti-church planting, an alternative to evangelism, fostering the enlargement of church campuses or *mission stations*. Frost and Hirsch fear MC faces similar risks from reinterpretation.

The fifth major finding has been the influence of populism. Although critical of church systems, CG practitioners worked within them. When McGavran finally left his denominational mission agency, he continued to equip missionaries for these church systems. Moyes was frustrated by those who left, and critical of charismatic leaders who appealed directly to people to leave and start new churches around renewal music or new forms. This 'authoritarian populism' annoyed Moyes and Corney and, they believe, gave church planting a bad reputation in Australia. However, at times Moyes' leadership style also reflected this type of populism. He was willing to switch denominations to pursue his CG agenda and bypass the elite to appeal to the people, but he remained within and used traditional structures – with the people being a resource to fulfill his dreams. Corney was also prepared to work around the system, but remained firmly within his denominational tradition seeking to empower and facilitate the people. He and Moyes expressed irritation over the intentional populism of EMC – fostering 'populism of the little man' and 'authoritarian populism'.

EMC research participants bypassed denominational hierarchies and appealed directly to believers to engage in mission within the postmodern paradigm. Over time Frost and Hirsch have become less strident towards traditional church paradigms. It might be that they

became more aware of their relationship of *sodality* toward the church *modality* (Winter 2000:894), or their audiences have become increasingly cognizant of the state of the church, but they continue to foster a missional ecclesiology – forged by *missio Dei*, centered in Christ, empowered by the Spirit and reflecting Trinitarian community, giving high value to the gospel. Within the confines of the political rhetoric of populism, this might be termed a populist ecclesiology.

Revised theories and fresh approaches

In purporting to address evangelistic ineffectiveness, with EMC proposing a missional ecclesiology, the findings and areas of convergence suggest alternate strategic ways forward in ministry practice –

1. *A simple missional*. A missional ecclesiology critically respectful of church history, deconstructed of complex formulae, free of alienating recrimination and confrontation, in language accessible to all believers, could resonate with a wider cross section of evangelicals.

2. *A humble missional*. Churches and networks shaped intentionally and radically by the gospel might better confront Australians with the Christian message. Forms of Christian community, service and fellowship that overtly represent the inherently paradoxical, countercultural nature of the gospel and status reversal of Jesus might appeal more to society and also revise traditional church models.

3. *A populist missional.* In that movements institutionalize, established churches and denominations do well to ensure there are systems that release 'the priesthood of all believers'. Niebuhr identified the *disinherited* as those who cultivate new churches and movements.

4. *An activist missional*. With continuing decline in church affiliation and attendance, rather than limiting dialogue to 'angry young men' or 'future travelers' (Hirsch's American type mega-church pastors) it is time to enrich the wider Australian church with missional thinking, implementing multiple missional communities and plants. Involvement in such practical application holds theorists to account and grounded in reality.

5. *A non-sectarian missional*. Like Luther's 'canon within the canon' CG and EMC have tended to be *church within the church*, limited by history and evangelical theology. Comparative study has now thrust missional ecclesiology – shaped by evangelical

'perspectives and values' (Hill 2008:184) – into the wider ecclesiological arena. This needs further development, giving missional thinking wider credibility and influence.

A simple, practical and broadly non-sectarian missional movement based upon continuing CG and MC conversations might affect a radical rethink within the majority evangelical church, calling it back to its missional obligations. While certain ecclesial forms might negate missional principles, missional does not proscribe a form as a procrustean bed – an arbitrary standard into which all must fit. While they may not themselves become functionally missional, through encouragement, teaching and coaching, some existing and established churches could become the supportive hubs of growing networks of new missional communities and plants.

I conclude: the experience of church for Australian evangelicals has dramatically changed for research participants. However, if a growth-missional path is pursued it will be worth the turmoil of the last decades. It will be a shared journey – traditional churches and denominations, CG churches and MC networks in conversation – striving to balance Word, Spirit and world; and together finding 'fresh ways of incarnating the gospel in a changing and diverse culture'. (Moynagh 2004:153)

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C. Interviews

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Frost, M.	Descriptive Summary of 16 Nov 2011 Interview by Peter Roennfeldt, Sydney, approved 26 June 2013: interview, consent form, and descriptive summary with agreement stored electronically at MST.
Hirsch, A.	Descriptive Summary of 14 Dec 2011 Interview by Peter Roennfeldt, Ringwood, approved 4 Jan 2013: interview (recording and transcript), consent form, and descriptive summary with agreement stored electronically at MST.
McCredden, Phil.	14 Feb 2013 Interview by Peter Roennfeldt, Doncaster, approved 16 Feb 2013: interview transcript, consent form and agreement stored electronically at MST.
Moyes, G	Interview by Peter Roennfeldt on 18 Nov 2011, Tumbi Umbi, NSW, agreement 18 Nov 2011; interview (recording and transcript), consent form and descriptive summary stored electronically at MST.

Appendix A
Letter of Introduction to Interviewees

Dear (Name)

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my research project.

As indicated in my preliminary contact, I am undertaking the Doctor of Ministry Award at the Melbourne School of Theology's Nash Institute, under the auspices of the Australian College of Theology. I have approached you because of the significant contribution you have made to the Australian church and your early involvement in cultivating Church Growth/Emerging Missional Church theory and practice. This letter includes important information regarding my research and the focus of the interview.

The working title of my Doctor of Ministry thesis is: *Reshaping the Australian Experience of Church: The Impact of Church Growth and Emerging-Missional Church upon Evangelical Ecclesiology in Australia*

The purpose of this research is to explore the ways in which Church Growth and Emerging-Missional Church (CG/EMC) have, as responses to the struggle to evangelize and make disciples from society, reshaped the ecclesiology of Australian evangelicalism during the last 40 years. Rather than simply adding to the numerous summaries and critiques of these movements, I will do this by listening to:

a) What you as a theorist and practitioner tell me about your experience of them.
b) What you consider to be the impact of these experiences upon yourself.
c) How you perceive your ecclesiology and that of evangelical churches have been reshaped by these phenomena.

During the interview, I will listen to the story of your experience with (CG/EMC – selected according to the special interest of the interviewee) – your hopes, visions, frustrations, disappointments, etc. The following questions will be used as starting points:

1. What incidents or people connected with GC/EMC stand out to you? How did you become involved and who influenced your journey?
2. How did the experience of GC/EMC affect you? What changes do you associate with the experience?
3. How did the experience affect significant others in your life?
4. What memories really stand out for you? Can you recall some of the emotions engendered by the CG/EMC movement?
5. In what ways was your ecclesiology changed by this CG/EMC experience? What do you think have been the biggest changes in your ecclesiology through your involvement in CG/EMC? How has the ecclesiology of evangelicalism in Australia been redefined by CG/EMC?
6. How would you describe the relationship between your ecclesiology and the gospel? In what ways do your think your focus upon CG/EMC has shaped your understanding of the gospel – and what change or development can you identify? If you were to sum up the gospel in one sentence today, how would you do that?
7. In what ways do you think CG theory could learn from EMC, and vice versa? In what ways do you think their principles have evolved or changed?
8. What do you consider to be essential qualities of an ecclesiology that is faithful to New Testament values? If you could start like the apostle Paul in places where Christ was not known (Rom 15:20), what types of ecclesial communities would you set out to cultivate?
9. What is your vision for the church in Australia? According to your perception, what action or presentation by you had the greatest influence in advancing the value of the church or the gospel for Australians?
10. How do you perceive you may have shaped evangelical churches in Australia through your involvement in CG/EMC?

I would like to negotiate a way in which you would be comfortable with me identifying you in my research. My suggestion is an agreement that before I include any previously unpublished comments by you, that I provide a copy of the sections of my research for your review – before I finalize the inclusion of those comments. Of course, you will also be free to cancel your participation at any time or decline to answer particular questions. Since I need to audio-record the interview, I also seek your consent for doing this.

I look forward to interviewing you, and thank you again for your participation.

With kind regards,

Peter Roennfeldt

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Appendix B

Consent Form: Interview with Peter Roennfeldt

I agree to be interviewed by Peter Roennfeldt as part of his Doctor of Ministry research project with the working title, *Reshaping the Australian Experience of Church: The Impact of Church Growth and Emerging-Missional Church upon Evangelical Ecclesiology in Australia.* I understand that –

1. The interview will take approximately 1 hour
2. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed to electronic form, which may be printed for the researcher's use
3. All records of interviews (taped, electronic, printed) will be securely and confidentially stored by the researcher
4. I will obtain a summary of the research when completed, if I so desire
5. I consent / do not consent to the use of previously unpublished comments indentifying me in the research if I have had opportunity to review those comments prior to the submission of the research project
6. I can withdraw from participation in the interview at any time – or refuse to answer a particular question
7. My participation is voluntary with no financial remuneration of any kind

Signed by participant: Date:

Name:

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Signed by researcher: Date:

Appendix C
Semi Structured Interview Questions

The purpose of this interview is to allow theorists and practitioners to tell their stories of the experience of CG/EMC. The usual greeting and explanation of the purpose of the interview will set the scene and help engage.

Experience of the phenomena:

1. What incidents or people connected with GC/EMC stand out to you? How did you become involved and who influenced your journey?
2. How has the experience of GC/EMC affected you? What changes do you associate with the experience?
3. How has the experience affected significant others in your life?
4. What memories really stand out for you? Can you recall some of the emotions engendered by the CG/EMC movement?

Impact upon ecclesiology:

5. In what ways was your ecclesiology changed by this CG/EMC experience? What do you think have been the biggest changes in your ecclesiology through your involvement in CG/EMC? How has the ecclesiology of evangelicalism in Australia been redefined by CG/EMC?
6. How would you describe the relationship between your ecclesiology and the gospel? In what ways do your think your focus upon CG/EMC has shaped your understanding of the gospel – and what change or development can you identify? If you were to sum up the gospel in one sentence today, how would you do that?

Dialogue between CG and EMC:

7. In what ways do you think CG theory influenced EMC, and vice versa? In what ways do you think the principles of each have evolved or changed?

Ecclesiology:

8. What do you consider to be essential qualities of an ecclesiology that is faithful to New Testament values? If you could start like the apostle Paul in places where Christ was not known (Rom 15:20), what types of ecclesial communities would you set out to cultivate?

Personal influence:

9. What is your vision for the church in Australia? According to your perception, what action or presentation by you had the greatest influence in advancing the value of the church or the gospel for Australians?
10. How do you perceive you may have shaped evangelical churches in Australia through your involvement in CG/EMC?

Appendix D

Church Backgrounds of Emerging Church Leaders

A summary of the church backgrounds of emerging church personnel interviewed by Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger in their research for *Emerging Churches* (2005).

Emerging pastor / leader	Emerging church name	Parent was a pastor	Christian home & church	Left church	Not church going	Not Christian	Other religion
Jonny Baker	Grace, London	x					
Phil Ball	New Generation	x (planter)					
Debbie Blue	House of Mercy		x				
Joe Boyd	Apex		x				
Kester Brewin	Vaux	x (vicar)					
Spencer Burke	Ooze website				x		
Mal Calladine	Tribe Generation					x	
Jonathan & Jennifer Campbell			x				
Brad Cecil	Axxess		x	x			
Sreve Collins	Grace, London					x	
Alan Creech	Vine & Branches				x		
Anna Dodridge	Bournemouth		x				
Ben Edson	Sanctus1	x (vicar)		x			
Roger Ellis	Revelation Church					x	
Jason Evans	Matthew's House		x				
Dwight Friesen	Quest	x (pastors)					
Rob Graham	Levi's Table		x				
Simon Hall	Revive					x	
Todd Hunter	Christ the Community		x?				
Si Johnston	Headspace		x				
Andrew Jones	Boaz						x
Billy Kennedy	Sublime, Remix	x					
Dan Kimball	Vintage Faith Church.					x	
Chris Matthews	Extreme, Red Café		x				
Joel McClure	Water's Edge		x				
Brian McLaren	Cedar Ridge Community Ch		x				
Mark Meardon	Eternity	x (vicar)					
Rachelle Mee-Chapman	Thursday PM		x				
Kenny Mitchell	Tribe				x?		
Ian Mobsby	Epicentre Network					x	
Aaron Norwood	The Bridge		x				
Doug Pagitt	Solomon's Porch					x	
Mark Palmer	Landing Place		x				
Pip Piper	Maji		x				
Kevin Rains	Vineyard Central		x				
Paul Roberts	Third Sunday Service		x	x			
Peter Rollins	Ikon					x	
Nanette Sawyer	Wicker Park Grace		x				
Mark Scandrette	ReIMAGINE!		x				
Dan Slatter	Warehouse				x		
Sean Stillman	Zac's Place	x (evangelist)					
Dave Sutton	New Duffryn Community Ch					x	Buddhist
Barry Taylor	Sanctuary & New Ground					x	Buddhist
Andy Thornton	Late Late Service	x (warden)					
Dave Tomlinson	Holy Joes		x				
Rebecca Ver Straten McSparran	Tribe	x					
Sue Wallace	Visions		x				
Karen Ward	Church of the Apostles		x				
Holly Ann Rankin Zaher	Three Nails		x				
Dieter Zander	Quest					x	