Doing Church in a New Paradigm

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Abstract

In line with the assertion that the church reflects the values and practices of society this thesis explores the link between new paradigm churches (an emerging expression of church) and three key aspects of contemporary Western society, globalisation, pragmatism, and individualism. The theoretical underpinning for the thesis is drawn from the work of Troeltsch in which he explored the different forms Christianity has taken throughout history. In this regard it proved useful to supplement Troeltsch's analysis in incorporating the notion of 'paradigm' into a consideration of contemporary expressions of 'doing church' – hence the use of the term 'new paradigm church.'

In examining the link between church and society criticisms that suggest that new paradigm churches have colluded too much with the values of the surrounding culture are considered. Research findings drawn from interviews with leaders of eight churches in Christchurch, New Zealand are examined in light of these claims. Societal influence is apparent in the findings presented. Evidence of global influence is seen in the programmes, concepts, and attitudes being adopted from other locations. A pragmatic approach is reflected in the widespread use of mission statements and the nature of the programmes being used. Individualism can be seen in the churches, particularly through the use of entertainment as a medium of communication within churches but more through an emphasis on 'meeting felt needs'.

The thesis concludes by considering the challenges that faces leaders of new paradigm churches as they seek to be relevant to the world in which they live while at the same time being true to their basic calling that is to play a part in transforming that society.
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Chapter One

Introduction

“It’s time to move over in the pews and make room for these new churches”.
So Gary Moore, the mayor of Christchurch, was heard to say outside the Anglican Cathedral, the city’s most prominent landmark on the 17th of December 2000. The occasion was Christchurch’s civic church ceremony marking 150 years since the province was settled. The comment was made in reference to a gathering that had taken place the week before, when over 150 churches from the city had staged their own “unofficial” celebration.

This remark by Christchurch’s Mayor and the situation that he was commenting on highlight an interesting phenomenon that will be examined in this thesis - the development of a new way of ‘doing church’ which is gaining popularity among Christian believers. What has changed is the ‘style’ of ‘doing church’, reflected amongst other things, in the music sung and the way churches are being led. The official church ceremony and the unofficial celebration marking Christchurch’s 150th anniversary provide useful examples of both the newer, contemporary style of church and also a more traditional style.

The contemporary and traditional celebration services were remarkably similar in content. Both were addressed by the Mayor, both acknowledged the Maori who had been in Christchurch before the European settlers, both featured Maori speeches, they both included blessings for the city from church leaders, both had singing, and the same bible reading that was read at both services that recounted the story of Abraham setting out to find a new homeland. What made these services different however was the style. At the first, and significantly larger, gathering no one was seen in a religious gown reflecting its contemporary style. The standard attire for the majority of those involved in the service was all black. No hierarchy was discernable amongst
the evening’s M.C, the singers, band, orchestra, and choir. They all wore the same style of clothes. In contrast, the official ceremony saw an array of robes and mitres acknowledging the presence of various bishops. The blessings from church leaders during the two services reflected the difference also. At the first gathering the M.C. invited anyone who was a leader in any church to come to the front of the stadium and join in giving a blessing for the city. Several hundred people came forward to do so. At the second gathering a selection of eight leaders, many in their official attire, came onto the stage at their appointed time to give what was essentially the same blessing. The most notable difference, however, was seen in the singing. The first service featured about 15 songs, many of which were written in the past 10 years, a few hymns were sung also. The time devoted to singing was lengthy, around half an hour, and a full ensemble of band, complete with electric guitar and drums, a variety of singers, an orchestra, and a choir, accompanied the congregation. At the second service two hymns were sung the first being “God Save the Queen”. At this event a brass band and robed choir accompanied the singing.

What these two events illustrate is a marked difference between a more traditional way of ‘doing church’ and a newer style of church. Fifty years prior to these services Christchurch marked its 100th anniversary with one official ceremony, again outside the Cathedral, attended by a large representation of all Christchurch churches. Yet just 50 years later an alternative representation of the Christian faith has emerged which showed strength in numbers outweighing that of its forebear.

This occurrence could well be understood as a representation of a religious trend that has defied almost all predictions concerning religious adherence in modern western culture. In the sixties many sociologists viewed secularisation as an inescapable destiny for the Western world. Sociologist Peter Berger wrote

Whatever the situation may have been in the past, today the supernatural as a meaningful reality is absent or remote from the horizons of everyday life in
large numbers, very probably of the majority, of people in modern societies, who seem to manage to get along without it quite well (Berger 1960: 32-35).  

Initially this notion was reinforced as interpretations of reality from a strictly religious viewpoint declined. Science was seen to offer rational answers to human existence, challenging the irrationalities of religious conviction, while technology and psychology offered alternatives for enhancing human progress without depending on ‘old fashioned’ notions of God. However, while religious institutions experienced a decline in their power and influence within society a corresponding decline in actual church attendance has not been validated.  

Millar (1997) observed that while many of the mainline churches in the United States are indeed losing membership, overall church attendance is not declining. He claims, along with others (Trueheart 1996, Cimino and Lattin 1998) that a new style of Christianity is emerging. In this regard he writes,

New paradigm churches are changing the way Christianity looks and is experienced. Like many upstart religious groups of the past, they have discarded many of the attributes of established religion. Appropriating contemporary cultural forms, these churches are creating a new genre of worship music; they are restructuring the organizational character of institutional religion; and they are democratising access to the sacred by radicalising the Protestant principle of the priesthood of all believers.

Many aspects of traditional church structure and practice have been challenged resulting in the creation of a new look Christianity. One of the

1 Later Berger refuted much of the thought behind his own and other sociologist’s theories on secularisation – see P. Berger ‘A Disinvitation to Sociology’ (1977)

2 The notion that church attendance is declining is problematic. Quoting Australian figures MacKay (1997) writes “the proportion of Australians attending church once a month or more has fallen from 35 per cent to 20 per cent” (MacKay, 1997: 112). While this is obviously based on some statistical research MacKay does not provide a reference for it. Unfortunately church attendance is not a figure that has been accurately recorded over time in order to provide a true picture of any movement in figures. In New Zealand church attendance is often not measured. Rather affiliation with a church is considered. I was able to sight information that had been collated through the voluntary efforts of church leaders supplying an interested statistician their figures of attendance. After many hours of studying and comparing the figures I had to resign to the fact that as a measure of church attendance the information was of no use. Each church measured something different and not all churches supplied information. Church attendance figures in New Zealand are often guessed to be between ten and 15 percent. While, as a percentage of the overall population, this seems low historians claim that New Zealand never had a high attendance church figure.
most obvious changes is the commitment on the part of these congregations to church growth. Such dedication often results in big congregations. Trueheart (1996) describes these churches as 'large and dynamic' and points out that they are the fastest growing churches in the United States. Cimino and Lattin describe these churches in more detail:

In the early 1970s, “superchurches” emerged that intentionally sought to draw the multitudes into their pews by featuring high-profile preachers and Sunday school campaigns. The megachurches emerged a decade later, targeting larger crowds through more sophisticated forms of marketing.... Megachurches may have 10,000 members, or no more than a few hundred. What they have in common is that they are fast-growing and use contemporary services to attract spiritual seekers and unchurched Americans. Megachurch leaders unashamedly admit the influence of business and management theory. One leader cites management guru Peter Drucker’s formula as his inspiration: “What is our business? Who is our customer? What does the customer consider value?”

Megachurches are adorned with few ecclesiastical trappings. Crucifixes and stained glass windows are rare, and the building itself may be rented. Function is more important than form as they attempt to appear unintimidating and culturally relevant to seekers. Visitors are greeted with contemporary music often performed by professional bands, rather than traditional hymns accompanied by an organ...

These congregations are marked by flexibility. Services may have no fixed order, and they can be held in the afternoons or on Saturday. The sermons are more a source of teaching than of preaching. They focus on practical matters, such as family concerns and personal growth, not doctrine, sometimes mixing psychotherapeutic concepts with biblical teaching.... Many mega churches have been influenced by the charismatic and Pentecostal movements. Their large size and many functions make them less dependent on denominational support and affiliation. Prominent megachurches such as Willow Creek have formed their own quasi denominational network of churches. There is an emphasis on forming relationships, often expressed in a variety of small groups (Cimino and Lattin, 1998: 37)

What these churches have demonstrated is ability and desire to adapt to aspects of Western culture in order to create growing rather than dwindling congregations. In the face of an increasingly secular society, that seems to place diminishing significance on things of a spiritual nature, these churches have gone to great lengths to attract the unconverted and thereby increase church participation. They have sought to create a sense of community in a society with an increasing emphasis on individuality and they have done this all within the context of contemporary organisational structure.
This transformation of the church raises many issues for sociology, a discipline that has paid scant attention to the areas of growth and change within the Christian religion. As David Lyon states “faith has been underplayed and underestimated in sociology” (Lyon, 2000: ix). In an age where theories of secularisation dominated intellectual thought patterns of religious adherence that deviated from the expected were left unexamined.

This thesis seeks to look at a phenomenon that, until recently, has had no place in an intellectual tradition that for several decades overlooked religious developments. In his book ‘Reinventing American Protestantism’, Millar (1997) commits himself to looking more closely at a phenomenon observed by some of his undergraduate students in his sociology of religion class. He writes ‘for several years I had read in my students’ term papers about churches that were teeming with teenagers like themselves, played rock music that people could dance to, and met in unconventional places’ (Millar, 1997: 7). After studying this religious movement in more depth Millar termed these Christian groups ‘new paradigm churches’. This is the term that has been chosen to describe the churches under study in this thesis. Millar explains that new paradigm churches preach an old fashioned gospel, but their music and form of worship are radically contemporary. Furthering his explanation Millar notes:

The new paradigm [church] can be found in many places. One of its most typical sites is within the numerous independent churches that have proliferated in recent years. These churches are contributing to what has been called a new era of postdenominational Christianity in America, reflecting a general disillusionment with bureaucratic hierarchies and organizational oversight. Other new paradigm churches remain within existing denominations, but their worship and organizational style differ decidedly from those of the more institutionalised churches in their denominations.

Included in my definition of new paradigm churches are “seeker sensitive” churches.... These churches are attempting to design worship services that appeal to those who do not usually attend church. I also want to include in the ranks of the new paradigm a growing movement of churches that identify themselves as part of “apostolic networks.” These churches model their organizational structure after the religious leadership described in the New Testament book of the Acts of the Apostles.

It is not particularly helpful, in my view, to use such theological terms as evangelical or fundamentalist to describe these changes in American
Protestantism. Even categories such as charismatic and Pentecostal are too broad to capture the distinctive character of the revolution, although many new paradigm churches do embrace the “gifts of the spirit” (Millar, 1997: 1-2).

In looking at new paradigm churches both in Christchurch, New Zealand and elsewhere, this thesis seeks to address some key sociological issues: How effectively can descriptions of “new paradigm” churches be applied to contemporary churches in Christchurch, New Zealand? How can changes in the church be understood in the light of classical sociological theories of religion? What insights can sociology offer into the relationship between church and society?

This work primarily seeks to examine new paradigm churches in the context of the society in which they emerged. In doing so the thesis will look at the nature of new paradigm churches in more detail. Chapter two considers some of the traits associated with new paradigm churches, particularly as they are found in the American context. Chapter Three then turns attention to sociological theories of religion. It will consider the theories often used as a means for understanding different religious phenomenon focusing specifically on the theorist Troeltsch and those theories that stemmed from his work. An examination of how these theories can be usefully applied to the church in contemporary society will be made. At the end of Chapter Three the thesis turns to the notion of paradigms and relates this to broaden the framework of understanding for new paradigm churches. An understanding of the notion of paradigms points to a way of understanding social structures, in this case churches, as reflecting those values and philosophies in the society of which they are a part. There are three discussion chapters that focus on this concept in more depth. Each of them looks at one of the three social traits of globalisation (Chapter Four), pragmatism (Chapter Five), and individualism (Chapter Six). These chapters consider the influence that each trait has had on churches. Practical examples

3 Names to describe this phenomenon widely vary. Although they can often emphasise different aspects of the contemporary Christian church trend the different terms used to describe new paradigm churches are: ‘megachurches’ (Cimino and Lattin, 1998) and ‘new apostolic churches’ (Wagner, 1998)
are provided from the research undertaken for this project. The thesis concludes with a reflection on some of the critiques aimed at new paradigm churches and asks whether, in their engagement with contemporary culture, these churches have compromised Christian beliefs.
Chapter Two
A Closer Look at New Paradigm Churches

In this chapter a more thorough exploration of new paradigm churches will be made. In order to achieve this the chapter will focus on the church scene in the United States. This reflects the availability of material on new paradigm churches. Much of this material also focuses on a few influential and very large U.S. churches such as Willow Creek Community Church, Chicago, and Saddleback Valley Community Church, Orange County, California. The decision to focus on these churches, however, reflects more than simply the information that is available. These churches have pioneered some of the techniques and methods now found in new paradigm churches around the world.

Doing Church

One of the first concepts pivotal to any discussion of new paradigm churches is the notion of ‘doing church’. However, such a concept is fraught with difficulties. Van Dusen (1948) points out that: "The first fact to face is that there is no agreed Christian interpretation of the doctrine of the church. Even the church which has the strongest appearance of unity and the most exclusive claims in the face of other Christians, the Church of Rome, has no dogmatic definition of its theology of the Church." (Van Dusen, 1948: 17). Agreeing with this sentiment Florovsky (1948) writes, "it is impossible to start with a definition of the Church, for, strictly speaking there is none that could claim doctrinal authority" (Florovsky, 1948: 43).

This problem is highlighted even in common understandings of ‘church’. The church can be defined as a building in which worship occurs, or a denominational body, for example, the Methodist church, or a single
congregation. This problem is further complicated by the sociological definition of church.\footnote{Based on the categories of Troeltsch the concept church has come to describe a sociological classification of Christian religious groups. Further explanation of this concept is provided in chapter 4.}

The debate of what it means to do church exists at both the practical level, for leaders of churches, and at the theoretical level, embodied in the discipline of Ecclesiology. Such debate has lead to a variety of understandings on what it means to 'do church' and what exactly church is.

As will be seen later what it means to do church has been markedly affected by the historical epoch the church or churches find themselves in. What people consider of importance to doing church reflects, to a large degree, the surrounding culture.

The earliest church was a community of Jews who believed that Jesus from Nazareth was their promised Messiah. This Jewish community came to speak of itself using a Greek translation of Hebrew concept describing the assembly of Israel. Ekklesia meant simply a gathering of people or, more specifically, God's people.

Given this context, it is not surprising that one of the key ideas surrounding the expression of the Christian faith has been the regular gathering of believers. Difficulties arise when trying to pinpoint the purpose of such a gathering and the essential elements that should be involved. Because the first followers of Jesus were Jewish many of the activities that are now associated with a Church gathering, such as singing and teaching, were carried out within the context of the Jewish faith. Those who believed in Jesus still met at the Jewish temple and would have attended synagogue. It is unlikely that the early church merely repeated these religious practices as they met. The earliest accounts of the meetings of these first Christians
generally describe prayer meetings, shared meals, the teachings of the apostles, and opportunities to redistribute wealth\(^2\).

At this stage any organisational structure was still in its elementary stages and based primarily around the disciples of Jesus. As time progressed, however, persecution of Christians increased and a distinction between Judaism and Christianity developed. Alongside this the Christian religion was spreading with the development of Christian communities throughout the Roman world. Letters (apostolic "epistles") were written offering guidelines to these new believers. Leaders with different functions are mentioned in these, teaching is discussed, and worship mentioned.

Ultimately a form of church structure and church liturgy emerged. Letters from Ignatius in 100AD show that by this time the church had a charter, defined organisation and liturgy. The Christian experience of the first two centuries was that of belonging to a community of fellow believers. Over time, however, the whole notion of what it meant to do church emphasised additional elements.

These different emphases have reflected the particular era that the church found itself in. For early Christians who were suffering persecution the meaning of church obviously had markedly different connotations from the meaning of church in a context where Christianity was the official religion.

During the medieval era where society was considered "Christian" the church played a pivotal role of providing meaning and coherence for all of society.

\(^2\) Several descriptions of the early church point to these activities. The most comprehensive description of New Testament Christians is found in Acts 2: 42-47. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were gathered together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (NIV translation) Other passages describe similar activities. (Acts 4 32-35 talks about sharing possessions, Acts 12 : 12 describes a prayer meeting, Acts 13: 14-44 describes Paul, the Apostle, teaching in a synagogue)
In pre-reformation Europe a small number of officials acting on behalf of the state and the people, glorified God. They did so with music and with liturgy that was far too complex for the active participation of lay people. Religion was done in Latin, not the local language. There were no hymns and only sometimes a sermon. Ordinary people were expected to behave morally, to attend church on the great feast days, and to finance the professionals who did the serious work on behalf of the community and the nation. Religious life was a sophisticated complex organisation of formal religion laid over by a mass of popular superstition, with the two worlds bridged by a complete and uncritical acceptance of a few simple Christian beliefs. It was universally held that God would judge us and banish us to heaven or hell as appropriate and that the church held the key. Only the prayers of the Church, the mediation of the saints, and the re-enactment in the Mass of the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross would ensure the kingdom of heaven. Ordinary people used the magic of the church to live their ordinary lives and supported the professionals who performed ‘high’ religion and acquired religious merit on behalf of the whole community. (Bruce, 1996: 2)

In this context the Catholic Church focused its efforts on the ‘sacraments’ of the church. Augustine stated “Our Lord Jesus Christ hath knit together a company of new people by sacraments, most few in number, most easy to be kept, most excellence in signification” (Watson, 1978: 225). The Catechism of the Catholic church states: “The Church has discerned over the centuries that among liturgical celebrations there are seven that are, in the strict sense of the term, sacraments instituted by the Lord” The seven sacraments are: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance and reconciliation, Anointing of the sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony (Chapman, 1994: 256)

Such a focus can be understood in a society where an individual was considered to be a Christian simply because they were born into a Christian society. Any effort to evangelise was directed towards the “heathen” outside of the Christian World, as seen in the Crusades (1095 – 1272), but not at those within their own society. In contrast to this, beliefs concerning what is important for the church today often focus on the need for Christian conversion amongst those within society, clearly reflecting the current role of the church in society. Green (1951) claims: “The church of Christ by her very nature is committed to the task of evangelism” (Green, 1951: 11). The importance of evangelism to the church in current society is echoed through other people’s beliefs about the constituent elements of church. Watson
writes: "The primary task of the church is to worship God. Even before the obvious evangelistic and missionary work, God's people are called to be a worshipping community" (Watson, 1978: 179). Considering what is important, Barna argues that there are six pillars of the church. He lists these as Worship, Evangelism, Service, Education and Training, Building Community, and Stewardship (Barna, 1992: 89). Meanwhile Warren states that: "A purpose driven church is committed to fulfilling all five tasks that Christ ordained for his church to accomplish. Worship, ministry, evangelism, baptism, and discipleship" (Warren, 103-105).

Debate clearly surrounds what it means to do church. This leaves no obvious guideline to the aspects of new paradigm churches that need to be considered in this thesis. What follows is a selection of four aspects that I believe are instrumental in distinguishing new paradigm churches from traditional churches or from churches that may be seeking to provide a relevant form of Christianity in the current era in a manner different from new paradigm churches.3 The four characteristics to be considered are 1) worship services, 2) the development of community within new paradigm churches, 3) the evangelistic 'intentionality' of new paradigm churches, and 4) the organisational structure of new paradigm churches.

The descriptions of these four aspects focus on statements made about new paradigm churches both by outside observers and also by those involved within them. Many of the statements may be contentious and open for

3 There are several examples of churches engaging with contemporary culture in a manner which is distinct from that employed by new paradigm churches. Dawn (1997) distinguishes 'alternative' worship from the examples provided by new paradigm churches. She writes 'Current moves in worship illustrate how different levels of cultural engagement can either effect a radical reinterpretation of the Gospel, or merely 'dress up' the same old fare in new clothes' (Dawn, 1997: 47). Dawn distinguishes churches that make an effort to be approachable but still have not changed the fundamental ingredients 'the services were still very much led from the front. The speakers were invariably men, giving a homily-style, instructive talk. The relationship between platform and congregation was very separate: all the initiative came from the platform and the congregation (who seemed more like an audience) were tagging along with what happened at the front' (Dawn, 1997: 47-8) In contrast to this are churches where the medium has changed so much that the message has a 'noticeably different angle'. For example an emphasis on symbols, particularly ecological ones Dawn believes enables people to come to God in the context of their world. Readings from as many women as men communicate that God is not just male and voices coming from throughout the congregation, rather than the front emphasis the 'we' in the service.
criticism. A deeper examination of the issues that present themselves to new paradigm churches will make up chapters four, five and six of this thesis. For this reason the comments made about new paradigm churches are not questioned in this chapter.

**Worship Services**

The first aspect to be commented on concerning the worship services of new paradigm churches is the buildings in which they take place. A previous era of the quaint rural or suburban chapel or grandiose cathedral is being superseded. In new paradigm churches you generally won’t find rows of hard pews facing the front in order to focus the attention of the congregation on the carefully crafted altars, tables, and pulpits. There is no coloured light streaming through stained-glass windows reflecting off hundreds of years’ worth of dust that floats gently in the undisturbed air. Instead these traditional church buildings have been replaced by an array of rented halls, converted supermarkets, or purpose-built centres that, in some cases, are better equipped than many city town halls. Trueheart, in his visit to a new paradigm church, noted:

> The new architecture of faith is inconspicuous. The seven-year-old sanctuary of Mariners [Newport Beach, California] is an understated horizontal brick pile with barely a peak in its auditorium roof, let alone anything suggesting a spire. The doors of Mariners open onto a tree-lined semicircular courtyard that was packed that Sunday morning with hundreds of people standing and talking together in the sunshine... A cappuccino cart with parasol stood to one side, dispensing the secular sacrament... I made my way with hundreds of others to the sanctuary and found a seat along a carpeted aisle. I was in a handsome and dramatically sloped amphitheater. (Trueheart, 1996: 39)

The contrast between traditional church architecture and new paradigm...
church architecture reflects further contrasts within the buildings and what happens there. Keyboards have replaced pipe organs, worship leaders have replaced music directors, casual worship teams have replaced robed choirs, and overhead projectors or powerpoint have replaced hymnals. Songs more closely reflecting those heard on mainstream radio stations have replaced hymns. With only a few exceptions, new paradigm churches all use contemporary worship styles. Indeed the style has become so pervasive it has even penetrated into traditional churches (Wagner, 1998: 22).

Millar describes in more detail two different services that he participated in during his in-depth study of three churches for his book on 'New Paradigm Churches'. Two of his experiences are outlined below:

My initial visit to the Vineyard happened to be the first Sunday that the Anaheim Vineyard was meeting in its new “interim” facility, a huge white tent in a blacktopped parking lot that seated nearly 3,000 people. Sitting in the tent, I was surrounded by people in their mid-twenties to early thirties and numerous babies and toddlers, but I also noted a surprising number of old people. At the front of the tent was a stage, filled with amplifiers, speakers and microphones. The worship leader, a man in his late thirties, said a brief prayer welcoming the Holy Spirit into our presence, and then the band began to play. There were three female vocalists at separate microphones, someone on bass guitar, a drummer, two people playing acoustic guitars, and an individual playing keyboards. The sound was melodic; indeed, there was a distinct sweetness to their soft rock music. But this band was not “performing”; they were worshipping, and the congregation sang with them, as the lyrics were projected onto a side of the tent. (Millar, 1997: 44-45)

The second service that Millar describes is similar despite being targeted at, and attended by, young people.

Although I had learned to expect surprises in this research, I was still shocked when I walked into Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa on a Monday night and found 2,300 teenagers gathered to study the Bible. Every seat in the main auditorium was full, and teens were sitting on carpeted floor; one girl was lying down, propped up on her elbows, as if watching TV in her living room. The music was good; in fact, very good! One might expect to pay handsomely at a concert to hear a band this professional. For some of the songs, the audience joined the band in singing. For others, they clapped, danced in place, or tapped a foot in time with the music. The lead guitarist stopped at one point and sermonized about what constitutes true Christianity, saying, “We’re not singing about religion tonight; we’re talking about a relationship with Jesus.” There were a few whistles of approval to this
statement, and the band then started playing “I'll walk down that aisle and believe it today.” After about forty minutes the band ended with “Amazing Grace,” and the entire audience stood and joined them. (Millar, 1998: 29)

Following the singing there is often media presentations, dramas, or personal testimonies, then comes the message (no mention of sermons). Talks are targeted at the real life experiences of people in the congregation with a focus usually on both those who are Christians as well as those who “aren’t yet followers of Jesus”. Trueheart describes the speakers he heard as “breezy and funny” and “discursive and witty” (Trueheart, 1996: 42). Much of the material is evangelistic in nature. In Chicago Trueheart heard the message “All human toil is for the mouth, yet the appetite is not satisfied” quoting Ecclesiastes 6:7. The preacher told the congregation “Your cravings, if you get to the heart of them are for the eternal” (Trueheart, 1996: 42). At the youth service in Costa Mesa he heard that “deep down inside everyone has a thirst for God” just like the Samaritan woman whom Jesus met at the well. “We try to cover over that thirst by seeking short-lived pleasures. But sex outside marriage, drugs, new clothes - none of these diversions is enough; they are followed by a continuing desire for something more” (Millar, 1998: 30).

This evangelistic style of preaching and the use of contemporary music reflects the intention of new paradigm churches to be “seeker friendly” or “seeker targeted”. A service designed for seekers either exclusively or as part of a more Christian targeted service strives to meet the spiritual seeker where they are. This means both culturally and spiritually. Hunter (1996) pinpoints Robert Schuller from the Crystal Cathedral as a pioneer in wanting to understand non-churched people and adapt his church to become a “missionary congregation” in North America. Schuller’s formula was:

The unchurched people's needs will determine our programs
The unchurched people’s hang-ups will determine our strategy
The unchurched people's culture will determine our style
The unchurched population will determine our growth goals.
(Schuller in Hunter, 1996: 67)
Out of Schuller's approach Hunter has identified and classified three separate movements in the seeker approach to doing church which are found in virtually all large churches in the United States and which are characteristic of new paradigm churches. He names them the "Seeker Friendly" approach, the "High Participation Seeker Service", and the "High Performance Seeker Service".

a) Seeker Friendly
In the 1970s the Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church in Montgomery Alabama developed the "Seeker Friendly" church service. It was a fairly traditional service with organ, choir, and traditional hymns but less formal (the pastor wore a sports coat), and very celebrative. Hunter describes it as like a "low church" pageant, and made very manageable for the uninitiated seeker. In the three identical Sunday morning services at Frazer Memorial, memorization of the creed is not assumed; instead it is printed in the bulletin. The bulletin and liturgist announce the page in the pew Bible where people can find the reading, or the passage is printed in the bulletin. The church aims to make the service an "unintimidating, manageable, friendly journey for people who don't know much about church".

b) High Participation Seeker Service
For Hunter's second category he uses the example of Saddleback Valley Community Church in Orange County California that he claims has a "High Participation Seeker Service". In this service there is no organ, but a band; no choir, but singing ensembles. The service is primarily for pre-Christians and secondarily for Christians, but it targets both. Saddleback's four identical weekend services are informal, even "laid back". The pastor, Rick Warren, usually wears a shirt, often with no tie rather than traditional robes or collar. The music features "adult contemporary" songs, praise songs, and choruses (with virtually none written before 1980) and the service, especially the lengthy music portion, is very participatory, and celebrative - somewhat like a rally. The sermon looks at an issue, like "Stress-Busters," "Healthy Self-esteem," "Keeping a Marriage Together," or "Finding a Purpose," - addressing the topic, in nonreligious language, from the wisdom of one or
more relevant biblical texts.

c) High Performance Seeker Service
The final category is based on Willow Creek Community Church, Chicago and their "High Performance Seeker Service". This service also features a band or orchestra, not an organ, and singing ensembles not a choir, as well as topical biblical preaching in the culture’s language. However, it is shaped even more for non-Christian and even less for Christians than the services found at Saddleback church. The senior pastor, Bill Hybels, believes that "you cannot, maximally, in the same service, meet the needs of both Christian and non-Christians"; so Willow Creek's distinct services for believers meet Wednesday and Thursday nights. Willow Creek’s high performance service is much less participatory than Saddleback’s service. Early in the Willow Creek service people sing one song and greet people around them; otherwise, overt congregational participation is minimal - somewhat like a concert or performance. Willow Creek’s study of their target population revealed that many unchurched people don't want to “sing anything, say anything, or sign anything." Rather they want to explore Christianity anonymously, at their own pace; so Willow Creek is committed to providing "a safe place to consider the dangerous message of Jesus Christ." The service offers a short drama before the message, because Willow Creek's leaders believe that this generation, the first raised on television from infancy, is less capable of processing abstract ideas than previous generations; they need to see it dramatized, like on a TV "sitcom" (Hunter, 1996: 67).

Bill Hybels describes Willow Creek’s Seeker Services as being contemporary, visual, planned, relevant and biblical.

They are contemporary, using up-to-date Christian music to reach contemporary people. They are visual, using true to life drama and cutting edge multimedia to reach TV-oriented generations. They are planned with as much creativity and excellence as we can muster, to reach people who are used to a high standard in the secular marketplace. They are relevant, using present-day illustrations and applications, showing people that Christianity is for them, both today and tomorrow. They are biblical, teaching without apology the whole counsel of God, including the "hard" areas such as heaven.
and hell, the judgment day, the message of the cross and the fact that Jesus is
the only way to the Father. (Hybels 1998: 80)

The Development of Community

Compared with the style of their Worship Services the other three
characteristics of new paradigm churches are not so obvious on first visit
although they are equally important in shaping the nature of these churches.

The second aspect to be looked at is the role these churches are playing in
creating what Trueheart describes as a “chord-touching call to community”.
In an age where social institutions that used to hold civic life together such as
schools, families, and neighbourhoods, seem no longer to be doing so
Trueheart notes

The new congregations are reorganising religious life to fill that void. The
Next church in its fully realized state can be the clearest approximation of
community, and perhaps the most important civic structure, that a whole
generation is likely to have known or likely to find anywhere in an
impersonal, transient nation.” (Trueheart, 1996: 38)

How each church achieves this is unique to their situation. Upon entering
Mariner’s Church, California, Trueheart checked out displays for various
church ‘ministries’, support groups and fellowship opportunities.

To name a few for inspection that morning: a seminar on effective single
parenting; twelve step recovery meetings by category (alcohol, drugs, abuse);
a parent-of-adolescents meeting; a class for premarital couples; another for
“homebuilders”, something called Bunko Night (“Tired of shopping? Low on
funds?”); a “women in the workplace” brunch; a “fellowshippers” (seniors)
meeting; a men’s retreat (“Anchoring Deep”); women’s Bible studies; a
baseball league; a passel of Generation X activities; “grief support
ministries”; worship music, drama and dance; “discovering divorce
dynamics”, a “belong class” for new members; and “life development” (“You
will learn to know yourself and begin to see where God has a place of service
for you. This is a can’t miss class”) (Trueheart, 1996: 40)

However, while specifics of groups and courses may vary between new
paradigm churches the commitment to ‘go smaller’ while they ‘grow bigger’
is virtually universal among these churches. Bill Hybels of Willow Creek
Church describes the purpose of small groups.
This is where the big church becomes small. Once a church grows beyond about 50 people, you can't hear each other's stories anymore, or track each other's progress or evaluate or encourage or hold each other accountable. That is why we have been committed from the very beginning to build small groups so that all participants in the life of Willow Creek can be relationally connected in a particular group that will help them grow, learn and flourish in the body of Christ. (Hybels in Wagner, 1998: 58)

The pastor responsible for small groups at Willow Creek says

This philosophy of ministry enables a church of 15,000 to provide better care than most churches of one hundred. In many smaller churches, the pastor attempts to meet the needs of a hundred or so people. At Willow Creek, the standard is different: Everybody's cared for by somebody, and nobody cares for more than ten people". (Wagner, 1998: 59)

The Pastor of another large American church explains how his congregation has responded to their small group system

Our people have bought into small groups; groups give people a sense of identity. As a church grows larger, people can get lost without a group to help them feel significant, feel a sense of acceptance and belonging, and feel like they're making a contribution to the lives and hurts of others. All those needs are best met in a small group situation. We are intentionally building group ministries into every facet of our church, ... Small groups have helped us ensure that we not only continue to grow numerically, but that the quality of life-change, discipleship, and care keeps pace with the numerical growth. (Wagner, 1998: 281)

The importance of small groups was highlighted for Trueheart when he heard a testimony given by a couple at Mariners church. He writes

The wife explained that she had gone from saying "I go to Mariners Church" to "I belong to Mariners Church." The husband was asked how he and his wife had made "a small place out of this big place" - a fair and worrisome question that many newcomers wonder about. He spoke of finding "a sense of connectedness" in the small group activities he had joined and a "new purpose in serving God in several ministries." (Trueheart, 1996: 40)

Evangelistic Intentionality

The third aspect of new paradigm churches to be highlighted is their evangelistic 'intentionality'. For new paradigm churches this can best be summed up as the use of whatever resources are available to help them reach non-churched people. Becoming intentional has involved the application of
tools from the fields of management, marketing, psychology, and communications in congregations, as they seek to "grow churches" (Guinness, 1993: 13). Wagner describes it as the combination of "technical principles of church growth with the spiritual principles of church growth" (Wagner, 1998: 12).

A key concept that has been used by most new paradigm churches is the notion of mission and vision statements, as found in most secular businesses. Willow Creek, Chicago proudly states that their mission is 'To turn irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ' or FDFX. This catch phrase is repeated in other contexts. The Fellowship of Las Colinas in Texas states its purpose this way: "We exist to reach up - which is worship (expressing love to God); to reach out - which is evangelism (or sharing Christ with others); and to reach in - which is discipleship (becoming fully devoted followers of Christ)."

In order to achieve this goal of turning irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ new paradigm churches have sought to create a place that Trueheart claims seeks to "be not only approachable but ultimately irresistible" (Trueheart, 1996: 54). He notes:

> It is not an accident that the latest generation of large churches, with their huge auditoriums and balconied atriums, some with food courts and fountains, resemble secular gathering places... Walking into churches like Mariners, or Willow Creek, one can easily imagine oneself in a corporate headquarters or a convention hotel....By adopting nonthreatening architecture, the large churches are finding another way to lower psychological barriers against the church edifice." (Trueheart, 1996: 53)

The intentionality of these churches is perhaps best seen in the material published by them as well as by authors targeting new paradigm church leaders and 'wanna-be' new paradigm church leaders. In Willow Creek's 'Church Leaders Handbook' the reader finds Willow Creek's Policy, Mission Statement, Vision, their 'Seven Step Strategy' and their 'Ten Core Values'. Rick Warren, the senior pastor of Saddleback Valley Community Church has authored a book titled 'The Purpose Driven Church - Growth without Compromising Your Message and Mission' (1995). This book is essentially
a guide to becoming intentional or 'purpose driven'. It addresses issues such as 'Defining your Purposes', 'Communicating your Purposes', 'Organising Around Your Purposes', and 'Applying your Purposes'. The book includes a section on 'Reaching Out to Your Community'. This looks at 'Who is your Target?', 'Knowing Whom You Can Best Reach', and 'Developing your Strategy' Then comes 'Bringing In a Crowd' with fundamentals like 'Designing a Seeker Sensitive Service', 'Selecting your Music', and 'Preaching to the Unchurched.'

Then there are books by the spectators and speculators. In George Barna's book 'Church Marketing' (1992) the reader can discover 'How to implement successful marketing strategies in a biblically-based, Christ-centred way', 'How to recognise your church's unique identity and use that knowledge to meet your community's needs', and 'How to run the business side of your church without compromising your spiritual integrity'.

The inside flap of a book aimed at church leaders entitled 'Aquachurch' asks:

Wondering how to guide your congregation in this unstable, unsteady and turbulent postmodern world? In this latest work from church historian, futurist, and best-selling author Leonard Sweet, church leaders will discover the leadership arts essential for thriving in today's culture (Sweet, 1999).

In order to stay intentional at all levels of the church many new paradigm churches have developed and implemented programmes to encourage members of their congregation to become purposeful in their involvement with the church. Willow Creek is a notable example of this. Two of their programmes have now been published and, distributed through the Willow Creek Association, are available for use in other churches. Both programmes apply a form of pseudo-psychological testing. In 'Becoming a Contagious Christian' participants complete a test to discover their own personal evangelism style and then go on to find out how they can implement that style in evangelism amongst their friends. Similarly in the 'Network' course participants learn their spiritual gifts, passion, and personal style, allowing them to discover their role in their church.
The degree to which this has become a primary focus within new paradigm churches is illustrated in the following comment by Trueheart:

When I marveled to Bill Hybels, of Willow Creek, about his church's phenomenal growth and size - more than 15,000 attend a worship service every weekend - he frowned. “There are two million people within a one hour drive of this place,” he said. “In business parlance, we've got two percent of market share. We've got a long way to go.” (Trueheart, 1996: 53)

Organisational Structure

The final area to be considered is the organisational structure of new paradigm churches. Traditionally local churches have been part of a wider denomination that comes with its own hierarchy. For example in the Anglican or Episcopalian tradition a vicar is accountable to a bishop and so on. Within an individual congregation this sort of hierarchy is best seen in the division between the clergy and the laity. Kallestad (1996) explains what this model meant for him as a Lutheran minister.

I led the worship, visited the sick, recruited new members, recruited and trained the Sunday school teachers, supervised the youth group, raised the money, and in my spare time worked on a cure for cancer... Since I was the only person around the church much of the time, I responded to every emergency. At times I ended up scrubbing floors, cleaning up after overflowing toilets, digging trenches for electrical work, cleaning away brush and weeds from the site, laying sod, and printing bulletins. Whatever needed to be done, I was the only one nominated to do it. (Kallestad, 1996: 95)

However, in the new paradigm church this pattern is no longer continued. Instead, as mentioned earlier in relation to small groups, roles that were previously deemed the responsibility of priests or pastors are carried out by the congregation themselves. Daugherty, a pastor of Victory Christian Centre, Oklahoma writes:

Mobilizing people in ministry became a focus for us in 1979. As I read Ephesians 4: 11, 12 concerning the calling of ministry gifts, I received the revelation personally that my job was not only to minister to people, but also to equip others to minister. "And He Himself gave to some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Saints are believers who need to be equipped for the work of the ministry.... This means outlets or opportunities must be established for believers to release their ministry potential. Cell groups are the number-one
place for us to focus our members into ministry (Daugherty, 1998:165).

Wagner observes:

Although new apostolic pastors are fervently dedicated to leading their churches, they are equally dedicated to releasing the people of their congregations to do the ministry of the church. A characteristic of many new apostolic churches is an abundance of volunteers. Church members are normally taught that part of being a good Christian is to discover the spiritual gifts as well as through any natural talents they might also have. (Wagner, 1998: 20)

Easum (1995) describes this phenomenon as ‘permission giving’. He explains:

Permission-giving churches believe that the role of God’s people is to minister to people, in the world, every day of the week, by living out their spiritual gifts instead of running the church by sitting on committees and making decisions about what can or cannot be done.

Ministry happens when people discover their spiritual gifts instead of fulfilling roles or tasks the institution requires done. Instead of asking people to serve based on the need of the institutional church, these churches ask people, “What gifts do you bring to the Body of Christ, and what do you need from the Body to help you exercise them? Tell us and we’ll equip you to use them” (Easum, 1995: 51)

This philosophy requires a change in organisational structure. Easum notes, “permission-giving churches develop a flat organisational structure that encourages and facilitates ministry instead of coordinating or managing it”. (Easum, 1995: 51) This was the kind of structure that Millar observed in his study of new paradigm churches.

...the organisational chart is extremely flat and bureaucratically lean. The senior pastor sets the vision and defines the spiritual culture of the institution, but he typically gives substantial autonomy to individual staff members in overseeing specific programs. There is a strong sentiment that the real work of ministry should be done by the people, so the clergy see their task as nurturing and training lay leaders rather than initiating programs and running them. (Millar, 1997: 138)

The result of this is the ‘smorgasbord’ of groups, programmes, and classes seen on offer within new paradigm churches. Millar observes:

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5 While volunteerism is found in a variety of churches this claim by Wagner that new paradigm churches have an abundance of volunteers reflects findings by Iannacone (1994) that show that growing churches have a higher degree of volunteerism than churches not experiencing growth.
The method for starting a new group is this: A person feels a responsibility towards homeless families in the neighborhood, or someone who sees the need for a program for people recovering from divorce, expresses this concern to the senior pastor or a member of staff. Typically, full encouragement is given to the individual to pioneer a new ministry. The role of the pastor or staff member is to support this individual in his or her ministry, rather than to micro-manage the program.... this idea has provided the human staffing to address many different issues and problems (Millar, 1997:156)

In looking at the characteristic of new paradigm churches four traits were selected due to their distinctive nature in relation to doing church. As a means of further understanding these traits and the way in which they might be a reflection of the values from the surrounding culture the next chapter turns to the sociology of religion for possible insights.
Chapter Three
Finding a Theoretical Framework

Consideration of new paradigm churches provides the inevitable challenge of understanding them within a sociological framework. This chapter looks at insights from the sociology of religion. Focusing on a Weberian tradition, Troeltsch's work is considered. The categorisation of religious groups that stemmed from Troeltsch's religious typologies is looked at as a possibility for understanding new paradigm churches. The conclusion is drawn, however, that the tradition of classifying religious groups is not helpful for understanding those groups relationship with the surrounding culture. As an alternative the notion of paradigms is considered.

Classical theories in the sociology of religion offer insights concerning religion and the relationship it has with society.

Sociological theories of religion... give us explanations regarding the social significance of religion. The sociological researcher is concerned with how religion is used to help keep society together, how it helps to maintain the status quo, or whether it can help bring about change in society. (Barnard, Burgess: 1996, 318)

1 This statement summarises the three main sociological traditions of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber in relation to the study of religion. Only one of these -- the Weberian tradition will be used in this thesis. However, brief consideration will be given to the theories of Durkheim and Marx. Durkheim believed that the role of religion was in the creation and maintenance of values and social structures within society. “The internalisation of a traditional religious belief system and the formal hierarchies which represent it ensures that any social change that occurs is slow... [avoiding] structural changes which threaten cohesion and stability.” (Barnard, Burgess: 1996, 319)

Marx saw a similar arrangement when he examined religion. However, for him, this was a purely negative phenomenon. For him religion was just another ideological tool used by ruling classes to control and oppress the workers.

Marx saw the way religion in general, and Christianity in particular, functioned in the German society of his day. Religion was used by the ruling classes to sanction the status quo. It justified the inequities and sufferings of the present social order by explaining them as the outworking of an eternal transcendental order. Just as doctrines of caste, karma and rebirth have often tended to induce in many Asian cultures a passive acceptance of one's material and social condition and an indifference towards all attempts at transforming this world, so in nineteenth-century Europe the state churches took it for granted that the 'divine will' was reflected in the present ordering of things. (Ramachandra, 1996, 29)
Max Weber’s approach to studying religion and society provides a possible starting point for understanding new paradigm churches. His way of interpreting the role of religion in society allowed him to reflect upon the power of religious thought in everyday life at certain stages of history. Weber saw that each society needed to be looked at as a unique entity, with its own history and social structure with its own set of circumstances. When viewed in this way religion was seen to have varying roles. Weber was particularly interested in the changes that he saw religion bring to society, as evidenced through the emergence of Calvinism and the links he saw that this had with capitalism as they grew and developed together in Europe.

Initially Weber’s work was extended by Ernst Troeltsch (1865 – 1923), a colleague, who followed in Weber’s analytical tradition by focusing on Christianity in Europe during the early part of the twentieth century. Troeltsch developed a way of classifying the varieties of Christian experience through his threefold typology of ‘church’, ‘sect’ and later ‘mysticism’. Troeltsch saw the ‘church’ as a type of organisation that is overwhelmingly conservative, accepts the secular order, to a certain extent, and dominates the masses. At its most developed, the church makes use of the state and the ruling class and vice versa, becoming an integral part of the social order. In contrast to this is the ‘sect’. A sect is a comparatively small group aspiring to personal inward perfection, and aiming at direct personal fellowship between the members of the group. Their attitude toward the world, the state and society may be indifference, tolerance or hostility, since they have no desire to control or incorporate these forms of social life.

Sects are comparatively small; they usually aim at discovering and following ‘the true way’, and tend to withdraw from surrounding society into communities of their own. The members of sects regard established churches as corrupt. Most have few or no officials, all members being regarded as equal participants. A small proportion of people are born into sects, but most actively join them in order to further their beliefs. (Giddens, 1997: 447)
Troeltsch’s third category was mysticism and he believed this was growing in significance. The term mysticism denotes a primarily subjective religious experience. A mystic is not likely to be linked to a religious institution, as it is the personal experience that matters. It is a spiritual experience that can be described as “more internal than external, more individual than institutional, more experiential than scriptural” (Paul, 1993: 677).

In 1929 Niebuhr, an American, developed Troeltsch’s church-sect distinction in such a way that it could be applied to American denominationalism. Niebuhr added ‘Denomination’ to Troeltsch’s distinctions, and dropped mysticism. He viewed the denomination as an intermediary strata between sect and church. Neibuhr’s analysis is a dynamic understanding of the relationship between Church and sect. For him a break away sect, after time would develop via denomination into a ‘Church’. Millar explains Neibuhr’s idea:

[A] number of studies have shown that by the second or third generation of a movement... the religious intensity of the group wanes, and correspondingly, the growth rate slows. The typical scenario is that the sect evolves into a denomination and in the process accommodates to the morals and mores of the dominant culture, eventually resolving the tension between their religious worldview and political values of the state. Part of this transformation is a function of sect members growing more affluent due to their strict religious ethic (and with wealth, the motivation for separation from worldly pleasures diminishes) (Millar, 1997: 153)

After Neibuhr there developed a tradition of classifying religious, particularly Christian, groups. One of the most notable sociologists in this field, Yinger (1970) developed a typology which included two types of churches, two types of denominations, and four types of sects. Wilson (1970) also developed an argument for four types of sects, although they were somewhat different from Yinger’s.

Considering the variety of options provided by recent sociologists for

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2 Yinger’s classifications included the: institutional ecclesia, institutional denomination, diffused ecclesia, diffused denomination, established sect, established lay sect, sect movement, and charismatic sect.
3 Wilson’s sect classifications included: conversionist, Adventist or revolutionary, introversionist or piestist, and gnostic.
classifying religious groups it would seem relatively easy to incorporate new paradigm churches into one or other of the sociological categories. For example it could be possible to analyses new paradigm churches from the perspective of one of Wilson’s seven sects. With an emphasis on salvation - “turning irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ” it would seem as if they could perhaps be classified as a conversionist sect.

A particularly convincing argument for new paradigm churches to be classified as sects is provided by Millar when he writes “In some ways, new paradigm churches resemble what sociologists call sects” (Millar, 1997: 153). He outlines the reasons as:

their insistence that there is one truth, not many, and that authority is a meaningful category, not simply a social construction rooted in material self-interest... impos[ing] high moral standards on their members (Millar, 1997: 154)

However Millar goes on to show how traditional understandings of the sect-denomination typology cannot be successfully applied to new paradigm churches. He writes:

the typology is useful as a way of explaining how new paradigm churches differ from historic patterns of religious evolution. While new paradigm churches have some sectarian qualities, such as intensity of religious experience, they are not cultural separatists in the way that scholars normally think about religious sects. Rather than calling their members away from cultural engagement, they actually appropriate many aspects of contemporary culture, transforming these aspects for their own purposes. In addition these churches do not ask members to disassociate themselves from culture, but to see these associations as a vehicle for inviting a secular friend to radically change his or her life. And while new paradigm churches may be less organisationally complex than most denominational churches, they do not view this as first generational simplicity so much as an acknowledgement-shared by many of their fellow baby-boomers- that institutionalization and bureaucratization are to be avoided in all spheres of life, whether political or religious.... Although they impose high moral standards on their members, new paradigm Christians are anything but sober and life-denying in their demeanor; quite the contrary, they celebrate as joyously and boisterously as anyone in secular culture. While they have a definite idea of what it means to lead a Christ-like life, they do not prize conformity in dress and appearance. I see them as representing a new style of Christianity that utilizes the moral and spiritual energy associated with sectarian religion, and yet embraces many - although certainly not all - of the aspects of postmodern culture. (Millar, 1997: 154-5)
Despite the ambiguity contained in this Millar still concludes: “Because of this curious blending of cultural currency and high moral and spiritual commitment, I believe one might label new paradigm churches "postmodern sects"” (Millar, 1997: 154)

For Millar the solution is to create yet another typological unit, explaining the differences between common understandings of what it means to be a sect and new paradigm churches as a ‘postmodern phenomenon’. Millar believes that, like all sects, new paradigm churches will develop over time into denominations according to Neibuhr’s typology.

....[When] these churches [sects] age, one would predict that they will become more denominational in form and content. Specifically, one might predict a move to be more "reasonable" in their moral demands and more "rational" in their theological position. Furthermore, one would predict increased organizational complexity, in which they will live by rule more than spirit-led inspiration. In addition one would expect worship to be less intimate and more performance oriented. (Millar, 1997: 154)

The difficulty with this analysis is that Millar presumes that new paradigm churches will follow the typical path of a sect and then uses this assumption to back up his argument that they can be successfully classified as a sect. The reasons he outlines for their classification as a sect are outweighed by the characteristics he lists which prevent it from being classified in this way. While ideas such as the eventual loss of momentum and move towards a more “rational” theological position are interesting predictions, Millar’s analysis does little to help develop a more immediate understanding of a new paradigm church.

Does the answer lie in classifying new paradigm churches in a totally different manner altogether? Is it helpful to look at new paradigm churches as denominations? Many new paradigm churches operate as if they were their own denomination. They have associations often with hundreds of member churches. Many run their own leadership training conferences and seminars. Several of them have published their own resources. They are also often known for their “in house” training of leaders.
Most new paradigm church leaders would shy away from claiming denominational status. However, this is not unlike Martin Luther who considered himself a good Catholic and John Wesley who took pains to verify his authenticity as a loyal Anglican. Neither of these claims lessened the influence these two men had in the development of denominations. The problem with this type of classification lies in exactly the same place as classifying new paradigm churches as sects. The characteristics, which allowed Millar to conclude that new paradigm churches were sects, work against any argument that one might put for their consideration as denominations.

If classifications are going to have any use at all as classificatory devices then they must be used with a fair degree of accuracy. 4 The usefulness of classificatory devices is in their ability to classify. However, this usefulness is clearly limited if only a few categories are applied. Millar could accurately claim that new paradigm churches hold many similarities to sects although choosing to ignore characteristics in order to fit new paradigm churches into a type provides only limited insight. By ignoring some aspects of the typical typologies, as Millar has done when he classifies new paradigm churches as sects, new paradigm churches could be classified as any one of the different categories presented by different sociologists. It is clear that these groups contain characteristics of sects, cults, denominations and possibly churches.

These traditional typologies clearly create difficulties in explaining this new religious phenomenon. At best they provide only part of the picture, at worst they totally misrepresent something that could be described as the emergence of something quite new. This begs the question: what does the emergence of such groups tell us about the usefulness of the different sociological

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4 While obviously not working on the same level it is possible to see that if only a selection of criteria were used a zoologist could classify a human as an ape or vice versa. If even fewer criteria were applied a human could be mistaken for a bird. Both a human and a bird have hearts, lungs, stomachs, they both eat food that they digest in a similar manner and so the list could continue.
typologies that were used to describe the Christian movement in the early twentieth century to the era in which we now live?

Having critiqued this typological tradition within the sociology of religion what does that leave as a framework for understanding religious experience and in particular the experience of the emerging churches described in the previous chapter? When looking at religion in the current social context some theorists have arrived at the conclusion that the church -sect typology simply does not work anymore, while others try and refine the concepts in order to deal with the much wider variety of religious groups and organisations than the church-sect dichotomy can handle. One interesting angle on how to use the concepts found in the work of Steeman (1975). Steeman argues that in order to make use of Troeltsch's theory it is necessary to go back to the original sources and examine what the concepts were supposed to do when they were first introduced into the sociological tradition.

Steeman criticises the contemporary use of the Troeltsch’s concepts. He points out that American Sociology, which heavily influenced post-World War II European sociology, took the church-sect distinction mostly as a classificatory device to create some order for understanding the variety of religious organisations in modern pluralistic society, an effort that further refined the distinction into subtypes for the sake of more descriptive accuracy (notably Yinger 1970, Wilson 1967). This, Steeman claims is a rather static use of the concepts:

It remains that the Church-sect distinction has been given a rather abstract, transhistorical status, which invites the sociologist to classify as either Church or Sect - or somewhere in between - a particular religious group that he encounters. (Steeman 1975: 183).

This possible misuse of a sociological framework is not a solitary example. Horton (1964) writing about the theories of Marx and Durkheim claims:

The middle range sociologist repackages classical theories into workable hypotheses that can be used by any number of non-theoretically inclined specialists in the many substantive areas of sociology. The "middle-range" market alters old theories; in the process of simplification, they are
fragmented and divested of their original ethical, historical, and often radical significance. (Horton, 1964: 122)

Steeman argues that the sociology of religion has strayed away from what the concepts Church, Sect and Mysticism meant when Troeltsch, following Weber's lead, used them to interpret and order the social history of Christianity (Steeman, 1975: 184). In Troeltsch's mind the phenomena identified by the concepts Church, Sect, and Mysticism were historically dated.

Christianity first took the sociological form of the Church, that the typical Sect is a later development which is dialectically related to the Church-type, and that Mysticism, as a dominant phenomenon in the history of Christianity, appears after the Church-type and the Sect-type have lost their historical relevance (Steeman, 1975: 184).

Steeman's interpretation of Troeltsch clearly shows a move away from a focus on the three types and focuses instead on the relationship between religious structure and society.

What Troeltsch tried to capture in his typology were the basic dynamics of Christianity as it was forced to take sociological shape, both with regard to its internal organisation and with regard to its social environment. In this process he came to isolate the Church-principle, the Sect-principle, and Mysticism as inherent tendencies which are at work in the history of Christianity, giving it its sociological form, dependent on and influenced by the social environment in which the Christian movement found itself and to which it had to respond. (Steeman, 1975: 184)

Troeltsch argued that by its very nature Christianity could organise itself as a church, or as a sect, or become mystical depending on the particular

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5 Troeltsch wrote that the most important phenomenon of early Christian history is the gradual emergence of the Catholic church out of the disparity of the earliest communities of enthusiasm. For Troeltsch the Catholic church was the first true expression of Christianity in a sociological form. This, however, denies the validity of the early Christian experience and the possibility of viewing the first followers of Jesus as a sect that emerged out of the Jewish tradition, much like Kuhn's "paradigm shifts". Viewed in this light, the history of Christianity could be seen as a series of reactions against mainstream religiousity. Conservative religious experience results in radical movement which over time becomes itself conservative. Considering the Christian experience in this manner requires a change in the definition of sect. Troeltsch sees a sect as having a focus on ethical perfection. Instead it is possible to see a sect as a group focused on ecclesiological perfection, which also has an important component of emphasising individual moral and ethical high standards.
historical circumstance. Throughout history it has, in fact, taken on these various forms of organisation.\(^6\)

The basic point is that the Christian movement, as it arose out of Jesus' preaching, entailed the belief in a gracious and loving God who was the God of all humankind and who demanded ethical perfection. This means that there are three elements which, when given special emphasis, lead to three different forms of Christian organisation: the Church-type is the sociological form related to the gospel's universalism; the Sect-type is related to the Gospel's demand for ethical perfection; Mysticism arises when the element of individual intimacy with God in Jesus is emphasised. The Gospel's universalism tends to a large scale institution which makes God's gifts in Christ available to populations; the Gospel ethic, especially the sermon on the mount, leads to small groups of Christian saints; the emphasis on God's loving care leads to a fostering of religious well being. All three are present in the New Testament\(^7\).

Troeltsch believed that it was the ebb and flow of history that allowed each of religious types to develop and come to the fore.

Troeltsch's focus on the relationship between social structure and the form that Christianity has taken over history can be further understood in light of the concept of paradigms. In his seminal work The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962), Thomas Kuhn used the notion of paradigms to make sense of scientific revolutions. Various scientific discoveries have provided information that has been so profound in their implications that the then current conceptions of the universe and life itself had to be dramatically altered. This alteration in conception Kuhn called a 'paradigm shift'.\(^8\) The

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\(^6\) While Troeltsch's insights are generally helpful it needs to be acknowledged that his is a view of Christianity that sees Christian history in relation to the history of Western civilisation.

\(^7\) Troeltsch was a theologian and formulated this particular theory in theological terms. While Troeltsch's outworking of his beliefs concerning the nature of the church are used in this thesis to a certain extent that should not be interpreted as an unquestioned acceptance of his theories surrounding the nature of the church and the form which it can take.

\(^8\) While this term is not an easy one to fully define Kuhn writes 'Their paradigm tells [scientists] about the sort of entities with which the universe is populated and about the way in which the members of that population can behave; in addition, it informs them of the questions that may legitimately be asked about nature and of the techniques that can properly be used in the search for answers to them' (Kuhn, 1972: 93). Kuhn provides an example of how paradigms work to inform those living within them about what is 'true' and 'possible'. 'On at least seventeen different occasions between 1690 and 1781, a number of astronomers, including several of Europe's most eminent observers, had seen a star in position that we now suppose must have occupied at the time by Uranus.... Herschel, when he first observed the same object twelve years later, did so with a much improved telescope.... As a result, he
term 'paradigm' delineates an era in which a particular theory provided the framework for a particular way of understanding reality.

This theory of paradigms is useful in two ways, and on two different levels for our present discussion. On one level it can be loosely applied to the work and findings of Troeltsch. Troeltsch’s point that Christianity and the form that it takes is historically specific can be seen as a form, although written several decades before Kuhn, of identifying the notion of paradigms (or eras) and paradigm shifts in the history of the social world. Each of the eras that Troeltsch identifies could be viewed as a paradigm reflecting the wider context of society itself. The shift away from 'church' as the dominant form of Christian religious expression could be viewed as a reflection of the changes in society itself.

On another level the theory of paradigms can be used to analyse the actual theories of social scientists. Writing at the beginning of the previous century Troeltsch developed a theory that was clearly reflective of a particular historical period. While his theory was dynamic and provided an analysis based on the changing nature of history, later developments clearly lost that dynamism. The taxonomy now prevalent in the sociology of religion seems to have been based on an interpretation of Troeltsch that sees the task of the religious sociologists as naming and describing religious groups within the bounds previously given.

A revisiting of Troeltsch’s earlier work and the alternative way of viewing it offered by Steeman allows the sociologist of religion to think of alternative frameworks for understanding the phenomenon seen today. As has been mentioned it is possible to see the patterns in Christianity having an historical

was able to notice an apparent disk-size that was at least unusual for stars.... Herschel therefore announced that he had seen a new comet! Only several months later, after fruitless attempts to fit the observed motion into a cometary orbit, did Lexell suggest that the orbit was probably planetary.... The shift of vision that enabled astronomers to see Uranus, the planet, does not however, seem to have affected only the perception of that previously observed object. Its consequences were more far-reaching.... The minor paradigm change forced by Herschel helped to prepare astronomers for the rapid discovery, after 1801, of the numerous minor planets or asteroids' (Kuhn, 1972: 114-115).
base and therefore a possible historical interpretation. This way of viewing religious phenomena offers new possibilities for understanding present trends.

Steeman's interpretation of Troeltsch's work offers an alternative way of seeing religious groups and hence points to a new paradigm. This thesis will use this framework as a starting point for developing a different way of looking at the emergence of this new way of ‘doing’ church.

Using ‘Paradigms’ to Understand Religious Change

The use of the concept of paradigms as a way of seeing the church in history is not new. In theological circles this framework has been used as a way to understand the changing nature of the church through time. Hans Kung argued that the entire history of Christianity could be divided into six major “paradigms”. He list these six paradigms as:

- The apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity
- The Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period
- The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm
- The Protestant (Reformation) paradigm
- The modern Enlightenment paradigm
- The emerging ecumenical paradigm (1984)

In contrast to this Mead (1993) argues that there have been three paradigms in the history of Christianity. The first two he labels “Apostolic” and “Christendom” while he believes that the final paradigm has not yet fully emerged. He writes

> In our own time, that second paradigm is breaking apart. Its successor, a third paradigm, has yet to fully appear... while we have experienced the disintegration and disruption of the old, the new paradigm has not yet appeared. (Mead, 1993: 8-9)

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9 The formation of Mead’s seems to be similar to the framework that Troeltsch was using when he formulated his theory on Church and Sect. Only in an era of Christendom does there truly exist a “church” for sects to break away from. Theories, such as Kung’s, which bring the Reformation into consideration, allow more for the development of categories such as denomination, which were used by later sociologists.
Other examples where the history of Christianity is viewed as a series of paradigms can be found in the writing of Christian historians. In his book on Church history Shelley (1995) labels different periods of time. While he does not claim to be describing paradigms he does divide the history of Christianity into eight timeframes, some with similar names to those of Kung - The Christian Middle Ages, The Age of the Reformation, and The Age of Reason and Revival.

It is obvious from these three examples that there is no current agreement on exactly how many eras or paradigms there have been in the history of Christianity. However, all of these authors agree on two things. The first point of agreement is that churches adapt to their surrounding culture. In describing the transition from an Apostolic Era to the era of Christendom Mead writes that the reorientation that the church experienced was “the church’s attempt to relate to its social environment” (Mead, 1993: 8). Kung writes:

> The concept of Christianity is always shaped by the particular concrete form it takes at a period in history... Indeed every age has its own picture of Christianity which has grown out of a particular situation, lived out and formed by particular social forces and church communities, conceptually shaped beforehand or afterwards by particularly influential figures and theologies. (Kung, 1995: 7)

In explaining this concept of Kung’s further Bosch writes:

> There is yet another important - and related - factor which affects the way people interpret and experience the Christian faith: the general “Frame of reference” with which they happen to have grown up, their overall experience and understanding of reality and their place within the universe, the historical epoch in which they happen to live and which to a very large extent has moulded their faith, experiences, and thought processes. The differences between the six sub-divisions of the history of Christianity listed by Kung have to do, to a very large extent, with differences in the overall frame of reference between one era and the other, and only to a lesser extent with personal, confessional, and social differences per se. The “world” of the Hellenistic Christianity of the second and subsequent centuries was simply qualitatively different from the “world” of primitive Christianity. (Bosch, 1992:183)

The second area in which they all agree is that Christianity is currently in an
emerging paradigm. Concurring with Mead’s assessment Kung believes that the latest paradigm cannot be fully described yet. Bosch explains: “The new paradigm is therefore still emerging and is, as yet, not clear which shape it will eventually adopt. For the most part we are, at the moment, thinking and working in terms of two paradigms” (Bosch, 1992: 349).

This seems to be reflected in the beliefs of church leaders that the familiar ways of doing church are no longer relevant. Leaders, not just of ‘new paradigm’ churches believe that the relevance of traditional church is diminishing. Carrell writes:

Pervading all, when honesty comes to the surface, there is a widespread feeling that ‘the Church’ (particularly in its traditional structures and inherited ministry patterns) is ill-equipped for these times and circumstances. (Carrell, 1998: 23)

Out of such beliefs have emerged the new paradigm churches under study here. These are churches that are actively seeking to engage with the surrounding culture and adapt their style in an attempt to be relevant to the world in which they live. It is a process that Millar describes as a second reformation.

I believe we are experiencing a second reformation that is transforming the way Christianity will be experienced in the new millennium. The style of Christianity dominated by eighteenth century hymns, routinised liturgy, and bureaucratized layers of social organisation are gradually dying. In its place are hundreds of new paradigm churches, which are appropriating stylistic and organisational elements from our postmodern culture. This reformation, unlike the one led by Martin Luther is challenging not doctrine but the medium through which the message of Christianity is articulated. (Millar, 1997: 11)

Such adaptation is not without its difficulties. While Carrell acknowledges the problems of the traditional church in the era in which we live he warns

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10 What is interesting here is an ironic similarity of the views of both secularisation theorists and commentators of new paradigm churches. Both sets of commentators argue that what has been previously known as the Christian church is disintegrating. What differs between the two groups is their conclusions about the diminishing church. Secularisation theorists would claim that this is an indication of the decline of the importance of Christianity as a whole in Western society. On the other hand the Christian theologians quoted above are expectant of a new Christian paradigm to emerge which will see a change in the way Christianity is experienced but not a dismissal of it.
about the dilemma for the church willing to adapt to the surrounding culture.

If these traditional Churches are perceived to have the problem of identifying too closely with an older world and another age, the problem of the newer Churches is likely to be that of too closely identifying with the subtle values and outlooks of this present world and current age. (Carrell, 1998: 164).

The new paradigm church movement has been criticised for its relationship with the surrounding culture. Detractors argue that new paradigm churches have adopted too many of the characteristics of American culture leaving them in a position that, they believe, has compromised the message of the Christian church. One example of this is found in ‘Dining with the Devil’ by Os Guinness (1993). This book looks at some of the trends in new paradigm churches. Guinness believes that the church has made itself particularly vulnerable through its adoption of managerial techniques in the running of the church and also in the uncritical targeting of unchurched individuals by ‘speaking to’ their felt needs. Hull (1992), in “Power Religion” comments on Guinness’ analysis. He summarises the argument:

The danger is to address church renewal through managerial technique. In this scenario the pastor uncritically shapes his role based on the new wave of leadership technique. Or he uses support groups and “felt needs” as a primary means of evangelism. Before long, like any corporate executive, the pastor becomes the slave to the market place; he has to tell the consumers what they want to hear if he wants to keep his job and secure results. A "user -friendly" church, if by that we mean catering to the cultural and selfish goals of contemporary fashion, is an unfaithful church. (Hull, 1992: 144)

New paradigm churches use of these sorts of cultural elements has been described as the “mishaps of an inadequate Christian response to the American culture” (Pritchard, 1996: 206). Pritchard believes that all of church history could be understood as “one long line of experiments in how to respond to one’s culture” (Pritchard, 1996: 207). These statements are similar to Peter Berger’s (1986) view of religion’s relationship to society. He suggests that religion has "Two basic options" in response to modern society’s symbolic universe: accommodation and resistance. Expanding on this idea Hunter (1986) writes:

Religious organisations must choose either to accommodate their beliefs to cognitive standards external to their tradition or else defensively isolate
themselves from those standards in order to remain theologically plausible. (Hunter in Pritchard, 1996:151-2)\(^1\)

These issues reflect those of the research component of this project. Eight ministers from Christchurch, New Zealand were interviewed. They were all leaders of churches that were seen to be engaging with the culture as they “did church”. Traits evidently gleaned from the surrounding culture related to the form of the church rather than the beliefs. One of the interviewees stated this position clearly:

I think the thing about being true to what is timeless about the gospel but being ready to adapt in terms of cultures styles and musical styles is obviously important. Looking at the some churches, often they hold on to traditional worship styles and try to change the beliefs of the gospel in order to meet where modern people are. That is totally back to front, we hang on to the central truths of the gospel that have united Christians through the centuries but we change the cultural style (Pastor 1)\(^2\)

In seeking to change the cultural style of the church in order to be relevant to the culture there is obviously the possibility of taking on board aspects of the culture that are open for criticism.

The rest of this thesis now seeks to look at how selected traits of the era in which we live have affected some of those new paradigm churches where congregations are striving to be relevant to the changing culture in which they find themselves. Three such traits will be looked at in the next three

\(^{11}\) This understanding of the relationship between churches and the surrounding society can be seen as an alternative way of understanding the church – sect dynamic that Troeltsch was concerned with.

\(^{12}\) This emphasis on changing the way Christianity is presented rather than examining any of the core beliefs of Christianity reflects a conservative, rather than liberal, understanding of Christianity. Conservative Christianity places an emphasis on some of traditional understandings of the faith. For example Conservative Christians would hold that Jesus is the Son of God and the Bible is God's word in written form. Liberal Christianity, in contrast, questions many of the traditional beliefs of Christianity. Many Liberal Christians question the stories about Jesus in the bible particularly those that involve the miraculous such as healing. Geering, a prominent Liberal theologian, states: “I'm trying to interpret Christianity in the modern context.... Culture, generally, is changing very rapidly around the world and the traditional religions have to come to terms with that” (Zander, 2001: 27). The sentiment behind this, like that behind some of the statements by those interviewed emphasizes the need for change. However, as the quote above suggests the emphasis for that change is different. Liberal theologians focuses on the theology while the conservative church leaders that were interviewed focused on church structure and content.
chapters. They are globalisation, pragmatism, and individualism.\textsuperscript{13}

The chapters will look at characteristics of each of the traits within society. They will then consider criticism of new paradigm churches and the way that globalisation, consumerism, and individualism have impacted them. Alongside this the way that the specific churches in Christchurch have been impacted by these phenomena will be considered. Issues of compromise will be addressed as each of the three traits is considered.

These traits were selected for ethnographic reasons. As the interview material was reviewed it became apparent that these themes captured many of the key issues raised by informants.\textsuperscript{14} It also reflects the themes from critiques of these new paradigm churches.

\textsuperscript{13} It is no accident that these three traits can be seen to be partial descriptors of postmodernity. In seeking to engage with the culture around them those church leaders that were interviewed obviously were connecting with traits often deemed ‘postmodern’.

\textsuperscript{14} More information of this process is given under the heading ‘Research Process’ in Appendix One.
Chapter Four
Globalisation

Every week throughout the world, thousands of church leaders plan, prepare, and lead their congregations in church services intended to connect God’s solutions to the needs of people...The amount of creativity, time, and energy it takes to prepare high quality services each week is often overwhelming,... You know all about the pressures we’re describing that’s why we’re so excited to tell you about WillowNet - WCA’s new online resource system. WillowNet is a system with a searchable database of Willow Creek’s service elements since 1990, available for immediate downloading. Among these are drama sketches, message transcripts, song information, service order sheets, multimedia, and video suggestions. (WCA Monthly, July/August 1996)

According to Tomblinson (1999) globalisation describes the ‘complex connectivity’ of the world we live in. Or put another way “globalization refers to the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences that characterize modern social life.” In practical terms, this means that territorial boundaries are diminishing in their importance. McGrew (1992) captures this aspect of globalisation when he states “globalisation is a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding” (McGrew, 1992: 3). He goes on to say that virtually everything can now flow through countries and regions including “goods, capital, people, knowledge, images, crime, pollutants, drugs, fashions and beliefs” (McGrew 1992: 67). Friedman (1999) illustrates globalisation at work in his description of a trip to Qatar:

When I traveled to Doha, Qatar, in the fall of 1997, I stayed at the Sheraton Hotel, which is located right at the tip of the Doha corniche overlooking the bluish-green Persian Gulf. The Doha corniche is a ten-mile-long seafront walkway, paved with white stones and lined with gardens and palm trees. Women in native Qatari robes, some wearing black masks with only slits for their eyes, stroll up and down the corniche... My first morning in Doha, I went out for a stroll on the corniche, and as I soaked up the colors the rainbow of people and the whole tableau, I said to myself: "This place is really tastefully done. If there is an authentic Persian Gulf culture and scene, this is it." And the more I walked, the more I enjoyed myself - until I rounded one corner and suddenly it appeared before me, like a huge blot on the horizon: Taco Bell. Yes, right there in the middle of the Qatari corniche, Taco
Bell – with a twenty-foot-high picture of the Emir of Qatar protruding from its roof. I looked at that and thought to myself: "Oh no, oh Jeez, what is that doing here? Why did they have to put a Taco Bell right in the middle of the beautiful corniche? Here I was having my authentic Qatari moment, here I was feeling far from home in a unique corner of the world, and I have to see Taco Bell." And the worst thing was: It was crowded!... The writer Thomas Wolfe said, "You can't go home again," but I fear he was wrong. In the world of globalization, you won't be able to leave home again. (Friedman, 1999: 220)

One simple explanation as to why globalisation has occurred is given by Friedman. He writes:

_The Economist_ once noted, the previous era of globalization was built around falling transportation costs. Thanks to the invention of the railroad, the steamship and the automobile, people could get a lot more places faster and cheaper and they could trade with a lot more places faster and cheaper. Today's era of globalization is built around falling telecommunications costs – thanks to microchips, satellites, fibre optics and the Internet. These new technologies are able to weave the world together even tighter. (Friedman, 1999: xv)

This description focuses on increased mobility, both real and metaphoric, and seems a feasible explanation. However, alternative interpretations focus on broader understandings. Tomblinson explains that globalisation implies changing the very nature of territory and not just occasionally lifting some people out of it. It is experienced by staying in one place but experiencing the ‘dis-placement’ that global modernity brings.

Friedman captures this sentiment through an interview with Ishak Ismail, the owner of all the Malaysian Kentucky Fried Chicken Franchises. Friedman asked, “What is the great appeal of Kentucky Fried Chicken to Malaysians?” Ismail answered that they didn’t just like the taste but also what it symbolised. “Anything Western, especially American, people here love. They want to eat it and be it. I’ve got people in small towns around Malaysia queuing up for Kentucky Fried Chicken – they come from all over to get it.” Friedman concludes, “walking into Kentucky Fried Chicken in the rural areas of Malaysia is the cheapest trip to America many Malaysians will ever be able to take” (Friedman, 1999: 235). What is captured in this interview and in Friedman’s conclusion is the extent to which distant events and entities have penetrated local experience through the process of globalisation. This is
something that we will see shortly in relation to contemporary church experience.

Consideration of the ability of institutions and organisations to transplant themselves to another culture has led to a concern about the extent to which a single global culture is replacing the diversity of thousands of local cultures around the world. The process of globalisation is feared to lead to the homogenising of culture where certain dominant cultures threaten to overwhelm other more vulnerable ones. ‘Global culture’, ‘Americanisation’, ‘Western Cultural Imperialism’ and ‘Coca-colonisation’ are terms which all imply that the consumer culture of the United States has been transplanted into every other part of the world and is subsequently taking all other cultures over.

Examples of this seem most obvious by examining the spread of some American cultural icons. Howes (1996) notes that “Coca-cola and its rival Pepsi [are] now doing battle in China, the last sector of the globe that they have failed to dominate; McDonalds and its rivals, Pizza Hut, Sizzlers, and KFC fast-food restaurants engorge the world with vast quantities of sanitized and homogenized food [meanwhile] Global yuppiedom is equally susceptible to the attractions of Rolex watches, Porsche cars, Luis Vuitton luggage, Chanel perfume, AGA kitchen stoves, Dom Perignon champagne, and Perrier mineral water” (Howes, 1996: 142). However, he then goes on to note:

Although sympathy for such a spread of popular culture has become unfashionable, the view from the Elysian heights may be a little clouded. Certainly one’s diet would be homogenized if one ate every day at McDonalds but there are, for example, isolated and traditional Buddhist societies in the Himalayas whose diet consists almost entirely of barley porridge, barley bread and barley beer, and anyone raised on English school dinners could hardly make claims for the tantalizing variety of that particular national dietary culture. This is to say that the globalization of popular culture has apparently paradoxical but actually consistent effects in simultaneously homogenizing and differentiating. (Howes, 1996: 142)
Relatively few today would cling unwaveringly to the idea that ‘hegemony is prepackaged in Los Angeles, shipped out to the global village, and unwrapped in innocent minds’ (Liebes and Katz 1993: xi). Martin-Barbero (1993) writing from a Latin American context proposes that there is interaction between external cultural influences and local cultural practises. He writes that ‘the steady, predictable tempo of homogenizing development [is] upset by the counter-tempo of profound differences and cultural discontinuities.’ (Martin-Barbero in Tomblinson, 1999: 149). Howes illustrates this point using the example of Coca-Cola.

No imported object, Coca-Cola included, is completely immune from Creolization. Indeed, one finds that Coke is often attributed with meanings and uses within particular cultures that are different from those imagined by the manufacturer. These include that it can smooth wrinkles (Russia), that it can revive a person from the dead (Haiti), and that it can turn copper into silver (Barbados)... Coke is also indigenised through being mixed with other drinks, such as rum in the Caribbean.... Finally it seems that Coke is perceived as a ‘native product’ in many different places — that is you will find people who believe the drink originated in their country not in the United States. (Howes 1996: 6)

**Globalisation and the Church**

In order to examine the relationship between church and culture the impact of globalisation on churches needs to be considered. Two key issues will be considered that surround such a process. The first issue is the decline in allegiance to traditional church structures in favour of adopting practices from churches which have been heard about, read about and who offer resources to any churches wanting to find out about their way of doing church. The second issue to be looked at relates to the claim, in aspects relating to globalisation, that what is being represented in churches is the ‘Americanisation’ of religion and that as a result churches are becoming homogenised the world over. In order to consider these issues attention will now be paid to the influence of authors, two globalised traits apparent in the Christchurch churches: seeker services and cell groups, and the resulting post-denominationalism.
The Influence of Authors

One of the key areas where pattern of a global influence can be noticed in the reading material of the ministers interviewed. Questions about books church leaders were reading showed a variety of influences although some patterns were clear. Those authors that featured prominently in the comments of ministers were all American. Six of the eight people interviewed mentioned the influence of John Maxwell and his material on leadership.¹ Four people indicated that Carl George had had an impact on them.² Three people read the Leadership Journal and three people talked about books by George Barna.³ It was clear from some of the comments that some of the material that these church leaders had read had changed the way they did church.⁴

I think George Barna was a really big influence ten years ago. Right then realising that if we kept doing church the way we were doing it was not going to be very helpful. His latest one that I’ve been reading recently is called ‘The Second Coming of the Church’. He’s always got some revolutionary thinking and because he’s a research sort of guy and he gets out there and amongst it.

We made a cognitive shift about eight years probably George Barna really influenced my thinking with his user friendly churches book. (Pastor 7)

¹ John Maxwell is a Christian author and speaker from the United States. He looks at issues of “leadership, relationships and personal growth”. He also puts out audio and video tapes through INJOY, a leadership development institute founded by him. Some of his books include ‘Be All You Can Be’, ‘Developing the Leader Within You’, ‘Developing the Leaders Around You’, ‘Be A People Person’, and ‘The Winning Attitude’. (Maxwell, 1995: Backflap)

² Carl George is the author of books entitled ‘Prepare Your Church for the Future’, ‘How to Break Growth Barriers’ and ‘The Coming Church Revolution’. He directs the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth and is adjunct professor of Church growth at Fuller Theological Seminary. He also runs seminar in the United States. (George, 1994: Back Cover)

³ George Barna, also from the United States, is the founder and president of Barna Research Group Ltd. a marketing research company. The company specialises in research for Christian churches and church-related groups. He has written several books including ‘User Friendly Churches’, ‘The Power of Vision’, and ‘Church Marketing’.

⁴ The authors named by the interviewees show a similarity to those named in the Willow Creek Association New Zealand Leadership Survey. In responding to the question “Name two authors or speakers who have been the greatest influence on you in some aspect of leadership over the past 3-5 years” those interviewed named Bill Hybels [Willow Creek] - 69 respondents, Rick Warren [Saddleback] - 36 respondents, John Maxwell - 20 respondents, Murray Robertson [a local Christchurch pastor] - 11 respondents, and George Barna - 8 respondents.
Seeker Services

Within the Christchurch churches a key area where the process of
globalisation was evident was in the adoption of seeker services or services
that were in some way tailored to seekers. Only three of the eight churches
ran weekly seeker services, however, all of the churches had clearly thought
through the notion of “seeker sensitivity” and the impact that this particularly
American concept had had was evident. Some of the comments are outlined
below:

We are trying to make particularly the 10.30 church seeker friendly. Over the
next month we are doing a series on some of the tough questions of faith like:
‘How Do We Know God Exists? Is Jesus the Only Way?’ those sort of key
questions.... I still think we are in the early stages of exploring that. There are
a number of people who have really caught the vision of being seeker
oriented. We are increasingly aware of the importance of being seeker
friendly and we are looking for more opportunities to have special services
that are really seeker oriented. Christmas Eve is a really good opportunity
here because you get so many people going to church at Christmas time so a
lot of effort has gone into Christmas Eve as a special one off at this time of
year. (Pastor 1)

I’d say we’re seeker friendly, not completely seeker focused, but I suppose
we’re still seeker oriented. The idea has molded us quite a lot.... We have
our regular guest services which are aimed as seeker services. This year we
had one about every ten weeks, about four or five a year. (Pastor 7)

We would describe ourselves as seeker oriented. We do our guest services
with big productions three times a year, Christmas, Easter and at another time
during the year. They are the only times when we consciously go out and
invite people in without them having to feel that there will be a challenge at
the end or anything like that. We’ve found that they work for us and we have
had a lot of people join the church and become Christians because of those.
(Pastor 6)

I think it is seeker orientated, in the fact that we try and do topics that are
relevant to seekers to help life. I think we explain the things that they won’t
understand, in those areas we are [seeker oriented]. I know that we do some
things that if you were to look at a true seeker church you might say ‘oh no
that doesn’t work’, for example our singing, but we’ve really felt that one of
the winning aspects of our church is atmosphere. We feel that atmosphere
really can touch people, especially atmosphere that is filled with the presence
of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. We find that atmosphere quite
difficult to create within a five minute zone and so we sing for 30 minutes. I
know that for unchurched people that is a long time and they could tune out,
but on the other hand they see the enthusiasm and they feel the presence of
God. (Pastor 5)

Every fourth Sunday we do a guest event where we turn it on as far as
resources allow. That is: quality music, short talk, pretty close to seeker
targeted, cringe free, no community singing - they sit down and watch the
Every so often we have a series that is for seekers. People are realising that they can invite their friends and people are taking pamphlets to give out or drop in letterboxes. For us Willow Creek has been very significant. It has helped us to become more intentional, helped us focus on our direction. It has brought the seeker focus and we have developed services because of that. It has also helped us figure out structures that will allow us to keep focused. (Pastor 2)

The penetration of the seeker friendly concept and the language surrounding this concept of being “seeker friendly” is an outstanding example of how one prominent church can influence other churches around the world in the process of globalisation. Comments made by one pastor directly about Willow Creek church provide a clear illustration of the influence that that church is having.

I first went to hear Bill Hybels in '93 when he first came to New Zealand. That model really inspired me but we are still at the relatively early stages of working it through. I think Willow Creek for a start is just such an encouraging model because here is a church that is advancing in a secular world. So often for church leaders the issue is morale as well as hope and confidence for the church. I personally have been really inspired by Willow Creek and Bill Hybels and the Willow Creek model - to see a church really going ahead against the tide of secular society. I think an increasing number of churches are aware of the continuum from seeker hostile to seeker oriented. I think an increasing number of churches have become conscious of the need to think in terms of the mentality of seekers with their services. I think smaller churches have struggled to find all the resources of places like Willow Creek in terms of mounting a really swept up multi-media service but I think churches are pushing down the continuum. (Pastor 1)

The influences mentioned above often came through direct contact with a church leader or church. The majority of the church leaders had actually flown to the United States to see Willow Creek and several had been to other locations to check out churches.

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5 Influences that churches such as Willow Creek and Saddleback have had are, to a certain extent, enigmatic. It would seem, however, that the remarkable and very rapid growth has drawn attention to these churches. The fact that the leaders seem willing and able to articulate strategies behind the growth would make them desirable to any church leader interested in growing their church. This concept is considered further in the chapter on pragmatism.
Cell Groups

A practical example of the influence of other churches and other church leaders on the churches in Christchurch is through the use of cell groups as an integral part of church structure. Half of the church leaders interviewed talked about the influence of Ralph Neighbor and the church in Singapore he was associated with, Faith Community Baptist Church. They mentioned the way in which cell groups were an integral part of this church. Several other names were also mentioned as being key influences but only Willow Creek was mentioned more than once. Attitudes towards the actual model of small groups from Singapore differed. This seemed to have led to a difference in the way in which information about cell groups was incorporated as part of the local Christchurch churches. In talking about the role and development of cell groups in his church one minister said:

There was a bit of talk in the mid seventies about small groups. We did a very radical thing because we stopped a lot of stuff we were doing in the church and decided we would rebuild the church around small groups. This was in the days long before people started writing books about cell churches and so on. We felt that we had hit on something original and then a few years later we found that this was happening around the world at the same time - people were hitting on this idea that this is the way to do church - you let go of all your institutional stuff and build the church around small group relationships. It caught on like wild fire. It was a tremendously popular thing to do....Later on we sort of lost the plot with the small groups really and at that point we came in contact with Ralph Neighbor. We went for a couple of weeks to FCBC in Singapore (Faith Community Baptist Church) and Ralph was there and so was another guy named Bill Beckham and it was Bill particularly - he's written a book on small groups - he was very good at analysing what was going on and he was the one who told me that that in the seventies this started happening around the world quite spontaneously. He said that to get it back on track again the senior pastor has really got to take over the thing again and start a group, which we did. It was about 1994 that we relaunched the thing. So those guys have had an effect. And Carl George has too. His idea of the "Meta church" is more like what we do than Ralph Neighbor's pure cell church. (Pastor 3)

Another minister said:

We looked at a lot of different models and really looked at the stuff that was coming out of Singapore that was very 'if you don't do it this way it will never work for you'. We read all the books and over that eighteen months we really talked about it a lot and then finally come up with what we wanted - the content of those groups. If they want to do a bible study, if they want to do a social that's fine as long as there is a bit in there where they are talking about their lives and opening up and sharing. (Pastor 5)
Post-denominationalism

As the impact of a few large and influential churches grows a greater number of churches all around the world become like them. This leads to a corresponding decline in allegiance to traditional church bodies. Neibuhr (1995) states:

What we are going through is simply the Americanisation of the Christian church. American born religious groups, including Pentecostals, are growing while denominations like the Methodists and Presbyterians whose worship reflects the European Protestant tradition, with centuries-old hymns and liturgies, have lost influence. (Neibuhr, 1995: 3)

This is occurring not only to denominations but also within them. Church leaders seem to be more wary of labelling themselves, particularly with a denominational label. This was evident in the comments made by those interviewed. Several included their denominational label near the end of a list of descriptors about their church. One example of this had the minister pausing after providing four labels and then remembering, as if it were an after thought, the church’s denomination. He laughed and said, “yes, I’d better think of that.” The decreasing importance placed on traditional designations can be seen in the following comments:

One thing that I have become increasingly conscious of is that I feel a kindred spirit bind with lots of people outside our own denomination. I am aware that somehow we have to break down the denominational walls and the denominational barriers. (Pastor 1)

We have got very strong Pentecostal roots but we probably aren’t easily defined as a strict Pentecostal church. Our services are more seeker friendly than the traditional Pentecostal church would be. I don’t personally find the label describes us very well if I compare myself to a few Pentecostal churches. (Pastor 7)

The most obvious example of this, however, is in the church that chose to become independent and withdraw its affiliation with its parent denomination. The lack of concern by any members of the church could be seen as an illustration of the diminishing role that denomination have come to play for these new paradigm churches.

I wrote to everyone in the church and said this is what I think we should do, ... then we had our annual general meeting about a month later and I asked if anyone had any comments to make, no one said anything so I said, well
we're now out and that was it, just like that. (Pastor 4)

In place of some of the denominational allegiance has come a commitment to being involved with other "like-minded churches" as one minister described it. All of the ministers talked about their involvements in various networks of ministers. Within the more traditional denominations was the "renewal movement" which acted as an association for churches within those denominations that were involved in the charismatic renewal. Several of the church leaders were involved in a fortnightly gathering of ministers which they dubbed the "Thursday club" while another minister talked about a new network they were involved in setting up. It is undoubtedly in these settings that much of the new information concerning "what’s hot and what’s not" on the church scene is disseminated. One of the interviewees talked about reading all the books that were recommended at the "Thursday club".

While the ministers all spoke very enthusiastically about the role that such networks were having in breaking down traditional barriers such crosspollination of ideas has sparked some criticism. Much like the criticism explored earlier in the chapter centering on the homogenisation of culture, critics of new paradigm churches claim that these sorts of churches are becoming indistinguishable from each other. When looking at the churches in Christchurch it would seem as if such a criticism might well be valid. Most of the churches ran an ALPHA course. All the churches had some sort of seeker friendly component present in their thinking about church services. All of the churches had cell groups of some sort. And all of the churches ran other programmes within their churches as a means of meeting specific

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6 This meeting is hosted by one of the ministers interviewed at his church once a fortnight on a Thursday afternoon. It has an open invitation and while there are several regulars to this gathering there are also ministers who come occasionally or who have come only once. These meetings are generally based around discussions of issues facing one or more of the ministers there at the time.

7 This group came to be made up of a group of ministers who travelled to Colorado Springs together to look at different Christian activity in that region. They called the group the "Colorado Club" and were the impetus behind the "unofficial" 150th Anniversary celebrations mentioned in the introduction.

8 Alpha is a ten week course, originally from Britain, designed to introduce those outside of the Christian faith to the basic tenets of Christianity. Further explanation is provided in the chapter on Pragmatism.
goals. The presence of mission statements reflected a common way of thinking, as did much of their “new paradigm church jargon”. An illustration of this is found in the way in which three pastors spoke about church growth and what causes church growth.

[Church growth is] really important because I think that a healthy church grows. I am probably more of the persuasion of talking about church health rather than church growth. I think that if a church is healthy then it will grow and so for me growth is a prime indicator of church health. (Pastor 6)

[Church growth is caused by] having a balanced church. For us we have five main values: worship, prayer, community, people moving in their areas of gifting, evangelism and giving and the sixth is teaching. Keeping those in balance and making sure all those values are held equally throughout the church. When you do that it’s growing a healthy church. If you just emphasise one of those, say teaching, and there’s no evangelism then it’s not a healthy church, I think a healthy body grows. (Pastor 1)

[Church growth is caused by] a healthy church, healthy pastors equal healthy churches. (Pastor 4)

**Criticism of Globalisation and Churches**

The concerns touted by critics stem from issues concerning new paradigm churches as a whole. Obviously if a person believed that new paradigm churches provided non-problematic solutions to issues concerning how to best do church in a new paradigm then the spread of new paradigm churches would not be seen as a concern. The issues discussed in the next two chapters highlight some of the concerns that critics do have about new paradigm churches and go some way to explaining their uneasiness about the spread of new paradigm churches.

Two issues raised about the globalisation of new paradigm churches are looked at below. The first concern suggests that leaders in “copy-cat” new paradigm churches have not thought through issues surrounding what it truly means to do church and therefore have uncritically adopted approaches from other churches based on whether these techniques can be seen to have increased church attendance. The second issue concerns the notion that churches, church programmes and church structures should not necessarily be copied. This is based on the premise that what is seen to work in one
church cannot always be successfully transposed to another location.9

In writing about the first concern Hendricks comments:

Today perhaps the most severe [pressure] is the pressure to put people in the pews on Sunday morning. So when any church appears to have discovered effective ways to do that, other churches that hear about it often wonder, 'Would that work here? Maybe we should try it.' Before long, countless churches are using the same strategies, with varying degrees of success.... The issue is not how one's congregation can be like some other 'successful' (i.e. large) church, but how it can be the unique church that God intends it to be. Do we know what that church is? Do we know what particular purpose and mission God has called it to? (Hendricks in Dawn, 1999: 285)10

Dawn illustrates this by comparing churches which adopted approaches used in other churches to scientists carrying out medical procedures without any concern for possible moral implications.

Just as scientists sometimes begin to perform medical procedures before anyone has raised the necessary moral objections, so it seems that many congregations today are switching worship practices without investigating what worship means and how our worship relates to contemporary culture. (Dawn, 1999: 4)

One of the arguments against the adoption of techniques from other churches relates to the target population of the large churches in the United States. Millar (1993) claims that churches that try to implement strategies found in churches like Willow Creek will fail because their populations are different

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9 This is an interesting criticism and the extent to which those interviewed had thought through some of the criticisms raised here is discussed below. However, while there is much talk about the inability to successfully transpose American models and concepts to other contexts the examples of the success of KFC in Malaysia and Taco Bell in Qatar suggest that this thinking may not be accurate. The Willow Creek Association has proven to be very popular in New Zealand and the ideas of other churches, such as Saddleback Community Church, have proliferated throughout contemporary church culture in Christchurch. The spread is not just into Western cultures either. The book 'Purpose Driven Church' has sold more than one million copies all over the world with Chinese translation of this book selling twenty thousand copies. A recent conference held by Saddleback in Hong Kong was attended by 1500 people, representing 500 churches (Lai, 2000: 12).

10 Hendricks' comment about the 'most severe pressure' reflects a consumerist model that focuses on what is measurable. This concept is explored in more depth in the following chapter. He also raises another issue of interest in his comment concerning how churches can be 'unique' when they use others' programmes. Hendricks does not explain his emphasis on 'uniqueness' or offer reasons as to why this, more than numerical growth, should be the focus of a church. Contrasting Hendricks comment to the model of the largest church in the world Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea, where hundreds of thousands of people meet in venues throughout the city to partake in live worship service links or watch pre-recorded videos points to a cultural value of 'difference' expressed by Hendricks. In Korea there doesn't appear to be an emphasis on 'uniqueness'. Identifying the stress that Hendricks places on 'uniqueness' perhaps as a Western cultural value helps explain his point of view.
from that found in South Barrington, Chicago.

Different churches have tried to copycat the technique and failed because they don’t understand their market well enough to adapt the approach to their market’s needs. (Millar, 1993:2)

The result, critics argue, is a proliferation of churches that cater for white, middle to upper class individuals. Talking about the Willow Creek caricatures of a spiritual seeker ‘Unchurched Harry and Mary’, Luecke (1997) writes:

Unchurched Harry and Mary, as they appear in Willow Creek discussions, represent only a limited segment of the boomers that churches talk about trying to accommodate—specifically the well educated, professional, unchurched whites in upscale Chicago suburbs..... Although Willow Creek leaders encourage other churches to find the comparable profile for their own communities, much of the discussion among followers repeats the South Barrington impression of Harry and Mary. (Luecke, 1997: 114)

Providing perhaps the most scathing criticism Hull argues succinctly that:

“[New Paradigm churches] offer models that cannot be reproduced and leaders who cannot be imitated” (Hull, 1992: 142). 11

During the interview process I asked several of the interviewees about some of the criticisms surrounding the use of methods from American churches. Responses concerning the negative components of globalisation showed that these church leaders had not been passive recipients of new ideas but rather had adapted and discarded where they felt necessary. They were quick to criticise anyone who thought that a simple transplant of programmes would be an effective way of doing church.

Neither of them [Willow Creek and Saddleback] would work in New Zealand, which an awful lot of people don’t understand. You can’t just transpose those places from one cultural setting to another. One of the problems, as any discerning person will know, is that what works in American culture is not necessarily going to work in New Zealand. I’ve never seen any unchurched people in New Zealand like unchurched people in Chicago; Illinois, or Barrington in particular. Perhaps on the North Shore in Auckland or Kandalah in Wellington but nowhere else much. There aren’t big communities of people like that in New Zealand so when they talk about unchurched people it’s a mighty different animal to unchurched people in

11 The evidence, however, suggests that models are being reproduced. Perhaps it would be more accurate to suggest that models cannot be ‘slavishly’ imitated.
New Zealand. (Pastor 3)

A lot of the stuff that we get from overseas we've got to use and adapt for our culture. You can't take anything and immediately plant it in New Zealand because we're unique... America is a lot more spiritually aware than New Zealand. Often that is a factor that we forget when we transfer one of their programmes into our society. We are much more secular than the States there is a greater degree of spiritual realisation in people's lives in the USA than there is in New Zealand. When you get there you see that. They say 'God bless you' as part of their conversation whether they mean it or not.' Or on the bus the driver might say we have to thank the Lord for a really lovely day today but you're not sure if he really knows the Lord. But I guess that's just part of their vocabulary. A lot more of them say they believe in God in American than they would here. Either you're a Christian or you're not here. (Pastor 7)

Considering this acknowledgement of the cultural differences and the supposed futility of direct implants it is interesting to note what the interviewees had to say concerning the obvious use of materials from other churches.

I've always tried to sift through stuff and say okay, what will work for us. It might not even work for the church across town. As long as the focus is on the harvest and the people out there, as long as we keep on reminding ourselves of that then that is more relevant to me. Making sure God's put something on our hearts is more relevant than saying let's do it Bill Hybel's way or Rick Warren's way because its working over there. (Pastor 7)

This notion of "what will work for us" was reflected in several of the comments made about using resources from overseas.

With McDonalds, Burger King or whatever, you can franchise the local operation. If you go into McDonalds in Singapore you've been into the one in Auckland, they are the same, exactly the same, except for the language at the top. Whereas if you go into one of these new paradigm churches they're not like that, they're not all the same. They may do a lot of similar things but they don't necessarily do them the same way, so it isn't just a cookie cutter thing. There are some basic concepts in here which people have got a hold of and tinkered with. Now you do get the Americans who say you've got to take the whole deal and don't change it but most churches I know have got a hold of something and played around with it to their hearts content till it suits them. (Pastor 3)

I think we are becoming like liquorice allsorts. We tend to grab stuff from all over the place if it's going to work for us, if it's not going to work for us we won't. Just because we're in the Willow Creek Association doesn't mean we're going to use their Network because it doesn't fit necessarily. I like that, I like gleaning from all sorts of places and trying it and seeing if it's going to work for us but you could never become a clone of someone else. (Pastor 7)

I think they [Willow Creek and Saddleback] have been very important and I
think that they’ve obviously got their place here. I think that with any model out there you’ve got to make sure it’s what is going to fit your church. We haven’t gone totally down that track but we have certainly picked stuff out of the Willow Creek thing which we’ve made our own and adapted to how we want to do it. (Pastor 6)

The technique of choosing programmes and using ideas from whatever sources suited the purpose the church was hoping to achieve resulted in a variety of influences for each church. These tended to reflect more closely the individual preferences of the various ministers interviewed. While there were a few repetitions in terms of who and what was mentioned it was clear that people were selecting churches and church leaders based on the similarities they felt that they shared.

With Saddleback I see it working [for our church]. I see that the principles are biblical and transcultural. Rick Warren would be my biggest influence in terms of how we do church. I enjoy listening to Bill Hybels immensely… but we have adapted the Saddleback style (Pastor 4)

I have looked at the major seeker churches in America the Willow Creeks and the Saddlebacks. I’ve looked at that but not only that. There’s a whole sector of church that really believes in the power of the Holy Spirit and they see a lot of unchurched people coming to Christ and they’re at totally the opposite end from seeker friendly churches - very Pentecostal. They have lots of singing, very strong on the power gifts, and so we probably looked at some of those churches around the world as well. What we’ve probably tried to do is blend the two…. I really enjoy listening to a guy called Phil Pringle who runs a contemporary, almost American style church in Sydney, I feel that has been good for me, because he’s not too far away from our culture and he’s a very good leader. (Pastor 5)

Hillsong has had an influence because we’re fairly closely related to the church over there and know Brian quite well. We’ve always had a close relationship with the whole Hillsong deal and that has really influenced our church a lot too - particularly in the music area and also partly in the style of their church and their services, not totally but there is a little bit there. Also in their church philosophy which is really really positive. You can’t come away from that place without feeling really really positive and that has been good for us here too. (Pastor 6)

I’d put the influence of John Wimber right up there alongside Bill Hybels. He was also a major in that he demystified a lot of the spiritual gifts area. What he had to propose wasn’t as accessible as Bill Hybels in that John Wimber was talking power evangelism and I’m still a bit intimidated by that. …Toronto has been an influence. I was able to go there and got suitably blitzed. It was marvelous. I was able to see that from the inside to be more open about God moving in very unusual ways. I don’t think I could have coped with it had I not gone there first…. Atlanta was a significant one for me with Promise Keepers and the men’s movement. Also Pensacola - it reinforced that there is still a place for the platform evangelist. All of these
contribute. (Pastor 8)

A while back I went to Australia and there was a Christian community there that all lived together and then did their ministry out of that. I guess I’d like to be able to develop something like that but in a more urban context. Many of the groups you see seem to be more in a rural setting. Obviously that’s more than what Bill Hybels means by community. (Pastor 2)

This “pick and choose” mentality points on the one hand to a desire to remain ‘true’ to the leader’s notions of what was important for their churches. However, it also highlights the somewhat pragmatic approach of these churches, taking and applying what ever they think is going to ‘work’ for them. Such statements point to the struggle of leaders to balance their values of growth and uniqueness. The comment of one church leader highlights this dilemma.

Willow Creek is a very intellectual type of approach and that is because of who they are. But because we are Pentecostal our roots are in the Holy Spirit. Understanding that we have really wanted to allow that aspect to come through into our church. I felt for little while along in our journey we lost something of our Pentecostal heritage. We knew that we wanted to be relevant to the unchurched and we saw the successful model of Willow and Saddleback and I think we allowed the pendulum to go too far. We thought, ‘wow they’re really doing it. Let’s be like them.’ But in it we lost something of the power of the Holy Spirit, the sense of what we call “the anointing”. So we realised that that wasn’t really us, we had become too conservative, we were missing something we really loved. So in recent years we have brought more of that aspect of the Holy Spirit in and probably blended the two together, always keeping in mind though that we want to be seeker friendly and keeping relevant to the seeker. (Pastor 5)

This issue of pragmatism is considered in more depth in the next chapter.
Chapter Five
Pragmatism

*Every church is driven by something. Tradition, finances, programs, personalities, events, seeker and even buildings can each be the controlling force in a church. But Rick Warren believes that in order for a church to be healthy it must become a purpose-driven church... In this landmark book, you'll learn the secret behind the fastest-growing Baptist church in American history. Saddleback Church grew from one family to over 10,000 in worship attendance in just fifteen years, while planting twenty-six other churches... and without owning a building. Founding pastor Rick Warren shares a proven five-part strategy that will enable your church to grow... -warmer through fellowship • deeper through discipleship • stronger through worship • broader through ministry • and larger through evangelism. (Warren, 1995: backflap)*

In much of contemporary society core social practices and cultural values, ideas, aspirations and identities are defined and oriented in relation to concepts such as pragmatism and rationalisation rather than to other social dimensions such as work, citizenship, or religious cosmology. In practical terms, this means that more and more areas of social life are organised according to measurable, practical outcomes or immediate importance. The values of pragmatism have acquired a prestige that encourages their expansion into a variety of social domains. This is illustrated through the extension of a pragmatic model to health provision and education. Pragmatism is increasingly central to the meaningful practice of everyday life in the Western world, being a core part in the construction of what we now experience as social reality.

This idea of the values, practices and institutions of pragmatism extending into all realms of experience is captured in George Ritzer's book 'The McDonaldization of Society' (1993). In this book Ritzer describes how the

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1 Recent shifts in Western culture have seen the move away from various domains being run by the experts within that domain. Health care used to be controlled by Doctors, Specialists, Surgeons, and, to a lesser extent, nurses. Now hospitals and other health care providers are "managed" in much the same way as a business. The opinions of health professionals have become subsumed to the business decisions of a manager. In the same way educational institutions are being controlled less by academics and more by bureaucrats.
principles that lie behind McDonalds have spread throughout the world and into every area of life (Ritzer, 1993: xvii). In examining this phenomenon Ritzer looks at four specific areas which are characteristic of a McDonaldized institution - efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control.\(^2\)

Efficiency describes the process whereby an organisation is structured by the pursuit of the optimum means to an end.\(^3\) Ritzer argues that McDonaldization is characterised by a mindset where individuals rarely seek to establish these means on their own. Instead they rely on already discovered processes which have been institutionalised. In McDonalds, efficiency is achieved by the simplification of menus as well as the implementation of various systems for workers to follow. All processes associated with the production and serving of food have been separated into steps and structured much like an assembly line.

Calculability reflects the measurement of the burger-making and selling process. In production what is assessed is speed, how many burgers are produced and how long it takes. In the consumption of the burgers the concern becomes how many burgers have sold and how quickly customers can be processed. From the consumer’s point of view what is calculated is the cost. Ritzer talks about ‘Big Macs and Large fries’ being presented to the consumer at what is perceived to be a reasonable price. Ritzer argues that the emphasis at McDonalds is primarily on the size of the portions relative to the

\(^2\) A fifth trait that Ritzer also looks at is the ‘irrationality of rationality’. This particular aspect will looked at more in light of the findings about churches and their relationship to the traits associated with pragmatism.

\(^3\)The processes of increased efficiency became amplified when, in 1914, Henry Ford applied to car manufacture the technique he had first seen in slaughterhouses in Chicago: he hooked the chassis onto a continuously moving chain.... As the car chassis moved down the assembly line, the workers had to perform their set tasks before it had passed by. The most important skill now was speed, as anyone could learn the simple repetitive tasks in a matter of hours. Ford could produce more cars in less time and at less cost.... The workers and the way they worked came under scrutiny, and were also standardized. Believing that rationalisation was the key to efficiency, F.W. Taylor developed a system he called Scientific Management in which the way people worked was analysed and reorganised. Complex tasks were broken down into simple, repetitive, timed jobs. This was designed to let humans and machines work together to maximum capacity.
price and the speed of service not the quality of the product.

McDonalds offers predictability. Entering McDonalds provides a familiar environment. The signage is the same, the interaction between worker and customer is the same and most importantly the food is the same.

Finally, Ritzer highlights control as an aspect of McDonaldization. He describes this as the replacement of human with non-human technology. In this way “organisations gain control over people gradually and progressively through the development and deployment of increasingly effective technologies (Ritzer, 1993: 101). Eventually the routinised behaviour of workers is replaced by computers and robots.

Pragmatism and the Church

Claims that churches have taken on board the values of pragmatism and are shaped by the characteristics outlined above are not difficult to find. In a similar comment to one noted above Lyon sees the effects of pragmatism as being “felt well beyond the store and the market, as more and more institutions - schools, hospital, museums, government departments, universities, libraries, and so on - see their users as consumers, and their members and users respond as such” (Lyon, 2000: 79). He notes that the statements 'Will it sell?' and 'Can I buy it?' have become metaphors commonly used in all sectors of life, including religion (Lyon, 2000: 79-80). Dawn (1995) explains, “Because the church seeks to minister to people formed by the technological milieu, it easily succumbs to its principal criterion of efficiency”. (Dawn, 1999: 42)

Pragmatic characteristics being displayed within new paradigm churches trouble some people. Guinness (1993) is concerned about how people who advocate church-growth uncritically use strategies borrowed from the human sciences, advertising and marketing which he believes are forged from unbiblical assumptions (Quoted in Robinson, 1994: 37). MacArthur (1993) backs up this concern.
Recently I spent some time reading a dozen or so of the latest books on ministry and church growth. Most of those books had long sections devoted to defining a philosophy of ministry. Not one of them referred to the instructions Paul outlined so carefully for Timothy. In fact, none of them drew any element of their ministry philosophy from the New Testament Pastoral Epistles! Most drew principles from modern business, marketing techniques, management theory, psychology and other similar sources. Some tried to illustrate their principles using biblical anecdotes. But not one of them drew their philosophy from Scripture - although much of the New Testament was written to instruct churches and pastors in these matters! (MacArthur, 1993: 27)

Further comments along these lines come from Colson (1992) who states that "Church growth has not only become big business, it also emulates big business. Church growth literature often speaks of products, services, and investments: 'x' amount of time and money invested in a particular project will yield 'y' results" (Colson, 1992).

One way where the influence of secular pragmatic values can be seen in the church is in the direct relationship between secular management experts and leaders of new paradigm churches. Burger (1997) observes that after attending a seminar led by management theorist Peter Drucker, Bill Hybels of Willow Creek church began to believe that marketing God had something in common with selling a product. 'I didn't know anything about how to manage the type of organisation our church had become,' he says. 'But I was so affected by Peter. I was like a sponge. After listening to Drucker, Hybels hung a poster outside his office that read: 'what is our business? Who is our customer? What does the customer consider value?' (Burger, 1997: 5)

Guinness believes that this focus on methodology has marginalized theology when thinking of church structure. He claims, "After all, Church Growth, as opposed to church growth, is a self professed 'science', not a theology" (Guinness, 1993: 26). He writes:

It is amazing to witness the lemming-like rush of church leaders who forget theology in the charge after the latest insights of sociology - regardless of where the ideas have come from or where they lead to. Carelessly handled, innovation and adaptation become a form of corruption, capitulation, and idolatry. (Guinness, 1993: 29)
MacArthur believes that this pattern, observable in new paradigm churches, can be summed up in what he describes as a focus on pragmatism. He defines pragmatism as "the notion that meaning or worth is determined by practical consequences" (xii). In support of his argument he quotes Donald McGavran who is recognised as the founder of the "church-growth" movement.

We devise mission methods and policies in light of what God has blessed - and what he has obviously not blessed. Industry calls this 'modifying operation in light of feedback.' ... We teach men to be ruthless in regard to method. If it does not work to the glory of God and the extension of Christ's church, throw it away and get something which does. As to methods, we are freely pragmatic - doctrine is something else. (Quoted in MacArthur, 1993: 74)

MacArthur disagrees with this philosophy stating that pragmatism "defines truth as that which is useful, meaningful and helpful. Ideas that don't seem workable are rejected as false". (MacArthur, 1993: xii) He argues that when pragmatism is used to make judgments about right and wrong, or when it becomes a guiding philosophy of life, theology and ministry, it inevitably clashes with scripture. This is because "Scriptural and biblical truth is not determined by what works and what doesn't" (MacArthur, 1993: xiii).

Using Mission Statements

Claims that pragmatism is predominant in new paradigm churches are interesting to consider here. An observable trait from the business world that is impacting churches is the implementation of Mission statements. The widespread introduction of Mission statements in businesses ensures that at all times employees are focused on the aim of the business and working to achieve that aim. For the customer Mission statements give a clear indication of what they should expect from that business. Alongside Mission statements, Vision statements, strategic plans, and long term plans all seek to focus the attention and energy of all those involved in an organisation on a common goal. Interviews with ministers in Christchurch revealed that this thinking had penetrated some way into the operation of their churches. All of the churches had mission statements. These included:

- Helping people to follow Jesus
- To show people the way to God
• To help people become followers of Jesus
• Reaching unchurched people and helping them become fully devoted followers of Christ
• Our mission is to be a church with a great commitment to the great commandment and the great commission
• [We] are committed to making radical followers of Jesus Christ by:
  1. Loving God totally (Matthew 22: 37-38)
     The greatest commandment
  2. Loving one another sacrificially (John 13: 34-35)
     The new commandment
  3. Loving the unchurched fervently (Matthew 28: 18-20)
     The last commandment

In line with this a few of these churches also had vision statements or philosophies of ministries for their churches. Two had booklets that covered these statements. One church in particular had a comprehensive book that covered statements of the church’s values, its mission statement, its strategy, statement of purpose, statement of belief right through to appendices of “equipping material” and information concerning “Evaluating my path to maturity, to service and to outreach.”

The ministers interviewed for this project believed that putting these statements in place had been positive for their churches. Comments they made were as follows:

It keeps focusing people. We have it up on the screen every Sunday morning as people come into church. I think that is the best way for people to own what you are wanting to do and where you are going as a church. (Pastor 6)

I have found it very helpful because it has given me a succinct way of saying what our vision is. I wouldn’t think that [the vision statement] has been quite as impactful as the mission statement but I think it has been helpful to just get down “this is who we are”. (Pastor 3)

When we formulated that [mission statement] 6 or 7 years ago I preached on it for 6 weeks and it was really good because it was happening to us in our hearts. We knew that it was our bottom line. I preached on each [of the facets] for two weeks and then each year I do it again in different ways. It made a really good impact. It was about the same time as the seeker friendly thing. It’s helped me too and the leaders. Our focus always has to be on these areas

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4 An interesting follow up to this research would be to focus on why each church had chosen to develop such mission statements. A focus on theories concerning ‘innovation diffusion’ may be useful for understanding the pattern that is apparent in the spread of such thinking within these churches.
and if something doesn’t fit then we know we are not doing it right. (Pastor 7)

We gathered a group of leaders at the beginning of ‘97 and spent two or three Saturday mornings together looking at developing a mission statement and a vision statement. Out of that has come a leaflet of our mission, vision and strategy statement. I think that has been very helpful for us in the last couple of years. I’ve kept going back to our vision which is really based on Acts chapter two and I’ve preached on that every six months. (Pastor 1)

It’s been very good. We drew it up after a period where we had lost our focus so we put time into figuring out what are we actually trying to do here and a number of people on the staff reasonably often say this is a very helpful thing to do. In fact the person who heads up our community ministries says it is the best thing we have ever done, so I think it has been good. (Pastor 3)

While the adoption of mission statements and, to a lesser degree, vision statements have been evident in the churches; the presence of planning, particularly any sort of long term planning, was not so apparent.

We’ve never actually sat down and done middle or long term goals in a broad sense. We do but we have never formalised anything, and if you asked me now where do we want to be as a church in five years time I probably couldn’t tell you a whole lot. We work very much on a year to year basis. It’s worked till now but we recognise that we need to be doing a little more, at least mid term planning.... At the moment our goals are very much formulated around getting ourselves into our property and that seems to be consuming our focus a lot. It’s like our twelve month plan. This time next year we are going to be doing this. I don’t have a five year apart from that. (Pastor 7)

That’s our area of weakness actually, we would be more likely to say "this is the line that we want to go down, seeker orientated", so we pour our resources and energy and creativity down that pathway. We don’t have a five year plan or a ten year plan (Pastor 4)

We are not really into five year plans. The reason is we have done them in the past and within a year they are hopelessly outdated because things change and they develop so often. We would think one or two years ahead but it is pretty open ended beyond that. There are some things like buildings and soon you’ve got to start thinking a number of years ahead so I suppose we do to some extent but it is not a written down "here it is". We are not that kind of managerial. (Pastor 3)

While the majority of churches did not set long term goals a few were involved in short term planning.

We have a two year goal. We planted the church eight years ago and in the first five years we went from minus ten to naught and it’s really only been going in the last three years. At this stage we only set two year goals and each department sets one year goals. (Pastor 5)
We had a little group last year, some of the key leaders a group of about six or eight that met for about eight months last year and really reviewed every area of the church's life and we drew up some goals for the next three to five years and we looked at some strategies for achieving those goals. I think that has given us a sharper sense of focus, knowing where we are going, it has made us aware of a few key steps that we need to take. It has made us aware of needs in terms of staffing and buildings too. We've got a number of key things we need to do there. We've got a little group at the moment actually looking at enlarging the buildings, looking at the plant generally. (Pastor 1)

We have a process every year we go through. We have retreats, we have staff retreats and sometimes the elders are involved. Then for the last few years at the beginning of each year we have pulled together the various leaders of all the ministries, which is about 150 people, and just talked about vision kind of things and planning and then we encourage each group to think about the coming year. (Pastor 3)

While it appears that some of the traits from a pragmatic society have permeated the church it is also apparent that church leaders have been selective in which “tools” they have taken on board. The comment by Pastor 3 that “we're not that kind of managerial”, in particular, reveals a conscious rejection of some of the traits of a pragmatic approach.

Using Programmes

The second area that will be considered as an indicator of the level of a pragmatic mentality that has pervaded these churches is the use of programmes. All these churches use programmes as a means of achieving a specified goal or goals. The majority of these are programmes that have been developed in other contexts and are then sold to churches wanting to achieve a similar purpose. There were two programmes that were prevalent in the eight churches. The first programme was ALPHA. Seven of the eight churches ran ALPHA. The eighth church ran a programme with similar aims and structure as the ALPHA programme. The second popular programme was Network which five churches had running. One church was about to implement it and a second church was looking at implementing a similar programme entitled SHAPE.

ALPHA is a programme designed to introduce those who are not Christians to the basic beliefs of the Christian faith. It was developed in Britain and has a distinctly British focus. The programme is based around a series of videos
that are presented by the author of ALPHA, Nicky Gumble. A typical ALPHA evening involves a shared meal, viewing of the video, and discussion of the video material using booklets as guides. The aim of the ALPHA programme is to introduce people to the Christian faith.

Network is a programme designed in the USA by Willow Creek Community Church. As mentioned in Chapter Two Network is designed to help participants “discover their spiritual gifts, passion, and personal style”. Its aim is to help church members discover where they can be involved in voluntary service within the church. Fully implemented the Network programme requires the completion of the course by participants, follow up interviews with a ‘consultant’ who has access to a database, prepared by the church, outlining all possible volunteer opportunities in the church with the gifts, passions, and personal style required of someone who would be suitable to fill the position. In short it is a mini placement agency for the church.

The general response to these two programmes by the Christchurch ministers who were interviewed was mixed. Overall people were generally positive towards the ALPHA programme. However, there was some concern expressed about the Network programme. Comments made about the ALPHA course included the following:

We have seen people come to faith through ALPHA. That’s really good. We’ve seen people rekindled in their faith. I think the very first ALPHA course we did we had a guy who was in his late seventies who’s wife always came to church and he never did and now he’s teaching Bible in Schools very enthusiastically. (Pastor 1)

Seven people became Christians out of the last ALPHA. We baptised a couple a week ago. (Pastor 8)

These days most of the adults we baptise come through ALPHA and I think of all the ministries we have probably Divorce Care is the most effective in terms of the numbers of people who become Christians, certainly coming in to ALPHA. There is a bit of a step really. People tend to come in to Divorce Care then come to Sunday night then go to ALPHA. It doesn’t happen to everyone but most that go to Divorce Care would end up coming on a Sunday night, some of those would go to ALPHA and some of those would eventually become Christians. (Pastor 3)
We are running ALPHA at the moment. We used Discovering Jesus for a number of years and found that really good. In fact, in my mind I think that Discovering Jesus is more New Zealand friendly than ALPHA is. I love to see somehow that we could adapt Discovering Jesus and run it like an ALPHA programme maybe because I think it takes people from way back on the Engels scale and takes them through whereas to my mind ALPHA seems to presume you’re almost a Christian before you start. But it is still very good. I love the way it is done with the meals. We are running ALPHA right now. Discovering Jesus is still available but we are not promoting it so much. We are running with ALPHA to see where it goes. (Pastor 7)

We haven’t ever got into ALPHA. We run Christianity Explained and have done for quite a few years. It is similar to ALPHA, but it’s a model that we have had for quite a few years and it had worked for us so we are still using it. We have looked at ALPHA and thought about using it but have felt that for now we will keep going with Christianity Explained until its time runs out. All these things seem to have a time when they are really working. (Pastor 5)

Comments on Network were:

It’s very popular. It’s helping us with the diversity of ministries that are emerging, its helping people find a place, and give them a job they love. (Pastor 8)

The impact has been good as far as making people aware that they have some gifts and abilities and we’ve had some people come to us and say “hey what can I do?”, and we’ve been able to slot some people into some different areas, in the church. We’ve also devised an up and coming leaders programme which is a ten week programme where we selected people out of the church that we knew had leadership potential and so we took them through the church. We’ve only run one so far, and we’ve placed about 90 percent of those people in leadership positions in the church. (Pastor 6)

We’ve had a lot of people go through it. A lot of the ministry leaders tell me that no one has ever rung them up and said “I’ve been to Network and I’ve discovered that this is my gift and I want to come and help in your ministry”, so I’ve wondered at times whether the people that are doing it are doing it more for confirmation of what they are already doing because I think that most of the people that do it are probably active in the church doing something anyway. Other people do it as a process of self discovery - what are my gifts and so on. Although I do know of some people [for whom it has been helpful]. I discovered the other day that someone was working in the daycare because when they went through Network their passion was to work with little kids so they went and signed up. So there are people who do [find places to volunteer] but I wouldn’t think huge numbers of people because most people that come in to ministry positions tend to be friends of people who are already involved in it. They get recruited whether they are gifted to do it or not. It seems to be a relational way that ministries grow. (Pastor 3)

I am currently looking for something else to use. I found that it was very difficult to implement. Its danger is that it has got a lot of promise but people sort of feel disappointed at not getting there. I'm sort of seeing if we could use something else with a similar result. Other people's experience of it seems to show that too. It seems very top heavy administratively if you follow the
book. SHAPE seems to be a good one. So we haven’t been fully sold on Network. (Pastor 7)

Most of the churches also had a variety of other courses running. Three churches had a Divorce Recovery programme running. Two had “Growing Kids God’s Way”. Two were running a course “Experiencing God”. Two churches were using programmes from an Australian church coming under the umbrella of “Careforce Recovery”. This includes a Divorce recovery programme, A Sexual Abuse Group, Marriage Enrichment, and groups called “Search for Significance, Man to Man, and Woman to Woman”. Two churches were using programmes from an Australian church coming under the umbrella of “Careforce Recovery”. This includes a Divorce recovery programme, A Sexual Abuse Group, Marriage Enrichment, and groups called “Search for Significance, Man to Man, and Woman to Woman”. Other churches had similar programmes to these with a “Survivors of Sexual Abuse” Group and Pre-marriage courses. A few churches also were running another Willow Creek course “Becoming a Contagious Christian”. However, like the Network course there had been some dissatisfaction with this programme.

Information provided by the ministers of the eight churches showed that there was a definite interest and a willingness to try new programmes. Some of the churches were clearly relying heavily on programmes as a way of achieving the aims of the church. One church, in particular, had developed a seven step programme designed to take people through seven different programmes. The first course (ALPHA) was designed for people who aren’t Christians while the next six aimed to take people through to Christian maturity. Entitled “Sinner to Saint” the entire process used several of the courses based on the programmes already mentioned, while the minister had developed others especially for the church.

What is particularly interesting about the use of programmes in these churches is not that such programmes exist and are widely used but the degree to which they embody the values of pragmatism. Processing members of the church in order to ensure their appropriate placement in the church is certainly driven by a desire to be efficient with the “human resource” of a church. In light of this growing rationalisation within new paradigm churches Ritzer’s book “McDonaldization of Society” (1993) has some useful insights.
Criticism of Pragmatism and Churches

In his book "McDonaldization of Society" Ritzer devotes a chapter to examining what he describes as the irrationalities of rationalisation. Having discussed the processes of efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control he uses this chapter to highlight several ways in which these processes, designed as part of a rationalisation process, have consequences that are irrational. A few of the issues that he discusses are relevant to new paradigm churches.

The issue that Ritzer raises concerns the issue of efficiency. Ritzer claims that many of the institutions concerned with efficiency are focused not on what is efficient for users of their goods or services but what is efficient for the institution.

Although the forces of McDonaldization trumpet their greater efficiency, they never tell us whom the system is more efficient for. Most of the gains in efficiency go to those who push rationalisation. People need to ask: Efficient for whom?... Is it efficient for people to pump their own gasoline? Is it efficient for them to push numerous combinations of telephone numbers before they speak to a human voice? Most often, people will find that such systems are not efficient for them. (Ritzer, 1993:123)

Applying this criticism to new paradigm churches it is possible to see links to their increasing use of programmes. If we ask Ritzer’s question “Efficient for whom?” one is left with the unmistakable impression that the use of programmes is efficient for those within the church. It is more efficient for a Christian to take a friend to an ALPHA course than it is to study, in depth, the claims of the Christian faith so that they are able to communicate with clarity the material covered in this course. It is easier and more efficient to take people through a course designed for those who have been divorced than to meet with each of those individuals one on one and provide counselling.5

5 The whole concept of having a church service designed for those who do not regularly go to church is also a more efficient way for church members to introduce their friends to the Christian faith than by talking to them themselves. The tendency of many new paradigm churches to run several services in a row on a Sunday heightens the impression of efficient systems ensuring as many people can “be processed” in a day as possible.
The result of this drive for a McDonaldized system, Ritzer believes, is a dehumanizing system that, he writes “may become antihuman or even destructive of human beings” (Ritzer, 1993:128). The use of programmes creates a uniformity of experience, as in the uniformity found in a McDonalds restaurant. However, Ritzer argues that uniformity is incompatible when human interactions are involved. To be dealt with in a uniform manner is dehumanizing. (Ritzer, 1993:131).

As well as being dehumanizing for those on the receiving end of a uniform system those involved in the running of such a system can also experience a feeling of dehumanization. Running a pre-prepared programme does not require the creative input from those running it. While the extent of such dehumanization would be difficult to measure, examples from McDonaldized businesses point to high levels of resentment, job dissatisfaction, alienation, absenteeism, and turnover amongst employees (Ritzer, 1993:130). This could be a parallel for what those in new paradigm churches describe as “the back door”. While new paradigm churches are often renowned for their size an often unspoken characteristic of such churches is the large turnover of people within them. There are obviously a variety of reasons why individuals choose to leave churches. In a study of Church leavers, many from churches similar to those being studied here, including people from Christchurch, Alan Jamieson (2000) discovered that alongside those who leave these churches for personal reasons, there are those who have begun to question some of the underlying assumptions of their churches. While the assumptions being questioned are varied there is, no doubt, those for whom the increasing similarities between a McDonaldized world and a McDonaldized church are no longer tenable.

Another issue, discussed by Ritzer, is the lack of reality that necessarily stems from uniformity. It is difficult to relate to an individual in a strictly personal manner when one is working within the bounds of a structured programme with a need to get through the whole programme of that night’s course. A dangerous consequence of this is the temptation to create the
impression that intimacy, rather than uniformity is the order of the day.

Ritzer supplies an example of this in his book.

At Nutri/System, counselors receive a list of things to do to keep dieters coming back. The counselors are urged to “greet client by name with enthusiasm.” Knowing the clients’ name creates a false sense of friendliness, as does the “enthusiastic” greeting. Counselors are also urged to “converse with clients in a sensitive manner.” The counselors are provided with a small, glossy card entitled, “Personalized approach at a glance.” The card rationalizes the personal greeting with pseudo-personalized responses to problematic situations. For example, if clients indicate that they feel they are receiving little support for the diet, the script urges the counselor to say, “I’m so glad to see you. I was thinking about you. How is the program going for you?” Is the counselor really glad to see the client? Really thinking about the client? Really concerned about how things are working out for the client? (Ritzer, 1993: 131)

Pritchard comments on this “fake intimacy” within the new paradigm church situation, although more so in the context of seeker services. In contemporary society many situations arise where large groups gather, such as a university lecture, and while people may be in close proximity with one another the situation is far from intimate. Pritchard warns that in the seeker service attempts can be made to make people feel more personally welcomed. “If you know yourself well,” Pritchard writes, “You know how to turbo boost whatever your strengths are to manipulate people...”

A speaker or singer can spark an emotional intimacy with the audience. But this emotional closeness is actually devoid of a true relationship.... This emotional closeness is anonymous and can be manipulated to wrong ends. (Pritchard, 1996: 216)\(^6\)

Another aspect of new paradigm churches which some say is a reflection of pragmatism is the size of new paradigm churches. Many new paradigm churches are large and critics accuse ministers of these churches of placing too much emphasis on the size of their congregations. Dawn believes that such an emphasis on measurement is revealed by the “huge push for worship practices to be changed in order to attract large numbers” (Dawn, 1999: 29)

Our culture is statistical, and, as previously shown; Technopoly (sic) aggravates the tendency. As relationships, entertainment, and even the news

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\(^6\) Observations of a seeker service in Christchurch illustrated this for me, as the worship leader sought to create a persona most similar to something like that of a game-show host.
become increasingly superficial, society looks for ways to measure success. Lacking any tools to grade quality, we must measure quantity... The danger to the church is enormous and, strangely, often not obvious. Quality suffers when the main concern is quantity.... On the other hand the dangers of these idolatries cannot be used as an excuse not to care for the people in the world around us, not to do all we can to attract them to Christ. That concern, however, must always be guided by the goal of faithfulness rather than of numerical success. (Dawn, 1999: 51-2)

When interviewed the Christchurch ministers were asked how important growth was to them. While they acknowledged that growth was a focus for them they were insistent that it was not growth for growth's sake.

It's not our focus but it's our measuring instrument. If we are doing the job we expect to grow but we don't talk a lot about figures but, if at the end of the year, we haven't grown we ask ourselves why.... I think that if you are focusing on the right things the growth will come, I think God brings the growth. I think if you are focusing on numbers and growth you're trying to do it, but if you say "what does church mean? How can we do that and be effective at doing that?" the numbers should just happen. (Pastor 5)

Growth is really important because I think that a healthy church grows. I am probably more of the persuasion of talking about church health rather than church growth. I think that if a church is healthy then it will grow and so for me it's a prime indicator of church health. (Pastor 6)

I think it is important that we want to see people become Christians and we want to grow our resource base to do mission, we want to be effective at evangelism and so on. I think a lot of stuff in churches is a morale thing and growing churches are quite a different place from a declining church in terms of morale and vision and all this sort of stuff. Going to a church that is declining is a depressing experience. I think that is important. I think that a church that is continuing to grow in a healthy way has a big effect on the morale of the place. (Pastor 3)

We have never been a church that says we've got to have this many people by the end of this year, or this many new Christians by the end of this year, and that sort of stuff, its probably not my style. I talk about it sometimes saying "you know we're aiming for a church of this size it would be great to have that, but then why stop there anyway why not aim for a church THIS size, why should we put a limit on anything if God wants to keep working. But I've seen too many people get stuck on "this number has to happen and if we don't reach it we've failed" that can be detrimental so we try not to get to number conscious in a sense but I think that people saying "hey look come on there's heaps of seats to fill or we are going to go to a new auditorium is a great challenge, we've got all these empty seats here to fill, it's not just filling the seats it's reaching people out there. So getting them to look outside of themselves all the time and saying that's what we're here for. Keeping that vision before us all the time. That's a big challenge for me to try and help people see we've got to keep outward focused we've got to keep reaching the people in the city who don't know the Lord. We often talk about the fact that 10% possibly at most are in church, there is 90% not we've got a big job to do. We're part of the wider church around the city we're just one
congregation we want to do our part in that. (Pastor 7)

When asked about the place of “experts” that seek to encourage church growth and explain principles of church growth one minister said:

It is not simple. It is a complex of a whole lot of things, that’s why books that give six simple point to church growth are nearly always wrong I think. It is hugely complex. There are all sorts of national factors; churches in some countries will grow much faster than others. Churches in America tend to grow much faster than churches in New Zealand because of the national religious climate and also because the urban areas are much bigger, people draw from a much bigger catchment area. Then there is institutional factors, national ones, like some denominations are very committed to growing churches so there is a climate created within that denomination to grow churches and other churches are not interested. In fact, if a church started growing they would be highly suspicious of you and think there is something dubious going on here. Then you’ve got local communities that are so different. In some communities it’s relatively easy to grow churches, in others it is much more difficult. Then you’ve got factors associated with the local church itself, which if they’re right can actually overcome all of the above factors and that largely comes down to leadership, to the quality of what’s done, particularly the preaching, to the growth of a sense of community in the church and a sense of belonging together, of some intentional steps you take to reach out to people who aren’t yet Christians. I mean, some churches grow because they put on a good show and just attract people from other churches. I don’t think that’s genuine growth for the church. It is not kingdom growth. So growth as such has to be analysed. You have to ask, “is it growing the kingdom of God or is it just growing one local church at the expense of other ones?” Which is ultimately not worth a can of beans. Obviously if a church is growing it is going to attract people from other churches that are in situations which are boring them to tears or whatever and that is inevitable, you can’t stop that. But if that is the only way a church is growing then there’s big trouble. (Pastor 3)

As a cautionary word to churches Hull (1992) emphasises the need for churches to carefully scrutinise the tools of pragmatism. He writes:

The need to reach out to a hurting world, and the need to use tools invented by the world in order to do so, cannot be denied. The trouble comes when we employ those tools uncritically, without careful biblical scrutiny. The more the church accommodates to culture, the more it becomes secularized itself and, therefore, incapable of offering solutions as a hand outside a ruined culture, reaching into the pit to pull the captives to freedom. A secularized church cannot make disciples because it is not itself a faithful servant of its risen King (Hull, 1992: 145)

The issue that Hull raises here is the level of critique employed by church leaders. While this is going to be different between every individual, it is obvious from the comments made at least some of the ministers were not
being passive recipients of the values that the culture is handing them. The comments below are an illustration of this.

I think borrowing from the business world is fine. Servant leadership will never change and I think as long as we are adopting business principles which are servant leadership business principles then we are okay but if we adopt business principle that are not that way then we are not doing the right thing. I believe we do things well. I think the church’s image of “anything goes” is totally wrong and if the business model has helped us be a bit more professional in our presentation of all sorts of things and our communication with people and the way we run our churches then that is good. But you can, on the other hand, be a manager and be bogged down and a lot of administrative ways of doing things are having no effect on what you have been called to do. So there is a danger in that and I’ve known leaders in the past who have become very management oriented in their whole church style to the point where they’ve gone so far that way they’re not really called to do. So I think it’s been healthy but we have to be careful not to adopt some of the bad ideas from business, it’s got to be servant led. So we can create a place where people can say “hey I can trust these people because they’re not shoddy, it’s done well, they’re up front they’re doing it honestly, there are checks and balances in place”. All those sorts of things are very important. (Pastor 7)

The second comment deals directly with the concept of McDonaldization.

People are saying “all this hullabaloo that has developed over two thousand years has obscured the reality of Christianity, let’s come back to the source documents, forget all the traditions and stuff which has grown up”. I think these new kind of churches, these new paradigm churches are an attempt to answer the question, “if the apostles were around today what sort of churches would they be seeking to develop?” They obviously understood the kind of churches that were necessary in the first century and so given that you live in a McDonalds world do you decry McDonalds and you become a lone voice standing out there against this wicked trend or do you say “how do you contextualise the gospel into this, given that efficiency and organisational strength are kind of neutral. They are not necessarily good or bad they are just different and this is the way now that people relate to each other. But then some people in historic churches would say that what we are doing for example is terribly wrong. It is the McDonaldization of religion. But those people tend to be in very small churches with very elderly congregations and that is a point that is not often made. (Pastor 3)

While, for these Church leaders there will always be a struggle to balance the values of the Christian faith with the values of pragmatism, it is not a struggle some of them have relinquished. For those that are prepared to do this Guinness writes:

In sum, innovation is not a problem. If Christians were to use the best fruits of the managerial revolution constructively and critically, accompanied by parallel reformation of truth and theology, the potential for the gospel would be incalculable. (Guinness, 1993: 16)
Perhaps one key difficulty in a pragmatic approach lies in what Guinness refers to as the 'parallel reformation of truth and theology'. When considering pragmatism as a philosophy, where what works is valued, one unanswered question remains concerning new paradigm churches: why do certain approaches work, while others do not? The next chapter looks at the issue of individualism and how its values can be seen in new paradigm churches. In considering individualism it is possible to conclude that perhaps the pragmatic strategies of new paradigm churches work because they are buying into the predominant, individualistic, values of society. For this reason pragmatism poses a problem. We now turn to the issue of individualism and look further at its impact on new paradigm churches.
Chapter Six

Individualism

Unfortunately the market driven philosophy appeals to the very worst mood of our age. It caters to people whose first love is themselves and who care not for God - unless they can have him without disrupting their own selfish lifestyles. Promise such a people a religion that will allow them to be comfortable in their self love, and they will respond in droves. (MacArthur, 1993: 28) ...

The word 'Individualism' first appeared in a dictionary during the 19th Century, three hundred years after the appearance of the word 'individual' (Chaudhiri, 1997, 4). It was defined as a 'Belief in the individual's supreme worth and importance, as well as in his (sic) right to act as he pleases'.

Commenting on individualism in the United States Bellah writes:

'We believe in the dignity, indeed the sacredness of the individual. Anything that would violate our right to think for ourselves, make our own decisions, live our lives as we might see fit, is not only morally wrong, it is sacrilegious.' (Bellah, 1985: 85)

Schmookler (1993) argues that the concept of the individual is the core concept underlying Western market societies that in turn foster a certain form of individualism. The validity of the first part of this claim can perhaps be best seen in the theories of Tonnies in his comparison of traditional rural cultures and industrial cities.

Tonnies (1855-1936) believed there existed two types of society. The first: ‘Gemeinschaft’ (which can be translated as ‘community’) is the type of society found prior to the emergence of modern capitalist society. It is characterised, among other things, by unity and sympathetic relations among kinsfolk and old acquaintances. In this era society was chiefly made up of home and land loving peasants, and needs were met by home production and barter. In contrast to this is ‘Gesellschaft’ (which has been translated as ‘association’). This describes society after the emergence of modern capitalism. In this type of society atomisation exists where there was once
unity, with strangers and aliens everywhere (Loomis in Tonnies, 1955: xix). Gesellschaft has resulted from the disruption of traditional bonds through specialisation or segmentation of labour marking a 'continued change in the original basis upon which living together rests' (Tonnies, 1955: 28). Tonnies explains that the theory of the Gesellschaft deals with the artificial construction of an aggregate of human beings that superficially resembles the Gemeinschaft in so far as the individuals peacefully live and dwell together. In the Gemeinschaft they remain essentially united in spite of all separating factors, whereas in the Gesellschaft they are essentially separated in spite of all uniting factors.

However, alongside this societal explanation of a move to an individual focused society is a more philosophical one. The move towards a more urban, or Gesellschaft type society paralleled developments in social thought relating to the individual. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) with his emphasis on the protection and preservation of individual freedom and later developments from his theories signaled a change in attitude to the appropriate role of the individual. Hobbes no longer believed that the role of an individual was to support the existing social structure. Rather, the role of society was to restrain the selfish impulses of the individual (Magee, 1994: 94).

The importance of the rights of ordinary people compared to those in power can be noted also in the theories of Locke (1632-1704). Alluding to Hobbesian ideals, Locke argued that individuals come together voluntarily to create society. As with Hobbes, the social contract for Locke is not seen as being between government and the governed but between free individuals. Unlike Hobbes, however, Locke saw the governed as retaining their individual rights even after government has been set up. The securing of individual rights, the protection of the life, liberty, and property of all, is, Locke believed, the only legitimate purpose of government and sovereignty ultimately remains with the people.

Modern day democracies are based on these philosophies. The American Declaration of Independence (1776) stated: 'We hold these truths to be self
evident that all men are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable Rights and that among them are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness'. Thirteen years later the French Revolution spread democratic ideals throughout Europe.

**Individualism in Contemporary Society**

Lyon argues that two types of individualism can be found in society today. Expressive individualism describes a worldview in which the self is central and needs are met through experiences, especially bodily ones. Acquisitive individualism places consumption in a central position resulting in significance being given to the accumulation of things. Consumerist attitudes and lifestyle pervade society where acquisitive individualism is found and choice is deemed to be paramount. Expressing a similar sentiment Benton writes:

> Consumerism focuses on the power of personal choice for the customer... Being able to choose what we want is a way of expressing ourselves and people get great pleasure out of it. (Benton, 1999: 12)

**Expressive Individualism**

The importance of the 'dignity of humans' forms what Chaudhuri (1997) argues is one of the basic ideas associated with individualism. While this concept, considered in light of the social context in which it emerged, seems laudable it is distorted somewhat by our current context. Schmookler argues that traditionally the essence of freedom has always been freedom from an oppressive authority that compels us to do something against our will. However, that freedom has now come to mean the liberty to indulge the whim, desire, or craving of our selection (Schmookler, 1993: 141-142).

Chaudhuri believes that such a distortion of the concept of human dignity is expressed in society’s increased emphasis on ‘self-development’. This reflects a philosophy that places the self as central. The current emphasis on self-development reflects a shift from an ethic of self-denial to an ethic of self-fulfillment. Individualism has fostered a person who does not require or desire others for his or her completion of life (Sampson in Schmookler,
1993: 98). Rather the emphasis is now placed on 'finding meaning', 'growing' and on finding 'self-expression'. Benton comments:

Hand-in-hand with the growth of industrial society has come the rise of popular psychology which says that happiness and true fulfillment in life is about self-actualisation, self-esteem, self-assertiveness, self-knowledge. (Benton, 1999: 104)

This notion of 'personal growth', writes Sampson, is heavily burdened with the 'self-contained individual' idea. The greatest good is individual self-expression; the group and the culture are seen as the evils that thwart freedom and independence. By viewing an individual's primary task as finding his or herself in autonomous self-reliance, the separation of individuals from their families and from those larger communities and traditions that constitute their past is heightened.

Acquisitive Individualism

Acquisitive individualism represents a widely held belief that an individual has the right to pursue self-interest in the form of acquisition of money and fulfillment of all desires, good or bad, without external constraints. A consumer society communicates the message that consumer goods will give us what we are looking for. Smchookler (1993) believes that:

The consumer driven market society of the contemporary world instills in us its own voice - its own cacophony of voices within us. The flood of commercial messages tell us where happiness is to be found. Buy it from us. Smoke these, and you’ll be as exuberantly joyful as this beautiful young woman skipping hand and hand with her lover. The voices echo inside our minds, the voices of our cultural teacher: this product makes one sexy; this product makes one strong and manly; this one brings good fellowship. (Smchookler, 1993: 32)

Responding to these ideas Campolo (1994) says

Those who contrive ads have great insight into our collective psych and have tailored their pitch to convince us that what is being sold will provide such essential requisites as security, love, status, and peace of mind.

To listen to the ads is to be assured that everything needed for spiritual well-being can be secured if we just have enough money. Hamburgers are sold by appealing to our sense of losing out on life: "You deserve a break today... at
McDonalds.” In reality all you get for your money is some ground meat.

“Buick is something you can believe in!” Here you thought Buick was an automobile, and the ad makers tell you it is a religious conviction!...

Then there’s the most famous ad of all time. In it we are shown people from all the nations of the world, dressed in their native costumes. There are Serbs and Croats. There are blacks and whites from South Africa. There are people from Asia and Latin America, and ethnic types from all over Europe. They are holding hands. They are singing together in unison, “I’d like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony...” And what is it that brings perfect harmony to a broken humanity? It’s Coca Cola. And if there’s any doubt about the validity of the claim, a strong authoritative voice assures us, “It’s the real thing.” (Campolo, 1994: 44-45)

Like materialism, consumerism emphasises the ‘need’ to accumulate material possessions. The distinction comes in the primacy of ‘personal choice’ attached to consumerism. “Consumerism doesn’t just offer people things, it offers them a vast range of things from which they can choose. Part of the buzz of consumerism is the pleasure of personal choice. By personal choice we express ourselves and our individuality” (Benton, 1999: 38)

**Individualism and Churches**

When considering the place of expressive individualism and acquisitive individualism in new paradigm churches it is important to consider that in our experience of everyday life individualism cannot always be clearly categorized as expressive or acquisitive. To a certain extent they both provide fuel for each other. Vitz claims:

> It has certainly proved convenient that just as Western economies began to need consumers, there developed an ideology hostile to discipline, to obedience, and to delaying of gratification. Self-ism’s clear advocacy of experience now and its rejection of inhibition or repression was a boon to the advertising industry, which was finding that the returns on appeals to social status and product quality were diminishing. Most of the short expressions and catchwords of self-theory make excellent advertising copy: Do it now! Have a new experience! Honour thyself. (Vitz, quoted in Benton, 1999: 104)

The relationship between expressive individualism and acquisitive individualism can certainly be seen in the two aspects of new paradigm churches that are to be considered in this chapter which are an emphasis on entertainment and a focus on felt needs.
Kallestad advocates using entertainment as a way of appealing to people in contemporary society in his book “Entertainment Evangelism”. He argues that if people are prepared to queue for entertainment, why not use entertainment to attract people to church. Likewise there is a trend to use worship services to address people’s ‘felt needs’. These trends have been criticised. MacArthur (1993) who is probably the most critical of the new paradigm church movement states:

Some church leaders evidently think the four priorities of the early church - the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2: 42) - make a lame agenda for the church in this day and age. Churches are allowing drama, music, recreation, entertainment, self-help programs, and similar enterprises to eclipse traditional Sunday worship and fellowship. In fact, everything seems to be in fashion in the church today except biblical preaching. The new pragmatism sees preaching - particularly expository preaching - as passé. Plainly declaring the truth of God’s word is regarded as unsophisticated, offensive, and utterly ineffective. We’re now told we can get better results by first amusing people or giving them success tips and pop-psychology, thus wooing them into the fold. Once they feel comfortable, they’ll be ready to receive biblical truth in small, diluted doses. (1993, xiv) …

Unfortunately the market driven philosophy appeals to the very worst mood of our age. It caters to people whose first love is themselves and who care not for God - unless they can have him without disrupting their own selfish lifestyles. Promise such a people a religion that will allow them to be comfortable in their self-love, and they will respond in droves. (1993, 28) …

The user friendly philosophy is a sharp turn down a wrong road for the church. I am convinced that the downgrading of worship, Scripture, and theology will ultimately usher in serious doctrinal compromise. (MacArthur, 1993: 64)

Against this background, this chapter will look more closely at the claims made by MacArthur and others about the place of entertainment and ‘felt needs’ in church services of new paradigm churches and their relationship to individualism.

Entertainment
Those who criticise new paradigm churches claim that there is reliance in church services on modes of entertainment found in secular culture as a means of holding the interest of those who attend. Dawn (1999) in Reaching out Without Dumbing Down suggests:
mega church worship is... the product of market analysis and sets out to produce or reproduce for late modern folk the sight and sound and smell, the intentions and ambience and aura, of the mall and the market place, the showplace and the entertainment centre. (Dawn, 1999: x)

Webster also asserts that new paradigm churches have adopted patterns of entertainment associated with secular culture. He believes that alongside this churches have taken on board the values of the entertainment industry. He writes:

It appears that we have become susceptible to the idolatrous moods of novelty, sentimentality and subjectivism. Churches now compete, not only among themselves but with popular culture, in a mood-producing quest for warmth and excitement. They are caught up in providing a diet of entertainment that does not satisfy the need for spiritual nourishment. (Webster, 1994)

The similarities between new paradigm church services and forms of entertainment found in secular culture are, in some senses, undeniable. As the Chapter Two showed, the use of contemporary music, drama, and other media is one of the defining features of this style of church. However, the labeling of a church worship service, or parts of it, as 'entertainment' is somewhat subjective. What some people may describe as entertainment may not be considered such for others. It is therefore problematic to try and claim with any authority that the churches in Christchurch that were the focus of this research. All of the churches, however, were seeking to be contemporary in the style of their services and so potentially open themselves up to the dilemmas surrounding the use of different forms of media, e.g. drama and video, within their church. For this reason it is important to consider some of the claims that critics make about the implications of incorporating aspects of contemporary, secular culture into church services.

One of the first criticisms made is that by using entertainment as a medium for communicating the Christian message the message is itself compromised. According to Maudin (1994) critics claim “seeker sensitive churches compromise the gospel by tailoring their message to non-Christians” and “the use of polished entertainment, feel-good sermons, and marketing techniques subtly alters the gospel that is being communicated” (Maudin,
1994: 22). While it seems as if this concept would be something church leaders and authors would be aware of, critics point to examples where the implications of the relationship between the message and medium have not been fully explored. Two critics point to the work of Barna (1992). MacArthur quotes Barna as saying:

It is critical that we keep in mind a fundamental principle of Christian communication: the audience, not the message, is sovereign. If our advertising is going to stop people in the midst of hectic schedules and cause them to think about what we're saying, our message has to be adapted to the needs of the audience. When we produce advertising that is based on a take it or leave it proposition, rather than on sensitivity and response to people's needs, people will invariably reject our message. (Barna in MacArthur, 1993: 145)

While Barna does qualify his statement somewhat towards the end, the first sentence is revealing. It seems as if he believes that the message can be altered as long as it is appealing to the audience. While further reading of Barna’s work does not give quite the same impression, what this statement does reveal is the need for dialogue about the place of entertainment in relation to the overall message trying to be communicated. Dawn (1999) who also critiques Barna writes:

Barna's work is immensely appealing; it is full of love for unbelievers and offers great suggestions for reaching out to the world. However, we must read his work with discernment because of his lack of emphasis on the truth side of the dialectic. For, example, Barna insists that we must "shed existing attitudes of piety and solemnness, in favor of attitudes of anticipation, joy and fulfillment." Indeed the church should demonstrate more openly its hope and gladness; but the gospel’s truth also calls for holiness, piety, repentance, and solemnity. Barna seems to have fallen into the present culture’s idolatry of happiness. (Dawn, 1999: 62)

Dawn argues that it is all very well seeking to be appealing but if in doing so the communicator does not clearly present an accurate picture of, in this case, the Christian message, then the long term benefit is questionable. MacArthur believes that the Christian message being proclaimed in new paradigm churches creates an impression of “believing in Christ as nothing more than a means to contentment and prosperity” (MacArthur, 1993: 85). Dawn, picking up on similar theme asks:
If people are introduced to a Christianity composed only of happiness and good feeling, where will the staying power be when chronic illness, family instability, or long term unemployment threaten? If worship is only fun, how will those of us who are attracted to such worship have enough commitment to work on the conflicts that inevitably develop because all of us in the church are sinful human beings? (Dawn, 1999: 280)

Furthering this criticism of the use of entertainment in a church service, Pritchard (1996) reinforces the idea that what is presented during services aiming to communicate to people who are not Christians is not an accurate picture of the Christian faith. He writes:

In a true seeker service, attenders are not called upon to participate or directly respond in worship. The theory is that Harry doesn't sing any place else and resists having words put in his mouth. What Harry wants and gets is a polished professional performance... This would be a reasonable accommodation if those involved in seeker services remain conscious that it is not yet worship as it ought to be. In practice this distinction often gets blurred for leaders in congregations that model themselves after Willow Creek... Harry doesn't get a chance to see people like himself engaging in a worship relationship with God... Is a seeker service the best introduction to what a Christian church stands for? Addressing such reservations has led many churches to settle for being "seeker sensitive" or "seeker friendly" - arranging the service to be more accommodating to the unchurched, but still retaining the focus of a worship service. (Pritchard, 1996: 3)

Proposing much the same idea Dawn states:

In order to be a circle that welcomes and nourishes strangers, churches must be a company of committed individuals whose lives depend upon the truth that Jesus Christ is Lord...we must not obscure this truth by transforming a congregation into an audience, transforming proclamation into performance or transforming worship into entertainment. If we forget the distinction between public opinion and biblical confession in a false attempt merely to attract crowds to Jesus, genuine Christian community will vanish in the process. "If unchurched Harry feels perfectly at home in our churches, then chances are that we have no longer an authentic household of faith, but a popular cultural religion. (Dawn, 1999: 292)

The second criticism of the use of entertainment is best articulated by Dawn who claims that people who employ entertainment as a way of attracting non-churched people to their congregations are buying into a philosophy which she calls 'dumbing down'. Dawn looks at a range of forces in society that she believes are making us less intelligent. She writes:

1 In Jamieson's Book 'A Churchless Faith' (2000) he discusses the predominant style of 'Evangelical, Charismatic churches' that he believes are generally pitched at Fowler's third stage of faith development. This describes someone who may be strongly committed to his
Our age of show business is not characterised by the facets of an age of exposition namely "a sophisticated ability to think conceptually, deductively and sequentially; a high valuation of reason and order; an abhorrence of contradiction; a large capacity for detachment and objectivity; and a tolerance for delayed response" in fact, television’s "surfeit of instant entertainment... makes reasoning seem anachronistic, narrow and unnecessary." (Dawn, 1999: 23)

She argues that while teachers in schools are aware that they are dumbing down the work and the tests, and many educators are trying to counteract the societal forces that necessitate it, pastors, musicians, worship participants, and parish leaders don’t seem to know when we are dumbing down the church. She asks: “Do we sometimes know that we are dumbing down worship, but think that we must do so in order to appeal to persons in our culture?” (Dawn, 1999: 11). She argues that worship must cater to television-age crowds craving entertainment, but worship efforts of new paradigm churches must also be to be ‘faithful, deep, and truthful’. Dawn believes that new paradigm churches would do well to analyse how television and other ‘dumbing down’ factors are affecting people in our society. Through her own analysis she has concluded that: “television has habituated its watchers to a low information-action ratio, that people are accustomed to learning good ideas (even from sermons) and them doing nothing about them” (Dawn, 1999: 21). Dawn believes that the solution for new paradigm churches is to find ways to nourish active, public responses to the truth it proclaims. She writes:

   Our worship must not only build awareness of the world’s needs under God’s cosmic care but also challenge and empower participants to join in God’s purposes for responding to those needs as agents of his care. We do not want to attract people to worship simply for their own benefit but also to engage them in spreading the generosity of God’s love throughout the world. (Dawn, 1999: 294)

Dawn proposes that the church should be a counter-cultural force that stands against the predominant values in society. “In a country that worships
money, power, efficiency, immediacy, and control”, she writes, “genuine worship invites us to be generous, meek (in the biblical sense), reflective, eternally minded, and obedient” (Dawn, 1999: 284). Dawn argues that worship, far from merely entertaining or soothing congregants, should confront them. She writes:

“‘Worship Ought to Kill Us.’ It ought to go against the "character" of a culture that makes commodities of God and worship, that deals with God and worship in terms of chumminess and folksiness, but never with awe - and thus seldom with power to liberate worshippers from the bonds of a binding and dulling culture”. (Dawn, 1999: xi)

Picking up of the theme of a missing social critique Lyon suggests that the message of Christianity has been ‘recoded’ in order to fit the consumer context in which it now finds itself. (Lyon, 2000: 86)

The final criticism of the presence of entertainment in church to be discussed here relates to the concept of ‘relevance’. Guinness outlines the danger that he perceives comes with trying to be ‘relevant’. Guinness believes that where people seek to be relevant they can quickly forget why they are being relevant and for whom they are being relevant. The result is relevance for relevance sake; which, Guinness argues, leads to irrelevance. He believes that a constant appeal to relevance becomes a way of riding roughshod over truth and corralling opinion coercively. “Without truth”, Guinness writes, “relevance is meaningless and dangerous”. Guinness quotes Simone Weil who said: “To be always relevant, you have to say things which are eternal” (Guinness, 1993: 63). The problem Guinness highlights is the huge emphasis given to being relevant in new paradigm churches. When the prominence of things that are eternal and true lose their grounding due to a desire to be relevant the result is trendiness leading, Guinness believes, to feverishness. In this regard Guinness quotes Nietzsche to good effect:

Under the aspect of eternity [becomes] under the aspect of fifteen minutes. [Instead of the] contentment of a tree in its roots, the happiness of knowing that one is not wholly accidental and arbitrary but grown out of a past as its heir, flower, and fruit, feverishness is the condition of an institution that has ceased to be faithful to its origins. [It is then caught up in] a restless, cosmopolitan hunting after new and ever newer things. The pursuit of relevance thus becomes a prime source of superficiality, anxiety, and burn-
Guinness argues "there is thus an irrelevance to the pursuit of relevance as well as a relevance to the practice of irrelevance". He concludes his argument by quoting Henri Nouwen who says, "I am deeply convinced that the Christian leader of the future is called to be completely irrelevant.... That is the way Jesus came to reveal God's love" (Guinness, 1993: 64)

The comments made in the interviews pointed to a desire by the Christchurch church leaders to be "relevant". All the ministers interviewed expressed this idea in some way. For one the wish was to be "user friendly" while another spoke of "tailoring the service to the unchurched". In describing his church's services one minister said:

[We're] very conscious of the different cultures within society so [we're] trying to make Christianity fit into their culture, instead of always expecting people to come into another culture. (Pastor 5)

Other individuals reinforce this concept in comments:

[It's] important to be relevant, to really look at where people are at and make sure the church, the services, the ministries are connecting to the target group. So [we're] examining all the time: 'is this relevant to society? Are we really doing anything that is going to reach our community? Are we reaching people? Are we doing it right or are we just getting religious again? [We're] deliberately trying to get away from the big gap that's between being out there and being in here so we looked at our songs and thought "well this has got this sort of word in it, how will they relate to that?" And if they can't [relate] then [we] don't use it. We won't use King James type language anywhere. We're seeker friendly in that we've tried to make everything cross the bridge, cross the barriers between those that are used to church life and those that aren't. We are seeker oriented. The music that we use is contemporary we want our music to be not too dissimilar to what people are used to during the week. (Pastor 7)

We are trying to make everything we do be seen through those eyes, is it helping someone make a commitment to the Lord, are we seeing people come into our services because we are relevant I think we need to continually reinvent the church and offer options for seekers (Pastor 4)

Meeting "Felt Needs"

The second area of criticism that relates to individualism and the predominance of this philosophy in new paradigm churches is in the meeting
of people's 'felt needs'. Guinness describes this as the uncritical elevation of modern notions of "need". He quotes a proponent who believes that the entire law of new paradigm churches can be summed up by "their two great commandment" which he states are: "Find a need and meet it, find a hurt and heal it". Other authors are also vocal in this fixation with meeting needs.

MacArthur writes:

It seems people's emotional; "felt needs" are taken more seriously than the real but unfelt spiritual deficiencies Scripture addresses. "Felt needs" included issues like loneliness, fear of failure, "codependency," a poor self image, depression, anger, resentment, and similar inward focused inadequacies. Some of these are real and some of them are fabricated by the psychological sales pitch. (MacArthur, 1993: 49)

The first criticism of this approach is primarily a theological one. Guinness writes:

At first sight, a ministry based on meeting needs is surely unobjectionable. After all, its ultimate sanction is the saying of Jesus: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:31-32). Need is thus the proper first step toward both true faith and prayer. As George Macdonald wrote, "Every need of God... is a seeking of God, is a begging for himself, is profoundest prayer, and the root and inspirer of all other prayer... (Guinness, 1993: 4)

"Yet", Guinness goes on, "people who use the modern need-meeting approach overlook certain things. First, this approach has no matching emphasis in truth" (Guinness, 1993: 4). Pritchard agrees:

There is substantial biblical teaching that emphasizes that the life of faith is often one of wholesome satisfaction... [However,] to argue for Christianity primarily by pointing to its usefulness in satisfying felt needs is to ultimately undercut it. To teach that Christianity is a means eventually teaches that it is superfluous. If someone is able to satisfy their felt needs without Christ, the message of Christianity can be discarded.... The goal of a Christian's life is faithfulness, not fulfillment... From a biblical perspective fulfillment is a gift not a goal.... God does not promise that the end of the Christian life on this earth will result in fulfillment. That sort of teaching is an American distortion of biblical teaching. (Pritchard, 1996: 256-7)

Earlier in his book, Pritchard offered the following comment:

A more biblical approach to the current American fixation with fulfillment is to call it the idolatry that it is. Jesus does not guarantee that to follow him will make one fulfilled. In fact, at several points, the direct opposite is communicated: 'I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world
hates you" (John 15:19); 'If they persecuted me they will persecute me also' (John 15:20). The temptation to say that Christianity will meet all of one's felt needs is not true to biblical Christianity. (Pritchard, 1996: 200)

These criticisms can be seen to be valid for the churches in Christchurch. The emphasis on meeting needs could be seen particularly in the content of some of the popular songs sung in these churches as well as in the sermon topics.

A few examples of song lyrics highlight the emphasis placed on what Christianity can do for an individual. The following excepts provide evidence of this.

As for me, God came and found me
   As for me, He took me home
   As for me, He gave me a family
   And I'll never walk alone
   In my life I'm soaked in blessing
   And in heaven there's a great reward
   As for me and my house
   We're going to serve the Lord
(God is in the House, R Fragar and D Zschech, 1996)

   He is able, more than able
   To accomplish what concerns me today
   He is able, more than able
   To handle anything that comes my way

   He is able, more than able
   To do much more than I could ever dream
   He is able, more than able
   To make me what he want me to be
(He is Able R Noland and G Ferguson, 1990)

   ...I know you'll make a way
   To guide me everyday
   Lead me to the highest place
(You're So Faithful S Hira, 1996)

It is also interesting to note which hymns have remained popular in contemporary culture. Perhaps the most popular hymn today would be Amazing Grace. When the words of this hymn are considered it is not surprising that it has kept its appeal.

   The Lord had promised good to me,
   His word my hope secures;
   He will my shield and portion be
   As long as life endures.
Likewise sermon topics pointed to an emphasis on the self, focusing often on personal issues.

One series on 'Answering Life’s Toughest Questions…” dealt with the topics

What is the Point of Life?
How Can I Be Happy?
How can I Make the Most of My Time?
Why Isn’t Life Fair?
What Happens After I Die?
How Much Money Is Enough?
Why Should I Work So Hard?
How Do I Face the Future?

At another church the series ‘Our Longings and God’s Response’ covered these topics:

Our Longing for Significance
Our Longing for Purpose
Our Longing for Security
Our Longing for Forgiveness
Our Longing for Strength.

Each of these series shows an acceptance of the philosophy of individualism as they focus on issues of meeting the perceived needs of individuals.

The second aspect to the critique of critique meeting felt needs relates to the consumer nature of needs in contemporary Western society. Both Dawn and Guinness question the very notion of needs suggesting that many of our needs are in fact fabrications of a consumer society. Guinness states “modernity has expanded and corrupted the very notion of need by creating a "need on command" society” (Guinness, 1993: 65). Dawn argues that we have been “educated by advertising and a milieu that champions consumption as a way of life into "an unappeasable appetite not only for
goods but for new experiences and personal fulfillment." Consumption is expected to provide "the answer to the age old discontents of loneliness, sickness, weariness, lack of sexual satisfaction," the malaise of boring and meaningless jobs, and "feelings of futility and fatigue." At the same time it "creates new forms of discontent peculiar to the modern age" (Dawn, 1999: 64-5). Alongside this Guinness argues that the new status of "need" has debased true needs.

Need, subject to consumer fashion, becomes shallow, plastic, and manipulable. Needs induced by advertising slogans are often merely wants; as such, they become commodities that are purchased on command through expert prescription. Thus from books to newspapers to movies to television to videos, American culture is becoming a vast, lucrative exercise in need-meeting and appetite satisfaction on a mass scale.... the result is a descent into vulgarity and adolescence that stands as a warning to any who make Need primary and find meeting Need easy. (Guinness, 1993: 66)

Guinness believes that this pattern of 'meeting needs' will in fact have the opposite consequences than intended by new paradigm churches. He states, "endlessly engineered and marketed, an obsession with need results in consumer indifference to specific, genuine, real needs" (Guinness, 1993: 67).

**A Challenge to Individualism?**

The evidence from the Christchurch churches give the impression that the congregations are well on the way to becoming more entrenched in the values of an individualistic, self seeking society. However, despite what the critics supposed was the unmistakable outcome of the direction of new paradigm churches, evidence from the interviews pointed to an opposing phenomenon not discussed by any of the authors. All the churches ran small groups for members of their congregations as well as boasting substantial volunteerism.²

² Of these two phenomena the volunteerism figures point the most to an active denial of individualistic values. While attending a small group requires some degree of self denial through the emphasis on accountability within the group it could also be argued that these groups are pandering to greater self obsession because time is being spent in what could be introspective activity. On the other hand volunteerism speaks to an altruism that may cut across a focus on the individual.
Of the churches that were able to provide any sort of figure on belonging to a small group that met during the week outside of normal church hours the figures given were 50 percent, 60 percent, and 85 percent. These figures, however, don’t have to represent any sort of challenge to the individualism in Western society. Critics may claim that these groups represent a further extension of the ‘need meeting’ philosophy found in new paradigm churches. Without further study this proposition remains difficult to prove or disprove. However, within some of these churches, as has been mentioned, there was a high rate of volunteerism. It is hard to relate this meaningfully to assertions concerning the spiraling of needs that are said to occur when ‘felt needs’ are addressed. While the issues raised in the previous part of this chapter are clearly concerns that need to be considered by those involved in new paradigm churches the scenario may not be as bad as the writings portray. Once again several of the ministers did not have exact figures of volunteerism. The lowest figure given was 20 percent while several other were closer to 30 percent with a couple at 50 percent. One of the staggering aspects was the number of hours given. While most of the ministers thought that the majority of the volunteers would give around two hours a week to the church in voluntary activity they all acknowledged some were giving ten hours or more.

When discussing their volunteers two ministers made the following comments:

We have over two hundred people involved in the community ministries. The youth community has got over 60 leaders. There are sixty small groups, a number of them have got associate leaders. We’ve got 60 leaders in the children’s ministry, 70 if you count Intermediate children. Then you’ve got all the ones at the preschool age group too. Then you’ve got all the various discipling groups and I don’t know how many people would be involved leading them. [That’s] three [hundred and] eighty - there’s only eight hundred members. Sounds like a half... sounds a bit high too, cause not all those ones would be members, not all the people doing stuff would be members. A third to a half, although I really have no idea..... The keen ones, the leaders, they have the time for what they are actually doing, then they have the time for preparation for it, then they would probably also have other time when they were contacting people who were involved in what they’re doing. That would obviously vary from week to week, but it would involve a number of hours, up to ten hours a week. Some things are just a few hours a week. Some people might be putting in fifteen hours a week. (Pastor 3)
261 people were invited to our end of year function, which is well over half. That includes hall set up teams and a whole raft of stuff so anyone who is serving in the church life in any way is invited to that. That includes leadership of small groups, Sunday school, young people’s, worship teams, sound teams, hall set up teams, offering, morning tea rosters, crèche rosters, the whole lot… I’ve got some people in the church who are involved in so many different things, they just amaze me. The lowest end of the scale would have to still be doing two to three hours and then if you were going to the people who are involved in many things, some of them would be involved in twenty [hours], which really amazes me… I suppose in terms of our 10.30 congregation it may be 50 percent [volunteering] but that’s only a guesstimate, throughout the church it’s probably between 30 and 50 percent. (Pastor 7)

Webster claims that new paradigm churches cater to narcissism. Much of the discussion above shows the precise ways in which the techniques employed by new paradigm churches pander to an individualistic view of the world. He believes that instead the church must demonstrate an alternative that frees believers from themselves. He argues that “Giving people what they want may satisfy certain felt needs but make it more difficult to give them what they truly need” (Quoted in Dawn, 1999: 66). If what people truly need is an escape from a cultural view that posits the individual as central then the new paradigm church may have succeeded in “Get[ting] people into religion by offering social contracts and help with their problems. Then show[ing] them how serving others is part of religion. (Burger, 1997: 4) It may be possible for new paradigm churches to give people more of what they want and more of what they need.

The possibility that new paradigm churches are buying into the values of an individualistic culture is difficult to ascertain because individualism seems so ingrained in our very way of thinking. Using entertainment as a communication medium in churches and targeting ‘felt needs’ points to an acceptance of an individualistic mindset. It seems that one of the biggest challenges with individualism facing new paradigm church leaders is whether the end justifies the means. Indications point to the longer term possibility that individualistic attitudes may be challenged through the new paradigm church emphasis on volunteerism. However, the question remains,
is the hope of attracting those who don’t go to church enough of a
justification for ignoring, or even buying into the mindset of individualism?
Chapter Seven

New Paradigm Churches - Misrepresenting or Contextualising Christianity?

The belief that the nature of church and how church is done is dependent to a large extent on the surrounding culture has been the underpinning argument of this thesis. The work of theorists who explore the relationship between church and society, such as Weber and Troeltsch, has been drawn on as a framework for understanding such a relationship. Expanding on Troeltsch’s theories by using the theory of paradigms a fuller understanding of the dynamic nature of societal and therefore church change was reached.

Looking at globalisation, pragmatism, and individualism in Christchurch churches provided useful examples of areas where contemporary expressions of church show the impact of contemporary society.

In New Zealand society, where over fifty percent of the population claim a Christian religious affiliation, and much of the moral and legal system is based on Judeo-Christian values it is possible to see areas of everyday life that show marks of a society which was at one point heavily influenced by Christianity. This is also true of other societies traditionally considered ‘Christian’. Capitalism, the economic system underpinning our very way of life is argued to have come into existence only through the influence of those philosophies inherent in the Protestant mindset, where all work, not just that of the clergy, was seen to bring honour to God. The Protestant work ethic that celebrated hard work, practical education, and saving has done much to shape the values in society today. Likewise, on a more individual scale, the efforts of Christian social reformers, such as William Wilberforce and his

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1 This is based on the 1996 Census results where 51.8% of respondents claimed affiliation with a Christian church. (Statistics New Zealand, 2000: 129)
campaign against the slave trade, have also had a great impact on Western society.

However, throughout all of this the history of the church points clearly to a relationship that goes two ways. The church reflects the many societies of which it has been a part. The earliest Jewish heritage is still present in the church today as is the extraordinary hierarchy reminiscent of the Roman world in which Christianity as an ‘official’ religion was born.

Ebbs and flows within society have meant constant changes in the way everyday life is experienced and understood. New paradigm churches represent churches changing the way they ‘do church’ in order to still be meaningful in today’s society. In this thesis three facets of contemporary society and the way new paradigm churches are impacted by these facets were examined.

Churches in Christchurch, New Zealand are using strategies and programmes of large and influential churches from the U.S., Britain and Australia, While many of the ministers from these churches in Christchurch had visited some of the most prominent churches overseas, many of the traits being adopted have arrived on their doorstep through visiting speakers, published resources, global associations, and the Internet.

This reflects the ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences of globalised society where the transfer of almost everything occurs across countries and cultures. One of the reasons explaining why this has happened within religion was highlighted in the research findings. A desire to be effective, using resources that ‘will work’ have encouraged local ministers to adopt concepts and practices from across the globe. As mentioned earlier in the text:

When any church appears to have discovered effective ways to do that, other churches that hear about it often wonder, ‘Would that work here? Maybe we should try it.’ Before long, countless churches are using the same strategies, with varying degrees of success. (Hendricks in Dawn, 1999: 285)
It can be seen that through the process of Globalisation churches have developed a form of eclectism, garnering programmes and ideas from a variety of sources as a means of meeting their own goals as a church. A trend that has emerged from this is a desire to use what is seen to 'work best' for the church. This gives rise to the criticisms that were addressed in the chapter on Pragmatism which questions whether weighing things on how well they work is an appropriate guideline for selecting materials to be used in churches.

The focus on success through the use of pragmatic techniques and approaches has, the critics argue, given undue emphasis to those values espoused in a pragmatic viewpoint. As the many criticisms showed there is much concern that a pragmatic approach is inconsistent with a biblical approach. Churches use of mission statements, vision statements, strategic planning, and programmes should not be heralded as favourable solutions for a faith with seemingly diminishing importance but rather as secular tools of which to be wary.

Guinness challenges church leaders not to forget theology in the charge after the latest secular insights believing that carelessly handled, innovation and adaptation become a form of corruption, capitulation, and idolatry. (Guinness, 1993: 29) Hull (1992) also calls for careful biblical scrutiny of secular tools in order for the church to avoid becoming secularised itself and therefore incapable of offering anything more than the world itself offers.

While pragmatism places value on concepts not because of any inherent worth that they may have but because of their possible usefulness it is necessary to ask why such concepts may work in churches. Is it because those secular tools are employed by church based pragmatists based upon the same individualistic philosophy found in society and works by reinforcing a philosophy of individualism?
In our society where individualism flourishes self-awareness and self-expression are touted as some of the greatest goods. Meeting one’s “needs” is seen as paramount. The church’s message may go some way to challenging the notion of that true happiness is found in consuming products but, as the chapter on individualism discussed, many of the underlying assumptions of individualism may, in fact, be further reinforced by the strategies used in new paradigm churches.

If this is the case, can it be said that these tools are working at all? Are they, in fact, reinforcing values within society that are actually inherently opposed to the values supposedly espoused within Christianity?

These new paradigm churches are actively seeking to engage with the surrounding culture and adapt their style in an attempt to be relevant to the world in which they live. As they seek to appropriate stylistic and organisational elements from our postmodern culture to replace the style of Christianity dominated by eighteenth century hymns, routinised liturgy, and bureaucratised layers of social organisation they certainly risk taking on board too much of the surrounding culture. As cautioned earlier, Carrell believes

> If these traditional Churches are perceived to have the problem of identifying too closely with an older world and another age, the problem of the newer Churches is likely to be that of too closely identifying with the subtle values and outlooks of this present world and current age (Carrell, 1998: 164).

Lyon asserts that the everyday challenge of the values of contemporary society have yet to be fully acknowledged by most Christian communities (Lyon, 2000: 145). He believes that there is much about our world that should be questioned. “In so far as it trivializes truth, simplifies suffering, and sucks us into its simulated realities as extras in the spectacle” he writes, the world “can hardly expect to go unchallenged. In so far as it excludes the eternal, and colludes with consumerism as the highest good, it calls forth critique” (Lyon, 2000: 148).

There are certainly a number of authors considered in this thesis who have
sought to provide such a critique. New paradigm churches have been described as: addressing church renewal through managerial technique, using “felt needs” as a primary means of evangelism, becoming a slave to the market place, downgrading worship, reproducing the intentions and ambience of the mall and entertainment centre, providing a diet of entertainment, preaching “feel-good” sermons and forgetting the distinction between public opinion and biblical confession (Hull, 1992; MacArthur, 1993; Dawn, 1999; Webster, 1994; Maudin, 1994). In seeking to provide a critique these authors claim that new paradigm churches are unfaithful, ushering in serious doctrinal compromise, not satisfying the need for spiritual nourishment, subtly altering the gospel, offering nothing more than a means to contentment, and compromising the Christian message.

All these claims support the notion that new paradigm churches are misrepresenting or distorting Christianity at best or, at worst, offering a false Christianity. With such criticisms it seems surprising that any attempt to choose new paradigm church options are foolish. However, when faced with the possible alternative of doing church in a traditional way the desire to interact with contemporary culture seems more understandable. As quoted in the thesis Carrell acknowledges that:

> When honesty comes to the surface, there is a widespread feeling that ‘the Church’ (particularly in its traditional structures and inherited ministry patterns) is ill-equipped for these times and circumstances (Carrell, 1998: 23)

As society changes the church faces the dilemma of remaining with familiar patterns of doing things and risk becoming a cultural enigma or changing alongside society. New paradigm churches offer one example of an attempt, now global in its spread, to interact meaningfully with the surrounding culture. They show a desire to contextualise the Christian faith within the surrounding culture.

In order to contextualise with a degree of success, however, there must be a self-conscious interaction with the surrounding culture. All notions of doing
church are affected by cultural milieux. True contextualisation only occurs when praxis – the relationship of action and reflection – is engaged in to the deepest possible level. It is the process of adaptation and resistance with respect to contemporary culture.

As some of the findings revealed there was a degree to which those minister interviewed were self-conscious about their relationship with the surrounding culture. However, the task of communicating within a culture that clearly has aspects inimical to the Christian faith is a massive one. The struggle for those ministers must surely be nothing less.

While the struggle represented in these chapters speaks of a need to relate meaningfully to the surrounding culture the spread of new paradigm churches points also to a larger struggle. As discussed in the chapter on globalisation ministers must not only weigh the values of practices of their own culture but also of the dominant culture in the realm of new paradigm churches – American culture. As questions are asked about appropriate boundaries and mistakes are inevitably made one is left with the question of whether new paradigm churches may actually work to spread American values throughout the world. Just as the missionaries in the colonial era brought western values and ways of life to much of the world, the informal networks seen working alongside new paradigm churches could work to encourage pragmatism and individualism outside of the first world where they are currently seen to flourish. While the notion of globalisation working as a stamp on local landscapes has been questioned the subtle creep of values and practices from the West that may use religious channels calls for even greater concern and a desire to address the relationship of new paradigm churches with society.

Underlying all of the questions and criticisms is one key issue. Is the church called to reflect the world around it, adapting to its cultural ebb and flows, or, as was said of the early Christians, to turn it upside down?² There are aspects of doing church which must be counter-cultural. This is part of the

² Acts 17: 6
challenge facing church leaders seeking cultural relevance in the way they do church. It is to be hoped that this sociological enterprise can help them in their efforts by highlighting some of the deeper questions that must be addressed if new paradigm churches are to remain true to their calling.
Appendix One

Research Process

The initial focus of this project was to examine "the use of secular tools within the church context by looking at the extent to which the American 'megachurch movement' has been embraced as a strategy amongst New Zealand church leaders for growing churches".

Following on from this starting point the research focused on the emergence of the 'megachurch' movement within the United States and paid particular attention to the example of Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago. This focus was taken because of the influence that Willow Creek has had globally and in particular, in New Zealand. The growth of the Willow Creek Association with over 2500 member churches worldwide pointed to a spread of the Willow Creek model of doing church.

This initial focus led to a literature review of Willow Creek material, along with an examination of many websites of Willow Creek Association churches around the world as the first point of research. However, during this process it became apparent that issues of possible interest to this piece of research extended beyond that of the increasing global impact of Willow Creek. This changed necessitated a change in the research process also. The project started with a deductive method of research in which a hypothesis was established and then data was collected to test the validity of that hypothesis (Patton, 1990: 44). The results from the first two interviews indicated that the influence from Willow Creek was one of many for their churches.

At this point the net for the research was cast a lot wider and reading was conducted concerning Evangelical and Charismatic churches as well as
church growth. This gave a different sense of focus to the project sociologically. Through this process the notion of examining the relationship between society and the church was formed. The change in focus resulted also in a different research approach. The research moved towards a more inductive approach where no pre-existing expectations or assumptions were being 'put to the test', rather observations served to create patterns on which theories could be built. (Patton, 1990: 44-46)

This approach meant that some of the discussion that came out of the research situations was not relevant to the direction the project took while some of the information became defining points for the research.

Methods Used

As indicated above the primary method used in this piece of research was interviews with church leaders. This was supplemented by documentary materials from new paradigm churches as well as the results of a survey of Willow Creek Association church leaders that had just been conducted. Alongside of this was my own personal involvement in one of the churches under study.

A qualitative approach was taken because I hoped to uncover the beliefs and attitudes of a small number of individuals. This resulted in carrying out eight semi-structured interviews with church leaders. Given the initial focus of the research, leaders were chosen whose churches belonged to the Willow Creek Association. The Association publishes a list of member churches. At the time the research project began there were twenty churches in Christchurch that belonged to the Willow Creek Association. The initial goal was to interview all the leaders from these churches briefly and then follow up two churches with more in depth interviews. After further reflection I chose instead to limit the number of interviews and make them all reasonably in depth. The ministers who were selected for the interviews were chosen after receiving suggestions from two key informants in the Christchurch church
scene. All of those I approached agreed to be interviewed. Unfortunately one church leader I was hoping to interview was on Sabbatical, ironically a part of this involved studying Willow Creek. I contacted all those I interviewed by telephone and found them all to be relatively interested in what I was endeavouring to study. The interviews occurred in mid 1999. Each interview lasted between 40 minutes and two hours. They were conducted at the work places of the ministers interviewed. They were each recorded on tape.

The first two interviews acted as pilot interviews and after completing these I re-assessed the questions being used as well as the direction the questions were taking the project. The questions for these interviews focused on finding out how much of the Willow Creek model had affected the way the church leaders did church. (A list of the questions they were asked can be found in Appendix Two). The remaining interviews sought to uncover patterns of influence in how the leaders believed church should be done. (A list of this second set of questions can also be found in Appendix Two).

After the research was conducted a transcript was created for each interview. These were then sent to each participant for them to make changes or additions. I encouraged those who wanted to make changes to send a corrected version back to me in a stamped self-addressed envelope that I provided. Three interviewees returned corrected transcripts.

My personal involvement with one of the churches where a leader was interviewed was perhaps the most influential point of contact sociologically. From this involvement an interest in studying the church in a more critical fashion was born. It was here that questions began fermenting prior to undertaking the study as well as continuing to present themselves during the course of study. While I did not undertake a systematic study of the church in the way that an ethnographer may have done my experiences certainly went a long way to informing the whole research project. This raised, of course, some methodological considerations for the project that will be discussed in more depth shortly.
Analysis

The analysis of the research findings was structured around the focus I chose for the whole project. Having carried out further reading I had defined these focus areas as Globalisation, Pragmatism and Individualism. These three themes also reflected what I believed were themes within the interview material. The research analysis then followed the pattern of looking for these themes in the interview material. The analysis was therefore informed to a large extent by the material in the interviews. This findings based researched is reflected in the way interview material is presented in the text. As the interview material provided the basis for the research themes there was no need to reshape the material when it was put into the broader context of the write up. This results in reasonably long statements from the interviews being used to represent the concepts being presented rather than my own interpretations of what was being said being the focus.

Methodological Considerations

The first consideration for this thesis stems from my own involvement in one of the churches under study. Spradley (1980) cites many examples of research carried out by people who are members of the setting in which they are carrying out research. He warns: “The more you know about a situation as an ordinary participant, the more difficult it is to study it as an ethnographer”. (Spradley, 1980: 61) This is certainly one aspect that needed careful consideration before undertaking the study. Although I was not carrying out ethnographic research as a primary research strategy I was certainly letting my experiences inform my research. Traditional approaches to sociological study have focused on the researcher taking a neutral stance in relation to the material under examination. In this regard feminists critiques have provided a useful alternative. Feminist research methods argue that there is no value free research. Rather, as Seidman states
"preconceptions guide our perceptions" (Seidman, 1994: 68). For me this issue was particularly pertinent and I believe that my involvement within one of the churches under study encouraged me to look at this aspect of the research early on in the process. I believe that acknowledging my experiences and letting them play a part in the research was a worthwhile option.

Of particular importance in this consideration is the fact that I am the daughter of one of the people I interviewed. The implications of this for this research were important considerations for me. On the one hand there was the obvious issues of partiality that would affect not just the gathering of information but also processing it. However, standing against this were the obvious benefits that such a position offered me. I had knowledge of possible issues that might be worth addressing that could not be replicated by reading books. I had access not only to my father but, because people recognised my name, to the others that I interviewed. In the interview situation too there were benefits. The people I interviewed were able to make reference to things that, to an outsider, would have needed perhaps too much explanation to bother mentioning. On the other side of the coin there may have been issues that people did not raise because they did not think that I was the appropriate person for that. These issues can never be fully quantified but I do believe that for the disadvantages I may have had there were certainly other advantages that cannot be overlooked.

The second major methodological issue for me to consider was that of privacy for those involved in the research. All those in the research would be aware of the other in the study if not know them personally. This provides issues about anonymity for the research participants. I explained this to those I interviewed and clarified that while amongst their peers I could not guarantee anonymity I would not use their names in the actual write up.
The final issue, which was not peculiar to this study, concerned the use of data. While care was taken to ensure participants understood the research process and what the information they provided me with was going to be used for it was still important for me to ensure that they had some control over that information. For this reason I sent back the transcripts of the interviews for those involved to review and make any changes that they thought appropriate.

**Ethical Statement**

The procedures undertaken during the course of this study complied with the guidelines of the Sociological Association of Aotearoa (New Zealand). This included aspects such as ensuring concept to participate was informed and confidentiality was ensured. As all the interviews were conducted with people acting in their professional capacity there was not the need to gain approval by the University Human Ethics Committee. In this regard also the ethical guidelines of the Sociological Association of Aotearoa were followed.
Appendix Two

Original Questions

General Church Information

How many services are there here?
-What type?

How many people regularly attend services here?

WCA Background Information

Why did you join the WCA?
-When

What Willow Creek material do you use?

What parts do you find most helpful/least helpful?

Do you belong to any other associations?

Seeker Oriented Church

Would you describe your church as seeker oriented, to what extent?

Do you run seeker services?
-Impact

What proportion of your adult converts have come to faith through your seeker services?
How many adult baptisms have you had this year?

Do you run the ‘Becoming a Contagious Christian’ programme?
-Impact

Do you run any other non WCA programmes designed for seekers or unbelievers such as ‘ALPHA’ or ‘Divorce Care’?
-Impact

Leadership

Do you read any Christian leadership/management/marketing books?
-Which ones have had an impact on you?
-Why?

Do you read any secular leadership/management/marketing books?
-Which ones have had an impact on you?
-Why?

What sort of techniques would you employ from these books, if any?

How influential has Bill Hybels’ material on leadership been on you?
-What about Rick Warren?

Have you been to hear or listened to tapes of Bill Hybels or Rick Warren concerning leadership?

Does your church have a mission statement?
-Impact

Does your church have a vision statement?
-Impact
Does your church have a strategy?
-Has your church your strategically planned?
-Impact

Do you run the ‘Network’ course?
-Impact

Do you have a Pastoral team? How many?
-What sort of people are on the team?
-What has shaped your philosophy on the sort of person to employ?

‘Being Church’

How familiar are you with Bill Hybels emphasis on creating a “biblically functioning community”?

What would that phrase mean to you?

Have you read any of Gilbert Bilzekian’s books?
-Impact

Do you run small groups?
-Where did that emphasis for you come from?
-What type of groups do you run at the moment?
-Is this how they have always been?

General church growth

How important is growth for your church?
What do you think leads to church growth?

Why do you think churches like Willow Creek and Saddleback have grown?

Approximately what proportion of the congregation is involved in a voluntary capacity within the church?
- What sort of hours would they give?

What is the average weekly offering?

How long have you been a pastor here? (Pastor before)
- Growth during your time as pastor?

How many missionaries?
- Is this an emphasis for your church?

Impressions

How significant has the seeker oriented church model been in your church?
- In New Zealand?
Revised Questions

Church Description

How would you describe/classify your church?

What do you believe is important for ‘doing church’?
-Who/what has influenced this for you and your church?

How many services are there here?
-What type?

How many people regularly attend services here?
-Do you count?
-% growth

Do you run small groups?
-Where did that emphasis for you come from?
-What type of groups do you run at the moment?
-Is this how they have always been?

Seeker Orientation

Would you describe your church as seeker oriented, to what extent?
-How/why did this focus develop?

Do you run seeker services?
-Impact

What proportion of your adult converts have come to faith through your seeker services?
How many adult baptisms have you had this year?

Do you run the ‘Becoming a Contagious Christian’ programme?
-Impact

Do you belong to any other associations, such as the WCA whose focus is on reaching seekers?

Do you run any other non WCA programmes designed for seekers or unbelievers such as ‘ALPHA’ or ‘Divorce Care’?
-Impact

Leadership

Do you any Christian leadership/management/marketing books?
-Which ones have had an impact on you?
-Why?

Do you read any secular leadership/management/marketing books?
-Which ones have had an impact on you?
-Why?

Which ones have had an impact on you?
-Why?

Does your church have a mission statement?
-Impact

Does your church have a vision statement?
-Impact

Does your church have a strategy?
-Has your church your strategically planned?
-Impact

Do you run the ‘Network’ course?
-Impact

Do you have a Pastoral team? How many?
-What sort of people are on the team?
-What has shaped your philosophy on the sort of person to employ?

General church growth

How important is growth for your church?

What do you think leads to church growth?

Why do you think churches like Willow Creek and Saddleback have grown?

Approximately what proportion of the congregation is involved in a voluntary capacity within the church?
-What sort of hours would they give?

What is the average weekly offering?

How long have you been a pastor here? (Pastor before)
-Growth during your time as pastor?

How many missionaries?
-Is this an emphasis for your church?
Impressions

How significant has the seeker oriented church model been in your church?
-In New Zealand?
Appendix Three

Church Descriptions

Eight pastors/ministers/vicars were interviewed as part of the research for this thesis. They were all the senior leaders in their church. All of them had other staff members working with them. They came from a variety of denominational backgrounds although the majority of them were Pentecostal. One was from an Anglican church, one Presbyterian, one Baptist, one independent who had been Baptist, one Elim, and three New Life. All of them could be described as Evangelical and Charismatic. Interestingly almost all of them were involved in planning a building project for their church, two of which were looking at new auditoriums for their churches.

Descriptions of all eight of the churches will be outlined below. Particular attention is paid to the types of services the churches had and attendance and growth figures of the different churches.

Church One

The first church is an Anglican church with two centres, the main church and a branch in a neighbouring suburb. Between the two centres the church had five services on a Sunday.

We have a nine o’clock communion service, and that’s a more traditional service with an older congregation, and then at 10.30 we have a non liturgical, informal service with modern music and the Sunday School is part of that service so that is the service where young families and children come to. We have an informal evening service here as well. So those are the services here, then at the branch in the morning there is a service which is much more like the nine o’clock service, it always has communion each week and then there’s a little five o’clock service at that church which is a traditional evensong, the old Anglican sung evensong.

During the 10.30 morning service the church had begun to introduce sermon topics aimed at seekers.

The church had an average Sunday attendance of 300 people between both centres.
The growth that this church had seen had been in the 10.30 morning service where in the last four to five years attendance had risen from 140-150 to 180 people. The vicar had been at this church for five years.

The vicar described the church in this way:
It’s an Anglican church; it has a lot of people who don’t come from an Anglican background as well so we’re not terribly Anglican in a denominational sense. I guess we really embrace two cultures there are people who came from a
traditionally Anglican background and there are also people who are looking for a much less liturgical less traditional style of worship so we really embrace those two cultures. In terms of our services we have an early morning service that tries to cater for traditional Anglicans it uses the prayer book structure for a communion service and then our main morning service is non liturgical using modern music, its much more informal in style. So we’re trying to bridge those two worlds really.

Church Two

The second church is a Presbyterian church. It had three services with a total attendance of 420 people of which about 70 were children.

The first service they had was at 9 o’clock. This was a traditional type of service attended mainly by older people. At 10.30 there was a family oriented service that had a more contemporary style. Then the evening service was also a contemporary service.

Aside from the minister the church had five other paid staff, all of whom worked part time. They were in charge of youth, children, music, cell groups, and one for running the Contagious Christian programme.

Church Three

The third church was a Baptist church. It had three main services and then a small healing service.

Sunday morning is really worship and biblical exposition and Sunday night is popularly called a seeker service but it is like an evangelistic service in 90s dress, that’s how I’d describe it. The Tuesday night service ministers particularly to people with psychiatric difficulties and others that we have made contact with through some of the community ministries. Then we have a healing service on Friday, but that’s very small, for people who would like prayer for healing of various kinds.

The three main services had “between 15 and 16 hundred” people attending them, which included children. In the thirty years that the minister had been at the church it had gone from a congregation of approximately 50 to the current figure.

It has been pretty encouraging really, over five years the attendance has gone up a lot and there’s been a steady stream of people who have come to faith in Christ for whom one of their first ports of call in the place has been Sunday night service, in fact I think for the adults who come to Christ around here the seeker service has been, almost without exception, one component in their making a commitment.

This church had nine full time pastors and four associate pastors. The full time staff included people in the areas of worship, youth, children, small groups, global mission, community ministries, administration, pastoral care and discipling. The associate staff were in youth, global mission, pastoral care and leadership development.
This church had a large emphasis on “community ministries”. They had approximately fifteen different sorts of services running in the community. These included a preschool, interest-free loans and budget advice, English classes for new comers to New Zealand, residential care for people with psychiatric illness, an op-shop and drop in centre, social activities for the elderly, and clubs for at-risk young people. These services involved several hundred volunteers and a number of paid staff.

The minister described the church in this way:

We’re growing a community. At its core it’s a relational community and out of those relationships comes a mission focus out into the world. There is a redemptive dimension in terms of people coming to faith in Jesus Christ but also having a redemptive impact on the wider society so that sick people get healed, broken people get put back together, and poor people get helped and so on and so on. The vision is “to be a redemptive community sharing the love of Christ in the world by word sign and deed so that unbelieving people become lifelong followers of Jesus Christ”. I think that is the important thing.

Church Four

This church was an independent, non-denominational, congregation that had previously been Baptist. The church ran two services on a Sunday.

We have one from nine thirty to ten thirty for believers, which consists of half hour praise and worship, and then we have communion on the first and third Sundays and Preaching/teaching primarily. Then our seeker service goes from 11 through to 12.

The first service usually had 75 to 100 people at it and the second between 150 and 220. The minister put the average attendance as up to 300 people. The minister had been there for 16 years and during this time the church had grown from 38 adults to the current attendance figure.

The church had an associate pastor as well as the senior pastor who was more responsible for the technical aspects of the services.

This church also had a strong emphasis on work in the community, particularly with children and youth. They ran two different drop-in centres, one for adults and one for youth. They also ran several holiday programmes for children at different locations.

This minister described his church as: “seeker orientated, we are trying to shift everyone's thinking into reaching out instead of just doing what we've been doing for however many years”.

Church Five

The fifth church was an Elim church. It had four services a week.
We have our Sunday morning service, which we target towards thirty plus, we run a strong children’s programme in that. That service is what I would call seeker friendly, it’s not totally a seeker service and it’s not totally a believer’s service. We would always have two creative elements in that service. If a seeker is there they can understand it and the sermon is always relevant to a seeker and to a church person, and yet there is an aspect of worship in there. Then we have a seven o’clock service and that is a totally different type of service and a different type of congregation. The seven o’clock service is aimed at the under thirties so it is a whole lot more jeans and t-shirt. It goes for an hour, seven till eight. There is usually a couple of creative components in that, often one of the young people will share, talk a little bit about their life and then we have a twenty minute message and then maybe an item or something creative in there. The third service is a late worship service which is basically a believer’s service and it is just a full on worship service. Then on Wednesday night every second week we do what we call a new community service which is really where we pull people from all our different congregations together. We do a lot of things there. We may have a prayer meeting, we may have communion we may do teaching, we may have guest speakers in there that are going to be more relevant to believers.

The attendance was 300 at the morning service, 200 at the first evening service, 100 at the second and 100 at their Wednesday service. This church had had ten to 12 percent growth consistently in the past years. It had been a church that had grown from nothing in the time the pastor had been there.

The pastor said this about the church:

I think we are a Pentecostal church but with a strong emphasis on being seeker friendly, very conscious of the different cultures within society so trying to make Christianity fit into their culture, instead of always expecting people to come into another culture.

Church Six.

The sixth church was a New Life church. They had two services on a Sunday.

We have our - I don’t know whether you could call it traditional, but it’s traditional for us - Sunday morning service. We have one at this stage but we are almost getting to the point where we need to think about two. We’re almost full on a Sunday morning now. That’s been pretty much the same for years and years except for the change in music style and the way the services are put together, but the distinctives, the Pentecostal distinctives are still there. That’s the service we get most people at. On Sunday night we have a “Sunday at Seven” service which is basically, for want of a better word, a gospel service. That’s tailored to the unchurched and that’s where we use a lot of our creative stuff, it goes from seven till eight, it’s a one hour service. After that we have a ministry service, they used to be two services but we’ve made them one and they just carry on now. Most of the people that come would be young, about 90% would be under thirty at the Sunday night services.

Eight to nine hundred attended the morning service and four to five hundred
at night.
The pastor had been acting as the senior pastor of this church for three years. The church had 800 people when he started and had grown to just over 1300 mainly in the last two years.

As well as the senior pastor the church had a Minister of Creative Arts, Minister of Teaching and Pastoral Care, three full time youth pastors, two part time associate ministers, a part time children’s pastor and a part time Asian Ministries pastor.

This church had a strong focus on the Creative Arts put on productions three times a year.

The pastor said this about the church:

Pretty predominant is our situation; right in the middle of the city, and our building is part of that. Because of that it draws all kinds of people. One of the other defining factors is that the people we have coming here are from right across the spectrum, sociologically, geographically - they’ve got to come into town to go to church, we seem to draw business people down to gluesniffers, compared to a suburban church where you draw more similar kinds of people.

As far as the church itself is concerned I think the area of worship is pretty strong, and the arts are developing, becoming stronger and stronger. Our social concern is still a growing, developing area, one of the things that we have had going for quite a while here is feeding the inner city people twice a week, out of our Cafe, about seventy or eighty twice a week.

**Church Seven**

This church was also a New Life church and had originally been a church plant of Church Six. This church had two Sunday Services.

The morning service is our main worship/word service which is based around those two aspects but having said that we would call it seeker friendly. It’s not a seeker service it’s a seeker friendly service so there has to be enough in it for the Christians to feel they have connected with God.

Our Sunday evening services are more youth oriented and there is more time for personal ministry at night than in the morning. It’s louder; hence it’s more for youth. It is seeker friendly but in saying that because there is more opportunity for personal prayer and ministry some people might think it isn’t. But it definitely is and people bring their friends along to that.

During the morning service time slot the church was having regular guest services designed as seeker services.

This church had around 400 to 420 people at its morning service, including children. In the evening service they had around 100 young people. This church had seen substantial growth since it was planted.

In describing the church the pastor said:
I would call it a contemporary, post-Pentecostal, evangelically bent, seeker friendly church. We have got very strong Pentecostal roots but we probably aren’t easily defined as a strict Pentecostal church, our services are more seeker friendly than the traditional Pentecostal church would be. I don’t personally find the label describes us very well if I compare myself to a few Pentecostal churches.

**Church Eight**

This church was also a New Life church. It had been a very closed and controlling congregation but after a leadership change had become affiliated with New Life churches of New Zealand. This church had two Sunday services. The first in the morning and the second at night that varied from week to week in their format.

We have the Sunday morning worship service which is pretty standard, middle of the road Pentecostal style. The strengths of it are the music options and the worship’s good. In order to meet the range of needs in the church we have started a six thirty service. We found that people were wanting more than could be obtained in a morning service. We have four different things that we do. The first of the month is bible school and what we do there is teach the basic doctrines. We have a ministry service on the second service. It is for those who want to let their hair down a bit. We usually have a guest speaker who preaches up a storm and knocks them over kind of approach - good, clean fun. The third Sunday is “Cafe chat”. We go into the café, open it up and we sell stuff but then we look at social and ethical issues. That has been going just this year. It started off with a big one, the problem of suffering, the idea is they come in buy their stuff sit down and there are questions so they can talk about it if they want, chat about it among themselves, and then I’ll do a talk on the subject and then there’s feedback. That meets a different market. Then we have the big one which is the fourth Sunday when we do a guest event. We turn it on as far as resources allow, that is quality music, short talk pretty close to seeker targeted, cringe free, no community singing - they sit down and watch the show. We haven’t had a fifth Sunday yet but the plan is we have an old hymns night for those who haven’t sung a traditional hymn for a long time.

The attendance was not counted at this church but the pastor estimated that the average weekly attendance was between 350 to 400 people which included 120 children.
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