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Generation Y in Australia

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Publication Details

Brain, M. (2009). Treasure in Jars of Clay: Towards a new Pauline Pastoral Theology of Mission to Generation Y in Australia (Doctor of Pastoral Theology (PThD)). University of Notre Dame Australia. <http://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses/46>

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**Treasure in Jars of Clay:  
Towards a new Pauline Pastoral Theology  
of Mission to Generation Y in Australia.**

**by**

**Matthew Brain**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of:

Doctor of Pastoral Theology

College of Theology and Philosophy

University of Notre Dame (Australia),

Fremantle, Western Australia

Year of submission: 2009

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## Abstract

Within the contemporary Australian context, it is evident that the young people who represent Generation Y (born, 1981 – 1995) are not engaged by a Christian faith. This thesis will set out an approach that will seek to re-envision the transmission of a Christian faith to the members of Generation Y in Australia through a Pauline pastoral theology of mission. Hence, this thesis aims:

1. To provide a theological hermeneutic of pastoral mission that may be a partner in dialogue with other approaches to ministry among Generation Y.
2. To assist the Christian churches in their consideration of some of the issues surrounding the general absence of Generation Y in their communities by drawing on scripture as a historical source of Christian theology.
3. To serve Generation Y with a pastoral response that endeavours both to draw from the foundational elements of the Christian faith and to suggest theological conclusions fitting for the post-modern world they inhabit.

The methodological structure of this thesis is based upon Whitehead and Whitehead's theological process of 'attending', 'asserting' and 'deciding'. In 'attending', this thesis engages with sociological, psychological, neurophysiological and theological data regarding the spirituality of Generation Y in Australia. It also 'attends' to a Pauline theology of faith as it is presented in the text of 2 Corinthians 4. Further, it brings the worlds of Paul and Generation Y into dialogue and 'assertion' through the epistemology and theology of mission of Lesslie Newbigin. The final phase of this thesis involves the proposal of a set of pastoral dispositions (*habitus*) which may guide the 'decisions' of the Christian churches as they seek to reach out to Generation Y in mission. Three fields of mission – *authenticity*, *proximity* and *intelligibility* – are considered in relation to an encounter between Australia's Christian churches and Generation Y. Through this process a new Pauline *habitus* of transmission is offered. The missional roles of *kenosis*, *patience* and *apprenticeship* in the Christian tradition are all discussed as ways that the Christian churches may re-engage with Generation Y in Australia through a renewed disposition of mission.

## Copyright declaration

I certify that this thesis is my own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution.

I also affirm that to the best of my knowledge the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



## Acknowledgements

To Dr Glenn Morrison, my principal supervisor, who has walked the length of this journey with me in friendship, wisdom and judicial guidance; Prof. Dennis Rochford, my initial supervisor, who took a punt on an unknown rural Anglican; and Dr Liz Boase, who gave critical feedback on methodology when it was needed, I give great thanks. This thesis, and myself as a person, are so much deeper for your input.

I do not think I would have finished the final year of this course without the mentorship of the Rt Rev Dr Paul Barnett, Dr Martin Rodger and other angels of providence. Thank you for your time, care, encouragement and helpful criticism when it was needed. I also acknowledge the valuable professional advice of Dr Arch Hart in suggesting articles regarding the role of neurophysiological stress in young people. Thanks to Chris Walker, a professional editor, for editing a late draft of this thesis and, more than this, providing friendship and stimulation throughout the project.

The people of St Marks Kalbarri, the Diocese of North West Australia and the Rt Rev David Mulready our Bishop have been indispensable in the development of this thesis. It is they who have helped develop these thoughts as a *pastoral* theology. Particular thanks must be extended to the Rev Donald and Mrs Nan Howard, Graham Dunn, Colin Baker and Bishop David for graciously relieving me of my duties at St Mark's Kalbarri, allowing me to finish this thesis. Although some time has gone by since I passed from their care, I acknowledge the debt I owe to my first teachers of theology and pastoral practice. Particularly Rev Andrew and Mrs Heather Reid, Rev Tim and Mrs Rosemary Thorburn, Rev Dr Allan Chapple, Rev Dr Don West, Rev Martin Foord, Rev Jim Crawley and Rev Steve Rarig. I am grateful for the foundations you laid.

Finally, in God's grace I would not be the person I am without the loving nurture of the Rt Rev Dr Peter Brain and Christine Brain, and James and Judy Shaw, my parents – and Jonathan and Rosie, Susannah and James, David and Toni, Jalinda,

Rebecca and Robert my siblings. Under God, your life and witness have been the most profound and deepest influence on me. Thank you for your love and nurture.

Most of all I thank God for his gift to me of Rachael, my beautiful wife, supporter and partner in ministry – and for James, Karis, Nathan, Thomas and Levi, our wonderful children. Thank you all for your patience and love when I am grumpy and unlovely.

As with all things, what is of worth in this thesis is inevitably not my own doing – but of God as he works through his servants who have helped me. The errors and failings are mine alone.

### ***Dedication***

Like a rose amongst  
the tender shoots is my  
Rachael with her children.

May this time I have been away in study  
be God's instrument of refreshment and joy  
as our shoots grow and bear fruit.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*But we have this treasure in jars of clay, so that the greatness of the power may be of God and not of us, although in all things we are being hard pressed we are not crushed, we are perplexed but not baffled, hunted down but not forsaken, knocked down but not destroyed, always carrying the dying of Jesus in our bodies so that the life of Jesus may be made clear in our bodies.*

*2 Corinthians 4:7–10*

## **Background and significance**

The world inhabited by Generation Y (born 1981–1995) is dominated by and mediated through a fast paced and rapidly changing matrix of information, ideas and technological innovation. For many members of Generation Y this is a cause for excitement and an absorbing medium for life. The hectic daily experience of Generation Y as it is found in Australia seems to belie the slower pace of previous eras, and many values of years gone by do not seem to fit within the new possibilities and perspectives of today.

However, as research emerges, indications are surfacing that show that this rapidly changing environment is not entirely capable of sustaining those who feed from it.<sup>1</sup> Generation Y, as a cohort who have grown up in this new technological world, are increasingly finding that they are caught between a worldview of individualisation, consumption and complete immersion in a technological environment and a desire to find deep, authentic relationships and fulfilment in life.

In spite of a rich heritage of theological reflection that speaks to the desires of the human heart, the Christian churches today struggle to have their voices heard in society at large and by Generation Y in particular. The Christian churches live with constant reminders that many people, young and old, are uninterested in anything they may have to say which are considered to be part of the value system of an old, outdated era.<sup>2</sup> Churches are now faced in very obvious ways with questions regarding the nature and acquisition of a Christian faith that in a previous era may have been ignored or the answers simply assumed and lived.

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<sup>1</sup> As will be discussed at greater depth in Chapter Two, significant numbers of young Australians report high levels of worry and negative self-perception. Depression and other stress related disorders are also significantly present. See, for example, Philip Hughes, *NCLS Occasional Paper 4: Insecurity in Australia* (NCLS Research, Sydney, 2004), 10; C. Hodges et al, *National Youth Depression & Alcohol Review and Action Plan* (Beyond Blue: The National Depression Initiative, Melbourne, 2005), 17; Anonymous, *National Survey of Young Australians 2006* (Mission Australia, Sydney, 2006), 12.

<sup>2</sup> This may be seen in the long-recognised pattern of declining numbers of people who regularly attend church services. See, for example, P. Kaldor et al, *Winds of Change: The Experience of Church in a Changing Australia* (Sydney: Lancer, 1994) 280. It may be seen also in negative media reports see, for example, J. Henry, 'Teachers See God as 'Too Boring' for RE,' *news.telegraph*, accessed on <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/03/20/ngod20.xml&sS>, 21 March 2005. Even positive assessments of the role of young people in the Christian churches require caveats. See, for example, Philip Hughes, *Putting Life Together: Findings from Australian Youth Spirituality Research* (Fairfield: Fairfield Press, 2007) 194 f.

Cogent and helpful insights regarding ministry to young people have been made from pragmatic, sociological, psychological/developmental and theological perspectives.<sup>3</sup> Depending upon the author's perspective, questions surrounding the nature of faith in young people may be collapsed into affirmations of particular evangelistic or nurturing strategies.<sup>4</sup> Against this background this thesis seeks to address the transmission of faith and add to the literature in two ways. First, it will provide a specific theological response to key sociological data that has recently emerged outlining the spirituality of Australia's Generation Y.<sup>5</sup> Second, the thesis will examine the missional role of the Christian churches to Generation Y by taking a step back to Christian scripture,<sup>6</sup> specifically 2 Corinthians 4, as a means to move forward with the guidance of the theology of mission of Lesslie Newbigin. Hence, the aim of this thesis is to place ministry to young people within a biblical, pastoral and missional frame and, further, to develop a pastoral and missional theological method of engagement between scripture and Generation Y. Consequently, this thesis will provide a hermeneutic of pastoral mission to help bridge the gap that exists between Generation Y in Australia and the Christian churches.

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the over-riding emphasis on practical strategies to connect in D. Fields, *Purpose Driven Youth Ministries* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998); J. McDowell, 'Introduction: The Disconnected Generation' in S. McDowell and R. Willey, ed. *Josh McDowell's Youth Ministry Handbook: Making the Connection* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000) xv; Fernando Arzola, Jr., 'Four Paradigms of Youth Ministry in the Urban Context,' *The Journal of Youth Ministry*, 5:1: (2006). See, for example, the sociological and cultural insights of D. Kimball, *The Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003). The immensely influential body of work by James Fowler illustrate a psychological/developmental approach. See, for example, J. W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (Blackburn: Dove Communications, 1981) and J. Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984). A theological perspective may be seen in, Kenda Creasy Dean, *Practising Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004); Graham Hill, 'Implications of Emerging-Missional Ecclesiology for a Missionary Approach to, and Understanding of, Youth Ministry.' *Youthworks College, Sydney, Theology of Youth Ministry Conference '08*; unpublished conference papers, 2008, cited with permission; Graham Stanton, 'All Things to All People? The Incarnation and Relational Youth Ministry.' *Youthworks College, Sydney, Theology of Youth Ministry Conference '08*; unpublished conference papers, 2008, cited with permission.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Ken Moser, *Changing the World: Creative Christian Ideas for Youth Groups*, vol. 2 (Sydney: Changing the World Press, 2002) 4; Edward D. Seely, 'Where Reformed Theology Meets and Shapes Youth Ministry: Facilitating Answers to Adolescents' Great Questions of Life,' *Calvin Theological Journal*, 41 (2006).

<sup>5</sup> Hughes, *Putting Life Together*; Michael Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y: Young People's Spirituality in a Changing Australia* (Melbourne: John Garratt Publishing, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Henri Nouwen, writes in *The Living Reminder*, "The French have an imaginative expression: *reculer pour mieux sauter* [sic], to step back in order to jump farther". One can vividly imagine a spring coiling to be imbued with new potential energy by shrinking backwards. Its leap forward is predicated upon an apparent retreat. Henri Nouwen, *The Living Reminder: Service and Prayer in Memory of Jesus Christ* (New York: Harper Collins, 1983) 64.

## **Statement of assumptions**

Reflection on the experience of any group of people will always be attended by biases and blind spots that will influence the nature and quality of the analysis given. This study will be subject to its own set of prior prejudices and perspectives. In the first instance, it is written by a member of Generation X looking in, as it were as an outsider, on Generation Y. Accordingly, care must be taken to allow the distinctive voices of Generation Y to arise lest they be overwhelmed by the interpretative pull of the author's generation. This said I am a near relative of Generation Y, having been born in 1975.

Second, and further, the thesis is written by one who has made conscious decisions to order their worldview around a Christian faith. I assume that the Christian faith is good and worth passing on, having chosen to do this myself. Though my position is not drawn from analytic philosophy, it does share the Christian reformed tradition. Again, although my position does not reach the analytic peaks of reformed epistemological reflection and apologetics, it does share its central claim that Christian belief is properly basic (that God has created in us a sense of the divine), rational and warranted. I will no doubt have my own nuances but will proceed on this understanding.<sup>7</sup> Further, via the theology of mission of Lesslie Newbigin I will proceed to demonstrate that not only is the Christian faith warranted, but it is also a true construal of our world.<sup>8</sup>

A third, related perspective and possible bias brought to this study is that I am a practising member of the Anglican clergy in a reformed, protestant Christian tradition. As such I hold what might be regarded as a 'high' view of the Bible as Christian scripture. This is to say that the Bible possesses a position of primary authority in my theological framework. Therefore I must be careful not to assume that the texts approached are *of necessity* internally coherent and applicable to a contemporary situation when discussing the Pauline framework of faith as found in 2 Corinthians 4. It is also possible that my position as paid clergy within an

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<sup>7</sup> Deane-Peter Baker, *Tayloring Reformed Epistemology: Charles Taylor, Alvin Plantinga and the De Jure Challenge to Christian Belief* (London: SCM Press, 2007) 1.

<sup>8</sup> As such providing an answer for both the *de jure* (i.e. belief in God is irrational) and *de facto* (i.e. belief in God is false) objections to Christianity.

institutional structure will lead me to value both the position of clergy and the formal structures of a church in my reflection.

Each perspective will add to a pastoral approach to the issue at hand, yet the accompanying assumptions and biases need to be controlled or questioned if the issues at hand are to be explored in a manner that is mindful of different perspectives and traditions. Given that there are potential biases coming from my reformed, protestant Christian tradition and worldview, I will seek to control the direction of the thesis in the following ways:

1. Regarding the notion of the authority of scripture in the work of theology, I will employ the pastoral theological method of Whitehead and Whitehead<sup>9</sup> to guide the process of the thesis. In their method, Whitehead and Whitehead allow for distinct, even competing, spheres to be heard, respectful of the full weight and implication of their voice. I will be more explicit as to how this will occur below; however, for the purpose of this thesis two spheres will be heard, that of Australia's Generation Y and that of Paul as he represents himself in 2 Corinthians 4.
2. Regarding one's ability to find coherent sense in scripture, I will build an exegetically based theology that is rooted firmly in the historico-literary sense of the text.<sup>10</sup> To this end, I will limit the primary extent of this theology to a single text (i.e. 2 Corinthians 4) so as to be able to demonstrate appropriate exegetical workings.
3. Regarding the applicability of an ancient text to the contemporary world, I will draw the reader back to the primary aim of this research, which is to provide a hermeneutic of pastoral mission to help bridge the gap that exists between Generation Y in Australia and the Christian churches. To this end, a hermeneutic of mission gained from an examination of the missionary –

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<sup>9</sup> J. D. Whitehead and E. E. Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981).

<sup>10</sup> This will be drawn from the theological method of Bernard Lonergan seen in, B. J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971) 153-173. Lonergan, a Roman Catholic, is not alone in advocating this method. E. Earle Ellis, himself representing a Baptist tradition, also approves of such a process. See, E. Earle Ellis, 'Perspectives on Biblical Interpretation: A Review Article,' *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 45:3 (2002): 491.

theologian Lesslie Newbigin will be employed to help bridge the interpretive gap between the spheres of scripture and Generation Y in Australia.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Purpose, research question and hypothesis***

This study has three main purposes:

1. To provide a theological hermeneutic of pastoral mission that may be a partner in dialogue with other approaches to ministry among Generation Y. A theological hermeneutic of mission may then critique and enrich other perspectives and may be itself critiqued and enriched.
2. To assist the Christian churches in their consideration of some of the issues surrounding the general absence of Generation Y in their communities<sup>12</sup> by drawing on scripture as a historical source of Christian theology.
3. To serve Generation Y with a pastoral response that endeavours both to draw from the foundational elements of the Christian faith and to suggest theological conclusions fitting for the post-modern world they inhabit.

Together, these three points provide a context for the major research question of this study, namely:

*How may a Pauline theology of the experience of faith as it is seen in 2 Corinthians 4 be applied pastorally within the context of Australia's Generation Y?*

It is my contention that a gulf has opened between the Christian churches and Generation Y in Australia. In this regard a renewed mission from the churches to Generation Y must be sought. Hence it will be my aim to explore the hypothesis that a clear vision of God and the seed of renewed mission may be found in the Pauline paradox of living with both joy and distress (2 Cor 4 :7). In other words, the dialectic and apparent contradiction between beholding the glory of God and the

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<sup>11</sup> The appropriateness of this choice may be seen in that Newbigin both pre-empted key post-modern criticisms of the applicability of the Bible to post-modern life and developed a hermeneutic that found explicit place for the diversity of cultural experience valued in post-modern life. See, Paul Weston, 'Lesslie Newbigin: A Postmodern Missiologist?', *Mission Studies*, 21:2 (2004): 243 f.

<sup>12</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 124.



experience of distress in life will provide a missiological bridge across which the Christian Faith may be connected with the spiritualities of Generation Y in Australia.

The explicit research question implies at least two subsidiary questions that will be explored in the course of this thesis. When considering how a Pauline view of faith, as it is presented in 2 Corinthians 4, may be applied pastorally within the context of Australia's Generation Y, two further questions emerge:

1. How does Paul expect that faith be transmitted within his context? And
2. What may this transmission of faith look like in the context of Generation Y in Australia?

In another perspective these two questions can be translated as statements that:

1. Paul has something to say regarding the transmission of faith in 2 Corinthians 4; and
2. There is the possibility of some connection between what Paul has to say regarding the transmission of faith and Generation Y.

In order to address the research question with clarity the key terms of the question must be examined, albeit briefly. The subsequent definitions will then assist in the delineation of explicit parameters for the study and in developing a theological language of mission within the context of Generation Y in Australia.

## **Key Terms**

The key terms to be defined before exploring the features of life as a member of Generation Y in Australia are: pastoral theology, spirituality and faith, Generation Y, Pauline and mission. In the context of the research question and emerging thesis a clear understanding of the function of these six key terms will provide the structural integrity needed for progress to be made. An exploration of the idea of *pastoral theology* will guide the thesis towards its methodological foundation. Consequently, by defining and discussing the idea of pastoral theology, a pastoral theological methodology will take shape. This will lead in turn to an investigation of *spirituality* and *faith*, two terms of central importance for the methodology. Next, the discussion

of key terms will proceed to *Generation Y* and a *Pauline* theology; these two terms form the contexts within which the emerging theology will be formed. Finally, an exploration of *mission*, particularly as it is found in the writings of Lesslie Newbigin, will give the hermeneutical lens to allow interaction between the contexts of *Generation Y* and a *Pauline* theology.

## Pastoral Theology

By way of analogy, defining pastoral theology is akin to nailing a jelly-fish to a tree. No sooner is one part neatly held down than another slides by and the first slips out of grasp. Yet, acknowledging the difficulty of providing a clear definition provides a helpful starting point.

One aspect of pastoral theology that contributes to the difficulty in giving a clear definition is the tension inherent in the discipline. Tidball writes of this tension being: "... the interface between theology and Christian doctrine on the one hand, and pastoral experience and care on the other."<sup>13</sup> There are various attempts to productively harness this tension. Some, like Tidball, seek an approach in which pastoral impetus is gathered through the application of theological reflection to daily life.<sup>14</sup> While this may provide a helpful starting point in reflection, other pastoral theologians ask how such a perspective may gain greater traction among exponents of pastoral theology.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps, one of the most helpful and practical perspectives to give insight into the dynamics of pastoral theology is the application of the concept of *habitus*.

The concept of *habitus* may be used to help bridge the gap between belief and action: "... guiding the temperament and practice of believers' lives."<sup>16</sup> By way of example, the Australian theologian, Terry Veling, has employed the concept of *habitus* in his

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<sup>13</sup> D. Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds: Explorations in Pastoral Theology* (Leicester: Apollos, 1997) 24.

<sup>14</sup> Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds*, 28.

<sup>15</sup> J. A. Wiseman, 'Teaching Spiritual Theology: Methodological Reflections,' *Spirituality Today*, 41:2 (1989).

<sup>16</sup> R. L. Maddox, 'The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline,' *Theological Studies*, 51 (1990): 651.

book, *Practical Theology: On Earth as it is in Heaven*.<sup>17</sup> He uses the idea of *habitus* to push pastoral theology further, by locating the practice of theology within an active group. Veling asserts that "... theology itself becomes an ongoing practice, and not merely a body of theories or abstractions ..."<sup>18</sup> and allows a process for people to become "... more "skilled," [sic] and thus more human in the ways they understand themselves, their tradition, and others."<sup>19</sup> One of my stated aims for this thesis is: "To assist the Christian churches in their consideration of some of the issues surrounding the general absence of Generation Y in their communities ...". I will soon contend that Generation Y is estranged from the Christian churches of Australia by profound and powerful social, epistemological and theological forces. Thus the task of re-presenting a Christian faith requires renewed wisdom and skill. Therefore, the presentation of a theology that promotes 'skilled living' by the Christian community seems to provide a fitting, holistic approach by which the deep and encompassing nature of spirituality may be addressed as it impinges upon the experience of Generation Y.

The concept of living skilfully as an exponent of a pastoral theology is initially difficult to grasp. However, by way of analogy a skilful pastoral *habitus* may be seen in the relationship between a sportsperson and the game that they play: the 'rules' and 'operations' of the game provide for the sportsperson the largely tacit framework in which they move and find self-referential reinforcement.<sup>20</sup> So a pastoral *habitus* here refers to a fundamental attitude of the heart and mind that results in an applied approach to life. In this approach it may be discerned that a practice of theological reflection located within the Christian community will shape the disposition and direction of that community.<sup>21</sup> Such an approach to life allows

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<sup>17</sup> T. A. Veling, *Practical Theology: On Earth as It Is in Heaven* (New York: Orbis Books, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> T. A. Veling, 'Emerging Issues Concerning the Practices of Theological Education,' *Religious Education*, 94:4 (1999): 416-417. In this paper Veling speaks only of 'practical theology'. However he has elsewhere named *habitus* as the process by which practical theology gains its practical wisdom. See, Veling, *Practical Theology*, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Veling, 'Emerging Issues,' 415.

<sup>20</sup> T. Schirato and J. Webb, 'Bourdieu's Concept of Reflexivity as Metaliteracy,' *Cultural Studies*, 17:3/4 (2003): 541-542.

<sup>21</sup> Glenn Morrison, 'Levinas, Von Balthasar and Trinitarian Praxis' (Ph.D thesis, Australian Catholic University, 2004), 224; Veling, *Practical Theology*, 16.

pastoral action that is intimately and reciprocally related to the theological theory to be formed.<sup>22</sup>

A key task of any skilled community lays in interpretation. The depth of wisdom as it has been gathered in the past must be applied to the present, inevitably involving both continuity and discontinuity with the established tradition. Whitehead and Whitehead seek to navigate through this interpretive task so that appropriate pastoral decisions are reached. They do this via a dynamic, three-step movement. The various sources of information available to the pastor or pastoral community inform a repeatable process aimed at reaching appropriate pastoral decisions.<sup>23</sup> Highlighted in this approach is the need to arrive at a point of concrete action where the decision is both for and from the community in which the pastoral need has arisen.<sup>24</sup>

Whitehead and Whitehead picture a reflective pastor moving through the three stage process that helps them progress from discerning God's voice in a particular situation to being able to enact certain concrete and corporate activities in response to it. The three active movements are named: Attending, Assertion and Decision.<sup>25</sup>

The initial movement in Whitehead and Whitehead's process is that of 'attending'. By attending to Christian tradition, personal experience and cultural information the Christian pastor will 'hear' what each sphere has to contribute to a particular discussion. This entails being attentive to "... the assumptions and presuppositions that lie behind the religious programs and pastoral decisions that are currently in effect ..."<sup>26</sup> and the positive contributions that each has to the subject. Whitehead and Whitehead point out that: "Theologically, we must listen to the Word before witnessing to it."<sup>27</sup> This idea is of particular importance to the process of my study because it emphasises the need to engage with the scriptural word with meaning and praxis whilst at the same time being aware of the other spheres of enquiry that impinge upon its proclamation. This attending process must occur with an ear for

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<sup>22</sup> R. P. Imbelli and T. H. Groome, 'Note: Signposts Towards a Pastoral Theology,' *Theological Studies*, 53: (1992): 130.

<sup>23</sup> Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 79.

<sup>24</sup> Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 25.

<sup>25</sup> Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 21.

<sup>26</sup> Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 87.

<sup>27</sup> Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 81.

pluriform traditions, brought about if by nothing other than the passing of time, and cultures, which enrich and inform what is apprehended in the text.<sup>28</sup> In this thesis, the two spheres listened to in this ‘attending’ phase are those of Paul (particularly as he is represented in 2 Corinthians 4) and the spiritual experience of Australia’s Generation Y.<sup>29</sup>

The second, ‘assertive’, phase or movement allows each sphere to speak and make its contribution felt so that a comprehensive picture may be gained of the question at hand. The authors point out that even as each of the spheres from which we must gain insight into the pastoral problem at hand speak, it is the stream of Christian tradition that “... reveals in a unique and exceptional fashion God’s will for us and for human history itself.”<sup>30</sup> Yet our own role as interpreter within this tradition must be acknowledged with its attendant “... cultural and personal influences ...”.<sup>31</sup> The shape of this thesis reflects this action, that is, a hermeneutical foundation will be constructed which allows the various voices being heard to interact with and test the claims of each other. The hermeneutical methodology of this thesis will be drawn from the theology of mission of Lesslie Newbigin.

The final stage of ‘decision’ marks “... the move from insight to action.”<sup>32</sup> Writing with Whitehead and Whitehead, Myers emphasises the need for pastoral decisions to result in collaborative activity on behalf of the corporate body of the Church.<sup>33</sup> As such the conclusions drawn from this study will be formed in a manner that seeks to develop a corporate *habitus* rather than disembodied abstractions or an individualised process.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 14, 20.

<sup>29</sup> Please note that, although I have not conducted the key survey and interview work necessary to allow the authentic voices of Generation Y to be heard, I am drawing upon studies which have sampled widely and used a variety of well-known and validated techniques to draw their data. Refer to the data analysis summaries of the key references cited in this thesis. C. Smith and M. L. Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 272-310; Sara Savage et al, *Making Sense of Generation Y: The World View of 15-25 Year-Olds* (London: Church House Publishing, 2006) 30-34; Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 353.

<sup>30</sup> Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 95.

<sup>31</sup> Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 96.

<sup>32</sup> J. G. Myers, ‘Decision Making - Goal of Reflection in Ministry’ in J. D. Whitehead and E. E. Whitehead, ed. *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981) 99.

<sup>33</sup> Myers, ‘Decision Making,’ 100.

<sup>34</sup> Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 12-13, 25.

In summary, the three steps of the process of pastoral, theological reflection will be addressed in this thesis as follows:

1. Attending: In Chapter Two, I will sketch some perceptions of the parameters of the development of meaning and the experience of spirituality within the context of Australia's Generation Y. The third chapter will follow with a discussion of the Pauline theology of the experience of faith, particularly as it is found in 2 Corinthians 4.
2. Assertion: Subsequently, I will review Lesslie Newbigin's theology of mission. Chapter Four will focus on the personal nature of knowledge and the role of the 'plausibility structure' in the development of knowledge. Having reviewed Newbigin's understanding of the 'plausibility structure', the cohering assumptions of the dominant spirituality of Generation Y and the Pauline faith will be gathered together, compared and contrasted. In Chapter Five the Trinitarian structure of Christian mission, drawn from Newbigin's writing, will be reviewed. This Trinitarian structure will form the interpretive framework that allows an ordered dialogue in which the Pauline vision of the experience of faith may be drawn towards the spiritual experience of Generation Y.
3. Decision: In the sixth and final chapter I will begin to engage in the active stage of reflection, seeking to establish a framework that enables pastoral decisions to be made so that the Christian churches can act in a pastoral *habitus* of mission in relation to Australia's Generation Y.

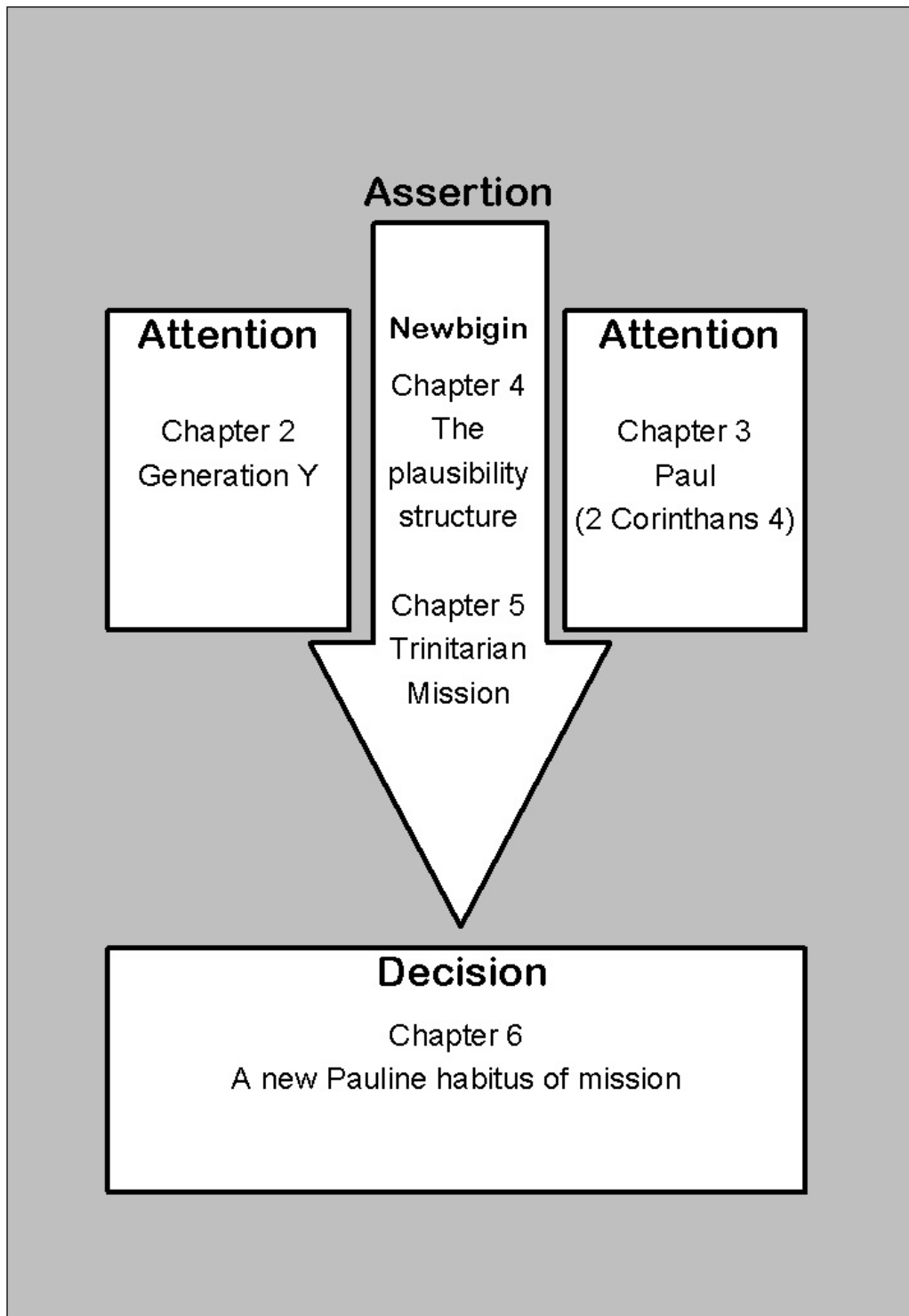
This process is illustrated in *figure 1* on the following page.

## **Spirituality and Faith**

Recently, a seminal work describing the sociology of spirituality within Generation Y in Australia was published by Mason, Singleton and Webber.<sup>35</sup> In this study Generation Y were able to speak of their perceptions of spirituality and the features of a spiritual life within their context. The size, statistical reliability and comprehensive analysis of the study have marked it out as a key resource in understanding the spiritual context and resources of this generation. My study will

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<sup>35</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*.



*Figure 1:* The theological process of Whitehead and Whitehead as applied to this thesis

draw on many insights made by Mason, Singleton and Webber and attempt to provide some theological reflection upon their ground-breaking sociological work. For example, I will take their insights on spirituality and transcendence to extend my pastoral analysis of Australia's Generation Y beyond mere codes of belief. This framework will also inform the theological questions regarding faith in the Pauline corpus.

Singleton, Mason and Webber stipulate a definition of spirituality, "... as a *conscious way of life based on a transcendent referent* [sic]."<sup>36</sup> Recognising the varied and indeed changing manner in which spirituality has been and is used, they highlight the methodological difficulties that arise when attempting to study spirituality in a strictly lexical manner. In stipulating a definition, which, in spite of their careful disclaimer is not unattached to lexical meanings, Singleton, Mason and Webber allow clear and unambiguous trends regarding this definition to emerge in their own right.<sup>37</sup> This will be of great benefit for this study as it will help guard against the possibility of reading into the experience of Generation Y presupposed lexical understandings of spirituality and generational features of spirituality borne by this researcher.

The definition of spirituality supplied above refers to transcendence. Transcendence is based upon some reality that lies beyond the individual. Usually transcendence is taken to imply reference to a deity(s) or supernatural force. However, Mason, Singleton and Webber broaden the category to include "... [n]on-religious ethical ideals ... [derived] ... from sources beyond the individual: e.g. from 'community standards' [sic]."<sup>38</sup> This is a broad sense of transcendence, but one that they argue is necessary if we are to do justice to the varied experiences of reality of Generation Y.

Mason, Singleton and Webber distinguish two active components in spirituality. A complete spirituality will be made up of both a *worldview* and corresponding but distinct *ethos*. The *worldview* refers to the patterned set of values, attitudes and

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<sup>36</sup> Andrew Singleton et al, 'Spirituality in Adolescence and Young Adulthood: A Method for a Qualitative Study,' *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 9:3 (2004): 250; Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 39.

<sup>37</sup> Singleton et al, 'Spirituality in Adolescence and Young Adulthood,' 249-252.

<sup>38</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 40.



motivations: the epistemological structures that support these entities.<sup>39</sup> The *ethos* looks at the manner in which the *worldview* is lived.<sup>40</sup> Discerning the difference between each component of a complete spirituality, Mason, Singleton and Webber study the changes in spiritual perception. This will have particular relevance to my thesis as I will soon suggest that behavioural, or *ethos*, changes have the power to drive changes in *worldview*.

Approaching the definition of spirituality above, a generic and universal sense could be applied to the term 'faith'. This seems to be the manner in which Fowler, a leading theorist of faith development, prefers to employ the term:<sup>41</sup> "Faith, [is] at once deeper and more personal than religion, [it] is the person's or group's way of responding to transcendent value and power ...".<sup>42</sup> As such, faith is something that is more profound than religious knowledge or an assent to a set of ideas, and may be of similar character when viewed across different religious manifestations.<sup>43</sup>

Yet the questions being asked in this study are self-consciously Christian, and so faith, or Christian faith, will be used here as the particular expression of Christian spirituality. As with spirituality as defined above, and faith as described by Fowler, Christian faith has both *worldview* and *ethos* components; put in different terms, it has an object of trust and various ways that it influences life.<sup>44</sup> For this thesis, a Pauline understanding of what constitutes a particularly Christian approach to faith will be sought in the text of 2 Corinthians 4. I will argue that this text provides insight into several of the key *worldview* and *ethos* components of the pervasive secular spirituality of Generation Y. However, a fuller reasoning for the choice of this text as the key source of a Pauline theology will be given below.

By articulating a Pauline manifestation of faith in distinction to a broader notion of spirituality, it is hoped that a renewed dialogue between the *worldview* and *ethos* of Generation Y and the Christian churches may occur. This will happen as the

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<sup>39</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 39.

<sup>40</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 69.

<sup>41</sup> Fowler, *Stages*, 3-5. Fowler himself cites dependence upon theologians such as Tillich and Niebuhr for this position.

<sup>42</sup> Fowler, *Stages*, 9.

<sup>43</sup> Fowler, *Stages*, 10-11.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (London: SCM Press, 1949) 15.

particular objects of faith/spirituality that mark out each perspective on life, and the particular manner in which faith/spirituality is embodied, bear witness to each other.

As set out above, this approach is made by drawing principally upon one understanding of what the ‘Christian’ faith may be, or may look like. My hope is that the dialogue set up within the confines of this study may provide some stimulus for reflection upon the nature of faith. Therefore the pastoral theological concern will be to study the possible relation between Pauline faith and the spirituality of Generation Y.

## **Generation Y**

This study is particularly interested in those young people born between the years 1981 and 1995.<sup>45</sup> Collectively termed Generation Y simply because they form the cohort following Generation X (1966–1980), these young people are generally the children of the post-World-War-II ‘Baby Boom’ (1946–1965). Although named in reference to their older siblings or cousins, Generation Y have forged an identity all of their own. Within this unique identity clear trends have emerged in which the decline of church membership has coincided with ongoing and vital spiritualities alternative to traditional Christianity.

## **Pauline**

St Paul’s writings have long played a pivotal role in the self-reflective and identity-forming tasks of the Christian churches.<sup>46</sup> Paul himself was a man deeply influenced by the particularity of Jesus Christ as the source and goal of Christian faith.<sup>47</sup> I will argue that Paul continues to provide ample material that may continue to inspire the

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<sup>45</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 62-63. It must be noted that the dates used to circumscribe (and appellations given to describe) what I have called Generation Y do differ. I do not intend to regard the dates I have given here as a strict and infallible description of all young Australians who fit into this range. However, with Singleton et al., they are “... better thought of as heuristic devices, useful markers for identifying very real differences between age cohorts.” Singleton et al, ‘Spirituality in Adolescence and Young Adulthood,’ 248.

<sup>46</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998) 2.

<sup>47</sup> Dunn, *Paul the Apostle*, 727; Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007) 223.

development of theology in this present age. What is meant in particular by a Pauline approach to the experience of faith, and the parameters within which it will be considered, will be reviewed in greater depth in the third chapter. The Pauline text of 2 Corinthians 4 will form the chief biblical text to be exegeted by which the Christian churches may be encouraged to develop insightful self-discovery.

The appropriateness of 2 Corinthians 4 as the key passage selected for more detailed exegesis will be argued at greater depth as the thesis moves into its 'assertive' phase. However, the four key reasons put forward for this decision are:

1. 2 Corinthians 4 provides a new perspective on ministry to Generation Y, as it has not been employed in this manner before. Therefore this thesis is original in its approach to pastoral theological reflection upon Generation Y.
2. 2 Corinthians 4 is particularly interested in the nature of ministry in the service of Christ within the context of a society of competing *worldviews*. I will argue that the Christian churches currently find themselves in a similar situation. Thus, the thesis is timely.
3. Within 2 Corinthians 4, three key themes arise: engagement, vulnerability and epistemology. I contend in Chapter Two that these are also found as themes in the spiritual experience of Australia's Generation Y. Accordingly, the thesis sets out to make appropriate pastoral theological links.
4. 2 Corinthians 4 contains a vision of faith that shows both *worldview* and *ethos* components at work. That is, it helps to explore the connection between the content of faith and the manner in which life is led. This is a theme that will help to highlight commonalities and differences between a Pauline faith and the spirituality of Generation Y, leading therefore to an appropriate hermeneutic of mission.

## **Mission**

The understanding of mission to be employed in this thesis will be established as Lesslie Newbigin's theology is introduced below and considered in depth in Chapters Four and Five. Newbigin's theology of mission will provide hermeneutical stimulus for the development of a pastoral *habitus* for the Christian churches in Australia.

In an energetic and productive life, Lesslie Newbigin (1909–1998) developed a comprehensive theology of mission forged from reflection on intense pastoral action. Embodying the roles of ordained clergyperson, cross-cultural missionary, bishop, ecumenical statesman, pastor, evangelist, theologian, teacher and writer, Newbigin was able to consider the task of mission assisted by a wide range of personal experience.

While he did not write a self-consciously ‘pastoral’ theology, and certainly not a ‘systematic’ theology in which he deliberately addressed a category of ‘pastoralia’, Newbigin did see a fundamental pastoral purpose in his theological reflection. The decisive moment in Newbigin’s development as a pastor and theologian came as he wrestled as a young man with the deep impact of destitution and despair upon the daily lives of people he was attempting to serve. He came to regard Jesus as being the ‘clue’ by which history, and therefore the vagaries of life, is understood and fulfilled. For Newbigin, Jesus is therefore the motivating force behind the pastoral care of those who interact with history.<sup>48</sup>

In regarding Jesus as the ‘clue’ by which history is understood, Newbigin sought to write a universal theology. As all people interact with history, being shaped by and shaping it, he desired from his reflection a way in which the richness of Christ Jesus as the ‘clue’ may be ministered to all.<sup>49</sup> As a consequence Newbigin did not generally approach questions regarding evangelism and nurture in isolation but was firm in his commitment to see both in operation together.<sup>50</sup> This was evident through his two ‘careers’, firstly as a western missionary to a pluralistic East and subsequently as an expatriate returning from the East to a changed, secular West.<sup>51</sup>

In both cases Newbigin found the key stimulus to the development of a theology of mission in a Trinitarian approach.<sup>52</sup> Ironically, the fundamental stumbling block to

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<sup>48</sup> Krish Kandiah, ‘Lesslie Newbigin's Contribution to a Theology of Evangelism,’ *Transformation*, 24:1 (2007): 51.

<sup>49</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids/Geneva: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company/WCC Publications, 1989) 113 ff.

<sup>50</sup> P. Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin Missionary Theologian: A Reader* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006) 234.

<sup>51</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 13.

<sup>52</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995) 19-29.

the declaration of the Christian gospel in both the pluralistic Eastern and secular Western cultures was the triune God of Christianity. Yet, within the doctrine of the Trinity, Newbigin discerned the seeds of a theology of mission that encompassed both plurality and secularity.<sup>53</sup> In this he found time for reflection and action, listening and speaking, meeting and parting, similarity and difference. Thus, his location of the impetus to mission within the Trinity will be the first of Newbigin's insights that will play a part in the development of the theology of this thesis.

Newbigin was not afraid to consider the claims to truth and knowledge that other approaches to spirituality offered. His second key contribution to a theology of mission, of vital importance for the thesis, are his ideas regarding the nature of knowledge and of subsequent truth claims. By placing Christian knowledge within this frame he presented useful tools for the assessment of both a Christian tradition and the tradition of the culture a missionary may enter.<sup>54</sup> In this context the category of the 'plausibility structure' formed an important epistemological feature in Newbigin's missiology. Newbigin writes that the plausibility structure is "... a structure of assumptions and practices which determine what beliefs are plausible and what are not."<sup>55</sup> In other words, a plausibility structure is a framework of tacit belief that allows the grounding of individual aspects of knowledge within a perception of reality. He then proceeds to present a Trinitarian vision of mission, particularly as it infuses the ongoing experience of the Christian churches. He also utilises the concept of the plausibility structure to demonstrate how a peculiarly Christian construal of history may interact with other construals.

Finally, this study will draw from Newbigin's understanding of mission as a pastoral task of the Christian community. His often quoted axiom that 'the congregation is the hermeneutic of the gospel'<sup>56</sup> marries the corporate life of the church community with the pastoral task of the transmission of the gospel that forms it.<sup>57</sup> His insights regarding the nature of living within the gospel community as a witness to Jesus, the 'clue' to history, provide practical insight as to how a pastoral and missional *habitus*

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<sup>53</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *Trinitarian Doctrine for Today's Mission* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998) 35-36.

<sup>54</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (London: SPCK, 1986) 35-41.

<sup>55</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 53.

<sup>56</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 222 ff.

<sup>57</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 41.

may be formed within the Christian churches as they bear witness to the gospel amongst and to Australia's Generation Y.<sup>58</sup>

Having set the basic parameters of this study, a description of the remaining chapters follows.

### ***Chapter outlines***

The remaining chapters of this thesis will set out an approach that will seek to re-envisage the transmission of the Christian faith to members of Australia's Generation Y through a Pauline pastoral theology of mission. The second chapter consists of an examination of the key features of the spirituality of Generation Y in Australia. The sociological data regarding the breadth and character of Australian youth spirituality is gathered into three key themes. Initially, Generation Y is seen to be (a) deeply estranged from the Christian churches. This separation is thoroughgoing, encompassing differences in belief, practice and the spiritual imagination. Secondly, Generation Y demonstrate (b) vulnerability in spite of apparent strength. This arises due to the stressful nature of the technological world that they inhabit, and the questionable ability of their prevailing spiritual resources to provide adequately for the different challenges of life. Finally the effects of (c) a 'this-worldly' spiritual epistemology upon Generation Y are traced. The dominance of a culture of consumption is noted and I contend that this causes a truncated spiritual horizon to exist amongst Generation Y. The chapter concludes with preliminary pastoral and theological reflection upon these spiritual trends.

Chapter Three moves on to consider the role of faith within a Pauline theology, as seen in the text of 2 Corinthians 4. A historico-literary exegetical process is employed, uncovering themes that run in parallel with those discovered in the examination of the spiritual world of Generation Y. Within the context of 2 Corinthians, Paul is found to be (a) engaged with the world of the Corinthians regardless of difficulties and distress. Paul is challenged heavily by the Corinthian congregation, the prevailing Hellenic culture and intervening, usurping 'ministers'.

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<sup>58</sup> Weston, 'A Postmodern Missiologist?', 39-40.

Yet Paul's faith motivates and enables him to remain engaged with the Corinthian church. Further, (b) Paul finds strength in spite of apparent vulnerability. His life is lived within a very obvious context of weakness. His refusal to accept monetary gifts from the Corinthians, his seeming rhetorical plainness and his repudiation of a harsh leadership style all make him undesirable to the Corinthian church in their social context. However, it is in Paul's very weakness that the eyes of faith may discern the power of God at work. Finally, the manner in which the 'lived' elements of Paul's *ethos* of faith and the cohering motifs of his *worldview* interact allow insight into (c) the practical outcome of an 'other-worldly' spiritual epistemology. Paul discerns true transcendence and life in the 'unseen' God as opposed to the 'seen' elements of wealth, fine speech and power. This, in turn, allows him to embrace trial and suffering for the sake of the 'other'.

In Chapter Four I begin to review Lesslie Newbigin's approach to mission in a pluralistic world and a post-Christian West. Newbigin's approach is considered with particular reference to the personal nature of knowledge and the role of the 'plausibility structure' in mission. The data arising from the examination of the spirituality of Generation Y and the Pauline faith is arranged so that the key ideas that give each their connection with reality are exposed. I find that both Paul and Generation Y value the role of personal relationship in the development and maintenance of knowledge. Similarly, the all-encompassing nature of their respective faith/spirituality is shared. However, the Pauline *worldview* drives its resultant *ethos*, whereas Generation Y's *ethos* seems to drive the *worldview*. This is then clearly demonstrated in differences between Paul and Generation Y in their attitudes towards the visible and consumable elements of life and the value of the 'other-worldly'.

Chapter Five turns to concentrate upon the role that Newbigin's Trinitarian theology of mission has as a foundation for dialogue between a Pauline faith and the spirituality of Generation Y. The Christological role of the Christian churches as witnesses to the great work of God to judge and bring restoration to the world will be considered at depth. The role of the Holy Spirit as the one who enables this witness and calls the world to account is also discussed. Preliminary indications as to the shape of a Pauline *habitus* of mission for Australia's Christian churches are then

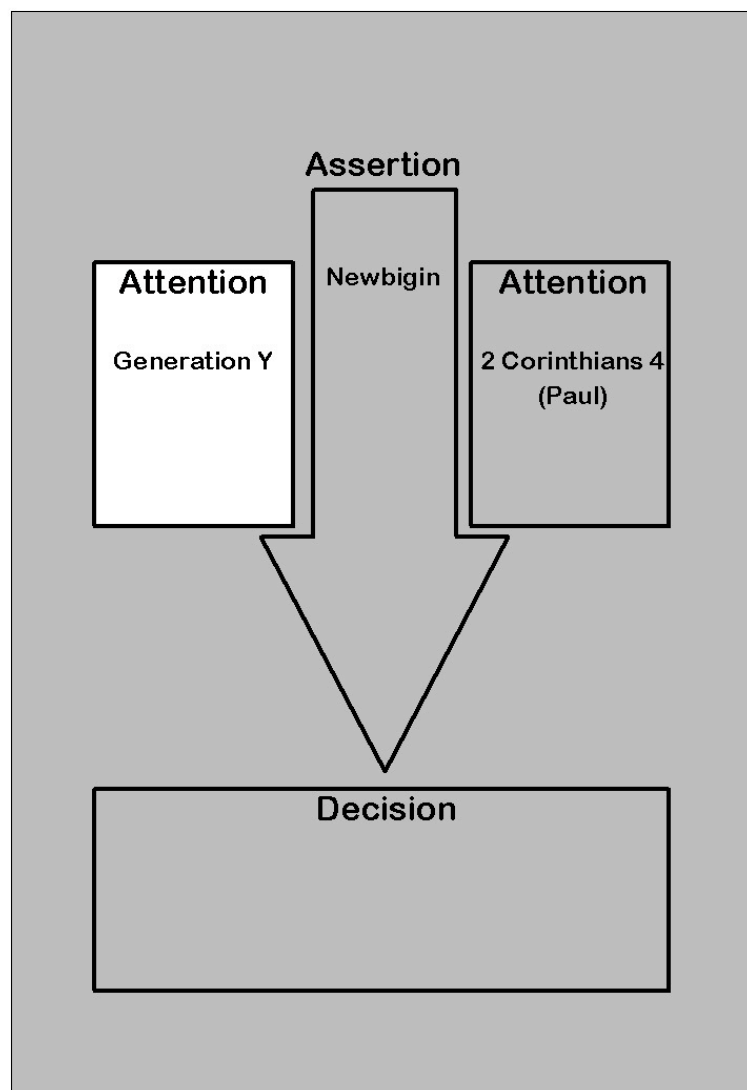
drawn. As Newbiggin's understanding of the church's role as the witness to God's work in the world is unfolded, the spiritual concerns of Generation Y uncovered in Chapter Four are brought into renewed dialogue with Paul's demonstration of faith. Ultimately this leads to the development of a threefold mission paradigm. The fields of *authenticity*, *proximity* and *intelligibility* are put forward as the hermeneutical keys for a Pauline pastoral theology of mission to Australia's Generation Y.

Finally, in Chapter Six, a new Pauline *habitus* of transmission is offered. The three fields of mission: *authenticity*, *proximity* and *intelligibility* are considered at some length in relation to an encounter between the Christian churches and Generation Y. Through this process tentative suggestions are given for a new theological perspective on mission to Australia's Generation Y. The missional roles of *kenosis*, *patience* and *apprenticeship* in the Christian tradition are discussed as dispositions arising from the missional fields of *authenticity*, *proximity* and *intelligibility* respectively. In this discussion the Christian churches are offered a new Pauline and pastoral *habitus* of faith as the foundation of and means for the transmission of faith to Generation Y.



## Chapter 2

### The social, spiritual and theological landscape of Generation Y



## **Y: I want it ... and I want it now!**

*I suck information  
Through the holes in my skull  
My belly gurgles hungry  
My mouth is always full.<sup>1</sup>*

Youth, that age currently filled by Generation Y, has long been a turbulent period of life. In the twelfth century, well before the modern concept of the teenager emerged, Peter the Hermit wrote:

Youth has no regard for old age, and the wisdom of the centuries is looked down upon both as stupidity and foolishness. The young men are indolent; the young women are indecent and indecorous in the speech, behaviour and dress.<sup>2</sup>

Even earlier (during the fourth century BCE) Aristotle wrote, “[w]hen I look at the younger generation, I despair for the future of civilization!”<sup>3</sup>

It seems that young people continue to be viewed with a degree of suspicion and amazement in the contemporary Australian environment. A short survey of the Australian media elicits no shortage of similarly lurid descriptions of Generation Y. Teenage violence, sexual promiscuity and careless behaviour have all been recently reported in the mainstream media, often with an air of disbelieving incredulity.<sup>4</sup> Similarly it is not difficult to find examples of older generations struggling to understand and appreciate the young people who make up Generation Y. The attitudes young Australians bear towards various issues such as financial, moral and health matters seem to baffle older commentators.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Antipop*, from the Primus album ‘Antipop’ (1999).

<sup>2</sup> Mark Ashton, *Christian Youth Work: An In-Depth Analysis for Local Church Strategy* (Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications, 1986) 15.

<sup>3</sup> Ashton, *Christian Youth Work*, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Anonymous, ‘Schoolies Pelt Police with Bottles,’ *The West Australian*, accessed on <http://www.thewest.com.au/default.aspx?MenuId=2&ContentID=104537>, 25 October 2008; Marissa Calligeros, “Put out or Get Out”: Schoolies Share the Love,’ *The Age*, accessed on <http://www.theage.com.au/national/put-out-or-get-out-schoolies-share-the-love-20081124-6faq.html>, 24 November 2008; Anonymous, ‘Cops Allege Schoolie Sexually Assaulted on Dance Floor,’ *The West Australian*, accessed on <http://www.thewest.com.au/default.aspx?MenuID=77&ContentID=110221>, 27 November 2008. Note that a ‘schoolie’ is the colloquial term to describe a student on holiday immediately following the end of their final set of exams.

<sup>5</sup> Leon Getler, ‘Generation Y-Worry Still Unfazed by Credit Woes,’ *The Age*, accessed on <http://www.theage.com.au/national/generation-yworry-still-unfazed-by-credit-woes-20081101->

However, sensational headlines do little to accurately describe Generation Y. In many ways Australia's Generation Y is a totally new cohort, formed by and busy forming a new way of being Australian. The emerging thought forms and practices of Generation Y are intimately related to the rapid technological advancements of this age and carry with them great energy and colour.

Nevertheless, the youth of Generation Y have not arrived *ex nihilo*. They are the sons and daughters of the Baby Boomers (1945–1965); the nieces, nephews and cousins of Generation X (1966–1980); and the grand children of World War II's Builders. As such they share key hopes and aspirations with previous generations, yet their approach to life is quite different.

Within this context the decline of church attendance that begun in the 1970s has continued with the consequence that many members of Generation Y have very little or no involvement with the traditional communities of Christian faith. Further, it is now becoming clear that not only do many young Australians not belong to a Christian church, they do not hold traditional Christian beliefs either.

This chapter will begin by tracing the spiritual and epistemological contours of Generation Y. Some key themes will then be drawn out of this sketch and preliminary theological soundings taken to help enable the distinctive sphere of the spirituality of Australia's Generation Y be heard.

## ***Spirituality, stress and the secular mind***

### **Generation Y and the Christian churches**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reports a 22 per cent decline in the religious affiliation of all Australians over the thirty-five years between 1971 and

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5fxq.html, 2 November 2008; Anonymous, "'Toolies' Give Schoolies a Bad Name,' *The West Australian*, accessed on <http://www.thewest.com.au/aapstory.aspx?StoryName=532432>, 23 November 2008. Note that a 'toolie' is the colloquial term to describe an older person who preys upon 'schoolies'. Anonymous, 'Pregnant Teens Not Butting Out,' *ABC News*, accessed on <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/07/2413649.htm7>, 7 November 2008.

2006.<sup>6</sup> This decline in an older strata of the population is mirrored amongst Generation Y.

Two measures of the church affiliation of Australian youth, the *Spirit of Generation Y* report and the ABS Australian Census of 2006 are cited in the table below.<sup>7</sup>

<b>Religion/Denomination</b>	<b>Census 2006 Age 15–24 %</b>	<b>Generation Y Survey 2005 Age 13–24 %</b>
Anglican	14	8
Catholic	26	21
Other Christian	17	17
Other Religion	7	6
No religious intent/ Not stated	35	48
Total	100	100

Two interesting patterns arise from comparing the data on this table:

1. A disparity between the estimates of Anglican and Roman Catholic church affiliation in the ABS Census and the *Spirit of Generation Y* project.<sup>8</sup> Mason, Singleton and Webber suggest that this is due to the conditions of each survey. That is, when a respondent is able to explore their attitude or given a chance for reflection, nominal adherence hardens into rejection and vague association drops away. They also suggest that as the parents of many members of Generation Y would have filled out their census details they tended to over report the affiliation of their children.<sup>9</sup>
2. An associated increase (i.e. transfer from Anglican and Roman Catholic) to the ‘No religious intent/Not stated category’. As will be touched upon here,

<sup>6</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 131.

<sup>7</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 74. Table 3.3. Please note that the figures in the “Census 2006” column only add up to 99%. I have retained the anomaly as was presented in the original.

<sup>8</sup> The Anglican and Roman Catholic churches are cited specifically here as they were the two Christian denominations with sample sizes large enough (in the ‘Spirit of Generation Y’ project) to make valid comparisons with the ABS data.

<sup>9</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 74.

and returned to later in more depth, this has been not a loss of spirituality but a transfer of spirituality to that of a 'Secular' character.<sup>10</sup>

## **Dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the Christian churches**

One area of Australian public life that has had an effect on the Christian churches' ability to transmit the Christian faith has been the widespread and rising dissatisfaction and disillusionment with churches as social institutions.<sup>11</sup> This disenchantment has occurred for at least two reasons.

Firstly, as people have drifted away from church life a 'religious de-socialisation' has occurred in which the aims and reinforcing structures of the Christian churches as social entities have been forgotten.<sup>12</sup> It seems people no longer know what these aims are, yet the general perception within the Australian community is that churches are fundamentally self-serving.<sup>13</sup> While Australia has increasingly functioned as a secular nation politically, there have been occasions when the Christian churches have played a vital role spiritually and socially within Australian society.<sup>14</sup> During these times the increased likelihood of contact between the general population and the Christian churches would have lent itself to greater familiarity and therefore, it seems, greater trust.

For many, the general perception of relational distance has hardened into specific unease. The slow and often inadequate manner in which the Christian churches as a whole, both in Australia and overseas, have dealt with allegations of abuse of various kinds has given explicit voice to distrust forged by unfamiliarity.<sup>15</sup> Many have regarded the actions of the institutions involved as being more interested in self-service than transparent assistance to others. Against a background of generally

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<sup>10</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 306.

<sup>11</sup> Hughes, 'Insecurity in Australia,' 17.

<sup>12</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 44.

<sup>13</sup> Hughes, 'Insecurity in Australia,' 18.

<sup>14</sup> I. Beward, *Australia: "The Most Godless Place under Heaven?"* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1988) 19 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Hughes, 'Insecurity in Australia,' 18.

improving confidence in institutions, Hughes notes that public confidence in the churches has continued to fall.<sup>16</sup>

## **The rise of a Secular spirituality**

It has been noted that between one-third and one-half of Generation Y makes no claim of affiliation to any Christian denomination or other traditional world religion. This means that almost half of Generation Y holds to either a non-traditional mix of beliefs and practices, or to some other spirituality. The dominant part of this group embraces what has been termed the ‘Secular’ path.<sup>17</sup>

While acknowledging the potential oxymoron in assigning a category of Secular spirituality, Mason, Singleton and Webber argue that secularism as it is manifest in Generation Y “... is not a question of mere deficit, a lack of belief ... but rather a different view of life in which spirituality is much more muted.”<sup>18</sup> This ‘muted’ Secular spirituality is marked by the value that is placed upon ‘this-worldly’ rather than ‘other-worldly’ aims, aspirations and understandings of the world.<sup>19</sup>

In sketching a portrait of what a ‘this-worldly’ life looks like one may be struck by its ordinariness and the simultaneous absence of key aspects that have been assumed to be part of a spiritual life. On the one hand ordinary activities such as eating, drinking, dressing, communicating and working are present. These are activities that people have been doing for millennia. Yet the coherence that ties all of these activities together is not sought in a being or force that exists ‘above’ the material plane. Rather, coherence is found in concepts such as an ‘ethical life’, or the fulfilment of ‘personal aspirations’.<sup>20</sup> Fundamentally it is the people, associations and things that reside in *this* material world that operate to bring the various activities of life into some sense of coherent meaning. Therefore, to approach Generation Y assuming an explicit, or even tacit, understanding of transcendence based upon an ‘other-worldly’ being or abstraction misses the basic themes that run through and

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<sup>16</sup> Hughes, *Insecurity in Australia*, 17.

<sup>17</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 203.

<sup>18</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 166.

<sup>19</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 204.

<sup>20</sup> Singleton et al, ‘Spirituality in Adolescence and Young Adulthood,’ 250 f.

cohere in a young persons life. Consequently, one may perceive a transcendence of sorts based upon a thoroughly materialistic and hedonistic lifestyle. For even self-pursuit can, at a very basic level, be argued to constitute an overarching personal narrative.

Within this spiritual arena, scepticism regarding the truth claims of what have come to be held as ‘personal beliefs’ is high. This is particularly seen as the ‘personal’ and subjective elements of transcendence and coherence are contrasted with what is regarded as the ‘hard’ knowledge of materialism. Therefore claims of spiritual truth that avert from the strictly material world accessed by sensory information are rejected in favour those that provide coherence individually, but hold no sway over anyone else. Thus the ‘meta-narrative’ of an explicitly transcendent *worldview* is replaced by the ‘midi-narrative’ of a localised, personal story of coherence.<sup>21</sup>

Generation Y place significant value on immediate, if not local, relational networks to provide the reinforcement and support required to develop frameworks of meaning. Authoritative institutions such as the Christian churches and an authoritative canon such as the Bible are generally downplayed or rejected amongst Generation Y. The immediate, ‘this-worldly’ and interactive realm of human relationship, exerts a powerful stimulus to the development of meaning that coheres around ‘this-worldly’ pursuits and aspirations.<sup>22</sup> In order to distinguish between this muted and elemental sense of transcendence and that of traditional Christianity I will hereafter describe a *worldview* that includes a supernatural or ‘other-worldly’ frame of reference as being *explicitly* transcendent.

### ***Worldview/Ethos dissonance***

One particularly interesting feature of Mason, Singleton and Webber’s sociological analysis of spirituality in Generation Y is that the constitutional beliefs of a *worldview* often do not connect with the daily operation of life (*ethos*) in any

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<sup>21</sup> Philip Hughes, ‘Characteristics of Religious Knowledge among Australian Students,’ *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 12:2 (2007): 139-141.

<sup>22</sup> K. Patterson, ‘The HBF/West Australian Report of the Western Australian i-Generation,’ *Patterson Market Research* (2004) 33-35; M. Mason et al, ‘The Spirituality of Young Australians,’ *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 12:2 (2007): 161.

meaningful way. The dissonance between the *worldview* and *ethos* of some members of Generation Y is illustrated by the discrepancy between the percentage of those who consider themselves Christian (46%) and the rate of active involvement "... with any form of Christianity ... [17%]".<sup>23</sup> This is further evidenced by the relatively high rates of adherence to certain 'New Age' beliefs and very low rates of participation in complementary practices. It seems that elements of both traditionally Christian and 'New Age' *worldviews* are easily mixed by members of Generation Y with a basically Secular *ethos*. What is more, the power of the Secular *ethos* seems to eventually erode the residue of the previously held *worldview*.<sup>24</sup> As the behaviours that nourish and maintain a vital spiritual *worldview* wane, the beliefs seem to progressively fall away.

An analysis of the literature does seem to implicate a consistent set of factors that characterize the shape of the spiritual experience of Generation Y. These attributes will now be examined under the headings individualisation, the importance of family and friends, comfort in the technological milieu, a consumerised approach to life and the completeness of immersion in the post-modern world. Factors associated with the absence of Generation Y in the Christian churches will then be summarised.

## **The social and spiritual characteristics of Australia's Generation Y**

### **Individualisation**

One of the immediately obvious aspects of the outlook of Generation Y as presented by social researchers is that of radical individualisation. This seems to be fed by the common theme that the young people who populate Generation Y have been raised outside of the reinforcing and constraining boundaries of a coherent tradition.

Without a framework for understanding the broad parameters of life, Generation Y lives in a world in which all options are open. It is therefore the right and responsibility of the individual to choose amongst the myriad options.<sup>25</sup> While this

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<sup>23</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 301.

<sup>24</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 302-303, 306.

<sup>25</sup> Hughes, 'Insecurity in Australia,' 4-5.



may seem to promote a certain loneliness of disposition, it does not necessarily do so.<sup>26</sup>

Generation Y is truly autonomous and situational: they gauge action according to what seems right for the self in its current situation and mould the concomitant belief systems to accommodate personal fulfilment as the highest goal.<sup>27</sup> In this environment, where the self has been elevated to the final arbiter of truth, it is not surprising that there has been a widespread decrease in loyalty to institutions. Occasional and temporary allegiances to organisations may be made if the individual's goals are congruent to or furthered by those of the organisation; however, ongoing loyalty is not readily considered. This is illustrated by the decline in membership of service organizations such as Rotary and The Lions Club.<sup>28</sup> While a majority of Generation Y profess a desire to see a compassionate and just society, and will in fact undertake work to further that aim, such work is done as a one-off volunteer on a project-by-project basis. It seems then that personal interests determine action rather than the dictates of an organisation of which one is an ongoing member.

Though the locating of authority by Generation Y within the individual has led to a profound freedom to choose a path of one's own, this has come at a cost. With autonomous authority has come the weight of responsibility.<sup>29</sup> This is felt by Generation Y in at least two facets of life. First, the multitude of decisions that must be made in order to navigate through daily life, let alone the grander trajectory of a lifetime, can become overwhelming.<sup>30</sup> In this sense the price of individualisation is becoming caught up in minutiae. One example of this is found in the great attention Generation Y pays to the establishment and maintenance of a current and fashionable wardrobe. Many different colours, styles, types and 'signature' brands vie for attention, introducing a significant level of distracting complexity to the simple task of dressing one's self. Choices faced by Generation Y in such basic areas of life were once pre-chosen by an established tradition. To complete this example, a

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<sup>26</sup> See, for example, J. Topsfield, 'Gen Y a Happy, Confident Bunch,' *The Age*, accessed on <http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/gen-y-a-happy-confident-bunch/2007/05/01/>, 2 May 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 118.

<sup>28</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 205.

<sup>29</sup> Hughes, *Putting Life Together*, 58-61.

<sup>30</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 329-330.

young man growing up in an Australian working-class family during the 1950s may have owned a pair of tough shorts and a couple of button down shirts. Thus the introduction of a myriad of choice at all levels of life saps time and energy from decisions that relate to the higher, overarching trajectories of existence.<sup>31</sup>

The cost of becoming caught in an overwhelming flood of choice is followed by the stress the individual must bear in carrying the sole blame for unfulfilled expectations. This is illustrated by the expectation that Generation Y will seek their own career path, changing employers and occupations in order to meet their goals, rather than working through an established pattern set out in a couple of organisations.<sup>32</sup>

Generation Y, the Baby Boomer and Generation X share an eclectic approach to spirituality based upon self-improvement. This is a feature commonly held in the Generation Y of both Australia and the USA.<sup>33</sup> Within this approach spiritual plurality is affirmed but not generally lived. Individuals tend to follow one path, increasingly that of a Secular spirituality, and if they choose to investigate alternatives it is done for informational reasons rather than to foster adherence.<sup>34</sup> This approach is fed by the radical individualism that underlies the epistemological horizon of Generation Y. Disconnected from nurturing and ‘legitimizing’ communities,<sup>35</sup> Generation Y seems to have embraced an ego-centric authority filter in which self-interest determines fitness of belief.

## **The importance of family and friends**

A common, unifying aspect of the *worldviews* exhibited by Generation Y relates to the importance of the family in their development. Underlining the particularly high role of parents in the development of young people, Mason, Singleton and Webber

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<sup>31</sup> Hughes, ‘*Insecurity in Australia*,’ 4.

<sup>32</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 231-232, 235-237.

<sup>33</sup> Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 170-171; M. Mason, ‘Teenage Religion and Spirituality: International Comparisons,’ *Annual Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion*, (2006, cited with permission): 16-18; Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 325.

<sup>34</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 179-187.

<sup>35</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 323.

were even able to describe Generation Y, as a grouping, as “... Echo-Baby Boomers ...”.<sup>36</sup>

Parents and members of the extended family are highly regarded as role models by the cohort of Generation Y.<sup>37</sup> It is not a surprise, then, to find that close relationships with family are highly valued.<sup>38</sup> A twin observation may be made at this point. Not only does Generation Y derive a significant lead from their parents in matters of spirituality and *worldview*, but they actively desire harmonious relationship with them.

The demographers of Generation Y record that a key influence on the development of spirituality within the generation is parental influence.<sup>39</sup> Significant associations have been made between the frequency of mother’s attendance at church and the strength of their Generation Y child’s Christian commitment. Similarly, families that talk about religion at home several times a week or more are significantly likely to produce children with ‘Active Christian’ commitment.<sup>40</sup> This is an activity that in many cases would be initiated by parents, and at least requires their active participation for it to flourish.

Yet, it has already been noted above that in the last four decades there has been a significant decrease in affiliation to the Christian churches in Australia within the population, including the parents of Generation Y.<sup>41</sup> This willingness to allow even such a low-cost affiliation to a Christian community, implied by mere indication in a survey, to pass by means that it is unlikely that the ‘higher’ cost commitments of regular discussion of matters to do with a Christian faith and physical attendance at a church are present within the life of many Australian families. As the members of Generation Y have moved away from relationship with the Christian faith – in their belief structures and practical commitment to a community of Christian faith – they have been led by their parents.

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<sup>36</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 270.

<sup>37</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 258.

<sup>38</sup> Anonymous, *National Survey of Young Australians 2006*, 18.

<sup>39</sup> J. Bellamy et al, ‘*NCLS Occasional Paper 5: Social Influences Upon Faith Development*’ (NCLS Research, Sydney, 2004), 6.

<sup>40</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 151, 156.

<sup>41</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 131.

Notwithstanding the importance of familiar, and particularly parental, stimulus in the development of spirituality in Generation Y, there are at least two factors that have acted to dilute this influence. Since the post-World-War-II ‘baby boom’, fertility rates have dropped in Australia. This has had the obvious effect of reducing family size. In fact, the high drop in the fertility rate has reached the point where single child families are becoming the norm. This biological phenomenon has been linked with the social reality that “... ‘relationships are now being formed with peers, not relatives’ [sic].”<sup>42</sup> The second pressure diluting parental influence in the development of the *worldview* of Generation Y is the growing likelihood that children will grow up in a household without one of their birth parents. So while “... the family is the most important agent in a young person’s socialisation ... now, more than any other time in recent history, family arrangements are liable to change.”<sup>43</sup> A corollary of these two changes is that friends and peers are growing in their importance in the growth of individuals’ *worldview* among the members Generation Y.

Friends are highly valued, the ones most likely to be turned to for advice or support in times of trouble. They also seem to have an important role in explaining their faith structures to the friends.<sup>44</sup> Just as the family resumed influence in the development of *worldview* in the absence of a declining church, so friends and peers seem to be doing so in response to pressures that have resulted in a diluted family structure.

The increasing role of friends in the lives of young people is illustrated by their influential position in the ‘policing’ and mediation of sexuality. Young people in Australia seem to be engaging in sexually active relationships at an early age. However, the presence of sexual activity within a relationship does not necessarily imply the expectation of commitment to the other person. In fact, it is generally understood that young people will have engaged in sexual activity with multiple partners.<sup>45</sup> Significantly, both ‘casual’ and ‘committed’ sexual partners do not

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<sup>42</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 232.

<sup>43</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 233.

<sup>44</sup> Bellamy et al, ‘*Social Influences*,’ 5; Anonymous, *National Survey of Young Australians 2006*, 9, 14.

<sup>45</sup> Anastasia Powell, ‘*Generation Y: Re-Writing the Rules on Sex, Love and Consent*’ (Ph.D thesis, University of Melbourne, 2007), 1.

supersede friends in importance and there is an expectation that friendship is permanent and will transcend sexual activity; either lasting beyond the sex, or existing outside the fragile sexual union.<sup>46</sup> Further, it seems that friends play a dominant role in mediating social norms regarding sexuality.<sup>47</sup>

The importance of a nurturing family environment in the development of a robust and active Christian faith has been suggested. A similar pattern emerges when we consider the role peer friendships play in the development of spirituality in a young person. Indeed, young people are powerfully influential in the spirituality of their peers. The importance of friends in the socialising process will heavily influence both the belief practices and values of a young person. Surveys frequently report the influential role that peers play as informal counsellors, guides and sounding boards for life.<sup>48</sup>

### **Comfort in the technological milieu**

It is now expected that a young person will spend many hours in a week in front of a screen; be it watching television, playing video games or utilising the internet via a computer.<sup>49</sup> Indicative as this is of a changing pattern of entertainment, it belies a more significant factor that has emerged within Generation Y. For many of the technologies accessed by Generation Y, particularly as they get older, ‘connecting’ with one-another via an electronic or digital medium – rather than the simple transfer of information – is the aim. The rise of mobile information technology, such as the latest versions of the mobile phone, illustrates this concept. New possibilities for entering into relationship are delivered in which speed and flexibility in connection are paramount.<sup>50</sup> It may be said that the mark of social success is not the ability to make deep contact with a message, but to have a deep list of contacts with whom to message.

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<sup>46</sup> Powell, ‘*Re-Writing the Rules*,’ 116, 132.

<sup>47</sup> Powell, ‘*Re-Writing the Rules*,’ 132.

<sup>48</sup> Anonymous, *National Survey of Young Australians 2006*, 14; Hughes, *Putting Life Together*, 79-80.

<sup>49</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 240.

<sup>50</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 238-239.

The pervasiveness of technology in the lives of Generation Y and the natural ease with which it is employed is such that they have been labelled ‘digital natives’.<sup>51</sup> It seems that for Generation Y technology is not a tool to be utilised amongst others in the discharge of life, but the medium in which life is lived.

Utilising the extraordinary speed and ease with which information may be exchanged, Generation Y is now able to source information in a manner that in a previous era was impossible.<sup>52</sup> The ability to upload and contribute information to the myriad sources of information has lent immediacy to the information-gathering exercise. It is now a relational exercise in which interaction with the data is expected. Almost anyone can post ‘information’ to a web-site; however, the process of authentication and review of that data is much more difficult than in the past.<sup>53</sup>

One of the hallmarks of Generation Y as a generation is their perceived proficiency in accessing and utilising technology in their daily lives.<sup>54</sup> It seems that technology has become the environment in which life is played out: the water in which young people swim.<sup>55</sup> It also seems that digital media plays a substantially entertaining function in the lives of young people.<sup>56</sup> So it may be said that technology is not a meaning *maker* but the *medium* through which Generation Y engages with spirituality. It then follows that in this context, Generation Y’s choice of *worldview* and particular lifestyle *ethos* choices will together exert strong recursive reinforcement.<sup>57</sup>

A corollary of the pervasive nature of technology in the lives of Generation Y is the presence of continual stimulation akin to ‘white noise’ that militates against the sort of reflective thought that is necessary to develop a spirituality sufficient to cope with life. This is likened to feeding child sweets to ward off hunger.<sup>58</sup> Soon I will argue that the Secular spirituality and technological world, so dominant in the experience of Generation Y, is a cause of much stress and, further, it is ultimately ill-fitted to

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<sup>51</sup> M. Prensky, ‘Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants,’ *On the Horizon*, 9:5 (2001): 1.

<sup>52</sup> Prensky, ‘Digital Natives,’ 3.

<sup>53</sup> Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 180.

<sup>54</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 239.

<sup>55</sup> Prensky, ‘Digital Natives,’ 1.

<sup>56</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 247.

<sup>57</sup> Savage et al, *Making Sense of Generation Y*, 41-42.

<sup>58</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 335.

cope with all that life will raise. Moreover, the consumerism implicit in much of the technological lifestyle effectively staves off interaction with the deeper issues of life by creating a constant stream of distracting stimulation.

### **A consumerised approach to life**

One of the defining characteristics of Generation Y is the prime role the consumption of manufactured goods has in life. The consumption shown by Generation Y, and its associated mindset consumerism, is not a new phenomenon. What has become distinctive within Generation Y, however, is a new completeness in the permeation of consumerism into the fabric of life. Not only must a member of Generation Y own a mobile phone if they are to feel adequately equipped to deal with the world around them, but it must be of the ‘latest generation’ and customised with bought accessories or features to reflect the personality and social group of the owner. As such, the purpose or even function of a person tends to be based squarely upon their consumption.<sup>59</sup>

Where choice is elevated to the position of a basic human right, the marketing of the various elements of consumption has taken on an epistemological role for Generation Y. While the goal of marketing is to encourage more consumption, it is now seen as the positive force used to understand the generation and has successfully been used to commodify even “...aspects of social life that were perhaps thought to be impervious to capitalist interests.”<sup>60</sup> For example, aspects of spirituality are ‘packaged’ and ‘sold’ with ‘customers’ picking and choosing the aspects of religiosity that best serve their purposes. Yet the rise of marketing as a tool in the construction of meaning has forced the development of a certain degree of suspicion on behalf of Generation Y.<sup>61</sup>

A second, deeper effect that acts upon spirituality is also born of the growth of the consumerist mindset. Spirituality has become largely about what makes one happy

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<sup>59</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 233-234.

<sup>60</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 234.

<sup>61</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 234.

or maximises self in the here-and-now.<sup>62</sup> Explicit transcendence as an element of human life or spirituality is forgotten very quickly as the repeated consumption of manufactured products produces an effective tie to the present.

A very practical outworking of the great stress placed by Generation Y upon consumption is that longer hours must be worked than in previous generations to maintain the desired levels of consumption. As manufactured goods cost money so a lifestyle based upon consuming such goods is expensive. This has also meant that levels of personal debt have risen and are higher than they have been before, reinforcing feelings of stress and instability.<sup>63</sup>

### **The completeness of immersion in the post-modern world**

Earlier it was noted that the social forces that define and are being manipulated by Generation Y in Australia are not new. In fact, Generation Y have already been described as being the echo generation of their parents; so closely do they follow their lead. However, the youth of Generation Y are the echo of their parents as they are now, not as they were when the same age.<sup>64</sup> Consequently, it has become clear that Generation Y are not the vanguard of a 'new' movement but the natural continuation of the social changes born of the post-World-War-II years, particularly the late 1960s and early 1970s. What is new, however, is the completeness with which Generation Y exhibit the epistemological and ethical manifestations implied by these movements.

Generation Y possess the distinctive ability to immerse themselves in the popular culture of the day. This has served to provide a powerful reinforcing process for the prevailing *worldview* and *ethos* of the generation. While for many young people popular culture does not seem to provide an overt stimulus to the development of *worldview*,<sup>65</sup> it is present within the lives of Generation Y to such an extent that the values espoused in and by the product become the prevailing soundtrack to life. For

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<sup>62</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 234.

<sup>63</sup> Hughes, 'Insecurity in Australia,' 7; Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 233.

<sup>64</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 315.

<sup>65</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 247.



example, the ability to choose what music one consumes, down to the compilation of individualised lists of tunes, and then surround oneself with constant stimulation through that music via the use of continually developing digital technology, creates an expectation for continued individualised consumption.

One practical implication of this immersion in the prevailing popular culture is the younger age at which critical decisions are made regarding the world and one's place within it. Australia's Generation Y have generally made crucial decisions regarding spirituality, reinforced by immersion in a consumerised *worldview*, by the time they reach high school.<sup>66</sup>

In the life of a young person there are significant times at which the status quo of life is disturbed and the opportunity to make new decisions and take up new life pathways is presented. Designated by developmentalists such as Fowler as points of crisis, they present the opportunity for growth. The decisions made during these points of crisis impact the *worldview* and *ethos* of the growing young person. They either reinforce and bring new depth to a previously held view, or break down old views and shape new *worldviews* and patterns of spirituality.<sup>67</sup> It has been found that these transitional life stages are important in the growth and development of spirituality in Generation Y. However, it seems that as a generation the transition between primary and high school has assumed a new importance whereas later transitions (e.g. the movement from secondary schooling to work or further study) once bore the dominant role. What has also become clear is that if the children of Generation Y lose a religious spirituality it is usually to develop that of a Secular nature.<sup>68</sup>

### **Factors associated with the absence of Generation Y in the Christian churches**

Generation Y do have an established spiritual consciousness, yet for many it exists independently of the Christian churches. This review so far has highlighted ten

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<sup>66</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 306.

<sup>67</sup> Fowler, *Stages*, 274.

<sup>68</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 139, 306.

factors that have played a role in the absence of Generation Y in the Christian churches:

1. Generally the parents of Generation Y are disconnected from the Christian churches.
2. Generation Y are a reflection of their Baby Boomer parents and as such have inherited their general disengagement with the Christian churches.
3. The massive cultural changes that occurred within western society during the 1960s and 1970s have been entrenched within the daily experience of Generation Y.
4. Therefore, Generation Y are less engaged with a Christian *worldview* and *ethos* than their Baby Boomer parents.
5. Thus an erosion of what was once a dominant adherence within Australian society to the Christian faith has been seen, and when Generation Y lets go of a Christian faith they move towards a Secular spirituality.
6. This is manifest in a set of different priorities in which ‘other-worldly’ concerns are replaced by interests that are decidedly ‘this-worldly’.
7. These new priorities coincide with a pervasive disillusionment with the church as a broker of the Christian faith. Distrust of church institutions, perceived authoritarianism within its structures and a shifting locus of moral authority to the self have eroded the Christians churches’ ability to portray their *worldview* and *ethos*.
8. Further, a process of religious de-socialisation has set in, reinforcing the alienation of young people from the message and lifestyle of the Christian churches.
9. A very different *worldview* has then grown within Generation Y in which the powerful forces of individualisation and consumerism have supplanted a prior *worldview*, fundamentally altering the aspirations and expectations of young people.
10. Finally, this individualised and consumerised *worldview* is predicated upon a significant epistemological shift. The post-modern mindset is manifest with a new completeness in recent generations. The roots of this *worldview* are not new; yet it is present today in a radical form, culminating in the insistence

within Generation Y of the right to the “... imaginative construction of their [own] world.”<sup>69</sup>

Before exploring the great potential for stress and vulnerability to be woven into the daily experience of Australia’s Generation Y, let it be noted that several key themes have arisen regarding their spiritual experience. Initially, a large proportion of Generation Y may be seen to be thoroughly estranged from the thought, action, ritual and social experience of the Christian churches. This, married to the all-pervasive, ‘this-worldly’ and consumption-driven technological lifestyle, has left many Christian churches and many of the members of Generation Y without a common spiritual language or even relationship.

Subsequently, Generation Y’s deep desire for relational intimacy and security is being fulfilled via networks derived from the family and a close circle of peers. Yet these networks are not secure and threaten to expose the cohort of Generation Y to unfulfilled spiritual ambitions.

### **Stress and vulnerability in the post-modern world**

Growing up as a member of Generation Y in Australia comes with many opportunities: almost unrivalled wealth, potentially flexible work choices, great technological capacity and facility, burgeoning peer contacts and a readily accessible pop-culture. However, at least one in five young people in Australian society will experience a depressive illness at some point.<sup>70</sup> While on the surface all may seem well with Generation Y, it appears that there are underlying stressors that prompt at least transitory failure to adequately cope with the experience of life. It may be that the psychological stress of autonomous responsibility for a productive and ‘good’ life is married to a technological environment that oozes stimulation and physiological stress, contributing to the experience of depression. It could be said in this context that:

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<sup>69</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 325.

<sup>70</sup> Hodges et al, ‘*National Youth Depression & Alcohol Review and Action Plan*,’ 17.

- Individualisation comes at a price:  
Responsibility is borne by the individual in *all things*.
- Technology comes at a price:  
Hyper-stimulation robs the individual of capacity to interact with the world.
- Connectivity comes at a price:  
A multitude of connections substitute for close personal relationships.
- Consumption of pop-culture comes at a price:  
Stringent patterns of self image must be adhered to.
- The establishment of peer tribes come at a price:  
The reinforcement and modelling of elders is hindered, reinforcing the responsibility borne by the individual.

It follows then that the already worrying symptoms of distress being shown by Generation Y may be magnified as their lives continue to unfold.

While some measures of happiness among Generation Y do not show that they are a particularly unhappy cohort, others do show some failure of the adequacy of the prevailing mind-set to navigate life.<sup>71</sup> This is magnified by the age of Generation Y. Many of life's most difficult challenges are yet to be faced by this cohort. Chronic illness, massive relationship failure, failure to achieve occupational or life goals, disappointment in life in general and the death of significant family and friends will typically be faced as they get older. It remains to be seen if the completeness of the individualism and consumerism of Generation Y will be robust enough to provide a fruitful path through these challenges.

### **Sociological sources of stress**

A key corollary of the increased choice that young people in Australia experience is the increased load of responsibility. In theory all options are open for young people, yet it falls to the young person to make their own way amongst the myriad choices. It has been observed that while increased choice may be available to some, even for most members of Generation Y, there are some for whom there is little actual choice.

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<sup>71</sup> Peter Kaldor et al, '*NCLS Occasional Paper 6: Spirituality and Wellbeing in Australia*' (NCLS Research, Sydney, 2004), 10.

This may be due to disability, social location, geography or a range of other factors. This lack of choice, often in the workplace, will frequently lead to a decreased ability to consume with all of the ontological implications that have been touched upon above. However, simply because a particular member of Generation Y does not have the same ability to choose a path or style and level of consumption as another does not mean that they have less desire to exercise choice or consumption. This may then lead to profound, unmitigated dissatisfaction with life.<sup>72</sup> The expectations bred via the young person's immersion in the cultural milieu of Generation Y are not only presently unfulfilled but fundamentally unable to be fulfilled. If consumption of manufactured objects is the goal of life then that goal will never be fulfilled. The consumer becomes consumed by the lifestyle and there is no end-point or completion. Rest is anathema, as an ontology founded on consumption must be fed by constant behaviours of consumption – if a satisfactory sense of self is to be maintained.

It has been noted above that the spirituality of Australia's Generation Y has exchanged an obvious or explicit sense of transcendence for an emphasis on the 'this-worldly'. This 'lowering' of the vision is typified in the role that consumption plays in the development of meaning. With the lowering of spiritual focus to the present and material comes the removal of explicitly transcendent forces from any reinforcing or supportive role. While the total assumption of self-responsibility may not be universally present, the restriction of responsibility to a limited, material scope is fraught with the likelihood of increased insecurity.<sup>73</sup> Further, if happiness or fulfilment ultimately comes via the autonomous activity of the individual then the self is solely accountable for the outcome of life. Failure or potential failure to make the choices one wants, or consume the items one wishes, or engage in the type of work one desires, and so on, exposes one to stress and dissatisfaction.<sup>74</sup>

Furthermore, the decline of social structures that has been noted in passing, including the decline of the church as a social institution, has contributed to reduced supportive frameworks. Not only has the nature of the prevailing *worldview* changed within Australia since the late 1960s, but so has the availability of the social resources once

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<sup>72</sup> Anonymous, *Building the Mission-Shaped Church in Australia*, A. Nichols ed. (Sydney: General Synod, 2006) 16.

<sup>73</sup> Kaldor et al, '*Spirituality and Wellbeing in Australia*,' 4.

<sup>74</sup> Hughes, '*Insecurity in Australia*,' 3-5.

drawn upon for reinforcement, emotional and material support. This decline is magnified by the fragile and changeable situation many families around Australia find themselves in.<sup>75</sup> While many of Generation Y value the modelling, support and reinforcement of their families, young people are finding that the ability of the families to provide what they hope for is compromised by instability. Further, negotiating the nature of friendships, developing serious ‘relationships’ and expressing sexuality are pressurised activities.<sup>76</sup> Again, there is strong reason to posit that the dominant spirituality of Generation Y in Australia is itself uncertain and therefore unable to provide the foundational security Generation Y desire.

### **Neurophysiological sources of stress**

Another context to consider regarding the changing social forces shaping Generation Y is in relation to the physiological experience of life and the consequent affective response. The last decade has seen the rise of an interdisciplinary approach to the exposition of personality and affect in which neurophysiological processes have been joined to traditional psychological explanations to provide a richer picture of the role of biology in the development of human affect.<sup>77</sup>

The important role of cortical stimulation in the development, mediation and reinforcement of emotional processes is now emerging as safe human trials and reliable, non-invasive and sensitive measurement tools are being developed.<sup>78</sup> Studies have highlighted the significant role that the cerebral cortex plays in encoding particular stress responses. The cerebral cortex is the surface layer of neural tissue surrounding the deeper brain structures. It plays a role in the development of memory, and particularly the sub-conscious, patterned behavioural responses that are elicited by both pleasant and noxious stimuli.<sup>79</sup> While there is undoubtedly much work that needs to be done before conclusive links may be made between neurological processes and the biology of spirituality, the work that has

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<sup>75</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 321.

<sup>76</sup> Powell, ‘*Re-Writing the Rules*,’ 138.

<sup>77</sup> R. Davidson, ‘Toward a Biology of Personality and Emotion,’ *Annals New York Academy of Sciences*, 935:May (2001): 191.

<sup>78</sup> Davidson, ‘Personality and Emotion,’ 192.

<sup>79</sup> S. Cooke and T. Bliss, ‘Plasticity in the Human Central Nervous System,’ *Brain*, 129: (2006): 1670.

been done thus far would indicate that physiology, and particularly neurophysiology, plays a part in the development and mediation of spirituality. This is relevant to this study in that the daily experience of Generation Y is saturated by powerful and pervasive cortical stimulation via the technological interface that characterises their life.

Studies seem to indicate that physiological stress upon the human brain reinforces processes whereby negative experiences, or experiences characterised by high neurological stimulation, are easily reinforced and encoded as adaptive responses.<sup>80</sup> What is clear, is that the sustained release of adrenaline and/or cortisol during times of stress is almost always unhelpful to ongoing healthy functioning. Adrenaline and cortisol produce psychological effects such as fear and physical effects such as the accelerating processes associated with diabetes and obesity.<sup>81</sup> What is also clear, is that sustained stress causes a depression of some, and sensitisation of others, of the neurophysiological structures and secretions involved.<sup>82</sup> This in turn intensifies the effects of further exposure to the stress-inducing stimuli.

Physiological stress is seen across a wide range of activity and is linked with the ability to derive pleasure in life. The pleasure 'rush' implicit in obvious examples of 'extreme' high-stimulation sports such as BASE jumping and even skateboarding are well-known. However, when the pleasure and stress pathways are subject to prolonged and/or increased activity, depression of the structures and adaptation of response will follow. This may find its analogy in the 'motivational toxicity' found in drug addiction, whereby chemicals directly stimulate the pleasure-mediating structures and pathways. Usually somatic stimulation along cortically mediated pathways produces pleasure. Yet the flood of direct chemical stimulation bypasses normal cortical regulation and encodes a powerful, directly mediated pleasure pathway. For continued pleasure to be experienced this pathway must then be stimulated at increasing levels as the brain structures that produce a pleasure

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<sup>80</sup> M. Maroun, 'Stress Reverses Plasticity in the Pathway Projecting from the Ventromedial Prefrontal Cortex to the Basolateral Amygdala,' *European Journal of Neuroscience*, 24: (2006): 2917.

<sup>81</sup> P. W. Gold and G. P. Chrousos, 'Organization of the Stress System and Its Dysregulation in Melancholic and Atypical Depression: High vs Low CRH/NE States,' *Molecular Psychiatry*, 7 (2002): 256.

<sup>82</sup> Gold and Chrousos, 'Organization of the Stress System,' 271.

response adapt.<sup>83</sup> Thus further, novel stressors must be sought to produce the pleasurable responses necessary for the healthy function of life, hence the presence of ‘toxic’ motivation. While differing in precursor from the direct chemical stimulation of drug use, the high cortical stimulation and stress response that flows from immersion in a world of constant technological stimulation produces a similar effect. The continuous stream of digitally produced and easily accessed sensory stimulation, and persistent cognitive demands, feeds into the neurophysiological arousal systems of the human body. These arousal systems release neurotransmitters that powerfully affect mood and the ability to attend to tasks and function.<sup>84</sup> As such, low-stimulation activities such as watching a sunset or enjoying a cool drink of water are no longer felt as pleasure, because the neurological pathways that mediate pleasure through these low-stimulation activities have been overridden by more developed pathways reinforced by the release of stress hormones. Therefore, to cope with stress, to feel pleasure in an activity or regulate emotional response to events, one must seek activities that release adrenaline and/or cortisol. These may be an ‘extreme’ sport, the voyeuristic thrill of a video game or even the simple flood of stimulation experienced through multi-tasking.

Thus, the physiological stress placed upon the human body by the digital media employed so universally, along with the associated work and lifestyle patterns taken up by Generation Y, may well have a spiritual result due to cortical influence on the deeper processing structures and processes of the brain. The immediate effects of stress upon the spiritual outlook of a young person may become apparent in an inability to attend to the elements of spirituality that will prove nourishing enough to cope with the stressors that seem to be lurking beneath the surface of at least a significant minority of young people.<sup>85</sup>

While it may be said that in many respects Australia’s Generation Y are happy and confident, there is a latent fragility in their constitution. The prevailing

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<sup>83</sup> Tobias Esch and George B. Stefano, ‘The Neurobiology of Pleasure, Reward Processes, Addiction and Their Health Implications,’ *Neuroendocrinology Letters*, 25:4 (2004): 238 ff, 248.

<sup>84</sup> Alex H. Bullinger et al, ‘Stimulation of Cortisol During Mental Task Performance in a Provocative Virtual Environment,’ *Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback*, 30:3 (2005): 214.

<sup>85</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 335. Cf. “Therefore, optimal functioning of the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex requires a relatively quiescent stress system.” The dorsolateral prefrontal cortex is vitally important in focussing attention to complex tasks, such as those involved in developing a *worldview* and its consequent *ethos*. Gold and Chrousos, ‘Organization of the Stress System,’ 258.



individualised and consumerised epistemology exposes Generation Y to stress and ongoing dissatisfaction. This will be magnified as Generation Y as a cohort confronts the difficult aspects of life that are encountered with age.

I have sketched some of the demographic, sociological and biological contours of Australia's Generation Y, particularly as they relate to spirituality. The next section of this thesis will begin to make some preliminary theological soundings from the gathered data. Following the theological method of Whitehead and Whitehead, I will remain in the 'attentive' mode, seeking to listen to the theological voice of Generation Y without interposing my own.

### ***Preliminary soundings: Theological themes in the world of Generation Y***

Amidst the spiritual contours of Australia's Generation Y, three key markers emerge. In general, Generation Y are thoroughly estranged from the thought, ritual and corporate worlds of the Christian churches. Generation Y are also vulnerable to spiritual collapse. Yet, in spite of the general uninterest of Generation Y in the Christian faith, they remain spiritually sensitive.

Woven through the key contours of (a) estrangement, (b) vulnerability and (c) continuing spiritual sensitivity are traceable theological themes. Foreshadowing a later, more comprehensive discussion, the three significant theological themes that find expression in the spirituality of Generation Y will now be delineated. The three broad theological themes are: estrangement and the 'conflict of alterity', the possibility of God in a god/ess world, and spiritual teleology.

#### **Estrangement and the 'conflict of alterity'**

As the social role of the Christian churches within Australian society has declined, so has the contact between members of these churches (as representatives bearing the Christian faith) and the cohort of Generation Y. Furthermore, there seems no ready

mechanism or conduit for contact between much of Generation Y and the people who make up the Christian churches.

One deeply influential and divisive effect of this dislocation is the growing mistrust amongst the wider Australian society, including Generation Y, of the churches as institutions. It is not unusual to find characterisations of the Christian churches and individuals who play some representative role within them as being primarily interested in the maintenance of a self serving status-quo.<sup>86</sup> It seems that Generation Y's perception of the Christian churches falls in with these negative assessments.

Similarly, the forms of worship and patterns of corporate life currently practised by the Christian churches at large struggle to engage the hearts and minds of Australian young people. Even regular attendees of Christian churches admit to boredom!<sup>87</sup> The liturgical and communal life of the various Christian communities is generally very different to the 'liturgy' of an individualised, consumption-centric secularism and the relationship networks of a technological age. Not only has Generation Y lost the ability to speak the spiritual language and share the relational forms of the Christian churches, but the churches have not yet learnt the new ones.

Generation Y as a whole appear to be deeply suspicious of the Christian churches from an ethical standpoint. Though presenting itself in social forms, this bilateral estrangement has deep theological roots and implications. One of the great philosophical and theological themes of post-modernism is that of the ethics of relationship. Drawing deeply from the reflections of Emmanuel Levinas, various researchers have explored the themes of 'otherness' and 'vulnerability', particularly as they relate to traditional theology and philosophy's attempts to 'thematise' people.<sup>88</sup> In their attempts to understand things as they are, the theologian and the

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<sup>86</sup> See, for example, "The church is into making a lot of money, one of the biggest businesses in the world.' (22-year-old male)" Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 222.

<sup>87</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 104.

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, Roger Burggraeve, 'Violence and the Vulnerable Face of the Other: The Vision of Emmanuel Levinas on Moral Evil and Our Responsibility,' *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 30:1 (1999); Per Nortvedt, 'Subjectivity and Vulnerability: Reflections on the Foundation of Ethical Sensibility,' *Nursing Philosophy*, 4 (2003); Morrison, 'Levinas,' (thesis); Glenn Morrison, 'Living at the Margins of Life: Encountering the Other and *Doing Theology*,' *Australian EJournal of Theology*, February 2006:6 (2006); Marie L. Baird, 'Whose Kenosis? An Analysis of Levinas, Derrida, and Vattimo on God's Self-Emptying and the Secularization of the West,' *The Heythrop Journal*, 48 (2007); Glenn Morrison,

philosopher find themselves perpetrating violence upon persons by diagnosing problems or reducing a transcendent person into an essence.<sup>89</sup>

It would seem that Generation Y are particularly sensitive to this ‘thematization’ of themselves by anyone and, in this case, by the Christian churches. In what I will term the ‘conflict of alterity’, Generation Y bear the complementary and competing desires to be known but not totalised. On the one hand they possess a deep desire for relational intimacy as evidenced by the importance of abiding relational networks. Yet they also exhibit strict, practical movement away from forces that are seen as restricting choice and freedom.<sup>90</sup>

Thus parallel thematic dyads emerge. Vulnerability before powerful thematising or totalising forces will be balanced and met by friendship and openness. This corresponds with the possibility of abuse being matched by the capacity and conditions necessary for trust to exist. Each of these themes are personal in the sense that they relate to persons and rely on a relational language of exploration. As such the ethical concerns of Levinas and the conflict of alterity felt by Generation Y present the challenge within this study of uncovering a pastoral theological ethic of mission.

## **The possibility of God in a god/less world**

One of the key achievements of Mason, Singleton and Webber’s study regarding the sociology of spirituality is to place a Secular *worldview* and *ethos* within a spiritual frame. Thus, in spite of the general lack of interest of Generation Y in the Christian faith, this has enabled their unique spiritual sensitivities to become apparent.

Significantly, within a lowered ‘this-worldly’ spiritual horizon the pursuit of significance and identity remains a chief motivating factor in the lives of the

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‘Pastoral Care and Counselling: Towards a Post-Metaphysical Theology of Friendship,’ *Australian EJournal of Theology*, March 2007:9 (2007).

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Nortvedt, ‘Subjectivity and Vulnerability,’ 229.

<sup>90</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 43, 304, 329; Mason et al, ‘The Spirituality of Young Australians,’ 161. Even if this ‘seeing’ may be a misconstrual of the other’s motives, one must remember that the individual, and therefore the individual’s perception, is placed in the prime place of interpretation and decision-making in the predominant Secular spirituality of Generation Y.

members of Generation Y. However, the foundational assumptions about what constitutes a spiritual life are generally not shared between Generation Y and the Christian churches.<sup>91</sup> The thorough immersion of Generation Y in an epistemology grounded in individualisation and consumption has so altered the language and conduct of a spiritual life that the ‘spiritual wares’ of the Christian churches seem not to have relevance.

One aspect of this altered epistemology that must be explored is the ‘spiritualised’ status bestowed upon sociology. Sociological knowledge, including the popular, non-scholarly and economically driven forms of marketing, becomes an important vehicle of experimental self-understanding.<sup>92</sup> Where self-understanding has been elevated to the primary class of insight and explicit transcendence is excluded from this view, traditional theology based upon some sort of explicit transcendence has little immediate or easy application, whereas sociology (particularly of a simple variety) takes on a *theological* role.

At the surface the Christian churches must deal with fundamental questions regarding what happens to the ‘traditional’ Christian doctrines and formulations if they are no longer either understood or deemed important. Hence, for example, the beginning points of fundamental discussions regarding the nature of God become far from clear if a transcendent God is absent from the picture. Various theologians have attempted to reframe Christian doctrine to make it applicable in the experience of young people.<sup>93</sup> Yet these treatments still seem to presuppose an essential coherence in their discussions’ points of departure.

This conundrum raises several theological questions. Is there a place for God in the post-modern mind?<sup>94</sup> Is secularism the natural end of Christianity?<sup>95</sup> If it is, how

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<sup>91</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 124.

<sup>92</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 338-339.

<sup>93</sup> See, for example, Robert W. Pazmino, ‘The Nature of God from an Adolescent Perspective: Biblical, Developmental, and Theological Insights,’ *The Journal of Youth Ministry*, 1:2 (2003).

<sup>94</sup> This seems to be the fundamental question being explored in McQuillan’s paper reporting on the ‘International Research Project on Youth Spirituality’. P. McQuillan, ‘Youth Ministry in a World of Diversity: The International Research Project on Youth Spirituality,’ *Australian EJournal of Theology*, March 2007:9 (2007).

<sup>95</sup> Baird, ‘Whose Kenosis? An Analysis of Levinas, Derrida, and Vattimo on God’s Self-Emptying and the Secularization of the West,’ 423.

may Christianity reinvent itself to serve the new mind? If it is not, how may Christianity speak to a generation whose fundamental spiritual *worldview* differs from Christianity at the *a priori* level of transcendence? Fewer theologians have grappled with the manner in which Christianity as a *systematic* theology relates to the *systematic* concerns of a different spirituality.<sup>96</sup>

Thus, the deeper theological theme presented by Generation Y is the impact of thoroughgoing individualisation on spirituality. That ‘I’ must establish myself via individual choice and responsibility finds difference as the point of identity and significantly affects any notion of authority (be it canonical, ecclesiastical, charismatic etc.) and must be addressed if doctrinal dialogue is to be fruitful. As such the behaviour, values and stance of Generation Y raise the foundational theological matter of the possibility of finding God in a *godless* world.

Allied to this deep, theologically-charged epistemological questioning is the nearness of plurality within the experience of Generation Y. The rise of the information and technological age has shrunk the world in many regards. The complete immersion of Generation Y in this environment has served to make the great plurality of world spirituality part of their everyday experience. It seems that the presence of plural options in the near experience of Generation Y, while not fuelling experimentation with established religion or even hybrid spiritualities, acts to erode confidence in an explicitly transcendent spiritual story. In an already individualised milieu, this perception of instability surrounding explicitly transcendent appeals further undermines the truth claims of any one particular spirituality – in this case the Christian faith. The individualised epistemological foundation of Generation Y presents the challenge within this study of uncovering a pastoral theological epistemology of mission.

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<sup>96</sup> Andrew Root provides a notable exception. See, for example, Andrew Root, ‘Practical Theology as Social Ethical Action in Christian Ministry,’ *International Journal of Practical Theology*, 10 (2006); Andrew Root, ‘Youth Ministry as an Integrative Theological Task: Toward a Representative Method of Interdisciplinarity in Scholarship, Pastoral Practice, and Pedagogy,’ *The Journal of Youth Ministry*, 5:2 (2007).

## Spiritual teleology

Oscar Cullmann writes of “... the *telos* or ‘end’ which gives meaning to the whole.”<sup>97</sup> He argues powerfully for a conception of history in which the person and redemptive work of Jesus Christ provides the ‘end’ of redemptive history by which all else finds meaning: its *telic* significance. He also argues that the Christian experience is characterised by the intrusion of the spiritual ‘ends’ of Christ’s work into daily life. This intrusion of God’s Spirit to bring completion to his people in, through, with and by relation to the *telic* work of Christ lends a distinct spiritual teleology to those who follow Christ.

Within a Secular spirituality, the spiritual teleology of Generation Y is somewhat different and seems somewhat confused, hanging between the poles of fulfilling relational networks and self-interested enjoyment of a material world. Both poles are vulnerable in some way in the spiritual experience of Generation Y. This vulnerability flows from three connected elements of post-modern Australian life:

1. In living completely immersed in an individualised, consumption-driven, technological age, Generation Y are exposed to both neurophysiological and social stressors that have reached new heights of saturation.
2. Following this, Generation Y’s prized networks of relationship are under stress and are at risk of change.
3. Yet, it is far from clear that the individualised, consumerised Secular spirituality will be sufficient to cope with the varied challenges that life holds.

It is clear, however, that Generation Y value relationships highly and place great value on a close network of friends and family. Within this context the role of relationship in the acquisition and discharge of knowledge has been elevated. As children of post-modernism, Australia’s Generation Y have become wary of universal truth-claims and calls to morality. Yet they rely heavily on a network of relationships within which significant sacrifices and courageous life decisions can be and are being made.

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<sup>97</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, Floyd V. Filson, trans. (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1962) 140.

The place of the 'role-model' in the life of Australia's Generation Y underlines their deep relational consciousness. It has been seen that one of the consequences of the social forces acting upon the Australian family is the rise of peers to fill the pivotal role of leadership in the development of spirituality within Generation Y. While on one hand the elevation of the peer to such a key role allows a freshness and responsive relationship not present when institutional authority figures stand in their place, the possibility also exists that the failure to access the richness in tradition and the stability of leadership by elders will result in thin soil in which to grow – the sort of soil that will be found wanting when deep roots need to be sent down.

The social forces that necessitate a rising peer role also impact the spiritual end of these relationships. If the nature of an elder is to tutor in a tradition then the interactive nature of peer relationships raises the process of interaction to a greater role. The give-and-take of peer mentorship, while potentially stressful and incomplete when viewed from the perspective of established tradition, is exciting and to some extent fulfilling (certainly consuming) when viewed within the bounds of that relationship.

Yet the technological medium, within which Australia's Generation Y exercise their important relational transactions, also plays a significant role in the manner of the transactions themselves. Media such as the mobile phone and internet-based technologies, used to discharge relationships, are also forces that *mediate* relationships. The most important sphere of interactive relationships is, ironically, held at arm's length. This both feeds into and reinforces the individualism of the cohort. Peers draw upon each other to feed self, utilising technology that in a very concrete way distances the communicants from face-to-face contact.<sup>98</sup>

For some time James Fowler's work on the development of faith has alerted those interested in the spirituality of young people to the importance of movement through a series of stages if spirituality is to grow.<sup>99</sup> Such movement relies upon the process

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<sup>98</sup> Morrison, 'Living at the Margins of Life,' 2.

<sup>99</sup> See, for example, William O. Avery, 'A Lutheran Examines James W. Fowler,' *Religious Education*, 85:1 (1990): 69; Richard R. Osmer, 'James W. Fowler,' *Religious Education*, 85:1 (1990): 51; Marlene M. Jardine, 'Fowler's Theory of Faith Development: An Evaluative Discussion,' *Religious Education*, 87:1 (1992): 74.

of conversion and recapitulation as the achievements of each passing stage are incorporated into and provide the building blocks for the next. However, the *ethos* of an individualised, ‘lowered horizon’ and consumption-driven *worldview* does not seem to allow the reflective consciousness that Fowler bases the development of faith upon.<sup>100</sup> It has been seen above that when one assumes a Secular *ethos*, one’s *worldview* will tend to follow a Secular course. The leading role that a Secular *ethos* plays in the loss of explicitly transcendent *worldviews* bears witness to this lack. Consumption and the ‘white noise’ of distracting stimulation make for an unreflective spirituality in which it is difficult to disentangle oneself from one’s own experience of the material world.

Thus, it is unclear how a spiritual teleology based merely upon the ego-centric enjoyment of the material world will provide the resources needed to cope productively with death, relationship breakdown, disappointment, stress and burnout. Nor is it clear how elements of life that are not based upon consumption, and may even run counter to it, such as a concern for social justice may thrive.

However, the presence of vulnerability brought about by the various predispositions and conditions of the Secular spirituality brings with it the possibility of intimacy and unintended contact with the explicitly transcendent. The role of ‘otherness’ and ‘vulnerability’ in the philosophy of Levinas has been touched upon briefly above. These themes also find their expression here. Even as the limits and constraints of the lowered horizon are reached and the consumer is consumed, the possibility for relational fulfilment exists. Therefore the mixed spiritual teleology of Generation Y presents the challenge within this study of uncovering a pastoral theological teleology of mission.

## **Conclusion**

As a whole, Generation Y is not uninterested in spirituality. Neither does Generation Y reject the need for a personally appropriated spirituality. However, their approach

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<sup>100</sup> J. W. Fowler, ‘*Stages in Selfhood and Faith*’ in J. W. Fowler, ed. *Faith Development and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) 53.



to spirituality is “... [not] related to what goes on in churches – there is a wide gap between elementary experiences of transcendence and the elaborate system of doctrine and worship which evolved over centuries during which everyday life was saturated with religious symbols.”<sup>101</sup>

As a generation, Generation Y are religiously eclectic in notion but not in practice, in traditional terms. Given that they are radically interested in what is good for the self, they will tend to follow an eclectic path when accessing religious practices, judging what is good religiously according to what is perceived to be good for self. However, the powerful forces of individualisation and consumption will tend to draw young people into an *ethos* and then *worldview* of what has been called a Secular spirituality. Thus spirituality tends to be seen in terms of what will maximise the individual’s experience of life.

Notwithstanding this, Generation Y is exposed to significant elements of risk. It seems that Australian young people are exceedingly vulnerable as the prevailing individualised, technological and consumerised spiritualities predispose them to high levels of stress and dissatisfaction. Yet they do not provide adequate tools to overcome the latent pressures that they apply.

Subsequently, brief soundings have been taken on three broad theological themes that are present within the spiritual experience of Generation Y. The estrangement of Generation Y from the Christian churches has had the effect of producing mistrust and particular sensitivity to any presentation of another’s faith that seems as if it may totalise the other. Yet, within this ‘conflict of alterity’ the opportunity for explicitly transcendent relationship arises as the ‘otherness’ of Generation Y is apprehended by the Christian churches.

The spiritual epistemology of Generation Y is distinct and quite different from that of traditional Christianity. Individualism and consumerism have been key factors in producing a spirituality based upon the lowered horizon of the here-and-now. While this makes conversation between traditional Christianity and Generation Y difficult,

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<sup>101</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 124.

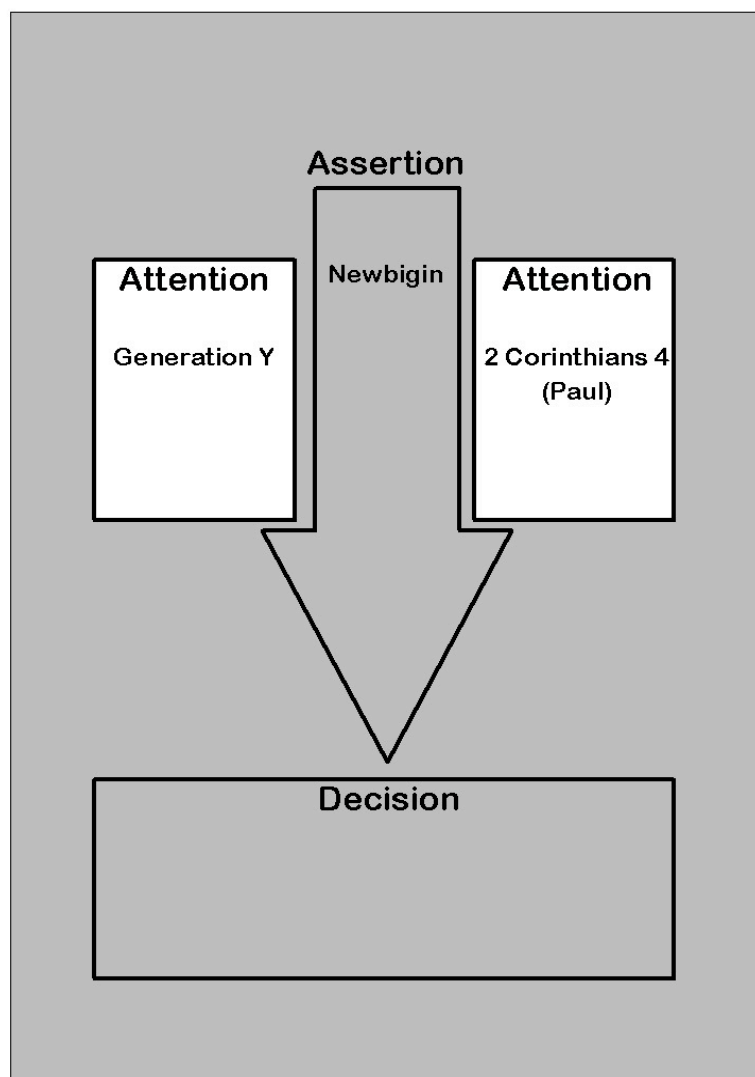
it affords the opportunity to re-examine the foundational elements of each without the assumption of shared commonalities.

Finally, the teleology of the dominant spirituality of Generation Y was traced. It is unclear that spiritual development of the kind envisaged by James Fowler is possible given Generation Y's complete immersion within an individualised and consumerised *worldview*. While the satisfaction of individual goals and desires may seem immediately attractive, it is by no means clear that a fulfilling long-term sense of self is achievable under these conditions. Neither are the realization of other demonstrated, if latent, desires of Generation Y, such as healthy relational networks.

This overview of the social and spiritual location of Generation Y in Australia will form one of the two foundational spheres to be attended to in this thesis. The key themes, namely the conflict of alterity, spiritual epistemology and teleology, explored above will be examined further via the hermeneutical lens of Newbigin's pastoral theology of mission. However, before moving to engage in this interpretive task, the Pauline theology of the transmission of faith, particularly as it is found in the text of 2 Corinthians 4, will be considered in the following chapter, thus 'attending' to the second sphere.

## Chapter 3

### Treasure in jars of clay: An exegetical study of 2 Corinthians 4 – Towards a Pauline theology of faith



## **Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus**

*For we do not proclaim ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves your slaves because of Jesus: Because it was God who was speaking, "Let light shine from darkness," who shone into our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.  
(2 Cor 4:5-6)*

2 Corinthians 4 provides a rich mine for material that addresses the nature and experience of faith. The text exhibits emblematic and deeply significant features within the Pauline discussion on faith and the resultant Christian life. As a context for 2 Corinthians 4, this chapter will first give an overview of recent Pauline scholarship. Though this scholarship has been voluminous and varied in both approach and conclusion, significant scholars have pioneered certain strands of Pauline research.

The 'New Perspective'<sup>1</sup> on Paul has dominated the tenor of scholarly reflection on the Pauline corpus since Stendhal and Sanders published their epochal essays in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>2</sup> The renewal of interest in Paul as a Jew has produced much debate that has touched almost every area of Pauline study. Recently, Dunn and Wright have been active in furthering reflection regarding Paul in his Jewish cultural context. Amongst a lengthy bibliography, Dunn has written a comprehensive study on Paul in which he explores the cohering role of a theology of the cross of Christ upon Paul's life and ministry, particularly as it played out from his 'Jewish past'.<sup>3</sup> Wright has pursued a slightly different agenda, preferring to work on a 'fresh' perspective that highlights the adversative nature of the Pauline gospel as it placed Jesus as a rival to the established powers of the day.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, Hays has made a

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<sup>1</sup> The 'New Perspective on Paul' is the phrase coined to describe the vigorous re-examination of how justification, law and the Judaism of Paul's day interrelated. It is a somewhat indistinct appellation and is applied without precision both negatively and positively.

<sup>2</sup> See Smith for a helpful annotated bibliography regarding the 'New Perspective'. Jay E. Smith, 'The New Perspective on Paul: A Select and Annotated Bibliography,' *Criswell Theological Review*, 2:2 (2005): 91-111.

<sup>3</sup> Dunn, *Paul the Apostle*, see particularly 21-23.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, N. T. Wright, 'Coming Home to St Paul,' *Charles Gore Lecture* (2000, accessed on [www.ntgateway.com/paul/](http://www.ntgateway.com/paul/), 14 Feb, 2005). 14 Feb, 2005; N. T. Wright, 'Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire,' *Centre of Theological Inquiry* (2004, accessed on [www.ntgateway.com/paul/](http://www.ntgateway.com/paul/), 14 Feb. 2005.). 14 Feb. 2005.

particularly strong contribution to the study of Paul by highlighting his use of the Old Testament and the role of a narrative sub-structure in his theology.<sup>5</sup> And Fee has also covered much ground in Pauline studies, particularly in the areas of Pauline exegesis and interpretation, Christology and Pneumatology.<sup>6</sup>

A literature search regarding 2 Corinthians 4 reveals four studies published in the last decade: Joseph Plevnik's *The Destination of the Apostle and of the Faithful: Second Corinthians 4:13b–14 and First Thessalonians 4:14*,<sup>7</sup> Wes Avram's *2 Corinthians 4:1–18*,<sup>8</sup> Thomas Stegman's *Ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα (2 Corinthians 4:13): Paul's Christological Reading of Psalm 115:1a LXX*<sup>9</sup> and Kenneth Schenck's *2 Corinthians and the Πίστις Χριστοῦ Debate*.<sup>10</sup> Plevnik uses 2 Cor 4:13b–14 to help explicate the experience of the Christian after death as it is found in 1 Thes 4:14. Avram uses the text of 2 Cor 4:1–18 to explore the movement from hearer to preacher and Spirit to congregation. Stegman and, after him, Schenck turn to the quotation from Psalm 115:1 LXX to raise the possibility of 'Christological ventriloquism' in this passage and then explore the nature of 2 Cor 4:13 in this light. In his commentary, Harris provides a general study of 2 Corinthians.<sup>11</sup>

Further offerings have been made regarding the use of the Old Testament in 2 Corinthians by Gignilliat<sup>12</sup> and Boers,<sup>13</sup> both of which underline Paul's Christological use of the Hebrew scriptures to speak to the concrete situation of his

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1989); Richard B. Hays, 'Is Paul's Gospel Narratable?,' *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 27:2 (2004): 217-239.

<sup>6</sup> Exegesis: Gordon D. Fee, *To What End Exegesis? Essays Textual, Exegetical, and Theological* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

Christology: Fee, *Pauline Christology*.

Pneumatology: Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Plevnik, 'The Destination of the Apostle and of the Faithful: Second Corinthians 4:13b-14 and First Thessalonians 4:14,' *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 62: (2000): 83-95.

<sup>8</sup> Wes Avram, '2 Corinthians 4:1-18,' *Interpretation*, 55:1 (2001): 70-73.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas D. Stegman, 'Ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα (2 Corinthians 4:13): Paul's Christological Reading of Psalm 115:1a LXX,' *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 69 (2007): 725-745.

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Schenck, '2 Corinthians and the Πίστις Χριστοῦ Debate,' *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 70 (2008): 524-537.

<sup>11</sup> Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner series eds. *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids/Milton Keynes: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company/Paternoster, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> Mark Gignilliat, '2 Corinthians 6:2: Paul's Eschatological "Now" And Hermeneutical Invitation,' *Westminster Theological Journal*, 67 (2005): 147-161.

readers. Aspects of 2 Corinthians have been examined from historical and psychological perspectives by Glancy<sup>14</sup> and Bash<sup>15</sup> respectively. Welborn<sup>16</sup> situates the epistle in a rhetorical tradition designed to appeal to the reader's emotions. Kwon<sup>17</sup> examines the use of *arrabon* in the context of 2 Cor 1:22 and 5:5. Three studies also reach conflicting conclusions regarding the unity or disunity of the letter, one approaching the issue from the perspective of ancient letter writing<sup>18</sup> and the other two<sup>19</sup> (with conflicting results) from a rhetorical point of view.

Although not a recent offering, Timothy B. Savage's *Power through Weakness: Paul's Understanding of the Christian Ministry in 2 Corinthians*<sup>20</sup> deserves particular note. Savage carefully places the letter of 2 Corinthians<sup>21</sup> within its historical and social context. As such he is able to demonstrate that the key theme of 'power through weakness' arises as a deliberate attempt by Paul to confront the "... radical disjunction between the secular prejudices of the Corinthians and his own conception of Christ which spawns his paradoxical description of the Christian ministry."<sup>22</sup> Savage draws particularly on 2 Corinthians 3 and 4 to draw out the exact nature of Christian ministry and concludes his study with a close study of 2 Cor 4:7–18. Savage's study will exert some influence on my treatment of the Pauline theology of the transmission of faith, dealing as it does with the same passage and the overarching theme of the Pauline ministry.

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<sup>13</sup> Hendrikus Boers, '2 Corinthians 5:14-6:2: A Fragment of Pauline Christology,' *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 64 (2002): 527-547.

<sup>14</sup> Jennifer A. Glancy, 'Boasting of Beatings (2 Corinthians 11:23-25),' *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 123:1 (2004): 99-135.

<sup>15</sup> Anthony Bash, 'A Psychodynamic Approach to the Interpretation of 2 Corinthians 10-13,' *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 83 (2001): 51-67.

<sup>16</sup> L. L. Welborn, 'Paul's Appeal to the Emotions in 2 Corinthians 1.1-2.13; 7.5-16,' *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 82 (2001): 31-60.

<sup>17</sup> Yon-Gyong Kwon, 'Arrabwn as Pledge in Second Corinthians,' *New Testament Studies*, 54:4 (2008): 525-541.

<sup>18</sup> Eve-Marie Becker, *Letter Hermeneutics in 2 Corinthians: Studies in Literarkritik and Communication Theory*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement* 279, Helen S. Heron, trans. (London: T & T Clark Intl., 2004).

<sup>19</sup> J. D. H. Amador, 'Revisiting 2 Corinthians: Rhetoric and the Case for Unity,' *New Testament Studies*, 46 (2000): 92-111; Ivor H. Jones, 'Rhetorical Criticism and the Unity of 2 Corinthians: One "Epilogue", or More?,' *New Testament Studies*, 54 (2008): 496-524.

<sup>20</sup> Timothy B. Savage, *Power through Weakness: Paul's Understanding of the Christian Ministry in 2 Corinthians*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>21</sup> Although he does regard 2 Cor 1–9 and 10–13 as being separate literary and occasional units. Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 191-192.

<sup>22</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 99.

In this scholarly context, the following exegesis will draw particularly upon commentaries presented by four Pauline scholars, namely Paul Barnett, Murray Harris, Ralph Martin and Margaret Thrall.<sup>23</sup> Each commentator has made a distinct contribution to the study of 2 Corinthians and has engaged with the major critical and exegetical voices of the past such as Furnish, Murphy-O'Connor and Bultmann, particularly those who have published in a language other than English. Given that each commentator brings different perspectives, there will be different shades of reading the text, allowing for a more diverse exegetical picture to be gathered. Barnett brings particular insight into historical questions as they bear upon the text. Harris and Thrall both weigh the grammatical import of the text exhaustively. Martin adds a short 'explanation' with each pericope, drawing out some of the theological implications of the text.

Significantly for this study, Bosch, Senior and Stuhlmüller, Köstenburger and O'Brien, Schnabel, Flemming and Dickson have all given particular attention to mission in Paul's writings.<sup>24</sup> Each author has contributed to the rediscovery of the deep significance of mission in the Pauline ministry. These studies point to attempts to recover a Pauline understanding of faith and mission. The point of significance for this thesis is that Bosch, Senior and Stuhlmüller, Köstenburger and O'Brien, Schnabel, Flemming and Dickson have all allowed for the development of an interpretive lens of mission to be applied to the Pauline texts.<sup>25</sup>

While the scholarly literature explores significant themes regarding the nature, interpretation and use of the Pauline corpus, and 2 Corinthians 4 in particular, my

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<sup>23</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, vol. 40, Bruce M. Metzger, series ed., Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986); Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, G. D. Fee, series ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997); M. E. Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, vol. I, J. A. Emerton et al., series eds, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (London: T & T Clark, 2004); Harris, *Second Corinthians*.

<sup>24</sup> D. Senior and C. Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1983); D. J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991); A. Köstenburger and P. T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (Leicester: Apollos, 2001); John P. Dickson, *Mission-Commitment in Ancient Judaism and in the Pauline Communities*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Paul and the Early Church*, vol. 2 (Downers Grove, Nottingham: IVP Academic, Apollos, 2004); Dean Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission* (Leicester: Apollos, 2005); Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove, Nottingham: IVP Academic, Apollos, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Senior and Stuhlmüller, *Biblical Foundations*, 161.

study seeks to break new ground. It is an original contribution to scholarship in its application of a Pauline pastoral theology to Generation Y. By exploring the missional implications of 2 Corinthians 4, the generalised work of Bosch, Senior and Stuhlmüller, Köstenburger and O'Brien, Schnabel, Flemming and Dickson will be brought into direct dialogue with the spirituality of young Australians. Therefore, as indicated in Chapter One, I hope that this approach will contribute to current perspectives on the transmission of faith by opening up new ground for consideration.

## ***An exegesis of 2 Corinthians Chapter Four***

### **The historico-literary exegetical method**

Having provided a preliminary analysis of Pauline scholarship, I will now set out an exegesis of 2 Corinthians 4. The text will be examined utilising historico-literary methods. As indicated in the introduction, the exegetical method of Bernard Lonergan will provide the template for the examination of 2 Corinthians 4 that follows. The exegetical extent of the passage will not be exhausted, but the themes that will engage Generation Y in conversation will be demonstrated. This will allow movement into a structured dialogue with the faith experience of Australia's Generation Y in chapters Four, Five and Six.

Lonergan designates exegesis as "... the application of the principles [of interpretation] to a given task."<sup>26</sup> He is particularly interested in the interpretive task as it applies to text, and specifically the text as it allows understanding of the author.<sup>27</sup> I will use his exegetical method as I approach the text of 2 Corinthians 4.

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<sup>26</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 158.

<sup>27</sup> Many scholars have questioned the possibility, desirability and morality of discerning the authorial intent of a text, much less the author themselves. Much of this questioning has come as a fundamental implication of post-modernism. I acknowledge that my comfort with the idea of the possibility, desirability and morality of finding an authoritative author behind a text may arise from my reformed, evangelical approach to scripture. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to test all of the possible claims and theses regarding authorial intent. This has occurred elsewhere (see for example Vanhoozer and Stein below). Yet a fundamental contention of this thesis is that a biblical approach, particularly a Pauline approach as it is found in 2 Corinthians 4, in which the author of the text is allowed to speak with authority, provides a reasonable and reliable framework for a clearly Christian missional encounter with Australia's Generation Y.



Briefly gathered under the notion of ‘coming to understand’, the process of interpretation involves four facets. One must understand: (a) the text’s referent, (b) the text’s words, and (c) the author’s text to arrive at (d) “... [an] understanding [of the author] through a process of learning and even at times as a result of a conversion.”<sup>28</sup>

In understanding the text’s referents the exegete turns ‘general’ and ‘potential’ knowledge of the objects representing the author in the text into ‘particular’ and ‘actual’. In doing so they increase the probability that their interpretation of the text will be guided less by “... personal preferences and guess-work ...”<sup>29</sup> than by the signs left by the author in the text.

This activity is sharpened as the exegete approaches the words of the text. In this aspect of exegesis Lonergan describes a ‘hermeneutic circle’ in which progressive and increasing understanding of the text occurs. This happens as “... the composition of the text, the determination of the author’s purpose, knowledge of the people for whom he wrote, of the occasion on which he wrote, of the nature of the linguistic, grammatical, stylistic means he employed ...”<sup>30</sup> are reviewed, gradually filling in the contextual meaning of the text.

Again this process develops as the exegete begins to understand the “... *author* by his *words* [sic] ...”.<sup>31</sup> According to Lonergan this occurs as partial knowledge and myriad ‘puzzles’ are elicited and are ‘self-corrected’ by patient re-reading that allows the author’s intent in their contemporary situation to explicate the puzzles. Thus, understanding grows not simply as an understanding of the author, as perceived by the exegete, but as the author presents themselves in their contemporary situation.

Finally, Lonergan locates an ‘existential dimension’ in a full understanding of a text (and therefore of the author of that text). The exegete “... can succeed in acquiring

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See, Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) 30-32; Robert H. Stein, ‘The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics,’ *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 44:3 (2001): 462-466.

<sup>28</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 155.

<sup>29</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 158.

<sup>30</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 159.

<sup>31</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 160.

that habitual understanding of an author that spontaneously finds its wave-length and locks on to it, only after he has effected a radical change in himself [sic].”<sup>32</sup> In this sense the exegete must open themselves to criticism not only of the text at hand but also of their foundational presuppositions and the “... tradition that [has] formed his [sic] own mind.”<sup>33</sup> This process of change within the exegete engenders an ongoing sense of discovery in which “... one comes to set aside one’s own initial interests and concerns, to share those of the author ...”<sup>34</sup> It is against this discovery of the context of the author that the ‘correctness’ of one’s interpretation of the text may be judged. Finally, the exegete is led to a point at which a statement as to the meaning of the text may be made. It is at this position that the role of the exegete as one whose “... concern is to understand ...”<sup>35</sup> is uncovered. Lonergan locates this as the ‘first phase of theology’ in which one is brought “... to listen to the past.”<sup>36</sup>

The exegesis in Chapter Three of the thesis will concentrate on the first three facets of Lonergan’s exegetical method: understanding (a) the text’s referent, (b) the text’s words and (c) the text’s author. This will be done as the contextual location, and the grammatical and syntactical presentation of the text are explored. The subsequent hermeneutical movement to (d) be moved in conversion to the context of the text’s author will occur as part of the process of ‘assertion’ in Chapters Four and Five.

## **The contextual location of 2 Corinthians 4**

Preparatory to the close examination of 2 Corinthians 4 below, the passage must be located within the wider movement of the epistle. There is some disagreement between commentators regarding the unity of the canonical epistle.<sup>37</sup> There is also variation between commentators concerning the exact structure of the letter(s) and where Chapter Four fits in the broader composition.<sup>38</sup> However, there is common

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<sup>32</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 161.

<sup>33</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 162.

<sup>34</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 163.

<sup>35</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 168.

<sup>36</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 168.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 17-25; Murphy-O’Connor, ‘*1 and 2 Corinthians*,’ 84; Thrall, *Second Corinthians I*, 188.

<sup>38</sup> For example, each of the four main commentators (Barnett (1997), Harris (2005), Martin (1986) and Thrall (2004)) used in the preparation of this exegesis propose different structures and places of best-fit for the chapter in question.

acceptance in placing this passage within a wider section providing a defence or apology for Paul's exercise of an apostolic ministry. Paul's need for this *apologia* seems to have arisen from three interrelated spheres: (a) ongoing friction in his relationship with the Christian church in Corinth, (b) the presence of 'super-apostles' who were attempting to usurp his influence by appeal to a different kind of ministry style and content and (c) the social location of the Corinthians within the Hellenic world.<sup>39</sup> The interrelationship between these three spheres becomes a significant feature of the Pauline theology of the transmission of faith as it is drawn towards Generation Y later in this thesis.

It seems that Paul had a clear agenda to take the gospel of Christ deep into the non-Jewish world, forming communities of faith, churches (*ekklēsiai*), as evidence of the gospel's power to transform.<sup>40</sup> Murphy-O'Connor regards Corinth as having been a potential jewel in the crown of the Pauline churches. Corinth was a melting pot of ideas, beliefs and practices, and it would have been a challenge for Paul to plant the gospel in such a robust and difficult environment. Indeed it was said "... Corinth is not for everybody!"<sup>41</sup> Should an *ekklēsia* have gained a foothold in Corinth it would surely have demonstrated the power of the gospel.

Paul had a long history of disagreement, pain and frustration caused by engagement with the Corinthian church.<sup>42</sup> The two canonical letters to the Corinthians see Paul seeking to correct the Corinthian Christians over issues including: the influence of those who would promote a Christianity in simple continuity with Judaism; the nature of apostolic ministry; Paul's own qualifications as an apostle; the role of freedom in the Christian life; the presence of social divisions within the Christian community; the liturgical practices of the church; and the resurrection of the dead.

The second Corinthian epistle arose then as part of an ongoing, 'living' relationship between Paul and the Corinthian church. Paul made initial contact with those who would form the seed of the Corinthian church in his first apostolic visit to the city.

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<sup>39</sup> Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 45; Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 16; Thrall, *Second Corinthians I*, 188 ff; Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 240.

<sup>40</sup> Schnabel, *Paul and the Early Church*, 1545-1547.

<sup>41</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, '1 and 2 Corinthians,' 74.

<sup>42</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, '1 and 2 Corinthians,' 74-90.

Following his usual practice he moved on from Corinth and wrote his first, no longer extant, letter to those in Corinth who had become Christians.<sup>43</sup> On receiving disturbing reports about their corporate life and doctrine, Paul wrote a second letter (what is known as 1 Corinthians) to the community and followed this letter with a visit. The visit did not go at all smoothly; and was, in fact, painful. Paul withdrew from Corinth quickly so as to avoid deepening his, and their, pain. A third, no longer extant, letter (probably referred to by Paul in 2 Corinthians as the ‘sorrowful letter’) followed *in lieu* of an extended time with the church. 2 Corinthians is then probably the fourth Pauline letter to the Corinthians. In some ways it is a confusing letter, containing both the joy of reconciliation and the fire of rebuke. For this reason some commentators further divide this letter into 2 Corinthians a and b (or more). Finally, around 55 CE, Paul completed a return visit to Corinth during which time he wrote the letter to the Romans.<sup>44</sup> In response to the ongoing history of disagreement and disturbed relationship with the Corinthian *ekklesia*, Paul chose to respond in defence of his apostleship with (in part) the words of 2 Corinthians 4.<sup>45</sup> Significantly Paul’s defence (*apologoumetha*) in 2 Cor 12:19 indicates that, if the letter is regarded as a unified whole, it is intended as an *apologia* for his ministry.<sup>46</sup>

From the opening verses of 2 Corinthians 4 it is clear that Paul is contrasting his ministry with that of others who have arrived in Corinth and in some way have set themselves up to usurp his position as apostle amongst the Corinthian church. Throughout the extant Corinthian communication, reference to these *usurpers*

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<sup>43</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 10.

<sup>44</sup> Murphy-O’Connor, ‘1 and 2 Corinthians,’ 84.

The relationship between St Paul and the Corinthian church could be tabled thus:

Visit:	to found the church.
Letter a:	no longer extant.
Letter b:	1 Corinthians.
Visit:	painful with a quick withdrawal.
Letter c:	the ‘sorrowful’ letter, no longer extant.
Letter d/e:	2 Corinthians (some commentators split this letter into two or more separate communications).
Visit:	during which time St Paul writes ‘Romans’.

I find the arguments put forward by Barnett for the literary unity of 2 Corinthians convincing; however, the unity of the letter is not a decisive issue for this thesis as Chapter 4, and its near context, fall within a passage whose unity is generally not disputed. As such, Thrall argues for a tripartite division of the letter, but clearly includes Chapter 4 within a coherent subsection of the letter that operates within a larger whole. Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 17-25; Thrall, *Second Corinthians I*, 188.

<sup>45</sup> Thrall, *Second Corinthians I*, 188.

<sup>46</sup> Paul Barnett, *Paul: Missionary of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008) 159-160.

abounds (see, for example, 2 Cor 2:14–17, 3:1–18, 5:12, 10:13–18, 11:1–23 and 12:1–13). Paul also seems to be addressing erroneous groups that have grown up around both Apollos and Cephas (Peter) within the church.<sup>47</sup> His correction of the misappropriation of the ministry of Apollos and Peter will be left aside in this instance. Instead, I will focus upon Paul’s reasons for disagreement with and correction of those who were seeking to usurp his position in Corinth.

Barnett writes that these *usurpers* were in fact false apostles who took the opportunity of Peter’s visit to Corinth to engage in a rival, extreme Jewish ‘counter-mission’, even as it assumed a Christian character.<sup>48</sup> The core of the *usurpers’* criticism of Paul centred around his seeming lack of charismatic experience and rhetorical skill (2 Cor 2:14–17, 3:1–18, 4:2, 5:12, 11:1–6 and 12:1–13). These were adduced to demonstrate that the *usurpers* were superior to Paul and that their ministry was superior to his.<sup>49</sup> As will be seen below, these factors coincided with the very aspects of Hellenic culture that Paul sought to confront within the Corinthian church.

Savage has identified four key areas in which Paul’s witness and ministry before the Corinthians ran contrary to their enculturated experience, and, as has been seen above, to the usurping ministry of the interloping hyper-Judaic counter-missionaries. These four areas were to do with an expectation that a leader would (a) boast about their qualification to lead, (b) be ‘strong’ and in fact harsh in their manner, (c) display self-aggrandising rhetorical skill and (d) avail themselves of the prevailing system of patronage to become wealthy.

Boasting about one’s experiences and capacity to lead was a common device in the ancient world. In the Hellenistic Corinthian culture, displays of boasting – that revelled in physical and mental power and which then led to personal prominence – were valued highly.<sup>50</sup> The *usurpers* modified this boasting only slightly. They continued to boast, but about their charismatic experience. By recounting times of religious ecstasy (2 Cor 5:13), visions (2 Cor 12:1, 7) and the performance of

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<sup>47</sup> Barnett, *Paul*, 166-170.

<sup>48</sup> Barnett, *Paul*, 171.

<sup>49</sup> Barnett, *Paul*, 173-174.

<sup>50</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 64.

miraculous signs (2 Cor 12:12), the *usurpers* sought to promote themselves above Paul, and thus legitimate their ministry above his.<sup>51</sup>

Paul's physical presence, or more precisely lack of imposing physical presence, also apparently troubled the Corinthians. The Corinthians, it seems, wish Paul to impose himself upon the church with obvious strength (cf. 2 Cor 1:23–2:4).<sup>52</sup> Paul's refusal to deal harshly with the Corinthians (remembering his withdrawal from Corinth to avoid nastiness, 2 Cor 1:23) and his insistence upon treating them with gentleness does not conform to predominant Corinthian notions of leadership. It also left Paul open to criticisms of inadequate or illegitimate apostleship.

Speech by leaders in the Corinthian environment was expected to be "... abusive and arrogant ... [reflecting] ... the self-regarding atmosphere of the day."<sup>53</sup> To be *seen* to be wise and powerful in one's own right was the goal of rhetoric. Consequently, Paul's appearance in weakness and humility confronted the Hellenistic assumptions of the day and fell prey to the *usurpers'* desire to display themselves as superior when compared to him. This is particularly seen in the seeming desire of the *usurpers* to draw glory for themselves from their supposed connection with the 'letter' of the law as given by Moses (the implication of 2 Cor 3:7–11 and 2 Cor 4:1–2).<sup>54</sup> In contrast all Paul had to preach was the 'foolishness' of Christ crucified (1 Cor 1:22–23).

"... [P]eople in antiquity were skilled in the art of using money for personal advantage."<sup>55</sup> Wealth was used by people within a system of patronage not simply to promote civic institutions and activities, but to 'effectively adorn' themselves.<sup>56</sup> In supporting the apostle, the Corinthians Christians would have been gaining honour for themselves. Paul effectively precluded this from occurring by not accepting their support. In doing so Paul forced the Corinthians to identify with his poverty and humility.<sup>57</sup> This would have been a frustrating and uncomfortable thing in the

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<sup>51</sup> Barnett, *Paul*, 173-174.

<sup>52</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 69.

<sup>53</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 80.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Barnett, *Paul*, 172 f.

<sup>55</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 92.

<sup>56</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 92.

<sup>57</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 93.

Corinthian environment. In a somewhat perverse twist, Paul's refusal to accept their patronage may well have prompted the Corinthians to seek to besmirch his reputation by insinuating that the 'Jerusalem' collection he promotes in 2 Corinthians 12 was the actual source of his support (2 Cor 12:16).<sup>58</sup>

As is seen in the following exegesis of 2 Corinthians 4, Paul confronts each of these values as contrary to the gospel he proclaims – and therefore contrary to true apostleship. In Paul's mind, as it is reflected in his writing and practice, to have succumbed to the 'natural' way of the Hellenic Corinthian culture, particularly as it was emphasised by the *usurpers*, would have emptied his ministry of true power.<sup>59</sup>

The exegesis of the text of 2 Corinthians 4 will now proceed. The entirety of 2 Corinthians 4 will be examined, with the nature of the links between each literary component demonstrated via the syntactical information in the text. I have provided my own translation as the key to this exegesis.<sup>60</sup>

### **This clear ministry (vv. 1 and 2)**

*Therefore, having this ministry according to the mercy shown us we do not lose heart but renounce the hidden ways of shame; neither dealing craftily, nor falsifying the word of God, but in the disclosure of truth we introduce ourselves to every human conscience before God.*

Paul connects the opening thoughts of the passage under consideration with the preceding thoughts via a short phrase (*dia touto*) with the force of *therefore*.<sup>61</sup> The prior passage illuminated two contrasting, yet connected, ministries. The first, that of Moses, was a ministry of 'death' (3:7), 'written on stone tablets' (3:7). In it the glory of God remained opaque to the people of Israel (3:7, 13). Moreover, it was a ministry that was now superseded (3:7, 13) by a ministry of greater glory. This new ministry was one of freedom in which the 'veils' and opacity of the old gave way

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<sup>58</sup> Barnett, *Paul*, 164.

<sup>59</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 190.

<sup>60</sup> At one point I have drawn upon Barnett's (1997) translation, that of the very difficult verse 15, to preserve the integrity of a pertinent citation.

<sup>61</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 211.

before an unhindered view of the ‘glory of the Lord’ (3:17–18). The end result of this new ministry was that those who had the ‘veil’ of the old set aside not only *beheld* the Lord’s glory, but were changed by this vision into the likeness of that glory (3:18).<sup>62</sup>

This passage is a key part of the *apologia* Paul mounts before the Corinthians of his own ministry in the light of the tensions that exist between Paul, the Corinthians and those who have come to Corinth seeking to usurp his position. There may be some implication that the competing teachers and church leaders exercised a ministry similar to that of Moses, which, while high on physical-show, is rendered by Paul as law upon stone (3:7). In contrast, Paul ministers a ‘new covenant’ (3:6), which writes by the Spirit of God upon the human heart (3:3–6).<sup>63</sup> With the introduction of the ‘new covenant’ Paul establishes the context for the ensuing passage. The nature of his ministry and the trials and situations it encompasses are based upon the ‘new covenant’ of the Spirit in which there is freedom. That is, freedom to perceive the glory of the Lord and freedom to be transformed into his likeness (cf. Gal 3:22–25).<sup>64</sup>

The previous passage (2 Cor 3:1–18) talks about the ‘new covenant’ as the content and motivating force behind Paul’s ministry, particularly as it contrasted with that of Moses. This point is underscored as Paul links the ministry he will continue to defend before the Corinthians in Chapter Four with that outlined in Chapter Three. *This ministry* of the ‘new covenant’ is of great glory. Its glory far surpasses that of the old as it prepares people for righteousness before God (3:7–11) as the Spirit writes upon their hearts.<sup>65</sup> Consequently, Paul prepares the way for the dominating argument of Chapter 4. The ministry which Paul discharges is glorious due to its origin (God) and its ends (preparing people to be presented righteous before God). Having reminded the Corinthians of the greatness of his ministry, Paul then qualifies his role. Paul partakes in *this ministry ... according to the mercy shown* him. Recalling his experience on the road to Damascus, Paul underscores the importance

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<sup>62</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 145-148.

<sup>63</sup> Paul Barnett, *The Message of 2 Corinthians*, J. R. W. Stott, series ed., *The Bible Speaks Today* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1988) 78.

<sup>64</sup> Barnett, *Paul*, 41, 62.

<sup>65</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 322.



of *evangelical conversion* in the life-experience of the one engaged in this ministry.<sup>66</sup> By *evangelical conversion* I mean a decisive reorientation of life in response to the presentation of the *evangel* (*gospel*). In Paul's case this was through a vision of the risen Christ; however, he consistently regarded the preached message of the *gospel* to carry the same imperative and bring the same results.<sup>67</sup> It must be noted here that the role of conversion in Paul's life has been the ground of significant contemporary debate. Stendahl is at great pains to point out that at no stage does Paul refer to himself as a dissatisfied Jew in need of a 'new' religion. He thus contends that it is improper to regard Paul's experience of Christ as constituting a 'conversion' from one religion to another, but rather a 'call' as apostle to the Gentiles.<sup>68</sup> Stendahl's insight does make sense in this passage, focussed as it is upon Paul's ministry to the Gentile church of Corinth. However, he has drawn the lines of debate too finely, for Paul's Damascus Road Christophany – drawn on by Paul in 2 Cor 4:1 – cannot be collapsed into a mere call. In receiving *mercy* Paul is moved from a previous attitude toward the law and covenant of Moses. It is this movement that underlies his reoriented mission. Paul insists that the reason that he may now perceive God without a veil (2 Cor 3:18) is through a "... radical relational change to Christ ...".<sup>69</sup> So, while strictly not changing religion, a dissatisfied Jew finding relief in a whole new belief, Paul does clearly find that his old path had given way before the revelation of Christ. As such it is better to talk of this event as *both* conversion and *call to Christ*.<sup>70</sup>

2 Cor 4:1 is clear that the conditions allowing Paul to minister are predicated upon *mercy*.<sup>71</sup> The divine passive employed in this phrase (*mercy shown us* (*ēleēthēmen*)) only serves to highlight this condition and places both Paul the man and Paul the minister under the single enabling hand of God the Father. One key implication of this condition is that a Pauline ministry is given, not taken. Again, this point in the Pauline *apologia* stands in direct contrast to those who question the substance of his

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<sup>66</sup> Flemming, *Contextualization*, 100-101.

<sup>67</sup> Köstenburger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 192. In fact, Bosch can write of Paul's encounter with Christ on the Damascus Road: "It was indeed a primordial experience and the one that Paul understood to be paradigmatic of that of every Christian." Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 126.

<sup>68</sup> Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles: And Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976) 7-11.

<sup>69</sup> Barnett, *Paul*, 72.

<sup>70</sup> Senior and Stuhlmüller, *Biblical Foundations*, 170-171; Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 125-126.

<sup>71</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 323.

ministry. As Paul would have it, ministry may be approached with confidence, resting in the power of the giver. However, it must be discharged with humility, being borne without human qualification.<sup>72</sup> A second implication of the divine mercy that enables *this ministry* is the importance the resurrected Jesus plays in the Pauline ministry. It is the Jesus met on the Damascus Road who forced Paul to reconsider his conception of God and subsequently reorder his life to match this new understanding.<sup>73</sup> These two implications foreshadow significant themes that re-emerge throughout this passage.

At this point it must be noted that Paul utilises plural forms (e.g. the mercy shown to *us*) consistently throughout the passage at hand. With the exception of the *we* in 4:14 this is a literary device to emphasise his position as an apostle in opposition to the Corinthians. As such the position of ‘apostle’ is in view.<sup>74</sup> It is right then that the reader questions the applicability of the apostle’s task to the situation being examined in this thesis, namely Generation Y in Australia. I hope that such questioning will be adequately addressed in the subsequent hermeneutical chapters. However, let it be noted at this point that it seems unlikely that, whatever it means for Paul to be an apostle in some exclusive sense, that the demands and character of his ministry as they are portrayed in this passage should not colour the ministry of those who follow him in ministering the ‘new covenant’.<sup>75</sup> Two reasons can be brought for this confidence. Paul cites the ‘new covenant’ as the basis for his ministry as an apostle.<sup>76</sup> However, in this same passage the ‘new covenant’, as the Spirit working in the inner life of a believer, is set as the basis for the establishment of every Christian (3:4–11).<sup>77</sup> Further, though speaking as an apostle, Paul is not chiefly concerned with defending a restricted role for himself as an apostle. He is primarily defending his ministry, and therefore himself as he bears that ministry, from charges brought by those who seem to be exercising a ministry built upon a

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<sup>72</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 323.

<sup>73</sup> Thrall, *Second Corinthians I*, 300.

<sup>74</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 58 fn, 140 fn. Therefore, I will continue to simply refer to ‘Paul’ when the text uses a plural form, except where the context demands plural referents.

<sup>75</sup> Indeed, one may easily find examples of 2 Corinthians 4 being used to instruct ministers of the gospel. For example C. E. B. Cranfield, ‘Minister and Congregation in the Light of II Corinthians 4:5-7: An Exposition,’ *Interpretation*, 19:2 (1965): 163-167; Avram, ‘2 Corinthians 4:1-18,’ 70-73.

<sup>76</sup> Plevnik, ‘The Destination of the Apostle and of the Faithful: Second Corinthians 4:13b-14 and First Thessalonians 4:14,’ 89.

<sup>77</sup> Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 56.

different foundation; that of the ‘old covenant’. Thus, I contend that Paul, while speaking as an apostle against the Corinthians, does so to correct errant views that arise from issues touching the heart of what it means to be a follower of Christ. Hence, he has in mind a ministry that arises from such a fundamental position that it is open to all who are *in Christ*.<sup>78</sup>

It is significant in the troubled context of Paul’s relationship with the Corinthian church that he *does not* then *lose heart* in the discharge of *this ministry*. The loss of heart envisaged by Paul connotes a sense of dereliction of duty. Further, this gives the impression of the presence of temptation to alter one’s conduct in unbecoming ways due to a difficult or perverse situation.<sup>79</sup> Again, the contrast is implied between Paul’s way of ministry and that employed by the Corinthian *usurpers*. Presumably Paul is being charged with a fruitless, plain or deceptive ministry when compared with these other ministers.<sup>80</sup> It could be that the perceived plainness or lowliness of the Pauline ministry was viewed as good reason to lose heart, or change the foundation of his ministry.<sup>81</sup> Yet Paul strictly avoids this scenario, paralleling the giving in to the unbecoming conduct implied by loss of heart with the *hidden ways of shame*. In fact, Paul *renounces* such a movement.<sup>82</sup> It seems that in Paul’s mind, to give in to the Corinthians’ expectations of him as a minister would be shameful conduct.

*The hidden ways of shame* are in turn placed in a synthetic parallel with *dealing craftily* in ministry and *falsifying the word of God*. Paul does this through the emphatic use of negating particles (*mē ... mēde*).<sup>83</sup> The idea of dealing craftily in ministry seems to indicate an important lifestyle dimension in Paul’s presentation of himself. It is suggested that Paul was being criticised for not accepting money from the Corinthians in return for his ministry. Rather, he was manipulating their reaction

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<sup>78</sup> Hence Martin can call every Christian a ‘Moses’, able to behold and reflect the glory of God. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 71, 74. So, while Paul can expect that the communities that his ministry formed ‘imitate’ his example (1 Thes 1:6), the difference he perceives is not that his work is of a different character to theirs, but that “... the demands he makes on himself are far greater than those he makes on others ...”; as such, the difference is of quantity, not quality. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 133.

<sup>79</sup> Thrall, *Second Corinthians I*, 299.

<sup>80</sup> Barnett, *Paul*, 159-180.

<sup>81</sup> Schnabel, *Paul and the Early Church*, 964.

<sup>82</sup> Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 77.

<sup>83</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 325.

to him (and his gospel) through this refusal. Hence, he was not dealing plainly, but with Machiavellian intent, in which the ends justified the means.<sup>84</sup> Paul strenuously denies this charge and goes on to intensify his denial by attaching, *nor falsifying the word of God*. Thus, lifestyle and speech components meet in Paul's *apologia* of his ministry.<sup>85</sup> He is wanting the Corinthians to be sure that the motives that run through his speech and conduct are transparent and true.<sup>86</sup>

Through the adversative *but (alla)* Paul connects the positive enunciation of his ministry with the preceding negative renunciation.<sup>87</sup> Contrary to Corinthian scepticism, his ministry progresses *in the disclosure of truth*. *The disclosure of truth* provides a negative parallel with the twin *hidden ways of shame* and a link between truth, as a minister proclaims and portrays it, and the word of God. Paul does not lose heart because the motive force behind his ministry is nothing other than the truth of the word of God. Therefore, the Pauline ministry has its origin outside of the minister and, in the Pauline estimation, constrains the minister. Yet, in being constrained, the minister is caught up in the incredible transaction in which the glory of God – found in his word, surpassing that of Moses and bringing the life of the Spirit – is made clear. It is *this ministry* that plays a pivotal revelatory role in the movement to perceive the *knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* (4:6).<sup>88</sup>

Paul concludes the initial phase of this passage by drawing the hearer/reader back to the visible conduct of his ministry. Paul thus seeks to *introduce himself to every human conscience before God*. He labours in a ministry of the *gospel* (4:4) that is ultimately answerable in method and motive to God; yet, *this ministry* is directed to the *human conscience*. The *human conscience* in question is that "... inward faculty of judgement which assesses conduct in accordance with given norms."<sup>89</sup> So Paul labours to present his ministry not to each and every human being, but to "... every possible variety of human conscience" [sic] ... Corinthian and non-Corinthian,

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<sup>84</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 213 fn.

<sup>85</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 325.

<sup>86</sup> Schnabel, *Paul and the Early Church*, 1359.

<sup>87</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 325.

<sup>88</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 214.

<sup>89</sup> Thrall, *Second Corinthians I*, 301.

Christian and non-Christian.”<sup>90</sup> Therefore, an inescapable mission paradox is set up in which the Pauline ministry self-consciously directs itself towards all sorts of people without discrimination based upon race or prior faith commitment. Yet, *this ministry* is finally answerable not to these people, but to the originator of the mission – God.<sup>91</sup>

### **Excursus – how this clear ministry may seem to fail (vv. 3 and 4)**

*Now even if our gospel is being hidden, it is being hidden unto those who are being lost; in whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they may not see distinctly the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.*

Paul’s address to the Corinthians takes a digression at this point as he addresses an implied question. If the ministry Paul promotes is clear, why is it that not all people (particularly Jews) respond to the *gospel* with understanding and acceptance? In the context of the letter it is likely that Paul is addressing a perceived retort to his initial *apologia* regarding his ministry which was put forward by the *usurpers* who had come to Corinth and were seeking to undermine its Pauline foundations.<sup>92</sup> Paul’s response is that it is possible for the *gospel* to be *hidden*. Returning to the logic of the previous chapter, the glory of the ‘old covenant’ was hidden from the Israelites by a veil Moses drew over his face. The same veil hides the revelation of the ‘new covenant’ when the words of Moses are read aloud in the synagogues of Paul’s day (3:12–16). The revelation of Christ as the glory of God, prefigured in the ‘old’, is now made clear in the ‘new’ – yet it remains *hidden* to those who are *lost* from God. Both *hidden* and *lost* are in the form of perfect passive participles, indicating conditions that have origins in the past but currently stand. So the force of this statement is something like, “[a]s long as men [sic] are on the road to perdition the gospel is veiled to them ...”.<sup>93</sup> So, although the possibility of future response is not ruled out by Paul, the current condition of non-response leaves people on a dire path.

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<sup>90</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 326.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Paul’s sense of responsibility to God as his master in 2 Cor 5:11. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 135.

<sup>92</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 216.

<sup>93</sup> R. V. G. Tasker, *2 Corinthians*, R. V. G. Tasker, series ed., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: The Tyndale Press, 1958) 70.

The *gospel* functions as a keyword for Paul that captures the heart of the message he preached as an apostle of Christ.<sup>94</sup> In this situation *our gospel* highlights the transmitted nature of the Pauline message. The gospel is not Paul's in the sense that he owns it, or even that it is his particular interpretation of it. But, it is the gospel he proclaims, having been entrusted with such a ministry in mercy.<sup>95</sup> It is against this divinely transmitted message that the possibility of 'another or other gospel(s)' is raised. The 'gospels' being brought to Corinth, swaying the hearts and minds of the Corinthian Christians, stand contrary not simply to Paul, but to Paul as the proclaimer of the gospel given by God. This makes sense of the adversative *even if* (*ei de kai*), which underlines the power of the gospel in spite of poor results: the poor results indicate not a poor gospel, but evidence of blindness.<sup>96</sup>

As raised earlier, the hiddenness of the gospel is phrased in the passive voice. Therefore, the gospel is *being hidden* from those who *do not see* that to which the gospel points. Those *in whom* the gospel is being hidden find themselves subject to the work of *the god of this age* – a unique expression in the New Testament, referring to Satan.<sup>97</sup> Thus, the inevitable doom awaiting those who *are being lost* requires not simply greater knowledge, a more powerful minister, or even human growth and maturity, but spiritual rescue from satanic power.<sup>98</sup>

Drawing upon the metaphor of sight, Paul argues that a lack of response to the gospel is akin to blindness of the mind in which the gospel's clarity is obscured by Satan. One would normally expect the appropriate counterpart for *blindness* to be the eyes. However, Paul's choice of the mind as the blinded organ highlights the importance of the mind in "... understanding ... the truth and the attractiveness of the gospel ...".<sup>99</sup> Hence, the evidence of this spiritual blindness of the mind is unbelief in the gospel Paul brings. Yet, refusal of the gospel is not a refusal of Paul, but of God.<sup>100</sup> Further,

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<sup>94</sup> Köstenburger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 271.

<sup>95</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 327.

<sup>96</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 215.

<sup>97</sup> Thrall, *Second Corinthians I*, 306-308.

<sup>98</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 327.

<sup>99</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 328.

<sup>100</sup> Dickson, *Mission-Commitment*, 298 fn.

Satan’s blinding activity is not neutral but purposive and effective.<sup>101</sup> The unbelieving are blinded *so that they may not see distinctly the light of the gospel*. Satan here plays a plainly adversative role in the proclamation and reception of the gospel.

Yet, the blinding of unbelief is set in sharp relief against the *light of the gospel* which was *made clear* to Paul and which *shone* in his heart at God’s behest.<sup>102</sup> So the light is capable of piercing the dark of blindness. This piercing *light* is qualified in three ways:

It is the *light*  
*of the gospel*  
*of the glory*  
*of Christ*      *who is the image of God*.

The primary object of the *light* which is to be *seen distinctly* is the *gospel*. Here some clarification as to the nature of the gospel may be found in the immediate context.<sup>103</sup> The *gospel* is *of the glory of Christ*. It has been seen earlier that Paul was at pains to contrast the veiled glory of the Mosaic ministry and the freely beheld glory of the Lord (3:18). Now he clarifies this contrasting picture by attaching the glory of the Lord to that of the risen Christ.<sup>104</sup> Again drawing on his own experience of the risen Jesus, Paul is able to announce that Christ himself is the *image of God*. Consequently, Jesus Christ is the revelatory means by which the invisible God is made known (with his attendant glory) to all people.<sup>105</sup> So it is through the *gospel* that the light of God – that is his glorious image, Jesus – may be *seen distinctly*.<sup>106</sup> Further, Christ the *image of God* also reveals true humanity as the ‘second Adam’.<sup>107</sup>

Before considering the next part of Chapter Four, it is pertinent to note that already in this passage Paul has moved from describing *this ministry*, to describing his work as *introducing ourselves to every human conscience* and, finally, as simply the

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<sup>101</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 330.

<sup>102</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 219.

<sup>103</sup> Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 79.

<sup>104</sup> Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 214.

<sup>105</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 219-220. Fee also makes the point that “... a unique, unshared prerogative of Yahweh has now been appropriated to refer to Christ.” Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 60, see also fn 85.

<sup>106</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 330.

<sup>107</sup> Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 487.

*gospel*. While it has been seen above that his ministry had an attendant lifestyle that either commended or brought shame upon it, his ministry is of speaking a particular message. The message is *the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God* – which is to be heard and accepted if its light is to be apprehended.<sup>108</sup>

Having digressed to explain the possible *refusal* of his ministry, Paul turns his attention to the basis for *acceptance*. In this section he lays bare his mode of ministry, the ground of his ministry and the means by which it has power.

### **The knowledge of the glory of the Lord in the face of Christ (vv. 5 and 6)**

*For we do not proclaim ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves your slaves because of Jesus: Because it was God who was speaking, “Let light shine from darkness,” who shone into our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

Using the connective *for* (*gar*), Paul goes on to place himself and his ministry in the framework of the gospel that has just been laid out.<sup>109</sup> He underscores again the declarative nature of the gospel as it is an entity that is *proclaimed*.<sup>110</sup> Paul’s *proclamation* of the gospel included a range of environments and styles, yet retained a sense of authority based on its Divine origin and illumination.<sup>111</sup> However, for all of the authority found in the proclamation of the gospel, Paul specifically counters charges of self-interest by claiming that he does not proclaim himself, *but Jesus Christ as Lord and (himself) your slave because of Jesus*.<sup>112</sup> Here the *Lordship* of Jesus Christ is contrasted with Paul’s bond of *slavery* to the Corinthians. If the spoken declaration of the gospel is the means of Paul’s ministry, then the *Lordship* of Jesus Christ is its content, and its mode is his *slavery* to the Corinthians. In essence,

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<sup>108</sup> Although classing the use of ‘gospel’ in verses 3 and 4 as “... cursory and so elud[ing] classification ...” Dickson still finds that the overwhelming weight of Pauline usage of the word “... connotes a ‘primary’ announcement ... [and] ... that, for Paul, the language of ‘gospel’ is the language of missionary proclamation.” Dickson, *Mission-Commitment*, 91.

<sup>109</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 220-221.

<sup>110</sup> Schnabel, *Paul and the Early Church*, 1355. Dickson again finds that ‘to proclaim’ (*kērusō*) is a verb indicating primary, ‘missionary announcement’. Dickson, *Mission-Commitment*, 323.

<sup>111</sup> Köstenburger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 192.

<sup>112</sup> Thrall, *Second Corinthians I*, 313.



the relationship of the minister (Paul) and those ministered to (the Corinthians) is marked by a decisive meekness flowing from ‘minister’ to ‘ministered to’ *because of Jesus*.<sup>113</sup> Here the reader may detect not only the instrumentality of Jesus in the ministry of Paul (i.e. it is through the application of mercy that Paul may bear the role of minister), but also his role of exemplar in ministry.<sup>114</sup> One implication of this is that while Paul carries the authority of the sender in bearing the gospel, he also bears the cost of human dissatisfaction with the manner in which this ministry is discharged. Therefore, although not framed specifically in this way, the troubles between Paul and the Corinthians are also produced *because of Jesus*.

A further connective, *because (hoti)*, links the next phrase to Paul’s explanation of his place as a minister of the gospel.<sup>115</sup> Again he emphasises that he is not a minister of the gospel due to his own devices. Paul ministers because God acted to turn his own *darkness* of unbelief into the *illumination* of belief. Drawing upon the creation motif of God calling light into being from the primordial darkness, Paul further develops the light/darkness metaphor discussed above. Just as God spoke into the darkness to produce light, so he spoke into Paul’s darkened heart to *illuminate* the gospel.<sup>116</sup> This time the gospel is rendered as the *knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*.<sup>117</sup>

Finally, it must be noted that in the immediately prior phrase, Paul clarifies the *telos* of God’s *illumination* of the gospel: *knowledge*. Significantly, the knowledge to be gained is not merely informational, in that the *knowledge of the glory of the God* is found *in the face of Christ*. In this context, *the face of Christ* denotes the person of the resurrected Christ as he appeared before Paul on the Damascus Road. Further it speaks not only of the incarnation of Jesus’ earthly life, but also of the continuing warmth of relationship available in the resurrected and glorified, but still incarnate, Christ.<sup>118</sup> Therefore, Paul stresses that knowledge is not knowing about things, but knowing a person: an activity that occurs in relationship. This section then closes

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<sup>113</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 221-223.

<sup>114</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 333.

<sup>115</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 333.

<sup>116</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 225. Fee points out that just as *the god of this age* blinds minds, so God *shone to illuminate* the heart. As such, the meanings of minds and hearts are parallel. Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 183.

<sup>117</sup> Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 80.

<sup>118</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 224.

with a threefold missional impetus: (a) God speaks to shine the light of knowledge into humanity; (b) that knowledge is found in the face of the incarnate, historical, risen and glorified Christ as the gospel is proclaimed; and (c) that *in knowing* God through Christ the true image *of God* is restored in humanity.<sup>119</sup>

### Treasure in jars of clay (vv. 7–10)

*But we have this treasure in jars of clay, so that the greatness of the power may be of God and not of us; although in all things we are being hard-pressed, we are not crushed; we are perplexed, but not baffled; hunted down, but not forsaken; knocked down, but not destroyed; always carrying the dying of Jesus in our bodies so that the life of Jesus may be made clear in our bodies.*

Again opening this section with the connective *but (de)*, Paul appears to force his eyes off the vision of God through Christ and to return to the present situation. This has the effect of contrasting the glory of the gospel with the hardships of the apostolic existence.<sup>120</sup> The *treasure* introduced here by Paul most likely refers primarily to the *gospel* (4:4) of the *knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ* (4:6).<sup>121</sup> However, it has been seen above that Paul's apostolic ministry is based upon the foundation of this knowledge so that the knowledge, leads to *this ministry* (4:1).<sup>122</sup>

Yet the *treasure* of the gospel is held in *jars of clay*. Here Paul draws upon another metaphor to describe the nature of his life as a minister of the gospel. His seemingly difficult and inglorious life (experienced both physically and psychologically, as seen in the list to follow) is the receptacle for the *knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ*. There are many suggestions as to the precise nature of the *jars of clay* that Paul refers to,<sup>123</sup> however, the core meaning of the metaphor must not be

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<sup>119</sup> Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 520.

<sup>120</sup> Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 84.

<sup>121</sup> Thrall, *Second Corinthians I*, 321-322.

<sup>122</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 164.

<sup>123</sup> See Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 85 f and Thrall, *Second Corinthians I*, 322 ff, for lists of possible referents.

obscured. That is, the key idea conveyed by the metaphor is of the richness of the contents as they contrast with the commonness and fragility of the container.<sup>124</sup>

Paul chooses this personally unflattering metaphor *so that the greatness of the power of the gospel may be perceived to be of God and not of us*. The treasure must be seen for what it is and not be obscured by any pretensions or approximations of glory arising from the human container.<sup>125</sup> In contrasting his own lack of power with the greatness of God's power which he bears in the gospel, Paul returns the reader to the issues being addressed at the opening of 2 Corinthians 4. Here it may be discerned why Paul emphatically repudiated any falsification of God's word. To be involved as an agent of ministry, drawn into God's mission, implies faithfulness to the originator of that mission to the point of allowing the true character of what is being carried to be discerned. Even if it requires the bearer to become like a clay jar.<sup>126</sup>

Paul extends this thought into a series of antitheses that seem to prefigure fuller descriptions of his suffering in 2 Cor 6:4–10 and 2 Cor 11:22–29. The graphic and disturbing hardships reviewed by Paul in Chapters 6 and 11 are probably intended to communicate through their "... cumulative weight ..." in 2 Cor 4:8–9.<sup>127</sup>

Four times Paul uses a passive participle to indicate some kind of trouble and then emphatically negates it in the form of a more intense, but related, passive participle (... *menoi all' ouk ... menoi*).<sup>128</sup> Paul characterises his experience thus:

1. He is *hard-pressed* but *not crushed*. Here *hard-pressed* has the undertone of being backed into a corner, yet Paul is not forced in so far that he has no room to move.<sup>129</sup>
2. He is *perplexed* but *not baffled*. Although reduced to a stand-still, unsure of what to do, Paul finds himself with a 'way out'. Some have found this antithesis difficult to reconcile with 2 Cor 1:8.<sup>130</sup> However, it would seem

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<sup>124</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 166. It could be said that the *jars of clay* Paul had in mind were somewhat akin to the take-away coffee cups of today: ubiquitous and ephemeral.

<sup>125</sup> Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 152.

<sup>126</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 167.

<sup>127</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 167.

<sup>128</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 171; Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 233.

<sup>129</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 233 fn.

<sup>130</sup> Thrall, *Second Corinthians I*, 328.

that the renewed confidence of verse 1:10 has been brought about by the process described in this phrase.

3. He is *hunted down but not forsaken*. Picking up the language of a pursuit, or even persecution, Paul finds that, although being a quarry fleeing a hunter, God does not leave him without help and friendship in his need. Here Paul draws upon the "... rich background in the OT (LXX) [sic] for Yahweh's determination not to forsake his people ...".<sup>131</sup>
4. He is *knocked down but not destroyed*. Perhaps Paul has in mind his stoning at Lystra (Acts 14:20) when he was literally 'knocked to the ground' yet not 'totally done in', being able to get up and continue to Derbe. The technical language of a decisive blow in a wrestling match does not prove fatal to this mere clay jar.<sup>132</sup>

Thus Harris proposes that "... the first element in each antithesis illustrates human weakness, the second illustrates divine power."<sup>133</sup>

The series of antitheses is headed by the phrase *in all things (ev panti)*, which applies to all four preceding antitheses and is joined by *always (pantote)* in verse 10. These two alliterative phrases join what is one complete sentence and underline the unrelieved nature of the trials Paul faces.<sup>134</sup> Therefore, when Paul refers to *always carrying the dying of Jesus in our bodies* he recalls the first element of each of the previous antitheses. That is, the ongoing nature of the experience and the Christological origin of the lifestyle he leads. In choosing to use a rare word in the New Testament and LXX, *the dying of (necrōsis)*, Paul has included the total experience of Jesus' life and ministry from birth to death in his own.<sup>135</sup> Jesus' initial (pre-resurrection) earthly life and ministry is properly regarded as a process of dying, which Paul himself joins in the physical and psychological trials that attend his life as a *jar of clay* for the *treasure* of the gospel.<sup>136</sup>

Paul concludes this sentence with the opposing half of the final antithesis. The purpose clause, *so that the life of Jesus may be made clear in our bodies (hina +*

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<sup>131</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 234.

<sup>132</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 344-345.

<sup>133</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 342.

<sup>134</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 235.

<sup>135</sup> Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 87.

<sup>136</sup> Schnabel, *Paul and the Early Church*, 966-967.

*subjunctive*), spells out the reason for Paul's inglorious lifestyle. In persevering through suffering, Paul waits for the experience of divine rescue: *the life of Jesus*. This has already been seen in the second half of the prior antitheses. It is in this rescue that Paul bears witness to the work of God to bring life from death. Two points may be made here. Initially, it may be noticed that the witness Paul bears occurs in his continued existence *and* his interpreted account of the deliverance as being wrought of God.<sup>137</sup> Secondly, Paul predicates his salvation on the resurrection of Jesus.<sup>138</sup> In this context, *the life of Jesus*, is Paul's way of denoting the risen and now glorified Christ. Significantly, against his usual preference for the titular 'Christ' when referring to the resurrected Son of God, Paul here uses his name, *Jesus*. By doing so, Paul draws continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.<sup>139</sup> He also uses this fundamental motif to denote two "... concurrent present realities ...",<sup>140</sup> with an attachment to the dying and living of Jesus that transcends mere analogy.

This stage of the passage marks a change in the application of what is written from Paul as one who bears *this ministry* (i.e. that of the 'new covenant') to the wider realm of all believers. With the experiences recorded here and in verses 11 and 12, Paul opens a new section that finds resonance with general Christian experience and specific application in verses 13 to 18.<sup>141</sup>

## **Death and life (vv. 11 and 12)**

*For we who are living are always being handed over unto death because of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be made clear in our mortal flesh. Accordingly death is made active in us and life in you!*

Paul now recapitulates and intensifies his connection with Jesus through the experience of suffering and trial. Verse 11 essentially repeats the antithesis of verse 10 with significant additions:

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<sup>137</sup> Thrall, *Second Corinthians I*, 335.

<sup>138</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 347.

<sup>139</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 235 fn.

<sup>140</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 347.

<sup>141</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 230-231.

1. Paul finds that the trials and suffering he undergoes are not random or self-inflicted, but divinely instigated. He is *being handed over* (again the passive form of the verb is used, *paradidometha*). Paul self-consciously mirrors Jesus' experience of 'being handed over' unto death (e.g. Mk 9:31, 10:33) and further strengthens the ties between his own suffering and that of Jesus.<sup>142</sup>
2. However, Paul does not simply mirror the experience of Jesus; he views his experience as resulting directly from following Jesus as his disciple. He is *being handed over ... because of Jesus (dia yēsouv)*. Consequently, his ministry, derived so fundamentally as it is from Jesus, is not triumphalistic.<sup>143</sup>
3. Another purpose clause (*hina + subjunctive*) rounds out the sentence and draws upon the metaphors of light, darkness and illumination. The intention of Paul's delivery *unto death* is that *the life of Jesus may be made clear in the mortality of our flesh*. Paul's discipleship and ministry have an underlying missionary thrust in that his experience of life in-and-through death is for the purpose of illumination; in this context for the Corinthians, but in general for *every human conscience*.<sup>144</sup>

Utilising *so then (hoste)* to bring this section (vv. 8–11) to an emphatic conclusion, Paul carries through the implications of the preceding argument. This time he does so from the Corinthians' point of view.<sup>145</sup> Paul no longer pictures *life* as being active in him, but in the Corinthians (*en humin*), thus changing the analogy slightly. The *death* so active in him is borne for the sake of *life* in the Corinthians.<sup>146</sup>

The verb *is active (energeitai)*<sup>147</sup> controls both the *death* that Paul experiences as the missionary and the *life* the Corinthians gain as a result of his ministry. It may be seen that the *death* of the witness is prior to the *life* it produces in those who

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<sup>142</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 348.

<sup>143</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 237.

<sup>144</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 348-349.

<sup>145</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 349.

<sup>146</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 237.

<sup>147</sup> *Energeitai* could be translated either as a passive (as I have above) or middle voice (with the meaning *is at work*). The middle is the more popular choice amongst commentators; however, a passive construal is by no means unattested and would fit with the divine passive of *paradidometha*, indicating God's continuing work to bring witness and life. See Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 238 fn; Thrall, *Second Corinthians I*, 337 fn; Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 350.

apprehend the illumination. Also, the life of Christ is *made clear* in order that it may be appropriated.<sup>148</sup>

### **I believed therefore I spoke (vv. 13–15)**

*But having the same spirit of faith according to what stands written, “I believed therefore I spoke”, we too believe therefore we speak, knowing the one who raised the Lord Jesus and will also raise us with Jesus and will present [us] with you. For all things are for you, in order that the increasing grace may overflow through the thanksgiving of more people to the glory of God.*

Here the antithetical side of the minister’s life is shown as Paul introduces the next sentences with the adversative *but* (*de*). In contrast to the operation of *death* in his life, Paul has faith that *the one who raised the Lord Jesus* will also *raise us with Jesus*. The plural *us* is used here by Paul representatively. In this way he includes the Corinthians in the eschatological resurrection<sup>149</sup> that he expects from the same one who raised<sup>150</sup> Jesus in the past.<sup>151</sup> Paul utilises a quote from Psalm 115:1a in the LXX<sup>152</sup> to underscore the result of the faith that he possesses.<sup>153</sup>

Paul describes his disposition of faith as being the same as that of the Psalmist. He may even be alluding to Jesus’ attitude by employing the principle of ‘Christological ventriloquism’.<sup>154</sup> At this point it is likely that Paul is drawing upon the total experience of the speaker in both Psalms 114 and 115 in the LXX, which are combined in the English Bible. The experience of rescue from suffering leads to his grateful and exultant testimony. In his identification with the speaker, Paul regards that the fitting response to renewal (4:16) through *death* is testimony. Hence, to

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<sup>148</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 177.

<sup>149</sup> *Will raise us* (*egerei*) is in the future tense.

<sup>150</sup> *Raised* (*egeiras*) is in the aorist tense (i.e. indicating a completed action).

<sup>151</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 242.

<sup>152</sup> Ps 116:10 in the English Bible, which at this point follows the Masoretic Text and is obscure and difficult to translate.

<sup>153</sup> Schenck, ‘2 Corinthians,’ 537.

<sup>154</sup> Thrall, *Second Corinthians I*, 339; Stegman, ‘Paul’s Christological Reading of Psalm 115:1a LXX,’ 726. Due to the brevity of this exegesis, I will not interact with T. D. Stegman’s paper at depth, other than to comment that his (with Schenck and Hays) finding of an instance of ‘Christological ventriloquism’ in 2 Cor 4:13 is not without possibility. However his conclusion that this demands a reading of *episteusa* as ‘being faithful’ is not warranted of necessity: it can still be read as a statement regarding the *content* of Jesus’ faith regarding God the Father. See Schenck, cited above at 153.

*speak* is an inescapable characteristic of those who have experienced the life-giving power of God.<sup>155</sup> However, this speaking comes after the appropriation of faith.<sup>156</sup> Paul again underlines that his experience as a minister of the ‘new covenant’ (vv. 7–14) is *all ... for your sake*. Here Paul has in mind both the *speaking* (v 13) and the vulnerable life of verses 7–12. Yet, this service carried out *for* the Corinthians is carried out with a further, primary goal in mind. Paul ministers *for the sake of* the Corinthians *to the glory of God*. Again, a purpose clause heads a dense and difficult set of phrases that may be best translated as the purpose, means and goal of the Pauline witness. Barnett diagrams the sentence thus:

For all things	
are for you	
<i>in order that</i> the increasing grace may overflow	PURPOSE
<i>through</i> the thanksgiving of more (people)	MEANS
<i>to</i> the glory of God	GOAL <sup>157</sup>

The goal of Paul’s ministry is to bring glory to God, which, as has been seen intertwined throughout this passage, Paul himself expects to share. This will happen as an increasing number of people share the *knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*. So Paul speaks in faith and acts out a vulnerable life in faith *in order that* those who do not know the glory of God may do so – and that those who do may be strengthened in that knowledge. Thus, speaking and persevering through trouble is for the sake of the Corinthians because they get to be part of the thanksgiving that brings glory to God. Consequently, Paul articulates the *telos* of his ministry and mission:

1. Secondarily, Paul acts for the sake of the people he speaks to and demonstrates the power of God to, through his vulnerable life. By this, more people are brought into the company of those who *know the glory of God in the face of Christ*.
2. Primarily, Paul acts to bring glory to God.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Hence the powerful use of the inferential conjunction *therefore* (*dio kai*). Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 395.

<sup>156</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 241-242.

<sup>157</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 244.

<sup>158</sup> Schnabel, *Paul and the Early Church*, 967.



## The paradox of faith (vv. 16–18)

*Therefore we do not lose heart, even if our ‘outward person’ is in decay, but our ‘inward person’ is being renewed day by day. For the momentary, light trouble of ours pales into insignificance beside the eternal weight of glory it is accomplishing in us, so we do not fix our eyes on the seen but on the unseen; for the seen is for a time but the unseen is forever.*

Although these three verses undoubtedly sit well with the next passage,<sup>159</sup> two factors prompt me to retain them for the purposes of this study. *Therefore we do not lose heart* (*dio ouk egkakoumen*) simultaneously points the reader to the previous verses (vv. 13–15) and to the opening statement of Chapter Four (4:1).<sup>160</sup> Paul appears eager to reiterate his reasons for standing firm against the Corinthian criticism of him and his ministry. Secondly, “[i]f 4:7–15 deals with “life” in the midst of “death” and 5:1–10 focuses on life after death, 4:16–18 incorporates those two themes ...”<sup>161</sup> So, the concluding sense of Paul’s argument in this passage runs along these lines:

We do not lose heart because our vulnerability before you and the world is:

1. brought about by God (hence the divine passive verbs/participles);
2. for your sake;
3. instrumental in mission (both from the divine and human perspectives);
4. the very clarifying activity of interaction in the divine life; and
5. the manner in which the proclaimed gospel (in which *the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* is known) is connected with you.

Therefore, verse 15 rehearses Paul’s prior argument of life being experienced in the midst of death. Yet this time, Paul adds that the minister’s life is not one of unremitted drudgery and sacrifice. This is because the *inward person* (*ho esō hērmōn*, literally ‘the inward of us’) is *renewed*. So the minister is ministered to in the act of vulnerable mission – the renewal is rendered once again in the passive voice. This divine passive points to the sustaining activity of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>159</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 239.

<sup>160</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 358.

<sup>161</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 357.

Furthermore, just as the trials are a constant feature of Paul's life, so the renewal is progressive and ongoing (*day by day*).<sup>162</sup>

The renewal that Paul experiences is emphasised as verse 16 is connected (*for, gar*) with the final sentence of the passage (vv. 17–18). The troubles rehearsed above (vv. 7–12) are now placed within an eschatological frame. They are understood to be *momentary, light and insignificant*<sup>163</sup> because they belong to the age of what *is seen*, which is only *for a time* and will eventually pass away. Compared to the *eternal weight of glory it is accomplishing in us* the trouble is *light* indeed. The *weight* may recall the glory God showed in the Hebrew Scriptures; however, it may refer more simply to the magnitude and abundance of God's greatness.<sup>164</sup> Either way *the glory* is not *momentary*, restricted, constricted and defined by time, but *eternal*.<sup>165</sup>

The *glory* Paul expects to share with the Corinthian recipients of this letter is again related to the *trouble* they experience. At this point Harris is worth quoting at length:

This [glory] is not presented as a reward for suffering, as if suffering of itself were meritorious. But [glory] is the God-ordained outcome of [trouble]; where there is suffering [because of Jesus] (4:11), there is glory [according to grace] (cf. Rom. 4:4).<sup>166</sup>

The implication of this outcome then follows naturally in the last verse of this passage.

The force of *fix our eyes (skopountōn)* is captured by the idea of concentrating on a point rather than glancing at it momentarily. Paul utilises another contrast to draw out the implication of verse 17. What is *seen* is not to be concentrated on, rather what is *unseen* should be focussed upon. The *seen* is the "... present age, in which we – along with Paul – inhabit an earthly tent-house and in which we – again with Paul – are subject to "suffering" [sic]."<sup>167</sup> However, the *unseen* is the directly

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<sup>162</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 359.

<sup>163</sup> *Pales into insignificance* renders an untranslatable phrase referring to something that is out of proportion to something else (*kath' ... huperbolēn*). Therefore the translation – *pales into insignificance* – indicates the slight and negative proportion of the troubles beside the glory being achieved. Thrall, *Second Corinthians I*, 354.

<sup>164</sup> Dickson, *Mission-Commitment*, 183 fn.

<sup>165</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 361-362.

<sup>166</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 362. N.B. The words supplied in [ ] are my renderings of words or phrases Harris has included in Greek.

<sup>167</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 254.

contrasted, incomparable, eternal weight of the glory of God. Hence, Paul rounds off this passage with a final reminder to the Corinthians that true glory is to be found not in outward signs and rhetorical skill. However, it is found in the renewal of the inner person as the resurrected life of Jesus wells up in-and-through vulnerability and by perseverance through mortality.<sup>168</sup>

The final phrase of this passage is another explanation introduced by *for (gar)*. The reason that Paul, and the Corinthians, must *not* concentrate on what is *seen* is that it is *for a time* only. Yet what is *unseen* is forever. At first glance this is counter intuitive, given that the *seen* is in some sense tangible and that which is *unseen* is intangible.<sup>169</sup> However, as has been observed consistently throughout Paul's argument in this passage, the *unseen* taps into the creative power of God to bring life in-and-through death: *Because it was God who was speaking, "Let light shine from darkness."*

### ***Conclusion: Themes in a Pauline theology of faith***

In Chapter Two I distilled the spiritual experience of Australia's Generation Y, particularly as it relates to the Christian churches, into three themes: (a) estrangement, (b) vulnerability and (c) a 'this-worldly' spiritual epistemology. In concluding this examination of 2 Corinthians 4 the exegetical data will be summarised briefly under three similar themes: (a) being engaged with the world, (b) finding strength in spite of apparent vulnerability and (c) utilising an 'other-worldly' spiritual epistemology. These themes arose in the context of Paul's relationship with the Corinthian Christians and they were exemplified in his words to them in 2 Corinthians 4. The distillations of each of the spheres being 'attended' to in this thesis will form the basis for Generation Y and Paul to 'assert' their respective realms in chapters Four and Five.

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<sup>168</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 184.

<sup>169</sup> Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 364. Harris best grasps the possible meanings of *seen* and *unseen* disentangling them from Platonic categories of that which is material and appears to be real and that which is idea and is real, or modern categories of the phenomenological and noumenal. He then attaches them to the eschatological (and Pauline) tension of the 'already' and 'not yet'.

## **Engaged with the world**

In spite of difficulty that produced despair, constriction and even physical harm, Paul refuses to isolate himself from the world. He faces 'death' from outside the Christian community and also from within it. However, he sees his continued engagement with the very people and circumstances that hurt him as the means by which divine 'life' may be released within him. His engagement is enacted in two connected ways. He endures hardship so that his life may be a visible testimony to the God who brings life out of death. He also speaks the gospel of the glory of God perceived in his Son Jesus. Paul does all of this with a twofold aim: that those who see and hear him might also receive 'life', and that their resulting praise to God will bring God further glory.

## **Strength in spite of apparent vulnerability**

In his experience of difficulty as a minister of the 'new covenant,' Paul demonstrates strength in spite of apparent vulnerability. His fragility and mortality is so apparent that he finds a 'jar of clay' to be a fitting self-appellation. Yet he perseveres through great trials. He even finds that the trials do not hamper his ministry, rather they allow him to be stripped of his outward signs of strength and be renewed by the 'life' of God. In this way, the strength that Paul finds through God's renewal manifests itself in profound humility as a minister before those he ministers to. The humility is that of a slave before his masters.

## **An 'other-worldly' spiritual epistemology**

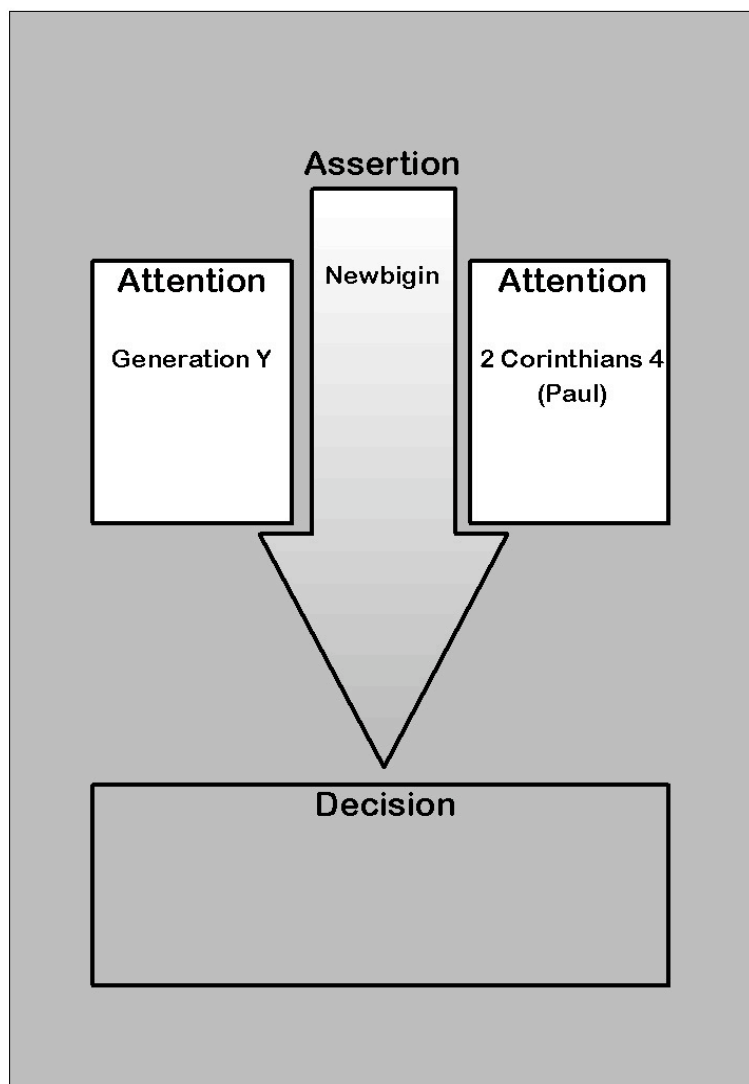
Paul also exhibits a profound awareness of the role that 'that which is unseen' plays in both his life and the life of those he ministers to. It is through the unseen God that Paul is handed over unto difficulty. It is also through the same unseen God that Paul is renewed. Similarly, the refusal to apprehend the 'face of Christ' through Paul's witness is a sign of spiritual blindness caused by Satan. However, two elements of Paul's spiritual epistemology connect this unseen world with what 'is seen'. The 'face of Christ' perceived in the proclaimed gospel provides the image of the unseen

God to those who dwell in the seen world. Paul's experience of renewal in weakness provides a second connection as he provides a witness to God's life-giving activity, underscoring the true power of the gospel.

In Chapter Two, the social and spiritual location of Generation Y was discerned. In this chapter, Paul's conception of faith as it plays out in Christian life and ministry has been explored. The thesis will now turn to the second phase of its chosen theological method, that of 'assertion'. As the guide in this assertive movement, a hermeneutic of mission will be drawn from the work of the missionary-theologian Lesslie Newbigin.

## Chapter 4

### Newbigin, Paul and Generation Y in Dialogue – Part One: The Plausibility Structure



## ***An ancient faith in a post-modern world***

*For a fair while I've had absolutely no belief in organised religion ... it's crazy ... I get really upset with people who base their actions on their interpretation of what God said.<sup>1</sup>*

Chapters Two and Three reviewed the spheres of the spirituality of Australia's Generation Y and the nature of faith as it is presented by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4 respectively. Theologically, a process of 'attending' has occurred as these two distinctive voices were allowed to speak in their own right. It is now appropriate to move to the second, 'assertive' phase of the theological method being employed in this thesis. The goal of the 'assertive' phase is that each sphere be allowed to encounter the other in dialogue, making its contribution felt, so that a comprehensive picture may be gained of the question at hand. In order for this to occur in this chapter and the next, a hermeneutical methodology will be drawn from Newbigin's epistemology and Trinitarian theology of mission.

Newbigin's epistemology and theology emerged in wrestling with practical questions relating to the exposition of the Christian faith within diverse spiritual cultures. Newbigin utilised the 'plausibility structure' to develop an understanding of the way that people make sense of what they 'know'. Through this understanding he was able to analyse the foundational themes that supported a particular spirituality. Further, by exploring the Trinitarian nature of Christian mission, Newbigin laid a foundation for a positive Christian movement towards those of different spiritualities. That is, Newbigin's epistemology and theology contains an approach that will enable a hermeneutical counterpoint to a Pauline theology of faith and the spirituality of Generation Y to arise. This in turn, will promote an interpretive method which is at the heart of the proposed pastoral theology of mission to Australia's Generation Y.

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<sup>1</sup> A quote from a 17 year old male named "Justin". See Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 214.

## Key Themes

The key pastoral theological themes for this chapter are listed in the matrix on the next page (*figure 2*). Alongside each theme are their corresponding ideas as they have been (or will be, in Newbigin's case) developed in the second and third chapters. The structural flow of the chapter follows Newbigin's column from top to bottom. The five 'lettered' pastoral theological themes form the section headings for the epistemological analysis of the plausibility structures of Paul and Generation Y.

It can be seen from this matrix that the plausibility structures of Paul and Generation Y differ significantly. This is perceived particularly as Paul finds coherence and strength in the realm of the 'unseen', whereas Generation Y prefer to derive their sense of meaning from what is 'seen'. This fundamental difference causes the motifs around which each plausibility structure coheres to be at odds with each other. Further, the Pauline *worldview* seems to drive his *ethos*, whereas Generation Y experiences the opposite. However, Paul and Generation Y find common ground in the commitment they display to their particular construals of the world. Similarly, they both find reinforcement as they immerse themselves in their respective plausibility structures. Further, both attach great importance to relationships in the development of their spiritual knowledge. As I progress to review key literature regarding the ministry of a Christian faith within a post-modern context it will become clear that a new theology of engagement with Generation Y within Australia is needed. Lesslie Newbigin's epistemology, especially that of the relational nature of knowledge and the plausibility structure, will provide the foundation for dialogue between a Christian faith and the Secular spirituality of Generation Y.

Newbigin regards the plausibility structure as a shared framework of meaning that allows a community to approach the various happenings and pieces of information that are perceived with a consistent and coherent sense of understanding. His category of the plausibility structure will become the means through which the spiritual concerns of Paul and Generation Y may begin dialogue. To reach this end, I will first review the key literature studying Generation Y's engagement with Christianity.



<b>Pastoral theological themes</b>	<b>Paul</b>	<b>Newbigin</b>	<b>Generation Y</b>
The 'knower' and the 'known'	Faith rests on God's invitation to 'know'.	The personal and relational nature of knowledge	Faith is just 'opinion'.
Beauty, rationality, comprehensiveness	'We' find fulfilment in relationship with God.	The plausibility structure	'I' find fulfilment in the 'here and now'.
	Engagement; Seeming vulnerability; The 'face of Christ'.	1. Motifs around which meaning is gathered	Estrangement; Seeming strength; Peer and family networks.
a) Estrangement and engagement	The primacy/ ultimacy of the 'unseen' gives perseverance in-and-through trial.	A plausibility structure gives a community a coordinated approach to reality.	The primacy/ultimacy of the 'seen' results in stress.
b) Strength and vulnerability	Life in-and-through trial	Election to witness in <i>kenosis</i>	Perceive churches as being self-interested and coercive
c) The importance of relationships in the development of spiritual knowledge	A primary relationship with Christ leads to relationship with the Corinthians.	The plausibility structure is tied to a community.	Vital, yet fragile, relationship networks with family and peers
	<i>Worldview</i> drives <i>ethos</i>	2. Patterns of commitment	<i>Ethos</i> drives <i>worldview</i>
d) <i>Ethos</i> : 'The <i>worldview</i> writ large'	Confidence, humility and commitment flow from Paul's sense of agency.	Discovery occurs with 'universal intent' and is public truth.	Explicitly transcendent ideas excluded to realm of 'opinion', yet retain commitment to a life based on individualism
	The <i>worldview</i> is reinforced by an <i>ethos</i> of life in-and-through death.	3. Publishing (broadcast) and discovery	The <i>worldview</i> is reinforced by an <i>ethos</i> that is constantly rehearsed.
e) Broadcasting spirituality	Both declaring the news of Jesus and living in a community that shares this understanding	Discovery implies broadcast to test and to share.	Intuitive value placed on the communal aspect of communicating

**Figure 2:** Matrix of key themes in Chapter 4

## Ministry in a post-modern context

Upon returning to England following many years of ministry in India, Lesslie Newbigin was confronted with a culture that had changed greatly since he had left it. His homeland was no longer 'Christian' either in his eyes, or in its own. The assumptions that guided national life had changed so that a common understanding of life based around Christianity no longer existed.<sup>2</sup> This meant that for the second time in his life as a minister of the gospel of Christ (the first being when he went to India) Newbigin had to reconsider what it meant to be engaged in mission amongst people who did not share the same assumptions about the world as he did. Whereas Newbigin's 'first' missionary career in India faced the challenge of pluralism, his 'second', upon return to England, faced that of secularism and post-modernity.<sup>3</sup>

Like Newbigin, many have attempted to reconcile what is the ancient faith of Christianity with a post-modern world. As has been seen earlier, the social, epistemological and spiritual foundations of Generation Y are different to those of the Christian churches in Australia. There is a growing body of literature that speaks about the particular spiritual character of Generation Y, especially as it relates to Christianity. Insights have arisen from the similar, yet distinct, social perspectives of the United States of America, the United Kingdom and, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, Australia.<sup>4</sup>

Concurrent with the emergence of sociological data regarding the spiritual experience of Generation Y is a growing body of theological reflection. This body of work has reflected a struggle to find a suitable theological language for ministry to young people given the post-modern milieu in which they exist. Theologians of youth ministry are questioning a discipline typically noted for its heavy reliance on

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<sup>2</sup> Kandiah, 'Lesslie Newbigin's Contribution to a Theology of Evangelism,' 52.

<sup>3</sup> Weston, 'A Postmodern Missiologist?,' 229-230.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, USA: Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*.

UK: Todd F. Martin et al, 'Religious Socialization: A Test of the Channeling Hypothesis of Parental Influence on Adolescent Faith Maturity,' *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 18:2 (2003): 169-187; David Voas and Alasdair Crockett, 'Religion in Britain: Neither Believing nor Belonging,' *Sociology*, 39:1 (2005): 11-28; Savage et al, *Making Sense of Generation Y*.

Australia: Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*.

programs and activities and paucity of deep reflection.<sup>5</sup> The nature of adolescence is being explored, particularly as it has been shaped by a variety of economic, social and political forces. Chapman Clark, David White and Andrew Root are currently engaged in a lively debate as to the most adequate way to conceptualise the rise and development of adolescence.<sup>6</sup>

Paralleling this ferment regarding the *sociology* of youth ministry is the engagement of sociological, psychological and philosophical insights with a *theology* of youth ministry.<sup>7</sup> Offerings are being made which situate youth ministry within the tradition and discipline of practical (or in the language of this thesis, pastoral) theology. Again, White, Clark and Root lead in this endeavour and are joined by other scholars, namely Kenda Creasy-Dean, Pete Ward and Malan Nel.<sup>8</sup> Further, theologies clustered around the incarnation and cross of Christ are drawn upon to help ground the theological practice of youth ministry. They provide a “... theologically responsible process for discerning and deciding how to behave, and how to live, when faced with a context that makes little sense out of what the church so often takes for granted.”<sup>9</sup> Jesus’ humanity and representative role are highlighted in the theologies of the incarnation and the cross. Theologians and practitioners of youth ministry have found that these two themes provide a coherent point around which to interpret the often turbulent experience of youth, and the need for the Christian churches to draw near to the ‘world’ of the young person.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Michael K. Severe, ‘The Pac-Man Syndrome: The Missing Congruence of Philosophy and Practice in Youth Ministry,’ *The Journal of Youth Ministry*, 4:2 (2006): 75-104.

<sup>6</sup> Chapman Clark, ‘Entering Their World: A Qualitative Look at the Changing Face of Contemporary Adolescence,’ *The Journal of Youth Ministry*, 1:1 (2002): 9-21; David F. White, ‘Empowering the Vocation of Youth as Youth: A Theological Vision for Youth Ministry,’ *The Journal of Youth Ministry*, 2:2 (2004): 13-29; David F. White, ‘Illusions of Postmodern Youth Ministry,’ *The Journal of Youth Ministry*, 6:1 (2007): 7-26; Andrew Root, ‘Further Illusions of Postmodern Youth Ministry: An Affirmation and Response to David White,’ *The Journal of Youth Ministry*, 7:1 (2008): 77-90; David White, ‘Toward an Adequate Sociology of Youth Ministry: A Dialogue with Andrew Root and Anthony Giddens,’ *The Journal of Youth Ministry*, 7:1 (2008): 91-100.

<sup>7</sup> Pamela Erwin, ‘Youth Ministry Education: Where Practice, Theology, and Social Science Intersect,’ *The Journal of Youth Ministry*, 4:2 (2006): 9-11.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, P. Ward, *Youthwork and the Kingdom of God* (London: SPCK, 1997); Malan Nel, ‘Identity Formation and the Challenge of Individuation in Youth Ministry,’ *The Journal of Youth Ministry*, 1:2 (2003): 79-101; Dean, *Practising Passion*; Root, ‘Practical Theology,’ 53-75; Chap Clark, ‘Youth Ministry as Practical Theology,’ *The Journal of Youth Ministry*, 7:1 (2008): 9-38; David White, ‘A More Excellent Way: A Response to Chap Clark’s Youth Ministry as Practical Theology,’ *The Journal of Youth Ministry*, 7:1 (2008): 49-58.

<sup>9</sup> Clark, ‘Youth Ministry,’ 11-12.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Root, ‘Youth Ministry as an Integrative Theological Task,’ 41-47.

Not surprisingly, theologians also struggle to find a suitable language of engagement with youth who are disconnected with historical, biblical and theological expressions of Christianity and the Christian churches. Some, such as Arzola, continue to press on with little nuanced or deep theological assessment of their approach,<sup>11</sup> while others seek to find indicators for success or failure to carry a pre-existing faith on to later life.<sup>12</sup> Some commentators (such as White and Root) make explicit acknowledgement of the changed nature of the sociological environment which has resulted in increasing the distance between young people and Christian ministry. Still others, exemplified by Seely,<sup>13</sup> seek to articulate a particular set of doctrines to a revised circumstance in an effort to re-engage with young people. Recognising that this approach, at best, reaches young people already within the province of the Christian churches, there are those such as Ward,<sup>14</sup> who move to a relational theology of the incarnation to provide a theological foundation for youth ministry that is more outwardly focussed. Further, there are those who, like McQuillan, seek to respond by allowing "... new expressions of spirituality that will change the world ..."<sup>15</sup> to emerge as youth ministers offer their presence rather than their heritage. Newbigin's epistemology and theology is particularly suitable against this diverse background. Throughout his various ministries Newbigin self-consciously attempted to write an ecumenical theology in which the entire people of God may engage with the world around a common spiritual heritage in Christ.<sup>16</sup>

As may be gathered from this literature review, much of the sociological, psychological and theological reflection on ministry to young people has occurred outside of Australia. With the exception of McQuillan, who is Australian, the theological reflection cited above tends to assume that Christianity is the default, or underlying point of departure for young people – even if they operate in a 'different world' to that of the past.<sup>17</sup> However, Chapter Two found that the spiritual

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Arzola, 'Four Paradigms of Youth Ministry in the Urban Context,' 41-55.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Wesley Black, 'Youth Ministry That Lasts: The Faith Journey of Young Adults,' *The Journal of Youth Ministry*, 4:2 (2006): 19-48.

<sup>13</sup> For example, Seely, 'Where Reformed Theology Meets and Shapes Youth Ministry: Facilitating Answers to Adolescents' Great Questions of Life,' 331-346.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Ward, *Youthwork*; Root, 'Practical Theology,' 53-75.

<sup>15</sup> McQuillan, 'Youth Ministry in a World of Diversity,' 12.

<sup>16</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 70-71.

<sup>17</sup> So, even Root's well developed pastoral theology that takes into account the theological method of Tillich, Barth, Bonhoeffer and Luther and the philosophy of Levinas assumes a setting in which youth

experience of Generation Y in Australia is most commonly *not* that of Christianity. In fact Stanton counsels that “... [w]e ought not underestimate the gap that exists between the church [sic] and many young people today – a gap in culture as well as trust.”<sup>18</sup>

It is my contention that the Australian context requires an explicit theology of mission if the Christian churches are to reconnect with Generation Y. Developing this missional perspective, Graham Hill (another Australian) has reviewed what has become known as the ‘Emerging–Missional Church Movement (EMCM)’.<sup>19</sup> He has identified the renewed ecclesiology of mission explicit in their theology and practice. The EMCM is concerned chiefly with how ‘the church’ participates within the mission of God as agents within culture; particularly in the Australian context as it exists estranged from Christianity. Hill maintains that a key to understanding the EMCM lies in its desire to contextualise the gospel. Accordingly, the church brings the gospel and the culture into dialogue. To this end Hill cites a four-step process by which this contextualisation may occur. In this process one moves from: (1) studying the local culture, to (2) studying Scripture related to the question at hand, to (3) critically evaluating past customs in the light of the relevant Scriptures, and finally to (4) arranging the chosen practices and theologies into a ritual or framework that expresses the biblical underpinnings.<sup>20</sup>

Within this pastoral and theological context I turn now to the work of Lesslie Newbigin to provide the lens by which Scripture may be reliably focused upon Generation Y. Initially, I present a short literature review locating Newbigin’s writings in the scholarly world. Following this review, I outline his epistemological foundations, noting their relation to Generation Y. It is through attention to Newbigin’s epistemology – which is based upon the personal/relational nature of

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are *already* part of a church’s ministry. See, for example, Root, ‘Youth Ministry as an Integrative Theological Task,’ 34.

<sup>18</sup> Graham Stanton, ‘All Things to All People? The Incarnation and Relational Youth Ministry.’ *Youthworks College, Sydney, Theology of Youth Ministry Conference ’08*, 2008, cited with permission, p6 in conference papers.

<sup>19</sup> Graham Hill, ‘Implications of Emerging-Missional Ecclesiology for a Missionary Approach to, and Understanding of Youth Ministry.’ *Youthworks College, Sydney, Theology of Youth Ministry Conference ’08*, 2008, cited with permission.

<sup>20</sup> Hill, ‘Implications of Emerging-Missional Ecclesiology for a Missionary Approach to, and Understanding of Youth Ministry,’ pp. 30-32 in conference papers.

knowledge and the plausibility structure – that a theology of mission to Generation Y may begin to be built.

## Building a theology of mission

Newbigin's writing has been the source of extensive discussion regarding the nature of interactions between secularised western society and the Christian churches.

Amongst others, Hunsberger, Goheen, West, Beeby, Kandiah, Drew and Weston have all made contributions exploring contemporary western culture in the light of Newbigin's Trinitarian theology of mission.<sup>21</sup> Some – for example, Wainwright and Drew<sup>22</sup> – utilise brief references to Pauline texts or themes to illustrate their discussion. However, it seems that the next step, that is developing a hermeneutical method from his theological praxis to allow interaction between scripture and a post-modern society, is as yet untested.

The experience of Generation Y, as it is presented in Chapter Two, is one in which explicitly transcendent epistemologies are effectively excluded from engagement with the grounded realities of the dominant consumerist *ethos*. Stories that promote meaning through reflection upon something, or someone, that exists beyond the 'here and now' are reduced to mere opinion. Powerful reinforcement of this stance on the *worldview* element of spirituality is given by an *ethos* thoroughly immersed in consumption. Further, the effects of social dislocation from the Christian churches have combined with materialism to form the *worldview* of Generation Y.<sup>23</sup> The

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<sup>21</sup> George R. Hunsberger, 'The Newbigin Gauntlet: Developing a Domestic Missiology for North America,' *Missiology: An International Review*, 19:4 (1991): 391-408; Charles C. West, 'Gospel for American Culture: Variations on a Theme by Newbigin,' *Missiology: An International Review*, 19:4 (1991): 431-441; George R. Hunsberger, 'Biography as Missiology: The Case of Lesslie Newbigin,' *Missiology: An International Review*, 27:4 (1999): 524-531; H. D. Beeby, 'No Loose Canon,' *International Review of Mission*, 89:355 (2000): 572-583; Michael W. Goheen, 'As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You': Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology,' *International Review of Mission*, 91:362 (2002): 354-369; M. W. Goheen, 'Is Lesslie Newbigin's Model of Contextualization Anticultural?,' *Mission Studies*, 19:2-38 (2002): 136-158; Weston, 'A Postmodern Missiologist?,' 229-248; Gavin Drew, 'The Gospel as Public Truth in a Pluralistic World: A Reflection on Lesslie Newbigin's Thought,' *Evangel*, 24:2 (2006): 53-61; Kandiah, 'Lesslie Newbigin's Contribution to a Theology of Evangelism,' 51-60.

<sup>22</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, 'The One Hope of Your Calling? The Ecumenical and Pentecostal Movements after a Century,' *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, 25:1 (2003): 7-28; Gavin Drew, 'The Gospel as Public Truth in a Pluralistic World: A Reflection on Lesslie Newbigin's Thought,' *Evangel*, 24:2 (2006): 53-61.

<sup>23</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 332-333.

possibility of meaningful conversation between explicitly transcendent spiritual knowledge and a materialistic, Secular spirituality is a key question that must be resolved if traditional expositions of Christianity are to connect with Generation Y. The members of Generation Y are also deeply influenced by individualism. This has given rise to a plausibility structure in which ‘I’ am able to construct a spirituality that can coexist comfortably in the midst of myriad others. In contrast, Newbigin provides a perspective on the growth of faith that allows for the continued integrity of a distinctive Christian faith and its relation to the real presence of competing, or at least different, spiritualities.<sup>24</sup>

I will now explore Newbigin’s biblical–theological epistemology with the aim of uncovering the manner in which he understands the development of a person’s comprehension of the world and its subsequent operation as a plausibility structure. In doing so I will propose guidelines for making clear the foundational, cohering motifs that allow the various pieces of information gathered by any person to correspond with reality. Consequently a hermeneutical lens will arise, in which the assumptions that cause the different ‘worlds’ of Paul and Generation Y to make sense may be drawn together in conversation.

It will be my aim in developing an appropriate hermeneutical lens to show that a biblically derived theological structure can resonate with the experience of Australia’s Generation Y. Hence, I will now turn to explore one of Newbigin’s key tenets: that all knowledge, spiritual and scientific alike, is personal, and as such is subject to the same limitations and possibilities.<sup>25</sup> Likening understanding to a ‘kind of intuition’, Newbigin traces its growth to fullness by using the example of a child’s early efforts in learning mathematics:

There is a time, sometimes a long time, when one simply cannot see what the point of it is. The teacher’s words are clear and simple, but one cannot see the point. And then, suddenly, the penny drops. One sees that there is something true and beautiful and satisfying.<sup>26</sup>

Newbigin’s epistemology is important within the context of this thesis, as the Christian faith has been denied the grounds to begin dialogue with the Secular

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<sup>24</sup> Weston, ‘A Postmodern Missiologist?’, 240.

<sup>25</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 48 ff.

<sup>26</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 43.

spirituality of Generation Y, due to its reduction to the realm of ‘opinion’ and personal choice. In exposing the personal nature of knowledge Newbigin provides the starting point for conversation. No person exists in a vacuum. Similarly, knowledge exists within the realm of personal relationship and is shared by communities. So too is the way that the various elements of knowledge are related together to provide an over-arching framework of meaning.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, as the personal and relational nature of knowledge is exposed, so the plausibility structure that gives knowledge sense may begin to be mapped.

### ***The personal nature of knowledge***

Newbigin draws upon the work of Michael Polyani, a philosopher of science operating in the middle of last century. Polyani argued that there was a great need to develop a ‘post-critical philosophy’ to rebuild that which enlightenment rationalism had almost destroyed.<sup>28</sup> He drew attention to humanity’s development over the years since the Enlightenment. Yet, Polyani also contended that the very framework that allowed the development of a scientific consciousness was itself about to fall victim to scientific rationalism: a context in which the sort of knowledge which could “... be stored in a computer ...”<sup>29</sup> is privileged above other knowing. Newbigin carries Polyani’s thought further by insisting on the need to return to a sense of the personal and revealed nature of all knowledge.<sup>30</sup> As seen above, Newbigin draws upon the student’s early experience of learning mathematics or science to illustrate what he means. The young student must, “... rely on the authority of the teachers [sic], but the purpose for which this authority is exercised is that we should come to see for ourselves that what is being taught is true.”<sup>31</sup> To know something (or someone) as ‘true’ requires first that one trusts the person who is imparting the knowledge.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Newbigin’s assessment of the progression of a scientist from student to pioneer. Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 45.

<sup>28</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 29.

<sup>29</sup> L. Newbigin, *Honest Religion for Secular Man* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1966) 80.

<sup>30</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 50.

<sup>31</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 44.

<sup>32</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 41.



By re-attaching knowledge to persons, Newbigin seeks to reclaim the role of faith in all types of knowing.<sup>33</sup> Thus, he anticipates the post-modern criticism of rationalism's certainty in unattached absolutes.<sup>34</sup> Ironically, Australia's Generation Y has grown up and dwells in a thriving, yet paradoxical, environment of rationalism. A 'scientific' mindset of scepticism regarding truth claims of a spiritual nature is matched by trust in 'neutral', scientifically verifiable truths.<sup>35</sup>

For Australia's Generation Y, faith in any explicitly transcendent, or non-material sphere is generally relegated to the private realm of 'opinion'. Thus, to speak of faith and spirituality in explicitly transcendent terms is to speak of entities that are not conversant with the grounded realities of common life.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, for Generation Y, the dominant epistemology expressed in individualism and consumption is based upon the lowered horizon of a secular materialism. Spiritual knowledge, or faith, is regarded as detached from the knowledge used in the operation of life.

As the Secular mindset relegates an explicitly transcendent spirituality to an untestable realm, it denies such *worldviews* the opportunity to enter into coherent dialogue with its own fundamental assumptions. Newbigin regards such 'scientific dogmatism' as being similar in this sense to 'religious fundamentalism'.<sup>37</sup> 'Scientific dogmatism' may present itself militantly and consciously, as may be witnessed when some promoting a 'scientific' view of the world belittle other ontological understandings without allowing rigorous debate.<sup>38</sup> It may also happen unconsciously, without fanfare, as explicitly transcendent explanations for the ground of life are simply not seen.<sup>39</sup> It is within this context of 'scientific dogmatism' that Newbigin argues that there is no such thing as detached, scientific, purely objective knowing. Consequently, he finds that the dichotomy between

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<sup>33</sup> Newbigin, *Honest Religion*, 87.

<sup>34</sup> Weston, 'A Postmodern Missiologist?', 230.

<sup>35</sup> Hughes, *Putting Life Together*, 125-126.

<sup>36</sup> Hughes, *Putting Life Together*, 124. See also Sir David Attenborough's scathing assessment of a 'creation-based' foundation in science in his interview on the popular talk show 'Enough Rope' for an example of this in action. David Attenborough, 'Enough Rope: Elders' interview by A. Denton. (ABC Television, 2008).

<sup>37</sup> See, Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 49.

<sup>38</sup> This is illustrated well in the 'Enough Rope' episode cited at 36 above.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, "Fiona's" unreflective dismissal of other points of view in Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 226.

‘subjective’ faith and ‘factual’ or ‘objective’ scientific knowledge is false.<sup>40</sup> Rather, Newbigin contends that:

... [knowledge is] all of a piece, and that even our knowledge of the kind of facts which can be stored in an electronic computer cannot be understood except as personal knowledge, knowledge which is an achievement of persons, living in a community of persons, and, in a very real sense, living by faith.<sup>41</sup>

Having established the need for faith in all sorts of knowing, Newbigin turns to the role of personal attachment in epistemology.<sup>42</sup> He points out that any one person is limited in the reach of their knowledge. That is, one person can only observe and test so much and is dependent upon others to reinforce and ‘fill in the gaps’ of their knowledge. He also draws attention to the process by which knowledge is propagated. Even in the supposed ‘hard’ sciences such as physics and biology, the truth of the finding is pinned to the reputation of the finder and the framework of knowledge within which their finding is framed.<sup>43</sup> Thus, Einstein’s monumental theory of relativity, “... was not in origin something imposed upon the mind of the scientist by so-called facts ... [but] ... was an imaginative leap, ahead of existing knowledge ...”.<sup>44</sup> Consequently Einstein exposed himself to the possibility that others would challenge his new presentation of ‘knowledge’. Yet, as others came to ‘dwell’ in his understanding of the world they were able to validate the consistency of his theory. By providing this foundational epistemological link, Newbigin invites a hermeneutical process by which the different foundations of the Secular and Christian *worldviews* may be brought into dialogue.

At first glance the personal nature of knowledge as promoted by Newbigin may seem to fit comfortably with the rising individualism of Generation Y. However, Newbigin progresses in his discussion of the acquisition and growth of knowledge to explore its relational character.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 35-36.

<sup>41</sup> Newbigin, *Honest Religion*, 87.

<sup>42</sup> For example, Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 33.

<sup>43</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 32-33; Weston, ‘A Postmodern Missiologist?’, 239.

<sup>44</sup> Newbigin, *Honest Religion*, 83.

<sup>45</sup> Newbigin here finds resonance with the reformed epistemologist Alvin Plantinga, who locates a warranted epistemological structure within a proper function, i.e. an epistemology is warranted if the faculties used to perceive that structure “... *function properly* [sic].” This drives one to the idea of a plan,

## The relational nature of knowledge

Newbigin breaks the process of gaining knowledge into three relational movements. Initially he sees that, “[k]nowing is an activity of persons.”<sup>46</sup> Thereby Newbigin recognises that knowledge does not stand as an independent entity outside of the self but is a learned skill, which, when attained, is a “... personal achievement ...”<sup>47</sup> It is personal both in the sense that it is constituted within a person and that it cannot be shown forth without personal recommendation. So, even a scientist stakes their personal reputation on the knowledge they propose.<sup>48</sup>

Second, Newbigin posits that, “[k]nowing is an activity of persons in community.”<sup>49</sup> The learning of knowledge relies on a community which supports the sharing of the objects of knowledge, such as values, sense, meaning, truth and wisdom. Therefore, mutual trust is needed to operate within this community. Newbigin reflects that, “[f]rom beginning to end our knowledge of the world is a shared knowledge ...”<sup>50</sup> that relies upon the mutual exchange of learning. This suggests that the contextual life of a community grounds the teaching and learning of knowledge.<sup>51</sup>

Finally Newbigin observes that, “[k]nowing involves a risk and a commitment.”<sup>52</sup> In order to enter into this shared process of learning one must provisionally accept the existing framework of knowledge. To participate in learning one accepts the shared framework understanding that it may, even if only at points, be wrong.<sup>53</sup> Then, as learning occurs, ongoing reflection on those prior, uncritically accepted assumptions allows exploration to correct false assumptions. Yet again, even the process of correcting false assumptions must occur using the old frame, tacitly accepting its other assumptions. Together, the processes of learning and discovery come with the risk of being wrong. Yet they also bear the possibility of new discovery. Therefore

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which in turn is understood best with respect to a planner. Hence knowledge is tied intimately to relationship. See, Baker, *Tayloring Reformed Epistemology*, 10.

<sup>46</sup> Newbigin, *Honest Religion*, 80.

<sup>47</sup> Newbigin, *Honest Religion*, 80.

<sup>48</sup> Weston, ‘A Postmodern Missiologist?’, 239.

<sup>49</sup> Newbigin, *Honest Religion*, 80.

<sup>50</sup> Newbigin, *Honest Religion*, 81.

<sup>51</sup> Weston, ‘A Postmodern Missiologist?’, 239.

<sup>52</sup> Newbigin, *Honest Religion*, 81.

<sup>53</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 45.

Newbigin declares that, “[i]n the traditional language of Christianity the name for that active principle [of learning] is faith.”<sup>54</sup>

Newbigin concludes that, “... the knowledge of God is not unrelated to all our other kinds of knowledge ...”.<sup>55</sup> He thereby moves on to explore a biblical vision of knowledge as an alternative to other purely rational or experiential epistemologies. By linking knowledge to the relational interplay of love, Newbigin follows a biblical theme to deepen the concept of knowledge. Consequently, he describes knowledge as “... the total mutual self-revelation and surrender of persons to one another ...”.<sup>56</sup> This is particularly relevant when we turn to questions relating to knowledge of other people rather than things. Both the knower and the known are active in seeking personal relationship with the other: one as the source of revelation, the other as the discoverer. Neither may be reduced to the status of mere data.<sup>57</sup>

Having explored the personal and relational nature of knowing, the foundation for Newbigin’s epistemological category of the plausibility structure has been laid. I will now progress to analyse the three elements of the plausibility structure that will form the investigative key for the spirituality of Generation Y and the Pauline faith. The three elements of the plausibility structure are:

1. the shared motifs that allow a community to find some sense of congruence with reality;
2. the patterns of commitment a community shows to this shared framework of understanding; and
3. the necessary role that publishing a plausibility structure plays in its maintenance and verification.

The first element of the plausibility structure may now be discussed. As each community of knowing approaches ‘reality’, they do so with a shared framework of understanding. To share membership of a particular community of knowing entails sharing certain ways of viewing the world and expressing one’s self about the world. Another way of conveying this is that certain motifs are commonly held that allow

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<sup>54</sup> Newbigin, *Honest Religion*, 84.

<sup>55</sup> Newbigin, *Honest Religion*, 80.

<sup>56</sup> Newbigin, *Honest Religion*, 79.

<sup>57</sup> Weston, ‘A Postmodern Missiologist?’, 236.

the community to approach life *together*. And *together* they have some sense that the sensory information they derive *about* the world has some correspondence with reality. These plausibility structures or *worldviews* are not neutral conglomerations of ‘fact’, but shared construals of contingencies. These construals of the contingencies of life are “... accepted on the basis of their intrinsic beauty and completeness ...”.<sup>58</sup> They are not unattached to verifiable evidence, but neither are they the simple sum of verified entities.

Generation Y’s cynicism regarding any claim to universal knowledge or faith that moves beyond the individual has been touched upon. Further, the post-modern era seems to have signalled the end of the universal meta-narrative as being an attempt to control, one that is hopelessly trapped in the limitedness of perspective.<sup>59</sup> Generation Y’s complete immersion within the popular information culture reinforces the undeniable variety of worldviews in operation around the world.<sup>60</sup> The apprehension of the mere variety of worldviews has coincided with cynicism regarding the goodness of what has been the dominant spiritual narrative of the West.

However, Newbigin anticipates, and begins to answer, some of the objections regarding the morality of the universal meta-narrative. By exposing a biblical understanding of knowledge he challenges the assertion that language, and the meta-narrative in particular, is only about power. By aligning knowledge with relationship, the meta-narrative in Newbigin’s scheme is no longer an appeal to power and control, but the means by which the seeker is drawn into relationship. Furthermore, the particularity of a Christian meta-narrative, climaxing as it does in the display of Christ broken on a cross, witnesses to an emptying of power.<sup>61</sup> We will return to address this theme further in Chapter Five.

Similarly, Newbigin anticipates another of the post-modern criticisms of the coherence of knowledge, namely, the impossibility of saying anything more than that which is local and limited in perspective.<sup>62</sup> He regards the narrative structure of the

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<sup>58</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 45.

<sup>59</sup> Weston, ‘A Postmodern Missiologist?’, 230.

<sup>60</sup> Hughes, ‘Religious Knowledge among Australian Students,’ 142 f.

<sup>61</sup> Weston, ‘A Postmodern Missiologist?’, 236.

<sup>62</sup> Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in This Text?*, 49.

Bible as a product of a particular set of cultures. Yet its immersion in these particular cultures allows it to engage and critique all cultures.<sup>63</sup>

Newbigin's renewal of confidence in the Bible as a universal, transcultural story is anchored in its placement as a unique part of a coherent human history. Its very uniqueness within the whole lends it the ability to speak to the whole.<sup>64</sup> This step is made possible in Newbigin's thought due to the fiduciary nature of knowledge. That is, if human history is interrelated and, in bald terms, 'means something', then the component parts may be examined together and their relationships explored. Each distinct and unique event has meaning not only as a constituent of the whole, but also as a possible key to unlocking the meaning of the whole. So it is possible to explore and weigh the significance of events. This evaluation of events then leads to an active attempt to develop understandings about the way things are. When new events and information are witnessed, and brought to bear upon an existing frame of reference, faith will set out to assess and assimilate this new knowledge into a suitable perception of reality.<sup>65</sup>

A second aspect of the plausibility structure that may now be discerned in Newbigin's epistemology is that of commitment. The plausibility structure is in its nature a statement of perspective: "... from where I stand this certain way of looking at things is so." However, it would be wrong in Newbigin's eyes to equate perspective with unreliability or insubstantiality. Rather, he contends that it is only from a point of commitment within a perspective that respectful dialogue with another may occur.<sup>66</sup> This is so because there is:

... no standpoint ... available to anyone except the point where they stand; that there is no platform from which one can claim to have an "objective" [sic] view that supersedes all the "subjective" [sic] faith-commitments of the world's faiths ... .<sup>67</sup>

Therefore, to uncover the basic assumptions of one's own *worldview*, and that of one's interlocutor, is the decisive step in dialogue. If this happens, conversation may

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<sup>63</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 91.

<sup>64</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 103.

<sup>65</sup> Newbigin, *Honest Religion*, 84-86.

<sup>66</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 164.

<sup>67</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 168.

occur with a fundamental honesty. For then it will rest upon the ‘level ground’ of commitment.<sup>68</sup>

By Newbigin’s own admission, the Bible witnesses to only one construal of ‘the way things are’.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, the dominant Secular spirituality of Australia’s Generation Y presents a different construal. In Newbigin’s terms, both construals rely on a similar foundation of assumptions shared within the communities who hold the respective views. As seen above, Newbigin named the progression of learning through life, within these assumptions, as ‘faith’. It has been observed that Generation Y’s approach to life, and the development and maintenance of their Secular spirituality, has allowed the ‘practical’ *ethos* components of spirituality to play a significant role in driving a resultant *worldview*. For Generation Y, an *ethos* centred around the consumption of manufactured goods is allied to an unparalleled ability to access and immerse oneself in the elements of the prevailing technological popular culture. This, in turn, reinforces a highly practical individualism where the end of all things, as well as the responsibility for all things, terminates with the individual. So in Newbigin’s terms, Generation Y actively makes a ‘faith’ commitment to the sufficiency of individualised materialism to bring happiness.

In Newbigin’s epistemological scheme, spiritualities – as diverse as those represented by Generation Y and Paul – may engage in dialogue. This is so as the fundamental assumptions of each are freed to be explored by the other. As people become aware of their assumptions about reality, and their underlying commitment to them, they may be able to engage with the different assumptions held by others.<sup>70</sup> Thus, for Newbigin, respect for the particularity of the Christian story allows corresponding respect for the other stories by which people seek connection with reality.<sup>71</sup> The process by which the fundamental assumptions of each spirituality are made known, and consequently may be explored, will be highlighted as the impetus to publish a plausibility structure is investigated.

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<sup>68</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 168.

<sup>69</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 103.

<sup>70</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 183.

<sup>71</sup> This is eloquently described in Newbigin’s exposition of the role of the people of God (drawn into the ongoing ‘story’) as a people of and for the cultures. For example, Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 52.

Finally, the third aspect of the plausibility structure in Newbigin's writing that I wish to explore is the impulse to publish what one has learnt. Newbigin exposes the mission implied in the learning of knowledge. As true knowledge is formed upon a relationship between the knower and the known, what is true for 'me' cannot be true only for 'me'. An interplay exists between the knower, the known and other potential 'knowers' which underlies the discovery of knowledge and the need to publish. In other words, the discovery is made with 'universal intent'.<sup>72</sup> So by making a discovery known, the community within which one learns is invited to test the discovery's sufficiency. Thus, the publishing of knowledge is part of the mutual role of community in learning: what I learn I invite others to test and accept.<sup>73</sup>

In sum, three key areas flow from the relational nature of knowledge identified in Newbigin's epistemology:

1. Initially Newbigin posits that communities will develop a view of the world in which central motifs cause the myriad of things that *may* be known to cohere and have some connection with reality.
2. Following this, true operation within these cohering frameworks can only occur when the commitment is acknowledged. Further, commitment to one's own perspective is also necessary for respectful dialogue with those who hold different, equally committed, frameworks of understanding to occur.
3. Finally, commitment to a particular construal of the world implies the need to publish that position to test its sufficiency, and invite others to experience its beauty.

Having established these epistemological elements, Newbigin turns to sociologist Peter Berger's idea of the plausibility structure to draw out the fundamental role of assumptions in the development and operation of a *worldview*.

## ***The Plausibility Structure***

Following Berger, Newbigin writes that the plausibility structure is "... a structure of assumptions and practices which determine what beliefs are plausible and what are

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<sup>72</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 47-48.

<sup>73</sup> Weston, 'A Postmodern Missiologist?', 241-242.



not.”<sup>74</sup> In Newbigin’s writing this flows from his assessment of the personal and relational nature of knowledge. Therefore, the plausibility structure becomes a lens through which to understand the different ways that people make sense of the varied information about the world that they gain.

Likening the plausibility structure further to a “... kind of intuition ...”,<sup>75</sup> Newbigin even goes on to describe it as “... part of God’s good ordering of his creation.”<sup>76</sup> Without such frameworks of understanding that determine the ‘plausibility’ or ‘implausibility’ of any finding, enquiry would become an exercise in futility. Where one accepts and internalises the accumulated weight of the particular tradition within which one must operate, a rational sense of faith begins to be developed, giving rise to more reliable and authentic meaning.<sup>77</sup> This suggests that the plausibility structure is the mechanism by which people are able to take a reliable, reasonable and coordinated approach to life. In doing so, the operations which they undertake have some sense of correspondence with reality.

The role that the community plays in developing knowledge – and therefore the plausibility structure – has been explored briefly above. Granted that the community grounds any search for knowledge and therefore any new discoveries, there are times, however, when discoveries are made that do not fit within the plausibility structure of the community. At these times the community is forced to re-evaluate the existing plausibility structure.<sup>78</sup> Change to a plausibility structure does not usually happen immediately. A community’s initial responses to new discoveries are usually to either ignore or dismiss them out of hand. Yet, some findings that disagree with the prevailing plausibility structure persist, and are joined by others, to the point that they begin to create a new framework by which the world may be understood. Here, the existing framework begins to shift, gradually, to take the new structure into account. It is only on some radical occasions that a plausibility structure is rapidly overthrown by a revised dynamic. Change does not occur because individual findings are somehow proved to be ‘true’. Rather, the theory that binds them offers

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<sup>74</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 53.

<sup>75</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 43.

<sup>76</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 45.

<sup>77</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 43-47.

<sup>78</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 45-46.

“... a vision of reality which commends itself by its beauty, rationality, and comprehensiveness ...”;<sup>79</sup> such a vision surpasses that of the old. That is, the beauty, rationality and comprehensiveness of the new plausibility structure are perceived to correspond more closely with reality than these aspects of the old.

A key consequence of reflective confidence in one’s plausibility structure is the ability to enter into dialogue with those who hold different construals of the world. Ironically, the very confidence one has in the beauty, rationality and comprehensiveness of the vision that binds the contingent happenings and operations of the world allows tolerant conversation with another. This occurs as one recognises both their commitment to a construal of the world, and their own limitation within the world. Given such ‘humble-confidence’, the possibility arises that the partner in dialogue may have insights that confirm or confront the bearer’s plausibility structure. These insights may then enrich that structure in relation to its underlying coherence.<sup>80</sup> Commitment to a particular plausibility structure “... lead[s] to differences in behaviour ... [and] ... to dissent from current practice ...”.<sup>81</sup> If this occurs in the public sphere, questioning and, following questioning, dialogue will arise.<sup>82</sup> In the light of an openness to dialogue arising from the consistent application of one’s plausibility structure, the opportunity for ‘missionary involvement’ arises when those who inhabit the same spaces operate with different understandings about the coherence of the world.<sup>83</sup>

Newbigin’s epistemology may be summarised under three key ideas: (a) the community, (b) commitment, and (c) the imperative to publish. Hence, for Newbigin it is axiomatic that the plausibility structure of a community lies at the heart of epistemology. The community with which one shares a particular construal of the world is an essential element in the growth and development of knowledge. It is the community that brings one into a certain understanding of what is plausible within the world – and what is not. Furthermore, the community enables discovery of new and more beautiful ways of understanding the world. This occurs as the language of

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<sup>79</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 43-47. Quote p 47.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 215.

<sup>81</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 235.

<sup>82</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 235.

<sup>83</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 164.

the old plausibility structure is used to stretch, redirect and test new discoveries. Following the role of the community in the development of knowledge is the committed nature of understanding. Each person, and the communities they represent, can only speak of their perception of reality. However, rather than limiting dialogue, recognition of one's commitment to a limited perspective allows each perspective to question the assumptions of the other. Finally, any discovery made about the world must be published in order to test its sufficiency. In making a discovery known an invitation is also issued to others to join the discoverer in their new construal of the world.

The gap between Australia's Christian churches and Generation Y has been explored in this thesis. I have contended that a new theology of engagement with young people is necessary if the Christian churches are to transmit a Pauline faith to Generation Y. Thus, I now turn to Newbigin's sense of 'missionary involvement' with those who hold different plausibility structures to help tease out some of the particular points of convergence and divergence between the Christian churches and Generation Y. Newbigin's experience of ministry occurred within the predominantly Hindu nation of India, and subsequently in a post-Christian England. This experience made him acutely aware that so many of the critical assumptions that Christians, and the Christian churches, made about their faith were not shared with the cultures that they inhabited.<sup>84</sup> He sought to uncover a suitable approach to mission in a world that had replaced a sense of engagement with the 'providential history of God' for acceptance before the 'rational bar of science'.<sup>85</sup> Hence, Newbigin utilised the plausibility structure, and its underpinning epistemology, to question the framework of his and his missional counterparts' *worldview* and *ethos*. Accordingly, for Newbigin, mission becomes a hermeneutical exercise in which the frameworks for interpreting the experience of life are examined.

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<sup>84</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 3-4.

<sup>85</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 95.

## ***Newbigin, Paul and Generation Y: Hermeneutical questioning in mission***

In order to begin the interpretive process of mission, the foundation of both the Pauline faith and the spirituality of Generation Y must be considered. This will be done using Newbigin's proposal of the plausibility structure. The spirituality of Generation Y and the faith experience of Paul were examined in Chapters Two and Three respectively. Motifs causing each *worldview* to cohere may be discerned. Three motifs were identified in Chapters Two and Three as being common to Paul and Generation Y: those of (a) estrangement and engagement, (b) strength and vulnerability and (c) the importance of relationships in the development of spiritual knowledge. I will take these three, parallel, motifs to be an indication of the valued themes of the plausibility structures held by the 'communities' of Paul and Generation Y. These motifs will be discussed along with: (d) the manner in which the two aspects of spirituality, the *worldview* and *ethos*, interact and (e) the way in which each spirituality is broadcast. The fourth section (i.e. part (d) above) will explore the way that the *ethos* and *worldview* components of spirituality indicate Paul's and Generation Y's commitment to their plausibility structures. The final section to be considered (i.e. part (e) above) will compare and contrast patterns of publishing of discovery within the Pauline and Generation Y plausibility structures. In using these five categories, Newbigin's epistemology will function as the analytical lens for Paul and Australia's Generation Y. The purpose of applying this analytical lens is to begin the process of dialogue that will allow each of Paul and Generation Y to 'assert' their relative claims.

### **Estrangement and engagement**

One of the notable features of 2 Corinthians 4 is the lengths to which Paul extended himself in order to remain engaged with the world of the Corinthians. However, Paul's engagement with the world of the Corinthians was carried out within a clear eschatological framework. For Paul, Jesus' resurrection formed the foundational element of his continued involvement in the lives and context of those to whom he ministered.

In 2 Corinthians 4 Paul draws upon his experience of the risen Jesus as Lord (2 Cor 4:1, 6). He does this as both the entry point for renewed relationship with God, and the motivating force behind his ministry. However, Paul is engaged with the world on the understanding of the temporality of the ‘seen’ and the primacy or ultimacy of the ‘unseen’.<sup>86</sup> This is, in turn, observed in Paul’s proclamation of the gospel. He is a herald called, not to inaugurate God’s Kingdom, but to announce the resurrection of Jesus which has brought it.<sup>87</sup> Further, his perseverance and transformation in-and-through trial bears witness to the seemingly unbearable but, paradoxically, bearable tension between God’s ultimate triumph and the empirical reality of life in this world.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, the Pauline life is lived in an ‘agency of ministry’ as he reveals the eschatological impulse of the resurrection. In other words, his life is lived in the realm of the ‘seen’ as an agent of the ‘unseen’. Paul is a “... proleptic manifestation of God’s reign, [a] beachhead of the new creation ...”.<sup>89</sup> Consequently, he is ‘always setting out’ for the *eschaton* while immersed in the context of the world.<sup>90</sup>

In contrast, for Generation Y the consumption of manufactured goods and immersion in popular culture provides an effective tie to the present. The ‘this-worldly’ concerns of enjoyable experience mediated by consumption promote a highly grounded approach to the complexity of life. It seems that for many young people there is a “... belief that there are enough resources within the individual and his or her family and friends to enable happiness to prevail.”<sup>91</sup> In fact, the premise that life is about personal happiness is so well accepted that it is regarded as a self-evident truth.<sup>92</sup> Although first used to describe the narrative substructure of Generation Y in the UK, Hughes has appropriated the term ‘happy midi-narrative’ to describe this understanding which is also prevalent among Generation Y in Australia.<sup>93</sup>

The midi-narrative is centred on the enjoyment of life. For most young people, the enjoyment of life is found in their friends and, for some, in their relationships with their families ... It is also found, to

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<sup>86</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 182-185.

<sup>87</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 149.

<sup>88</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 144.

<sup>89</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 144; Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 183-184.

<sup>90</sup> H. U. Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. VII: Theology: The New Covenant, B. McNeil, trans. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989) 485.

<sup>91</sup> Savage et al, *Making Sense of Generation Y*, 38.

<sup>92</sup> Savage et al, *Making Sense of Generation Y*, 38.

<sup>93</sup> Savage et al, *Making Sense of Generation Y*, 37-38; Hughes, *Putting Life Together*, 170.

varying degrees, in excitement, [and] in the activities and events that interest and engage them.<sup>94</sup>

The ‘midi-narrative’ suggests that an all-encompassing ‘meta-narrative’ falls before the “... more modest scale of the here and now ...”.<sup>95</sup> Many young Australians struggle to see a need for a sense of explicit transcendence. Their values of immediate relationship and patterns of being, centred around consumption and pleasant experience, seem to provide happiness in ‘this-world’. In this context it appears quite unnecessary to look to the ‘unseen’, if the ‘seen’ provides everything that is needed.

Earlier in the chapter Newbigin’s idea of the sufficiency of a plausibility structure resting upon its intrinsic “... beauty, rationality, and comprehensiveness ...”<sup>96</sup> was discussed. Exploring the factors that drive and shape engagement or estrangement with this world for Paul and Generation Y provides an opportunity to apply a lens of ‘beauty, rationality, and comprehensiveness’ to each plausibility structure. For Newbigin, part of what it means to operate within a plausibility structure successfully – beautifully, rationally and comprehensively – is the ability to move beyond the overwhelming *focal* awareness of incoming sensory information to apprehend and interact with that reality to which this information leads. In other words, the sensory information is attended to *tacitly* and leads to a *focal* appreciation or interaction with that reality which is being discovered through the senses.<sup>97</sup> For Paul, it seems that the external circumstances of life form the probe by which a greater view of existence is experienced. This greater view is the reality he explores. He is *tacitly* aware of hardship and trial, but *focally* aware of the eschatologically revealed Kingdom of God.<sup>98</sup> In contrast, though Generation Y are skilled inhabitants of their dominant Secular plausibility structure, their *tacit* experience and *focal* appreciation of ‘reality’ seem all but inseparable. This is so as ‘reality’ is perceived as the continuous flow of experience. For the Pauline plausibility structure, cohering ‘beauty’ may be summed up in awareness of participation in the Kingdom of God. For Generation Y, ‘beauty’ lies in the ability to consume experience.

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<sup>94</sup> Hughes, *Putting Life Together*, 170.

<sup>95</sup> Savage et al, *Making Sense of Generation Y*, 38.

<sup>96</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 47.

<sup>97</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 32-35.

<sup>98</sup> The categories of *tacit* and *focal* awareness are derived from Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 32-35.

Paul challenges the comprehensiveness of Generation Y's 'this-worldly' plausibility structure and its denial of the need for an explicitly transcendent spirituality for the achievement of lasting fulfilment. He does this in his understanding of the eschatological foundations for engagement in this world. The Pauline plausibility structure depends upon an explicit spirituality. In particular, it depends upon a spirituality that interacts with a personal Spirit for an adequate perception of reality.<sup>99</sup> For Paul, the categories of spiritual 'knowing' and 'not knowing' are tied to the explicitly transcendent activity of the Spirit of God. Therefore 'unbelief' in Paul's God is not a neutral category but evidence of spiritual 'blindness'. 'Blindness' is in itself part of a personal and explicitly transcendent sphere (2 Cor 4:3–6). It is my contention that, like the Corinthians, Generation Y do, or soon will, struggle to navigate in and through unfulfilled aspirations and vulnerability without the benefit of spiritual 'sight'. The Pauline plausibility structure confronts this with the paradox of life in-and-through death. However, the Pauline confrontation does not end at this point. Secularity's relegation of 'spiritual' knowledge to the realm of 'opinion' is tested by Paul. He regards the two horizons of the 'this-worldly' and the 'other-worldly' as fused in the incarnate Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6).<sup>100</sup> Additionally, this fusion of the horizons is continued through the embodied witness of the apostles and then the mission community of the Pauline church (2 Cor 4:5, 15). Thus, spiritual knowledge is attached to embodied historical enquiry and praxis focused upon the person and work of Jesus.<sup>101</sup>

In what was probably an unintended consequence of the Corinthian church's preoccupation with the triumphalistic, 'powerful' ministry of the *usurpers* – who fitted so neatly into prevailing social morés regarding leadership – the centrality of Christ in the Pauline worldview seemed to have been lost.<sup>102</sup> In other words, by looking toward expressions of human power, the Corinthians had taken their view from the glorious treasure (i.e. Christ) to the container (i.e. the minister). Paul is uncompromising in his insistence upon Jesus Christ as the proper subject of

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<sup>99</sup> Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 183-184.

<sup>100</sup> Hence, Paul's knowledge of the 'glory of God in the face of Christ'. Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 224-226.

<sup>101</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 78-80.

<sup>102</sup> Schnabel, *Paul and the Early Church*, 964.

proclamation (2 Cor 4:5).<sup>103</sup> He also finds his praxis of perseverance in-and-through trial upon the life and person of Jesus (2 Cor 4:11). This is because Jesus Christ is the supreme embodiment of perseverance and transformation in-and-through vulnerability.<sup>104</sup> Further, Jesus Christ is the immediate object of the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 4:6).<sup>105</sup>

In Paul's mind, the person of Jesus Christ causes his *worldview* to cohere and provide impetus to the resulting *ethos*. This suggests that a Pauline perspective could act as a challenge to the predominant position of Generation Y, namely, that explicitly transcendent belief and action belong in the 'private' world of opinion. Maintaining engagement with the world of the Corinthians, Paul effectively navigates difficult situations. Further, his *focal* awareness of the explicitly transcendent allows *tacit* management of present contingencies. Hence the importance for Paul of the 'face' of Christ which, while grounded in the earthly horizon, also spans the explicitly transcendent realm.<sup>106</sup> Therefore Jesus, in his continuing incarnate person and work, (a) provides a plausible – beautiful, rational and comprehensive – way of understanding experience, (b) enables productive navigation through experience and (c) determines the *telos* of experience. It is Paul's sense of explicit transcendence that allows him to be thoroughly engaged with the estranged Corinthians: his *ethos* in action. Similarly he is able to withstand his own estrangement from the world of the Corinthians through an understanding of Jesus Christ that is grounded in human experience and history: his *worldview*.

## Strength and vulnerability

Newbigin describes election as a call from God to stand as a witness to his work in establishing his kingdom.<sup>107</sup> Newbigin's application of a theology of election to mission will be discussed at greater depth in the next chapter. For now, the missional potential of Newbigin's understanding of election will be foreshadowed. However,

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<sup>103</sup> Senior and Stuhlmueller, *Biblical Foundations*, 186; Köstenburger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 175.

<sup>104</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 174.

<sup>105</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 521.

<sup>106</sup> Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 183.

<sup>107</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 82-83.



in this section, election will be considered as a way of understanding differences between the attitudes towards strength and vulnerability exhibited by Paul and Generation Y.

In the context of Newbigin's theology of election, the Christian churches do not stand as *possessors* of salvation. They are, however, "... witness[es] of that salvation which God purposes for the whole."<sup>108</sup> For Paul, election-to-witness was revealed as a radical commitment to both the worker-of-salvation and the recipients-of-salvation. Paul found himself bearing witness to a kingdom that was not yet fully expressed. However, his partial experience of the kingdom was formed so that others might share in the fulfilled experience (2 Cor 4:14). This meant that Paul willingly put aside the strength he could garner in-and-of himself to participate in the proleptic embodiment of God's provision. Consequently, he laid aside what appeared to be his legitimate claims upon the Corinthians in order that they too may share God's provision.

The possibility of life in-and-through death, or strength in spite of apparent vulnerability, also appears in 2 Corinthians 4 (vv. 11–12, 13–14 and 16–18). Paul is at great pains to establish that it is the very ephemeral, ubiquitous and plain nature of the vessel that bears out the richness of the treasure it contains (2 Cor 4:7). Notions of what constitutes power and weakness rank highly among the points of confrontation between Paul and the Corinthians found in 2 Corinthians 4. It seems that, for the Corinthians, weakness and vulnerability did not indicate blessing but reason for dismissal.<sup>109</sup> However, by insisting on 'weakness,' Paul demonstrates that renewal occurs as the disciple of Christ steps out into vulnerability and brokenness. Given that the united power of the cross and resurrection of Christ is felt in vulnerability and brokenness, this presents the very condition for a profound encounter of passivity: being lifted up by God.<sup>110</sup> Consequently, for Paul, the 'seen' elements of wealth, power and rhetoric fade before the 'unseen' renewal of life in brokenness.<sup>111</sup> Hence, the Corinthians are challenged by the Pauline eschatological

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<sup>108</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 166.

<sup>109</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 69, 80, 99.

<sup>110</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 486; Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 171.

<sup>111</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 511-512; Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 183-184.

perspective whereby the meaning of power and weakness is unveiled by the temporality of this age and the eternity of that which is unseen.<sup>112</sup>

When applying the metaphor of treasure in a clay jar to the human person, Paul discloses what gives him the ability to minister, as well as the content of his ministry. Consequently, bearing treasure implies for Paul a clear imperative to mission. Yet, the human vessel is not used up or broken before the Pauline mission. Rather, through the presence of the treasure it is relieved and transformed in its fragility.<sup>113</sup> Specifically, Paul becomes part of the first fruits of Christ's resurrection as it is applied to the world. The proleptic experience of resurrection is found in-and-through the experience of death.<sup>114</sup> So Paul's difficult experience is interpreted in the light of Jesus' resurrection. This means that vulnerability takes upon itself a *paschal* character, as "... the cruciform existence of the preacher ... [becomes] ... an aspect of the 'visibility' [of the glory of God shining out in the gospel]." <sup>115</sup> Hence God's power is not simply revealed by way of contrast: as Paul's weakness is contrasted with the promise and power of the words he bears. It is also seen in Paul's experience of sustenance through vulnerability. In a Pauline sense, the experience of being newly created by God is accessed via the act of reaching out through the vulnerability of ministry.<sup>116</sup>

The Pauline plausibility structure has produced a definitive perception, or ethic, of power and weakness in the Christian life. Taking this Pauline ethic, one can now confront, or reflect upon, the dominant Secular spirituality of Generation Y. The Christian churches are generally perceived by Generation Y as being more interested in self-service than transparent assistance to others.<sup>117</sup> Further, against a background of generally improving confidence in institutions, Hughes notes that public confidence in the churches has continued to fall.<sup>118</sup> Also, having grown up imbibing post-modernity's scepticism regarding the morality of the universal meta-narrative, many in Generation Y challenge a Christianity that claims knowledge of a

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<sup>112</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 493; Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 177-178.

<sup>113</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 492-493.

<sup>114</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 176.

<sup>115</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 505; Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 167.

<sup>116</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 492-493.

<sup>117</sup> Hughes, 'Insecurity in Australia,' 18.

<sup>118</sup> Hughes, 'Insecurity in Australia,' 17.

universally binding story.<sup>119</sup> Yet, in the Pauline faith, the presence of a universal narrative of faith does not lead to triumphalism and claims of power. The Pauline witness is to follow Jesus Christ into self-giving ‘for the sake of’ the other.<sup>120</sup> This raises the possibility that the common Generation Y perception of the Christian churches could be a *mis*-perception of a Pauline Christianity. Hence, in pursuing a Pauline vision of the Christian faith, the prevailing challenges that place Christianity within a framework of coercive power may be confronted.

The Pauline sense of being sent *of* God and *for* the Corinthians finds resonance with Newbigin’s appreciation of the utter *kenosis* of the cross: God’s exposure of himself to meet humanity.<sup>121</sup> Further, it is Paul’s recognition that the Corinthians encounter God in Paul’s vulnerability and weakness that drives his mission. Through Newbigin’s language of election and *kenosis*, Paul’s witness and mission to the Corinthians can act as an important hermeneutical key for Australia’s Christian churches as they seek to recognize Generation Y’s perception of a Christian faith.

### **The importance of relationships in the development of spiritual knowledge**

Along with perspectives on (a) estrangement and engagement, and (b) strength and vulnerability, the relational character of knowledge guides Paul’s ‘other-worldly’ spiritual epistemology. For Paul, the narrative structure of his spirituality is founded upon, and consequently given shape by, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>122</sup> It is for this reason that he maintains that the knowledge of God is found in the ‘face of Christ’.<sup>123</sup> In Newbigin’s terms, Paul’s faith is founded upon Jesus Christ. This is so, as it is in seeking Jesus that Paul is ‘active in learning’, and pushes back the boundaries of his old plausibility structure, with new discoveries about God.<sup>124</sup> Thus,

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<sup>119</sup> See Weston’s review of post-modernism in, Weston, ‘A Postmodern Missiologist?’, 231 ff.

<sup>120</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 236-238.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 167.

<sup>122</sup> Flemming, *Contextualization*, 100.

<sup>123</sup> Senior and Stuhlmüller, *Biblical Foundations*, 173 ff.

<sup>124</sup> So Paul’s Christophany on the road to Damascus may be likened to Einstein’s ‘discovery’ of the Theory of Relativity. Each accepted the intrusion of new information (in Paul’s case the personal disclosure of Jesus Christ) into their existing plausibility structure with the risk of being wrong. Their subsequent pursuit of a new way of understanding the world *given* this new knowledge was undertaken in faith. Cf. Newbigin, *Honest Religion*, 84.

‘in the face of Christ’, Paul fuses the two horizons of the ‘other-worldly’ and the ‘this-worldly’. He does this as the incarnate witness of Christ and the illumination of the Spirit coalesce.<sup>125</sup> For Paul, this relational knowledge finds explicit expression in the experience of suffering (e.g. 2 Cor 4:7–12). “[I]t is precisely when he is weak and suffering, when he is ‘hard pressed’ and ‘perplexed’, that the power of God springs to action and preserves him from ultimate crushing and despair.”<sup>126</sup> Similarly, the Pauline ‘mission’ is carried out ‘for the other’ as the role of agency in the Christian life is rehearsed. Paul is related to God through Christ and related to the Corinthians with Christ. Accordingly, in placing himself in the relationship of knowing God Paul, is ‘handed over’ to death, ‘handed over’ in mission, ‘handed over’ as a slave for the Corinthians and renewed day by day. It is in his relationship with Jesus Christ and the Corinthians that Paul finds confirmation of his knowledge of God. This is specifically so as his ministry is conducted in weakness.

An outstanding feature of Paul’s entire Corinthian communication, and 2 Corinthians 4 in particular, is the way that he continues to address the Corinthian church as Christians *in spite of* a deeply fractured relationship (see, for example, Paul’s warm greeting in 2 Cor 1:1). Paul’s continued fellowship at such a basic level is important. His fellowship shows that even an imperfect Christian community is the recipient of a great gift: the gift of unfettered spiritual ‘sight’ ministered in the ‘new covenant’ (2 Cor 4:1–2). The result of this sight is that the Christian community also possesses the potential for witness to God in Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:15). The pivotal 2 Cor 4:14 bears out this relationship:

... we [Paul] too believe therefore we [Paul] speak, knowing the one who raised the Lord Jesus and will also raise us [Paul] with Jesus, and will present [us] with you (2 Cor 4:14).<sup>127</sup>

The Corinthians, as distant as they are from Paul relationally, remain bonded with him in their union with Jesus. In contrast to the *usurping* ministers, Paul is able to speak of the Corinthians as his letter of recommendation (2 Cor 3:2).<sup>128</sup> The fulfilment of this bond, strained though it be, is that others may be added to their number. This, in turn, results in “... thanksgiving unto the glory of God (2 Cor

<sup>125</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 491.

<sup>126</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 171.

<sup>127</sup> I have taken this ‘we’ to be Paul’s use of a ‘royal’ plural in reference to himself. Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 58 fn, 140 fn.

<sup>128</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 168.

4:15).”<sup>129</sup> Consequently, Paul is able to affirm that a Christian community, in this case that of the Corinthians, is never beyond hope as a *missional* community. In spite of serious problems within the community, the foundational tie with the risen Lord Jesus retains hope for mission.

In the context of the Christian community, the Corinthians are confronted by Paul over their understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life. The role of the Spirit is evidently of particular interest to the Corinthians, figuring prominently in the two extant letters between Paul and the church (1 Cor 12–14, 2 Cor 3–6). In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul turns particularly to the necessity of the Spirit’s activity in ministry.<sup>130</sup> Paul reminds the Corinthians that a personal agency rests behind culture with the express aim of producing ‘blindness’ to God.<sup>131</sup> From this perspective Christian ‘faith’ is not mere acknowledgement of ‘facts’. Faith is not even apprehension of a person. It is, however, the spiritual appropriation of relationship with that person. Therefore, to appropriate relationship with the person of Christ (which, because he is a person, must be done on his terms) requires spiritual re-creation.

Relational networks are vital in the development and maintenance of the spirituality of Generation Y. Given the importance of relationship to the young people of Generation Y, parallels with Paul’s deep sense of the relationship implied in spiritual knowledge may be discerned. Both family and peers play important roles in the growth and maintenance of the spirituality of a young person. However, with the increasing fragility of family-based networks, peers have taken on a significant role as mentors for each other.<sup>132</sup> In this sense, being brought into the spiritual tradition of family and peers is parallel with the proclamation and demonstration of the *worldview* and *ethos* of the risen Jesus by Paul. However, it happens without fanfare, namely ‘naturally’.

The prized relational networks exhibited by both Paul and Generation Y are consistent with Newbigin’s analysis of epistemology. It was seen earlier that, in

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<sup>129</sup> Schnabel, *Paul and the Early Church*, 967.

<sup>130</sup> Schnabel, *Paul and the Early Church*, 981.

<sup>131</sup> Flemming, *Contextualization*, 139.

<sup>132</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 30, 233, 339.

Newbigin's understanding, discovery and the operation of life itself is inescapably tied to a community which shares a common basic plausibility structure. For Paul, the community of knowledge, within which his plausibility structure is forged and discovery regarding life is made, has two axes: (a) relationship Jesus Christ and (b) relationship with the Corinthian church. As Paul himself acted in responsive witness to Jesus Christ, he found that his relationship with the Corinthians acted to create the 'conditions of belief' in which his appropriated relationship with Jesus was reinforced. It seems, though, that the relational networks which forge the spirituality of Generation Y turn on a single axis, namely family and peer networks. Similar to Paul, both the 'conditions of belief' and the beliefs themselves, find their genesis and expression in this community. Although, what remains unclear is the adequacy of this single axis of community to provide for a stable and lasting approach to life.

### ***Ethos: 'The worldview writ large'***

The motifs of (a) eschatological engagement with the world, (b) strength in spite of apparent vulnerability and (c) the importance of relationships in the development of spiritual knowledge affect Paul's faith and the spirituality of Generation Y deeply. In Newbigin's terms, these three motifs form the key components of the respective plausibility structures. By utilising Newbigin's idea of the plausibility structure the manner in which the *ethos* and *worldview* components of spirituality interact may be mapped and patterns of commitment discerned.

In a paradoxical twist, the text of 2 Corinthians 4 resounds with confidence. For example, Paul's confidence is built upon his understanding of his relatedness to God (see, vv. 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14 and 17). Furthermore, Paul is given confidence in his sense of agency. He bears the authority of the sender which, as has been seen, is the risen Lord Jesus – who is himself sent by God the Father.<sup>133</sup> However, the authority Paul bears is not that of a disembodied character, in which the *bearer* of authority is in focus. Relying on the relationship implied in knowing God, Paul's authority to minister is derived from the person of the sender.<sup>134</sup> Consequently, the

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<sup>133</sup> Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 215.

<sup>134</sup> Schnabel, *Paul and the Early Church*, 1355.

Pauline experience of ministry bears out the legitimacy of the *sender's* authority.<sup>135</sup> The proleptic experience of Christ's glory, initially found in Paul's experience of Christophany on the road to Damascus, and later in perseverance and transformation in-and-through suffering, inevitably "... manifests itself in the kerygmatic and existential public character of the gospel in the world."<sup>136</sup>

Just as the same coin bears two sides, the second aspect of Pauline agency is humility. Paul can approach life and ministry confidently, because he is an agent of God. It is a mercy, though, that Paul carries his ministry (2 Cor 4:1); his ministry is not held because of his own power.<sup>137</sup> Hence, Paul considers himself to be a 'clay vessel' which is ennobled by the 'treasure' it contains (i.e. it does not show itself but the 'treasure').<sup>138</sup> Therefore, Paul is able to subordinate himself willingly as a slave of the Corinthians (2 Cor 4:5,15). Four aspects of Pauline engagement then follow in practice from his understanding of God as he is revealed in Christ:

1. Paul is engaged with God, as Jesus (the likeness of God) draws Paul into glory. This is expressed in Paul's participation in the first fruits of life amongst death.<sup>139</sup>
2. Paul is engaged with Jesus as the 'narrative' structure of Jesus' incarnation, death and resurrection explains and gives form to the lifestyle that Paul leads. Jesus' life, death and resurrection sustain him in-and-through what is 'seen'.<sup>140</sup>
3. Paul is engaged with the Spirit as the Spirit illuminates the ministry of Jesus within Paul. This allows Paul to be caught up in the relationship of knowing God through the witness of Jesus.<sup>141</sup>
4. Paul is engaged with the Corinthians as he witnesses to Jesus, thus fusing the horizons of the Corinthians (that which is 'seen') and of God (that which is 'unseen').<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Schnabel, *Paul and the Early Church*, 1413.

<sup>136</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 493, 521.

<sup>137</sup> Senior and Stuhlmüller, *Biblical Foundations*, 182.

<sup>138</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 493.

<sup>139</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 505.

<sup>140</sup> Hays, 'Paul's Gospel,' 238.

<sup>141</sup> Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 152.

<sup>142</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 183-184.

In 2 Cor 4:7–12 (echoed later in 2 Cor 6:4–10 and 11:16–33), Paul traces the cruciform nature of his life. It is clear that the plausibility structure causing his world to cohere was of such depth that it gave him the impetus to bear great cost, and see great beauty, in its discharge. The Christological foundation of this plausibility structure has been discussed above. Suffice to note at this point, that the exemplary *and* incorporative trajectory of Jesus' life in-and-through death so influenced Paul's being, that it underlay his entire life and ministry.<sup>143</sup>

Further to Paul's sense of agency-in-mission, Newbigin points out that the early Christian churches understood Jesus' resurrection from the dead to impose universal claims. To bear witness to Christ was not simply a 'private' affair, but impinged upon all of life. Both 'public' and 'private' spheres were included.<sup>144</sup> Therefore, Paul's message and his experience reinforced the total experience of faith. Just as his witness made claims upon the society within which he witnessed, so his experience of life in-and-through trial and vulnerability, underscored the claim of God upon his entire being. In Newbigin's terms, the 'public' nature of witness to the gospel also cut through the total experience of life.<sup>145</sup> One implication of Newbigin's placement of the gospel as a 'public' truth is that it is rehabilitated to interact with the other 'truths' that are asserted. This relates to Generation Y's exclusion of 'religious' ideas to the realm of 'opinion'. Earlier it was seen that, for Generation Y, explicitly transcendent spiritual ideas or activities are consigned to the epistemological world of 'opinion'. Consequently, they are outside the realm of evaluative discussion and unable to interact with the world of 'fact' beyond an individual's construal of the way things are.<sup>146</sup> Thus, for Generation Y, explicitly transcendent ideas have become like costume jewellery: temporary and occasional ornaments to be worn for decoration, which do not form the substance of life. Under Newbigin's category of the 'public' nature of the gospel as a plausibility structure, the gospel is given a forum upon which it may enter into dialogue with the highly grounded *worldview* of secularism. That is, in spite of the claims it makes to spiritual neutrality, secularity functions as a plausibility structure in a similar way to an explicit spirituality.<sup>147</sup> This

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<sup>143</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 174.

<sup>144</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 223.

<sup>145</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 247.

<sup>146</sup> Hughes, *Putting Life Together*, 121-135.

<sup>147</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 247.



means that, from within the committed and demanding framework of the gospel, comparison and contrast may be made of and to the equally committed and demanding claims of a Secular spirituality.

The ‘all-encompassing’ nature of the plausibility structure finds resonance between Generation Y and Paul. Generation Y know very well the singular pursuit of happiness. It dominates their decision-making process and is jealously guarded. Yet, it is also a source of stress. Generation Y’s individualised pursuit of happiness is often misunderstood as lack of commitment and is frequently resented by their elders.<sup>148</sup> However, within the parameters of personal happiness and important relationship networks, Generation Y make great sacrifices at personal cost.<sup>149</sup> The demanding, or ‘universal’, nature of Generation Y’s Secular spirituality is seen particularly in the presence of true individualisation. Notwithstanding the presence of significant relational networks, the general understanding present within Generation Y is that the individual bears responsibility in all things. That is, it is the *right* of the individual to exert free choice in all things, and the *responsibility* of the individual to actuate a successful life.<sup>150</sup> Such individualisation may be perceived as having a corraling effect upon Generation Y. In guarding the role of the individual, every decision made by a young person is powerfully constrained so that life is jealously guarded from any perceived threats to autonomy. The power of this element is manifest early in life. This is exemplified in the tendency for key decisions regarding the prime place of individual enjoyment in the greater trajectory of life to be made before a child reaches high school.<sup>151</sup>

Stress, vulnerability and the search for pleasure all combine to affect the experience of Generation Y acutely. The dominance of a pleasure oriented life and purpose has been repeatedly asserted (hence the mid-narrative revolving around ‘what makes me happy’). However, the social, technological and physical environments that Generation Y inhabit exude great stress.<sup>152</sup> The weight of individualism, fragile relational networks – caused by thin family structures and weighty demands upon

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<sup>148</sup> Braden Quartermaine, ‘Respect for Gen Y,’ *The Sunday Times*, February 10 2008, 59.

<sup>149</sup> See, for example, “Olivia’s” story in Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 213.

<sup>150</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 329-330.

<sup>151</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 306.

<sup>152</sup> Please refer to Chapter Two, footnotes 70-85, for the relevant references.

peers – and the stimulation-rich environment coalesce in largely unacknowledged pressure. These factors are joined by the presence of ‘white noise’ in the form of the constant visual and aural stimulation of the prevailing technological lifestyle, which prevents deep reflection on the conditions and possibilities of life.<sup>153</sup> Therefore, part of Generation Y’s experience of a plausibility structure with ‘universal’ claims is the experience of vulnerability via increased stress loads and the questionable capacity of the dominant *worldview* to cope with the prevailing *ethos*.

One result of Generation Y’s consignment of ‘religious’ ideas to ‘opinion’ is that their spiritual experience is marked by the powerful influence that the ‘lifestyle’ components of a consumption-driven *ethos* exert as the entry point of a Secular spirituality.<sup>154</sup> It seems that, in the spiritual experience of Generation Y, the *ethos* plays a significant role in driving the *worldview*. Hence, the elemental sense of transcendence experienced by Generation Y in enjoyable relationship may be viewed as an attempt to seek coherence in a self-focussed, behaviour-driven and ultimately fragile lifestyle. However, it seems that for Paul, his explicitly transcendent *worldview* drove a resultant *ethos* of perseverance. This allowed him to manage the material world productively, with the result that in weakness he became strong.<sup>155</sup> Accordingly, in a Pauline faith, the mission of God enacted by Christ has a practical outcome in the experience of an *ethos* of life in-and-through death.

Within Newbigin’s theology, an inescapable consequence of the ‘public’ nature of a community’s plausibility structure is that it is published: made available for engagement in dialogue with other construals of ‘truth’.<sup>156</sup> In this sense, the life-in-and-through-death dialectic of 2 Corinthians 4 accompanies a Pauline agency-of-mission. This is so as others glimpse an image of the Pauline *worldview*, and hence the mission of God, via the Pauline *ethos*.<sup>157</sup> Thus in 2 Corinthians 4 a view of faith is presented as:

1. it plays out in the life of Paul, as
2. it may play out in the life of the Christian churches, and as

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<sup>153</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 335-336.

<sup>154</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 302-303, 306.

<sup>155</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 185-186.

<sup>156</sup> Hughes, *Putting Life Together*, 247.

<sup>157</sup> Barnett, *Paul*, 175 ff.

3. it may then apply to the mission of the Christian churches to the world – in the present case Generation Y in Australia.

## **Broadcasting spirituality**

The final theme from 2 Corinthians 4 that I will consider here is the importance that Jesus' resurrection played in Paul's interpretation of his own experience. For Paul, Jesus' resurrection results in proclamation and perseverance. Consequently, it finds expression as Paul seeks to proclaim the coherence and beauty of his resurrection-driven *worldview* to others. Before considering this theme further, one may note that Paul speaks of 'proclaiming' Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:5). Yet, Newbigin prefers to describe the activity of sharing discoveries made about the world as 'publishing'.<sup>158</sup> Generation Y live in a technologically rich environment in which many different *media* and *modes* of communication are employed in the transmission of discovery. It seems, that in this context, 'broadcast' may be a suitable term to use that includes the ideas Paul and Newbigin express in their ideas of 'proclamation' and 'publishing', while at the same time encompassing the diverse communication options available to Generation Y.

Paul underscores the declaratory imperative contained in his call as an apostle of Christ Jesus four times (2 Cor 4:1–2, 3, 5, 14). He identifies belief as being inevitably the result of declaration.<sup>159</sup> However, the gospel that Paul proclaims is no bare message, but news of a *person*. Further, apprehension of the message leads to relationship with that person. Therefore the act of proclamation both conveys necessary information and mediates relationship.<sup>160</sup>

Returning to Newbigin's sense of the relational nature of knowledge, one may discern that it is to be expected that Paul's message conveys more than bare information. In proclaiming the gospel, Paul lays out for his hearers the opportunity to enter into the community of knowledge for which the gospel is the plausibility

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<sup>158</sup> See, for example, Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 35.

<sup>159</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 493.

<sup>160</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 505-506.

structure.<sup>161</sup> Additionally, the community of knowledge being presented by Paul has two axes: (a) the community of those who believe and (b) Jesus Christ. Jesus is the primary and decisive witness to Divine mission, and the Christian community follow him in witness. Thus, as the gospel *of* Jesus is proclaimed, an invitation to join in relationship *with* Jesus is implied. This is enacted as the hearer joins the proclaiming church to share in their witness. In other words, the hearer is drawn into the plausibility structure of the Christian community.

Perseverance plays a complementary role to proclamation in Paul's broadcast of his worldview. Paul's life, as reflected in 2 Corinthians 4, is marked by trial and vulnerability 'because of Jesus'. Yet, the Pauline experience is also one of life flowing from the risen Lord Jesus. It is not surprising then, that he seeks to transmit to the Corinthians the missional and eschatological ethic that, "... [s]uffering is ... a mode of missionary involvement."<sup>162</sup> As Paul is supported and transformed by God in-and-through trial, he provides a lived exposition of the central paradox of the Christian life. Paul's

... suffering represents a public demonstration ... of the death of Jesus Christ. And the power of God that is displayed in his life and ministry ... is evidence for the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the present.<sup>163</sup>

Perseverance and proclamation deeply underlie the life and mission of Paul. They work together to infuse the broadcast of his faith with a *kenotic* quality.

The Pauline life-in-and-through-death dynamic creates a recursive set of 'conditions of belief'. That is, Jesus, the person spoken of in the message of the gospel, reinforces and strengthens the fitness of the belief through his continued dependability. In Newbigin's terms, this dynamic relationship of dependability flowing from Jesus to the Christian community marks out the active principle of learning: faith.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Cf. Newbigin's discussion regarding the importance of the contemporary Christian churches' connection with the apostolic witness in their own continuing witness of faith in, Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 60-62.

<sup>162</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 177.

<sup>163</sup> Schnabel, *Paul and the Early Church*, 966-967.

<sup>164</sup> Newbigin, *Honest Religion*, 84.

The boundaries of Generation Y's intellectual, emotional and spiritual worlds are dominated and set by the milieu of popular culture. Despite some self regulation via 'the market', the generation is largely unaware that it is profoundly a product of popular culture.<sup>165</sup> One consequence of Generation Y's immersion in a technologically mediated popular culture is that the plausibility structure driving this generation gains strength through its constant rehearsal. Subsequently, the technological popular culture is powerfully reinforced.

As 'digital natives', Generation Y intuitively value the relational and communal aspects of knowledge. Knowledge is gained via interactive digital means in which the 'knowledge seeker' expects to be able to 'play' with data in an order and manner that they choose.<sup>166</sup> Thus, the acquisition of knowledge is more akin to a conversation in which parties swap information that flows from, and is dependant upon, the responses made by the other. In other words the acquisition of knowledge is intimately related to the publishing of knowledge.<sup>167</sup> The public, digital exchange of 'knowledge seeking' may then be understood as a call to relational engagement: an invitation to accept not data but self. Yet much of this 'knowledge seeking' happens in, what may seem to observers from other eras, a haphazard and incomplete manner.<sup>168</sup> While there has been movement away from traditional sources and systems of authentication, it is wrong to assume that the broadcast of the plausibility structure of Generation Y proceeds *without* authentication. It is now grounded upon the closer authority of the valued family and peer networks.

For Newbiggin, to discover implies the need to broadcast, or in his words, publicly affirm, what has been discovered. That is, a '*heuristic*' imperative infuses participation in a plausibility structure. The goal of learning within a plausibility structure is that moment when one may cry, "... now I see for myself ...".<sup>169</sup> So, when viewed from the perspective of discovery, as more beautiful ways of finding coherence and attachment with reality are discovered, broadcast is inevitable. This

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<sup>165</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 330-331.

<sup>166</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 239.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Marc Prensky's approach to educating Generation Y in Prensky, 'Digital Natives.'

<sup>168</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 239.

<sup>169</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbiggin: A Reader*, 228.

is because, when broadcast, the stability of these new discoveries may be tested and others given the chance to ‘see for themselves’ as well.<sup>170</sup>

Earlier it was suggested that the process of discovery and broadcast happens as a community of knowledge accepts a new construal of the world. This new construal then adds to, or sometimes replaces, the older view’s “... beauty, rationality, and comprehensiveness ...”.<sup>171</sup> Both Generation Y and Paul seem to find this ‘*heuristic*’ imperative a natural element of their respective plausibility structures. They share a common desire to test and share their discoveries about ‘reality’ through forging ongoing and interactive relational networks.

In pursuing a ‘*heuristic*’ spirit, Generation Y seem to have their broadcast radically shaped by popular, market-driven and technological media. Thus, the powerful and immediate *modes* of communication, which access technological media, drive what is also a significant attempt by Generation Y to establish relationship. It would seem that these *modes* of access also delineate and constrain the nature of relationship.<sup>172</sup> In other words, the speedy, explosive, technologically mediated action of communication supersedes, or over-rides, what is being communicated. By way of contrast, the nature of Paul’s primary relationship with the risen Jesus directed the way he used the various *modes* of broadcast available to him.<sup>173</sup> This is why he, in writing, speaking and living, continually sought to portray the ‘face of Christ’ (cf. 2 Cor 4:6). Paul’s communication was an explosive announcement (*euangelion*, gospel) of a person who brings life. So, Paul’s plausibility structure, grounded on an announcement of Jesus Christ, granted him “... an explosion of joy, news that ... [could not be] ... kept secret ...”.<sup>174</sup> For Generation Y, it seems that their broadcast is in danger of being consumed by ‘an explosion’ of digital signals.

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<sup>170</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 47-48.

<sup>171</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 47.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Morrison, ‘Living at the Margins of Life,’ 2-3.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. Köstenburger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 173.

<sup>174</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 231.

## ***Conclusion: The gap***

This chapter commenced with a review of Lesslie Newbigin's epistemology. Particular attention has been given to the personal and relational nature of knowledge. In Newbigin's thought, knowledge is necessarily personal for two reasons. First, any one person is only able to reach so far in enquiry and discovery. This means that any person is dependant upon others to be taught what must be known. Further, human learning relies on the personal recommendation of the teacher. The personal foundation of knowing becomes a relational exercise as learning occurs when people are drawn into a community which organizes the contingent happenings of the world into a coordinated approach that allows a reliable approach to reality. Consequently, communities of knowing share particular construals of the way things are, which are called plausibility structures. All people operate with commitment to the particular way that their community of knowing understands the world through plausibility structures. In presenting his epistemology centred upon the plausibility structure, Newbigin has provided the hermeneutical foundation for the committed assumptions of the Pauline faith of 2 Corinthians 4 to be uncovered alongside those of Generation Y.

The discussion that has flowed from Newbigin's understanding of the plausibility structure has highlighted issues that emphasise the gap that separates the spiritual experience of Generation Y and a Pauline faith. Three key, parallel motifs that arise in the Pauline faith and the spirituality of Generation Y have been explored. Significant differences have been uncovered between the Pauline understanding of (a) engagement and estrangement, and (b) strength and vulnerability, and that of Generation Y. The spirituality of Generation Y differs from the Pauline faith in that it concentrates largely on the realised experience of the 'this-worldly', as opposed to the explicitly transcendent Pauline concerns of the 'other-worldly'. Furthermore, Generation Y have been seen to be sensitive to the possibility of thematisation or control from, what is for them, the foreign power of the Christian churches. However, while significant differences may be discerned in the plausibility structures that underlie the Pauline faith and the spirituality of Generation Y, at least one common characteristic may be detected. In exploring the third key motif, (c) the importance of relationships in the development of spiritual knowledge, it was

discerned that both Paul and Generation Y valued their relational networks greatly in the construction and maintenance of meaning. For Generation Y, these networks were centred around family and friends. Whereas, for Paul, his relationship with the community of Christians in Corinth was joined by a bond with Jesus.

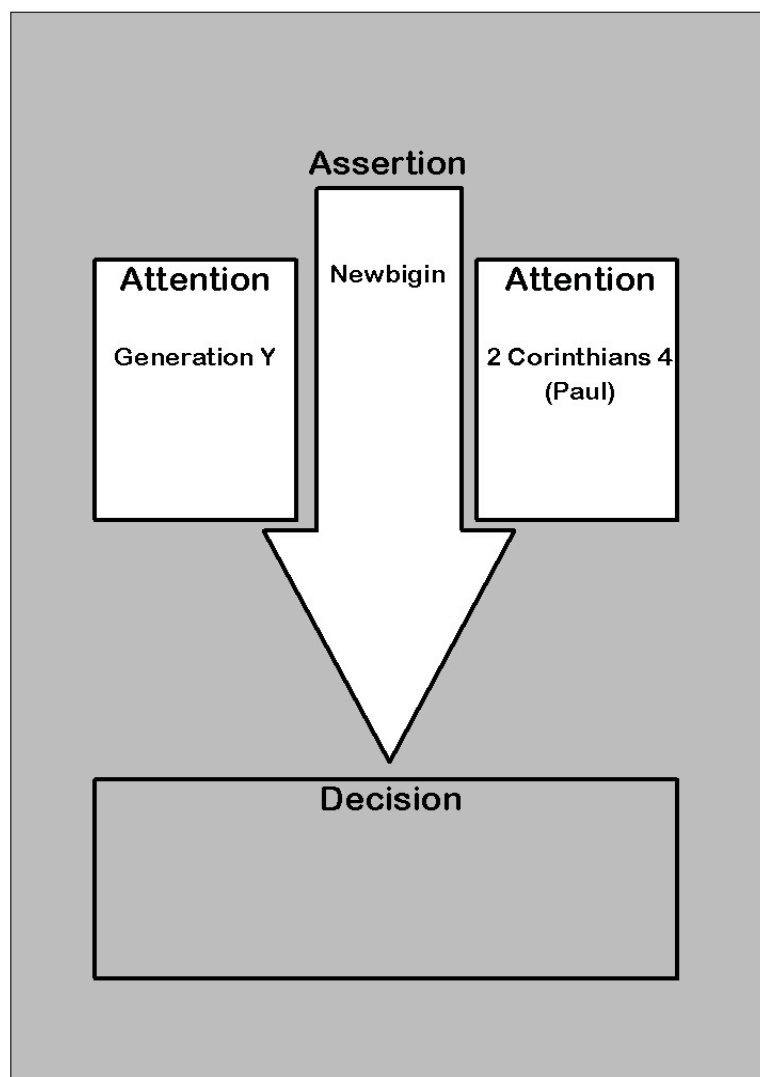
Two further aspects of the Pauline faith experience and spirituality of Generation Y have been explored under the guidance of Newbigin's epistemology. These were (d) the patterns of commitment exposed in the relationship between the *worldview* and *ethos* components of spirituality, and (e) the manner in which each plausibility structure is broadcast. Both the Pauline faith and the spirituality of Generation Y operate on the premise that they provide a comprehensive understanding of the world. They both thrive in environments in which the *worldview* is reinforced by the daily operation of life. As such the *ethos* of spirituality is linked clearly to its *worldview* and is a fundamental part of its broadcast. Yet, unlike Paul, it seems that for Generation Y the Secular *ethos* drives a resulting *worldview*. This dynamic relationship between the *ethos* and *worldview* components of spirituality will become a key theme as a Pauline pastoral theology of mission begins to emerge in the next chapter of this thesis.

In reviewing the role of the plausibility structure in the development and maintenance of a spirituality, Newbigin provides a foundation for his theology of mission. Following Newbigin's lead, the plausibility structures of Paul and Generation Y have been engaged on their own terms to discover the foundational elements that support them – limited as this engagement and discovery may be – and then discussed as they relate to each other. This has been done in both positive and negative terms. In order to build upon the foundation of the plausibility structure, and to develop a distinctively Christian mission, Newbigin then turns to the doctrine of the Trinity. Therefore, as the second part of the 'assertive' phase of this thesis, Chapter Five will proceed to consider how Newbigin's Trinitarian theology of mission may inform a Pauline approach to Generation Y.



## Chapter 5

### Newbigin, Paul and Generation Y in Dialogue – Part Two: Trinitarian Mission



## ***Bridging the gap***

*But what seemed to be the end [Jesus' crucifixion] is the new beginning. The tomb is empty, Jesus is risen, death is conquered, God does reign after all. There is an explosion of joy, news that cannot be kept secret. Everyone must hear it. A new creation has begun.<sup>1</sup>*

A deep chasm exists between the spiritual experience of Australia's Generation Y and the Christian churches.<sup>2</sup> Discovering a common ground between the Christian faith and Australia's Generation Y may seem impossible. This is because the distance between the dominant spirituality of Generation Y and the Christian faith is such that the foundational assumptions about what constitutes a spiritual life are no longer shared. In the previous chapter the plausibility structures of Paul and Generation Y were analysed and compared. Given the aim of the thesis, namely to develop a Pauline pastoral theology of the transmission of faith to Generation Y, this chapter will set out to extend this analysis by considering Lesslie Newbigin's Trinitarian theology of mission.

I suggested in Chapter Two that the life experience of Australia's Generation Y is such that the spiritual resources that many employ in the execution of their lives is, or soon will be, incapable of meeting their current and future needs. Yet a common desire of Generation Y revolves around fulfilling, authentic relationships. In contrast, Paul experienced renewal in weakness and restoration from vulnerability.

Accordingly, a Pauline sense of renewal and restoration has the potential to speak to the dialectical themes of authentic relationship and fragility experienced by Generation Y. I will contend that Newbigin's Trinitarian theology of mission may provide the Christian churches with a renewed opportunity to connect the spirituality of Generation Y with that of Paul. In particular, Newbigin's *kenotic* Christology will be used to inform dialogue between Generation Y and a Pauline faith.

For Generation Y, there are perhaps two predominant negative perceptions of the Christian churches. First, the social structures of the Christian churches are viewed

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<sup>1</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 231.

<sup>2</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 124, 312.

with suspicion as coercive and vested with self-interested power. Second, in the eyes of Generation Y, the developed systems of symbol and ritual of the churches do not connect in meaningful ways with their common desire for relationship, security and significance. However, in response to these concerns, the witness of faith borne by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4 presents a ministry that operates for the benefit of the other and not those who minister. This will provide the Christian churches with a theological model of re-engagement with Generation Y. Further, Newbigin's understanding of Jesus' *kenosis* will be explored in conversation with the voices of Paul and Generation Y so that Australia's Christian churches may find the impetus for transformed witness to Generation Y.

I have suggested that a key ontological stimulus for Generation Y is the consumption of manufactured goods. This is driven by the epistemological value placed upon the 'this-worldly'. Again, this finds contrast in Paul's testimony of faith in 2 Corinthians 4 as he places his hopes on the 'unseen' rather than the 'seen'. It seems that if the Christian churches are to recover a clear message that calls Generation Y beyond anything other than the 'this-worldly', a sense of connection between the hiddenness of the explicitly transcendent and the apparent clarity of the present must be sought. The nexus between Christ's submission on the cross and the outgoing witness of the resurrection borne by his disciples in Newbigin's theology of mission provides such a connection.

## **Key Themes**

Having reviewed Newbigin's epistemology in Chapter Four, a beginning has been initiated that allows the different assumptions of a Pauline faith and an expression of the spirituality of Generation Y to enter into dialogue. By emphasising the role of culture and community in the development and transmission of knowledge, Newbigin further uncovers a process by which the Christian churches may act as witnesses to divine mission: 're-explaining' the gospel to a generation whose manner and thought forms have increasingly moved beyond the established religiosity of Christianity. The following matrix (*figure 3*) summarises the pastoral theological perspectives of Paul, Newbigin and Generation Y to be discussed in this chapter.

<b>Pastoral theological themes</b>	<b>Paul</b>	<b>Newbigin</b>	<b>Generation Y</b>
Trinity	God the Father draws people near through the Son and Spirit.	The Trinity is the point from which to begin Christian mission.	Church is seen as an autonomous entity.
Jesus the Christ	The 'face of Christ' shows the 'glory of God'.	Christ is the clue to history and mission.	Self is the key to life.
Witness	Paul ministers by God's mercy.	God's people are elected to bear witness.	Sensitive to thematisation
Hope	Hope in future validated by sustenance in present.	Hope witnesses to God's kingdom.	Hope for the future replaced by wish for a better present.
Relationship	Self understood as self-in-relation with God.	The Christian churches are drawn into the Trinitarian mission.	The individual bears the right to and responsibility for life.
<i>Habitus</i>	Paul witnesses to God through perseverance.	The congregation is the hermeneutic of the gospel.	Desire authenticity in relationships.
Trinitarian paradigm of mission: <i>a) Authenticity</i>	Paul ministers by God's mercy, does not falsify God's word and relies on God's fulfilment of his kingdom.	<i>1a)</i> Being sent to be witnesses to the Father; <i>1b)</i> The 'church' is tied to an eschatological understanding of the Kingdom of God.	Value consistency between the message and the lifestyle of the messenger
Trinitarian paradigm of mission: <i>b) Proximity</i>	Proximity-in-mission is the medium in which Jesus is ministered	<i>2a)</i> The 'church' is for the world. <i>2b)</i> The 'church' is separate from the world.	Estranged from the Christian churches in relationship, thought forms and patterns of engagement
Trinitarian paradigm of mission: <i>c) Intelligibility</i>	Paul's entire existence shows that Jesus is Lord in the Corinthian culture.	<i>3a)</i> The gospel grows in the soil of the receiving culture. <i>3b)</i> The gospel is reflected back to the sending culture.	Individualised, consumerised, technological culture

**Figure 3:** Matrix of key themes in Chapter 5

Newbigin's theology of mission will be explored further in this chapter, to provide a structure around which interaction between a Pauline faith and the spirituality of Generation Y may occur. In other words, I will move again towards dialogue. This dialogical conversation will focus on (a) the self-emptying, *kenotic* ministry of Jesus Christ within the mission of the Trinity and (b) the hermeneutical role that the Christian churches play within God's continuing mission. I will conclude this chapter by proposing a 'Newbigin-inspired' paradigm of mission that will allow the development of pastoral 'decision' in the next. Further, in drawing upon a Trinitarian theology of mission I will also aim to develop a Trinitarian language of mission to give expression to the dialogue between Paul and Generation Y. Consequently, the three fields of my 'Newbigin-inspired' paradigm of mission – *authenticity*, *proximity* and *intelligibility* – flow from the Trinitarian foundation of mission.

### ***The Trinitarian foundation of mission***

Drawing upon his own experience as an evangelist, Newbigin places the Trinity as the necessary and distinctive point from which to begin in mission. He finds that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, "... is not something that can be kept out of sight ... [but that] ... [e]ven in the simplest form of missionary preaching, one finds that one cannot escape dealing with this doctrine."<sup>3</sup> Newbigin does not mean that complicated descriptions of the nature of God be present in every missionary encounter. However, it is the coordinated and outwardly focussed relationships of the three persons of the Trinity that provide the necessary starting point and content of mission.<sup>4</sup> Only in the work of the Trinity may the nature of Christianity be seen in the midst of alternatives. Moreover, it was the experience of the early churches that the explicit doctrine of the Trinity was spelled out in response to mission among plural alternatives.<sup>5</sup> Two aspects of mission must be examined within this context. Initially, God's mission, as it is revealed in the activity of the Trinity, will be explored. Yet, the Christian churches find that their own existence is based upon the

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<sup>3</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 35.

<sup>4</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 26.

<sup>5</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 33.

mission-activity of the Trinity. Therefore, the role of the Christian churches as they are also caught up in God's mission will also be examined.

## **God's mission and the mission of the Christian churches**

A plausibility structure is the set of assumptions that allow a community to operate with some sense of connection with reality. Newbigin builds upon his understanding of the personal nature of knowledge in order to recover a distinctly Christian plausibility structure that could be related to other manifest plausibility structures. This may be summed up in the contention that Christ is the clue to history.<sup>6</sup> For Newbigin, Jesus is the Christ who both sums up and speaks to all human experience, as he is the decisive witness to divine mission. In fact, this statement forms for Newbigin the key by which positive missionary encounter can be established.<sup>7</sup> Jesus is neither limited to one culture, nor detached from culture and history. This may be seen in the distinction between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith: Jesus the first-century Jew is the sum and fulfilment of divine mission within culture; while as the Christ of faith he is the sum and fulfilment to the cultures under evangelisation. Accordingly, bringing the sense of the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith together demands an eschatological outlook of hoping, for example, that the disciples' lived experience of Christ be continued throughout history and time. This is the distinction that functions as the decisive part of the whole: the clue by which the whole may be comprehended (Gal 3:23–29).<sup>8</sup>

The flow of history and the divine intervention of Trinitarian mission are inextricably linked in Newbigin's theology:

... the Christian mission is the clue to world history, not in the sense that it is the 'winning side' in the battle with the other forces of human history, but in the sense that it is the point at which the meaning of history is understood and at which men [sic] are required to make the final decisions about that meaning.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 16.

<sup>7</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 51.

<sup>8</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 50.

<sup>9</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 41.

Given the involvement of God in the public affairs of human history, mission is done in four contexts. It is (a) done in obedience to the one who has achieved the decisive, telic *end* for history. Thus mission is participation in the *telos* of that for which history functions. Consequently mission is done (b) in the context of enculturated human history as the men and women of mission interact with the particular issues, relationships and forces of their time, geography and society. Therefore mission proceeds (c) *before* ‘the other’ who must respond to the witness borne by obedience to the one who has achieved the *telos* of history. So in response to this witness “... men [sic] are compelled to make decisions for or against God.”<sup>10</sup> Finally, mission is possible given (d) the ‘decisive moment’ in history when Jesus, God the Son, was crucified, thus providing for both redemption from and judgement of evil in this world.

Newbigin then perceives ‘election’ as a missionary doctrine. In declaring that “... [God] has consigned all to disobedience in order that he may have mercy upon all ...”,<sup>11</sup> Newbigin places election as a call for those who have received mercy to be present bearing witness to the salvation God has wrought. Hence, through living in the purposes of God in the particularities of time, the one who *is saved* bears witness to the one who *saves* so that those who are *not saved* may *be saved*. Thus “... salvation involves us with the neighbour whom God chooses to be the bearer of salvation, and there is no salvation otherwise.”<sup>12</sup>

Clear precursors to Newbigin’s mission theology of election may be discerned in 2 Corinthians 4. Paul is at pains to establish that he bears his ministry, which he later describes as a ministry of reconciliation to God (2 Cor 5:18–19), through divine mercy (2 Cor 4:1). His conversion and call are predicated upon the prior and undeserved work of God. Moreover, this ministry is enacted so that Paul may be explicitly drawn into the ongoing mission of reconciliation. Earlier, Chapters Three and Four related that this sense of Pauline calling gave *en-couragement*, humility and perseverance to take on the task of mission. For example, Paul himself submitted to the depths of painful of experience. He was able to do so because God’s Spirit

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<sup>10</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 41.

<sup>11</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 85.

<sup>12</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 84.

provided renewal and vindication to him in-and-through his experience. So it was in the context of weakness and vulnerability that Paul bore witness to the decisive work of God to confront the spiritual blindness of the Corinthians in the ‘face of Christ’.<sup>13</sup>

One of the theological themes that arose from my review of the spirituality of Generation Y was their sensitivity to the Christian churches’ reduction of an individual’s experience to thematisation and totality. In what I termed the ‘conflict of alterity’, Generation Y bears the competing and complementary desires to be known but not totalised.<sup>14</sup> On the one hand they possess a deep desire for relational intimacy. Yet they also exhibit strict, practical movement away from forces that are seen as restricting choice and freedom.<sup>15</sup> Newbigin’s theology of mission, and particularly election-to-mission, draws the Pauline witness of weakness before the other. This could take place as those who have received mercy enter into conversation with Generation Y. Specifically, Paul’s experience of faith-in-weakness provides a fitting template by which the Christian churches may be ‘neighbour’ to the sensitive ‘other’ of Generation Y.

Hope plays a key role within the eschatological framework of mission in Newbigin’s thought. This is particularly so as the Christian churches interact with the world as continuing witnesses with Christ to God’s action. The Christian churches bear the results of God’s action in Christ proleptically. Not in a fulfilled sense, but truly, as a sign of the sure arrival of God’s Kingdom.<sup>16</sup> This means that the Christian churches are challenged towards an eschatological witness, that is to say, towards developing a proximity to God’s presence by way of a hope seeking understanding. However, Newbigin adds that this hope is not “... personal bliss for myself ... [but] ... the coming of Jesus to complete his Father’s will.”<sup>17</sup>

Again, clear precursors to this theology of hope may be discerned in 2 Corinthians 4. Paul ends his address to the Corinthians regarding the legitimacy of his ‘weak’ ministry against the visible ‘power’ of the prevailing culture and the *usurpers*. He

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<sup>13</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 188.

<sup>14</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 43, 304, 329.

<sup>15</sup> Mason et al, ‘The Spirituality of Young Australians,’ 161.

<sup>16</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 126.

<sup>17</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 216.



then transitions to the next part of the epistle by reframing his experience within the context of God's eternal work. 'The eternal weight of [God's] glory' is not waiting for Paul at some unspecified time and location, but is being 'accomplished in him' (2 Cor 4:15). While Paul waits to experience the fulfilment of Jesus' resurrection (2 Cor 4:14), he *also* experiences the intrusion of Jesus' renewed life in-and-through death (2 Cor 4:11). So Paul is able to have hope for the present – and the future – as his future hope is validated by the fulfilment of hope in the present. Thus, Paul's witness of hope is inescapably based upon a developed eschatology that is centred on the fulfilment of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Conversely, when compared to this Pauline vision, the experience of Generation Y may be properly described as *hopeless*. Generation Y are not hopeless in the sense that they do not wish for certain things to occur, or for certain things to be true. Nor do they not work towards these things – they do. Further, they are not hopeless in that they display a hopeless disposition. Yet, the rising incidence of depression among the population of Generation Y may challenge this view. However, Generation Y are 'hope-less' in the sense that their spirituality of the lowered horizon has room for at best a severely truncated, fully realised, eschatology.<sup>18</sup> In other words, all that may be can only be more of what is. One cannot hope for the intrusion of something 'other' to bring life to the present, simply something 'better'. I suggest that this is more akin to optimism rather than a fully Pauline hope. The replacement of wish for hope in the spirituality of Generation Y may not be immediately noticeable, particularly when present wishes are fulfilled, or there is some possibility that they will be fulfilled. However, in times of stress and crisis, when the promise of wish-fulfilment fades, the presence of hopelessness will become apparent. This is illustrated by the frustration evidenced amongst those who, while sharing the Secular spirituality of Generation Y, do not have the financial or social resources to realize the ideal of individualised consumption.<sup>19</sup> The Christian churches are then afforded another opportunity to connect with Generation Y through the witness of hope. This will be investigated further as I explore Christ's role in the mission of the Trinity.

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Savage et al, *Making Sense of Generation Y*, 164-166.

<sup>19</sup> Anonymous, *Building the Mission-Shaped Church*, 16.

## Christ the clue to mission

The key question that Newbigin answers as he unfolds a Trinitarian understanding of mission is: “What is the relation between what God has done once for all in Christ and is continuing to do through the witness of the Church [sic], and the events of world history as a whole?”<sup>20</sup> He answers this question via a Trinitarian formula in which God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit each play complementary roles effecting mission, witnessing to this mission and bringing the world to account before this mission.<sup>21</sup>

For Newbigin, the biblical story of God the Father is unlike the other religious stories he encountered. Similarly, it defies confinement in the ‘private’ realm by the Secular spirituality of Generation Y. This is because the biblical story places human history within the larger, cosmically complete, “... framework of God’s history.”<sup>22</sup> So, in Newbigin’s theology, God the Father is active ruling all things, caring for all things and sustaining all things.<sup>23</sup> As the biblical story progressively focuses in on one aspect of the whole picture, the specific part speaks to the experience of God’s work for the whole.<sup>24</sup> Hence, the particular story of God at work in the people of Israel, provides the context in which God rules, cares for and sustains the whole of his creation. This ruling, caring and sustaining activity is perceived in two particular ways: as (a) judgement and as (b) restoration. Weston describes the judgement of God as being the

... ‘unmasking’ of the spiritual ‘principalities and powers’ that are at work in the social and political structures, and that assume a power that is not rightfully theirs ... [In the light of God’s judgement] ... nothing is left absolute ‘except God as he is known in Jesus Christ’.<sup>25</sup>

Consequently God’s judgement is a confrontation of that which tears God’s creation away from the one who made it. Further God’s restoration is his action to return his

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<sup>20</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 38.

<sup>21</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 39-41.

<sup>22</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 31.

<sup>23</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 39.

<sup>24</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 31.

<sup>25</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 29.

creation to its “... true ends ... . The Old Testament therefore is full of visions of a restored humanity living in peace and happiness within a renewed creation.”<sup>26</sup>

Newbigin’s missionary application of ‘election’ is manifest within the context of God’s judgement and restoration of his creation. As the biblical revelation of God’s story narrows in the Old Testament, it does so as an expression of God’s election of a few people to bear witness to his powerful work for the many. The election of those to bear witness to God narrows eventually finding its focus in Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father.<sup>27</sup> Yet, in 2 Corinthians 4, the Corinthian church fails to join with Christ to bear witness to God’s activity in two key ways: (a) by placing their ‘eyes on the seen’, the Corinthians miss out on the vision of the glory of God found in the face of Christ, and (b) by the absence of their experience of ‘life’ (2 Cor 4:12) in God.

In highlighting the Corinthians’ decision to place great weight on the temporal power of the interloping ‘*usurpers*’, in contrast to his own weakness, Paul seems to be drawing their attention towards the blinding effect of Satan. For the Corinthians to ‘fix the eyes’ on the ‘seen’ not the ‘unseen’ (i.e. Paul’s suffering, not the true glory that will come (2 Cor 4:18)) means that the hope of eternal glory (beheld in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:6)) is not grasped.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, the possibility of becoming subject to the spiritual blindness of unbelief, wrought by Satan (2 Cor 4:3–4), is raised. The implication is that the Corinthians themselves are vulnerable to the ‘blinding force’ of Satan.<sup>29</sup> In Newbigin’s terms, they have not lived up to their election. In succumbing to Satan’s blinding activity they have also lost the ability to participate in the mission of the Father.

Yet God is seen working in restoration to bring life to the Corinthians. Through Paul’s agency, God is ministering the life found in the resurrection of Jesus to them. Paradoxically, as Paul experiences a ‘deathly’ lifestyle (*necrōsis*) in following Jesus

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<sup>26</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 34.

<sup>27</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 34.

<sup>28</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 254.

<sup>29</sup> Such blindness may be distinguished in the corporate life of the Corinthian church as they seek to promote their own causes over each other. Examples of this may be observed in Paul’s criticism of their abuse of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:17–34) and the presence of a ‘party’ spirit that would discriminate between believers by the apostle they followed (1 Cor 1:10–17, 2 Cor 3:1–6).

Christ (2 Cor 4:11), life may be born anew in the Corinthians (2 Cor 4:12).<sup>30</sup> They are given the opportunity to have their eyes reoriented to Jesus Christ, the witness to the unseen glory of God. This is enacted by Paul, as he proclaims the gospel transparently and perseveres, being transformed through weakness in trial. Thus Paul's continued exposure of himself to the pain inflicted by the Corinthians is also part of God's means of renewal. In handing Paul over in weakness, for the Corinthians, God achieves his mission: bringing daily renewal in the Corinthians (2 Cor 4:14).<sup>31</sup> Paul is contrasted to the Corinthians. If the Corinthians ran the risk of falling short of their election, Paul fulfils it in his witness in weakness.

Newbigin's key stimulus towards a Trinitarian mission then is the insight that Jesus is the 'clue' by which history may be understood and navigated. Yet, Jesus is the clue as he witnesses to the work of the Father. "As the Son, Jesus loves and obeys the Father. He submits himself wholly to the Father's ordering of events. He does not seek to take control himself of world history."<sup>32</sup> Newbigin regards Jesus' incarnate life, chiefly his death and resurrection, as the point at which God the Father displays his judgement and salvation of the world. So he points out that Jesus did not start a political movement, nor attempt to wrestle power from the hands of those who held it.<sup>33</sup> However, Jesus did embody the place in which God reigned. "... [I]n Jesus the Kingdom [of God] is present."<sup>34</sup> So it is through his life, confronting the powers contrary to God and proclaiming that the Kingdom of God has come, that the world would see that God truly reigns.<sup>35</sup>

In the context of this divinely ordered mission, Jesus binds his disciples to himself, so that they may share his relationship with the Father who sent him. He also sends them as *his* witnesses to the world.<sup>36</sup> The disciples would "... be those, who in Paul's words, are "always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies" (II Cor. 4:10) [sic]."<sup>37</sup> This flows into the

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<sup>30</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 174-177.

<sup>31</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 178-179.

<sup>32</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 39.

<sup>33</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 208-210.

<sup>34</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 40.

<sup>35</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 46.

<sup>36</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 47.

<sup>37</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 46.

mission of the Christian churches. The disciples' witness to the work of God the Father is directly dependant upon their connection with Jesus, God the Son. So "[t]he Church faces the world rather as *arrabon* [sic] ... as a sign, first-fruit, token, witness of that ... which God purposes for the whole."<sup>38</sup>

Throughout 2 Corinthians 4 Paul interacts with Jesus' experience of incarnation: his earthly life, crucifixion, death, resurrection and resurrected life, to make sense of his own. Hence, by way of the life-in-and-through-death paradigm set out by Jesus, Paul finds both example,<sup>39</sup> and a way to be incorporated into Jesus' death and life.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, by forsaking other means of knowing God, Paul becomes a student in the 'Jesus' tradition (what may be called discipleship).<sup>41</sup> And further, by 'entering into' the experience of Jesus Christ, Paul enters into the 'relationship' of the knowledge of God. This is underscored by the role the incarnate 'face of Christ' plays in the knowledge of God (2 Cor 4:6). In perceiving the glory of God in Jesus, Paul stands before the Corinthians as a witness to God as he is. He also witnesses to God as he draws humanity to himself. Therefore, as Paul perseveres through a 'cruciform' life he encounters the transformation of taking on life from God. This is to say that his transformation becomes the grammar of testifying to the "... assurance of the new aeon in the old ... 'from glory to glory' ...".<sup>42</sup> However, for Paul, such experience of glory remains hidden; rather, his existence is marked by trial and vulnerability. And this for Paul is not an experience of loss, but an encounter of letting himself be vulnerable enough to share in and be transformed by the Trinitarian form of Christ's *kenosis*.

Newbigin applies a theology of *kenosis* to explain the way that in Christ all of history, including that of the Christian churches, is brought before God the Father. Newbigin centres his Christology in the transformative power of the cross. As a denial of worldly power, the cross stands as the pinnacle of *kenosis*. Paradoxically, the high point of mission – the point of contact between the Triune God and the many

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<sup>38</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 166.

<sup>39</sup> Flemming, *Contextualization*, 196.

<sup>40</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 174-175.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Flemming, *Contextualization*, 112, 174. Paul's sense of discipleship may be seen as he plays the role of the interpreter of trans-cultural (and at key points, countercultural) Christian tradition which he applies to particular issues in particular places.

<sup>42</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 521.

spiritualities of humanity – is the depths of vulnerability to worldly power experienced by Jesus on the cross. Thus, in the fundamental and unique exposure to the vulnerability of Jesus' death, the Christian churches are both objects of judgement and most clearly witnesses to the restorative power of God's activity in resurrection.<sup>43</sup>

Recognising Jesus' archetypical example in relation to this age of 'the seen' experience, Paul also recognised that "... righteous suffering will bear a specifically Christological imprint."<sup>44</sup> In this sense, Paul showed that the true path to fulfilment did not lie in submission to the hubris and posturing of the Hellenic milieu of Corinth, but in the *kenosis* of Christ. This means that perseverance through bad external circumstances is not viewed as simply a means to better circumstances. Rather perseverance is itself a sign of renewal and of an internally active relationship with God. So Paul exhibited a hope that far outstripped human effort in its forward vision and ability to be actualised. Albeit that the actualisation of his hope was inescapably founded upon the 'pneuma of faith'.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, the *telic* purpose of life for Paul was radically founded upon relationship with God, not the appearance of success in wealth, prestige and power.

For Newbigin, Christ's act of submission upon the cross ushers in the truly powerful 'Kingdom of God' into which humanity is called. Yet the power contained within this decisive event is hidden.<sup>46</sup> So it is the submissive witness borne by Christ and the disciples that brings the work of God the Father to light. This witness, in turn, compels people to accept or reject that it is God who holds and directs the 'true end' of history.<sup>47</sup>

Paul joins Jesus to bear witness to God's work to the Corinthian church. He finds that, having interpreted his experience according to the *pneuma* of faith, his

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<sup>43</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 167-168.

<sup>44</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 174.

<sup>45</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 513, 522.

<sup>46</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 39.

<sup>47</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 47.

interpreted experience begs to be broadcast (cf. 2 Cor 4:13–14).<sup>48</sup> This is why the ‘word of God’ is so important to Paul. Schnabel can write that Paul broadcasts it “... to everyone who is willing to listen ... [it is] ... the central process and task of missionary work ...”.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, for Paul as a ‘righteous sufferer’, following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, no occurrence interpreted via the life of Jesus is simply *bare* experience. So, “... [i]f the Lord Jesus did not rise from the dead, then Christian existence as Paul knows it would cease to exist.”<sup>50</sup> However, according to the eyes of faith, Jesus *did* rise and consequently must be made known (2 Cor 4:5, 13).

In a similar movement, Paul bears witness to God’s work to Generation Y as he demonstrates that self-fulfilment is drawn in submission to God’s creative power. Again, the theme of transformation in-and-through trial and fragility may be used to depict this paradox. In a Pauline plausibility structure, fragility gives way to life via the transformation effected by God’s Spirit.<sup>51</sup> This affords Paul great confidence in life, even when the external circumstances of life seem to be bad. Paul’s confidence stands in contrast to the stress experienced by Generation Y in the presence of forces that pose a threat to the ideal of happiness. Furthermore, the idea of fulfilment, in spite of external circumstance, is introduced. It is not a denial of the ‘this-worldly’, but an intrusion of eschatological realities and values into the present.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the fundamental understanding of the nature of self-hood is changed. No longer is it possible to conceive self as ‘self-as-individual’, but self as ‘self-in-relationship’: fundamentally distinct in experience, yet deeply connected in enduring relationship.<sup>53</sup> It is in the nexus between weakness in life, and the experience of God giving renewed life, that the parameters and occasion of self-in-relationship may be drawn.

Fulfilled relationship occurs then in relation to God’s self-disclosure in Jesus. The Pauline plausibility structure uncovers a ‘redemptive epistemology’ in which knowing implies unfettered relationship. Unfettered relationship then produces the

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<sup>48</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 493.

<sup>49</sup> Schnabel, *Paul and the Early Church*, 1548.

<sup>50</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 182. Cf. Paul’s insistence in using the unfamiliar *Christos* (Christ) in the non-Jewish world. “The confession of Jesus as the messianic bringer of salvation was the crucial characteristic of the new movement of the followers of Jesus.” Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 185.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 174-180.

<sup>52</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 182.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Anthony Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, Peter C. Phan, series ed., *Theology in Global Perspective* (New York: Orbis Books, 2006) 164-165.

possibility of knowing beyond the tethered and fragile experience of the consumer. Accordingly, the tools and power for dealing with the fragile bonds of relationship are bound up in knowing God. Additionally, they are brought into clear relief through the person and work of Jesus Christ.<sup>54</sup> A clear, yet affirming, witness is given before Generation Y, then, of sustainable and life-affirming relationship. The sort of relationship in which the finitude and fragility of human others is not drained in one's own need for relationship. Relatedness to God transforms the approach of the individual as they are given new resources to be *for* the other in-and-through trial.<sup>55</sup>

Within Newbigin's Trinitarian theology of mission, the Holy Spirit enables the ministry of the Son.<sup>56</sup> The Father takes hold of history, the Son bears witness of the Father's hand, and it is by the Spirit that the world is called to account:

It is the work of the sovereign Spirit to enable men and women in new situations and in new cultural forms to find the ways in which the confession of Jesus as Lord may be made in the language of their own culture.<sup>57</sup>

As Jesus the Son embodies and bears witness to the work of the Father, the Holy Spirit is active making it possible for people to recognize and respond to Jesus' witness. In other words, to acknowledge that Jesus stands as the witness of God's powerful hand to draw history to its appointed *ends* establishing Jesus as Lord, requires the enabling work of the Spirit.<sup>58</sup>

Yet, the Spirit works within the human context of history and the various enculturated forms that together make up the flow of human experience. This suggests the Spirit works by confronting and challenging culture with the reality of Jesus' Lordship. This means that, within an enculturated confession, those who do acknowledge Jesus as Lord are forced to re-evaluate what was taken for granted as 'natural'. Then, under the guidance of the Spirit, they may discover how Jesus *is* Lord within their context. That is,

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<sup>54</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 165.

<sup>55</sup> Morrison, 'Living at the Margins of Life,' 2-3.

<sup>56</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 40.

<sup>57</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 20.

<sup>58</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 36.



... [t]he mission of the church [sic] is in fact the church's obedient participation in that action of the Spirit by which the confession of Jesus as Lord becomes the authentic confession of ever new peoples, each in its own tongue.<sup>59</sup>

So for Newbigin, while Jesus is the clue by which history is understood, it is the Spirit who enables mission. In fact, it is the congruence of human action with the enabling presence of the Spirit that forms the underlying impulse of mission. As men and women are enabled to confess Jesus as Lord within their culture, the resulting, total witness of their lives becomes mission. Therefore, the people who are called into the confession of Jesus as Lord are also called into an enculturated tradition of discipleship in which they follow him reflecting the prevenient witness of Christ.<sup>60</sup>

The Holy Spirit is active in calling the Corinthian church to account before God through the implied question Paul leaves hanging in 2 Cor 4:13–14. While he is happy to address the Corinthians confident, as it were, in their sharing the basis for resurrection and eternal relationship with God, Paul poses questions even as he answers them: “Will you (Corinthians) join with me in speaking? Do you share this spirit of faith? Do you believe life is found through death in Jesus?”<sup>61</sup> Paul transposes the implied questions into the spheres of (a) life, (b) ministry and (c) witness. He does this sequentially in 2 Corinthians 4 as he exposes the nature of unbelief in life (vv. 1–6, 16–18), ministry (vv. 7–12) and witness (vv. 13–15). Therefore, in (a) life, Paul asks, “... are you spiritually blinded, in love with the empty display of wealth and human power: subject to unbelief?” Then, in (b) ministry, Paul enquires, “... where do you turn for the demonstration and mediation of God's power: the self-exultation of human power or the hidden ‘treasure’?” And finally, (c) in witness, Paul challenges, “... how are you appropriating the treasure of life found in-and-through death: that which is witnessed to by the Son and enacted by the Father?” Paul's examination of the Corinthians turns the *apologia* of his own ministry upon its head. Instead of questioning Paul, the Corinthians are scrutinised.

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<sup>59</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 20.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Newbigin's appraisal of the valuable role that Christians from a culture different to one's own have in challenging culturally based assumptions. Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 209.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 183.

In their case, however, it is the inner workings of faith that are probed rather than the outer displays of power, wealth and rhetorical skill.

As has been seen above, the points of crisis, at which Generation Y are confronted by God in judgement, are also the points of opportunity for restoration. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is active calling Generation Y to account before God in at least three ways. Initially, (a) the reality and coherence of the Pauline faith is seen in the perseverance and transformation of the churches in-and-through (but not necessarily out of) weakness. The internal coherence and beauty of faith is shone forth as a witness that challenges other plausibility structures. Then, (b) the proclamation of the gospel spoken out of this experience provides the decisive challenge to accept that Jesus Christ *is* Lord of human experience and being. In Paul's terms these are the words of light piercing the darkness of unbelief. Finally, (c) authenticated witness found in the congruence of word and lifestyle provides both the content of faith and the contingent conditions for believing. In this way, the Pauline agency in the mission of the Trinity is carried on by the contemporary people of God. The decisive call of the Holy Spirit to Generation Y is to be made in, through and by the collected people of God who have responded in faith to the renewal of life in the Father, via the witness of Jesus Christ, the Son.<sup>62</sup>

Newbigin's Trinitarian theology underlines a missiological stance. In a manner similar to the Trinitarian drama of Christ's *kenotic* encounter of the cross, Christian churches are called to be transformed by such radical self-giving. The transformation gives rise to a missiological position of witness. Such radical witness forms a likeness of Christ's Trinitarian obedience. And thus, the churches find a Trinitarian logic of radical and transformative mission to the world. Namely, that the mission of God is exposed in the absolute emptiness and vulnerability to the world's powers of the cross of Christ. The Christian churches are called to bear witness to this mission-in-weakness (cf. Rom 8:18-25) as the first-fruits of God's transformation of the world. So it is when the Christian churches' are most humble and vulnerable that the judgement and restoration of God will be seen, both from the inside and outside of the community of Christians.<sup>63</sup> This is so as the churches find their security and

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<sup>62</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 60-65.

<sup>63</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 167.

strength, not in the manifestation of religion or earthly power, but by the empowering presence of God's Spirit.<sup>64</sup> Newbigin's understanding of *kenosis* allows the Christian churches to question the point at which divine mission and ecclesial mission meet. From this point Trinitarian engagement with the spiritual experience of Generation Y will be possible, given Generation Y's estrangement from traditional ecclesiastical forms.

Attention will now be turned to the role that the Christian churches play in Newbigin's theology of mission. Initially the role of tradition in the formation of a Trinitarian worldview will be examined, particularly focussing upon the role of Scripture in this tradition. Then a missiological paradigm based upon Newbigin's missional ecclesiology will be developed. This paradigm will eventually allow the final development of a Pauline pastoral theology of mission for today's Australian churches.

### **The churches and the Trinitarian mission**

Newbigin explores the role of tradition in the plausibility structure witnessed to by Christ. In his thought, an appropriate Christian tradition rests upon the unique revelation of God in Christ. The experience of tradition, as it were, is to join the apostles in recognising the uniqueness of what God was doing in Jesus Christ.<sup>65</sup> If one is to grow in the knowledge of a certain tradition, or plausibility structure, they must then undertake an apprenticeship within that tradition. For this to occur there must be a strong understanding of the tradition to which one is joined.<sup>66</sup> This is not because the tradition itself is paramount, but because it is the window into the plausibility structure. In the case of the Christian churches, the plausibility structure is the mission of the Trinity. Becoming an apprentice in the Christian tradition is a recognition of both the enculturated nature of history (and therefore human life), and the 'in-breaking' of God into history.

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<sup>64</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 47-48.

<sup>65</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 60.

<sup>66</sup> Weston, 'A Postmodern Missiologist?', 240.

Newbigin contends that the Christian congregation is the hermeneutic of the gospel. That is, it interprets the in-breaking of God's mission into human culture. In other words, the plausibility structure of the revealed mission program of God allows the Christian churches the opportunity to 'indwell' the story as embodied exponents of divine mission. Newbigin, realistically, places the Christian churches as a part of a world in which many faith claims are made. Yet, far from being paralysed by the multiplicity of *worldviews* on offer, the churches are given the impetus to remain active in this environment. Their action seeks to interpret the divine mission to the world.<sup>67</sup> This witness happens in two connected ways. First, it is in the continued 'passing on' of the message of God at work in the world summed up decisively and fully in Christ. This is an expositional movement in which the speaking of a message from person to neighbour is the key element.<sup>68</sup> However, it is joined by a second component in which the message of Christ conforms the people of Christ into a unified shape. As diverse cultural expressions of humanity are united to Christ, they bear witness to his sufficiency by practical and visible unity with each other.<sup>69</sup> This is a difficult task and one that requires great and respectful patience, but remains the necessary key to a complete witness to the finality of Christ.

The cultural and social climate of Generation Y is one in which relationships and authenticity are highly prized. Young Australians desire a relational network. However, they maintain antennae that are finely attuned to 'spin',<sup>70</sup> by which they quickly discern and despise messages that seem to bear little impression on the reality of the messenger's life. In this context, Newbigin's description of the church 'indwelling' the belief system found in the Gospel is an attractive one. This is because the subjective experience of faith is linked clearly, yet distinctly, to the objective foundation of faith in the experience of the Christian churches. What one knows about Christ flows into action indicating relationship with Christ. In other words, the nexus between the divine 'revealer' and the human 'knower' suggests a theological phenomenology of knowing found in a Trinitarian foundation of mission.

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<sup>67</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 98.

<sup>68</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 50.

<sup>69</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 52.

<sup>70</sup> 'Spin' is the term used to describe the process of choosing to portray events in a manner that promotes one's own interests, even if it means stretching the plausibility of the events or avoiding responsibility for mistakes. Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 234.

Newbigin establishes the congregation's ability to 'know' God upon Jesus Christ. It has been repeatedly observed in this thesis that Jesus is also the primary witness to God in 2 Corinthians 4. However, Newbigin progresses this Pauline epistemology by establishing a link between the historical action of Jesus Christ and the Christian churches as they are manifest now. To do this he turns to the Christian canon of Scripture. He then exposes the interpretive role the Christian churches have as students within the tradition of the witness of Jesus.<sup>71</sup>

Newbigin's writing is characterised definitively by biblical allusion and quotation. He uses three terms: the Bible, Scripture and the gospel, to bring different shades of emphasis to the traditional Christian canon. 'The gospel' is highly focussed upon the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus comes as the clue to history and the decisive point of Trinitarian mission. In this sense he is the focal point and hermeneutical key of the canon. So Newbigin's use of the gospel is tied to the related aspects of divine mission and culture.<sup>72</sup> Divine mission is captured and expressed by the gospel in the context of diverse human culture. Thus the gospel presents a missional edge to the Christian canon. It relates particularly to the personal nature of knowledge, as it is the gospel of the person of Jesus. Consequently, as the gospel is preached, relationship with Jesus is offered. So it is in the proclamation of the gospel that the heart of Trinitarian mission is found.

In Newbigin's writings, 'the Scripture' and 'the Bible' are used with seemingly parallel meanings. They denote the written text through which Jesus presents himself to the world and are found as the sixty-six books of the canonical Christian Bible.<sup>73</sup> They stand in a continuous tradition in which the peoples who understood the historical forces of the world as being purposed by God in his redemptive plan as it bears witness to that plan as it unfolds. It both witnesses to particularities of history and draws the contemporary reader into the ongoing redemptive plan in as it plays out in their own history.<sup>74</sup> By reading 'the Bible/Scripture', a tripartite dialogue is established, whereby (a) the culture of the missionary and therefore (b) the presentation of 'the gospel' by the missionary, and (c) the newly receiving

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<sup>71</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 144.

<sup>72</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 46.

<sup>73</sup> Beeby, 'No Loose Canon,' 573; Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 97.

<sup>74</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 76-77.

culture are all confronted and challenged by the text. Thus ‘the Bible/Scripture’ is itself a product of particular cultures and to be understood as such, requiring great patience and care lest it be domesticated by the receiving culture.<sup>75</sup> Yet it has the ability to re-define questions and worldviews so that its own agenda becomes the interpretive framework for all cultures.<sup>76</sup>

Newbigin’s crucial contribution to this thesis both underlines the central role of Scripture in the formation of theology and warns of possible errors. In seeking to remain true to scriptural themes and expressions, one runs the twin risks of misrepresenting the text of Scripture and alienating the subsequent theological reflection from its own culture. The role that the church plays in witnessing to the triune work of God in the world may be highlighted in two ways. First, there is the extent to which Scripture is read directly into the activity of the Christian community. Second, there is the possibility that Scripture fades away and speaks with little or no authority beside the contemporary experience of the community. While Newbigin writes with the respectful pen of a true ecumenist, seeking to highlight the various wealth of understanding within Christianity, he retains a clear distinction between Scripture and the community it spawns. In Newbigin’s thought the Bible is the authoritative point that anchors the ongoing witness of the church to a “... once-and-for-all event ...”.<sup>77</sup> This is so, because it is tied to a unique historical event. Consequently, even as the witness does continue “... through a continuous, living, historic process ...”,<sup>78</sup> without that fundamental and initial anchor “... the whole Christian religion falls to the ground.”<sup>79</sup> So in Newbigin’s mind, even though Scripture is the driving force for theology, it must be initially understood from the perspective of its ‘first’ culture.

The reductive or totalising tendencies Newbigin warned of are attempts to view the Bible as either a compendium of ‘value-free facts’ or a record of ‘value-laden experience’.<sup>80</sup> Newbigin returns to Polyani’s reminder that all knowledge is personal

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<sup>75</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 96-99.

<sup>76</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 51.

<sup>77</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 71.

<sup>78</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 71.

<sup>79</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 71.

<sup>80</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 204.

and that it relies upon an inherent framework of assumption.<sup>81</sup> Thus, Scripture must be understood within a tradition of confession, and not as a neutral observer of either ‘facts’ or ‘values’.<sup>82</sup> The Bible is authoritative precisely because it is committed. Within its committed assumptions it provides a coherent call to knowing emanating from the Trinity.<sup>83</sup> Accordingly, within this committed call to knowing God, one becomes free to enter into dialogue with the equally committed calls of other worldviews.<sup>84</sup>

Newbigin’s logic provides a way for the Christian churches to acknowledge the Bible as the key to receiving and entering into ‘the gospel’ of the cross of Christ. The plausibility structure of Christianity is found in the gospel. It provides both the means for understanding the world and the ground upon which knowledge of God may grow. This gives rise to a ‘hermeneutic of mission’ which will guide the foregoing development of a Pauline pastoral theology of mission. Having examined the role of Scripture as a witness to Jesus, it is fitting in Newbigin’s theological methodology to move on to explore the manner in which the congregation of Christians acts to itself bear witness to the divine mission.

### ***The congregation as the hermeneutic of the gospel***

In this section a paradigm of mission will be developed. Through this paradigm a language of mission will arise by which the Christian churches of Australia may understand the nature of faith as it is understood by Paul and how it may be related to the spirituality of Generation Y. As discussed above, Newbigin’s missiology is based emphatically upon the theological category of the Trinity. Yet his Trinitarian theology of mission flowed naturally into his ecclesiology. I will now turn to Newbigin’s ecclesiology to draw the final step in a Trinitarian language of mission for contemporary Australian churches.

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<sup>81</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 205.

<sup>82</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 242.

<sup>83</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 242-244.

<sup>84</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982) ix.

In Newbigin's theology of mission, the Christian churches are called and elected to be witnesses of God, dependant upon the Spirit and continuing the mission of the Son. In thinking about God's people, Newbigin reflects that:

They go through history as the witness people, in whom the Spirit is present to bear witness of the real meaning of the things which happen in the world, so that – *in relation to these things* – men [sic] are compelled to make decisions for or against God.<sup>85</sup>

So it is by the Spirit of God that the church discloses the true nature of what it means to 'live in the Kingdom of God'.<sup>86</sup>

The idea that the Church provides a structure for the lived exposition of the Christian belief system is founded upon the bond between Christ and the People of God.<sup>87</sup> Granted that Jesus' experience is in some way archetypal, it teaches the Christian community to live out and understand their experience of the world, especially in the hope of opening new possibilities, through enacted reflection upon Jesus' redemptive role in history. This active assimilation of the gospel into the life of the Christian community simultaneously develops into their act of mission. Through living out Christ's mission, the congregation finds itself enlisted as a witness to the Christ, and an agent of God's self-revelation in the transmission of faith.<sup>88</sup>

Newbigin's notion that the congregation is a hermeneutic of the gospel implies that the gospel plays an indispensable role in the formation and disposition of the congregation. In other words, the gospel plays a profound role in setting the character of the Christian community. I will now return to the concept of *habitus*, first encountered in this thesis in Chapter One as the parameters of what constitutes a pastoral theology were discussed. The idea of *habitus* will be used to guide reflection on what it means for the participants in the Christian community to be shaped and guided by the gospel.

The underlying values and motifs that bring coherence and some sense of meaning to the Pauline faith and the spirituality of Generation Y have been traced. This was

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<sup>85</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 21.

<sup>86</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 50.

<sup>87</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 27.

<sup>88</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 78-79.



done in dialogue with Newbigin's category of the plausibility structure. These values and motifs may be thought of as the 'rules' that set the limits of the 'game of life' and provide "... the context for social interaction ...".<sup>89</sup> Newbigin's missional ecclesiology then forms an innate *habitus* for the Christian churches as it provides for a "... set of bodily dispositions and mental structures through which ... [one may] ... interpret and respond to the social world ...".<sup>90</sup> In other words, it provides for the Christian churches the template by which people may become skilful exponents of life. This is so where people are able to respond consistently to the challenges of life by living in *tacit* harmony with their authoritative plausibility structure. Skilful living is evidenced in the Pauline witness of 2 Corinthians 4 as Paul's connection with Jesus Christ through death and life shapes his consequent decisions and disposition. Newbigin extends this Pauline attitude as he explores the role of the Christian as being an 'apprentice in tradition'.<sup>91</sup>

The mission of the Christian churches flows from a *habitus* that arises directly from the hermeneutical stance it takes as the witness to the Trinitarian mission. So Newbigin writes:

... Christians are not called upon to organize a movement to counter the powers of paganism. They are called upon to be witnesses to him who is sovereign over history, whose character and will have been revealed and who – in Christ – has done the deed which precipitates the final issue for all mankind.<sup>92</sup>

As the Christian church is able to look along Scripture entering into the historico-theological flow of God's revelation, two outcomes emerge. First, from an internal perspective, the members of Christian churches will grow in their ability to live as reflective and skilled exponents of life from a Trinitarian perspective. A theological *habitus* will be borne out of the reflection of individuals in community upon the God who has acted, and does and will act to make sense of the operations of the world in which they live. Skill will be shown as people take on the character of Jesus Christ,

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<sup>89</sup> Powell, 'Re-Writing the Rules,' 39.

<sup>90</sup> Powell, 'Re-Writing the Rules,' 39.

<sup>91</sup> Newbigin himself talks of 'indwelling' a tradition. For Newbigin, 'indwelling' must occur in community and follow the lead of others. In this context I use the term 'apprenticeship' to provide the Pauline sense of being invited to share in Paul's own choice of speech and life: much as an apprentice is invited into the 'life of the trade' embodied by the tradesperson. Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 99-102.

<sup>92</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 26.

the central and decisive figure of Trinitarian mission.<sup>93</sup> This will be evident in both the individuals that make up the Christian churches and the churches themselves, as expressions of the skilled community.

In Chapters Three and Four I noted that Paul founds his confidence in life, in fact the very direction and discharge of his life, upon his attachment to Jesus. As Paul is ‘handed over unto death’, it is ‘because of Jesus’ (2 Cor 4:11). He bears ‘the dying (*necrōsis*) of Jesus in his body’ (2 Cor 4:10). Yet he also shows ‘the life of Jesus’ in his frail mortality (2 Cor 4:11). And he expects to be ‘raised with Jesus’ (2 Cor 4:14). Paul’s experience of life is shaped both by his understanding of the Trinitarian mission and the forces and people that are confronted and restored by his action. This results in the fundamental experience of sharing the *kenosis* of Christ, so that the life of the Father may be seen in his hope-filled existence. Paul’s hope causes the contingencies of life to cohere and be attached to the reality that the God of glory gives life (cf. 2 Cor 3:6, 4:16–5:5).

The second outcome of this theological *habitus* is that the skilled church becomes the crucial hermeneutical agent of the Trinitarian mission to the world at large. The skilled church is “... the witness of [God’s] governance ...”<sup>94</sup>: the body through which God presents the Messiah to all people “... with the possibility of receiving or rejecting the end for which he created all things.”<sup>95</sup> Therefore, members of the Christian churches are called to live out a particular relationship, being ‘apprentices in tradition’. Another way of putting this would be that the Christian churches become witnesses to the activity of Christ anchored, as it is, in the canon of Scripture. That said, Newbigin is remorseless in his pursuit of the role of tradition in the development of knowledge. For example, he continually reminds the reader of the necessity of a community for the appropriation of insight.<sup>96</sup> In this context he likens the Christian believer to a pupil who moves through a process of discovery that begins with acceptance of authoritative statements and progresses to the heuristic moment in which one may declare, “Now I see for myself [sic].”<sup>97</sup> Consequently,

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<sup>93</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 27, 45.

<sup>94</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 45.

<sup>95</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 27.

<sup>96</sup> See Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 43.

<sup>97</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 50.

the process of learning to ‘indwell’ the “... words, concepts, images [and] ideas ...”<sup>98</sup> of the tradition moves the believer progressively from *focal* to *tacit* awareness of the ‘tools’ of the tradition. Inversely, the believer grows in their *focal* awareness of the reality the tools allow them to explore.<sup>99</sup>

The role of ‘the apprentice in tradition’ has a dual implication for this study. Initially, it provides a missional perspective by which the experience of the Christian churches as they exist today may be viewed. From an individual’s perspective, one is able to move into the hermeneutical role of the congregation as they are drawn into apprenticeship. Secondly, those outside the Christian congregation may grow, able to explore the fullness of the reality witnessed to by the Christian churches, as they too are drawn close to the presuppositions and foundational construal of experience shared by the community formed by the gospel.

Fundamental to the experience of the Christian community is the bipolar relationship “...to God and to the world.”<sup>100</sup> This relationship plays out in a paradigm of mission with three connected, but distinct, parts in which simultaneous poles of relatedness interact. The three poles are (a) *authenticity*, (b) *proximity* and (c) *intelligibility*. Each part of the paradigm relates to a different aspect of Trinitarian mission as it is experienced by ‘the church’.<sup>101</sup> Following Newbigin’s lead in perceiving that mission is then a formative value of ‘the church’, *authenticity*, *proximity* and *intelligibility* may also describe the witness borne by ‘the church’ to the world.

As ‘the church’ is formed by the mission of the Trinity, and in their essence formed for mission, there is a need for *authenticity*. Earlier, it was seen that one of Newbigin’s key ecclesiological ideas is that it is of the very nature of ‘the church’ to

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<sup>98</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 205.

<sup>99</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 205.

<sup>100</sup> Michael W. Goheen, ‘As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You’’: Lesslie Newbigin’s Missionary Ecclesiology,’ *International Review of Mission*, 91:362 (2002): 358.

<sup>101</sup> At this point one must note the importance Newbigin attached to a unified manifestation of the ‘church’ as an earthly and visible witness to the unity found within the Trinity. In this thesis, the term ‘the Christian churches’ is used in recognition of the temporal manifestation of many *churches*. Indeed, some of these churches bear very different self-conceptions and understandings of their connection with any concept of ‘church’. However, this usage is at odds with Newbigin’s theological understanding of the people of God: as they are related to God and to the mission of the Trinity. In order to remain consistent with Newbigin’s own usage I will continue this section using his terminology, ‘the church’. See Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 82-83, for an example of Newbigin’s use of ‘the church’.

act as a witness to the work of God the Father in the world. This implies a clear ‘apostolic’ relationship in which the validity of the sent ones is based upon the faithfulness by which they bear witness to the words and deeds of the sender. Newbigin also ties the present manifestation of ‘the church’ to an eschatological understanding of the Kingdom of God. As a sign must point to its consummation with a genuine expression of what is to be fulfilled, so ‘the church’ in this missional paradigm is called to “... [point] human beings beyond their present horizon to the coming Kingdom of God, which can give direction and hope.”<sup>102</sup> ‘The church’s’ existence is only truly *of* God if it points towards the fulfilment of his Kingdom.

The missional paradigm of *authenticity* is consistent with the Pauline vision of faith. As Paul presents a defence of his ministry in 2 Corinthians 4, he reveals that he will have nothing of worth to bring as a minister if his ministry is not moulded by his agency of God’s eschatological ministry (cf. 2 Cor 4:1–2).<sup>103</sup> To retain *authenticity* as a minister, Paul must proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and rely on the gracious call of God that allows him to *see* the hidden eschatological reality of this declaration.

It seems that the cohort of Generation Y require *authenticity* of those who seek to engage with them in relationship. Earlier the importance of marketing in the construction and discharge of the spirituality of Generation Y was touched upon. While reliant on market driven information for the execution of their consumption-oriented *ethos*, Generation Y display a sharp sense of discernment of ‘spin’.<sup>104</sup> In the search for relationship, young people pride themselves on being able to detect *authenticity* in a message. They want to perceive consistency between what they understand as being ‘sold’, and the lifestyle of the ‘seller’. Thus, ‘keep it real’ may be characterised as a spiritual catch-cry of Australia’s Generation Y.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Goheen, ‘As the Father Has Sent Me,’ 359.

<sup>103</sup> Please note that I have been and will continue to use the terms ‘agency’ and ‘agency in ministry’ to describe the ministry Paul undertook. This may be perceived to be contrary to Newbigin’s thought as he denies that the Son, and ‘those whom he has made his brethren’, are ‘agents of the Father’s rule.’ Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 40. However, in this thesis I use the idea of agency to describe the manner in which the *witness* of Jesus is carried forth unto today in contrast to the Father’s *rule* in Newbigin’s usage. As such ‘agency’ and ‘agency in ministry’ are used in this thesis to deepen Newbigin’s concept of witness with the Pauline concept of ministry given ‘in mercy’.

<sup>104</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 234.

<sup>105</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 234.

A second paradigm found in Newbigin's writing is *proximity*. Just as the 'church' must retain *authenticity* as sent of God, so *proximity* with the world to which they are sent is implied. Newbigin understood the missional program of Jesus Christ for the world as being carried on by 'the church'. Christ became incarnate in order that the world may "... see things as they really are."<sup>106</sup> *Proximity* with the world for which he came was of fundamental importance in the mission of the Trinity.<sup>107</sup> Similarly 'the church' is to be shaped by its call to also be for the world. In being shaped Christologically, 'the church' will then take a threefold ministry in, with and before the world. Newbigin speaks of Jesus Christ being close to the world, in the dialectic of being both *for* and *separate from* it, in the following three ways:<sup>108</sup>

1. As the Creator and Sustainer of the world, all that is good in the world – including all that is good within the various culture of the world – flows from Christ. This means that all that has flowed from Christ, as the one who brings all good things to being and keeps them in being, must be present in the expression of Christ's people.
2. As the Consummator of the world, Jesus Christ is both the *telos* of his creation and the one to bring completion. Therefore 'the church' participates in this *telos* as a picture of the fulfilment of the culture from which it is called.
3. As the Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ identifies himself totally with it. However, as its Judge, he "... rejected the sin that had distorted it. The cross [in which Jesus was identified as both Saviour and Judge] stands as the salvation and the judgement of each place – salvation of God's good creation, judgement on the deforming power of sin. Thus the church, while identifying with its culture, rejects the idolatrous twisting power of sin present in cultural idols."<sup>109</sup>

Hence, to be *of* God and *for* the world implies the *proximity* of the missional community to the various cultures of the world, so that the agents of mission are simultaneously identified with the world and separate from it.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Newbigin, *The Light Has Come*, 6.

<sup>107</sup> Newbigin, *The Light Has Come*, 10.

<sup>108</sup> Goheen, 'As the Father Has Sent Me,' 360.

<sup>109</sup> Goheen, 'As the Father Has Sent Me,' 360.

<sup>110</sup> M. W. Goheen, 'Is Lesslie Newbigin's Model of Contextualization Anticultural?,' *Mission Studies*, 19:2-38 (2002): 139.

Paul's connection with the Corinthians has been noted several times in the course of this thesis. Paul's ministry was characterised by being for-the-other: in the case of 2 Corinthians 4, the Christians gathered in Corinth. Yet Paul's ministry was played out in the context of a disjointed and difficult relationship. In fact, Paul's dominant experience of *proximity* to the Corinthians was felt as cost.<sup>111</sup> In 2 Cor 11:28 he is able to reveal to the Corinthians that "... [he is] under daily pressure because of [his] anxiety for all the churches." Further, to be burdened, perplexed, hunted down, knocked down and 'dying' like Christ was the direct consequence of a life lived for the Corinthians (2 Cor 4:7–12). In other words, Paul bore the humiliation and exposure of continual relational movement back towards the Corinthians in spite of their rejection. However, Paul found that in his *authentic* movement towards *proximity* with the Corinthians God not only sustained, renewed and transformed him, but made the movement mean something. Whereas mere movement towards painful *proximity* would only produce more pain, this *proximity*-in-mission became the medium by which the resurrected life of Jesus was ministered to an estranged people.<sup>112</sup> So Paul was, for the Corinthians, an exemplar of Jesus Christ's Trinitarian form of *kenosis* – in contrast to their prevailing triumphalistic milieu. What is more, by being near, he was the witness to the possibility of being incorporated into true life that would not fail: life that came from the 'unseen' God.

Just as the Corinthians found that they were both affirmed and challenged by Paul's *proximity* to them, there is potential for Generation Y to be similarly engaged. The widespread disengagement and estrangement of Australia's Generation Y from the Christian churches has been noted repeatedly in this thesis. It seems, that from the perspective of many young people, 'the church' is not close to their experience of life.<sup>113</sup> However, the immersion of Generation Y in the popular technological culture of this age has also been highlighted. This culture, while allowing freedom and possibility, has also distorted the experience of Generation Y. The great stress load borne by Generation Y, and the potential for the depersonalisation of self and others inherent in lifestyles mediated by technology and consumption, hover like a ghostly

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<sup>111</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 185-186.

<sup>112</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 186.

<sup>113</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 324.

shadow over their experience.<sup>114</sup> In Newbigin's missiological language of *proximity*, and Paul's theology of being-in-ministry-for-the-other, 'the church' has tools to re-engage Generation Y. This may occur firstly as the churches exist *for* young people. Given that they are able to explore their culture, young people contain the potential to search for the good in that culture. In re-engaging as a witness to Christ, 'the church' may assist young people to discover Jesus the Christ, the Creator, Sustainer and Consummator of their culture.

Being *for* the world in the manner envisaged by Newbigin implies a final missiological paradigm, that of *intelligibility*. If 'the church' is to be an *authentic* witness with Christ to the work of the Father through the power of the Spirit, and if the *proximal* context in which they must do this is the various cultures of the world, then, for the mission exchange to be complete, the witness must be *intelligible* to those who are the recipients of ministry. Goheen paraphrases Newbigin, suggesting that "[t]he church fails to be for the place when its theology, ecclesiastical structures, worship, and churchmanship is imported from a foreign culture or is a survival from another time."<sup>115</sup> Newbigin traces the products of 'imported' Christianity lamenting that "[t]hey show little power of spontaneous growth and depend rather upon a continual flow of resources from outside to keep them where they are."<sup>116</sup> If witness is not *intelligible*, then it will not pass on a seed of faith able to grow within its own culture. However, an *intelligible* witness brings with it the possibility that some may come to Christ within the receiving culture. With this comes the possibility that they in turn may reflect the judgement and restoration of the gospel, previously unnoticed in the sending culture, back to it.<sup>117</sup>

The different nationalities, previous spiritual experiences and social classes of those to whom Paul ministered were extraordinary in breadth.<sup>118</sup> Yet, in ministering across various cultural divides, Paul did not shy away from using and explaining foreign concepts. However, he remained sensitive to the different contexts that he

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<sup>114</sup> Cf. Morrison, 'Living at the Margins of Life,' 2.

<sup>115</sup> Goheen, 'As the Father Has Sent Me,' 360.

<sup>116</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 32.

<sup>117</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 112.

<sup>118</sup> Barnett, *Paul*, 5-6.

encountered.<sup>119</sup> 2 Corinthians 4, in particular, demonstrates this willingness to go to great lengths to ensure *intelligibility*. Realising the depth to which the outwardly focused attachment to wealth and power had infiltrated the Corinthian church, Paul used his entire experience as a human being to demonstrate the incompatibility of such an attachment with the gospel of ‘Jesus Christ as Lord’. While his exposition of the gospel in his body was evidently not popular, it may be discerned to have led towards an *intelligible* witness that was completed by his written exposition in 2 Corinthians 4.<sup>120</sup> Thus, it may be seen that Paul’s concern for *intelligibility* affected his ministry profoundly. Paul was careful to develop an outward form of witness that exposed the unexamined assumptions of the culture to which he ministered the gospel. In other words, he was sensitive to the hidden undercurrents of culture that would weaken full appropriation of the gospel.

According to Mason, Singleton and Webber, Generation Y lack meaningful connection with the ritual, symbols and liturgies of contemporary Christian experience.<sup>121</sup> The Pauline witness of *intelligibility* raises two areas in which the Australian ‘church’ may draw near to Generation Y in mission. Initially it is incumbent upon a Pauline church to learn the spiritual ‘language’ of the culture into which it is bearing witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. In Pauline terms, this ‘language’ means both the words which mark the verbal declaration of the cohering motifs of that culture, and the hidden assumptions which find their expression in the realm of lifestyle choices.<sup>122</sup> So a key task of the Christian churches in Australia is to explore the way in which being immersed in a popular technological culture affects the growth and development of relationships. Further, the role that consumption plays in expectations of happiness and fulfilment among Australian young people must be examined. Following this exploration of the spoken and embodied spiritual ‘language’ of Generation Y, a Pauline church will explore the deep implications of the gospel *as they relate* to the spoken and unspoken elements of youth spirituality. Thus, the modes of Christian expression, verbal and in the

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<sup>119</sup> Flemming, *Contextualization*, 106-107.

<sup>120</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 189.

<sup>121</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 124.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. the way that Paul defends both his speech and life to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 4. Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 325.



realm of lifestyle, will self-consciously bear witness to the Lordship of Jesus as it relates to the culture of Generation Y.

In reviewing Newbigin's ideas of the plausibility structure, the Trinitarian foundation of mission and the essential role of mission within the establishment and expression of the Christian churches, a Trinitarian language of mission has been generated. This language of mission has been summed up under the three fields of *authenticity*, *proximity* and *intelligibility*. This paradigm of mission will now form the basis of a missional hermeneutic for Chapter Six that will guide a Pauline *habitus* of mission to Generation Y within the context of the Christian churches in Australia.

### ***Conclusion: A missional hermeneutic***

Chapters Four and Five have set out to draw from Lesslie Newbigin's theology of mission with the aim of bridging the hermeneutical gap between Paul's 'ancient' faith and the post-modern spirituality of Generation Y. These two chapters form the 'assertive' phase of this thesis in which the Pauline sphere and that of Generation Y have been freed to speak in dialogue and make their relative contribution felt. The aim of this process was to develop a comprehensive picture of the question at hand. In this way a Pauline theology of faith may be applied pastorally within the context of Australia's Generation Y.

Initially, Newbigin's understanding of the personal and relational nature of knowing was reviewed. This led to the formulation of the category of the 'plausibility structure', in which the assumptions and motifs allow what one 'knows' to be connected with all other 'knowledge' in a coherent way, so that it corresponds in a satisfying way with reality. In developing the plausibility structure, Newbigin uncovered a way for different construals of the way things are, and therefore spiritualities, to converse as they confirm and confront the assumptions of the other. The 'plausibility structures' of Generation Y and Paul, as he represents himself in 2 Corinthians 4, were then examined under five headings. The parallel themes of (a) estrangement and engagement, (b) strength and vulnerability and (c) the importance of relational knowledge were joined by an examination of (d) the manner in which

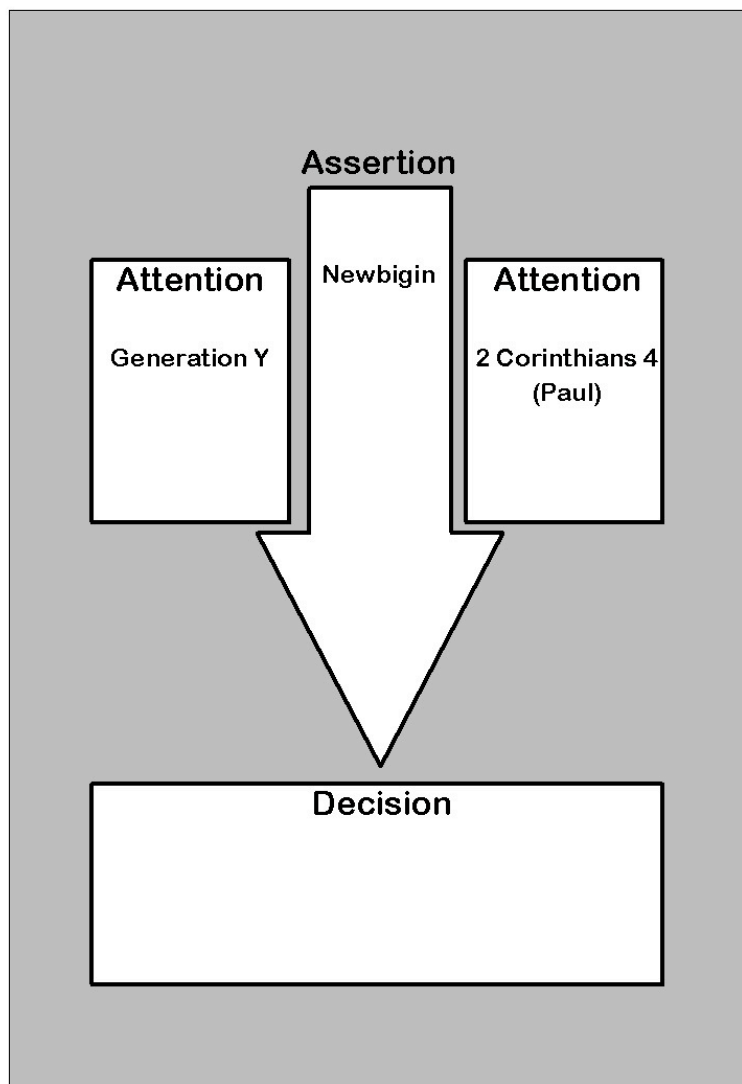
the *worldview* and *ethos* of each spirituality interacted and (e) the way in which each spirituality is broadcast. Each sphere of spirituality was found to confirm the other in the high value placed on the personal nature of knowing. In this sense the way that knowledge draws one into relationship with another was shared by both Paul and Generation Y. The total outworking of spirituality in life was found to be common between the plausibility structures of each sphere. However, significant confrontation between the Pauline faith and the spirituality of Generation Y was exposed in their understanding of weakness and vulnerability, estrangement and engagement and whether the *worldview* drives the *ethos* of spirituality or vice-versa.

In this chapter the Trinitarian shape of Newbigin's theology of mission was used to give a missional form to the encounter between Paul and Generation Y. The role of Jesus Christ as witness to the divine mission was in particular focus. The Christian churches are to follow Jesus Christ in the role of witness to the powerful judgement and restoration enacted by God the Father. The churches possess the role of hermeneutes of the gospel to the cultures in which they live. This theme was consistent with Paul's demonstration of the Christian faith in 2 Corinthians 4. For Paul the verbal declaration of the gospel was matched by a lifestyle in which the eschatological Kingdom of God intruded to bring life amongst death and strength in apparent vulnerability. So it was in the proclamation that God raised Jesus from the dead, and in the demonstration of a life transformed in-and-through weakness, that Paul bore witness to the divine mission.

Finally a three-fold paradigm of mission was drawn from Newbigin's Trinitarian theology. *Authenticity*, *proximity* and *intelligibility* were put forward as appropriate fields by which the Pauline witness of faith may be drawn into a *habitus* of mission for Australia's Christian churches as they consider Generation Y. Attention will now be turned to consider this Pauline *habitus* of mission. In considering a Pauline *habitus* of mission to Generation Y, I will move into the final theological phase of this thesis. Having allowed the spirituality of Generation Y and the Pauline faith experience to speak in the 'attentive' phase, and brought them into dialogue in the 'assertive' stage, a pastoral theology would be incomplete without action. I now turn to shape a way of life by which pastoral 'decision' may be made as the Christian churches seek to transmit their faith to Australia's Generation Y.

## Chapter 6

### Re-visioning the transmission of faith to Generation Y: A new Pauline *habitus* of mission



## **Crossing the bridge**

*For we who are living are always being handed over unto death because of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be made clear in our mortal flesh. Accordingly death is made active in us and life in you! (2 Cor 4:11 & 12)*

Throughout this thesis, it has been pointed out that a great gap exists between the spiritual experiences of Generation Y and the Christian churches in Australia. It is within this context of estrangement that the research question which drives this thesis must be brought to conclusion. The question is:

*How may a Pauline theology of the experience of faith as it is seen in 2 Corinthians 4 be applied pastorally within the context of Australia's Generation Y?*

Earlier it was suggested that the separation between the Christian churches and Generation Y in Australia may be related to a gap that must be bridged. In order to build a bridge that may allow the Christian churches to span this break, a three stage theological method has been enacted: 'attention', 'assertion' and 'decision'.

Initially the spheres of the spiritual experience of Generation Y in Australia and a Pauline understanding of faith were 'attended' to. Of importance for this study, three aspects of Generation Y's spiritual experience were found. First, they are estranged from the life, teaching and patterns of engagement with the God of the Christian churches in Australia. Second, they are also spiritually vulnerable due to their immersion in a technologically rich world and acceptance of an individualised, consumerist *worldview* and *ethos*. Yet thirdly, they remain spiritually sensitive, valuing relationships highly in the development of their understanding of the world. Themes similar to those uncovered in the experience of Generation Y were seen in Paul's spiritual and pastoral experience with the Corinthians – but, there were important differences. In the light of Paul's faith experience of 2 Corinthians 4, it was suggested that Paul was also estranged from the Corinthian church. Yet he found a way to maintain engagement with them through his attachment to Christ. Further, Paul was able to repudiate external displays of wealth and power to embrace seeming vulnerability. In doing so he found that God sustained and transformed him in-and-through trials. Finally, Paul too valued relationship in the development of his

understanding of the conditions of existence. However, this relationship had two axes. The first axis centred around the revelation of the transcendent God brought 'in the face of Christ'. The second axis of relationship with the Corinthian Christians provided the context in which Paul's faith in God was confirmed. Hence, by 'attending' to the different worlds of Generation Y and Paul, the foundations have been built, to enable the possibility of constructing a Pauline transmission of faith to Generation Y.

The second stage of the theological process involved 'assertion'. Here, the spheres of Paul and Generation Y were put into perspective to 'assert' their relative understandings and values regarding spirituality. This process of 'assertion' has, to draw an analogy, erected the pylons upon which the road that bridges the gap may be laid. In other words, Paul's theology of the transmission of faith, as it is found in 2 Corinthians 4, and the spiritual experience of Generation Y were drawn together with the hermeneutical aid of Lesslie Newbigin's epistemology and theology of mission. The possibility for dialogue has been bridged using Newbigin's category of the plausibility structure. In uncovering the committed assumptions of Paul and Generation Y through analysis of their plausibility structures, the points of congruence and departure between the two have been mapped. Both Paul and Generation Y operate with a sharp appreciation of the committed nature of their plausibility structures. This, in turn, means that both spheres find that their spiritualities are reinforced as they are broadcast. However, Paul's *worldview* seems to drive his *ethos*, whereas, for Generation Y, their *ethos* takes the leading role.

Looked at together, the key parallel motifs of the respective plausibility structures, namely attitudes towards (a) estrangement and engagement, (b) strength and vulnerability and (c) the importance of relationships in the development of spiritual knowledge, were each deeply affected by perceptions of spiritual transcendence. Following this epistemological review, a language of theological engagement between Paul and Generation Y was developed out of conversation with Newbigin's theology of mission. For this final chapter, the pastoral theological themes of *kenosis*, *patience* and *apprenticeship* in tradition will be pressed into service to show how Newbigin's sense of *authenticity*, *proximity* and *intelligibility* can lead to the development of a Pauline *habitus* of mission to Generation Y.

This final stage of the theological process marks “... the move from insight to action.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, this stage lays out some reflections enabling pastoral ‘decisions’ to be made. In attaining these points of ‘decision’, the three main objectives are to (a) provide a theological hermeneutic of pastoral mission to Generation Y, (b) assist the Christian churches as they consider some of the issues surrounding the general absence of Generation Y in their communities, and (c) serve Generation Y with a pastoral response that is fitting for their world. I hope to show how the ‘decisions’ proposed in this final chapter may result in collaborative activity on behalf of the Christian churches.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the conclusions drawn from this study will be formed in a manner that seeks to develop a corporate *habitus*, rather than disembodied abstractions or individualised processes.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, it will be my intention to complete a bridge across which Australia’s Christian churches may travel together to span the gap to Generation Y.

## Key themes

The key pastoral theological themes that form the structure for this final chapter are: *kenosis*, *patience* and *apprenticeship*. As set out in *figure 4* below, these three pastoral theological themes are considered in the light of a Pauline *habitus* of mission, Leslie Newbigin’s theology and the experience of Generation Y.

In *figure 4* an important relationship between Paul and Newbigin emerges. That is, the parameters of a Pauline *habitus* of mission will be set by Newbigin’s tripartite paradigm of mission as *authenticity*, *proximity* and *intelligibility*. This will help to structure the body of Chapter Six. As each element of this paradigm is approached, I will set out to identify the dispositions that provide “... the context for the social interactions ...”<sup>4</sup> that are necessary for mission. Parallel to Newbigin’s category of the plausibility structure, ‘the dispositions’ help to deepen the churches’ understanding of their identity and activity.

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<sup>1</sup> Myers, ‘*Decision Making*,’ 99.

<sup>2</sup> Myers, ‘*Decision Making*,’ 100.

<sup>3</sup> Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 12-13, 25.

<sup>4</sup> Powell, ‘*Re-Writing the Rules*,’ 39.

<b>Pastoral theological themes</b>	<b>Pauline <i>habitus</i> of mission</b>	<b>Newbigin</b>	<b>Generation Y</b>
<i>Kenosis</i>			
The 'apostolic' church	A sense of being sent by God  The need for spiritual re-creation	The witness of the Son forms the plausibility structure of Christianity.  The gospel is a public truth enabled by the Spirit.	Live in a 'this-worldly' spiritual context ruled by the individual
God's eschatological kingdom	Life in-and-through trial is the experience of the eschatological kingdom of God.	The <i>kenosis</i> of Christ  The 'church' is the <i>arrabon</i> of God's kingdom.	'Keeping it real'
<i>Patience</i>			
Overcoming the 'conflict of alterity'	Continuing engagement in spite of cost	In being for the world God meets humanity at the lowest point.	The 'conflict of alterity'
The crisis	The possibility of life in-and-through trial, i.e. hope and <i>patience</i>	In being separate from the world, God both judges and provides for restoration.	Fragile networks of relationship and stressful patterns of life
<i>Apprenticeship</i>			
Text and TXT	Knowing God 'in the face of Christ'	The gospel is an 'explosion of joy'	Immersed in technological world, yet desiring intimacy of relationship
The congregation as a hermeneutic of the Gospel	Paul invites the Corinthians into his experience of holding treasure in a jar of clay	Focal and tacit awareness of reality  <i>Apprenticeship</i> in tradition	Uninterested in the 'world' of the Christian churches  Happy 'midi-narrative'

**Figure 4:** Matrix of key themes in Chapter 6

Just as a sportsperson responds to the ‘rules’ and ‘field of play’ that give shape to their game, so my reflections are designed to explore the parameters and conditions of mission that give shape to the life of Australia’s Christian communities. Thus, having set out the ‘field of play’, as it were, I will explore the manner in which Australia’s Christian churches may develop a set of embodied dispositions that will enable skilled action in a *habitus* of pastoral mission.<sup>5</sup>

As a whole, as the fields of *authenticity*, *proximity* and *intelligibility* are laid down, particular attention will be paid to the way in which *kenosis*, *patience* and *apprenticeship* together form a pastoral theology of mission for Australia’s Generation Y. Accordingly, the chapter will be organised in the following three major sections:

1. *Kenosis*: A paradigm of ‘authenticity’ before Generation Y;
2. *Patience*: A paradigm of ‘proximity’ to Generation Y; and
3. *Apprenticeship*: A paradigm of ‘intelligibility’ to Generation Y.

Each section underlines the interaction and dialogue between Paul, Newbigin and Generation Y in the hope of enabling pastoral decisions. Initially, *kenosis* will be explored as an *authentic* disposition (*habitus*) of Pauline mission. Paul’s sense of being sent by God in mission as an ‘apostle’ is the grounds for both confidence and humility within the mission of the Christian churches. Further, an understanding of participation in God’s eschatological kingdom allows the churches to approach vulnerability and trial as the contexts within which they experience life.

Following the discussion regarding *kenosis*, *patience* will be opened up as an appropriate *habitus* of *proximity* to Generation Y. It will provide the Christian churches with particular possibilities for mission as they seek to engage Generation Y and remain mindful of their sensitivity to thematisation. A *habitus* of *patience* is extended as the opportunity for the transmission of the Christian faith is drawn out in the presence of ‘crisis’ in the lives of Generation Y.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Powell’s process, based on Bourdieu’s concept of the *habitus*, found in Powell, ‘*Re-Writing the Rules*,’ 39.



*Apprenticeship* is also considered as an *intelligible* mode of witness to Generation Y. This will occur as the knowledge of God ‘in the face of Christ’ is brought close to the explosive communicative ability of Generation Y, but as an ‘explosion of joy’. Finally, the hermeneutical role of the congregation will be considered. However, this will occur with the congregation taking on the perspective of an apprentice learning to use new tools to discharge an established task. Now, a Pauline *habitus* of mission will be explored in the light of the *habitus* and disposition of *kenosis*.

### ***Kenosis: A paradigm of ‘authenticity’ before Generation Y***

An important element of the paradigm of mission drawn from Newbigin’s theology is *authenticity*. In Chapter Five, two elements were discerned to constitute the parameters of *authentic* witness to the work of God the Father. The first is that the church acts in an ‘apostolic’ relationship of witness to the Father. This relationship is based upon ‘sending’ and ‘being sent’: it is God the Father who is the sender and the churches that are sent.<sup>6</sup> The second element that informs *authentic* witness is that the present manifestation of the churches is tied to an eschatological understanding and experience of the Kingdom of God. For both Paul and Newbigin, the decisive activity of Jesus’ death and resurrection forms and sets the trajectory of experience for the people of God. However, the churches’ experience of this decisive work is of a proleptic nature, awaiting fulfilment in the *eschaton*. This leaves the people of God as the promise and foretaste of what is to come before a watching world.<sup>7</sup>

However, *authenticity* does not seem to figure as the current perception of the Christian churches in Australia. In the case of Generation Y, given that they are well acquainted with marketing as a tool to better sell a product, they use marketing to their advantage in many ways, picking and choosing from options so that they may ‘imaginatively construct their world’.<sup>8</sup> However, Generation Y are also particularly sensitive to marketing in which the seller seems to twist or ‘spin’ the message to promote their own self-interest.<sup>9</sup> This means that as a whole, Generation Y seem to

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<sup>6</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 40-41.

<sup>7</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 53.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 325.

<sup>9</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 234.

distrust the Christian churches in Australia and perceive them to be self-interested. Against this perception, Paul's enacted witness of *kenosis*, flowing as it does from Jesus, the decisive witness to divine mission, provides a disarming and *authentic* counterpoint to the distrust and preconception of Generation Y. I will now turn to examine the possibilities that (a) bearing a mission from God and (b) being the foretaste of God's kingdom afford the Australian churches as they seek to reach out to Generation Y in mission.

### **On a mission from God: The 'apostolic' church**

A predominant experience of spirituality for Generation Y is that explicitly transcendent epistemologies are denied a public voice. This attitude is so well ingrained that for many of Generation Y who identify themselves as Christian, a Christian faith is reduced to private opinion.<sup>10</sup> That is, faith may be nourishing personally, but it has no place within the general discharge of public life. However, there are at least three factors that have arisen from this thesis that challenge the sufficiency of this view. First, Generation Y's Secular spirituality is vulnerable to collapse. Further, it is not clear that the 'lowered horizon' that so influences their *worldview* and *ethos* will be able to cope with the demands of life. Second, Paul challenges the idea that Christianity is unattached to the everyday possibilities and problems of the here-and-now and is, therefore, just an opinion. He does this through his fusion of the 'this-worldly' and 'other-worldly' horizons in 'the face of Christ'. Third, Newbigin disputes that any plausibility structure (i.e. the Pauline faith and the Secular spirituality of Generation Y) is reducible to the private world of opinion. Rather, he demonstrates that each and every plausibility structure makes universal claims in its attachment to reality. They are, then, open for examination and assessment regarding their sufficiency as plausibility structures. This happens as a plausibility structure is tested for its 'beauty, rationality and comprehensiveness' in dealing with the contingent happenings of life.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 90-92.

<sup>11</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 47.

For Newbigin, part of the abiding character of ‘the church’ is that it follows on from Christ in the same tradition of witness to the work of God.<sup>12</sup> Following from this understanding of the missionary involvement of the people of God in the witness of Christ, Paul’s sense of apostolicity may be brought to bear upon the Australian Christian churches. Earlier, it was seen that Paul had a significant awareness of his own ‘call’ to be the apostle to ‘the gentiles’ (cf. Gal 1:1, 15–17).<sup>13</sup> However, as the manner in which his faith influenced his life was examined in 2 Corinthians 4, Paul revealed that the gospel made deep claims upon every Christian’s life: Paul the apostle invited all of the Corinthian Christians to share in his declaration that God raised the Lord Jesus and in his experience of life in-and-through death (cf. 2 Cor 4:13–18).<sup>14</sup> Consequently, the contemporary Christian churches share a sense of ‘being sent’ to make known what God has done. In this Pauline context, for the churches to share in the final witness of Christ to God’s kingdom appropriates his general invitation to join him in his ‘apostolic’ plausibility structure (cf. 2 Cor 4:14).

To be an apostle of God implies an essential confidence. This confidence is a consequence of the authority of the sender.<sup>15</sup> In the terms of discovery with ‘universal intent’,<sup>16</sup> as the churches encounter the ‘glory of God in the face of Christ’ they do so as agents-in-mission. The perception of God’s glory is transmitted, as it were, in the death, resurrection and continuing life of Jesus Christ. Further, God’s glory is transmitted so that others may also share in the life that flows from it (2 Cor 4:12). This paradigm of ‘apostolic’ confidence means that the witness of God’s glory is freed to contend for the plausibility of that understanding. However, witnessing as one who is sent forestalls arrogance. Confidence may emerge in the demeanour of the Christian churches of Australia in at least three ways:

1. The Christian community is freed to acknowledge that it contends from a point of commitment: having been ‘sent’ to bear witness to the glory of God. However, in acknowledging that faith is necessary for this confidence the

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<sup>12</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 53.

<sup>13</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 126.

<sup>14</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 126.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Paul’s overwhelming sense of confidence in his task which was *given* by God. Barnett, *Paul*, 120-121. This is also present in 2 Cor 4:1-2.

<sup>16</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 47-48.

Christian community is able to engage in dialogue with the other, helping them to uncover the faith commitment implied in their own stance.<sup>17</sup>

2. Further, the Christian community is able to contend for their position willing to have it examined and challenged. This is so as the very strength of the Pauline perspective is that God brings restoration, and confirmation of faith, in-and-through the experience of being challenged.<sup>18</sup>
3. Finally, in appropriating an ‘apostolic’ mode of witness, the Christian churches recognise that they do not construct the truth of the message. Rather, their witness is that of vouching for its ‘beauty, rationality and comprehensiveness’ as it is achieved *in* them.<sup>19</sup>

To be an apostle of God also implies an essential disposition of humility. As the Christian churches carry on the witness of the Son they bear it as a servant bearing forth the master. In this sense, witness is carried out in an attitude of *kenosis* where the self fades before the image of the sender.<sup>20</sup> One aspect of witnessing not only *to*, but *in* the *kenosis* of Christ, is that the witness bears out the sender without responsibility to effect change in those who behold their witness. Newbigin has written that conviction, judgement and restoration of this world comes subsequent to witness, and is brought about by the Father, through the Spirit.<sup>21</sup> As the Holy Spirit confronts people with the witness of those who live acknowledging that ‘Jesus is the Lord of history’, God the Father brings judgement or restoration according to their response. Paul mirrors this thought as he exposes unbelief as the effect of spiritual blinding (2 Cor 4:3–4).<sup>22</sup> Therefore, to witness in the weakness of *kenosis* means that witness is just that – witness.<sup>23</sup> It is not witness plus judgement. Nor is it even witness plus restoration, for again that is one of God’s works. Two important implications flow from this discovery in the context of the Australian churches’ witness to Generation Y:

1. Witness is not given to effect response. This removes the pressurised atmosphere of needing to justify activity through ‘results’: increased

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Newbigin’s approach to evangelism in, Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 36.

<sup>18</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 167-168.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 26-27.

<sup>20</sup> This is reminiscent of Jesus’ own *kenosis* in which he “... emptied himself taking on the form of a slave ...” (Phil 2:5–8).

<sup>21</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 40.

<sup>22</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 491; Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 328.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 138.

attendance at church functions, or ‘decisions for Christ’. Thus, God is restored as the proper object of the Christian churches’ devotion, and people may be served irrespective of response. In this way the churches’ demeanour before Generation Y will be less clamouring and anxious. This is because they will be more satisfied in God and, ironically, more confident in their position.

2. The category of spiritual sight is returned to the Holy Spirit. Thus a mechanistic view of mission is excluded. That is to say, a view of mission in which certain techniques, programs and formulae are appropriated with the expectation that if they are ‘done right’ then the results will follow, will be left behind. The Christian community will entrust the *result* of witness to the Holy Spirit. Consequently, prayer for the communities within which witness occurs becomes the *telic* activity of witness.<sup>24</sup> In Pauline terms this is both the prayer of faith (2 Cor 4:13–14) and the prayer of thanksgiving (2 Cor 4:15). The prayer of faith being that in which the confident declaration of the gospel asks for its completion by the *pneuma* of faith. And the prayer of thanksgiving being that in which those who do respond to the gospel in faith express thanks to God that their prayer of faith was answered. This recursive, yet passive, activity strengthens and reinforces the *pneuma* of faith and witness of the Christian community as God brings the restored life of his kingdom to bear in the present.<sup>25</sup>

The apostolicity of the Christian churches involves leaving behind the self in order to gain God. As Nouwen writes, “...(t)he French have an imaginative expression: *reculer pour mieux sauter* [sic], to step back in order to jump farther.”<sup>26</sup> It is through the apparent retreat of giving up the right to construe the conditions of this horizon that the Christian churches are able to leap beyond it – into the freedom of life and glory (2 Cor 4:10, 17–18). By retaining commitment to the one who has sent the Son, in whom ‘the knowledge of the glory of God’ (2 Cor 4:6) may be grasped, the Pauline community allows itself to be the agent through which a coherent call to

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Newbigin’s insistence upon the necessity of the Holy Spirit’s work for the beginning and ongoing growth of a Christian life. It seems that, underlying Newbigin’s view, Paul must ask God for this to happen (and thank him when it does). Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 70-72.

<sup>25</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 531-532.

<sup>26</sup> Nouwen, *The Living Reminder*, 64.

knowing may emanate from the Trinity.<sup>27</sup> Just as, for Paul, this meant taking up the ‘*necrōsis* of Jesus’ (2 Cor 4:10), so in the current context this means allowing the experience of the Christian churches to be infused with loss of hermeneutical autonomy. Consequently, as the churches live as ‘apostles’ of the eschatological Kingdom of God – in which the elements of that which is ‘seen’ decline in importance before the ‘unseen’ reality – the presence of a God unnoticed by Generation Y will be made clear.

### **Thy Kingdom come: God’s eschatological kingdom**

Generation Y insist on the right to construct their own spiritual world.<sup>28</sup> Yet, the machinery of the market churns out many things to enjoy and this generation’s experience is dependent upon continued material consumption.<sup>29</sup> Like the strands of a spider’s web, the networks of relationship that provide reinforcement, nurture and emotional security are far reaching and interconnected. However, also like the spider’s web, these networks risk bearing only a small weight and being easily brushed aside.<sup>30</sup> Further, the hubris of the market espouses a sense of self-confidence that has little place for difficulty in life. Yet, as has been seen earlier, these forces have combined in the experience of Generation Y to make them suspicious of being deceived. They desire a ‘real’ or *authentic* experience in which people live out their values, and they are sensitive to hypocrisy. So it is within a divided context that a Pauline church seeks to bear an ‘apostolic’ ministry. Like Paul, the Christian churches share ‘... this ministry according to the mercy shown us ...’ (2 Cor 4:1). Their ministry is a gift of God in which slavery gives way to freedom.<sup>31</sup>

For the Pauline church there is a relational link between the historical activity of Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection, and his present activity in the church. Accordingly, the gospel – as a verbal declaration that God the Father raised Jesus, his Son, from the dead – stands as the grounds for the past and the future of God’s

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 82-84.

<sup>28</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 324-325.

<sup>29</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 233.

<sup>30</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 232-233, 331.

<sup>31</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 133, 134-5; R. Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994) 15 ff.

people (cf. 2 Cor 4:4).<sup>32</sup> It is the gospel's call to submit to the past, in order to be drawn to the future: to experience the 'glory of God' one must perceive the 'face of Jesus Christ' (2 Cor 4:4).<sup>33</sup> However, the submission involved in this Pauline vision of faith is not one of subservience but participation. For to be drawn into relationship with the risen Jesus involves bearing witness to that resurrection. It is in the witness of life in-and-through death that the Pauline church stands as the interpretive key to Generation Y of Jesus' resurrection.

In the context of this continuing relationship, the proclamation of the gospel is not merely the speaking of words. Rather, it is the issue of a personal invitation. The fabric of individualisation is given up to be included in the freedom of restoration. That is, the seeming loss of declaring another's message opens up the horizon of possibilities for the future.<sup>34</sup> This paradox stands in contrast to the apparent freedom of the present guarded by Generation Y. In the imaginative construal of the present as their own, Generation Y allow themselves to be corralled by the forces that paint the horizon in which they live, namely the market, fleeting time, fragile relationships and society.<sup>35</sup>

The Christian churches have the opportunity to bear an ironic witness to the freedom Generation Y desire. Even as the Pauline church experienced loss, it did so as a fundamental characteristic of the freedom captured in the gospel. In this sense, Paul's own *necrōsis*, namely, following Jesus in vulnerability and death, was no merely static and occasional affair, but was a lifestyle in which burden, perplexity, flight and injury gave way to perseverance, understanding, succour and balm (2 Cor 4:7–10). Thus, Paul's lifestyle of renewal out of loss mirrored and made clear the message he brought. In fact Paul self-consciously ensured that his lifestyle of dependence upon the restoration and renewal of God brought him into conflict with the self-honouring lifestyles of the cultures in which he moved.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, his apostolicity extended beyond his lips and lay also upon his life. To share a Pauline sense of being 'called' by God to minister the possibilities bound up in the gospel to

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<sup>32</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 521.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 521.

<sup>34</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 501.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 501.

<sup>36</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 190.

Generation Y, a contemporary Pauline church must, it seems, seek out experience in which their being ‘sent’ is clear. Just as Paul’s own experience of renewal through *necrōsis* begged to be told, so the contemporary churches must seek that experience out of which the gospel may proceed as an ‘explosion of joy’.<sup>37</sup>

For Paul, the context out of which his joy proceeded was one of *necrōsis* (2 Cor 4:10). Further, Paul’s own *necrōsis* (as illustrated in 2 Cor 4:7–10, 6:4–10 and 11:23–29) was due to his attachment to Jesus (2 Cor 4:10). In submitting to the prevailing power structures of the day, both Jesus and Paul allowed the restoring hand of God the Father to bring life.<sup>38</sup> Previously, it was seen that Generation Y do, in their individualism, struggle to exert themselves upon the multitude of forces that would act to control them. It was also suggested that in continuing to feed their spirituality through increased consumption, Generation Y prevent themselves from accessing the life that Jesus and Paul bore witness to. The experience of the contemporary Christian churches may be characterised as somewhat similar to that of Generation Y. One way of perceiving the churches’ various responses to the attested decline in their membership over the last decades, and Generation Y’s estrangement, is that they seek to promote their position by retaining outward forms of residual power. This is seen particularly in activity to guard financial self-interest, and not being transparent when dealing with abuses of position. It certainly seems that this understanding is the common perception of Generation Y.<sup>39</sup> In the Pauline context I suggest that, for Australia’s Christian churches, the experience of *necrōsis* would entail being drawn out in weakness in contrast to the prevailing security structures of this world: wealth and the maintenance of ‘this-worldly’ power.

To be drawn out in weakness in contrast to the prevailing security structures of this world, yet finding life in the midst of such weakness, bears witness to a God who values the people of this world and is working unto the transformation of his new kingdom.<sup>40</sup> For the Christian churches of Australia to share in, and minister, this eschatological vision requires that they clearly witness to the restorative power of

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<sup>37</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 231.

<sup>38</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 26-27.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Hughes, ‘*Insecurity in Australia*,’ 18; Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 80-82, 111-112.

<sup>40</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 495.



God the Father when exposed and vulnerable. If churches seek to realise the ‘weight of glory’ (2 Cor 4:17) now, they are circumventing what seems to be a key part of Paul’s witness. Further, it seems that in Pauline terms to seek realisation of the *eschaton* now, renders a hope-less existence. Significantly, this realised *eschaton* is borne out in the spirituality of Generation Y. A ‘gospel’ in which ‘the weight of glory’ is realised is different from that which infused Paul’s life, and flowed from his lips. Accordingly, it also denies the present people of God the experience of renewal in-and-through suffering. Thus, while realised ‘glory’ may be attractive, it provides no Pauline resources for the management of vulnerability: either within the Christian churches or as a witness to Generation Y.

The nexus between weakness in life and the experience of God giving renewed life allows for a ministry in which the parameters and occasion of self-in-relationship may be drawn.<sup>41</sup> The minister is decisively ‘self-being-renewed by God’ as they bring themselves under the needs and judgement of Generation Y. So one part of being fragile for and before Generation Y emerges as the minister bears the cost of dissatisfaction with the witness to God they bring. As Paul discovered, dissatisfaction with a gospel clothed in weakness produced dissatisfaction with its agent. Yet the Pauline witness is that through perseverance *with* dissatisfaction, the beauty of the gospel is shown. In this sense the fundamental humility of ministry mirrors the *kenosis* of Jesus Christ in which death in the present gives way to life.

*Kenosis* has been explored as a pastoral *habitus* arising from the first field of Newbigin’s paradigm of mission – *authenticity*. This has flowed from the Pauline theme of ‘apostolicity’: acting as agents ‘sent’ by God. In this theme due foundations for confidence and humility before Generation Y have been established. This has led to a renewed possibility of having something to offer Generation Y that does not dominate or coerce. The further Pauline theme of the eschatological experience the Kingdom of God – perseverance in-and-through trial – was also discussed. In this theme an experience of faith that may speak to Generation Y’s desire to ‘keep it real’ was uncovered. By turning aside from an experience of life that is tethered to economic and social power, the life-giving freedom of God is made

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<sup>41</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 164-165.

known. Having touched upon *kenosis* in this section, I will now investigate Newbigin's idea of *proximity* – in particular the way in which the Christian churches may discover that *proximity* in the mission of *kenosis* is the means for witness to the experience of being 'lifted' by God.

### ***Patience: A paradigm of 'proximity' to Generation Y***

Newbigin's theology of mission explicitly places the activity of witness to the work of God the Father within close *proximity* to those for whom the witness is directed. He summarises this close relationship as being both for the world and separate from it: mission is both "... a "positive relation" to *and* a "critical appraisal" of culture ...".<sup>42</sup> However, it seems that Generation Y's present experience of the Christian churches in Australia is far from close. Rather, many of Generation Y are thoroughly estranged from the various churches.

One significant aspect of Generation Y's disengagement from the Christian churches is relational estrangement. This is manifest in two ways. In the first instance, many young Australians have no deep or natural connection with a Christian community. Second, this disconnection has flowered into distrust of the Christian churches as institutions – which are perceived as being concerned chiefly with maintaining their own interests.

Further to Generation Y's relational estrangement from the Christian churches, their immersion in an individualised and consumerised pattern of living has been noted. These two factors have combined in the daily experience of Australia's young people. In Chapters Four and Five the significant differences between the explicitly transcendent Christian faith, as exhibited by Paul, and the Secular spirituality of Generation Y were explored. It seems that, in Newbigin's terms, there has been a change in the plausibility structure that underlies Australian society. The Christian churches can no longer expect that there is some sense of connection between them – as institutions and in their way of thinking – and Australia's youth. While changes in

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<sup>42</sup> Goheen, 'Newbigin's Model of Contextualization,' 139.

plausibility structure are usually slow,<sup>43</sup> the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s brought unusually rapid change.<sup>44</sup> Generation Y are the most complete manifestation of this change.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, the speed with which the dominant Australian plausibility structure has changed may have contributed to the difficulty that the Christian churches have had in maintaining meaningful connections with Australia's young people. In recognizing that the change *away from* a broadly accepted plausibility structure based upon a Christian faith has been unusually rapid, the Christian churches may also be reminded that a *return to* a Christian faith would usually require time and incremental change.<sup>46</sup> In other words the Christian churches need to establish a *habitus of proximity* to Generation Y characterised by *patience*.

I will now explore what it means for the Christian churches in Australia to develop a disposition of patient *proximity* to Generation Y. That is, how to be both for and separate from Generation Y. This will happen initially as the influence of individualisation upon the spirituality of Generation Y is considered. It has been suggested that individualisation is seen particularly in a heightened sensitivity to the perceived 'thematisation' of mission. Thus, I will explore what it means for the church to overcome the 'conflict of alterity' and be for Generation Y in mission. Then, how the particular life-stages experienced by Generation Y may affect the transmission of a Pauline faith will be discussed. In Newbigin's terminology, I will focus on what it means for the church to be separate from the spiritual experience of Generation Y in their points of crisis so that an alternative, beautiful and 'plausible' way of being may be offered.

### **Don't tell me what to do: Overcoming the 'conflict of alterity'**

As a generation, Australia's Generation Y are radically individualised. The forces promoting individualisation have effectively infused most aspects of Australian life, particularly as it is experienced by Generation Y.<sup>47</sup> As seen in Chapter Two, Generation Y have a keen sense of self, acutely expressed in the state of self-as-

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<sup>43</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 44, 46.

<sup>44</sup> Kaldor et al, *Winds of Change*, 279 f; Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 59.

<sup>45</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 313-316.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 46.

<sup>47</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 234-237.

individual. This sense of self coincides with scepticism regarding the transparency of ‘truth claims’: these being perceived as nothing more than veiled attempts to exert power.<sup>48</sup> Further, Australia’s Generation Y do not generally trust the motives of the Christian churches.<sup>49</sup> These factors combine in their experience to mean that the voices of the churches are regarded as attempts at coercion. The prevailing response of Generation Y to Christian voices may be characterised as: Don’t tell me what to do!<sup>50</sup>

While Generation Y hold the right and responsibility for life within themselves, they experience a significant paradox. They place great value on relationships with a network of family and peers.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, they are familiar with patterns of communication in which the sharing of information progresses as a relational exercise.<sup>52</sup> Yet, aside from the overwhelming place of individualisation in their Secular way of life, their movement into relationship is hampered by at least three factors. First, the technological modes of communication they use so proficiently promote communication at ‘arms-length’, which counteracts the deep exchange of self that is implied in knowing a person. Ironically, opening up the self to *share* knowledge, but doing so at a distance, invites the possibility of abuse.<sup>53</sup> Second, in accepting a consumerised approach to life, Generation Y submit themselves to (and therefore perpetuate) stringent societal, market-driven norms. Thus, relationship occurs within imposed limits and is not truly free.<sup>54</sup> Third, the family units and peer structures so highly valued by Generation Y are fragile and likely to change.<sup>55</sup> In this environment Generation Y experience what I earlier termed the ‘conflict of alterity’: the desire to be known but not constricted by thematisation, that is to say, the reduction of the other to an interpretation, proof or idea.<sup>56</sup> However, their relational terrain is uncertain and littered with potential frustration.

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<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Weston, ‘A Postmodern Missiologist?’, 236.

<sup>49</sup> Hughes, ‘*Insecurity in Australia*,’ 17-18.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 321.

<sup>51</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 232-233.

<sup>52</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 239.

<sup>53</sup> Morrison, ‘Living at the Margins of Life,’ 2.

<sup>54</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 330.

<sup>55</sup> In this context one may argue that by promoting relationship primarily (i.e. outside of the family) with peers, Generation Y exclude themselves from the wisdom of older generations that is developed through experience. Cf. Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 232-233, 336.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Burggraeve’s assessment of Levinas’ category of ‘face’ in, Burggraeve, ‘Violence,’ 29, 31.

Given Generation Y's demonstrated desire for relationship, Australia's Christian churches have an opportunity to re-engage with them. This will now be explored through Newbigin's missiological category of being *for* the other. In Chapter Five, Paul was seen to demonstrate this as he was *for* the Corinthians even as they criticised, ridiculed and made life difficult for him. Earlier in this chapter the claim that the *kenosis* of Jesus Christ has over the *authentic* witness of the Christian churches was also considered. Over the next few paragraphs I will bring the Pauline sense of being *for* the other in mission and Newbigin's missional paradigm of *kenosis* into dialogue with the experience of the Christian churches. This dialogue will be facilitated by Emmanuel Levinas' ethics of 'alterity': that is the 'otherness' of another person.

Nortvedt identifies key areas in which the vulnerability of 'alterity' may inform the practical discipline of nursing.<sup>57</sup> Some of these areas will be borrowed to help progress this similarly grounded discussion of mission. As one approaches an 'other', their "... moral consciousness [is awakened] by the vulnerability of the other person, as suffering for his [sic] suffering."<sup>58</sup> In this movement the experience of the other person is perceived intuitively.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, the 'other' is encountered as they exist in vulnerability: revealed beyond the assessable and totalised image of what may be seen. Perceiving the hurt of the 'other', their infinity, as it is related to one's profoundly limited capacity to possess their self, "... shatters the subject ... [and] ... makes the I vulnerable for the other's vulnerability."<sup>60</sup> In this movement of passive acceptance of the 'other', the 'other' becomes an 'I'. That is, the 'other' is not a 'he/she' (or worse still, an 'it') totalised by a body of observations or expressions. Rather, they are a human, whose transcendent vulnerability exceeds one's attempt to constrict. And for that reason the 'other' calls out for help before they have been reduced in the observer's consciousness.<sup>61</sup> In Nortvedt's context:

... [i]t is in this movement of being affected by clinical experiences not merely as pathophysiological facts but as concrete vulnerabilities that careful nursing is shaped and the clinical encounter becomes a concrete awareness of the other's humanity.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Nortvedt, 'Subjectivity and Vulnerability,' 222-230.

<sup>58</sup> Nortvedt, 'Subjectivity and Vulnerability,' 224.

<sup>59</sup> Nortvedt, 'Subjectivity and Vulnerability,' 224.

<sup>60</sup> Nortvedt, 'Subjectivity and Vulnerability,' 227.

<sup>61</sup> Nortvedt, 'Subjectivity and Vulnerability,' 227.

<sup>62</sup> Nortvedt, 'Subjectivity and Vulnerability,' 229.

In the context of mission to Generation Y, ethical relationship puts aside ‘certainty’ of what the ‘other’ should be doing, believing or being, to be drawn into an apprehension of the other’s true humanity-in-vulnerability.

Approaching the ‘other’ of Generation Y, open to their humanity – overthrown by their vulnerability – releases the opportunity to be for them. However, it does so at great cost. In fact, the possibility of being exposed in a similar way to Jesus’ exposure to the depth of evil on the cross is raised. In the passivity of glimpsing the extraordinary nadir of the ‘other’, the one who reaches out in ethical relationship is shaken and paralysed.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, paralysis may be the response that flows from this frightening glimpse of transcendence. “Who is sufficient for these things?”, one may cry. At this point the role of the community in Newbigin’s category of the plausibility structure may inform the response of the Christian churches. In Newbigin’s understanding, a community is indispensable in the acquisition, shaping and discharge of a way of life.<sup>64</sup> In Chapter Four I located this community around the single axis of family and friends for Generation Y, and the twin axes of God – as he is seen in the ‘face of Christ’ – and the Christian community for Paul. Further, I have argued that relatedness to God shapes a disposition of self-in-relationship.<sup>65</sup> This, in turn, transforms the approach of an individual as they are given divine resources to be *for* the other in mission. Against the single, fragile axis of family and friends utilised by Generation Y, the twin axes of a Pauline church form the means by which God responds to the weakness of his ‘apostle’ to give life in-and-through vulnerability. Thus restoration to life occurs as: (a) the Spirit of God enables ongoing witness-in-*kenosis* of the individual Christian,<sup>66</sup> and (b) the Christian community together acts out the *kenosis* of Jesus supporting each other and supplying what an individual lacks on their own.<sup>67</sup>

A Pauline *habitus* of *patience-in-proximity* to Generation Y may arise from discerning the challenge of being *for* Generation Y in the vulnerability of ethical responsibility. The experience of the Christian churches, as they seek to reach out to

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<sup>63</sup> Nortvedt, ‘Subjectivity and Vulnerability,’ 224, 227.

<sup>64</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 35.

<sup>65</sup> Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 164-165.

<sup>66</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 48.

<sup>67</sup> Root, ‘Practical Theology,’ 73-74.

the generally disengaged cohort of Generation Y in Australia, may appear weak and powerless before the deep undertow of secularity. However, I suggest that this is not perceived to be so amongst Generation Y. Given the preceding discussion regarding the nature of the ‘other’ and the particular sensitivity to thematisation felt by Generation Y, it is possible to perceive the mission of the Christian churches as coercive and powerful. The missionary, in spite of bearing witness to Jesus Christ broken on the cross, appears to have power because they are asking the ‘other’ to consider the claims of God revealed in Christ over their construal of life. However, in surrendering the power to thematise in order to encounter the ‘other’ in the experience of their vulnerability, the Pauline church hands itself over to the ‘other’. I will call this movement the willing ‘missional transposition of power’. Thus, the relationship of mission is being-for-the-other as they are. Yet, the churches also hand themselves over to the possibility of the restoration of God, as their willingness to “... suffer for the other and to suffer from the other ...”<sup>68</sup> translates into an experience of life in-and-through death.

I have explored a way in which the Christian churches may draw close to Generation Y through handing over the ‘power’ to thematise by patiently encountering their alterity. That is, how the churches may be for Generation Y. Now I will consider how the churches may present a ‘critical appraisal’ of the culture of Generation Y.<sup>69</sup> This will be done as the churches are separate from Generation Y’s spiritual experience of crisis.

### **The crisis: Developmental issues in action**

Generation Y’s technological and market-driven way of life appears to surge ceaselessly onward. However, in spite of this apparent progression, factors that erode their capacity to maintain fulfilment have been noted. Stressors from sociological and physiological sources combine with a *worldview* that excludes others – including divine others – from providing anything other than reinforcement in the current mode of being. Generation Y are vulnerable to collapse when stressors

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<sup>68</sup> Root, ‘Practical Theology,’ 71.

<sup>69</sup> Goheen, ‘Newbigin's Model of Contextualization,’ 139.

become too great for their Secular plausibility structure to bear. However, in Chapter Three a different way of life was revealed. The Pauline vision of the ‘face of Christ’ (2 Cor 4:6) enabled him to experience life in-and-through vulnerability. In Chapter Five, I explored Newbigin’s understanding of what it means for Jesus to stand as *separate* from the world. On the cross Jesus was simultaneously identified with, and separate from, the world to which he came. Jesus confronted the deforming power of sin – which may be perceived in Generation Y’s vulnerability to stress and the de-personalisation of a market-driven *worldview* – and brought in his resurrection the possibility of God’s restoration to life.<sup>70</sup> Further, the role of the crisis as the point at which the human person is able to progress in their spiritual development was touched upon, as Fowler’s theory of the development of faith was brought alongside the experience of Generation Y in Chapter Two. In this section I will synthesise the themes of (a) life in-and-through vulnerability, (b) Jesus’ identification with and separateness from the world on the cross, and (c) the role of the crisis in spiritual development. Accordingly, for Generation Y, times of crisis will emerge as a prime opportunity to ‘behold the face of Christ’ and be drawn towards God.

James Fowler has a high view of conversion within the Christian faith. In fact he clearly regards it as a necessary feature of the development of mature faith. For Fowler, conversion is the ongoing movement “... through which people ... gradually bring the lived story of their lives into congruence with the core story of the Christian faith.”<sup>71</sup> Further, conversion is mediated by “... changes in the *contents* [sic] of faith.”<sup>72</sup> Fowler pictures healthy conversion as a recursive process in which the unfulfilled demands of prior developmental stages are progressively met as a person appropriates new content in the formation of their faith.<sup>73</sup> Within this process, the new content of faith allows a person to progress in their spiritual development. However, healthy development can only take place through ‘recapitulation’: taking in the strengths of prior development and providing opportunity for healing and recomposition of damaged or inadequately formed aspects of faith.<sup>74</sup> For this reason, Fowler’s category of recapitulation is particularly helpful when seeking to

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Goheen, ‘As the Father Has Sent Me,’ 360.

<sup>71</sup> Fowler, *Becoming Adult*, 140.

<sup>72</sup> Fowler, *Stages*, 281.

<sup>73</sup> Fowler, *Stages*, 286-290.

<sup>74</sup> Fowler, *Stages*, 264.



understand the experience of spiritual growth from the perspective of the human person. People shape a sense of vocation as they take into account their changing capacities and contexts.<sup>75</sup> In Chapter Two I suggested that the *ethos* takes the leading role in Generation Y's Secular spirituality. The individualised and consumerised Secular *ethos* is certainly powerful, and is often present prior to overt changes in a young person's *worldview*.<sup>76</sup> However, when set against Fowler's view of the necessity of conversion and recapitulation, several questions may be asked regarding the sufficiency of Generation Y's Secular spirituality. These include:

1. How well does Generation Y's *ethos* of consumerism and individualism form their resiliency?
2. How capable is consumerism of promoting other-person-centred behaviour?
3. How readily will the individualism of Generation Y begin to encourage the possibility for a 'universalising faith' of being for-the-other?

As has been seen above, Generation Y are well aware of their own 'otherness'. However, they do not seem able to give of self to the 'otherness' of the other. This in turn limits their capacity to enter into significant and sustainable relationships. In Fowler's terms, the master stories, values and images of power taken on by Generation Y as their plausibility structure, do not have the capacity to deliver the relational connectedness they desire of their spirituality.<sup>77</sup>

Notwithstanding the objections of Stendhal and others, the idea of conversion is present in Paul's life and ministry.<sup>78</sup> Significantly, he appears to regard conversion as decisive in the change and development of the human vocation. In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul draws upon his encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus road to

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<sup>75</sup> Fowler regards the progressive appropriation of a partnership with 'the ground of all being' and each other to be the human vocation. Fowler, *Stages*, 281-291; Fowler, 'Stages in Selfhood and Faith' 54.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 306.

<sup>77</sup> Although published in the year that the first of the cohort of Generation Y were born, Fowler reflects on the 'master stories' of the then 25 year old upcoming business-people. He concludes that "... [a]t the risk of sounding judgemental ... [their story] ... might be capsulized [sic] as "the human vocation is to take care of number one; those number ones who have the most talent, drive and luck will – and should – inherit the earth." [sic]" This cohort are, in terms of their age, the parents of today's 'echo generation': Generation Y. Fowler then progresses to question the sufficiency of this master story. Fowler, *Stages*, 278-279.

<sup>78</sup> Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, 7-11; Senior and Stuhlmüller, *Biblical Foundations*, 170-171; Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 125-126; Barnett, *Paul*, 72.

explain and give shape to his experience of life in-and-through death.<sup>79</sup> The new conditions that confronted Paul (i.e. the *person* of the risen Christ) caused an inevitable shift in his self-understanding and vocation. From a Pauline perspective, the new contents changed both the point around which his faith cohered (conversion) *and* his sense of where his faith was leading him (vocation). Within the context of Fowler's developmental theory, scholars such as Avery, Osmer and Streib have attempted to tease out the role that a faith's content plays in the human vocation.<sup>80</sup> To engage at depth with this line of enquiry is outside of the scope of this thesis. However, it may be seen that *given* a change in the contents of faith, as implied by the Pauline sense of conversion, Fowler's sense of recapitulation involves the radical alteration of all the psychological and developmental tasks of a Christian.<sup>81</sup> This means, for example, that one may be a Christian in Paul's eyes and still need to individuate themselves to develop, or deepen their life *in* the way of Christ.

One implication of conversion and recapitulation for those seeking to transmit the Christian faith to Generation Y builds upon the need for *patience*. A faith that develops into a satisfactory plausibility structure will need to take into account the various developmental aspects of childhood and youth present within a person.<sup>82</sup> The tasks of spiritual development left unfinished in previous stages must be reviewed and completed if growth in this 'new' faith is to be authentic and durable. So conversion without recapitulation leaves the potential for growth, implied in crises, unrealised. Conversion must be accompanied by a 'recapitulative' discipleship in which the committed and demanding story of Christ is brought to bear upon the various tasks of growth and development. Similarly, those who chose to walk in *patience* with young people as a process of conversion and recapitulation takes place, must also find themselves addressing tasks of spiritual development as

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<sup>79</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 189.

<sup>80</sup> Avery, 'A Lutheran Examines James W. Fowler,' 69-83; Richard R. Osmer, 'James W. Fowler and the Reformed Tradition: An Exercise in Theological Reflection in Religious Education,' *Religious Education*, 85:1 (1990): 51-68; Heinz Streib, 'Extending Our Vision of Developmental Growth and Engaging in Empirical Scrutiny: Proposals for the Future of Faith Development Theory,' *Religious Education*, 99:4 (2004): 427-434; Heinz Streib, 'Faith Development Research Revisited: Accounting for Diversity in Structure, Content, and Narrativity of Faith,' *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 15:2 (2005): 99-121.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Mary's story in, Fowler, *Stages*, 286-288.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Newbigin's account of a child learning to 'see' the point of their community's understanding of the world. Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 42-43.

crises are met.<sup>83</sup> That is, both the witness, and the other perceiving that witness, are on a journey of deepening faith. Thus, the confrontation implied in a missional encounter with Generation Y may produce the catalyst for bilateral crises.<sup>84</sup> It certainly seems that, for Paul, confrontation with the Corinthians produced a need to review his reaction to the conditions of life. In confronting the distortion of humanity implied in the hubris of public Corinthian life, Paul was confirmed and deepened in his own faith. His confrontation of this ‘Corinthian crisis’ also allowed a witness to productive spiritual growth to be given to the Corinthians.<sup>85</sup> Accordingly, the Pauline witness is that as the end of self is reached, possibility for contact with explicit transcendence unfurls. In this way, the opportunity for Generation Y to find God in a *godless* world emerges. I will now touch on the Pauline themes of (a) hope and (b) *patience* in the context of conversion and recapitulation.

In considering the role of *kenosis* as part of a paradigm of *authenticity* before Generation Y, the eschatological nature of God’s kingdom was explored. Within this milieu, hope emerged as an important aspect of a Pauline *habitus*. I will now return to the theme of hope. However, this time hope stands as a catalyst for conversion within the Christian churches’ mission-in-*proximity* to Generation Y. Notwithstanding Generation Y’s confidence in their ‘happy midi-narrative’,<sup>86</sup> Fowler’s developmental perspective raises the possibility that it does not contain the power to successfully navigate inevitable crises.<sup>87</sup> For Paul, hope in the future, fulfilled revelation of Christ’s resurrection sustained him in the present. Further, his hope was strengthened as he shared proleptically in Christ’s restored life (2 Cor 4:16–18). In this sense, the weight of God’s glory, perceived and experienced by Paul, is contrasted with the stressful weight of Generation Y’s individualised expectation of fulfilment. Consequently, as the Christian churches embark on a life of suffering and vulnerability they explore the very grounds upon which the glory of God is discovered.<sup>88</sup> This means that difficulty may be approached with an

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<sup>83</sup> Cf. Fowler’s own account of his growing appreciation of human development over time and interaction with people. Fowler, *Stages*, 37-39.

<sup>84</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 168.

<sup>85</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 189-190.

<sup>86</sup> Savage et al, *Making Sense of Generation Y*, 37 ff.

<sup>87</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 335-336.

<sup>88</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 493-495.

expectation of restoration that has been fuelled by previous experience. That is, a disposition of hopefulness will rest upon the churches in the face of crisis that *looks*, to those who are watching, like the joyful and eager panting of an infant longing for her mother's breast. The hunger is certainly evident, but is present as the sweet anticipation of fulfilment. Therefore, the possibility of witness to Generation Y emerges. In an ironic contrast, in a crisis the 'tangible' certainties of consumerist experience are revealed to bear only the desire of fulfilment, whereas the 'intangible' hope of self fulfilled-in-relationship is deepened in the overwhelming of the autonomous self. As Mason, Singleton and Webber suggest, the "... short-term, low-level meanings ... [of a] ... lifestyle filled with 'distractions' and 'noise' [sic] ..."89 may have power, but only in the diversionary, superficial way that feeding sweets to a hungry child may ward off the sense of hunger. Yet, "[t]hose who so live and act become witnesses – even by their unguarded words and deeds – of the consummation in the hope of which they live."90 The presentation of a hope-*full* existence by the Christian churches allows those drawn into *proximity* to have the stress of responsibility for self overturned by conversion to self-in-relationship.

The nature of self-in-relationship as it occurs in a Pauline, eschatological framework also contains the seed of response to Fowler's idea of recapitulation. This may find particular form as the Christian churches respond to the present contingencies of life in *patience*. The life of faith, from a Pauline perspective, is inescapably a patient affair because it speaks of waiting. However, the 'wait' is not passive or static. Von Balthasar pictures the churches as restlessly "... breaking off and setting out ..."91 from the present towards the *eschaton*. In continually 'setting out' a paradox is introduced into the Christian life. The restless 'breaking off and setting out' does not promote restlessness, rather it intensifies Paul's deep sense of *patience*. This is because the eschatological quality of *patience* takes on an active aspect as it speaks of renewal and momentum (cf. 2 Cor 4:16–18).92 In pursuing the Kingdom of God, and becoming its very foretaste in the world,93 the Christian churches may interact with the crises of experience knowing that 'the eternal weight of glory' that belongs

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<sup>89</sup> Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 335.

<sup>90</sup> Newbiggin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 53.

<sup>91</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 485.

<sup>92</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 493.

<sup>93</sup> Newbiggin, *The Open Secret*, 62-63.

to the Father wells up in its midst (2 Cor 4:17). Experiences of further crises are anticipated as the glory of the Christian experience, rather than the frustration of a plan.

Within the context of Australia's Generation Y an adequate theology of the transmission of faith must have explicit place for their family and friends. The Christian churches may approach the significant value that Generation Y place on relationships with family and peers against a background of *hope-full patience*. In doing so at least two possibilities may emerge.

First, eschatological *patience* empowers the current members of the Christian churches in Australia to be involved in mission to Generation Y. Such involvement might entail the breaking down of the tyranny of time as the temptation to rush from place to place, and task to task, in a frantic attempt to 'seize the day' is confronted. In this, the churches would be given the opportunity to 'wait' upon the needs brought by crises. The time-consuming pursuit of prestige, prosperity, dynamic programming or any other external factor will not bring the churches glory, nor will they reflect glory to God. Glory comes to the churches, in Pauline terms, through the witness of Christ's restored life infusing their experience in-and-through crisis.<sup>94</sup> This means that many of the tasks that have become the common concern of the Christian churches, and the individuals who together form these communities, run secondary to witness. While specialised skills and gifts may be needed for the ongoing administration and nurture of the churches, each member of a Christian community is given the gift of time and crisis.

Following the abovementioned restoration of time to the churches, specific voice would be returned to those who currently make up the various communities of Christ in Australia. As the population of the Christian churches ages, so does their capacity to provide generative insight to following generations.<sup>95</sup> While legitimate questions surrounding the methods by which contact between older and younger generations may be fostered remain, the Christian churches must not forget the deep respect

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<sup>94</sup> Cf. Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 47-48.

<sup>95</sup> Mary d'Apice, *Noon to Nightfall: A Journey through Midlife and Aging* (Melbourne: Dove, 1995) 21, 54, 62.

Generation Y *already* have for their family and close friends: their mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts and grandparents who do hold a Christian faith.<sup>96</sup>

Second, a renewed sense of the importance of conversation arises with a recovery of time within an eschatological experience of *patience*. If the enacted aspect of faith is emphasised above, then the declaration of faith raises its voice here. Fowler's discovery of the importance of recapitulation in the development of faith adds a sense of *praxis* to Paul's interpreted experience of renewal (cf. 2 Cor 4:13–14). Paul's declaration of the gospel is intimately linked to his experience of life in-and-through trial, that is points of crisis. The Christian churches are invited to share this declaration. And it is through entering into Newbigin's sense of the mutuality of discovery with Generation Y that the opportunity to bear witness to the finality of Christ emerges.<sup>97</sup>

To approach a young person as the 'other' who is not summed up in their rejection of Christian values – but is as one experiences them in their crises – provides an opening for the ministry of transmission.<sup>98</sup> As a witness to Christ encounters the 'otherness' of Generation Y, dialogue-in-action provides a window into the plausibility structure of life-in-and-through-death in Christ. Resistance to an imposed message is overthrown by the surprising breakthrough of a gospel enacted in conversation.<sup>99</sup>

*Patience* has been explored as a pastoral *habitus* arising from the second field of Newbigin's paradigm of mission – *proximity*. This has flowed from the Pauline themes of (a) continuing in engagement in spite of cost, and (b) the possibility of life in-and-through death. In these themes I have proposed that the Christian churches may re-engage Generation Y as they confront the crises that inevitably mark out human life. Having discussed *patience* in this section, Newbigin's idea of *intelligibility* will now be investigated. This will be undertaken by exploring the role of *apprenticeship*, particularly as it provides the impetus for the gospel to grow within Generation Y's own soil.

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<sup>96</sup> Anonymous, *National Survey of Young Australians 2006*, 9.

<sup>97</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, (177-)182.

<sup>98</sup> Morrison, 'Pastoral Care and Counselling,' 7.

<sup>99</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: vol. VII*, 493.

## ***Apprenticeship: A paradigm of ‘intelligibility’ to Generation Y***

The final aspect of Newbigin’s missional paradigm uncovered in Chapter Five was *intelligibility*. For Newbigin, *intelligibility* entailed two aspects. First, an *intelligible* witness will allow a faith in Jesus Christ to grow within the soil of the receiving culture. As seen in the missional field of *proximity*, God shows himself to be both for and separate from the cultures of the world. The people of God are called to follow in witness to this divine mission. However, the witness of the people of God, if it is to grow within the receiving culture, must be *intelligible*. That is, it will allow the people of the receiving culture to discern what the gospel confirms as good, and of God, in their culture and what the gospel confronts as being distorted by sin and under the judgement of God.<sup>100</sup> Second, an *intelligible* witness will allow the receiving culture to reflect back to the sending culture previously unnoticed aspects of the judgement and restoration of God. This means that those who live and move in the culture ‘receiving’ the gospel also act in witness to bring to light aspects of the ‘sending’ culture that were previously subject to cultural blindness.<sup>101</sup>

As suggested earlier, the Pauline witness of *intelligibility* raises two areas where the Australian churches may be drawn near to Generation Y in mission: (a) the spiritual ‘language’ of Generation Y, and (b) the congregation becoming the hermeneutic of the gospel. Towards establishing a Pauline logic of *intelligible* witness, these two areas will be discussed. The suggestion that *apprenticeship* provides a fitting model for the development of a Pauline *habitus* of *intelligibility* to Generation Y will conclude this discussion.

### **Text in a TXT world**

One of the challenges that faces the Christian churches of Australia, as they seek to re-engage Generation Y through a Pauline theology of mission, is discovering what the Bible has to do with both the task and process of mission. As stated in Chapter One, I come from a tradition of Christianity that values the Bible as the primary and normative source for theology. This means that I am predisposed to accept that

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<sup>100</sup> Goheen, ‘As the Father Has Sent Me,’ 360.

<sup>101</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 112.

firstly the Bible does have a place in mission, and secondly, that what it has to say is relevant to Generation Y. In this thesis I have attempted to provide a rational and coherent theological framework that sets out the Bible's place in mission. I have done this through the theological methodology of Whitehead and Whitehead, and Newbigin's epistemology and theology of mission. Further, in the preceding discussion I have sought to demonstrate that the Pauline theology of faith that emerged from 2 Corinthians 4 does, in fact, speak to the contemporary situation of the Christian churches in Australia. However, I will now focus the final part of this discussion, regarding the development of a Pauline *habitus* of mission within the Christian churches, by putting forward two issues that must be resolved if a satisfactory Pauline theology of mission is to arise. They are:

1. Generation Y's patterns of engagement and relationship seem to have moved from focussing upon the 'given-ness' of a text to 'bursts' of connection via digital media.
2. Generation Y's general sense of the irrelevance of an ancient message – particularly as it is contained in a text – as summed up in the question: How on earth can *that* be relevant to me?

I have used the contraction 'TXT'<sup>102</sup> to signify the way that new and emerging digital technologies are used by Generation Y as mediators of relationship. In Chapter Two the relationship between technology, relationship and meaning was touched upon. I suggested that, for many of Generation Y, meaning is found in 'connection' which is mediated by bursts of digital signals. However, earlier in this chapter I also suggested that the extraordinary speed and flexibility allowed by contemporary communication modalities carried the danger of connecting as 'ghosts' – not as real people.<sup>103</sup> Thus, in the phenomenon of digital connection, young people may miss out on an encounter of the vulnerable 'face' of the 'other'.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, their 'face' is ignored in the explosion of digital signals. Within this context, the Pauline church has an opportunity to reframe an approach to the Bible.

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<sup>102</sup> TXT stands for 'text message' and is itself an example of the abbreviated form of communication fostered by digital communication technologies.

<sup>103</sup> Morrison, 'Living at the Margins of Life,' 2.

<sup>104</sup> Please note that Levinas uses the term 'face' differently to Paul. For Levinas "... the "face of the other" [sic] is not his [sic] physical countenance or appearance, but precisely the noteworthy fact that the other – not only in fact but in principle – does not coincide with his [sic] appearance ...". Burggraeve, 'Violence,' 29.



The Pauline theme of finding relationship with God ‘in the face of Christ’ (2 Cor 4:6) has played a significant role throughout the latter half of this thesis. Two ideas dwell within this theme. Initially, the idea of ‘the knowledge of the glory of God’ gives meaning to what is envisaged in Pauline relationship. That is, *knowing* God speaks of the intimate giving of self in love-making.<sup>105</sup> Further, awareness of the ‘face of Christ’ draws together the historical person of Jesus and the resurrected Christ of faith.<sup>106</sup> To force a Levinasian understanding of ‘face’ upon Paul at this point would face the danger of falling into thematisation. However, nonetheless, in bringing together the two ideas contained in 2 Cor 4:6, a profound connection with Levinas’ ethical responsibility explored above emerges. That is, true knowledge of God – that of a lover knowing their beloved and not of thematised possession – is possible because of God’s own self-giving in ‘the face of Christ’. The incarnate, crucified, resurrected and glorified Christ Jesus willingly reveals the alterity of God.<sup>107</sup>

In Newbigin’s unforgettable terms, this should create an ‘explosion of joy’ within those who have been drawn into the witness of Christ.<sup>108</sup> However, in his confrontation with the Corinthian church Paul raises the question: How can this ‘explosion of joy’ be ministered, transmitted or passed on? Following Paul’s sense of apostolicity, and Newbigin’s idea of the importance of a community in the development of the plausibility structure, I have proposed that this deep knowledge of God is ministered in two ways:

1. Initially, as the gospel is declared.
2. Then, as a community is formed by the gospel and interprets their experience of God’s restoration – i.e. life in-and-through death – through the lens of that gospel.

It must be emphasised that apostolic witness is the precursor to transmission in each case.<sup>109</sup> From a Pauline perspective, speaking the gospel is necessary for life. Then the experience of life completes the declaration of faith (2 Cor 4:13–14). Similarly, the witness to Christ draws others into the witness of Christ (2 Cor 4:15).

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<sup>105</sup> Newbigin, *Honest Religion*, 79-80.

<sup>106</sup> Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, 224.

<sup>107</sup> Newbigin, *Honest Religion*, 86 (87-89) 90.

<sup>108</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 231.

<sup>109</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 48-49.

Again, Newbigin furthers this Pauline framework. He does so through his placement of scripture within a tradition of continuous apostolic witness. Consequently, as was explored in Chapter Five, Newbigin's 'explosion of joy' is inescapably linked to the text of the Bible.<sup>110</sup> However, the text of the Bible stands as a means to an end, namely knowing God through Christ Jesus. As the text is read, in the context of the community called to give witness to the Christ, it is appropriated as the anchor to the "... unique, unrepeated, and unrepeatabe ..."<sup>111</sup> event of Christ. However, its expression is found embodied in the context of the day. This is exemplified by Paul's appropriation of the *kenosis* of Christ to confront the particular Hellenic and Judaizing distortions of the gospel in Corinth.

From this position an answer may be posited to the second issue introduced above: How on earth can *the Bible* be relevant to me? The Bible remains relevant because it is not the dry relic of an olden time, but the means by which people are drawn into the most intimate relationship of knowing God.<sup>112</sup> In other words, it allows for the sort of relationship that Generation Y desire, but that which ghostly digital 'connection' cannot provide. In accessing Scripture, the human person is given the opportunity to gain the explicit transcendence of God – his alterity, his life – rather than a 'ghostly' reduction. However, the Bible is understood as a participant in a community of knowing. Or in Newbigin's vocabulary, as part of tradition.<sup>113</sup> Consequently, as the churches are formed and given 'shape' by the gospel, as it arises from the text of Scripture, the 'conditions of belief' are set that give meaning to the declaration of faith in God.

I will now consider the first issue posed above – that the patterns of engagement and relationship, which so permeate the lives of Generation Y, seem to have moved from focussing upon the 'given-ness' of a text to 'bursts' of connection via digital media. In doing so I will seek a solution to this challenge through Newbigin's idea that the congregation is the hermeneutic of the gospel.

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<sup>110</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 71.

<sup>111</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 71.

<sup>112</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 74-77.

<sup>113</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 62-65.

## The congregation as a hermeneutic of the gospel

One of the significant aspects of the spirituality of Generation Y that has been uncovered by researchers is that Australia's young people are content to dwell within 'midi-narratives'. These 'midi-narratives' are constructed around the self and a network of family and friends.<sup>114</sup> Consequently, for Generation Y, given the opportunity to consume and experience an exciting life, nothing more seems to be needed. Generation Y's happiness in their construal of the world is reflected in the new patterns of engagement and relationship they employ.<sup>115</sup> The congruence between Generation Y's patterns of relationship and the sophisticated technological media they employ has been explored in previous chapters. Hence, young Australians live and move within an environment that seems to supersede the past in all ways. That is, contact with the Christian churches is perceived as being boring or irrelevant and not stimulating enough to be integrated into one's own 'midi-narrative'. In other words, the churches are seen to be 'old': tatty, shabby, outdated and obsolete – or 'antique'; to be set in a corner on display but not actively used. The self-generated bursts of digitally mediated communication that underlie the 'happy midi-narratives' of Generation Y scintillate, whereas what seems to be the fixed Christian experience seems not to sparkle.<sup>116</sup>

It is possible for the Christian churches to discern the judgement of God through Generation Y's assessment of them. From the perspective of Newbigin's Trinitarian theology of mission this may be done on two fronts. Initially, Newbigin reminds the churches that Trinitarian mission is, in its essence, mission *within* culture.<sup>117</sup> Foundationally, the Son of God entered enculturated human history to become the incarnate Jesus. Further, every other culture of history accesses this 'in-breaking' of God via the similarly enculturated witness of the apostles and the churches that follow in their tradition.<sup>118</sup> Second, the churches can only ever make their response to the gospel in the forms of the culture within which they move.<sup>119</sup> This will

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<sup>114</sup> See, for example, Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 332.

<sup>115</sup> See, for example, Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 239.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Mason et al's summary of Generation Y 's underlying spirituality, Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 333 f.

<sup>117</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 65.

<sup>118</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 52-53.

<sup>119</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 47.

sometimes be by rejecting certain cultural traditions. However, it always occurs by asserting the Lordship of Jesus *over* the various forms of culture.<sup>120</sup> In Australia's current cultural milieu the Christian churches must ask how attachment to Christ brings a growing focal awareness of the God who brings life in-and-through death *today*. According to Newbigin's assessment of the committed nature of the plausibility structure, the answer to this question must encompass all of life.<sup>121</sup> Consequently, it is not sufficient for churches to ask simply how public church meetings may be more exciting, or utilise digital media. The entire life, both corporate and as it is reflected in the various individuals of the churches, must also be examined. That is, the various relationships, and patterns of relating, that form life need to be informed by the plausibility structure of Christ as it is exhibited in this current age. Consequently, a series of questions arise that each congregation must grapple with.

1. In what sense does the 'given-ness' of Christianity relate to the individualised spirit of Generation Y?
2. How can the excitement of connection brought by the digital age be brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ?
3. How is *this* congregation a hermeneutic of what God has done in Christ?
4. How does *this* church demonstrate focal awareness of the God who brings life in-and-through death?
5. How are the tools of the age appropriated to bear out the finality of Christ in all things?

For Generation Y there is a sense of vibrancy about their lifestyles and life choices that they do not perceive in the Christian churches. I submit that in uncovering an awareness of *apprenticeship* the Christian churches may begin to promote an *intelligible* witness to Generation Y. Therefore, in order to bring this thesis to its conclusion, and complete this discussion regarding what it means for the Christian churches to present an *intelligible* witness, particularly a witness as an apprentice, I will return to the Pauline idea of bearing 'treasure in jars of clay'. For Paul, becoming like a 'jar of clay' (2 Cor 4:7) emphasised his fragility, temporality and

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<sup>120</sup> Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 47-48.

<sup>121</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 49.

ubiquity.<sup>122</sup> He, like Adam – who, as it were, was also formed out of clay – could be nothing more than that which was created. Yet Paul discovered a great paradox, within the bounds and utter ‘ordinariness’ of his clay-like existence, he was not used up or thrown away. He found that within his fragile existence and the tools of his embodied life, he was able to engage with the ennobling life of God.<sup>123</sup> So it is for the Australian Christian churches that in using the tools of the created world the twin axes of relationship that Paul enjoyed may be active.

For the Christian churches of Australia to bear the treasure ‘of the glory of God in the face of Christ’ (2 Cor 4:6) means that, like Paul, they will grow in focal awareness of the life-giving God as it emerges in the vicissitudes of embodied human relationships. In the first instance this means giving up the self to be drawn out as self-in-relationship with God as he is revealed by Christ. I have already touched upon this lifestyle of *necrōsis* above. However, the experience of life in-and-through the weakness that is experienced by giving up one’s own claims to temporal power and security bears the fruit of witness as it is demonstrated within the embodied context of culture. A definitive answer as to how this may occur within the various Christian communities of Australia is beyond the scope of this thesis. If for no other reason, this is because the answer will vary as the different congregations explore the nature of the people to whom they seek to bear witness.<sup>124</sup> However, just as an apprentice must learn to use all of the tools in their kit, so it falls to the churches to become skilled in navigating the cultures in which they move. Moreover, the apprentice will turn their newfound knowledge of the tools to the task they seek to master. That is, by having focal awareness of God as he is perceived ‘in the face of Christ’ the congregation that is bearing witness also has the capacity to draw back from the tool and reassess its usefulness and applicability in relation to the task of mission.<sup>125</sup> Thus, the congregation is given the capacity to walk the line between unquestioning acceptance of the assumptions and trappings of Generation Y’s culture, and needless rejection of those forms for a more familiar expression. Therefore, the congregation will discover times for action and passivity, declaration and listening,

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<sup>122</sup> Cf. Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 165-166.

<sup>123</sup> Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 166-168.

<sup>124</sup> This may be seen in Paul’s own decision to accept monetary support from some churches but not from others (2 Cor 11:9).

<sup>125</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 145-146.

speech and silence, company and solitude, so that in *all* things they may continue the apostolic, *kenotic* witness in the contemporary milieu.

In Chapter Three, Paul's analogy of bearing 'treasure in jars of clay' was itself likened to the present-day takeaway coffee cup and the coffee it contains. For the Christian churches, witness is the experience of being drawn to the lips and having the coffee tasted. It is the container's role in all things to draw the treasure to the beholder, just as it is the flavour of the coffee and not the cup that should remain on the taster's lips. Where the use of a tool means that the treasure is obscured, or is forced to spill or leak from the container – whether the tool is new or old – then it is time for the apprentice-in-witness to cast away that implement. So it is through the learning and wise appropriation of the tools of culture by an apprentice church, that young Australians may be brought near so that the treasure may be found.

Before closing this short reflection on the role of the congregation as the hermeneutic of the gospel for Generation Y, it is fitting to note once more the need for *patience-in-proximity*. Development as an apprentice takes time. Mastery of a vocation is not an immediate, or even short-term achievement. This is particularly so when growth in the vocation is mediated spiritually as an expression of the now but not-yet Kingdom of God.<sup>126</sup> For this reason friendship and conversation, that is finding opportunities to communicate with Generation Y in all of life, are vital if the apprentice is to grow and develop.

A challenge of Paul's theology of faith for the Christian church in Australia, as it is understood through Newbigin's theology of mission, is that the churches grow as apprentices of God. That is, they are called to learn how to use ever new tools as they bear witness to the finality of Christ. Just as an apprentice will, with time, learn to use all of the tools available to successfully conduct their trade, so the churches may approach the new cultural apparatus of Generation Y as the context in which they bear witness to the God who brings life. Ironically, as the churches stumble and fall in these attempts to engage with Generation Y, their experience of faith – and

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<sup>126</sup> Cf. Newbigin, *Trinitarian Mission*, 40-41.

witness to God – will be strengthened as he gives life in-and-through trial, vulnerability and death.

### ***Conclusion – Treasure in jars of clay: Towards a new Pauline habitus of mission to Generation Y in Australia***

By asking, *How may a Pauline theology of the experience of faith as it is seen in 2 Corinthians 4 be applied pastorally within the context of Australia's Generation Y?*, I have considered three fields of mission. It has been shown, first, that following in the *kenosis* of Jesus Christ can produce the sense of being able to minister the *authentic* glory of God in confidence and humility. Second, *patience* arising from an understanding of the emergence of life brought about by God in-and-through death has lent a way to be drawn into *proximity* with Generation Y. Together, these suggest bearing witness to God's restoration to Generation Y – that is, joining God in being separate from the distorting effect of sin on the growth and development of Generation Y, yet at the same time being in *proximity* to them at their lowest points. Finally, the churches have been given a pattern of *intelligible* witness as the role of the apprentice has been explored. This was achieved by investigating the prime role that Jesus plays in 'knowing God', alongside Paul's experience of bearing 'treasure in a jar of clay'.

Three main purposes were proposed for this study:

1. To provide a theological hermeneutic of pastoral mission that may be a partner in dialogue with other approaches to ministry among Generation Y. A theological hermeneutic of mission may then critique and enrich other perspectives and be itself critiqued and enriched.
2. To assist the Christian churches in their consideration of some of the issues surrounding the general absence of Generation Y in their communities by drawing on Scripture as a historical source of Christian theology.
3. To serve Generation Y with a pastoral response that endeavours both to draw from the foundational elements of the Christian faith and suggest theological conclusions fitting for the post-modern world they inhabit.

I have aimed to provide a theological hermeneutic of pastoral mission to Generation Y through the application of Whitehouse and Whitehouse's theological method and the epistemological and theological structure of Lesslie Newbigin's Trinitarian approach to mission. By appropriating the theological methodology of Whitehouse and Whitehouse the findings of this study have been set within parameters that may be tested. Further, through this method the 'workings' that have led to the various conclusions of the final chapter have been disclosed. This allows the various, inescapable assumptions and interpretations that lie behind my pastoral reflections to be supported or called into question by others. In exploring Newbigin's epistemology and theology of mission I have suggested a new lens through which a Pauline faith may be focussed upon the spirituality of Generation Y. The threefold paradigm of mission – *authenticity*, *proximity* and *intelligibility* – has given specific form to this interaction. Newbigin's profoundly theological perspective regarding mission has provided a way to ground the growing sociological and psychological/developmental insights regarding young Australians within the life of the Christian churches.

In 'stepping back' to Scripture, particularly the Pauline writings as they are represented in 2 Corinthians 4, key themes have arisen illuminating the spiritual experience of Generation Y. Whereas Generation Y generally perceive the Christian churches to be coercive and primarily interested in preserving self-interest, Paul has provided the stimulus to explore what it means to reach out in mission for-the-other while providing witness to the God who brings life in-and-through death. Furthermore, Paul's theme of finding life – in the twin axes of relationship with God and with people – has provided the churches with resources to address the individualisation inherent in the daily experience of Generation Y. In the action of 'stepping back' into a renewed sense of dependence upon God, the churches may 'jump farther' into relationship, and mission, with Generation Y. And it is in the context of witness to God to young Australians that the Christian churches will experience the vindication of their faith.

Finally, in this thesis I have sought to serve Generation Y by suggesting theological conclusions fitting for the post-modern world they inhabit. In analysing the spiritual experience of Australia's young people three themes have been identified: (a) deep



estrangement from the Christian churches which encompasses differences in belief, practice and spiritual imagination; (b) vulnerability in spite of apparent strength, brought about by the stressful nature of the technological world that they inhabit, and the questionable ability of their prevailing spiritual resources to adequately provide for the different challenges of life; and (c) a ‘this-worldly’ spiritual epistemology based upon a culture of consumption. Through relating a Pauline experience of faith I have suggested ways in which: (a) estrangement may turn to engagement, (b) apparent vulnerability may become strength, and (c) the promise of an eschatological Kingdom of God may be accessed not only in the ‘other-worldly’ sphere, but also in the ‘this-worldly’ context.

Fundamental to the research question is the establishment of a fitting process by which the scriptural sphere of 2 Corinthians 4 may be related to the experience of Generation Y. Consequently, throughout this thesis, I have endeavoured to demonstrate an apostolic and pastoral hermeneutic whereby the ‘word of God (cf. 2 Cor 4:2)’ may be heard and applied today. There have been five phases, of which Chapter Six represented the fifth stage. In summary, it will help now to distil these stages as:

1. Developing a historico-literary understanding of the witness of Scripture and of the current context. In this phase one must pay careful attention to the contextual locations of Scripture and the people one is reaching out to in mission. The purpose of this attention is that one may come to know not only the markings and sounds that designate the people of that sphere, but understand the people themselves. This requires careful learning from each sphere of enquiry, and “... even at times ... conversion ...”<sup>127</sup> to the world of the people one is studying.

This first phase was enacted under the ‘attentive’ stage of my pastoral, theological method.

2. Discerning the plausibility structures underlying the faith witnessed to by the Scriptures and the spirituality of the receiving community. In this phase the central motifs that bring coherence to the *worldviews* must be uncovered.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 155.

<sup>128</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 228.

Then, the way in which the various *ethae* flow from the different *worldviews* can demonstrate how the different communities of understanding show their commitment to their plausibility structure.<sup>129</sup> Finally, the manner in which the two spheres broadcast what they know reveals the patterns of relationship inherent in their communities.<sup>130</sup>

3. Relating the spheres of inquiry given the cultural distance between them. In this phase the motifs, patterns of commitment and broadcast are shown in parallel to discover ways in which they confirm and confront each other.<sup>131</sup>
4. Discovering how a Pauline community may provide a witness to the gospel to the other sphere. That is, detecting the areas in which a Trinitarian understanding of mission may be seen in the interaction of Scripture with the other sphere. This phase begins to explore the continuing witness of the Christian churches as they relate themselves to the Trinitarian mission reflected in Scripture.<sup>132</sup> Three questions are asked within the missional situation:
  - a. How is God seen at work in the scriptural faith to bring both judgement and restoration within the receiving culture? How is judgement and restoration reflected in turn upon the Christian community?
  - b. How does the Christian community join with Jesus to bear witness to God's work to the receiving culture?
  - c. How is the Holy Spirit active in calling the receiving culture to account before God in the scriptural witness to faith?

The second to fourth phases of this 'Newbigin-inspired' hermeneutic were enacted in the 'assertive' phase of this thesis. The final phase of this apostolic and pastoral hermeneutic has been enacted in this sixth chapter: the stage of 'decision'.

5. Deciding how a Christian community is called to bear witness to the gospel within their context. In this phase the Christian community will decide how to approach the receiving culture in *authenticity, proximity* and

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<sup>129</sup> For Newbigin, commitment to a certain plausibility structure flows into subjective and objective response. This is comparable with Mason et al's distinction between the characteristics of a spirituality's *worldview* and *ethos*. Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 47-48; Mason et al, *The Spirit of Generation Y*, 39-40.

<sup>130</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 48.

<sup>131</sup> Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 215.

<sup>132</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 76-77.

*intelligibility*.<sup>133</sup> The three fields of Newbigin's paradigm of mission inform the *habitus* of the Christian community to create within it an elemental disposition of mission.

The pastoral movement of this thesis, flowing from the experience of spirituality and faith in the contemporary Australian environment, has been summarised in the five stages enumerated above. I began by discovering the distinct voices of the spirituality of Generation Y and the Pauline faith. I progressed to discern the plausibility structures of each sphere, and then relate each plausibility structure to the other. The Pauline witness of faith was freed to speak as a witness to the gospel to the distinct character and concerns of Generation Y. Finally, I proposed how a Pauline faith may lead the Christian churches of Australia as they seek to bear witness to the gospel in this context. I hope that in this pastoral movement, a fitting Pauline theology of mission has been applied within the context of Australia's Generation Y.

### **Suggestions for further research**

In concluding this study I acknowledge that I have only begun to make a response to the challenges presented by the spirituality of Generation Y to the faith of the Christian churches and Christian theology. My assessment of the pastoral and theological implications of Generation Y's Secular spirituality may be questioned and deepened. It would be particularly helpful if the significant themes of individualisation and consumerism were investigated more fully to bring a greater appreciation of the assumptions that drive these aspects of the generation's understandings of the world.

I have considered only certain aspects of a broader and deeper Pauline, even biblical, response to the spirituality of Generation Y. Much fruitful reflection may proceed to critique and deepen my initial biblical work. The themes of confidence, humility, 'apostolicity', life in-and-through death, proclamation, gospel, faith, the 'seen' and

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<sup>133</sup> See, Goheen, 'As the Father Has Sent Me,' 354-369; Goheen, 'Newbigin's Model of Contextualization,' 136-158.

the ‘unseen’ may be deepened as they are studied in the context of Paul’s complete oeuvre. I have concentrated particularly on the role of Jesus in the mission of the Trinity. Fruitful discussion would be generated through an investigation of the Holy Spirit and God the Father as agents of divine mission to Generation Y.

I have attempted to provide a fitting pastoral, theological and hermeneutical method that will allow disciplined theological reflection on the theme of mission to Generation Y. My use of the pastoral and theological method of Whitehead and Whitehead may be examined for its accuracy in application and fitness in this context. Further, the hermeneutical principles drawn from the missiology of Lesslie Newbigin, may be verified and developed. There is much within Newbigin’s understanding of the enculturated nature of life, and one’s understanding of reality, that commends itself to study in the contemporary, culturally sensitive context. This is particularly so with respect to the way in which different cultural expressions of Christianity may call into question one’s own assumptions.

Finally, I have presented some reflections on how the Christian churches may respond in mission to Generation Y in Australia. In the first instance the threefold missional paradigm of *authenticity*, *proximity* and *intelligibility*, around which these reflections were based, may be tested. Second, the reflections were gathered under the themes of *kenosis*, *patience* and *apprenticeship*. Each of these themes may be examined from a number of positions: for example, theological, psychological/developmental, sociological, from the perspectives of different Christian traditions and as they interact with other parts of Scripture. Further themes that add to a *habitus* of mission for the Christian churches in Australia will undoubtedly arise from these perspectives.

It is my desire that this thesis enhance the ministry of the Christian churches within and among Australia’s Generation Y. By uncovering the significant Pauline witness to the possibility of finding life in-and-through vulnerability and death, and Newbigin’s sense of witness to the finality of Christ, I have indicated a path that the churches may explore as they seek to re-engage Generation Y. I hope that Paul’s discovery of Jesus’ life in-and-through weakness may resonate with the experience of the Christian churches. That, in being restored to life in Christ, the experience of

God's renewal may be transmitted like an 'explosion of joy' to the young people of Australia.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, so that the greatness of the power may be of God and not us ... [we are] always carrying the dying of Jesus in our bodies so that the life of Jesus may be made clear in our bodies ... Accordingly death is made active in us and life in you!

2 Corinthians 4:7, 10 and 12

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