

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches: Incorporating late-modernity in a new religious form

By

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
February 2018


Abstract

Sociologists of religion have found significant and sustained global growth amongst Pentecostal and Charismatic forms of Christianity. From this research, neo-Pentecostalism has emerged as a fruitful site for scholars to examine developments in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianities. Despite acknowledgement of the successful global expansion of Hillsong Church, and denominational studies of COC/inc and Australian Christian Churches (formerly Australian Assemblies of God), sociologists of religion have not examined incarnations of other internationally-recognised Australian-based neo-Pentecostal churches. The present study contributes to both international and Australian Pentecostal studies through an analysis of the theology and operations of five such churches: Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe Church, Planetshakers and Influencers Church. The thesis seeks to answer the question: what are the features of theology and organisational practice that assist these churches in growing on both a local and international scale? Using a critical religious studies framework to examine materials produced by the five churches, the thesis situates the continued expansion of Australian-based expressions of neo-Pentecostalism in historical, economic, social, and cultural context.

The thesis argues that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have expanded into organisations with international reputations by responding to the conditions of late-modernity. The thesis assesses the impact of several characteristics of late-modernity—neoliberal governance, marketisation and branding, mass-communication strategies, globalisation, celebration of entrepreneurial abilities, and individualised patterns of consumerism—as significant dynamics for facilitating the global expansion of Australian-based expressions of neo-Pentecostalism. The research finds that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches actively incorporate aspects of late-modernity—specifically, consumer capitalism, globalisation, and individualism as a curated self that realises modern understandings of personal freedom—in justifying and supporting their theological underpinnings and church-branded activities. The thesis advances Australian religious studies by developing an analysis of the emergence of neo-Pentecostalism in Australia and contributes to an international body of literature that seeks to position neo-Pentecostalism within conditions of late-modernity.

Statement of Originality

This work has not been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MShanahan', with a long, sweeping underline.

Mairead Shanahan

Acknowledgements

I formally thank my supervisor Professor Marion Maddox. Marion's patient and empathetic guidance imbued me with confidence in my academic abilities throughout my candidature. I'm very grateful for her expertise, feedback, and encouragement.

I must also thank Dr Ashley Lavelle and Dr Christopher Hartney, who supervised me when Marion was unable to work for a time during my candidature. It's in part due their diligent care that my thesis progressed in a timely manner during Marion's absence.

I acknowledge the expert feedback I received at three conferences during my candidature; the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion 2016 Annual Meeting, University of Sydney's Pentecostal Studies Conference, and University of Western Sydney's Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches Conference. Opportunities to present my research at these conferences significantly enhanced my thesis and I'm particularly grateful to the academics who took the time to provide suggestions on my presentations.

I also thank Dr Phillip Ablett for sparking my passion for sociology. He inspired me to pursue an academic career and I continue to be very appreciative of his thoughtful contributions to my research.

Finally, I thank my husband Carl and our two children, Rose and Eleanor. I will always be grateful for the supportive love of my family.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Research questions and approach

Sociologists of religion have discerned significant and sustained growth in numbers of people adhering to Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal Christianity. Pew Research Centre (2006) estimates that a quarter of the world's two billion Christians follow Pentecostal teachings and Casanova (2001: 435) observes that predicted growth patterns make Pentecostalism, and associated beliefs of Charismatic and neo-Pentecostalism, 'the most dynamic and fastest growing sector of Protestant Christianity world-wide'. Bitrus (2016) and Johnson (2009) note that neo-Pentecostal churches continue to grow congregations in many countries around the world. Pentecostalism has unique characteristics that are distinct from other forms of Christianity. Pentecostal theology emphasises charismatic experiences including glossolalia (speaking in tongues), healing powers, and prophecies, which are interpreted by believers as the outpouring and visitation of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostal churches place such spontaneous and experiential style of charismatic worship at the centre of religious practice (Cox 2001, Reyes 2012, Vlas & Slav 2014, Jennings 2015). Neo-Pentecostalism was observed in the late 1960s in North America, a theological movement that developed within Pentecostal and evangelical circles emphasising health and wealth as tangible, material, and individually accessible blessings from God (Heath 1973, McGaw 1980, Coleman 2002, Bowler 2013). Identified in the international literature variously as 'prosperity theology', 'health and wealth gospel', and 'faith ministries', these beliefs are distinct from Pentecostalism in that neo-Pentecostal leaders teach that access to spiritual and material blessing is activated through the faith of the individual believer (Hunt 2000a, Hunt 2000b, Mora 2008, Premawardhana 2012, Kramer 2001). Neo-Pentecostal churches replace the Pentecostal emphasis on spontaneity with orchestrated and rehearsed services, orienting a church's organisational goals to achieving growth, and promoting a branded church experience in which church leaders teach that material blessings from God can be claimed through individually active and faithful participation (Hunt 1998, Schaefer 2002, Dilger 2007 Premawardhana 2012, Bowler 2013, Agana 2016).

Sociologists of religion have examined expressions of neo-Pentecostalism in a range of international settings including North America (Heath 1973, Marti 2008, Bowler 2013), Latin American countries (Martin 1995, Kramer 2001, Martin 2003, Martin 2006), Europe (Hunt 2000a, Hunt 2000b, Schaefer 2002, Klaver 2015), African nations (Dilger 2007, Kalu

2010, Adogame 2010, Bitrus 2016, Agana 2016), Asia (Kim 2012), and the Pacific region (Newland 2004, Gudorf 2012). However, scholars of religion and society have not provided in-depth examinations of incarnations of neo-Pentecostalism in the Australian context. Hillsong Church has received local and international scholarly attention, in which the church's rapid local and global growth in members and finances has been observed (Connell 2005, Jennings 2008, Goh 2008, Riches 2010, Riches & Wagner 2012, Maddox 2012, Maddox 2013, Wade & Hynes 2013, Wade 2015, Marti 2017, Riches & Wagner 2017). Local denominational studies of the Australian Assemblies of God (AOG) (Clifton 2009) and Christian Outreach Centre (COC) (Hey 2010) touch on the neo-Pentecostal features of churches associated with those denominations. Maddox (2012, 2013, 2014a) observes growth theology in Hillsong Church and Citipointe Church's Christian Outreach Centre (COC) denomination, noting these organisations' marketing abilities and orientation to theologies of consumption. Miller (2015a) argues that Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Planetshakers, and Influencers Church comprise a distinct and successful Australian Pentecostal social movement. While this body of literature offers critical insight into the workings and theology of specific churches, there remains opportunity to investigate Australian expressions of neo-Pentecostalism and discover how such churches maintain growth and world-wide expansion. The thesis contributes to the emerging international literature on neo-Pentecostalism by studying the theology and operations of five Australian-based neo-Pentecostal churches: Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe Church, Planetshakers and Influencers Church. Using a critical religious studies framework to examine materials produced by these five churches, the thesis situates the continued expansion of Australian expressions of neo-Pentecostalism in historical, economic, social, and cultural context.

The thesis provides an historical examination of the advent of neo-Pentecostalism in Australia and situates the continued expansion of Australian-based expressions of neo-Pentecostalism within the broader conditions of late-modernity. The thesis identifies theological and organisational characteristics that have allowed Australian-based expressions of neo-Pentecostalism to thrive in local and international contexts. The thesis finds that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches achieve organisational goals of growth and a world-wide presence, because the churches incorporate elements of late-modernity into their theology and operations. Specifically, the thesis shows that Australian-based expressions of neo-Pentecostalism adopt aspects of consumer capitalism, globalisation, and individualism into theological teachings and incorporate these dynamics into conducting a range of church

activities. The thesis shows how theology and the institutional practice of churches can be influenced by the broader social, economic and cultural circumstances in which they operate.

The thesis responds to the key research question: what are the elements of Australian neo-Pentecostal theology and organisational practice that have allowed such churches to grow on both a local and international scale? Specifically, the thesis seeks to establish how neo-Pentecostalism emerged in Australia in relation to late-modernity asking, what are the theological characteristics and operational features of Australian neo-Pentecostalism? Furthermore, how did such churches come to compete with older Christian denominations? Following the introduction, the second chapter of thesis conducts an analysis of the formation and historical development of prominent Australian-based churches that feature neo-Pentecostal characteristics: Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe, Influencers Church, and Planetshakers. Chapter Two argues that the churches comprise a distinct neo-Pentecostal religious movement with discernibly unique theological characteristics and modes of organisation. Features of neo-Pentecostalism—Word of Faith theology, prosperity doctrine, individualised understandings of spirituality, and orientation to growth—emerged in Australia through international influences from the United States, New Zealand, and South Korea. The founders of Citipointe Church, Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Influencers Church and Planetshakers implemented neo-Pentecostal principles in their churches' theology, organisational structures, and goals. The thesis shows that senior pastors and leaders in Australian neo-Pentecostal churches teach individualised understandings of spirituality, Word of Faith theology, a version of prosperity gospel in which success is evidence of God's blessing, and Christians are obligated to display their success to encourage other people to come to church. For Citipointe Church, Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Planetshakers and Influencers Church, implementing neo-Pentecostalism proved useful for achieving goals of remaining relevant, contemporary, and expanding ministry activities. The churches developed organisations branded with the church logo to run parallel to the church as a key part of realising these goals, and to also assist the churches in gaining influence in multiple areas of life. Australian neo-Pentecostal senior pastors teach a post-millennial expectation of building God's kingdom on Earth in the present, rather than waiting for Jesus's return. For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, realising God's kingdom involves developing strategies for evangelism, conversion, and cultivating influence in areas including schooling, higher education, the business sphere, work places, and politics. This then becomes a theological justification for preaching prosperity doctrine: God's kingdom on Earth consists of healthy, wealthy, and successful Christians—celebrities, politicians, and business people—who are

prominent or ‘anointed’ to lead in multiple areas of life. To assist in their growth, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches contrast themselves to the older Christian churches and create services that are sensitive to potential converts and congregants. As such, Chapter Two elucidates the neo-Pentecostal elements in the founding visions of Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe, Planetshakers and Influencers Church, and discerns a concern with achieving influence as animating dynamic of the churches’ early expansion tactics. Through an examination of the founding and emergence of these churches throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, the thesis contends that the formative conditions present when the churches were founded subsequently impacted on their development.

Having established the theological and organisational foundations of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, the third chapter then examines their continued expansion in relation to emergence of cultural, political, social, and economic conditions of late-modernity. Chapter Three follows the ways in which Australian neo-Pentecostal churches took up mass-communication technologies—particularly television, music production, and book publishing—which consolidated their mass-reach and facilitated the early development of their globalised networks. From these foundations, the churches transitioned to online communications, becoming adept at using social media in the 2000s. The chapter then examines the economic circumstances of the early 1980s and the introduction of neoliberalism (then known as economic rationalism in Australia), and marketisation. In this policy environment, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches established church-branded activities as the government privatised aspects of education and social services, providing funding avenues for religious organisations to take on these services. This led to the establishment of Australian neo-Pentecostal versions of schools, tertiary institutions, community care, superannuation services, and banking services. Analysing the development of globalisation reveals how the Australian neo-Pentecostal developed their branding strategies as they began to expand beyond Australia to plant churches around the world while at the same time establishing international conferences and personalising a church experience through the provision of an aesthetic associated with the individual churches and senior pastors. Chapter Three examines the presence of late-modern conceptions of individualism in Australian neo-Pentecostal theology to find that an emphasis on self-responsibility in modern identity construction facilitates the popularity of the neo-Pentecostal understanding of a personalised relationship with God. Establishing the historical emergence of the neo-Pentecostalism in Australia and the relationship of the churches to key elements of late-modernity is the first major aim of the thesis.

The first half of the thesis links the development of Australian neo-Pentecostalism with the emergence of late-modernity, showing how Australian-based neo-Pentecostal churches drew on late-modern ideas of economic rationalism, globalised corporate culture and individualised success to shape their theology and organisational practice. Having established the features of late-modernity—consumer capitalist economic circumstances, dynamics of globalisation, and the primacy of the individual in modern understandings of the self—that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporated into their theology and operations, the second half of the thesis uses these elements of late-modernity to analyse the churches' contemporary practices in more detail. In particular, the second half questions how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches used late modern ideas of consumer capitalism, globalisation, and individualism to expand locally and internationally. Further, how have conditions in late-modernity, adopted throughout the formation of each church, continued to shape Australian neo-Pentecostal theology and organisation? The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters of the thesis use the themes of consumer capitalism, globalisation, and individualism to guide a deeper analysis of Australian neo-Pentecostal contemporary theology, organisation, and practice.

Identifying specific features of contemporary consumer capitalism, the thesis shows how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate commercialisation, corporate governance, and responses to recession into their theology and operations to facilitate organisational goals of expansion and growth. Chapter Four examines the ways in which Australian neo-Pentecostal churches generate income, showing that the churches commercialise multiple areas of their religion and use sophisticated marketing techniques to promote a particular brand of church aiming to attract regular congregants. In selling products and access to church events, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use modern marketing techniques to create a branded church experience with a unified public image and participate in the global Christian goods and services market. The use of corporate governance to organise institutional aspects of their churches and church-branded organisations provides the churches with a flexible organisational framework for designating roles and managing expectations within the church structures. Corporate governance in neo-Pentecostal churches centralises power to the board of directors—senior pastoral leadership—with consequences for decision-making within the church, particularly when questionable or transgressive behaviour occurs within the church. Finally, Chapter four analyses the churches' responses to recession, as economists understand that contemporary capitalism does not lead to infinite growth, but experiences cycles of boom and bust. The neo-Pentecostal emphasis on growth,

abundance and aspirational living provides such a response to recession and financial crises, one that theologically justifies the effects of economic dynamics as a way in which God might choose to bless the individual believer, and that Christians should see these cycles as ‘tests of faith’. The chapter shows that specific elements of consumer capitalism—commercialisation, corporate governance, and responses to recession—are present in Australian neo-Pentecostal theology and operations.

Chapter Five analyses dynamics of globalisation to find that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use glocalisation, transnational corporatism, and international aid programs to achieve aspects of their successful global expansion. The thesis examines the development of localised church-based networks through establishing home groups overseas. This activity uses glocalisation—bridging the local and global—to bring congregants to appreciate and participate in the globalised aspects of belonging to an Australian neo-Pentecostal church. Corporatisation is a significant dynamic within late-modern globalised capitalism and facilitates the transnational expansion of corporate culture. Analysing church planting through the lens of transnational corporatism reveals that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use similar techniques to corporations to achieve their growth goals through church planting. The churches respond to global inequality caused by the uneven distribution of capital around the world. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches assist poverty-stricken and trafficked peoples through local and international aid programs that provide material goods, housing, health programs and education. These aid programs undertaken by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches create opportunities for encouraging individuals to attend the local branch of Australian neo-Pentecostal church plant. The aid programs serve dual purposes of serving disadvantaged community needs while assisting Australian neo-Pentecostal churches achieve their growth goals and influence in communities around the world. Analysing these international activities undertaken by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches reveals elements of globalisation that the churches incorporate into their operations.

In Chapter Six, the thesis shows how modern understandings of individualism are present in Australian neo-Pentecostalism. This individualism facilitates an understanding of the self that aligns with consumerism, exceptional leadership, and entrepreneurialism. The thesis finds that the Australian neo-Pentecostal ideal of the Christian self is actualised in an entrepreneurial project where the individual is responsible for choosing salvation, realising God-given leadership capabilities, and modelling health and success through their consumer choices. This process reflects the logic of the consumerist market; social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook operate on exchanges of images as reputational currency.

This reputation economy, with choice as its guiding force, is used by Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders to develop their vision of an ideal neo-Pentecostal lifestyle. Online image production supports the conception of neo-Pentecostal selfhood as participating within a global community through display of lifestyle on social media accounts. The individual congregant is responsible for ensuring that they make the correct choices. This emphasis on individual self-responsibility is a significant dynamic in late-modernity and that chapter finds it present in Australian neo-Pentecostal theology and operations.

The thesis finds that conditions of late-modernity continue to shape Australian neo-Pentecostal theology and organisation as the churches seek to expand their presence around the world. The study finds neo-Pentecostal theological characteristics and operational features in Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Planetshakers, Influencers Church and Citipointe Church: the presence of Word of Faith theology, prosperity doctrine, expectations of health and wealth, individualised understandings of spirituality, and growth theology. A centralised organisational structure and commitment to growth means that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are optimally positioned to repackaging the late-modern conditions of consumer capitalism, globalisation, and individualism for religious means. Developments in consumer capitalism, including the use of marketing strategies to create brands, corporate governance, and responses to recession, are found in Australian neo-Pentecostal organisational structures, expansion techniques, and theological teachings. The churches use dynamics of globalisation—specifically glocalisation, transnational corporatism, and globalised inequality—to ensure the viability of their international expansion, church planting ventures, and aid programs. Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders teach that the ideal modern Christian is actualised in individual salvation, serving to lead the church, and development of an entrepreneurial self to align with identity construction techniques that favour a personalised religious experience emphasising the importance of individual faith and belief. By incorporating these conditions of late-modernity into their theology and operations, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have ensured their continued ability to grow church membership and finances, and to achieve goals of global growth. To a certain extent, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches owe their success to an ability to conditions of late-modernity into their theological and organisational practice, particularly those features of consumer capitalism, globalisation, and individualism.

The thesis contributes to understanding interactions between late-modernity and religion. Modern social theory identifies features of late-modernity as consumer capitalism, neoliberalism, individualism, and globalisation (Appadurai 1996, Bauman 2000, Beck &

Beck- Gernsheim 2002, Steger 2009). The thesis extends understandings of these dynamics by examining them in relation to a religious form that emerged in conjunction with late-modernity. The thesis shows that consumer capitalism affects Australian neo-Pentecostal churches by providing a frame of reference for justifying infinite growth, with consumer choice as the main medium of identity construction. The impact of neoliberalism is demonstrated in the ways in which Australian neo-Pentecostal churches structure their charity and social care activities to take advantage of privatisation policy that favours religious organisations. Globalisation offers Australian neo-Pentecostal churches a pathway to expansion around the world, while maintaining intimate community connections in a global church structure. Individualism provides justification for the emphasis on self-responsibility for success in Australian neo-Pentecostal theology, while avoiding reflection on the possibility of structural causes of inequality in late-modernity. The thesis assesses the impacts on elements of modernity on the methods of Australian neo-Pentecostal church growth, theology, and organisational structure.

The thesis analyses five Australian-based neo-Pentecostal churches, applying a critical religious studies framework to their activities, practice, and theology. The thesis identifies five Australian churches that had neo-Pentecostal elements in their founding visions and these characteristics continue to be present in their theology and operations. The study is not comparative as it does not seek to compare the churches directly with each other or with local and overseas counterparts. The thesis is limited to the five identified churches (Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Influencers Church, Planetshakers, and Citipointe), because they each display characteristics of neo-Pentecostalism. The thesis does not attempt to comprehensively describe or catalogue every church in Australia that may present neo-Pentecostal features. For example, Hope Unlimited Church based on the New South Wales Central Coast, Calvary Church in Queensland, and Riverview Church from Perth in Western Australia display some similar characteristics to the churches discussed, seeking to grow congregations and finances, and teaching versions of prosperity gospel, or health and wealth theology. However, those churches do not have the same international status or prominence as the churches analysed in the thesis. Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Influencers Church, Planetshakers and Citipointe Church are churches founded in Australia displaying neo-Pentecostal characteristics, achieving growth on both a local and international scale. While the thesis discusses features of neo-Pentecostal theology, the study is not theological or denominational, as it analyses church organisational structures and church-branded activities in the context of social theory. Furthermore, while the thesis identifies features of an

Australian version of the multi-national religious phenomenon of neo-Pentecostalism, scholarship has not identified a seamless global neo-Pentecostal movement. The thesis does not make claims about the existence of such a movement. Certain similarities exist between neo-Pentecostal churches and ministries around the world. Localised versions of neo-Pentecostalism observed in Ghana (Agana 2016), Latin America (Martin 1995), and in Seoul (Kim 2012) share some similarities with Australian-based incarnations of neo-Pentecostalism such as Word of Faith teaching, prosperity gospel, and preaching that individual belief can impact personal material conditions. However, scholarship has not delineated the extent of differences in theology and modes of organisation between such groups. For example, some African and Pacific versions of neo-Pentecostalism incorporate elements of indigenous traditions in practice and ritual (Hunt 2000a 341-342, Eves 2000: 76-77, Brison 2017) and in the Australian context, urban aspirational neo-Pentecostal churches capitalised on the localised economic rationalist policy setting in the 1980s. As such, the thesis contributes to an emerging body of international literature that seeks to understand the contours of neo-Pentecostalism as it develops around the world. The analysis is concerned with how historical, cultural, social, and economic circumstances of late-modernity impact and continue to shape the growth trajectories and expansion strategies of five Australian neo-Pentecostal churches.

Methodology and methods

The study draws on an interpretive and qualitative theoretical framework to develop critical religious studies methodology for analysing materials produced by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches. Max Weber's early 20th Century analysis of religion and modernity developed the conclusion that, as scientific reason and instrumental rationality came to characterise the operating forces of modern life, the world was becoming 'disenchanted' resulting in the erosion of religious belief from the world. Weber's observations of religion provide an epistemological starting point for analysing religion in modernity, as he acknowledged that religious forms respond to broader social dynamics. Weber (2001: 12) argues

the spirit of hard work, of progress, or whatever else it may be called, the awakening which one is inclined to ascribe to Protestantism, must not be understood, as there is a tendency to do, as joy of living nor in any other sense as connected with the Enlightenment... If any inner relationship between certain expressions of the old Protestant spirit and modern capitalistic culture is to be found, we must attempt to

find it, for better or worse not in its alleged more or less materialistic or at least anti-ascetic joy of living, but in its purely religious characteristics.

In this, Weber elucidates the importance of situating the emergence of particular economic and cultural modes associated with modern capitalism within religious dynamics. Contrary to Weber's prediction of a decline in religious belief, religion as a field of scholarly inquiry continues to be important as people retain religious beliefs and practices in the late-modern epoch. Lindquist and Handelman (2011: 9) point out 'The realization that religion was not dead and gone or at least safely secluded away in the private sphere... forced social scientists to recognize that religion was upfront, visible, and powerful.' Weber's insights into the relations between religion and broader cultural, economic, and social dynamics remain critical to understanding developments and changes in religious practice, with particular emphasis on the roles of economic and cultural dynamics. From this perspective, the thesis uses methodology developed from a sociology of religion that seeks to situate religious phenomena within broader contexts. The research aims to developing useful conceptual tools for contributing to showing how neo-Pentecostalism flourishes within late-modernity.

Through a contextualisation of the Australian neo-Pentecostal movement, the thesis draws on these methods for scholarly study of religion originally pioneered by Max Weber. In his monograph *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber (2001) analysed the ways in which theology might facilitate economic conditions and material modes of organisation, arguing that features of Calvinist-Protestant theology rationalised work ethics which implemented industrial capitalist ideology. Since the rise of consumer capitalism in the 1980s—constituting global free markets and the incorporation of entrepreneurialism into all aspects of modern life—religious studies scholars investigating the links between religion and economy have revisited Weber's thesis (Tremlett 2013, Yannarella 2015). Drawing on Weber's legacy, critical religious studies methods facilitate the analysis of a religion through an examination of the broader historical, economic, and social contexts in which the religion occurs. Scholars of neo-Pentecostalism pay particular attention to historical, economic, political, cultural dynamics that developments in neo-Pentecostalism might be observed to resist or incorporate (see Martin 1995, Berger 2010, Maddox 2012, Bowler 2013, Klaver 2015). Charles Taylor (2004: 75) argues that in the modern social imaginary 'Things cohere because they serve each other in their survival and flourishing'. These broader systems, patterns, and themes of social and cultural context interact, which in turn lend meaning and practicality to religious belief. In discerning the relevant features and characteristics of late-

modernity, the thesis draws on contemporary social theorists including Zygmunt Bauman, Manfred Steger, Arjun Appadurai and Ulrich Beck who identify distinct conditions of late-modernity as comprising consumer capitalism, globalisation, and individualism.

Late-modernity is characterised by a globalised shift from production to consumer capitalism with the development of individualism as a significant tool for identity construction. Bauman (2000: 60) observed that the shift from production to consumer capitalism facilitated the development of global culture in which individual choices are structured by the logic of the market and expressed in consumerist behaviour. Martin (2014: 36) agrees with Bauman, observing that in late-modernity material conditions and class location are reflected in consumer choices, which makes the value, preservation, and regulation of markets a key element of late-modern political dynamics. For Steger (2009: 195), markets are central to globalisation in late-modernity as the globally integrated consumer economy facilitates increased human movement and availability of advanced communication technologies. In Steger's (2009: 195) view, globalisation is the process of integration of leadless markets precipitated by advances in communication technologies that facilitate the spread of American culture. While American culture, particularly the dominance of Silicon Valley corporations, impacts aspects of globalisation in late-modernity, Appadurai (1996: 31) argues that globalisation disconnected role models and lifestyles from country and nation and individual agency facilitated by imagination becomes a key component of globalism. This flexibility emphasises the individual as the basis for developing late-modern culture. Observing social outcomes of the globalised integration of consumer capitalism, Bauman (2000, in Winch 2015: 299) argues that through this process, social exchange becomes an activity of consumption and people 'calculate what can be offered in terms of pleasure or social capital.' As Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: xxii) argue, this means that 'for the first time in history... the individual is becoming the basic unit of social reproduction.' According to Bauman, Martin, Steger, Appadurai, and Beck, the key characteristics that shape cultural, political, and social dynamics of late-modernity are consumer capitalism, globalisation, and individualism.

To assess the ways in which Australian neo-Pentecostalism incorporates late-modern conditions to succeed, the thesis draws on an interpretive qualitative approach to religious studies. Interpretive frameworks in religious studies assume that belief systems are social constructions and are responsive to historical, social, cultural, and material context (Woodhead 2011). Viewing religion as a social construction, the thesis draws on the traditions of critical analysis, which offers a qualitative interpretive approach to

understandings of how religions form, change, survive, and in some cases, thrive, while situating that religious occurrence within broader dynamics. Because the research seeks to contextualise Australian versions of neo-Pentecostalism in historical, economic, and cultural dynamics, the methodological standpoint of the thesis is not from an internal, or ‘insider’ congregant point of view. Rather, by situating the development and success of Australian neo-Pentecostalism in conditions of late-modernity, the thesis seeks to provide a redescription of church theology and activities; presenting an external construct employed by an outsider, a non-church attendee (Adams 2010: 399). This distinction is important, particularly in studies of Pentecostals; a religion that insiders claim manifests in personal experience of ‘spiritual gifts’. The research is not concerned with assessing these claims as true or false. Rather, the thesis seeks to discern the impacts of the broader contexts in which Australian neo-Pentecostalism came to claim the bestowment of particular spiritual gifts associated with materialism as desirable for the modern church-goer.

The thesis presents a re-description of particular Australian-based churches to achieve the aim of the research to situate Australian incarnations of neo-Pentecostalism within a broader context of late-modernity. The methodology of the thesis draws on Kevin Schilbrack’s (2010, 2012) response to Timothy Fitzgerald’s critical religious studies providing a method for studying religion as a socially constructed category subject to historically mediated power relations. This facilitates the examination of Australian neo-Pentecostalism as an act of redescription, as opposed to an ethnomethodological approach that would constitute a church-attender’s insider description. Schilbrack (2012) argues that religion should be studied on its own terms within the social, economic, and historical contexts of its occurrence. Religion requires understanding within the terms of reference of the participants and situating in broader dynamics to account for its socially constructed nature (Schilbrack 2010, 2012). Accordingly, the method of thesis focuses on the analysis of texts and artefacts participants in the religion produce to develop understandings of the processes involved in contextualising religious meaning and belief (Hjelm 2011: 135). The thesis applies the theoretical framework of late-modernity—key features of which are identified as consumer capitalism, globalisation, and individualism—to analyse materials produced by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches. Analysing the textual and material culture of these churches allows the thesis to assess the aspects of neo-Pentecostalism that the churches present as defining their practice, theology, and organisation. The methodology of the thesis is concerned with studying presentations of Australian neo-Pentecostalism to outsiders to understand how the churches developed their success, not the interior beliefs of

individual congregants. As such, the thesis takes Australian neo-Pentecostal material culture as the field of inquiry and material artefacts are used as the main data source within the study.

Taking material culture as the field of inquiry in religious studies offers a data selection framework for analysing religion through the materials the groups produce. This allows religious studies scholars to situate a religion within broader contexts, but still using participants' own terms of reference as displayed through the artefacts produced. According to Carp (2011: 475) material culture in religion is

everything that is both perceptible and cultural, not only artifacts, but also the contexts, processes and skills of use and production that surround and interpenetrate artifacts... It includes all modes of perception, not merely sight and its correlate, visual culture; invisibility is not synonymous with imperceptibility. Music, for example, is material (the sound of it, as well as the instruments and bodies that make it); so is the taste of a sacred meal, the scent of incense, the feel of rosary beads in one's fingers, the proprioception of one's body in sacred postures or gestures (kneeling in prayer, for example, or making the sign of the cross) or the kinesthesia of one's body engaged in religious activity (for example *sa'y* during the *Hajj*).

Material culture in religious studies relates not just to the objects of production themselves, but also asks scholars to situate these products, objects, or artefacts within a range of environmental dynamics. As Meyer et al. (2011: 209) argue

The meaning of an object is not understood to reside singularly in it, but also to draw from its circulation, its local adaptation, from what people do with it, and from the affective and conceptual schemes whereby users apprehend an object. Rather than focus on style or iconography alone, the task has become one of concentrating on lives of objects, studying objects longitudinally in relation to audiences or users by tracing their social careers, the places they go and the different ways they are put to use.

The study of material culture, therefore, does not seek to reduce or reify religion to explanation in terms of idea, dogma, or artefact. Instead, religion is seen as 'inseparable from a matrix or network of components that consist of people, divine beings or forces, institutions, things, places, and communities (Meyer et al. 2011: 209). Within material religious studies, Meyer et al. (2009: 210) point out the impact and uses of new and old media by religious traditions which highlight 'the importance of media technologies as inalienable elements of religious communication'. Analysing the production, development, and uses of such technologically mediated artefacts and products—including digital texts such as websites, social media accounts, books, and films—is important for understanding the self-representation of religious forms in late-modernity.

The importance of analysing the self-representation of recently-developed Australian-based religious forms is evident in the scholarly interest in Hillsong Church (Connell 2005, Jennings 2008, Goh 2008, Riches 2010, Riches & Wagner 2012, Maddox 2012, Maddox 2013, Wade & Hynes 2013, Wade 2015, Marti 2017, Riches & Wagner 2017). These scholars used a variety of methods to analyse aspects of Hillsong Church's activities including: style of worship services and liturgy (Connell 2005, Jennings 2008, Goh 2008); music production (Riches 2010, Riches & Wagner 2012); theology (Maddox 2012, Maddox 2013); institutional arrangements (Wade & Hynes 2013, Wade 2015); and globalised abilities for expansion (Marti 2017, Riches & Wagner 2017). However, this literature has not analysed the ways in which Hillsong Church reflects changes in culture to develop successful promotional activities, particularly given online communications became a key promotional strategy for the church as the popularity and importance of web-based communications increased through the 2000s. As discussed in Chapter 3, Hillsong Church was an early user of mass communication technologies for the purposes of promotion and was one of the first Australian churches to develop promotional strategy using online technologies. Further, Australian-based churches, such as C3 Church, Influencers Church, Planetshakers, and Citipointe, demonstrate similar capabilities for online promotion and creation of digital artefacts. These four churches have a similar growth trajectory to Hillsong Church, from small gatherings based in Australia to planting churches and charity organisations around the world. For Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe, Planetshakers and Influencers Church, this narrative of growth trajectory is promoted through the online dissemination of images, videos, blogs, podcasts and other digital creations. These artefacts, produced by Australian-based churches that display similar features of religious practice in late-modernity, are analysed in the thesis using material religious studies method, as online communications remain significant for understanding these churches' modes of self-representation.

Thus, the thesis takes its primary field of inquiry from digital artefacts and materials available online that are produced by and associated with Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe Church, Planetshakers and Influencers Church as an important aspect of understanding the churches' representation and promotion. These materials include a variety of texts, artefacts, and digital creations that are available online; books written by senior pastors, worship songs, videos and recordings of sermons and conference proceedings, promotional brochures and films, websites, music videos, press releases, TV and radio interviews, blogs, social media accounts, applications for smart devices, annual charity reports, and church governance documents. This data was collected using online search

methods during the researcher's thesis candidature, from August 2013 to February 2018. The scope of the collection is limited to materials produced by the five churches, as examples of the ways in which the churches present theology, promote activities, and develop institutional aspects of operations. As such, the time-period for the research is determined by when the churches produced or created texts and artefacts. For example, Citipointe Church is associated with the Christian Outreach Centre (COC) denomination and COC held first meetings as Christian Life Centre in 1974 (Hey 2010). Therefore, to analyse the ways in which Citipointe explains the development of its international expansion strategies, the thesis takes materials available online such as governance documents produced at the time and interviews with church leaders reflecting on the process. These materials produced by Hillsong Church, Citipointe, C3 Church, Planetshakers and Influencers Church are publicly available to church outsiders through searches of a variety of online mediums, such as video-sharing platforms (Vimeo and YouTube), social media accounts, archived newspaper articles, archived websites, government websites, interviews given to journalists and researchers made available online, podcasts, brochures for events, and online reading platforms including Google books. This search method allows the collection of materials that the churches produce and disseminate online with the purpose of representing themselves. The research applies the theoretical framework of late-modernity to the materials produced by the churches, positioning these materials in late-modern cultural, social, and political context. Through this application, the thesis discerns features of late modernity—consumer capitalism, globalisation, and individualism—as present within the theology and operations of Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe, Planetshakers and Influencers Church.

Within these materials, there are accounts of experiences central to neo-Pentecostalism including glossolalia, prophecy interpretation, and healing powers. This is due to the distinctive nature of Pentecostal and Charismatic forms of Christianity, which focus on 'experiential' forms of worship practice emphasising the importance of a physical or material experience of the Holy Spirit (Cox 2001, Jennings 2014). In accordance with Schilbrack's (2010) critical religious studies method, the thesis takes these accounts at their word and does not attempt to explain or rationalise what may be considered spiritual or even supernatural events. Analysing materials produced by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches means that the thesis can provide contextualisation of the ways in which the churches present to wider audiences. The churches under examination specialise in developing a religious style oriented towards encouraging people to regularly attend services. As such, the churches are aware of outsiders' perceptions and seek to control these by producing materials that have the specific

purpose of engaging with those outside the church, promoting theology and activities. As the research in the thesis is undertaken by an outsider, the material that is analysed allows the thesis to discover what the churches want outsiders to know about themselves. The thesis uses critical religious studies method to analyse texts and artefacts produced by Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe, Influencers Church, and Planetshakers which are disseminated through online mediums to explain how the churches develop self-representation while responding to changes in late-modern social, cultural, and political dynamics.

Significance of the project

The findings of the thesis have methodological, theoretical, and practical significance. The thesis examines features of late-modernity present in Australian neo-Pentecostal churches using a methodological framework of critical religious studies that recognises religion as a social construction. Applying critical religious studies theory to analysing Australian neo-Pentecostal church establishment and development is important for understanding how religions develop in relation to broader context. In this way, the thesis establishes how social, economic, and cultural dynamics impact on the development of Australian neo-Pentecostalism. The churches examined in the study make impact and influence central to their organisational goals of growth. The thesis shows that religion can retain a powerful expression in modernity, particularly when it incorporates aspects of the society in which it occurs. Understanding how religions respond and adapt to broader social, economic, historical dynamics reveals the ways in which religions not only survive but can flourish in late-modernity. This application of critical religious studies advances theoretical understanding of neo-Pentecostalism in modernity as dynamic and responsive to broader historical, social, economic, and cultural contexts.

The thesis is significant because it provides fertile ground for public and academic debate regarding the continued importance of religion in late-modernity. The findings provide insight into how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches seek to develop a Christian identity that aligns with modern cultural, social, and economic dynamics. The thesis analyses the ways in which Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate conditions of late-modernity into church and church-branded activities. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches respond to consumer capitalism to justify their growth theology, organise church structure through corporatised strategies, and respond to specific issues of late-modern consumer capitalism inducing developing theological explanations for recession. Findings that dynamics of

globalisation afford Australian neo-Pentecostal churches opportunities to expand are important for understanding the techniques that the churches have developed to support organisational goals of growth and globalised vision of church. The thesis reveals that individualism in Australian neo-Pentecostal theology aligns with the ways in which understandings of the ideal self as an entrepreneur have developed in late-modernity. The conclusions drawn from this research will aid in the scholarly assessment and evaluation of the abilities of religious movements to achieve success in late-modernity, particularly the ways in which they respond to social cultural, and economic conditions.

The findings of the thesis provide a foundation to compare Australian-based neo-Pentecostal churches with neo-Pentecostal churches that originated in other countries. Developing scholarly analysis on neo-Pentecostal churches in a variety of contexts is important for understanding the ways in which the churches flourish. In this way, the thesis makes contributions to international Pentecostal and Charismatic studies and to the global development of scholarly literature on neo-Pentecostalism. Scholarly analyses of neo-Pentecostalism have been conducted in other countries and these studies have revealed critical insights into the features, characteristics, and organisational structures of these churches. Such work includes: Linda Kintz's (1997) study of evangelical Christianity and its links to conservative political and cultural ideology in the USA, Simon Coleman's (2000) work on evangelical megachurch movements in Sweden, Margaret Poloma's (2003) studies on charismatic revival in Canada linking Pentecostalism to globalised dynamics, and Kate Bowler's (2013) historical account of the prosperity gospel in the USA that situates the theology in social, economic, and political context. Scholars observe local expressions of neo-Pentecostalism in Latin America (Martin 1995, Martin 2003, Martin 2006), Africa (Comaroff & Comaroff 2000, Kalu 2010, Haynes 2015, Agana 2016), Asia (Kim 2012) and the Pacific region (Newland 2004, Gudorf 2012), and others focus on neo-Pentecostalism in global contexts (Robbins 2004, Mora 2008, Coleman & Hackett 2015). The thesis contributes to this body of literature in an analysis of the establishment, development, and continued expansion of Australian incarnations of neo-Pentecostalism in relation to broader late-modern conditions of consumer capitalism globalisation, and individualism. The thesis reveals the contours of neo-Pentecostalism as it developed in Australia, identifying the features of neo-Pentecostalism in Australia and discussing the historical context in which Australian neo-Pentecostal churches gained popularity, prominence, and cultivated influence. This process of historical contextualisation is important for defining the main theological characteristics of

Australian-based neo-Pentecostal churches, while contributing to international literature analysing neo-Pentecostal churches.

Following on from this, the thesis contributes specifically to Australian religious studies scholarship. Academics studying Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in Australia document the establishment of Pentecostal churches since the early 20th century (Chant 1897, Hughes 1996, Piggin 2012). Scholars have provided denominational studies of Pentecostalism including the Australian AOG (Clifton 2009) and COC (Hey 2010). Religious studies scholars in Australia have made progress in analysing a variety of aspects of Hillsong Church. Jennings (2008) and Goh (2008) observe Hillsong's ability market their brand of ecstatic spiritual experience across the globe through their production of Christian worship music and cultivating their growth tactics. Riches, (2010), Riches and Wagner (2017), Wade and Hynes (2013), and Wade (2015) also analyse Hillsong Church's remarkable marketing skills, tracing the church's origins through an historical account of developing their popular and globally-recognised worship music. In a series of journal articles, Maddox (2012, 2013) provides a systematic study of Hillsong Church's neo-Pentecostal elements through an analysis of the church's legitimisation of consumer capitalism and growth theology. Extending Hey's (2011) work, Maddox (2015) also analyses COC—whose transnational organisation is International Network of Churches (abbreviated to lower-case 'inc') and local Australian ministry is Citipointe Church—as a conservative social movement. Most recently, Miller (2015a) draws on historical, archival, and participant observational research to argue that Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Influencers, and Planetshakers have developed a distinctly modern and influential form of Pentecostal Christianity. While these studies offer critical insight into aspects of the workings and theology of specific Australian Pentecostal denominations and churches, the present study is draws attention to lesser-studied churches, specifically C3 Church, Citipointe, Influencers Church, and Planetshakers. Thus far, Australian religious studies scholars have not examined expressions of neo-Pentecostalism in Australia. The research extends the local Australian literature to an analysis of the churches as a distinct neo-Pentecostal movement, establishing theological and operational features specifically in relation to aspects of late-modernity, developing academic insight and scholarly analysis of the local and global impacts of Australian neo-Pentecostalism.

Chapter outlines

Chapter Two shows how neo-Pentecostalism emerged in Australian in the 1970s through international influences, developing into a religious movement with distinctive theological

features and operational characteristics. Australian church leaders became interested in neo-Pentecostalism—Word of Faith theology, prosperity doctrine, expectations of health and wealth, individualised understandings of spirituality, and growth theology—and the senior pastors of Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe, Influencers Church, and Planetshakers implemented these principles in the visions for their churches. From the United States, evangelicals brought to Australia ideas of prosperity gospel and positive faith confessions, and pastors schooled in the worship practices of the Latter Rain movement moved to Australia from New Zealand, beginning churches that emphasized the spiritual blessings of faith healing and prophecy. From South Korea, David Yonggi Cho's new approaches to church organisational structure and non-invasive evangelism came to influence growth strategies and branding tactics of Australian neo-Pentecost churches. The chapter traces the influence and implementation of these teachings within five Australian-based churches; Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe Church, Influencers Church and Planetshakers. Adopting organisational practices assisted Australian neo-Pentecostal churches in competing in an increasingly diverse Australian religious marketplace, as they sought to expand their influence and growth. The chapter identifies Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Planetshakers, Influencers Church, and Citipointe as key churches in an Australian neo-Pentecostal movement and discerns the ability of these churches to compete with older Australian Christian denominations.

The third chapter traces the emergence of late-modernity in Australia to identify the conditions Australian neo-Pentecostalism incorporates. The chapter finds that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches took advantage of mass-communication technologies, the introduction and implementation of economic rationalist policies and neoliberal governance strategies, integration into a globalised economy, and a global shift from production to consumer capitalism. The chapter examines how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporated these structural elements of contemporary modernity to create growth opportunities and establish church-branded organisations. The chapter establishes the relations between developments in Australian modernity—access to mass-communication technologies, neoliberal economic conditions, marketisation, the effects of globalisation and the development of individualised consumerism—and the expansion of Australian neo-Pentecostal activities.

Chapter Four shows how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have incorporated consumer capitalism into theology and operations. The chapter finds that Australian neo-Pentecostalism responds to neoliberal economic conditions that create market mechanisms

for growth strategies. Neo-Pentecostal theology legitimises individualised consumerism as a key expression of identity formation. The boom and bust cycles of global capitalist economic structure and the effects of this on Australia are reflected in neo-Pentecostal theology which explains these processes as evidence of the ways in which God will bless believers. The chapter establishes the development of marketization techniques present in Australian neo-Pentecostal church branding strategies, in which the churches contribute to the global Christian goods market and outlines the operation of neo-Pentecostalism in the marketplace as a response to the prosperous economic conditions in Australia.

The fifth chapter demonstrates that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate dynamics of globalisation into theology and operations. The churches use a process of ‘glocalisation’—bridging the local and global—to link congregants as a community within a narrative of the church as a global religious movement. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use international church planting as a method of achieving growth across the world, while employing corporatised expansion techniques to supply potential congregants overseas with access to a neo-Pentecostal brand of church. Corporatisation is a significant dynamic within globalisation and analysing church planting through this lens reveals that the church planting undertaken by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches happens in an analogous manner to the operations of transnational corporations. Globalisation has caused inequality through economic development, and Australian neo-Pentecostal churches assist disadvantaged peoples through their international aid programs. Analysing these international activities undertaken by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches reveals how the churches have responded to late-modern globalisation dynamics.

Chapter Six argues that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate modern concepts of individualism into their theology and social media strategies. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate a form of individualism that is historically specific to consumerist modernity, in which conceptualisation of the individual concern the production of an entrepreneurial self as an autonomous and empowered identity. This process reflects the logic of the consumerist market; social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook operate on exchanges of images as reputational currency. This reputational economy, with choice as its guiding force, is used by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to develop their vision of an ideal neo-Pentecostal lifestyle. Online image production supports the conception of neo-Pentecostal selfhood as participating within a global community through social media accounts, and one in which a successful entrepreneur is portrayed as the ideal Christian self. As such, the chapter finds that modern ideas on individualism are present in Australian neo-

Pentecostal theology and through the display of lifestyle found on Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders' social media accounts.

Chapter Seven concludes the thesis, arguing that success and popularity of Australian neo-Pentecostalism should be understood in the context of the conditions of late-modernity. The thesis establishes the historical context of the emergence of neo-Pentecostalism in Australia and identifies examples of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches. The thesis assesses the historical development, theological characteristics, operational structures, and globalised abilities of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to argue that the churches affirm the dominant conditions of late-modernity: consumer capitalism, globalisation, and individualism. Examining expressions of neo-Pentecostalism as a response to conditions of modernity is important for understanding religion in the early twenty-first century. Analysing Australian neo-Pentecostalism as a new religious form that incorporates changes in global capitalist structures facilitates nuanced understanding of the significance of religion in modernity.

Chapter 2: The advent of neo-Pentecostalism in Australia

Introduction

To begin the task of developing the thesis core argument, Chapter Two discerns specific features of neo-Pentecostalism and demonstrates how these features arrived in Australia. Identifying features of neo-Pentecostalism in sociology of religion literature allows the research to show the Australian churches displaying neo-Pentecostalism in theology and operations. The central argument of Chapter Two is that the pastors of Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe, Influencers Church, and Planetshakers implemented neo-Pentecostalism in the founding visions of their churches and continue to teach such theologies, using these principles to develop organisational goals of growth and seeking influence. These Australian-based leaders incorporated overseas influences to introduce neo-Pentecostalism into their church theology and operations. Evangelical pastors from the United States such as William Barham and Oral Roberts articulated prosperity gospel and positive faith confessions for action, specifically through the founding of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International (FGBMFI). These men travelled to Australia and New Zealand to teach these principles and founded FGBMFI Chapters. Pastors schooled in the worship practices of the Latter Rain movement moved to Australia from New Zealand and began churches that emphasized faith healing and prophecy. From South Korea, David Yonggi Cho's innovative approaches to church organisational structure and evangelism came to influence growth strategies and branding tactics of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches. The chapter traces how these movements from overseas came to influence Hillsong Church, Citipointe Church, C3 Church, Influencers Church and Planetshakers, and shows that implementation of such neo-Pentecostal features in these Australian churches allowed the leaders to differentiate their churches from the older established Christian denominations. Adopting structured organisational practices assisted Australian neo-Pentecostal churches in competing in an increasingly diverse Australian religious marketplace, as they sought to expand their influence and growth.

The analysis in Chapter Two draws on historical studies of Australian and international Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal movements to discern the theological and operational features that distinguish neo-Pentecostal churches based in Australia. The first section of the chapter uses critical religious studies theory to establish religion as a socially constructed phenomenon to be understood in the participants' own terms with reference to

external dynamics. Then, the first section identifies features of neo-Pentecostalism documented in the international literature to identify the neo-Pentecostal elements that arrived in Australia. The section finds that the influences of the FGBMFI, the Latter Rain movement, and cell church models of growth were used by Australian pastors and New Zealand pastors based in Australia. The second section shows that these neo-Pentecostal principles were present in the founding visions of Hillsong Church, Citipointe Church, C3 Church, Influencers Church, and Planetshakers. The section finds that neo-Pentecostal theology underpins the expansion and branding strategies employed by the churches, including the development of church-branded activities that seek to cater to multiple areas of life, beyond that of church attendance. The final section of the chapter identifies the role of Kingdom Now theology (a form of Christian Reconstructionism) and ‘seeker-friendly’ services (church services designed to make non-church goers feel comfortable in attending church) within the expansion tactics of neo-Pentecostal Australian churches. The section argues that Kingdom Now theology and seeker-friendly services contribute to actualising the neo-Pentecostal drive for growth and influence. Identifying the implementation of these dynamics amongst Australian neo-Pentecostal churches is important for understanding how the churches have ensured success in an increasingly diverse and competitive religious marketplace in Australia. The chapter shows how neo-Pentecostalism emerged in Australia via international influences, is presented in the founding visions of Hillsong Church, Citipointe, C3 Church, Influencers Church and Planetshakers, and demonstrates that the churches use specific strategies, including Kingdom Now theology and seeker sensitive services, to ensure achievement of goals of growth and influence in Australia and overseas. The first section of the chapter identifies characteristics of neo-Pentecostalism as presented in Australia and then situates aspects of these influences within the development of the five churches in the second and third sections. Rather than using a strictly chronological structure, this allows the chapter to discern neo-Pentecostal features as the churches become larger and more prominent, which happened at different times to each church. Chapter Two develops the core argument of the thesis by identifying the features of neo-Pentecostalism (as distinguished from classic Pentecostalism), showing how these features were imported into the theology and organisational practice of specific Australian-based churches—Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe Church, Influencers Church and Planetshakers—and demonstrating how these features have advanced and supported the growth and influence of these churches.

Features of neo-Pentecostalism: a modern religious form

The purpose of this section is to use religious studies theory to identify features of neo-Pentecostalism as a religious form distinct from Pentecostalism. This establishes the emergence of neo-Pentecostalism in Australia. The key argument of the section is that religion should be understood as a socially constructed phenomenon that is influenced by external dynamics. The section finds that Australian neo-Pentecostalism developed through a convergence of factors—the advent of prosperity gospel and Word of Faith theology in the US, the demonstration of faith through individual action in the Latter Rain movement, and megachurch pastor David Yonggi Cho’s successful exportation of ‘non-invasive’ styles of evangelism from South Korea—and these were implemented in various ways in several Australian-based churches.

To discern the features of neo-Pentecostalism, a discussion on the parameters of religion as a category of scholarly inquiry is required. Religious studies theorists who deconstruct the term ‘religion’ argue that it developed within a certain historical context with implications of political control (Asad 1993, Smith 1998). Researchers in religion therefore should not make assumptions about the constitution of the religious. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, requirement for documentation, classification, and study developed in attempts to understand the cultures that expanding empires encountered and colonised across the globe. Anthropologists from this time formed systematic definitions of religion (Asad 1993, Smith 1998, Masuzawa 2005) and the political consequences of this process remain in contemporary religious studies (Arnal & McCutcheon 2013). The idea of a society having a distinct ‘religion’ came about as a scientific instrument for categorising colonised cultures. The religious or spiritual activities of the colonised societies were defined in opposition to Christianity within a classificatory system which esteemed Christian practices (Arnal & McCutcheon 2013; Smith 1998; Masuzawa 2005). Scholars deconstructing religion argue that the category should be understood as a social construction that developed from within the modern western academy. Religion is therefore a modern invention, subject to implications of political power, economic circumstance, and cultural connotations. Taking these observations as a starting point for discerning the advent of neo-Pentecostalism in Australia means that developing scholarly understandings of the features of neo-Pentecostalism requires situating within historical, political, economic, cultural contexts. This contextualisation contributes to scholarly debate on understandings of ‘religion’ as a socially constructed, fluid, and modern category.

Schilbrack (2010: 1122) asserts that the process of studying religion must demonstrate that the relations between a set of religious practices ‘are not arbitrary, but instead are connected to each other by the practitioners themselves’. For Schilbrack (2010: 1117-18), religion is not reducible to merely a concept, word or label but is similar to politics, sport or the economy, entirely possible to categorise as an object of academic inquiry. However, as Arnal and McCutcheon (2013: 113) remind researchers ‘self-critical reflection on the taxonomies of religious studies should not become an excuse for resorting to simple repetition and description of insider claims’. Schilbrack’s (2010) method to resolve the categorisation issue, of an ‘outsider’ researcher analysing ‘insider’ religious practice, is to identify what participants are doing on their own terms. Sullivan (1998: 422) argues that academics should ‘not attempt to dismiss religion as either irrelevant or evil, or as reducible to other human social or cultural phenomena’. Sullivan (1998: 442) defines religion as ‘a distinctive but varied and shifting human social and cultural product’. Viewed as a social product through which people deliberately construct elements of identity through their lived experience, it is possible to study religion from the ‘outside’ to situate phenomena deemed by insiders as ‘religious’ within broader contexts. Where Schilbrack (2010) provides method, identifying the participants’ own terms within the redescription undertaken by the scholar, Sullivan (2005) holds the point that religion retains meaning as an act of identification and this act is always performed within an existing power structure. Therefore, religion derives definition and meaning from context and the unstable nature of classifying a particular practice as ‘religious’ is socially dependent. As such, to begin the task of identifying the emergence of neo-Pentecostalism in Australia as situated within these social dynamics, there is a need to discern the historical inheritances of Australian-based expressions of Pentecostalism to explain the advent of neo-Pentecostalism in Australian churches.

Broadly, Pentecostalism ‘is a movement of churches, which share a common identity based on the experience and doctrine of baptism in the Holy Spirit, evidenced by, or associated with, the gifts of tongues’ (Clifton 2007: 2). Pentecostalism is distinguished by the teaching and practice of charismatic experiences of glossolalia, healing powers, and prophecies that are interpreted as the outpouring and visitation of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostal churches seek to create an environment that places this spontaneous and experiential style of practice at the centre of Christian worship (Cox 2001, Reyes 2012, Vlas & Slav 2014, Jennings 2015). Throughout the last two thousand years, accounts of glossolalia, stories of healing powers, and prophecy have surfaced within Christian traditions (Hughes 1996, McGee 1999). In the Australian context, Chant (1994) notes records of people experiencing

glossolalia on the Victorian goldfields during the 1860s, and Elliot (2012) observes the experience of charismatic phenomena amongst Catholic communities around the same time. The Los Angeles Azusa St Revival of 1906—at which hundreds of people experienced these charismatic phenomena—saw the development of a more organised approach to teaching people about Pentecostal spiritual gifts and, as a direct implication of the revivals held at Azusa St, Pentecostal missionaries visited over twenty-five nations within two years of the Los Angeles revivals to evangelise and preach on Pentecostal practice (Anderson 2004). Pentecostal missionaries such as Aimee Semple Macpherson and Smith Wigglesworth travelled to Australia to teach methods of inducing charismatic Pentecostal worship experiences.

Anglican, Catholic, Methodist and other Christian denominations established churches in the colonial states prior to Australian federation in 1901. This meant that Christianity was the dominant religion throughout the colonial and federation periods. Pentecostalism did not feature among Australian colonial Christian traditions and was founded in Australia in the early 1910s. The first Australian Pentecostal assembly, The Good News Hall established by Mrs Janet Lancaster, saw the beginnings of centralisation and institutionalisation of the Pentecostal movement in Australia (Clifton 2009: 54). By 1925, the Good News Hall claimed fifteen associated gatherings around Australia and a regular journal published by Lancaster was distributed to Methodist ministers and international Salvationists (Clifton 2009: 56). However, interaction between the growing numbers of Australian Pentecostals and the mainstream churches was discouraged when in the mid-1920s ‘most Protestant denominations required such ministers to ‘withdraw their Pentecostal practices or withdraw from the ministry’’ (Clifton 2009: 56-7). Despite this, the number of Pentecostal gatherings in Australia increased throughout the 1930s and the various offshoots from Lancaster’s Good News Hall were consolidated in 1937 to form the Assemblies of God (AOG), Australia’s oldest and largest Pentecostal organising body (Hey 2011: 25-6). In Australia, Pentecostals were seen as radical in their worship style and many clergy from the mainline churches were suspicious of what they perceived as a lack of theological rigour and structural hierarchy. Pentecostals distinguished themselves as ‘outsiders’ (Hughes 1996) and, due to their emphasis on experiential and charismatic worship, their theological credibility was often questioned by the mainline churches. Hughes (1996: 106) observes of Australian Pentecostals a tendency ‘to see themselves over or against the world... In the past, it has meant a withdrawal from some aspects of society, particularly from certain forms of entertainment’. A 1972 Synod study committee report observes specifically of Pentecostalism

and neo-Pentecostalism that the ‘teachings and practices occasion unrest and divisions within the church’ (Synod 1972: 487). In Australia, the Anglican, Methodist, Catholic and Baptist churches dominated the religious mainstream and Pentecostalism largely developed outside of this context.

Early Australian Pentecostals actively resisted organised church establishment favouring terms such as ‘Assembly’ or ‘Hall’ to distinguish their groups (Clifton 2009: 58). This was because Pentecostals seek to restore elements of New Testament church, ‘which they believe was lost in the concern with dogma and order and with the institutional developments in the early centuries of Christian development’ (Hughes 1996: 2). Within this, Pentecostals try to repel the highly ordered structural hierarchy associated with the older Christian churches with the aim of achieving the spontaneous spiritual experiences central to Pentecostalism (Kim 2012). Traditional Pentecostalism employs highly flexible church structures as theological qualifications are not essential to lead or found a Pentecostal church (Kim 2012). Groups can form a Pentecostal church as a result of a visitation from the Holy Spirit which manifests in the experience of spiritual gifts (Chant 1984, Hughes 1996). Pentecostal churches can also be founded through groups breaking away from longer-established churches, often after the original church is seen to have strayed from literal interpretations of Biblical methods of church establishment, hierarchy, or worship (Clifton 2009, Hey 2011). Cox (2001) argues due to the flexibility in both practice and organisation, Pentecostalism propagates easily in the context of many different communities and because of this, interpretations of the experience of the Spirit within Pentecostalism become localised. Australian Pentecostalism developed in rural areas rather than in cities as occurred overseas (Chant 1994: 38). Within the AOG itself, Clifton (2009) observes tensions between maintaining this spontaneous approach to worship and flexibility for instating leadership positions, and the need for institutional structure in church organisation to ensure long-term viability. Hutchinson and Wolffe (2012: 203) note the divisions between renewalist Pentecostals and other Christian denominations, finding that people perceiving a lack of flexibility set up their own Pentecostal outfits, ‘Many of these (particularly those which encountered the Latter Rain movement) were later the organising centres for independent mega-churches, prayer networks, or ‘post-evangelical’ forms’. The resistance to institutionalisation coupled with the continued search for spontaneous spiritual experience meant that Australian Pentecostalism remained open to international influences that were developing within a global circuit of evangelising Pentecostal preachers, linked through international missionary and evangelical Pentecostal networks established from the Azusa St

Revival. Pentecostalism in Australia was organised around the AOG and had established local and international networks. Within this context, neo-Pentecostalism emerged in Australia in the 1970s via influences from the United States, New Zealand, and South Korea.

Scholars observe the advent of neo-Pentecostalism in the United States in the 1950s and 60s (Heath 1973, McGaw 1980, Coleman 2002, Bowler 2013). The term ‘neo-Pentecostalism’ defines several theological and organisational elements including: Word of Faith teaching, prosperity gospel, growth theology, corporatised and branded church structure, and individualised understandings of spirituality. In the 1950s, Pentecostal preachers in the United States began to articulate the theological foundations of neo-Pentecostal prosperity gospel through their teachings on the nature of faith. The post-WWII prosperity of United States society led Pentecostal leaders—such as Oral Roberts, John Osteen, Jack Coe, Kenneth Hagin, and William Branham—to begin to explain the advent of material wealth in terms of faith and belief (Bowler 2013). In 1952, Oral Roberts and Demos Shakarian founded the Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship International (FGBMFI) that was ‘oriented to prosperous middle-class men who had felt uneasy with the culturally down-market associations of pre-War Pentecostalism.’ (Coleman 2002: 7). The FGBMFI spread to over a hundred nations through the institution of ‘Chapters’ and through this Roberts disseminated a

material element to his Prosperity message in part by developing the ‘Blessing-Pact’ concept, a form of exchange through which those who pledged \$100 to his work were promised a refund if they did not receive the gift back from a separate source within a year (Coleman 2002: 7).

The tithing and offering expectations about such mechanisms as the ‘Blessing Pact’ would become a key method for neo-Pentecostal churches to raise funds. At FGBFI gatherings prominent Pentecostal businessmen ‘reconciled old-time religion with mounting expectations for economic success’ (Bowler 2013: 52). The gatherings served as platforms for ministers such as Kenneth Hagin to rise to prominence, who popularised H.W. Kenyon’s Word of Faith theology (Bowler 2013, Coleman 2002: 7). Based on Norman Vincent Peale’s *The Power of Positive Thinking* and New Thought principles prevalent in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Word of Faith theology teaches that the spoken word has the power to directly control the material world and faith spoken aloud can guarantee access to wealth and prosperity (Griffith 2004, Bowler 2013: 44).

Pentecostal leaders across the United States affirmed the theological legitimacy of the links between Word of Faith teachings and prosperity gospel at a circuit of conferences and gatherings. Using prosperity gospel, pastors market themselves as experts in a range of life matters. These can range from soft prosperity rhetoric of cultivating psychological health to hard prosperity doctrine of guaranteeing financial success through Biblically mandated formulas for generating wealth (Bowler 2013). Bowler (2013: 50) argues that in the United States the prosperity gospel bridged the gap that Pentecostals had classically kept between themselves and ‘the world’ by ‘convincing the sanctified that modernity would not diminish their faith’. The Word of Faith theology popularised by the neo-Pentecostal preachers of the United States in the late 1950s and early 1960s legitimised the belief that, through specific actions of faith such as prayer and giving to the church in the form of tithes, Christians could access economic success and material abundance. These pastors found that church members want leaders who look and preach ‘like ambassadors for unrelenting progress’ realised through the practice of positive faith confession (Bowler 2013: 118). Through meetings such as FGBMFI, American Pentecostals popularised the New Thought and positive thinking principles forming the foundations of neo-Pentecostal Word of Faith theology and prosperity gospel. Demos Shakarian maintained close connections with Billy Graham and Oral Roberts, and both pastors contributed to FGBMFI. Graham wrote articles for the organisation’s newsletter and eventually Roberts became Shakarian’s ‘spiritual mentor’ (Tallman 2009: 200-201). These US-based leaders were instrumental in articulating and popularising key features of neo-Pentecostalism; namely, that Christians can access material wealth through specific actions, such as prayer and tithing, that are made in faith.

The establishment of FGBMFI Chapters and the advent of the Latter Rain movement cultivated interest in neo-Pentecostal prosperity theology in Pentecostal circles in Australia. The Latter Rain movement influence came through a group of Pentecostal pastors from New Zealand, some of whom moved to Australia in the 1970s. Inspired by the Word of Faith theology taught by William Branham during a visit to Vancouver (Tallman 2009: 188), the Latter Rain movement began in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan in 1948 when, during a Pentecostal Bible study class, a student laid hands on another student and ‘offered a “prophecy”, a spiritually inspired recitation concerning the life and future of the second student’ (Balmer 2002: 331). The laying of hands to prompt a visitation of the spirit, along with articulation of premillennialism in which a final outpouring of the Holy Spirit precipitates the second coming of Christ, characterised the worship practice of the Latter Rain movement (Balmer 2002: 331). Importantly, the Latter Rain movement taught that

‘prosperity was considered not just in financial terms, but also in relationship to bodily health’ (Yong 2012: 15). William Branham, Oral Roberts, Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland integrated the Latter Rain focus on the physical capacities for healing and health into their prosperity preaching and, through these preachers’ involvement with the FGBMFI meetings, Latter Rain beliefs were disseminated through FGBMFI Chapters in the 1950s (Tallman 2009: 189). The neo-Pentecostal foundations of preaching positive confessions to achieve health and wealth were laid through these movements.

The neo-Pentecostal emphasis on healing and health through spiritual or divine means has province in New Thought principles, a collection of ideas ‘holding a vision of the human being as a spiritual reality with the nearly limitless capacity to alter the allusions of personal fate’ (Griffith 2004: 68). Popularised in the US throughout the 1910s, proponents of New Thought, including figures such as Phineas Pankhurst Quimby and founder of Christian Science Mary Eddy Baker, ‘channel, harmonize and yoke all the powers of the universe in exalted service to health, wealth, and immortality’ in which ‘the body is the elemental ground of spiritual progress and perfectibility’ (Griffith 2004: 68-69). In New Thought, sickness and ill-health (both mental and physical) is staved off by controlling negative thoughts with the aim of causing a positive effect on the body to achieve happiness and health. The 1940s saw access to affluence and social status added to the promises of US New Thought, and the religious aspects of these teaching became less popular as psychology replaced spiritualism in explaining mental processes (Woodstock 2005: 162). However, Norman Vincent Peale—a savvy mass-communicator who during the 1960s lectured to five million people via his radio show (Woodstock 2005: 164)—extended these principles to outline a method of achieving spiritual wellness, physical health, and social success using techniques such as visualisation, banishment of ‘negative thoughts’, regular repetition of positive affirmations, and trusting God. As the final step in his method of positive thinking practice, Peale says,

Put yourself in God’s hands. To do that, simply state, “I am in God’s hands.” Then believe that you are NOW [sic] receiving all the power you need. “Feel” it flowing into you. Affirm that “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21) in the form of adequate power to meet life’s demands (1955: 9)

Peale centralises the role of the mind to achieving positive outcomes. Viewing the link between mind and body as controllable to achieve health and wealth is a key aspect of neo-Pentecostal perspectives on faith that seeks to actualise the presence of spiritual gifts and blessings. The emphasis in neo-Pentecostalism is on achieving health through self-expression

and self-fulfilment. In this, the healing power of positive thinking and devotional faith of New Thought and Peale's positive thinking is updated in what Hunt (2000a: 79) observes as

The spirit of triumphantism of the entrepreneurial culture and its accompanying rhetoric is a distinctive feature of what might be termed 'enterprise religion'. The gifted charismatic individual, succeeding in his vocation, is at the very heart of the enterprise culture... and is reflected in the 'rugged individualist' frequently identified with those in leadership positions in contemporary religious movements.

The pastors and leaders who would go on to start neo-Pentecostal churches in Australia exhibited this propensity for facilitating 'healing' through acts made in faith. The Latter Rain emphasis on faith healing and 'laying of hands'—placing hands on congregant's bodies to channel the power of the Holy Spirit to help people become well—was practiced by New Zealand pastors schooled in the movement's teachings and methods.

The Latter Rain-style emphasis on prophecy, healing, and health arrived in Australia and New Zealand through the establishment of FGBMFI Chapters and, as Hutchinson (2010: 267) observes, also through the Pentecostal missionary networks that developed throughout South-East Asia in the 1940s through the work of Azusa St evangelical preachers such as J.A. Dowie, Aimee Semple Macpherson, and Smith Wigglesworth. Hutchinson (2010: 268) argues that New Zealand 'provided a confluence of personalities and institutions which established a base for what would become a movement with remarkable global reach.' The travels of New Zealand preachers—such as Rob Wheeler, Kevin Conner and Ron Coady who came from Salvation Army backgrounds and attended Latter Rain movement leader Ray Jackson's Sydney Bible college in the 1950s—proved instrumental in holding Latter Rain-inspired revivals throughout New Zealand and establishing the renewalist-oriented New Life Churches (Hutchinson 2010). Hutchinson (2010: 271) links the FGBMFI leaders and the New Zealand Latter Rain movement through the transition to Oral Roberts from William Branham's leadership pointing out that in 1957, Rob Wheeler began an itinerant tent crusade through New Zealand under the name 'Word of Faith Ministry'. It was through these Latter Rain movement networks that Frank Houston would successfully bridge the gap between the AOG in New Zealand—who, like in Australia, were suspicious of Latter Rain preachers' unconventional approach to worship—and his newly established New Life Church movement in which he practiced the Latter Rain approaches to faith healing and prophecy. During a revival tour on Australia's east coast, Rob Wheeler had an impact on Andrew Evans, who along with David Cartledge, would both prove to be influential contributors to the Pentecostal growth church movement in the Australian AOG and the Christian Outreach Centre (COC)

denomination, learning the Latter Rain-inspired preaching at Ray Jackson's Bible college (Hutchinson 2010: 272). Hutchinson (2010: 272) observes how Jackson's college assisted in developing a characteristic style of Pentecostal Bible teaching; specifically, the school 'provided the movement with an hermeneutical methodology which gave full rein to the imaginative use of allegory and typology'. Hutchinson (2010: 272) argues that these styles of evangelising and allegorising were unique to the New Zealand New Life Church movement. Importantly, this type of preaching encourages an individual interpretation of scripture and personalises an experience of the Spirit through the Latter Rain focus on developing individual faith confessions through testimony, healing, laying of hands, prayer, and personal expression. Knowles (2003) observes that the international counter-culture movements of the 1960s helped to create a cultural environment that was receptive to Latter Rain and neo-Pentecostal ideas, as people become interested in discovering spiritual values with an emphasis on personal experiences. In this way, key features of neo-Pentecostalism—words of faith for positive confession, emphasis on health and wealth, prosperity theology, and a view of the individual believer as responsible for their spirituality—came to Australia through the Latter Rain movement and the US prosperity preachers.

Several of the Latter Rain-inspired New Zealand pastors emigrated to Australia throughout the 1970s to start their own churches as they realised that Australia's larger population would support more growth in Pentecostal churches (Hey 2011: 105). These pastors would prove hugely successful in establishing the foundations of Australian megachurches. They built on the proliferation of the Church Life movement, which Wheeler claimed was at one point starting new churches every two weeks in Australia and New Zealand (Hutchinson 2010). New Zealand migrants included Trevor Chandler who founded Brisbane Christian Life Centre, Frank Houston who established the Hills Christian Life Centre in 1977, and others including Phil Pringle founder of C3 Church, and Brian Houston who followed his father Frank to Australia in 1980. Hutchinson (2010: 274) outlines the direct theological influence Rob Wheeler had on these Trans-Tasman migrants

In August 1964, Wheeler participated with Trevor Chandler and Frank Houston in a Massey University Conference, which became a foundation stone for the rising charismatic movement in the mainstream churches. Wheeler shared his testimony of how he had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. It was the beginning of a flow of people from traditional churches into the rising Pentecostal churches.

Bob Midgley and Trevor Chandler spoke at the Brisbane FGBMFI in 1970 and the two men impressed Clark Taylor, a key leader in the 1974 founding of the Christian Outreach Centre (COC) denomination that would later establish Citipointe Church, with their demonstration of the Latter Rain worship style (Hey 2010: 147). Andrew Evans, who pastored the Pentecostal Paradise Community Church in Adelaide and was a key leader of the AOG in Australia in the 1980s and 90s, was also inspired by Bob Midgley, and, according to Austin (2017: 80), ‘the influence of Trans-Tasman Latter Rain preachers offered liberation from previous legalistic restrictions and a freshness of Pentecostal expression.’ Seeking ‘freshness’ and renewal in expressions of worship and organisation comprises the ‘neo’, or new, aspect of neo-Pentecostalism.

Importantly, the new Pentecostal pastors influenced by the Latter Rain movement sought to create ecumenical relationships between denominations. Neo-Pentecostalism encourages groups to remain in communication with traditional Christian denominations rather than excluding themselves from mainline churches, as classical Pentecostal churches might do (McGaw 1980: 285). Hutchinson (2010: 266) observes ‘widespread dissatisfaction amongst Pentecostals about the institutionalization of their tradition among the major denominations’. The Latter Rain-inspired pastors capitalised on this dissatisfaction and found that Australia in the 1970s provided fertile ground for church planting. During this time, American preachers who taught versions of the Word of Faith doctrine and prosperity gospel—Billy Graham, Benny Hinn, Jerry Falwell, William Branham—held world-wide speaking tours, developing a captivating preaching style that would come to be associated with televangelism. Throughout the 1970s, a charismatic revival swept through Australian churches and Pentecostal groups, and there was renewed interest in sharing charismatic experiences to encourage ecumenical relationships (Clifton 2009: 144). Billy Graham inspired both Andrew Evans (Austin 2017: 109) and Clark Taylor, specifically encouraging Taylor’s foray into televangelism (Hey 2010). Despite the desire for ecumenism shown in the early 1970s, the established Pentecostal Australian AOG were initially suspicious of the Latter Rain pastors’ boisterous rituals, which included encouragement of rapturous dancing, casting out demons, prosperity message and faith visualisations, singling out Trevor Chandler and Bob Midgely as key instigators (Hey 2011: 109). Hey (2011: 104) observes that in Australia, churches with neo-Pentecostal elements were formed by participants in international charismatic movements, such as the New Zealand pastors, who left established Pentecostal gatherings to create their own independent churches based on ideas of spiritual revival, renewal, and attaining mental and physical health. Hey (2011: 104) states that these

particular pastors ‘rejected the tightly defined practices and beliefs of the major denominations and were more open to the innovations of the Latter Rain, Faith Confession and Prosperity movements’. Neo-Pentecostal elements arrived in Australia through the influence of the New Zealand pastors in the 1970s, links to the FGBMFI meetings, renewed interest in new forms of charismatic worship and personalised spiritual experiences, and encouragement of more ecumenical relations between Pentecostal churches and Christian denominations.

Two more features of neo-Pentecostalism—growth theology and corporatised models of church structure—came to Australia through the influence of South Korean Pastor David Yonggi Cho, pioneer of a highly successful church growth model and whose Yoido Full Gospel Church in 1977 claimed more than thirty thousand congregants (Clifton 2009: 153, Hey 2011). Yonggi Cho encouraged an approach to church organisation based on business growth models, teaching a form of Pentecostalism which emphasised a version of the prosperity doctrine (Clifton 2009: 153) and identified the 1980s as a ‘time for church growth’ (Yonggi Cho 1981: 93). Yonggi Cho expounded ‘the gospel of blessing’ which assumed ‘that material blessing, including financial prosperity, was part of the liberation from the curse [of sin]’ (Clifton 2009: 153). In his book explaining the success of his growth church model, Yonggi Cho (1981: 51-2, original emphasis) argues that door-to-door evangelism is too confrontational and through his ‘home cell’ system ‘each cell group becomes a nucleus of revival in its neighbourhood, because the cell group is where real *life* is to be found in that neighbourhood.’ Speaking at an Australian AOG conference in 1977, Yonggi Cho influenced the AOG to become more open to contemporary charismatic worship and to church organisational structures based on business techniques (Hey 2011: 109). Andrew Evans became a regular guest preacher at Yoido Full Gospel Assembly throughout the 1990s and Phil Pringle remained a supporter of Yonggi Cho through his 2017 embezzlement trial, inviting Yonggi Cho and his wife to speak at C3 Church Oxford Falls in 2016 (C3 Church Oxford Falls *Instagram* 2016). Yonggi Cho (1981: 69) recounts what Australian church leaders said to him during his 1977 visit

Australians are not churchgoers any longer... They are worldly. Australia is rich with minerals, and many Australians have found material success without having to work very hard for it. Now they are much more interested in pleasures than in God.

To address these issues, Yonggi Cho (1981: 99-103) advises Pentecostal Australian pastors to emulate his growth church model. The cell church model effectively works like a franchise

with congregants encouraging friends and neighbours to attend the home group and then come to the larger church congregation. However, as Hutchinson (2010: 217) points out, by the early 1990s the more corporatised church model that developed from the cell church structure ‘began to replace the earlier influence of the free movement of the Spirit’ that was central to Latter Rain teachings. The corporate model prioritises church planting, where a particular church brand is replicated in new locations, over the more casual cell church model. Inspired by Yonggi Cho, Andrew Evans adapted the new growth model to plant six hundred and eighty AOG-branded churches during his twenty-year tenure as General Superintendent of the Australian AOG from 1977 to 1997 (Austin 2017: 122). Importantly, the influence of Yonggi Cho’s growth church model was adapted to suit Australia, in which increasing congregant numbers were achieved through non-confrontative evangelism techniques. This in turn laid the foundations for implementing corporatised approaches to church structure, with a focus on branding and church planting. Neo-Pentecostalism emphasises the benefits of centralised corporate-style institutional structure which assists with achieving organisational and missional goals of growth.

Australian expressions of neo-Pentecostalism emerged from international influences mainly from the United States, New Zealand, and South Korea. Features of neo-Pentecostalism identified by international scholars—Word of Faith theology, prosperity doctrine, expectations of health and wealth, individualised understandings of spirituality, and growth theology evolving to more corporate church models—emerged in Australia through the institution of FGBMFI Chapters, the advent of Latter Rain movement, and learning from Yonggi Cho’s pioneering growth church model. In neo-Pentecostalism, practising positive thought confessions means that congregants are encouraged to pray for abundant health and wealth in the belief that God will provide (Bowler 2013). The focus on abundant living extends beyond spiritual health to mental strength, and physical wellness; and Christians can expect material and financial gain from these positive faith confessions. Neo-Pentecostal theology came to Australia from international influences, and churches such as Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe Church, Planetshakers and Influencers Church instituted features of neo-Pentecostalism in their theology and operations to ensure long-term success and viability.

Relevant, contemporary, and global: Churches of an Australian neo-Pentecostal movement

The purpose of this section is to identify churches founded in Australia that displayed neo-Pentecostal elements, discerning the churches that comprise a neo-Pentecostal movement based in Australia. The key argument of the section is that the founders of Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe Church, Influencers Church and Planetshakers were influenced by neo-Pentecostalism. The section finds that the leaders of these churches incorporated neo-Pentecostalism into their founding visions and continue to present neo-Pentecostal characteristics in their theology and operations.

The New Zealand Latter Rain-inspired pastors' legacies remain in the establishment and continued growth of Australian-based churches that present neo-Pentecostal features. In 1974, Clark Taylor held the first meeting for what would become the Brisbane-based Christian Outreach Centre, the denomination that would rebrand several of its churches under the 'Citipointe' name in the 2000s. Frank Houston founded Sydney Christian Life Centre at Waterloo in 1977 and merged with his son Brian's Hills Christian Life Centre to become Hillsong Church in 1997. Phil Pringle and his wife Chris moved from New Zealand and founded Christian City Church, which would become C3 Church, in 1980 at the North Sydney suburb of Oxford Falls. Andrew Evans's two sons, Ashley and Russell—who would each follow their father to establish their own careers in Christian ministry running Influencers Church and Planetshakers—were raised in Australian AOG culture as their father pastored the Paradise Community Church for thirty years from 1970 to 2000 and served as the Australian AOG General Superintendent between 1977 and 1997. During this time, Evans demonstrated the growth potential for an Australian church; his Adelaide church congregation grew to one of the largest in the country and the number of churches associated with the AOG also grew substantially under his leadership (Austin 2017: 143). These first- and second-generation Australian-based pastors shared similar visions for their churches from the outset and neo-Pentecostal features can be discerned within these original visions. The pastors wanted to create large religious movements that would remain relevant and contemporary with a focus on teaching positive faith confessions and aspirational living. These religious movements would be a platform for preaching neo-Pentecostal beliefs that individual Christians could access abundance in health and wealth.

From the inception of the COC movement, the founders envisaged church growth and global outreach through teaching Word of Faith theology and prosperity gospel. Trevor Chandler founded the Brisbane Christian Life Centre in 1974, introducing his assistant

minister Clark Taylor to the new Latter Rain-inspired practice (Hey 2006: 7). After travelling as an itinerant pastor through Australia, Fiji, and America, Taylor decided that ‘new converts needed a well-established continuing charismatic church environment where they could be nurtured’ (Hey 2006: 8). Taylor returned to Brisbane and founded COC in 1974, attracting hundreds of attendees within a few months of holding meetings (Taylor 2013). Taylor was instrumental in realising the growth potential of a ‘full-service’ church, developing the foundations for COC-branded organisations that would cater to multiple areas of life while incorporating aspects of contemporary society and culture in church structure. Taylor modelled the first purpose-built COC campus on the design of a shopping-centre, realising the growth potential in providing congregants with modern conveniences (car-parking, air conditioning, comfortable seating) and used popular music elements in COC’s praise and worship music to showcase energised and exuberant services (Hey 2011). Taylor pioneered Christian television programming in Australia and founded COC-branded institutions including a school, Bible college, and ministry training program (Hey 2011). Concerned about the perceived secularisation of education in Australia, COC adapted American-style Christian education programs for Australia and opened a school in 1977 (Citipointe College History 2017), followed by a Bible college Christian Heritage College in 1986 (Christian Heritage College History 2017) and a COC-branded kindergarten in 1988 (Citipointe Childcare *About Us* 2017). In the 1980s, Taylor began to provide short-term training courses to teach leaders how to plant COC-affiliated churches and by 1990, COC had one-hundred and sixty affiliated churches in Australia.

Hey (2006: 9-8) observes that Taylor took the flexibility of Pentecostal practice—with its focus on experientialism and oral traditions of preaching—and added the emphasis on personal conversion, divine healing, and words of knowledge to illustrate how to achieve material goals. In his reflections on gathering finances to fund COC activities in the early 1980s, Taylor (2013) states ‘I’d learned that if God was in something, I didn’t need the money, but I needed to hear God talk to me’. Taylor recounts conversations in which God gave him advice on how to buy the properties for COC’s land and buildings in Brisbane. For Taylor, faith is actioned through listening to God. Taylor’s (2013) claim has foundations in Word of Faith theology and prosperity gospel in which he outlines the method for allowing the Holy Spirit to ‘show you what is possible’. Taylor teaches the Word of Faith principle that God will provide access to material benefits through the performance of specific actions made in faith. In Taylor’s case, he says that God told him that a real estate agent would accept a three-million-dollar sale, over an original asking price of eleven million dollars,

during the purchase negotiations of the one hundred and thirty acres that would become COC's main campus at Carindale in Brisbane (Taylor 2013). Taylor's teachings are grounded in neo-Pentecostal Word of Faith theology, which he claims facilitated his access to material assets. These theological tenets remained in COC's transition to a global movement and during a ministry rebranding.

Taylor resigned the leadership of COC in 1990, facing allegations of sexual misconduct (Hey 2010: 130). After Taylor left, COC planted churches around the world during the 1990s opening 'thirteen centres in New Zealand, twelve in Papua New Guinea, twenty-two in the Pacific Islands, two in Malaysia, four in England, and seven in Chile.' (Hey 2006: 8). COC continued to expand its operations beyond that of ministry and conducting worship services. Under new COC leadership throughout the 1990s, COC-branded schools were established at several locations around Australia, the Bible college expanded to encompass a range of undergraduate and post-graduate programs, a local community care program was established, and an overseas 'global care' program founded that provides aid, medical assistance, orphanages, and schools (Hey 2006). COC has nurtured Christian involvement in politics supporting the founding of the Australian Christian Coalition, now the Australian Christian Lobby which maintains some ties to COC. In 2013, COC board chair Ross Abraham supported an Australian Christian Lobby submission on charities (Submission by Australian Christian Lobby 2013) and in 2017, COC board member Peter Pilt spoke on the organisation's podcast (Australian Christian Lobby 2017). COC started an intentional student chaplaincy program, Christian leadership training program, business courses, and a private equity fund called inc Invest (Maddox 2015: 1). COC's name change to International Network of Churches (using the lower-case 'inc' acronym) was positioned as a rebranding exercise and experts in corporate branding strategy advised on the transition (Maddox 2015: 3). As Maddox (2015: 3) points out, the 'inc' acronym carries a significant indication of associating church with business; the lower-case 'inc' signals the abbreviation of 'incorporated' used in commercial signs. Clark Taylor's initial vision for COC—a church with influence in multiple aspects of life on both a local and global scale—was successfully realised through the incorporation of neo-Pentecostal elements such as growth theology, emphasis on personalised spiritual experiences, access to material wealth as proof of God's blessing, and corporatised approaches to developing a church brand. COC/inc is a Christian organisation that provides a church-branded service for multiple areas of life: childcare, school, university, business, finance, and ministry.

Mark and Leigh Ramsey started the COC church in Noosa in 1987 and rose to prominence in the movement, successfully planting COC's first American church in Denver, Colorado. They became the senior pastors at the Brisbane COC church campus in 2000 (Hey 2010: 295). Mark Ramsey preaches neo-Pentecostal Word of Faith theology, with an emphasis on the health aspects of healing. In his book *Spiritually Transmitted Diseases*, Ramsey (2014: 1) emphasises positivity and health, 'As a believer, I love that concept that I can be a contagious transmitter of good, positive, inspiring ideas'. Ramsey (2014: 1) says the method for combatting 'spiritual disease' is to see 'this generation transformed by believers who are willing to act as carriers of healthy, powerful, life-enhancing, God-ordained, spiritually transmitted truths.' Ramsey places the act of 'transmitting'—convincing people to become Christians through demonstrating positive thinking, ideas, and beliefs—at the centre of the ideal Christian life. Ramsey's teachings emphasise the ability of the individual believer to not just access health through controlling thoughts to remain 'positive' but puts the onus on the individual Christian as responsible for then 'transmitting' those positive thoughts. Giving a sermon at the C3 Church plant in San Diego, Ramsey claims that he was 'miraculously healed' of lung cancer and that his church is seeing 'more people healed of cancer than ever before... because your testimony has incredible power' (Ramsey 2017). Here, Ramsey ascribes testimony (by which he means the story of how an individual comes to be a Christian) with enough power to heal cancer. Ramsey preaches the neo-Pentecostal emphasis on accessing health through individual action (realised through combatting cancer or 'negative thoughts' with the power of faith and testimony) and the aspirational prosperity principle that demonstration of these attributes is proof of God's favour and blessing.

Along with skills in maintaining church plants, Ramsey brought his experience in sales and business management to his senior pastoral role. In the 2000s, Ramsey rebranded nine COC-affiliated church campuses under the label 'Citipointe Church': six in Brisbane and surrounding areas, and three in the international locations of New Zealand, Colorado, and Bulgaria. Hey (2010: 296) argues that Ramsey's formative ministry experiences in Colorado meant that on his return to Brisbane he brought with him an American-style Christianity that provided an entrepreneurial and corporatised approach to developing long-lasting church structures. Ramsey instituted changes in the Brisbane COC churches under his leadership with the aim of attracting the audience of the 'new millennium' (Hey 2010: 296). Throughout the rebranding, extra weekend services at Citipointe in more languages were added, campuses were refurbished with air conditioners and updated colour schemes, car parking facilities were improved, and sophisticated performance technologies—projector screens, sound,

lighting, and multimedia systems—installed to enhance church services. Through this, Citipointe updated Clarke Taylor’s emphasis on providing congregants with modern conveniences and experiences. Experiential approaches to church management are outlined in Citipointe Church’s brand management document ‘HeartBeat’ that commits to providing attendees a complete church ‘encounter’, right down to ensuring that Citipointe churches smell pleasant with a reminder under the ‘Senses Encounter’ to empty bins and clean toilets (Heartbeat Citipointe n.d.: 8). Ramsey continues to be a prominent leader in the COC/inc movement and, as at 2018, he remains on the COC/inc Board of Directors. Ramsey carried on Taylor’s founding legacy to implement neo-Pentecostal elements in successfully rebranding and expanding COC-affiliated Citipointe Church’s facilities and international presence.

In 1977, Brian and Roberta ‘Bobbie’ Houston followed Brian’s father Frank from New Zealand to Australia. After assisting Frank Houston in pastoring Christian Life Centres, the couple started their own Christian Life Centre in the north-western Sydney suburb of Baulkham Hills in 1983. In an interview with the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, Brian said that he chose Baulkham Hills

partly because of a hugely successful car dealer out there who ‘used to be on the TV and sell Holdens. And I thought to myself, ‘If you could build the largest Holden dealership in Australia there, surely it must be somewhere where you could build a church’ (Snow 2015).

Brian establishes links between suburban commerce and church in his original vision for what would become Hillsong. Hills Christian Life Centre hosted its inaugural annual conference in 1986, starting an Australian version of a corporatised and branded form of the Pentecostal mass revival. According to the Hillsong website, at these conferences ‘thousands of people gather to hear about church leadership, worship, and community engagement from Hillsong’s key team members and other renowned Christian leaders’ (Hillsong Fact Sheet 2017). The conference model encourages people to pay for the privilege of praying and tithing under the leadership of celebrity pastors and Christian speakers. The 1990s, the church expanded its conference model to hold annual gatherings for each arm of its ministry including conferences for women, men, youth, business people and, from 2017, creative artists and worship leaders. Hills Christian Life Centre became a site for nurturing Australian praise and worship music, releasing the first Hills Christian Life Centre-branded worship music album in 1992, titled *The Power Of Your Love* (Hillsong Fact Sheet 2017). The praise and worship music for which Hills Christian Life Centre became globally recognised inspired the church’s name change in

1999 to ‘Hillsong’, a portmanteau of the Sydney suburb where the church started and the worship songs for which the church became famous. The change in name capitalised on the church’s developing recognition in the Christian music market and was instrumental in achieving the brand status that Hillsong now has within global Pentecostal circles.

Hillsong developed several Hillsong-branded organisations—a Bible college, creative and performing arts centre, an online television channel called Church Online, television programs, Christian leadership and business programs, and international aid programs in a range of areas—that operate alongside and support ministry-related activities (Hillsong 2017). In 2002, Prime Minister John Howard opened the purpose-built Baulkham Hills Hillsong campus (Levin 2007) that serves as the church’s headquarters and has several major facilities including a convention centre, chapel, book store, coffee shop, carparking facilities, and childcare centre. At Business Connect meetings, Hillsong claims that members can network with successful Christian business people to build a business in ‘tandem with their faith’ (Hillsong *Business Connect* 2017). As at 2018, Hillsong Church holds services in twenty-one locations around the world, an annual conference three times a year—in Sydney, London, and Los Angeles—and supports a praise and worship band Hillsong United on international touring schedules, recording, and releasing new Hillsong-branded music. In 2018, Hillsong’s women’s conference ‘Colour’ will be held in Sydney, Cape Town, London, Kiev, and three different locations in the US. Hillsong Church maintains a sophisticated online presence that includes website management, developing smart device applications, two television streaming sites, media engagement strategies, a blogging network for leaders in Hillsong, and a presence on major social media platforms.

Like COC/inc and Citipointe in many ways, Hillsong Church has used neo-Pentecostalism—prosperity gospel, Word of Faith teaching, health and wealth theology, individualised approaches to spirituality, and branding strategies—to successfully create a globally recognised religious movement that operates in multiple areas of life. The Houstons were pioneers in marrying corporatised branding tactics with the promotion of their church using neo-Pentecostal approaches. Brian Houston (*Australian Broadcasting Corporation* 2005) states that he has a ‘fundamental belief that there is a personal God and that I can know him as my own personal saviour.’ This links to the neo-Pentecostal principle that a personalised spiritual relationship with God is the responsibility of the individual to seek and maintain. In the Hillsong Church vision statement, the Houstons (2017) reflect neo-Pentecostal principles of growth as central to their objective of starting a church:

The Church that I see is a Church of influence. A Church so large in size that the cities and nations cannot ignore it. A Church with a message so clear that lives are changed forever. A Church growing so quickly that buildings struggle to contain the increase.

For the Houstons, achieving rapid church growth is assisted through a display of success, health, and wealth as evidence of ‘God’s blessing’. This thinking has foundations in neo-Pentecostal Word of Faith teaching: a successful life is claimed through actions made in faith. This is apparent when Brian Houston says, ‘It’s all about encouraging people to be successful in every sphere of life, and that’s attractive’ (in Dolby 2007). Here, Houston links an attractive church—a large church that people want to attend—to the displays of the successes from its leaders and members. Brian Houston’s ideal Christian demonstrates the physical and material benefits of being a Christian in all areas of life to influence other people to decide to attend church. This personalised and performative emphasis on evangelism builds on ‘non-invasive’ evangelism approaches to church growth. In 1999, Houston published *You Need More Money*, in which he argued that God desires for Christians to prosper financially and followed with the *How to Maximise Your Life* series that outlines methods of achieving ‘prosperity with a purpose’. For Houston, prosperity comes from an individual believer’s faith that is tangible in a visible capacity for health and wealth, which Christians are then obligated to display and claim as ‘blessings from God’. Neo-Pentecostal prosperity gospel and aspirational Christian living is central to Brian Houston’s ministry and Hillsong Church’s theology.

Brian Houston sought to implement his modern neo-Pentecostal vision of church in the broader Australian Pentecostal community. Changes in the institutional structure of the Australian AOG under Houston’s leadership is key to understanding the influence that neo-Pentecostalism has in Australian Pentecostal churches. In 1997, Houston became General Superintendent of the Australian AOG after Andrew Evans. Houston built on Evans’s successful growth church model, overseeing the implementation of a more centralised institutional approach for AOG-associated churches in Australia. During his leadership tenure, Houston provided corporatised approaches to church governance with the aim of ensuring the viability of Pentecostal churches in Australia and expanding association potential for non-affiliated churches. In 2007, the Australian AOG became Australian Christian Churches (ACC), creating an overarching Pentecostal governance body with the aim of incorporating more than just AOG-affiliated Pentecostal churches. The ACC (2017) website states the organisation ‘currently consists of over 1,000 churches with over 380,000 constituents, making it the largest Pentecostal movement in Australia’. This claim is typical

of a neo-Pentecostal growth theology that highlights the continued expansion and numerical increase of the religious movement.

Houston's leadership was instrumental in instituting more centralised governance framework for AOG-affiliated churches in Australia. Houston operationalised Hillsong Church's original vision of achieving growth through his commitment to developing internal church governance procedures. This would facilitate the ability of churches to contribute to outreach work on a local and global scale, while accessing the corporatised branding strategies developed for Hillsong. Hillsong Church is affiliated with ACC (Hillsong *What We Believe* 2017). This approach contrasted with the suspicion of institutionalisation held by many Pentecostal churches (Hutchinson 2010), who feared that these processes would suppress the spontaneity of the spirit experience. Houston himself states that his embrace of new approaches to church governance was, in part, due to developing a church movement that would survive in modern times (Dolby 2007).

ACC operates under a united constitution document which takes aspects of its organising procedures from a combination of business management and 'Biblical principles'. The document provides centralising policy guidelines for the operation of the national ACC board, outlines the purpose and beliefs of the ACC Pentecostal movement and procedures for ordaining ACC-affiliated church ministers (ACC United Constitution 2017). The creation of this policy document provided a governance framework for many Pentecostal churches in Australia and centralised organisational expectations for affiliated churches and ministries. Affiliated churches have flexibility regarding procedure and content of church services, supporting local outreach and ministry programs, and day-to-day running of church finances. In keeping with Pentecostal tradition, there is no need for ministry qualifications to affiliate; churches and ministries are required to sign a declaration of 'doctrinal consistency' (ACC United Constitution 2017: 15). Once affiliated, churches and ministries send delegates to the bi-annual national conference where governance decisions are made according to the ACC constitutional procedures. Affiliation with the ACC effectively institutionalises a more procedural approach to church governance within new Pentecostal churches, limiting flexible approaches and appointment of leaders.

The managerial expectations derived from doctrinal points outlined in the ACC constitution are based in Pentecostal traditions: belief in baptism in the Holy Spirit evidenced through glossolalia, divine healing from sickness and disease, bestowal of supernatural gifts, and the imminent return of Jesus (ACC Constitution 2017: 6-7). The neo-Pentecostal emphasis on individual spiritual experience is evidence in the stated belief that the Holy

Spirit is ‘active in the work of convicting and regenerating the sinner and sanctifying and guiding the believer into all truth’ (ACC Constitution 2017: 5). Salvation comes through repentance and water baptism is a ‘new birth’, undertaken as a public symbol of repentance (ACC Constitution 2017: 6). The adult believer ‘decides for Christ’, and this decision is the responsibility of the individual to undertake. The ACC constitution states the church is both local and universal (ACC Constitution 2017: 14), and that ‘the Movement shall give priority to World Missions (ACC Constitution 2017: 23)’. This encapsulates the globalised potential for growth, actualising neo-Pentecostal growth church theology within the operational commitments of affiliated churches. Article 23 outlines the non-profit aspect, stating, ‘income and property shall be applied solely towards the promotion of the objects of the Movement’, operationalising the global outlook and growth aims. The movement objectives (ACC Constitution 2017: 3-4) are that every person should have the opportunity to experience the spirit and become a Christian. These objectives facilitate the financial and organisational justifications for undertaking ministries around the world. Thus, ACC affiliation allows a church to signal a particular brand of Pentecostalism, one that strives to be continually relevant to the modern world; and proof of this relevance is actualised in commitments to global growth, conversion, and preaching the importance of developing a personalised spirituality. The shift from the AOG to ACC was a rebranding exercise that institutionalised a neo-Pentecostal emphasis on growth, global outreach, centralised governance frameworks, church brand development, and individualised understandings of spirituality. Houston’s tenure as leader of ACC was instrumental in implementing neo-Pentecostal principles in Australia’s AOG/ACC-affiliated churches.

In 1980, Phil and Chris Pringle moved from New Zealand and founded Christian City Church at Sydney’s Northern Beaches. Hutchinson (2010: 276) observes the influence of the Latter Rain movement in the Pringle couple’s use of ‘contemporary worship music, a theology of Presence, and liturgical acts such as the laying on of hands’ in their worship services. Christian City Church grew from a small household gathering to attracting five hundred attendees within four years (C3 Global *About* 2017) and the Pringles purchased land at Oxford Falls in North Sydney which would become the central campus for C3 Church. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Pringles successfully planted Christian City-branded churches in Sydney and expanded on their church plant model through the founding of ten churches in cities around the world, the first of these in New York in 1989 (C3 Church *About Us* 2017; Kelsey *Vimeo* 2010). Christian City Churches was rebranded as C3 Church in the late 2000s and, according to the C3 Global (*Home* 2017) website ‘With over 450 churches in

64 countries, we are rapidly moving towards the 2020 Vision of 1,000 Locations planted by the year 2020'. The neo-Pentecostal emphasis on growth is central to the way that C3 Church explains the success of their church planting. C3 Church's growth narrative, including the attitude of incredulity that Phil and Chris Pringle continue to maintain about their church's success, is a key part of C3's brand development and the smallness of the movement's beginnings is emphasised at every opportunity. Pringle (*Vimeo* 2010) says

I wake up surprised pretty well every day either by the things that God has done by that simple act of obedience [moving to Sydney]. I mean we were kinda happy with thirty people. It's a mix of surprise and sober understanding.

This narrative of astonishment links to the sense of relatability Pringle envisaged for his church, which connects the Pringle couple's leadership to C3-branded churches around the world. This bridges the gap between local and global church plants, as the couple appear to have personal input into the vision and planting of each C3-branded church.

Despite similarities to the Hillsong and ACC vision, C3 Church is independent of the ACC, a choice which allows the Pringles to develop their own style of leadership and church culture. In a video released for the thirtieth anniversary of C3 Church, Pringle (*Vimeo* 2010) discusses his desire for his church to be 'modern and contemporary and to look like you were relevant to today'. In a film clip from the 1980s, Pringle (*Vimeo* 2010) explains the church's success as 'People can relate to the kind of language that we use. We're speaking in their terms. We're relating to their world; talking about the pressures they are facing and meeting the real needs in their lives'. C3 Church's original commitment was to remain modern, contemporary, and relevant. Phil Pringle (*Vimeo* 2017) says that central to C3 Culture is having a church that is 'alive, animated, that we have life, we don't want to be slow-moving or dead people' and this is actualised in the energy and vitality that C3 seeks to portray in its activities. C3 Church held their early services in warehouses and Chris Pringle (*Vimeo* 2010) reminisces 'The great thing about being in warehouses is that you can do anything... I just remember crazy meetings... we let hoses and water-guns in the buildings!' These types of exuberant displays are key to C3 Church's strategy to maintaining the appearance of youthfulness and spontaneity—despite worship services being rehearsed and structured—and actualising their vision of remaining 'contemporary'.

C3 Church's commitment to producing contemporary praise and worship music developed after the church began filming Sunday services during the 1980s, and from these recordings came the production of a worship album that Pringle claims is the 'first of its kind

in Australia' (Pringle *Vimeo* 2010). The thirtieth anniversary video (*Vimeo* 2010) shows footage of Phil Pringle personally endorsing ('You are gonna love this album!') Christian City Church-branded praise and worship albums released between 1997 and 2001. The personal touch is central to the C3 Church brand and the Pringles pride themselves cultivating a church environment in which a congregant is 'able to walk through the doors of any C3 church and feel like your home' (C3 Noosa *History* 2017). They teach the neo-Pentecostal emphasis on abundance and prosperity as Pringle says, 'We never apologise for people succeeding or doing well or winning at life because we know that it's been the result of discipline, hard work and really applying all the things that God has given them in their life' (C3 Noosa *History* 2017). Phil Pringle (1999) has a particular interest in the link between faith and 'spiritual' healing, claiming in his book *Healing the Wounded Spirit*

One of the most damaging things that can happen to a person is for their spirit to become sick. Because our life springs from within, it is vital that we are healthy in our spirit, otherwise a troubled life is inevitable.

Pringle (2017) teaches that the individual is responsible for taking care of their socio-emotional health 'The health of your entire world depends on your choice to believe'. Pringle's (2017) vision for C3 Global—the central website for the world-wide operations of C3 Church—is stated as 'C3 Church is a place where you will encounter the presence of God, develop your life, and maximize your potential so that you can live the absolute best life that God has in store for You'. Neo-Pentecostal emphasis on positivity, faith embodied in action, aspirational living, and access to spiritual health and success is present in C3 Church's theology.

Like COC/inc and Hillsong, C3 Church has developed a range of C3-branded organisations that sit alongside and, in many ways, support the church enterprise. Founding separate ministries for men (Realmen), women (Everywoman), young adults (C3 Youth), and children (C3 Kids) led to the establishment of a circuit of annual conferences for each ministry held in international locations. 'Presence' is the name of the general annual conference for C3 and involves a convergence of multiple aspects of the C3 Church organisation including a display in event management skills, ministry, international connections through celebrity guest speakers, creative arts, and worship music from the C3 music team (Presence *Home* 2017). Pringle founded Oxford Falls Grammar School in 1984 catering to students from kindergarten to the final year of high school (Oxford Falls Grammar School *History* 2017) and a Bible college in the early 1980s that offers courses in ministry,

leadership, and the creative arts (C3 College *About* 2017). The church's Vision Builders program encourages congregants to tithe directly to a bank account that supports C3 Church expansion, assists in paying off the church's loans, and contributes to a suite of global aid programs such providing medical assistance, housing, food, clothing, disaster relief, micro-financing, chaplaincy support, and church plant support (Vision Builders *Home* 2017). The Pathfinders ministry is specifically for nurturing Christian entrepreneurs and businesses and holds an annual prayer breakfast, business management classes, and runs a mentoring program. Pathfinders often runs in tandem with bigger C3 events, as Pringle explains:

Business people have long been on my heart and are an important part of Presence Conference. We encourage pastors to bring the marketplace people in their midst so they can catch the vision and feel what their leaders are a part of and then take that back to their churches, communities and careers. Our Pathfinders business breakfast positioned over the Presence week specifically brings together these business men and women from all across the world and is a great opportunity to bring guests for a snapshot of Presence.

In developing these church-branded activities, C3 Church markets itself as a place for high-achieving and successful Christians. The narrative of growth (from small beginnings to a world-wide presence) and the emphasis on achieving health and wealth through individual actions made in faith demonstrates the neo-Pentecostal elements present in C3 Church and Pringle's teachings.

Similar to Citipointe, Hillsong, and C3 Church, the influence of neo-Pentecostalism was present in the founding and growth of Influencers Church and the Planetshakers movement. In 2000, Andrew Evans passed on the leadership of his successful Paradise Community Church to his son Ashley and daughter-in-law Jane. During his twenty-year tenure as senior pastor, Andrew Evans had successfully adapted David Yonggi Cho's cell church growth model and when Ashley Evans took over, Paradise Church claimed four thousand regular Sunday-service attendees (Austin 2017: 145) and owned a purpose-built church campus complete with a three thousand seating capacity auditorium, meeting hall, bookshop and cassette tape library, counselling rooms, offices, Bible college classrooms, kitchens, and car-parking facilities (Austin 2017: 127-8). Ashley Evans rebranded his father's church, changing the name to Influencers Church in 2012 (Shand 2013). The vision for Influencers Church (2017) is to 'influence the hearts of people towards greater connection with GOD [sic], using the generous resource of God's love in the context of God's family, the local church'. Under the Influencers Church brand name, Ashley Evans planted three more churches around Adelaide and three in the suburbs of Atlanta in the US state of

Georgia. Influencers Church runs separate ministries for men, women, youth, young adults, and children, with an annual Influencers Church conference and an annual fashion parade for women called 'bU'. Ashley and Jane Evans built on Andrew Evans' achievements to develop a neo-Pentecostal church that caters to multiple aspects of people's lives.

Influencers Church displays neo-Pentecostal features in its vision, theology, and goals. The vision statement for the church says

We believe that to reach this generation, you need to speak their language. The language of this generation is media and so we are committed to engage with media to communicate to & capture the vision and hearts of the generation that will take the baton from us and run further and faster than we ever will (Influencers *Vision Statement* 2017).

This outlines Ashley and Jane's desire to remain relevant and contemporary, growing their church using modern communication tools and strategies. As at 2018, Influencers Church promotes much of its work online through a website and social media platforms including an Influencers Church-branded television streaming service, an online store for purchasing worship music and church branded products, and an online leadership college. An emphasis on church growth and individualised spirituality is evident in the vision statement

We are committed to making fully devoted followers of Christ, who understand the why behind the what, that are fully focused on building God's kingdom and putting Him first in their lives (Influencers *Vision Statement* 2017).

Influencers Church draws on Word of Faith beliefs to highlight the importance of faith in action to receive God's blessings. The blurb for Ashley Evans' (2014) book *No More Fear: Break the Power of Intimidation in 40 Days* says, 'Is the world limited in opportunities and resources, or is it unlimited, with boundless possibilities and blessings? If God is the source of all things and He is unlimited, then life is a treasure basket of dreams just waiting to become reality.' Ashley Evans teaches neo-Pentecostal approaches to aspirational Christian living in which God can be expected to 'bless' Christians with an abundance of unlimited resources. Further to this, Influencers Church theology promotes the idea that access to these resources is available for believers through actions made in faith. A post on Ashley Evans's Facebook page describes the senior pastors' approach to faith healing activated by prayer and the action of 'anointing', in which oil is smeared on a person to symbolise that God has chosen them for a special purpose. A child from a family who attended Influencers Church

was seriously ill after multiple surgeries and the family invited Jane Evans to visit the child and pray for him (Ashley Evans *Facebook* 2017). Ashley says

the moment she anointed Ted with oil and prayed for him, this little boy who dying became conscious, opened his eyes, focused on his surroundings and started to cry for his mum. He had just been healed.

This claim for healing involves the neo-Pentecostal emphasis on actions made in faith (in this case, prayer and ritual use of oil) in attempts to realise a material effect. In the final paragraph of the post, Ashley Evans admonishes his Facebook followers ‘Go after God with ALL [sic] your heart in 2017... I promise you, it will remove the uncertainty from your life’. Here, Ashley Evans implies that individual belief and action made in faith is required to access health. Ashley and Jane Evans have taken Andrew Evans’s goals for Paradise Community Church, updating the church’s approach to growth using online communication tools and planting churches in overseas locations while implementing neo-Pentecostal principles in which individual action is required to achieve health and abundance in their church’s theology and goals.

In 1997, Ashley Evans’s brother Russell and his wife Samantha received donations and offerings from Paradise Community Church to develop the Planetshakers youth conference. Under the couple’s leadership, the Planetshakers conference held in Adelaide grew rapidly from three hundred attendees in 1997 to sixteen thousand in 2002 and a praise and worship band formed under the same name as the conference (Austin 2017: 145; Daystar Television *About Planetshakers Band* 2017). In 2004, Russell and Sam Evans capitalised on the success of the Planetshakers conference and band and founded a Planetshakers-branded church in Melbourne (Austin 2017: 145; Daystar Television *About Planetshakers Band* 2017). From this base, Russell and Sam planted four more Planetshakers churches in Melbourne and expanded internationally, planting churches in Singapore, South Africa, Geneva, and the city of Austin in the US state of Texas (Planetshakers *Home* 2017). The Planetshakers annual conference was renamed ‘Awakening’ and, as at 2018, runs in two Australian cities (Brisbane and Melbourne) and four international locations: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Austin, Texas (Planetshakers Conference *Awakening* 2017). Despite only having been in existence as a church since 2004, Planetshakers has cultivated community involvement at a local and international level. As at 2018, Planetshakers runs several organisations alongside its conferences and churches including: children’s ministry (Planetkids), youth ministry (Planetboom), Bible college (Planetshakers College which is run

through the ACC-affiliated Christian university Alphacrucis College), home group network (Urban Life), music and worship team, film and video production team, theatre team, a music school, a ministry targeting university students and an associated annual leadership camp (PlanetUNI), business leadership courses (Planet Business), and a community engagement network that works in partnership with other not-for-profit groups to provide low-cost food, addiction support groups, refugee support, and a Christmas gift-giving service for children living in low-socioeconomic circumstances. Russell and Sam Evans implemented neo-Pentecostalism to assist in expanding their church internationally and to provide services in multiple areas of life.

The Planetshakers founding slogan ‘To empower generations for generations’ signals Russell and Sam Evans’s vision for their church: contemporary, global, and long-term. The original focus on young people has resulted in the church engaging an experiential approach in marketing their church. The Planetshakers brand capitalises on the legacy of their high-energy youth-orientated beginnings: their worship music sounds very similar to the most recent popular music releases (synthesisers are used to replicate these sounds), and loud praise and worship services feature large bands (including backing dancers) with the use of sophisticated sound and lighting technology (strobe lights, smoke machines, lasers, multiple screens) to create a praise and worship experience focused on physical engagement (Planetshakers *YouTube* 2017). According to Evans himself, two-thirds of the church’s twelve thousand congregants are aged between eighteen and forty years old (Daystar Television *About Planetshakers Band* 2017). Reflecting on the youth-orientation of his church, Evans (Daystar Television *About Planetshakers Band* 2017) states, ‘Planetshakers is more than a worship experience. It’s a combination of presenting praise and worship in a ‘new school way’, speaking the language of the day, whilst not watering down or losing the presence of God’. The ‘new school way’ reference is a youth culture idiom that succinctly captures the ‘contemporary’ approach Russell and Sam Evans take in developing the Planetshakers brand.

The couple model neo-Pentecostal principles of aspirational living, Word of Faith, prosperity gospel, and individualised approaches to spirituality in their preaching and activities. The opening paragraph of Russell Evans’s (2014: 1) book *The Honor Key: Unlocking a Limitless Life* begins ‘If you’re like me, you want to experience heaven here on earth. You want to have abundance, receive an inheritance, and release generational blessings’. Russell Evans (2014) argues it is up to the individual believer to seek salvation through the act of honouring God and through this, a Christian can access the abundance and

blessing that God has in store for them. This is a neo-Pentecostal approach to salvation; an individual believer decides to become a Christian and then it is their responsibility to perform acts of faith and honour to access health and wealth. Sam Evans's Instagram (Imgrum 2017) account demonstrates how she models her individualised approach to spirituality, posting an image of gift from a friend: a personalised Bible which rephrases verses to directly address Sam reading '*Sam* is God's daughter... *Sam* is a friend of Christ' (Imgrum 2017). The Evans' realised their goal of developing an international religious movement, implementing neo-Pentecostal approaches in their church organisation and theology.

Neo-Pentecostalism was present in the original visions for Citipointe Church, Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Influencers Church and Planetshakers. The founders of the churches implemented neo-Pentecostal principles in the churches' organisational structure and theology. The senior pastors of the churches teach individualised understandings of spirituality, Word of Faith theology, and a version of prosperity gospel in which success is evidence of God's blessing and Christians are obligated to display their success to convince other people to come to church. The churches employ the non-invasive seeker-friendly growth church model pioneered by Yonggi Cho, and they have adapted this model to incorporate corporatised branding strategies. Their growth narrative—beginning from very small gatherings to now having influence on a global scale—is important for understanding how they market themselves. The leaders affect surprise at their church's growth, despite the implementation of organisational strategies to achieve this very goal. This attitude actualises the relatability that the leaders seek to present, which in turn is a strategy of non-invasive evangelism—along with the display of health and wealth—that the churches use to attract more congregants. Implementing neo-Pentecostal principles in their church theology and organisation was instrumental in Citipointe Church, Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Planetshakers and Influencers Church to achieve their goals of remaining relevant, contemporary, and global.

While the churches display neo-Pentecostal characteristics, there is some variation between them. In terms of governance and structure Hillsong Church, Planetshakers, and Influencers Church are affiliated with ACC, whereas Citipointe is affiliated with COC/inc, and C3 Church maintains a governance structure independent of both ACC and COC/inc. There are differences in aesthetic and style. C3 Church and Hillsong Church emphasise a desire to developing a church that feels like 'coming home' and the senior pastors are central to creating the church dynamic, particularly with C3 Church. Planetshakers seeks to create

high-energy services and worship music with the specific purpose of attracting younger congregants. Influencers Church is smaller in comparison to the others with just seven church plants in two different locations. Despite these differences, analysing the churches' common features reveals the advent of neo-Pentecostalism in Australia. As Hillsong Church, Citipointe Church, C3 Church, Planetshakers and Influencers Church became more well-known, the churches sought to develop influence in areas beyond the scope of Sunday church services, growing and developing church-branded activities while contrasting themselves with older mainline Australian churches.

Claiming dominion and gaining influence for establishing 'Heaven on Earth':

Competing in the Australian religious marketplace

The purpose of this section is to explain how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches ensured viability. This section is important for identifying specific dynamics that continue to drive the churches' desire to achieve growth and influence. The section examines the expansion of the churches' branded activities to argue that the churches use Kingdom Now theology and the implementation of seeker sensitive services to achieve stated organisational goals of growth and influence. The chapter finds that these dynamics facilitated the abilities of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to successfully compete in an increasingly diverse Australian religious marketplace, distinguishing themselves from the older Christian churches and marketing a neo-Pentecostal brand of Christianity and church style.

Australian churches displaying neo-Pentecostal characteristics have developed a range of activities that support their churches including annual conferences, Bible colleges, local and global ministries and charity programs, and diversified ministries according to sex and age group. These activities—branded with the church logo—extend the work of the churches into the broader Australian and global community. The activities happen outside the scope of the regular Sunday church services and perform two functions for Australian neo-Pentecostal churches. Along with establishing their brand in an increasingly diverse religious marketplace in Australia, providing these activities assists the churches to gain influence beyond that of a Sunday church services. This desire to develop influence actualises Kingdom Now theology, a version of Christian reconstructionist beliefs that are typically associated with the American conservative Christian right (Lugg 2000, McVicar 2013). However, Australian neo-Pentecostal senior pastors have adapted these ideas, moving past overt pre-millennialist preaching to teach an expectation of building God's kingdom on Earth in the present, while awaiting the second coming of Christ. Seeking influence becomes a theological justification

for preaching prosperity doctrine, as the senior pastors argue that the establishment of God's kingdom on Earth consists of healthy, wealthy, and successful Christians who are prominent or 'anointed' to lead in all areas of life. For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, their ability to build God's kingdom is operationalised in evangelism, conversion ('decisions for Christ'), and cultivating influence in spheres such as schools, business, work places, and politics.

McVicar (2013: 123) traces the development of Kingdom Now theology in the late 1980s through Pentecostal church leaders in the US, articulated by Bishop Earl Paulk Jnr, the lead pastor of a twelve-thousand-member church in Atlanta, Georgia. Paulk preached on the role of Christians in a spiritual warfare against demons, saying that Christians are obligated to 'demonstrate' the kingdom in their everyday lives as a method of combating the forces of evil (McVicar 2013: 122-3). Specifically, as McVicar (2013: 123) observes

Paulk (1984, 36) insisted that "God's people" must "take rightful dominion of this kingdom. Responsible Christians must vote and write letters to public officials on critical issues. They must sign petitions concerning matters that will promote peace, harmony, goodness and true freedom."

Kingdom Now theology encourages churches and Christians to reach beyond the Sunday service and develop influence in multiple areas of life, emphasising the importance of establishing Christian educational institutions—to combat concerns about the 'secularisation' of public education (Lugg 2000)—and networking with Christian leaders and potential converts in media, business, and government. Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe, Influencers Church, and Planetshakers all teach a version of Kingdom Now theology. For the churches, the theology forms a key justification of preaching prosperity gospel, part of the Kingdom Now narrative that emphasises the responsibility of the Christian to claim and establish God's kingdom on Earth. Kingdom Now theology is also a factor in developing non-invasive or 'seeker sensitive' evangelism techniques for conversion. These techniques assist in growing the church to provide proof of the establishment of God's kingdom, seen in large or expanding churches whose congregants embody the neo-Pentecostal ideals of health, wealth, and success.

Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe, Influencers Church, and Planetshakers specifically discuss in church vision statements the nature of the influence that they wish to cultivate. The Hillsong Church (*Vision* 2017) vision statement seeks to build a church of influence 'that raises, equips, and empowers generations of young, anointed leaders from across the globe. Graduates to serve God in all walks of life' and these leaders will impact

‘cities and nations with great, God-glorifying churches’. Hillsong Church will consist of ‘kingdom-minded’ people who empower a ‘leadership generation to reap the end-time harvest’ (Hillsong Church *Vision* 2017). This vision encapsulates Kingdom Now theology: establishing God’s kingdom on earth (kingdom-minded) is supposed to precipitate the ‘end times’, or the second coming of Christ. Empowering leaders is a significant theme in Kingdom Now rhetoric and is expanded in the ideas of a ‘purpose filled’ life, as Hillsong Church seeks to raise Christians who have served God’s purpose and are prominent in ‘all walks of life’. This empowerment can occur through networking opportunities conveniently provided at Hillsong-branded organisations such as BusinessConnect meetings, attending Hillsong College, and working for the church in marketing, public relations, and communications.

In the mid-2000s, Australian politicians visited Hillsong Church for a number of occasions. Prime Minister John Howard opened their Baulkham Hills Campus in 2002 (Miller 2015b) and New South Wales Premier Mike Baird opened the 2016 campus upgrade ‘The Epicentre’ (Hillsong Annual Report 2016: 55). Federal Treasurer Peter Costello spoke at the 2004 and 2005 Hillsong conferences. The 2005 conference was also attended by New South Wales Premier Bob Carr, Christian Democrats New South Wales state Member for Parliament Fred Nile, and three federal parliamentarians Peter Dutton, Kevin Andrews, and Alexander Downer. Federal Treasurer Scott Morrison attends his local ACC-affiliated church Shirelive in the Southerland Shire South of Sydney (Badami 2014, ACC *Search* 2017), and while serving as federal Members of Parliament, Louise Markus (who worked for Hillsong before entering parliament) and Alan Cadman both attended the Baulkham Hills Hillsong campus (Metherell 2004). Politicians attending church and church events is not unusual, as New South Wales Premier Bob Carr said when asked about his attendance at the conference, politicians ‘maintain dialogue with people in all denominations and all faiths’ (*The Age* 2005). However, instances of politicians attending Hillsong Church decreased as the visits received attention from the Australian media, with some of the analysis casting the church in a negative light. Headlines accused Hillsong of being a ‘money-making machine’ (Snow 2015), excluding congregants who ‘asked hard questions’ (Marr 2007) and ‘fleecing its followers for millions’ (News Corp Australia Network 2015). In response, Brian Houston (2005) said

the last thing on our mind was that we'd ever have number one albums or that on election night they'd be talking about the 'Hillsong Factor', or that we'd have a conference for nearly 30,000 daytime delegates. I don't have any political agenda.

Houston's claims that he did not expect his church to achieve these things align with the growth narrative for explaining the church's success as a 'blessing'. Having people who are powerful in both state and federal governments attend Hillsong services and events is useful for facilitating the church's Kingdom Now narrative. New South Wales Premier Mike Baird's presence at the 2016 opening of the upgrade to the Baulkham Hills campus is displayed in photographs in Hillsong's annual report for the year and Baird's praise the church in a quote in the report: 'I had the privilege to come and open what I think is undoubtedly one of the best youth centres in the world. What a gift to our youth and what a gift to the community' (Hillsong Annual Report 2016: 55). Here, the New South Wales Premier identifies that Hillsong is seeking that influence. People of influence are seen at Hillsong services and events, and this is displayed as evidence that the church is achieving its Kingdom Now goals of cultivating influence and impact.

Hillsong Church counts celebrities, musicians, and sports stars as regular attendees. The lead singer of Irish band U2 Bono, basketball star Kevin Durant, Khloe and Kourtney Kardashian, Kendall and Kylie Jenner, pop musicians Selena Gomez and Hailey Baldwin, and High School Musical stars Vanessa Hudgens, Hailee Steinfeld, and Nick Jonas have all attended Hillsong services in the United States (Ojomu 2017). Pop star Justin Bieber regularly attends Hillsong services at the New York church plant and has travelled to Sydney for the church's annual conference (Ojomu 2017, Van Den Broeke 2017). Israel Folau (2012), an Australian rugby player, has attended Hillsong; his Twitter profile description reads simply 'Living the dream #TeamJesus' and he praises Hillsong Church in his posts: 'Awesome night @hillsongchurch!! Good to see it pack out. #WeDontStop #TeamJesus'. Hillsong Church services at Baulkham Hills served as the meeting site for arranging Folau's 2012 switch from Australian Rules Football to National Rugby League (Pandaram 2012). Australian rugby league player Jarryd Hayne recorded an interview for the 2015 Sydney Hillsong conference during his career in the American National Football League, in which he discussed his faith as a key element of his success 'It's not about what you say, it's about being there. Let God do what he'll do, and things just happen' (Van Den Broeke 2015). For Hillsong, having internationally acclaimed and successful people—politicians, celebrities, musicians, and sports stars—attend the church reinforces the narrative of success that is an element of Kingdom Now theology. Hillsong can claim to be realising their vision of establishing God's kingdom on Earth, gathering 'anointed' celebrity congregants to demonstrate the appeal and attraction of a neo-Pentecostal version of Christian living.

Australian politicians may be warier of attending Hillsong's church services and events since 2005, but the presence of celebrities and sports stars at the church cultivates the atmosphere of success that Kingdom Now theology explains as positioning Christians in places of prominence for attracting people to convert to the Hillsong version of Christianity.

Kingdom Now theology is present in C3 Church's espoused culture. The goal to plant over one thousand C3-branded churches by 2020 is a growth church strategy, but it also actualises Kingdom Now theology of seeking global influence and impact. Pringle (*Vimeo* 2017) outlines the importance of growth and kingdom principles in his statement 'God has released us to bear his name and reputation and we need to continue to do the same so that we cause growth for his kingdom... We want to be smart so that we can relate to people of influence'. In a video explaining the culture of C3 Church, Phil Pringle (*Vimeo* 2017) discusses the 'Kingdom Values' that he has sought to implement in his church congregations around the world and this includes empowering Christians within C3 Church to become leaders and collaborating with Christians outside of C3 Church

Part of our culture is that we are involved in the marketplace, we're involved in reaching out to people, and including people who are wealthy and in business, who are in politics and power, who are in the media world, who are in the entertainment world, who are in the educational world, and in the world of commerce. All these fields in the marketplace we want to make sure that we are treading... our culture with that ministry. People in the market place are as called of God as any minister is.

Pringle modelled this type of collaboration at the 2015 Pathfinders Prayer Breakfast at which New South Wales Premier Mike Baird and the New South Wales police commissioner Andrew Scipione were the keynote speakers. A former banker, Baird appointed several fellow evangelical Anglican Christians in his cabinet, including Bay Warburton, founder of eBay in Australia and the son of former Caltex chair Dick Warburton (Nicholls 2014, Clennell 2015). Scipione is open about how his Christian faith has guided his career in the police (Box 2017), modelling his leadership style on scripture stating that the Bible is 'the greatest leadership tome you could ever read' (Lim 2017). Scipione has long-standing connections with the Sydney-based neo-Pentecostal churches, he attended Brian Houston's father's funeral in 2004 (Snow 2015). Pringle's association with Baird and Scipione shows how C3 Church has successfully collaborated across denominations to create networks with powerful people in New South Wales within the spheres of government, law, and business. Other keynote speakers at C3 Church's Pathfinders breakfasts include Australian Reserve Bank Governor Glenn Stevens, technology investor Daniel Petre, and social entrepreneur

Daniel Flynn (Pathfinders 2017). In 2000, Australian Prime Minister John Howard opened C3 Church's purpose-built campus at Oxford Falls, Sydney (Chris Pringle Vimeo 2010) and Phil Pringle interviewed former Prime Minister John Howard at the 2013 Pathfinders breakfast (Pathfinders *YouTube* 2013). Internationally, the Pathfinders breakfast in San Diego has featured a range of prominent speakers: Californian Assemblyman Brian Jones, conservative Fox News commentator Mike Slater, media journalist Kelli Gillespie, and manager of Christian media association 'Risen' Allan Camaisa (Pathfinders San Diego 2017). Pringle sees this kind of collaborative ecumenism and inclusion, in both Australian and international locations, as a tool for conversion and influence. Demonstrating prosperity and abundance is part of this networking, Pringle (Vimeo 2017) states of C3 Church culture

We believe that he [God] is the fulfiller of our desires, delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart, then we can expect to see God fulfil dreams... God has great delight in not just meeting needs but being abundant. There is an abundance, more than we can know what to do with at times

Pringle (Vimeo 2017) encourages his congregants to influence those outside of church culture 'use newspaper headlines to identify a need and care for them to come to Christ'. Pringle (Vimeo 2017) specifically wants his congregants to engage people of different religions and those who may be suffering trauma, citing anecdotal evidence of the potency of this approach in converting Muslim refugees and women fleeing domestic violence 'by healing them, we see them come to Christ'. For Pringle and his church, achieving conversion and influence is central to realising the Kingdom Now theology that drives church growth through evangelism, and raising the prominence of Christian leaders to signal the establishment of God's kingdom on Earth.

The COC/inc movement seeks to develop influence in multiple areas, taking the approach of creating COC/inc-branded organisations that model Kingdom Now theology. Education is a particular area of concern for COC/inc. COC's decision to start a school and Bible college in the 1980s occurred in the context of changes to the education system that promoted liberal democratic ideas, alternatives to truth claims from conservative religious and societal authorities, and an emphasis on human advancement through rational thinking (Hey 2011: 222). Hey (2011: 166) observes that those in the COC movement in the 1970s and 80s believed the second coming of Christ was imminent, quoting a COC leader who recalls, 'End time teaching was everywhere at the time. None of us believed we'd have children. We didn't believe that we would live to be forty-five'. This belief was central to the

understanding that the advent of secular humanist education was a stage in the culture wars that signal end times. As such, COC sought to develop educational organisations infused with their version of Christian ethos and values, as a counter-measure to the perceived secular humanist influence in public education (Hey 2011: 222). Christian Heritage College's original vision was to provide Christian teacher training programs to combat what Clark Taylor (in Hey 2011: 232) observed as 'spiritual warfare' in Australian's higher education system, Taylor observed 'To get a degree, young Christians have to go through a system that attempts to destroy their faith.' As pre-millennialist expectations faded, COC's move into the education market became more long-term, driven by a desire to actualise Kingdom Now values and principles in ministry and education. The Citipointe Brisbane website lists 'Influence' as the first value of the church, explaining:

There should be a spiritual climate change, an absence of darkness, a shift for the good surrounding the people of God. It is, after all, why we are here... Influence. The fact that we are still located on the earth says that our presence here is purposeful. This is no accident. We are here upon the earth to be the difference, to advance God's 'kingdom come'; to bring more of Heaven to Earth and to take more from Earth to Heaven.

Achieving influence for advancing God's kingdom is a driving force for COC/inc, in education, ministry, and politics. In 1995, COC leaders John Gagliardi, Neil Miers, and David MacDonald founded the political lobby group Australian Christian Coalition to provide 'a unified Christian voice to overturn decades of Godless, hedonistic, self-gratifying qualities and personal values' in Australian government (Gagliardi 1995). Rebranded as the Australian Christian Lobby in 2001, as at 2017 the group claims to have eighty-thousand members and has developed a vocal conservative Christian influence in policy debates on issues ranging from legalising same-sex marriage to outdoor advertising standards (Shanahan 2017). Concern with countering secular humanist culture with Kingdom Now theology is evident in Citipointe pastor Karolina Gunsser's (2017) message that the culture of the world is in opposition to God. Gunsser (2017) tells the Bible story of Daniel's capture and service to the King of Babylon as a parable to resisting the culture of the world, relating the lessons from the story directly to modern Christian university students. Gunsser (2017) says,

Daniel, this Godly young man, is forced into three years training, by force, abducted and forced to learn all the codes of the world. I kind of know what that feels like. I don't know if there are any other university students here and you sit through socialist lectures that teach you such rubbish that you feel like you need to cleanse and purge at the end of every lecture. Hello, it's ok to call it what it is. It's rubbish.

Here, Gunsser implies that a secular university education is not of God, but of the world (where ‘socialism’ implies opposition to God) and as such, should be resisted. This resistance is central to creating Kingdom Now culture for the COC/inc movement’s Citipointe Church, developing a two-pronged strategy for achieving influence and realising God’s kingdom on Earth. The church teaches opposition and resistance to ‘worldly’ culture while at the same time providing COC/inc-branded organisations that carry out work within ‘the world’ which are infused with Citipointe and COC/inc’s version of Christian principles.

Similar to Citipointe, Influencers Church implements Kingdom Now theology in their preaching and organisation, teaching resistance to conforming to the culture of the world and encouraging audiences to attend their particular church-branded events to combat worldly culture. An emphasis on developing Kingdom Now principles of influence are signalled in the church’s choice of name, ‘Influencers’. In his book *No More Fear: Break the Power of Intimidation in 40 Days*, Ashley Evans (2012: 3) promises his reader, ‘You will learn about the role fear plays in your life, how intimidation places artificial boundaries around your God-given influence, and how to live a life of victory, dominion and authority’. In Evans’ view, the ‘enemy’ seeks to prevent Christian influence and replaces joy with fear, rejection, and intimidation. Evans’ theology teaches that, with enough faith, Christians can come to hold dominion and authority by resisting a version of Satan that seeks to sap Christians of the confidence to lead and implement Kingdom Now theology. In a sermon titled ‘Kingdom Culture’, Ashley’s wife Jane Evans (2017) argues that Christians ‘have been sent by God to conform the culture around you, not to conform to the culture around you’. In her message, Jane Evans (2017) teaches that men are the ‘warriors’ who take new territory and women are the ‘culture creators’, who settle inside the new territory and make changes in the culture. To learn how to do to this, Jane Evans (2017) encourages the women in her audience to register for the 2018 Influencers Church women’s conference ‘bU’, promising that ‘God is going to do something incredibly prophetic and profound at this conference’. Encouraging congregants to educate themselves about Kingdom Now culture at Influencers Church-branded events operationalises both prosperity gospel and Kingdom Now principles. Attending church-branded events ensures that the success of Influencers Church events can be recorded and displayed as proof of the establishment of the God’s kingdom as a growing church culture.

Similar to Hillsong, Citipointe, C3 Church, and Influencers Church, Planetshakers teaches Kingdom Now theology and seeks to develop influence. Russell Evans (2014: x) believes that honouring God is the central principle to accessing the Kingdom, writing

As you open the pages of this book, I dare you to discover the power of the kingdom of God that can come into your life through the principle of honor. When you do, it will release an inheritance. A generational blessing will come out of your life that will affect not only your life but the lives of those around you for years to come.

Russell Evans (2014: 7) argues that a Christian must be active in their honour ‘God always waits with love, forgiveness, and honor for all who are willing to humble themselves and reach out to Him.’ This is a part of the active faith component of neo-Pentecostal teaching, a Christian is responsible for pursuing an honouring and faith-filled relationship with God, and through this action achieves access to the kingdom in the present, rather than waiting for Jesus’ return. For Russell Evans, the Kingdom of God on Earth is demonstrated in abundance, victory, blessings, and influence. In an interview with Mike Huckabee—previously Governor of Arkansas and Republican Presidential candidate in 2008 and 2016—on his show on the conservative American cable television channel Fox, Russell and Sam Evans (FoxNews.com 13 January 2013) state their desire to teach young people how to impact their communities. Sam Evans (Foxnews.com 2013) says they want to teach young people ‘to see the significance of themselves, the gifts and abilities, that they can affect their world for the greater’. Planetshakers TV has dedicated a four-part series to explaining the Kingdom of God, showing clips of Planetshakers Church members in a range of jobs—from pilots to small business owners—recounting how they express principles of Kingdom Now theology in their day-to-day roles, namely modelling being ‘normal’ with the aim of ‘sowing the seeds’ and cultivating interest amongst non-Christians in becoming a Christian. The implementation of Kingdom Now theology for Planetshakers emphasises ‘empowering’ people to continue the realisation of God’s kingdom through cultivating influence and demonstrating both success and relatability.

The articulation and implementation of Kingdom Now theology to seek influence in the Australian neo-Pentecostal movement coincided with the development of strategies amongst the churches to raise their prominence and grow their congregations. Research conducted by the Australian survey group National Church Life Survey (1996) found that despite growth in the size of local church congregations from 1991 to 1996, there was an overall decline in church attendance throughout the early 1990s. Census data shows that

religious diversity in Australia grew during the 1990s and 2000s, due to an increase in non-Christian migrants and more Australians choosing the ‘No Religion’ category in the census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017a). In 1991, seventy-four percent of Australians identified as Christian, almost three percent as non-Christian, and twelve percent ‘No Religion’. The 2016 Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017a) revealed that fifty-two percent of the Australian population identifies as Christian—down from sixty-one percent in 2011—and the ‘No Religion’ category increased from twenty-two percent of Australians in 2011 to thirty percent. From 1991, non-Christian religious affiliation increased in 2016 to eight percent of the Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017a). Practising Christians tend to be older Australians aged over sixty-five years and those aged between eighteen and thirty-four were the most likely to report not having a religion in the 2016 census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017a). In their analysis of data on religion yielded in the 2016 census, Bouma and Halafoff (2017: 130) use the term ‘superdiversity’ to define the parameters of Australian responses to the religious adherence question on the census. While Christianity remains the dominant religion in Australia by a slight majority, decreasing church attendance and increasing numbers of people, particularly young people, who do not identify as religious would indicate that neo-Pentecostal churches, with their aims to achieve growth and influence, would struggle in Australia. However, Bouma and Halafoff (2017: 132) observe that within the increasingly diverse religious context revealed by the 2016 census, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches—which includes Australian Christian Churches and other neo-Pentecostal churches—emerge as the fourth largest religious group in Australia. Neo-Pentecostal churches market themselves in direct contrast to the older traditional Christian denominations. Specifically, the neo-Pentecostal churches curate an aesthetic of reliability and create ‘seeker-friendly’ worship services to compete in an increasingly diverse religious marketplace. These traits create an advantageous strategy as the churches rebrand their religion as ‘non-traditional’, appealing to both young people and non-church goers, while remaining comfortably within a paradigm of Christianity that is familiar to many Australians.

For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, striving to appear non-traditional and relatable impacts on both aesthetic and organisational choices, with a particular emphasis on creating a church that is sensitive to people who have either no experience of church, or who have rejected church. These strategies are not new in Pentecostal evangelistic techniques. Aimee Semple Macpherson, a pioneer of reaching unchurched people in the 1930s from the Azusa St Revival missionaries who travelled to Australia, used jazz and created ‘illustrated

sermons' using popular music, props, costumes, and scenery to engage 'those who don't have a church' (Redman 2001: 370-1). A 'seeker-sensitive' approach to church using updated versions of these techniques was developed by Willow Creek Community Church, an American megachurch in the Southern suburbs of Chicago pastored by Bill Hybels who specifically wanted to formulate a method of getting people unfamiliar with Christianity to commit to attending church. In the late 1970s, Hybels took his experience of starting a Christian youth group—in which he and several friends taught the gospel using popular and accessible entertainment forms such as music, art, and photography—to start a church in which he implemented modern management strategies and marketing research (Pritchard 1996). Hybels used aspects of Robert Schuller's theology of self-esteem that proved successful in building The Crystal Cathedral of Orange County California—famous for its extravagant glass building and drive-through church services—which emphasises the importance of understanding people's psychological and emotional needs in church (Pritchard 1996: 51-8). Schuller developed Norman Vincent Peale's positive thinking theories to formulate a gospel in which self-esteem is central, arguing 'Sin is any act or thought that robs myself or another human being of his or her self-esteem' (Pritchard 1996: 54). Schuller's theology linked self-esteem to mental health through his proposition that knowledge of God's love provides people with self-esteem and meets their psychological needs (Pritchard 1996: 53). Hybels implemented aspects of Schuller's theology into his sermons and messages to teach a gospel of personal fulfilment and psychological health at Willow Creek Community Church. He tailored his preaching to cater to 'non-churched' potential congregants, using market research (surveys, geographical information, research retreats) to ensure that his messages were presented in creative, visual, and easy-to-understand ways to his target audience (Pritchard 1996). Hybels coupled his positive Christianity with principles of business management outlined in works such as Peter Drucker's *The Effective Executive* and Kenneth Blanchard's *Leadership and the One Minute Manager* (both compulsory reading for staff at Willow Creek Community Church) to create an institutionalised leadership culture based on business management techniques that implemented regular reporting mechanisms and accountability structures to make staff productive (Pritchard 1996: 42). Hybels' tactic of marrying modern marketing to a theology of personal fulfilment proved successful. Willow Creek Community Church claims twenty-four thousand congregants (Willow Creek Community Church 2017) and holds Christian leadership conferences all over the world (Pritchard 1996: 89).

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches implement similar approaches to creating a seeker sensitive environment. Phil Pringle's books *You the Leader* (2010) and *Inspired to Pray: The Art of Seeking God* (2010) carry endorsements from Bill Hybels, and Brian Houston was a keynote speaker at Willow Creek's 2015 Global Leadership Summit (The Global Leadership Summit *Home* 2015). For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, the seeker-sensitive aspect is linked to relatability. The legacy of Pentecostalism remains in the churches' desire to create a physical experience of church, seen in Planetshakers' curation of a stadium rock concert-style services and Citipointe Church's commitment to providing a pleasant church experience that accounts for all the senses. However, creating relatable and seeker-friendly services has resulted in curbing aspects of the outpouring of the spirit in the bigger Sunday gatherings. Hillsong, for example, reserves more controversial Pentecostal practices—glossolalia or healing—for smaller home group meetings during the week. Houston explains that while he believes in speaking and tongues and healing,

for practical reasons, we would tend to allow the outworking of the gifts to be expressed more in our smaller groups or in day-to-day church life. Our Sunday services are more of a gathering. There's a right time and place for everything (Dolby 2007).

This is a direct appeal to relatability in an aesthetic sense (the church does not want to look strange to those unschooled in Pentecostal forms of worship) and in organisational choice (home groups become a site for practising spiritual gifts). Phil Pringle (Vimeo 2017) outlines the importance of the relatability and seeker sensitivity combination for C3 Church, explaining:

When we move with the holy spirit, we will not find ourselves apart from the world that we live in. We are not in the same spirit of complaining and negativity and unclear spirit. If people see us as some weird wacky crowd over there, the bridges are not strong so that people can come across.

These approaches are marketed to potential congregants as a distinct contrast to 'traditional' or 'organised' forms of religion. In attempts to appear friendly to new congregants, the worship spaces of neo-Pentecostal churches tend not to display Christian iconography. Goh (2008: 291) observes that Hillsong worship spaces are 'deconstructed (or minimally structured) in terms of architecture and ritual—show[ing] very clearly displacement of materiality from the level of orthodoxy's architecture and iconography'. The spaces of neo-Pentecostal worship favour:

large multipurpose auditoria which are on the one hand open, accessible and flexible spaces, yet on the other hand also entirely filled up (with sound, images, equipment, church personnel and finally the growing body of the congregation itself) in the course of the church service” (Goh 2008: 292).

Goh (2008: 295) argues that Hillsong’s worship style is therefore dependent on the ‘imaginative participation of the individual’ for creation of meaning. Brian Houston (in Dolby 2007) explains his understanding of a relatable church as ‘We’re not just speaking to people on their Sunday, but on their Monday’. The neo-Pentecostal focus on health, good self-esteem, positivity, and abundant living, coupled with the seeker sensitive approach and cultivation of influence through Kingdom Now theology, works to create this ‘relatable’ aesthetic within Australian neo-Pentecostal churches.

The senior pastors contrast this approach to ‘traditional’ Christian church services. The leaders of Hillsong, Citipointe, C3 Church, Influencers Church and Planetshakers position their church style and message delivery as a response to ‘boring’ church services. Phil Pringle (Vimeo 2017) emphasises this approach in creating C3 Church culture:

We haven’t got dead congregations... in so many traditional Christian expressions could be termed that, and we have termed them that, we found that there’s no life there anymore, it’s become dead or cold... We don’t endure Christianity, we enjoy our life for God.

Christine Caine—founder of the anti-human trafficking organisation A21 campaign and an Australian Pentecostal pastor who regularly speaks at Hillsong, C3 Church, Citipointe, Planetshakers and Influencers Church conferences and church plants—draws a clear distinction between Australian neo-Pentecostal churches and mainline churches. At Atlanta Influencers Church, Caine (2014) speaks of the abundance of God’s promises to Christians and the difference between churches like Influencers Church and traditional churches who ‘live in the wilderness because they won’t make the necessary adjustments that it takes to go from wilderness deliverance mentality into promised land abundance mentality’. Caine (2014) differentiates between traditional churches and a neo-Pentecostal style of church saying,

all that religion and institutionalised, bureaucratised religion does is brings you into a wilderness, not into a promised land... and they’re trying to take dead, stale, mouldy manna, and they’re trying to suck it dry, and there is no nutritional value in it because it is dead. It is a dead system, it is a dead religious structure, it is a dead institution and we keep going back to form, and ritual, and dead methodology

because we don't want to do the work of wrestling with the Holy Spirit to find the new thing.

This contrast is coupled with a stated desire to engage non-Pentecostal Christians and non-Christians to continue the work of growing the church to establish God's kingdom. Phil Pringle (*Vimeo* 2017) says 'We want to be a blessing to the whole body of Christ. We don't want to be a small group, we want to have a broad ecumenical engagement.' Australian neo-Pentecostal churches see all Christians as 'the church' and they seek to reinvigorate Christianity with their style of worship and engagement with the Holy Spirit. Along with the seeker sensitive service, part of the strategy of linking to non-Christians sees the lead pastors market themselves across religious and non-religious contexts. The C3 Church website distinguishes Pringle's speaking abilities stating, 'Phil's dynamic and relevant preaching has made him a much sought after [sic] speaker in both the Christian and secular world'. This claim markets Pringle as a speaker with the ability to bridge Christian and secular contexts. The Influencers Church women's conference 'bU' website markets Jane Evans in a similar way: 'bU was founded 15 years ago by author and motivational speaker Jane Evans, as a community organisation aimed at inspiring and encouraging women of all ages and cultural backgrounds to achieve success in life.' This emphasises her speaking skills and broader community engagement experience over her career as a pastor in a neo-Pentecostal church. The ability of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to present these strategies as a contrast to older Christian traditions, while remaining firmly within familiar Christian religious traditions, means that neo-Pentecostalism has an advantage over the mainline churches with a drawcard for membership in a population in which interest in religion is declining and available religious options are increasing. Neo-Pentecostal churches in Australia contrast themselves with older Christian traditions to compete within an increasingly diverse religious marketplace. This, coupled with a seeker sensitive approach, means that the churches can achieve goals of growth and seeking influence in Australia and around the world, realising a version of Kingdom Now theology.

Conclusion

The chapter discerns the emergence of a distinct Australian-based neo-Pentecostal movement through the founding of churches such as Hillsong Church, Citipointe Church, C3 Church, Influencers Church and Planetshakers. Features of neo-Pentecostalism—Word of Faith theology, prosperity doctrine, expectations of health and wealth, individualised

understandings of spirituality, and growth theology—emerged in Australia through the influence of FGBMFI Chapters, the Latter Rain movement, and David Yonggi Cho’s church growth model. The founders of Citipointe Church, Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Influencers Church and Planetshakers implemented neo-Pentecostal principles in their churches’ theology and organisational structure. Senior pastors and leaders in Australian neo-Pentecostal churches teach individualised understandings of spirituality, Word of Faith theology, a version of prosperity gospel in which success is displayed as evidence of God’s blessing, and Christians are encouraged to display their success to convince other people to come to church. They have adapted Yonggi Cho’s growth church model to incorporate corporatised branding strategies and their growth narrative is central to their marketing strategies.

For Citipointe Church, Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Planetshakers and Influencers Church, implementing neo-Pentecostalism was instrumental for achieving goals of remaining relevant, contemporary, and global. The churches developed organisations branded with the church logo to run parallel to the church as a key part of realising these goals, and these assisted the churches in gaining influence in multiple areas of life outside of church, actualising a version of Kingdom Now theology. For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, realising God’s kingdom involves developing strategies for evangelism, conversion, and cultivating influence in multiple areas including in schools, higher education, the business sphere, work places, and politics. This then becomes a theological justification for preaching prosperity doctrine: God’s kingdom on earth consists of healthy, wealthy, and successful Christians—celebrities, politicians, and business people—who are prominent or ‘anointed’ to lead in multiple areas of life. To develop their growth and cultivation of influence, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches contrast themselves to the older Christian churches and create services that are sensitive to potential converts and congregants. This assists Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to successfully compete in a religious marketplace that is increasingly diverse.

The next chapter beings the task of understanding elements of late-modernity that impacted on the abilities of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to achieve their goals. The chapter discusses the developments in technologies, policy, economic circumstances, and social contexts to discern features of late-modernity that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate into their theology and operations. The chapter examines mass-communication technologies, the emergence of neoliberal policies (known as economic rationalism in Australia), the dominance of marketing and branding, and the development of individualism

as key features of modernity that are present in Australian neo-Pentecostal theology and operations. The chapter demonstrates how these elements of modernity assisted the churches in developing their branded church activities and in expanding their congregations and finances beyond Australia. This advances the task of the thesis to identify specific characteristics of modern society that emerged and continue to animate the drive for expansion shown by Hillsong Church, Citipointe, C3 Church, Influencers Church and Planetshakers. The analysis of the next chapter is concerned with discerning the broader circumstances unique to the late-modern epoch that are present in Australian neo-Pentecostal theology and operations.

Chapter 3: Situating neo-Pentecostalism in Australian late-modernity

Introduction

The previous chapter identified neo-Pentecostalism in Australia as a unique religious movement independent from Pentecostalism with specific features and modes of organisation. Neo-Pentecostal characteristics were present in the founding visions of Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe Church, Influencers Church and Planetshakers. The churches use Kingdom Now theology to cultivate influence and seeker sensitive services to develop a specific brand of Christianity that seeks to remain modern, contemporary, and permanently growing. Having established how neo-Pentecostalism emerged in Australia, Chapter Three of the thesis begins the task of identifying and analysing specific features of late-modernity that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate into their theology and operations.

Examining the emergence of late-modernity in relation to the expansion of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches advances the argument of the thesis by showing how the churches respond to and incorporate external dynamics: technological, economic, political, and cultural. The central argument of Chapter Three is that neo-Pentecostal churches in Australia incorporated dynamics of late-modernity that emerged throughout 1970s. Conditions of late-modernity that specifically impacted on the churches are identified in the chapter as: availability of mass-communication technologies, marketisation and neoliberalism, globalisation, and individualism. The post-World War II period shifted technological, economic, political, and cultural dynamics in Australia which increased the availability of mass-communication technologies, introduced economic rationalist policies and neoliberal governance strategies, integrated a globalised economy facilitating a shift from production to consumer capitalism, and developed individualised consumerism as a tool for identity construction. The chapter examines how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporated these elements of late-modernity to expand growth opportunities for ministry, charity, and other activities. Through this process, the chapter establishes relations between elements of late-modernity—access to mass-communication technologies, neoliberal economic conditions, the effects of globalisation and the development of individualised consumerism—and the expansion of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches.

To make this argument, the chapter uses scholarly literature theorising the emergence of late-modernity in Australia to analyse materials produced C3 Church, Citipointe, Hillsong Church, Planetshakers, and Influencers Church and associated organisations. To illustrate

specific examples of the expansion of church and ministry-related activities, the research applies the theoretical framework of late-modernity to materials produced by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches and associated organisations such as schools and Bible colleges, community care and charity ventures, international church planting, book publishing, music production, international conferences, and establishing financial institutions. The materials analysed in the chapter include books produced by church leaders, sermon recordings, promotional materials for conferences, television programmes, promotional websites, governance documents, annual reports, and financial reports. These artefacts were found using online search strategies, which allows the collection of materials that the churches produce and disseminate online with the purpose of representing and promoting themselves and associated organisations. The time-period in which these materials were produced range from the late 1970s, in which Australian neo-Pentecostal churches were holding first meetings, to digital artefacts such as social media accounts and websites. The chapter applies characteristics of late-modernity—the emergence of mass communication technologies, economic rationalism and neoliberalism, globalisation, and individualism—to the materials produced by the churches and associated organisations. Analysing this data through an application of specific features of late-modernity allows the chapter to discern links between representations Australian neo-Pentecostal churches present to the public and the emergence of specific late-modern cultural, social, and political dynamics. Through an explanation of academic scholarship theorising specific conditions of late-modernity and analysis of materials produced by the churches, the chapter explains how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches expanded their activities and interests by incorporating elements of late-modernity into their theology and operations.

The first section of the chapter discusses the Australian neo-Pentecostal response to the influx of mass-communication technologies to Australia post-World War II. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use music, television, and access to developing global publishing networks to expand their evangelism strategies into virtual spaces. This meant that they were optimally positioned for a successful transition to using Internet and social media communications in the 2000s. These foundations in the modern media industries established the information-sharing networks which would come to define Australian neo-Pentecostal marketing and evangelism techniques. The second section of the chapter discusses the introduction of economic rationalist policies and neoliberal governance strategies in Australia. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches expanded their interests in education, community care, superannuation, and investment services, in part due to the development and

implementation of marketisation and privatisation in government policy. The third section of the chapter links globalisation to the expansion of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches oversaw a growth in their church activities extending to international church planting ventures, and cultivated a globalised aesthetic in their church brands, to realise their goal of creating global religious movements. The final section of the chapter identifies individualised consumerism as a key philosophical juncture for conceptions of the self in contemporary modernity. Individualised consumerism is evident in the proliferation of ‘choice’ as the main component of identity construction. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches mirror this ethos through an emphasis on a personalised, consumable experience of religion and this emphasis is linked to rhetoric of self-responsibility for improvement and success. The chapter argues that features of contemporary modernity—technological advances, economic circumstance, global dynamics, and individualised understandings of the self—are incorporated into neo-Pentecostal theology and activities. The chapter shows that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches demonstrate an ability to adapt to cultural, political, and economic shifts in late-modernity, facilitating the expansion of church-branded ministries and activities.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches and technology for mass-communication

The purpose of this section is to explain how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate developments in modern technologies into their church operations. This is important for linking church activities to technological developments and advancements as a feature of late-modernity. The section argues the creation of mass-media markets—music, television, and global book publishing networks—in which the churches were involved were instrumental in their successful transition to using Web 2.0 technologies throughout the 2000s. The section finds that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporated developments in modern communication technologies into their operations and this meant that the churches were optimally positioned to capitalise on the invention and popularity of Internet and social media communications in the mid-2000s.

Australia entered a period of economic prosperity following the end of World War II. A combination of circumstance including: the increasing Australian population, international economic cooperation, tendency towards a globally integrated economy, and the invention of technologies that facilitated the extraction of natural resources meant that Australians enjoyed increased wages, living standards and access to mass-produced goods (McLean 2013: 50). The development of global trade markets and Australia’s close proximity to the

industrialising Asian nations assisted in raising Australian living standards while increasing the size of the economy. The period in the early 1950s and 60s introduced mass communication technologies directly into Australian living rooms (Arrow 2010: 109). While radio had been present in Australia since the early twentieth century (Griffin-Foley 2009: 7), access to cheaper mass-produced radio equipment and the increased sale of broadcasting licenses allowed the radio market to develop and expand post-WWII. Television broadcasts were made in Australia for the first time in 1956, leading to the development of the local television industry. By 1960, seventy percent of Australian homes in Sydney and Melbourne had a television set and ownership of televisions had increased to ninety percent of all Australians by 1965 (FreeTVAustralia 2005). Many programs screened on Australian television during this early period were imports from the United States (Arrow 2010). However, local versions of foreign programs and Australian content was developed from the initial introduction of television in Australia (Arrow 2010). A decline in church attendance throughout the 1960s spurred interest amongst churches in alternative methods for communicating Christian messages (Hey 2010: 101, Clifton 2007: 139). Christian groups saw opportunities to use these technologies to spread their religious messages throughout Australia and Australian neo-Pentecostal churches cultivated networks for communication through these technological developments.

Throughout the 1970s, changes in consumer culture brought about a shift from Fordist industrial models to more networked approaches to business and organisational management. In Australia, these post-Fordist economic structures involved new techniques of production that were associated with the rise in information technologies and increased fragmentation of market and consumption patterns (Flew 1994: 59). Boltanski and Chiapello (2005: 73) argue that this shift offered liberation from oppressive industrial work practices, as throughout the 1970s business organisations began to operate as ‘lean firms working as networks in the form of teams or projects, intent on customer satisfaction, and a general mobilization of workers thanks to the leaders’ vision’. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005: 108-118) state that in this kind of capitalism

The ideal networker thus exhibits the following capacities: the ability to generate and participate in projects, to make connections and extend networks, to move from project to project, to demonstrate flexibility and adaptability and arouse enthusiasm, act as innovator and mediator through his/her communicative skills and mastery of communication technologies

Anarson (2015: 14-15) observes that a feature of modernity is that of the expectation of unlimited innovation, an aspect that becomes ‘more pronounced, with the transformation known as ‘industrial revolution’, and the institutionalisation of permanent technological progress. Specifically, Anarson (2015: 13) argues that through these innovations ‘The promise of absolute wealth, the perspective of enrichment without intrinsic limit, is easily compatible with the individualist version of the spirit of capitalism.’ This new business environment—characterised by technological progress, market fragmentation, and globalised networking capabilities driven through leadership and vision—suited Australian neo-Pentecostal churches. As seen in Chapter Two, the churches sought to establish a relevant, relatable, and contemporary brand of Christian church, and, as such, Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe, Influencers Church and Planetshakers saw the incorporation of technological developments as a key part of realising their vision of church.

Due to cultural and economic developments in post-Fordism, access to mass-communication technologies became commonplace as more flexible approaches to broadcasting and media developed in Australia. Sparks (2007: 4) observes

mass media offered a much less costly way of propagating new ideas in remote regions than through the recruitment and training of large numbers of people who would go into the field and act as teachers or ‘extension workers’ charged with the task of changing people's minds through face-to-face contact. The scale of the audience that mass media could produce meant that they could reach into the minds of vast numbers of people at the same time and for vastly less cost.

Evangelical church groups in Australia began to establish organisational structures to facilitate spreading Christian messages through mass media technologies. Australian Methodist Minister Alan Langstaff started Vision Ministries in the 1970s which ‘became a vector for the spread of charismatic renewal ideas using electronic media, including the use of radio and the introduction of television and cassette tape recording’ (Hey 2010: 101). At this time, the first of forty Australian Christian radio stations were funded through church groups purchasing broadcast licenses (1WayFM 2015). The international Christian radio network United Christian Broadcasters supported both Vision Radio Network and fellow Christian station network Radio Rhema in Australia (Christian Media Australia 2017). Christian Media Australia was founded in 1978, the peak body that represents the Australian Christian media industry (Christian Media Australia 2017). The production of Australian Christian television programs followed, with the founding of the Australian Christian Channel in 1987 (ACCTV 2015). In other media forms, the invention of more personalised

distribution technologies—including records, cassettes, and CDs—contributed to a fracturing of the music media market as consumers could exercise greater flexibility in purchase choices. From this, a global Christian music market developed to which Australian neo-Pentecostal churches contributed. Their success in this market assisted in developing their ability to adapt to digital economies that emerged in the 2000s.

The foundations for a Christian worship music market developed in the 1970s and 1980s as technological innovations for consuming music—cassettes and CDs—became commercially viable and the emergence of popular culture developed mass appeal. The seeker services popularised by Willow Creek Community Church’s innovations drew on popular music styles to market their services to younger attendees. Redman (2001: 370) observes ‘Seeker churches rely heavily on multimedia technology and the arts to communicate the message. They invest in high-quality, state-of-the-art sound and video projection systems.’ In 1971, *Time Magazine* observed the emergence of Christian music markets: the Jesus Revolution through which Larry Norman pioneered a style of rock music with Christian lyrics, the popularity of such Christian songs as *Amazing Grace* and *My Sweet Lord* appearing in the US top-40 charts, and musicals such as *Godspell* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* employing popular music styles to tell the New Testament story of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection (*Time Magazine* 1971). The 1980s saw Christian music impact the secular music industry in the US when artists Amy Grant and Michael Card wrote praise and worship songs that crossed over from Christian to secular radio (Race 2017). In the 1980s, Christian bands such as Petra, Stryper, and Undercover brought new popular music sounds of metal and punk to Christian praise and worship music (Jones 2017).

The development of an international Christian music market was facilitated by the technologies that enabled churches to record sermons, thus facilitating the support of Christian musicians and bands. Redman (2001: 381) observes that Christian worship music is mainly ‘produced and distributed by a handful of music recording and publishing companies’ which include Christian publishers developed from churches and other secular companies such as EMI. These technologies and disseminations of popular music culture reflect developments in late-modernity. Evans (2007: 148) observes a particular theological element to contemporary praise and worship music which proposes

modern life in the Western world is far more affluent and enjoyable than previous decades. If so, then Christians’ desire to see the return of Christ, or to take their place in heaven immediately, might have diminished. Combine this with modern teaching on the abundant life that can be experienced by the believer, or the general

positivism present in many contemporary churches, and it's easy to see why thoughts of the 'end times' have been pushed further back in the collective psyche.

This positive style of Christian praise and worship songs that employed the sounds of culturally popular music suited the seeker-friendly services that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches sought to create. The advent of the technological innovations that facilitated the emergence of Christian music market allowed Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to set up foundations for making and selling contemporary Christian praise and worship music. Through this, the churches made contributions to the development of the Christian music market while gaining experience in adapting to changing technologies and markets within the entertainment industry.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches recognised the powerful link between communication technologies and mass-marketing strategies. The establishment of a variety of Christian radio stations coupled with increased access to record and cassette players—and later, CD players—established marketing avenues for creating Christian resources. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches became adept at producing music for use in worship services and incorporating Christian music recordings into their marketing strategies along with record and cassette sales and, later, CD and DVD sales. Hillsong Church was one of the first Australian churches to understand the power of marketing music through mass communication technologies. Leaders at the church recognised the potential for evangelism through music that reflected popular styles and in 1983 began sourcing Christian rock music from a Melbourne band for use in Sunday services (Riches 2010: 13). Hillsong released its first studio-recorded worship album, *Spirit and Truth*, on cassette tape in 1988 and was followed by *Show Your Glory* in 1990, which Hillsong claims was the first such album to be marketed and distributed outside Australia, with some success in the European market (Hillsong Music Australia 2017). After distributing their music through Christian Marketing Australasia, Hillsong founded their label Hillsong Music Australia in 1997 and the church now uses the Australian bases of international music companies Warner and Sony to distribute their music products (Hillsong Music Australian 2017). Darlene Zschech, a worship pastor at Hillsong, wrote 'Shout to the Lord' in 1993 releasing the song in the US market in 1996, and it became popular in congregations world-wide. According to Christian Copyright Licensing Incorporated in the 'top 25 songs for 2007, the song was ranked fourth in Australia, ninth in the United States and third in the United Kingdom' (Hawn 2017). The enduring impact of Zschesch's song is associated with the Hillsong Church brand as a

producer of quality Christian praise and worship music in Pentecostal and evangelical circles (Pulliam Baily 2013). The music of Hillsong's worship band Hillsong United led by Brian Houston's son Joel continues to appeal to both secular and Christian markets. The band's albums and songs have charted in the Billboard Top 100 list and they won Christian music industry awards in 2014 and 2015 (*The Daily Mail* 2014; Nsenduluka 2015). Redman (2001: 380) observes

The commercial production and distribution process has proved to be the most efficient way to expose new worship music to the wider church. If anything, recent technological developments have lowered the barrier for churches and individuals and helped to facilitate a boom in new worship music.

Hillsong Church has become adept in using their music, which draws on popular music styles and technological developments, to successfully compete in the global Christian music markets.

While C3 Church, Citipointe, Planetshakers, and Influencers Church are not as globally recognised in the Christian music market as Hillsong Church, they use their music in a similar way. For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, contemporary praise and worship music is used with modern technologies to evangelise and build awareness of their brand of church. C3 Church made video recordings of their sermons in the 1980s, the popularity of which led to the establishment of C3 Music who have produced forty albums under the C3 Music Publishing record label (Vimeo 2010; C3 Music 2017). The Planetshakers touring band, led by senior pastor Russell Evans's wife, Sam Evans, developed from the Youth Alive revivals and, in 2017, was nominated for two Christian music industry awards (Longs 2017). Citipointe Live, the praise and worship arm of Citipointe Church in which Mark Ramsey's son Joel Ramsey plays guitar, writes and performs the music for the church to use in services and to sell (Citipointe Live 2017). Influencers Music writes, performs, and records worship music for the church, and their 2017 album *Imaginations* was recorded and distributed through Christian music label Syntax Creative, who represent one hundred and thirty independent record labels and were recommended as distributors by US megachurches Elevation Church and Fearless Church to Influencers Church (*Gospel Music Association* 2017). The churches create marketing campaigns around their album releases, playing promotional videos and film clips to their congregations and marketing branded apparel (for example, T-Shirts and hats) for purchase with the album. The 2017 Hillsong United album *Wonder* comes with a free Wonder-branded T-Shirt with the online purchase of a vinyl copy

of the record, capitalising on the renewed popularity of vinyl records (Ellis-Peterson 2017). The success of Australian brands of Christian worship music is evident in a media release for Influencers *Imaginations* album, which refers to Influencers as belonging to the ‘Hillsong network family of churches’ and is associated with both Planetshakers and Hillsong United (CCM News 2017). Entering the commercial Christian music market actualised the ability of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to incorporate changes in music production and distribution technologies. In the media release for the new Influencers album, Planetshakers senior pastor Ashley Evans (*Gospel Music Association* 2017) states

We believe that there are depths to the digital space that are yet to be explored especially by Christians... There is a huge opportunity for music and the message of Jesus. Simply put, we embrace digital. We know this is the future of music and we are excited about being innovators in this space’.

While spruiking his brother’s church’s music, Ashley Evans outlines his interest in continuing to use the latest technological developments in making and distributing praise and worship music. Neo-Pentecostal churches in Australia were and continue to be at the forefront of using modern recording, production, distribution, and marketing techniques to commercialise and sell their music products.

As television became popular as a communicator of mass-culture in late-modernity, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches capitalised on US-style televangelism to develop their brand of Christian message. The creation of a Christian television industry in Australia meant that neo-Pentecostal churches diversified their media interests to include recording and broadcasting sermons and live events. In the 1950s, Section 103 of the Australian Broadcasting Act stipulated a certain number of hours required to present religious programs each week, which means that commercial networks supported ‘religious programming with facilities and broadcast opportunities’ (Christian Television Australia n.d.). The global interest in charismatic renewal throughout the 1960s and 70s brought prominent US televangelists and New Zealand pastors inspired by Latter Rain teachings of faith healing and prophecy to Australia as churches began to experience charismatic phenomena (Hey 2006). The interest in charismatic worship—occurring through instances of glossolalia, and claims of healing powers, and prophecy interpretation— particularly in the Australian AOG (now the Australian Christian Churches or ACC) provided ecumenical networking opportunities for the future pastors of neo-Pentecostal churches (Bretthauer 1995). Figures such as Clark Taylor, Frank Houston, and Phil Pringle used these opportunities to lay the foundations of

church-branded organisations through the establishment of local Christian television programs. Taylor, the founder of Christian Outreach Centre denomination in Brisbane, attended the Billy Graham Crusade in 1959, leading to both his charismatic conversion experience and appreciation for Graham's televangelist style (Hey 2006). In his career as a pastor and televangelist, Taylor used many elements of Graham's preaching style including becoming 'aware of the value of marketing the star performer combined with a denial of any form of elitism' (Hey 2010: 137-8). During his travels to the US in the early 1970s, when prominent televangelists such as Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, and Oral Roberts were starting their own media careers, Taylor realised the potential of developing US evangelical-style religious television programs in Australia (Hey 2010: 179). Using COC's funds, Taylor aired the program *A New Way of Living* on commercial Australian television which was modelled on the US televangelists' talk-show style (Hey 2006). Throughout the 1980s and 90s, Hillsong Church, and C3 Church followed COC's example and began making their own television and video programs (Hey 2010: 179).

Hey (2010: 179) observes that Australian audiences of Christian television were not large enough to sustain the funds required to broadcast local church programs during primetime viewing hours on commercial television. However, producing television programs has other uses for a church. Hoover (in Bretthauer 1995: 76) argues that viewers of religious television are more likely to participate in church-branded organisations and the medium can 'introduce people to new forms of communal involvement such as healing ministries, prison ministries, Bible study groups, charismatic groups, or world hunger initiatives'. Film clips of C3 Church sermons from the 1980s advertise such charity organisations to the congregation (Vimeo 2010). In the 1990s, the availability of subscription television through cable and satellite technologies gave Australian neo-Pentecostal churches opportunities to expand their television programs. The Australian Christian Channel (ACC TV), an incorporated not-for-profit organisation funded by donations, began airing in 1999 with a twenty-four-hour broadcast via the Australian subscription television service Optus TV (ACC TV 2017). Planetshakers, Influencers, and Hillsong broadcast church-branded programs on this channel (ACC TV *Guide* 2017). Daystar Television, a Christian cable television channel based in Dallas in the US state of Texas, began broadcasting globally in 2004, and Hillsong Church and Planetshakers continue to broadcast programs through this world-wide platform (Daystar Television *About* 2017).

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches make program content from footage of their Sunday services, annual conferences, concerts, and special services for Easter and Christmas.

Performances are rehearsed, scripted, filmed, and edited for distribution. The use of television programs for mass communication of religious ideas allows pastors to communicate with large numbers of people across distant spaces (Bretthauer 1995: 76). This ability means that that ‘the religious community that was tied to its local church—where space, locale and place converged—now finds itself supplanted by the megachurch that allows contact among thousands of people who have nothing in common besides their connection to an ethereal church’ (Bretthauer 1995: 7). A promotion for the Hillsong Channel (Hillsong *Because We Can* 2017) states ‘For many people around the world, television and online media may be the only way they are ever able to hear the Gospel’. This mediation of mass communication through modern technologies allows neo-Pentecostal churches to develop their experience in developing influence beyond the physical realm into a space where congregants are connected through virtual participation in the church. Developing television programs that connected worshippers and showcased the pastors’ sermonising abilities provided the churches with long-term experience and engagement with the television media landscape in Australia and globally. Coupled with their involvement in the Christian music market, the churches were well-positioned to take up the digital technological capabilities that emerged with Internet mass-communications networks.

The development of a global Christian publishing market provided Australian neo-Pentecostal churches with opportunities for message, vision, and brand communication, while at the same time developing global networking capabilities amongst celebrity Pentecostal and evangelical circles. Australian consumers enjoyed increased access to mass-produced paperbacks from the middle of the twentieth century and this coincided with the development of the global Christian publishing industry. Specialist Christian fiction and non-fiction book chain, Koorong Books, and the associated distribution company Crossroads was founded in Melbourne in the late 1970s (Schlumpf 1999). Through this supply chain, the neo-Pentecostal leaders found local support for their publishing endeavours. Schlumpf (1999: 30) observes that Koorong Books in the late 1990s was the largest account of US Christian publishing and international distribution company Baker Book House. The *Publisher’s Weekly* trade magazine notes the increased popularity of the Christian self-help genre from the mid-1990s stating ‘Australians are voracious readers... and they’re really looking for spiritual titles’ (Schlumpf 1999: 30).

Australian neo-Pentecostal authors publish through local and US Christian companies and the books feature endorsements from celebrity pastors. Brian Houston’s book *Get a Life* was published in 1999 by Trust Media Distribution based in the US. Maximised Leadership

Inc, a publishing company associated with Oral Roberts University in Oklahoma, published Houston's, *For This Cause* (2001), and Bobbie Houston's book, *Heaven is in This House* (2001). Phil Pringle has published books through Pennsylvania-based Christian publishing company Whitaker House and published *Healing the Wounded Spirit* through his own PaX Ministries company in 1999. Evidence of the global neo-Pentecostal, megachurch, and prosperity pastor networks in which Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors operate are in the recommendations and publishing connections provided in the leaders' books. Frank Houston's title *The Release of the Human Spirit* was published in 1999 by US-based Destiny Image Publishers that also represent US megachurch pastors such as T.D. Jakes, Myles Monroe, and Rick Joyner (Destiny Image 2016). Citipointe pastor Mark Ramsey's book *Spiritually Transmitted Diseases* carries endorsements from Phil Pringle and Brian Houston (Citipointe Live Store 2017). Miles McPherson, senior pastor at San Diego megachurch The Rock Church, endorses Russell Evans's (2014) *The Honor Key* as 'one of those rare books that illuminates key Biblical and kingdom principles in a way that we can all apply to our everyday lives'. The development of a globalised Christian publishing industry meant that neo-Pentecostal leaders could consolidate their theological ideas in books, particularly through the establishment of the Christian self-help genre in the international publishing sector.

Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders capitalised on the Christian self-help genre expansion. In the mid-1990s, publishers became aware of the increasing popularity of this genre within international publishing markets. Harrison (1998) noted that 'Christian publishing has gone from paddling upstream to sailing mainstream' throughout the 1990s due to the efforts of US-based evangelical publishing houses to link with non-Christian publishing and distribution companies. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches reflected this appeal to both secular and Christian markets. The style of Christian self-help genre in which Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders write is characterised by an absence of conventional theological discussion, with a focus on presenting the author's ideas in a relatable conversational style using contemporary pop culture references to explain Bible stories. Bible stories and Biblical verses are interpreted within these texts for a modern audience with an emphasis on simplified conversational writing style, rather than using theological or academic language. Pioneering this style in the Australian context, Frank Houston, Brian Houston's father, (1999: 1) opens his book *The Release of the Human Spirit* with an anecdote about being cut off in traffic, linking the story to a personal feeling of 'breaking free'. The Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders use pop culture references in keeping with the seeker-

friendly approach to remain relevant to contemporary lives. Pringle (2001: 51) links the 1980s movie *Wall Street* to a discussion on the pitfalls of greed in his book *Keys to Financial Excellence*, claiming that God will bless the selfless giver with material prosperity. Bobbie Houston (1998: xvi) references the popular romantic comedy *When Harry Met Sally* in the title of her book *I'll Have What She's Having: The Ultimate Compliment for Any Woman Daring to Change Her World*, encouraging Christian women to 'fall in love with Jesus... and discover a personal satisfaction beyond your wildest dreams'. In the Christian publishing industry, the development of the Christian self-help style became a lucrative way for pastors to develop a personalised seeker-friendly message. In this sense, 'Christian bookshops not only serve as a market place for ideas, but as a market place for spiritual celebrities' (Bartholomew 2006: 11). Neo-Pentecostal leaders embraced and advanced the Christian self-help genre in Australia, using international publishing networks to further their own brands of church leadership on both domestic and global scales. Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders participate in the Christian self-help genre, marketing their brands of contemporary celebrity Christian leadership.

From their early foundations in the developments in mass communication technologies, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches transitioned to making media for digital spaces. In response to the increasing consumer demand for personal computers and virtual networking capabilities, user-friendly World Wide Web browsers were developed in the late 1990s, leading to the emergence of Web 2.0 in the mid-2000s. The term Web 2.0 describes the characteristics of the modern Internet's structure and purpose which include: "*mashups*," the integration of previously disparate sources of data in ways that create new value; an increase in site *functionality*, which allows for more services to be offered to users; and a focus on *socialization*, with websites and applications facilitating connections' (Bekkering 2011: 107, original emphasis). Plunkett Research Group (2013) summarise the changes in the media market as a result of the Internet

With astonishing speed, entertainment, media and publishing have evolved into a highly dynamic industry, interconnected by the global digital platform in a manner that few people could even have conceived of 20 years ago. From books and media printed on paper, music on CDs, movies rented on DVD at the local Blockbuster and TV networks that forced the viewer to be in front of the screen at a given hour in order to watch a given show, the industry has changed dramatically into an always on, easy to time-shift, always with you on mobile platforms, customizable stream of news, entertainment, movies and music.

The advent of Web 2.0 and the invention and commercialisation of smart devices that facilitate access to the Internet in almost any time and place, provided opportunities for technologically savvy religious organisations, such as Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, with opportunities in media publishing and distribution.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use online tools—websites, blogs, social media platforms, and video streaming services—to communicate their messages and market their church brand. Hillsong Church, C3 Church, and Planetshakers each operate a central website—Hillsong TV, Planetshakers TV, and C3 Church’s Your Best Life—dedicated to video streaming content captured from services, conferences, and concerts, and content developed specifically for the streaming platform. For example, Planetshakers TV offers thirty-minute video episodes that show a compilation of clips from Planetshakers-branded events, interspersed with interviews with church leaders and members, and promotions for charities supported by the church (Planetshakers TV 2017). Through the Hillsong Channel (2017) website, consumers can view fifty-six different shows that relate to each Hillsong ministry including edited footage of conferences, exclusive interviews with senior pastors and worship leaders, and clips of celebrity guest pastors—T. D. Jakes, John Gray, Carl Lentz, Joyce Meyer, Rick Warren—speaking at Hillsong church plants and events all over the world. The vision for Hillsong TV (2017) is to create a ‘channel that is constantly pioneering: one that leads the industry in revolutionary communication of an ancient message through media, film and technology’. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have a presence on the popular social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Vimeo. The churches have their own accounts—one for each church plant—and the pastors and worship leaders also have personal accounts on social media sites that are open for public viewing. The rise of blogging as an online communication tool provided opportunities for the churches to transplant their conversational writing styles developed in the Christian self-help genre to the online world. Hillsong, Planetshakers, and C3 Church promote blog posts (often as ‘devotionals’) through the main church-branded website that also promotes events, new music, charity and ministry activities, and provides information about church services and locations. Experience in adapting to changing media markets and technologies meant that with the advent of Web 2.0 Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders were optimally positioned to take their churches online in multiple ways and areas.

Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders’ incorporation of modern technologies into their evangelism, marketing, and branding strategies demonstrates an understanding of mass popular culture and a willingness to embrace elements of this culture to achieve

organisational goals and build global awareness of the church brand. Cultivating interests in the music industry, television, and publishing allowed Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to extend their activities into diverse fields of the late-modern media environment. The Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders' expansion of worship practice to non-physical space using mass-communication technologies provided a path for transition to the Internet and the churches were optimally positioned to take advantage of the popularity of social media. An openness to adopting changes within these broader social contexts is evident in their adaptability to the environment of privatisation that was encouraged through neoliberal governance strategies and marketisation in Australia.

Economic rationalism and neoliberal governance: privatisation and marketisation for expanding ministry and church-branded activities

The purpose of this section is to explain how dynamics of modern governance and economic circumstance in Australia impacted on the abilities of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to expand ministries and church-branded activities. This is important for situating the expansion of Australian neo-Pentecostal church activities within changing political circumstances in Australia. The section argues that implementation of neoliberal policies emphasising marketisation and privatisation assisted in the expansion of Australian neo-Pentecostal church activities into educational, charity, and financial sectors. The section finds that project of dismantling the welfare state in Australia provided opportunities for Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to expand their church-branded activities to include educational, not-for-profit community care, and financial ventures.

In Australia, the post-World War II period saw increased prosperity and economic opportunities. Keynesian welfare state principles, in which the state was responsible for implementing and delivering a range of services supporting these opportunities, worked in the context of the protectionist economic policies in Australia (Webster 1995). The Australian macroeconomic structure changed with the introduction and implementation of economic rationalist and neoliberal policies as a response to the effects of stagflation and the oil crisis in the 1970s (Webster 1995, Stokes 2014: 194). The transition started with the reform of the public service under the Whitlam government in the 1970s (Quiggin 1997, Stokes 2014: 197). In the 1980s, the Hawke government implemented economic rationalist policies that laid the foundations for Australia's transition to neoliberalism. These included integrating the Australian economy into the global market, 'embracing the notions of free trade and the removal of constraints on capital flows through bilateral trading agreements,

and other international alliances' (Chester 2010: 315). Keynesian economic management was dismantled through a range of policy changes; floating the Australian dollar on international markets, delegating monetary policy responsibility to the Reserve Bank, downgrading industry policy, cutting trade tariffs, privatising publicly owned sectors of the economy, and introducing marketisation and privatising as instruments of government service delivery (Spies-Butcher 2008: 270). Beginning with the Whitlam government in the 1970s, successive Australian governments undertook changes in policy approach that resulted in neoliberal policy focus on privatisation, marketisation, and supporting free global trading markets.

While these approaches came to be known as neoliberalism, in Australia this type of macroeconomic management was called economic rationalism, in which policy-makers provide regulations to ensure that markets are un-inhibited, under the assumption that markets best distribute both social and economic resources (Quiggin 1997, Stokes 2014: 195). Beeson and Firth (1998: 4) observe that within neoliberal and economic rationalist thinking

promotion of an image of the economy as a self-regulating system is associated with the belief that the dynamism of self-interest is a more efficient mechanism for optimising national wealth than governmental initiatives, particularly those which rely upon a conception of the common good.

Escobar (2005) argues that economic structures are central to power arrangements and the organisation of material conditions in modernity. In this, the economy becomes the site for governance and policy application, and the creation of markets is assumed as the most efficient policy mechanism for distributing social goods. Beeson and Firth (1998: 6) locate the image of the market as 'the ideal to which schooling, education, health services, welfare and the agencies of the state which provide these services are encouraged to conform in order to ensure national economic survival.' Australia's policy approach to neoliberalism did not entail a reduction of state intervention in macroeconomic structures (Spies-Butcher 2014: 188). Wilson (2006: 517) observes that Australia's welfare state has actually expanded since the 1980s. Cahill (2007: 222) argues that in neoliberalism, 'the state... continues to play a strong, active, interventionist, and coercive role. Even deregulation, the *sine qua non* of neoliberalism, entails the imposition of a new set of regulations.' Economic rationalist and neoliberal policy aims means that the state's assumed role is to support the creation of market-like mechanisms to deliver services. The implementation of economic rationalism facilitated the expansion of the economic justifications into social policy decisions. This

version of neoliberal ideology assumes that privatisation, marketisation, and corporatisation of government services are the most efficient methods to deliver those social services that were previously managed by the state under Keynesian macroeconomic structures. Neoliberal policy shifts the state's role in service delivery, from direct implementation of services to encouraging competitive, market-like processes in the delivery of those services. In Australia, this policy shift led to the development of a two-tiered system in many social services, such as education, health, and welfare delivery, as private markets were developed in these areas. These changes facilitated the entry and expansion of Australian neo-Pentecostal church-branded organisations into the areas of education, community care, and for COC/inc and C3 Church financial services including superannuation and investment services.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches expanded their church-branded activities in the education sector, taking advantage of the new government emphasis on privatisation. The provision of federal funding structures for independent schools was instrumental in creating the appearance of a competitive education market in Australia. The initial policy structures for deregulating education and creating a two-tiered education market were implemented in the early 1980s (Trimmer 2013). This process redefined the purpose of education in Australia as a tool 'for individual advancement' (Morsey et al. 2014: 447), positioning parents as having a choice between 'private' schools—funded mostly through fees and Federal government money—and mostly State government-funded schools. Hey (2010: 214) observes that federal government policy in the early 1970s saw the Whitlam government establish government assistance schemes for new Christian schools, while encouraging these schools to participate in networks of curriculum accountability. Funding structures for non-government schools provided federal resources to independent religious schools on a nationwide scale. COC/inc established their church-branded school in 1978 and C3 Church started Oxford Falls Christian College in 1984. The federal policy environment valued marketization as the key process in the creation of the appearance of a competitive education sector and the development of a private education market in Australia, and this provided opportunities for COC/inc and C3 Church to expand their educational ventures.

COC founded their school in inner-city Brisbane in 1978, catering for years one to ten (inc.org *Education* 2017, Hey 2010). C3 Church established Oxford Falls Grammar School in 1984 on the same campus as the C3 Church and C3 Bible College (Oxford Falls Grammar School 2015). Throughout the late 1970s, COC churches across Queensland capitalised on parental concerns about state schools' 'emphasis on scientific world views, the big bang theory of origins, evolution and a materialist, rationalist world view that seemed to exclude

the roles of God, divine revelation and divine providence' (Hey 2010: 221). Parents were particularly interested in sending their children to low-fee Christian schools that offered smaller class sizes and strong parent-teacher relationships (Hey 2010: 220). Enrolments at the schools increased and COC opened schools in three locations in south-east Queensland while six COC churches along the Eastern Australian coast started schools between 1979 and 1982 (Hey 2010: 220). Hey (2010: 222) observes that the independent Christian schooling market aimed to create schools that were infused with Christian ethos and world view, to combat the changes in public schools that increasingly emphasised vocational and recreational subjects, sexual and drug education, and relaxation of corporal punishment. Both COC/inc and C3 Church's schools seek to provide education based in a Christian worldview that emphasises empowering students to influence their wider community. The Citipointe Christian College (2017: 2) prospectus states

in our quest for excellence we integrate faith and learning holistically, to empower students with the values and foundations that will allow them to flourish and serve God and the wider community

Oxford Falls Grammar Schools (Oxford Falls Grammar School Annual Financial Report 2016: 2) outlines a similar vision in its mission to teach students about

Proclaiming the Gospel message and lifestyle through Christ-centred educational excellence, encompassing the spiritual, physical, emotional and academic development of each student.

The type of Christian education marketed by COC/inc and C3 Church assists in actualising the churches' goals of equipping their congregants with abilities to influence from their interpretations of a 'Christian-centred' perspective and be successful in the wider community to demonstrate the appeal of being educated within neo-Pentecostal church environments.

Financial support from State and federal government sources assisted C3 Church and COC/inc to successfully continue their ventures into the Australian education market. In the late 1990s, the Howard government formalised the federal funding structures for religious schools consolidating the two-tiered education system to provide long-term recurrent funding from the federal and State governments to independent 'private' schools (Maddox 2014a). By 2000, the smaller COC churches along the coast had closed their schools and as at 2018, COC/inc runs Citipointe Christian College in Brisbane, Victory College at Gympie, Suncoast College Nambour, and Christian Outreach College Toowoomba (inc.org *Education* 2018). Hey (2010: 230) notes that increased government funding assisted in the establishment,

expansion, and continued success for COC/inc ventures into the schooling sector. According to Myschool figures, a government website that compiles financial and socio-economic data on Australian schools, in 2015 Federal and State government funding provided fifty percent of Citipointe Christian College's income, eighty percent of Victory College's, sixty percent of Suncoast Christian College's, and sixty-three percent for Christian Outreach College Toowoomba (Myschool *Search* 2017). Oxford Falls Grammar School received thirty-six percent of its funding from federal and State government sources (Myschool *Search* 2017). Through the funding structures designed to facilitate a two-tiered education market in Australia, C3 Church and COC/inc continued their successful ventures into the school sector.

The Australian tertiary education industry also underwent significant changes during the emergence of neoliberal policy and Australian neo-Pentecostal churches expanded their bible colleges. The development of the technical and further education system—vocational education and training institutions funded at the State level—formalised the accreditation process for trades and skills not taught at universities (Harman 1988: 258). Accreditation for a range of post-secondary school skills was centralised to state-level institutions and this split the Australian higher education system into three sectors: universities, colleges of advanced education, and technical and further education institutions (Harman 1988: 253). The Australian higher education sector expanded throughout the 1990s due to favourable government funding and growth in the Australian economy (Hey 2010: 235). In this policy context, neo-Pentecostals in Australian churches established private colleges offering certificate, diploma, advanced diploma, bachelor and, masters qualifications in ministry training, church planting techniques, Biblical interpretation, worship service development, missionary training, and pastoral community care.

COC/inc established Christian Heritage College, a teacher-training college modelled on North American evangelical Christian universities that, initially, used mostly US-produced educational resources (Hey 2010: 233). Christian Heritage College received accreditation status in 1988, and in 1992 successfully lobbied the federal government to grant Commonwealth-funded financial assistance to students to better enable the college's ability to expand (Hey 2010: 234). Christian Heritage College offers bachelor's degrees in teaching and social science, and an Associate Diploma of Ministry, Bachelor of Ministry and post-graduate Diploma of Ministry (Hey 2010: 234-5). C3 College, founded in the early 1980s, is marketed as a training institute offering government-accredited courses for Christian ministry, creative arts and performance, and social services such as counselling, chaplaincy, and community development (C3 College 2016). Students at C3 College can study on the

main campus at Oxford Falls Sydney, online, or at a number of campuses across Australia (C3 College 2016). The Influencers Leadership School—taught through ACC-affiliated Alphacrucis College—, Planetshakers College, and Hillsong College, founded in the 1980s and 90s, offer similar ministry, worship and community services training accreditation with voluntary service at the churches a requirement of qualification completion (Influencers Leadership College 2016, Planetshakers College 2016).

The brand of Christian education offered through Australian neo-Pentecostal colleges actualises the churches' goals of maintaining relevance, growth, and influence. The church colleges market courses that are designed to empower students to be Christian leaders in all areas of life. According to the website, Hillsong College offers students

a proven mix of classroom learning, hands-on ministry experience and a vibrant College community, you really will be set up for a life of purpose and impact. All around the world our graduates are making a difference in ministry, worship and creativity (Hillsong College 2016).

Influencers Leadership School outlines its vision in its website to provide students with higher education for furthering the church's influence and growth goals, stating:

From family to business to politics and the arts, the Influencers vision is to alter the perceptions of God and the church, leave a mark on the world and make it a better place. We see people whose influence is so attractive it cannot be ignored, so authentic it isn't rejected, so compelling it is listened to, so loving it is embraced and so powerful it becomes an unstoppable force for good (Influencers Leadership School 2016).

The expansion of the private market in the higher education sector in Australia throughout the 1980s facilitated the involvement of neo-Pentecostal churches in the tertiary training and higher education sector. This meant that neo-Pentecostal churches developed church-branded tertiary institutions that market their version of Christianity in higher education contexts.

Marketised methods of contracting welfare and community care services instituted in the emergence of neoliberal governance strategies meant that Australian churches had the opportunity to expand their charity work (Melville & MacDonald 2006). Anglican, Catholic, Salvation Army, and Church of Christ organisations took more responsibility for welfare and community care services as the government implemented market-based solutions to creating accountability in the welfare and community care sector. In this policy environment, community health and counselling services are outsourced to private enterprise and non-profit

organisations through contract tendering processes and grant applications, in which organisations compete for grants and funding. The government holds an organisation to account through a range of bureaucratic accountability mechanisms, including stringent contract renewal procedures. Through this, organisations associated with churches have increased responsibility for a range of community care and health services such as managing health and aged care facilities, running counselling services, facilitating work-for-the-dole programs, managing second-hand goods shops, delivering employment services, and providing rehabilitation programs in the community. Religious organisations receive much of their funding through donations and use volunteer labour to perform many services. The most recent Productivity Commission Report (2010: 53) into the charity and not-for-profit sector in Australia found that the industry is worth \$43 billion with five million volunteers contributing \$14.6 billion in unpaid work to the sector. The government provides funding for the not-for-profit industry, exceeding \$25 billion through donation, purchasing, and investing in charity organisations and work, including many religious organisations (Productivity Commission Report 2010: 275). Outsourcing community and social services to not-for-profit religious organisations benefitted neo-Pentecostal churches and enhanced their ability to perform pastoral care and community services.

Hillsong, C3 Church, COC/inc, and Planetshakers each have ministries that perform community care, providing crisis housing, food, assisting homeless people, and counselling services for vulnerable peoples. To assist their contribution, the churches partner with other Christian charity organisations including child sponsorship groups Compassion Australia and World Vision, social care organisation Mission Australia, youth-focussed anti-alcohol and drug organisation Red Frogs, anti-sex trafficking groups SHE Rescue Home and A21 Campaign, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused Charity Bounce, and Christmas donation charities such as Operation Christmas Child. COC/inc founded Red Frogs in 1997 to combat what they saw as a youth culture dominated by alcohol and substance intake, attempting to model ‘alternative’ methods for partying (Red Frogs 2017). Leigh Ramsey, senior pastor of Citipointe Church, founded SHE Rescue Home in Cambodia to help young female victims of rape, prostitution, and sex-trafficking (SHE Rescue *Home* 2017). Hillsong Citycare, the charity arm of Hillsong Church, says that they provide counselling services for youth, school-based sexuality education programs, crisis care including counselling services and emergency financial assistance, transitional housing for domestic violence survivors, inmate support through chaplaincy and chapel programs in prisons, and leadership development (Hillsong Annual Report 2016). Hillsong Citycare states their purpose as

We have been serving in schools, prisons, nursing homes, hospitals, shelters, detention centres, and in our local neighbourhoods over the past 20 years. The heart behind everything we do, is to see lives of individuals changed so they can lead and impact in every sphere of life (Hillsong Citycare 2017).

Planetshakers Empower provides volunteers with activities for community care with a focus on community engagement, particularly with refugees and asylum seekers. Planetshakers Empower has partnerships with Foodbank Victoria, Prison Network Ministries, Prison Fellowship, and the Salvation Army, and the mission statement says

Individuals and families in Planetshakers Church are encouraged to be sensitive and responsive to the needs of people in our neighbourhoods. Initiatives might include befriending a newly arrived refugee family, offering social support for a frail elderly neighbour, mowing the lawns for a solo parent, or helping at a backyard blitz for a local community group (Planetshakers Empower 2017).

The entry of religious organisations into a range of community services allowed neo-Pentecostal churches to formalise their community care work arrangements and forge partnerships with other religious organisations. These outsourcing and funding processes afforded neo-Pentecostal churches the opportunity to establish charity services accountable to the government while simultaneously developing church-branded community care organisations. C3 Church's partnership with anti-poverty initiative Christians Against Poverty emphasises the evangelism potential of charity work stating that 2016 was

another busy and successful year with almost 100 families being helped through our 3 campuses. On average there is a new salvation every week. Since opening the Centres we have assisted 490 families and seen 130 decisions for Christ (Vision Builders 2013: 7).

The increase in the Australian not-for-profit sector allowed Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to identify and respond to opportunities in the charities sector while at the same time build awareness of their church brands within local and international communities.

The deregulation of financial markets and the implementation of superannuation designed to supplement the state-funded pension in Australia meant that neo-Pentecostal churches had opportunities to involve themselves in developing interests in financial institutions. Emphasis on individual responsibility and concerns about increasing government spending on welfare prompted the Keating government to implement a guaranteed national superannuation policy in the early 1990s (Dawkins 1992, in Drew & Stanford 2003: 4). Drew and Stanford (2003: 4) observe that the Department of Finance and Administration stated:

the key objectives of compulsory superannuation when introduced in 1992-3 were greater private sector provision for retirement and to assist lower income workers to live better in retirement through a combination of the age pension supplemented with tax assisted superannuation.

The government introduced tax incentives to encourage self-governance and management in the financial services, allowing people to choose their superannuation services and manage their own investment portfolios. The neoliberal policy environment incentivised individual responsibility for arranging retirement funds through superannuation management services, contributing to creating a robust financial services market in Australia (Pearson 2006: 99). The deregulation and development of the superannuation industries and investment services provided opportunities for neo-Pentecostal churches to expand their activities in the financial sector.

In 1984, Christian Schools Superannuation Fund was established by Christian Community Schools, the group that oversaw the accreditation of parent-controlled schools affiliated with churches (Christian Super Annual Report 2014), such as those run by COC and C3 Church. In 2000, Christian Community Schools changed its name to Christian Super and began to seek investment strategies based on the organisation's interpretations of Biblical principles and ethics (Christian Super Annual Report 2014). COC/inc joined forces with other state-based and national AOG and Pentecostal school associations, and in 2001 formed Christian Schools Australia to provide school development, professional development, and assist in lobbying for government funding (Hey 2010: 229-30). Christian Super's board is made up of representatives from Christian Schools Australia and ACC, the organisational body for the Australian AOG, along with Christian Education National, the Baptist Union of Australia, and Churches of Christ in Australia (Christian Super Annual Report 2016: 10). C3 Church's Oxford Falls Grammar Schools is a member of Christian Schools Australia (*Search* 2017) and COC/inc's Suncoast Christian College is represented by the Australian Association of Christian Schools (Australian Association of Christian Schools Annual General Meeting 2015: 2), which is a member association of Christian Education National (Australian Association of Christian Schools *Christian Education National* 2017). In 2015, Christian Super merged with the Australian Christian Superannuation, the superannuation provider for Australian Christian Churches, the organising body for Hillsong, Planetshakers, and Influencers Church. Christian Super's 2015 Annual Report states the organisation provides 'a

uniquely Christian superannuation product to a membership of more than 26, 000 members with funds under management in excess of \$940 million' (Christian Super 2015: 2).

Thus, Christian Super represents the superannuation interests of several Australian neo-Pentecostal churches and associated schools, and their brand of investment strategy is based on ethical values 'firmly grounded in Biblical principles' (Christian Super Annual Report 2015). The company outlines a list of 'Topical Positions' (Christian Super 2017) that guide the ethics of investment decisions explaining that Christian Super will not invest in: abortifacient or abortifacient-like contraceptives, companies that derive more than five percent revenue from alcohol production, products tested on animals, companies proven to be involved in bribery or using corrupt practices, companies using child labour in their supply chain, negative contributions to climate change and use fossil fuels, predatory lending practices, companies profiting from human rights abuses, improper marketing, or companies involved in the fast food, gambling, tobacco, sex, and weapons industries. Christian Super (*Topical Issues* 2017) states 'In arriving at these positions we strived to take into account the fullness of scriptural revelation as well as varying views within the Christian community'. Through the establishment of Christian Super, organisations linked to Australian neo-Pentecostal churches can access a superannuation company that aligns with a particular brand of Christian worldview. The creation of the superannuation industry in Australia saw neo-Pentecostal churches support Christian Super, a financial services company that encapsulates a brand of Christian investment strategy.

Established in 2004 as COC Investment Services, inc Invest manages COC/inc's finances including building funds, church planting support, and a variety of personal and business investment fund strategies and accounts (inc Invest 2014). The inc Invest (2014: 2) products and services booklets states

we believe in the mobilisation of individual and corporate finances to empower the local church and its charitable objectives. Whether you're a local church member, a business owner or managing a church or college ministry, we offer a range of products and services designed to meet your financial needs and your desire to help resource the growing church, charity and educational activities of the INC movement.

Customers are encouraged to arrange 'direct giving' from their inc Invest account to make tithing to their COC/inc-affiliated church more convenient. Inc Invest offers customers targeted donation pools which fund church planting, church property development, hardship and crisis loans, and missionary work through Christian Heritage College's School of

Business (inc Invest 2014: 11). Inc Invest allows COC/inc to consolidate their financial interests into one organisation that offers a full range of banking services, including personal and business finance accounts for managing donations, tithes, loans, and funds for church activities. The deregulation of the financial services sector and the establishment of compulsory superannuation policy allowed neo-Pentecostal churches to link church-branded activities to the financial industry, capitalising on their organisational skills, business connections, and wealth management strategies. The success of these activities demonstrates an ability to adapt to a neoliberal policy environment that encouraged organisational self-responsibility for finances through privatisation of financial services such as superannuation and banking.

The implementation of economic rationalist and neoliberal policies afforded opportunities for neo-Pentecostal churches to build their activities in the education, community care, and financial sectors. While the expansion of the not-for-profit sector benefitted many Australian religious organisations, the specific advantage that these changes offered the newly established neo-Pentecostal churches were opportunities to market their brand of Christianity as relevant to multiple areas of life. Offering a version of Christian education in schooling and higher education allowed neo-Pentecostal churches to establish themselves in the education sector. Uptake of charity work and partnerships with successful not-for-profit organisations provides opportunities for neo-Pentecostal churches to develop pastoral experience and encourage ‘decisions for Christ’ in realising growth potential through the charity sector. The deregulation of the financial market assisted in establishing links with Christian finance companies, allowing them to actualise business and monetary policy ethics based on their interpretation of Biblical principles and expanding their capacity for growth through contemporary finance management practices. Marketisation and privatisation afforded Australian neo-Pentecostal churches opportunities to build and expand activities to market their brand of Christianity in areas beyond church.

Globalisation, church planting, and the neo-Pentecostal ‘pastorpreneur’

The purpose of the section is to explain how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have integrated modern dynamics of globalisation into their church brands, enhancing their abilities to plant branded churches all over the world and facilitating the global fame of senior pastors. Globalisation is a feature of contemporary modernity, facilitating a global imaginary in which the ability of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to expand their activities internationally is realised. The section is important for understanding how the development of

a modern global imaginary assisted the world-wide expansion and success of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches. The section argues that globalisation facilitated the expansion of neo-Pentecostal churches through the development of church planting, international conference networks, and a unified church brand aesthetic. The section finds that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches employ a global imaginary to facilitate their development of internationally recognised church brands.

Theories of globalisation in late-modernity observe the complexities of a globalised context in which macro and micro social, cultural, and economic structures interact; globalisation captures the ‘many ways in which more people become more closely connected across larger distances, and grow more aware of their connections’ (Lechner & Boli 2015: 1). Markets are central to late-modern conceptions of late-modern global imaginary, with Steger (2009: 195) observing understandings of the global imaginary as comprising ‘inexorable global integration of leaderless markets fuelled by the ICT revolution and spreading American (Western) culture.’ A globally integrated economy, increased human movement, and availability of communication technologies brings both benefits and challenges to religious movements. Yates (2015: 438) argues that the globalised export of prosperity gospel and aspirational versions of Christianity means that, despite the appearance of indigenised evangelical Protestant movements, there are many Western missionary and church-branded organisations ‘operating in a manner similar to that of multinational, non-governmental organisations and corporations’. Hunt (2000a: 331) observes that prosperity gospel readily translates to different localised contexts. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, with their associations with evangelical Protestantism and the growth orientation in their theology, can develop in this globalised context to expand their ventures internationally. From the late eighties and early nineties, Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders created church planting opportunities and started international conferences for congregation members and pastors with the aim of creating churches with a global presence. The popularity of American prosperity gospel pastors—exemplified in the global success of televangelists such as Billy Graham, T.D. Jakes, and Joel Osteen—influenced Australian neo-Pentecostal church leaders and they developed a modern entrepreneurial aesthetic for teaching their aspirational Christianity, an aesthetic that Klaver (2015) calls ‘pastorpreneur.’ Through dynamics of modern globalisation, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches became adept at reproducing a branded religious experience within church plants and through the senior pastors’ entrepreneurial style.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have developed a growth narrative combining a global outlook with business insight for church operations. Yates (2015: 439) observes of this type of Christianity ‘most Evangelical organizations express their mission and work in terms more typical of multinational corporations rather than religious organizations’. Neo-Pentecostal churches align a globalised imaginary with the involvement in the capitalist global structure using the language of business success to describe the terms of global missions as being ‘in the marketplace’. C3 Church has four hundred C3-branded churches planted around the world (C3 Global *Home* 2017) and Phil Pringle (2011) writes in a blogpost on ministers in the marketplace ‘We must become broader and bigger people, allowing for a far grander expression of the calling of believers in the marketplace and instead of censoring them, encourage, honour, profile, celebrate and develop everyone for effectiveness in the marketplace’. In this, Pringle argues that the best place for everyone to achieve success is through business opportunity. Planetshakers has churches in four international locations and the Planetshakers 2016 Conference advertised a session called ‘Marketplace Ministry’ in which attendees ‘Hear from business people and key marketplace leaders on the importance of ‘being in this world, but not of it’ as you navigate the corporate world as well as how to be a voice of influence in your industry’ (Planetshakers *Awakening* 2016). For Planetshakers, the link between business and transnationality is key to Christian success. In the brand documentary for the COC/inc ‘global networking ministry’ Oceania, chairman Ross Abraham (inc.org 2017) says of the COC/inc movement

In the early stages, it was known for its passion for lost people, its hunger for the supernatural, and a place where really literally anything could happen. It quickly transitioned to a church planting movement that started in Australia and into the Pacific and now right around the world.

COC/inc claims to have two thousand churches around the world, with locations in the Pacific, Europe, US, and South America (inc *Planting on Purpose* 2017, inc *History* 2017). Hillsong Church’s global outlook is stated in the first line of their vision statement

The church that I see is a global church. I see a global family: One house with many rooms, outworking a unified vision. I see a church apostolic in calling, and visionary in nature; committed to boldly impacting millions for Christ in significant nations and cities around the world (Hillsong Church *Vision* 2017).

For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, actualising global success results from church planting and creating international events through a unified church brand.

Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders use church planting to maintain a global presence and operationalise branded religious experience. Church planting creates transnational networks of churches named for and associated with the original church. In 1989, C3 Church had its first successful international church planting in New York, pastored by Mark Kelsey and his wife, close friends of Phil and Chris Pringle (C3 Church *This is Our Story* 2016). In the early nineties, Hillsong planted their first international church campuses in Kiev and London (Hillsong Fact Sheet 2016). Ashely and Ruth Schmierer planted a COC/inc church at Brighton, England in 1993 (ing.org *History* 2017). Throughout the late 2000s, Influencers planted three branded churches in Atlanta, Georgia (Influencers *Churches* 2017) and Planetshakers planted branded churches in Singapore, Cape Town, Geneva, and Austin in the US state of Texas (Planetshakers *Church* 2017). These international church plantings set the strategy for globalised approach to growing the churches, as Australian neo-Pentecostal churches created transnational church brands. Hillsong, C3, Planetshakers and Influencers use the rhetoric of a ‘global religious movement’ to reinforce the sense of a world-wide presence. Influencers Church sees Australia as playing a central part in the exportation of the Australian neo-Pentecostal brand of Christianity around the world. Posting a quote attributed to Smith Wigglesworth (an early 20th Century Pentecostal missionary) on Instagram, Influencers Church shows its perspective on Australia’s role in globalising the Pentecostal message. The Influencers Church Instagram account credits Smith Wigglesworth with stating

Australia you have been chosen by God for a great move of the Holy Spirit. This move of God will be the greatest move of God ever known in mankind’s history and will start towards the end of the 20th century and move into the 21st century. This move of God will start a great revival in Australia, spread throughout the whole world and usher in the second coming of Jesus. This will be the final revival before the coming of the Lord (@influencersmusic *Instagram* 2017).

For Influencers Church, Pentecostal revival in Australia is instrumental in realising the globalised mission of the movement and, the church claims, will play a key part in creating the conditions in which Jesus is supposed to return to Earth. Phil Pringle is specific about cultivating C3 Church’s global abilities saying in a video explaining C3 Church’s origins that he wanted the church to be ‘contemporary, modern, and global’ (C3 Church *This Is Our Story* 2016). Similarly, Brian Houston says he was inspired to create a global church about the same time as Pringle (Hillsong Fact Sheet 2016). In a blog post explaining Hillsong’s church planting strategies, Brian Houston asks

Does the world need more churches? The short answer is yes, but the world doesn't need more mediocre churches. The world needs healthy and vibrant churches that are genuinely fulfilling the Great Commission in their cities, towns, villages and nations. Churches that are filled with life, worship, biblical teaching and healthy, accepting community.

According to Brian Houston, the world needs more churches that offer the Hillsong neo-Pentecostal brand of Christianity: relevant, influential, global, and oriented to growth. The key to creating and supporting the globalised transnational element lies in Australian neo-Pentecostal churches' ability to use a centralised organisational structure to their advantage when it comes to maintaining viability of the overseas church plants.

The solidity of the neo-Pentecostal church institutional foundations in Australia means the planted churches are supported through a variety of resources—finance, infrastructure, music products, videos, books, Bible teaching material and the appealing presence of the senior pastors—to assist in ensuring success of international church plantings. For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, the support of the original church provides a solid structural foundation for the church plantings. This reflects an understanding of globalised marketing strategy, particularly in the ways in which Australian neo-Pentecostal senior pastors create a sense of connectedness to international church plantings. The benefits of learning how to plant COC/inc-branded churches listed on the promotion of the advanced training course are listed as

a well-known brand that has increasing momentum, financial support for your development and plant, coaching and training from successful church planters and pastors, church management systems that have been developed and proven over a long period of time, a strong financial safety net with access to its own treasury, reduced administrative overheads due to volume, up to date and ever improving resources, membership to and relationship with a community of pastors, planters and churches, provision of Ministry credentials for ordained ministers, access to other movement related bodies (Red Frogs, Global Care, CHC etc), international connections and missions opportunity (inc.org *Planting on Purpose* 2017).

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches support their overseas church plants through financial arrangements within their church structure, with designated church-branded financial organisations for developing and supporting international ventures. Hillsong Church's Nation Builders, C3 Church Vision Builders, and COC/inc's inc Invest are responsible for organising donations to finance church planting activities. Online infrastructure is consolidated to a global website branded with the church logo and sophisticated web design to ensure consistency in the church aesthetics and style. Hillsong Church used 'boutique' web design

company Offroad Code to centralise individual church plant websites to the domain Hillsong.com and the site now offers multi-lingual capabilities and an online store that sells thousands of products directly from the church to the customer (Offroad Code *Hillsong Church* 2014). Here, Hillsong capitalises on technology use to consolidate the globalised abilities of the church into a central website that caters for regular and potential congregants all over the world. Australian neo-Pentecostal international church planting strategies employ a global imaginary to realise transnationally marketable church brands.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use established networks with close friends and family to manage global expansions and overseas church plants. C3 Church's first overseas plant in New York was pioneered by Mark and Bernadette Kelsey, who were friends with the Pringles from the earliest days of starting C3 Church (Pringle *Vimeo* 2010). Mark and Leigh Ramsey, senior pastors of Citipointe Church, attended Bible college and started the COC/inc church plant at Denver in the US state of Colorado (Hey 2010: 295). C3 Church, Hillsong Church, Influencers Church, and Planetshakers are multi-generational ministries; the senior pastors grew up in Pentecostal church culture and their children are involved in their parents' churches. Brian Houston inherited his father Frank Houston's Sydney church in the 1990s, and the Houstons' three adult children hold prominent positions in the Hillsong Organisation. Joel leads the globally touring and internationally acclaimed Hillsong band Hillsong United, Ben and his wife are senior pastors of the Hillsong Los Angeles church plant, and Laura runs Hillsong children's ministry in Sydney with her husband (brianandbobbie.com *Home* 2017). Phil and Chris Pringle's daughter Rebekah works for C3 Church's publishing company PaX Ministries and runs her father's art business (LinkedIn *Rebekah Pringle* 2017). Brothers Ashley and Russell Evans, raised by prolific Pentecostal church planter Andrew Evans, share the internationalised brand status of Australian neo-Pentecostal church music. Russell's wife Sam is a praise and worship leader in the Planetshakers band (Planetshakers 2017). The 2017 media release for Ashley's Evans' Influencers Church's album *Imaginations* is marketed with references to Hillsong and Planetshakers' acclaimed music (CCM News 2017): Hillsong, Influencers, and Planetshakers are affiliated with ACC, the rebranded Australian Assemblies of God. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches employ family members, friends, and people educated in the church-branded educational facilities to assist in developing and expanding their global ministries. The leaders of the planted churches are intimately familiar with the structure and style of the original church. The pastors for the planted churches use the original church's brand and access branded resources to create a similar aesthetic and

spiritual performance style amongst the international church plants, unifying the transnationality of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches.

Hillsong, C3 Church, and, Planetshakers produce worship music to use in transnational church networks. The Hillsong band, Hillsong United, has a global touring schedule, ensuring Hillsong music is promoted around the world through music venues as well as during Sunday services (Hillsong United *Tour* 2017). Planetshakers also has a touring band to support their music sales (Planetshakers Band 2016). C3 Church releases worship music during the singing session of Sunday services, and the praise and worship leaders teach congregants new songs while promoting music sales. The latest books written by the senior pastors are sold at the international church planting locations and are promoted throughout the Sunday services. Congregants are encouraged to use church-branded resources in their home Bible study groups. C3 Church provides a central website, called Connect Group, where members can download home group notes and Bible studies (*Connect Group Notes* 2017). Citipointe Church provides Life Groups and encourages interested parties to email the church for resources to facilitate their home Bible study group (Citipointe Northern Colorado 2017). The ability of neo-Pentecostal churches to draw on the resources of the original church structures and institutions—such as funds for living arrangements for travelling associated pastors, music products, and Bible interpretation resources—coupled with the theological emphasis on growth, means that Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders have become successful in creating transnational church brands.

These abilities to fund and develop viable church plants to cultivate a unified transnational brand of church actualises the global imaginary that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches present. Within late-modern globalisation Beyer (2003: 446, original emphasis) observes

a great variety of *religious organizations and movements* have spread around the world, sometimes in the context of migrations, but also for their own independent, ‘mission’ reasons. These organizations and movements have local origins, but take advantage of global communicative possibilities to move well beyond them.

Beyer (2003: 450) identifies the global spread of different Pentecostalsisms as an example of this type of religious movement arguing ‘Its highly diverse and localized forms maintain a wide variety of links with one another through publications, conferences, electronic media and travel. Marti (2017: 1) observes of Hillsong’s global abilities that the church has ‘become a worldwide commercial enterprise, distributing music and related products to Christian

consumers who are entrained to particular rhythm of religious sounds.’ C3 Church, Citipointe, Planetshakers, and Influencers have developed a similar global imaginary from a theology that views the entire world as a missional space, using electronic media communications as a nexus for articulating these aims. The Citipointe Church ‘Values’ section on the website states ‘We seek to see people find Christ as their Saviour and Answer, and then to take that Answer in their world. This is our mission, this is our mandate, this is our cause’ (Citipointe Church Brisbane *Values* 2018). The globalised links created through electronic media are evident in C3 Church’s main website which holds the domain ‘www.c3churchglobal.com’ and the website’s leading banner reads ‘C3 CHURCH – A GLOBAL COMMUNITY’ (C3 Church 2018). The Influencers Church website describes senior pastors Ashely and Jane Evans as ‘the Global Senior Pastors of Influencers Church Global, a multi-site church in Australian and USA’ (Influencers Church 2018). The description of the Planetshakers band reads ‘Australian Christian worship band, Planetshakers, is passionate to see generations worldwide unite together to worship God. Their heart is to see people encounter God, be transformed by His presence and empowered to make a difference in their world.’ The global missional imaginary of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches is actualised in aesthetic choices, seen in the senior pastors’ preaching style, church plant locations, and annual conferences.

In addition to church planting, Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors are adept at marketing themselves and their church products on a global scale through developing a style of spirituality that is performed through a specific aesthetic (Klaver 2015). As Klaver (2015: 149) argues in her study of a globalised Dutch neo-Pentecostal church ‘With regard to leadership, neo-Pentecostal churches depend heavily on the leading pastor, most likely the successful founder or builder of the church.’ The Australian neo-Pentecostal lead pastors model their public image as ‘pastorpreneurs’, a term developed in a 2003 book by American pastor John Jackson to ‘describe a creative risk-taker for the Kingdom of God’ (Jackson 2018). Klaver (2015) uses the term to explain the evangelical emphasis on a ‘performed’ spirituality which creates a platform for the pastor to showcase a personal experience of ‘blessings’ attributed to having faith and hope in God. Klaver (2015: 155-6) observes ‘from Australian to Indonesia to the USA... successful pastors are not primarily preachers or teachers but rather performers who embody their message and posit a resemblance between message content and material body image’. The ability of the Australian pastors to create a personalised sense of religious branding while managing transnational church organisations aligns with the homogenising elements of globalisation. As Garcia-Ruiz and Michel (2014: 3)

argue, ‘neo-Pentecostal community institutions tend to produce globalized individuals according to a fully integrated market logic.’ It is possible for a Hillsong congregant to visit a Hillsong-branded church in one of fourteen countries with a reasonable chance that either of the senior pastors, Brian or Bobbie Houston, will be present at the Sunday service. C3 Church is similar, Pringle and his wife Chris regularly travel to personally deliver services at any one of the four hundred C3-branded churches across the world, as do Influencers Church’s Ashley and Jane Evans, Citipointe’s Mark and Leigh Ramsey and Planetshakers’ Russell and Sam Evans. This personal presence is one of the neo-Pentecostal leader’s main roles in fulfilling the globalised imaginary of their church, with the purpose of retaining the sense of connection to individuals in a global congregation.

The importance of the senior pastoral presence is reinforced in the images on Australian neo-Pentecostal church websites in which the pastor and his wife are presented in professionally-produced photographs together, casually dressed and smiling (C3 Church 2018, Hillsong 2018, Citipointe 2018, Influencers Church 2018). These images support the seeker-friendly sense enacted in the real-life services. Neo-Pentecostal leaders differentiate their charismatic presence in their personal styles, which often reflect the location of the original church. Brian Houston capitalises on a Bondi Beach aesthetic and favours sports coats with jeans to create a casual and relaxed style. Phil Pringle tends to wear suits and ties to evoke a corporate image of city Sydney, the foundations of C3 Church as C3 stands for ‘Christian City Church’. Mark Ramsay of Citipointe Church Brisbane wears loose open-necked button-down shirts; the better to weather the tropical heat of Queensland. The manner of pastoral message delivery remains similar regardless of the country in which the church is located. The public image the pastors disseminate is transferable across all their church-branded organisations and taught to the leaders of the planted churches to both emulate and personalise.

The aesthetic of the church style is maintained across the church plants. While the church logo, music, Bible study guidelines, and branded devotionals are produced from a centralised source, the style of the international church plants are adjusted to appeal to the location. This actualises the multidirectional aspects of globalisation, in that locality affects brand presentation (Beyer 2003: 450, Marti 2017: 5). Hillsong New York has an intimate and underground urban grunge style, holding services in the Gramercy Theatre in Manhattan, a small five-hundred seat space that hosts rock groups, hip hop acts, death and black metal bands, and comedians (Gramercy Theatre *Home* 2017) and, as Christian Post journalist Jessica Martinez (2014) observes of the New York location, the popularity of the church

services means they divide ‘their services into six time slots each Sunday with lines of devotees wrapped around the block for each one’. Hillsong Los Angeles has a hippy chic atmosphere holding services in the Belasco Theatre, a one thousand seat capacity space that invokes old Hollywood glamour with an intricately carved art-deco style ceiling, balcony, and columns (Belasco Theatre *Gallery* 2017). Hillsong Paris presents understated Parisian cool aesthetic, holding services at the thousand-person capacity Bobino Theatre, the entranceway of which is tucked down an alleyway and the space dominated by large plush red seats (Bobino 2017). Hillsong Church can market its appeal to locals by taking on specific aesthetic and style elements of the church plant locale, without compromising on remaining a recognisably Hillsong church service using Hillsong-branded visual projections, music, and resources. C3 Church is similar in their use of the C3 Church logo and resources to unify their international church plants. In comparison to Hillsong, C3 Church uses more low-key spaces: C3 Los Angeles (2017) meets in an elementary school hall, and C3 Manhattan (2017) in a high school hall, and C3 Toronto (2017) and C3 Fulham (2017) use small theatre spaces. Rather than renting spaces, the COC/inc Church plants in the Pacific region use purpose-built halls (INC South Pacific Stories 2017). COC/inc’s church plant in Fiji (incfiji.org *History* 2017) embraced the 2010 rebranding to inc stating

Christian Outreach Centre’s branding changed to International Network of Churches, marking the 40 year journey of Christian Outreach Centre. Stepping into its new branding, also denoted a new season of change, of maturity, of taking and possessing territories, of the Moses generation coming to its end and the Joshua generation forging ahead to possess the promises of God

Here, COC/inc uses the imagery of the Israelites taking the land promised to them by God to theologically justify the success of their global outlook and church planting mission.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches build on their organisational foundations in Australia to plant churches around the world. Importantly, the churches conceive of themselves as global religious movements and the activities of church planting and holding international conferences realise this global imaginary.

Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders hold annual conferences to create global networking opportunities for both themselves and congregants. Each church’s annual conferences generally take place over two to three days and feature international speaking guests from other churches, and business leaders. The annual conference creates a point of gathering and revival that reinforces the global presence of the church. The promotional rhetoric for the neo-Pentecostal conferences seek to convey a sense of participation in a

global religious movement. In the invitation to the 2015 Hillsong Women's Conference Bobbie Houston writes that the message of the conference 'has crossed neighbourhoods and streets, oceans and mountains and has found its way into the four corners of the earth' (*Colour Conference Be Found* 2015). The Planetshakers 2016 conference website claims 'God has set in motion an unstoppable move of his spirit intended to shift the spiritual atmospheres of our cities' (Planetshakers Awakening 2016). Phil Pringle says in the blog for C3 Church's 2018 annual conference 'There is power in our coming together and in our praise. I know that a new level of praise will take us to higher realms of worship at presence this year'. Keynote speaker Pastor John Gray says in the highlight video from the Influencers 2013 conference 'And every sound, and every applause is a part of a symphony, a part of a praise that reaches the very throne of God' (Influencers Church Atlanta 2013). Gray's sermon footage is cut with images of a camera panning over a crowd of people standing, screaming, and applauding (Influencers Church Atlanta 2013). The all-encompassing rhetoric in the conference promotional materials reinforces what Wade and Hynes (2013: 175-6) call 'a vaguely felt sense of potential... concern[ing] the potential for a superior kind of self-actualisation through the subsumption of the self within a cause greater than themselves'. This subsumption of the local self in global church is particularly potent at neo-Pentecostal conferences. Inviting speaking guests from around the world and encouraging attendees to travel to conferences invites participants to experience a sense of a global church.

Engaging with dynamics of globalisation in modernity has assisted Australian neo-Pentecostal churches in achieving their organisational goals of growth and influence. Conceptualising themselves as a global religious movement has afforded considerable growth opportunities for Australian neo-Pentecostal churches. The churches' activities and branding aesthetic seek to convey a sense of a global imaginary. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches plant branded churches internationally, the pastors cultivate the 'pastorpreneur' preaching style while travelling to the church plants to inject their own personalities to the international locations. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use financial, material, and social resources to engage with a global imaginary realising their goals of growth and influence creating transnational church brands with the aims of actualising a global religious movement within the churches.

Australian neo-Pentecostalism, identity construction, and individualised consumerism

The purpose of this section is to explain how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate late-modern methods of identity construction into the church theology and operations. The

section is important for developing understandings of how modern conceptualisations of the self are incorporated into Australian neo-Pentecostal theology, particularly concerning their presentations of an ideal Christian life. The section argues that in modernity, individual choice enacted through consumerism is a key way in which people construct their identity and this method is realised in Australian neo-Pentecostal theological tenets. The section finds that Australian neo-Pentecostalism presents individualised consumerism through choice as a key identity marker of their brand of modern Christian self.

Conceptions of the self in late-modernity are defined by individualism. The development of mass culture mediated through advertising strategies post-World War II encouraged people to express their desires in individualistic and consumerist terms. Beck (1992: 88, 135) observes that in late-modernity, people are compelled ‘to make themselves the centre of their own planning and conduct of life... conceive of himself or herself as the centre of action, as the planning office with respect to his/her own biography, abilities, orientations, relationships and so on’. Here, Beck (1992) identifies a late-modern conception of the self in which the individual is compelled to participate in specific actions with the purpose of continually enhancing multiple aspects of life. This decouples the individual from social conditions that may also impact on a person’s ability to conduct a successful ‘planning office.’ Dawson (2011: 310) argues that this has a specific effect on religious forms in late-modernity which are given to ‘cosmic self-aggrandizement’ whereby the discourse of the individual is universalised through ‘rhetorical conflation of self-knowledge with universal comprehension and self-governance with cosmic mastery.’ This religious worldview endorses an individual that has a duty to ‘pursue his self-realization through any available means and at any possible opportunity’ (Dawson 2011: 311). This view implies that structural factors causing disadvantage can be overcome through active pursuit of self-knowledge. The late-modern paradigm of individualism elevates self-actualisation, self-governance, and self-understanding to the centre of life’s purpose. This means that explanations for failure become tethered to individual choice and action, and social or structural explanations for an inability to progress in life are ignored. Australian neo-Pentecostalism draws on this late-modern conception of the individualised self to position their version of Christianity as a method for realising this ideal self.

The convergence of economic rationalism, neoliberalism, and marketisation has led to a specific method of identity construction in late-modernity which centres on the assumption that the self is best actualised through entrepreneurial strategies. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (in *The Guardian* 2016) declared in 1987 ‘there's no such thing as society.

There are individual men and women and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look after themselves first.’ This statement encapsulated the attitude of economic rationalist and neoliberal policy-makers to relations between the state and the individual. People living under a neoliberal policy regime could expect little material assistance from the state. This change in government perspective had an impact on the conceptualisation of the self that continues to develop in late-modernity. The consequence of this, as Pieterse (2004: 137) observes, is that ‘distinctions between public and private domains have eroded; the public domain is privatized. What matters is not merely the link between threat and profit and war and business, but what kind of business’. Expectations that citizens would avoid government assistance were framed in a moral paradigm; people who required state welfare began to be viewed as character deficient: lazy, weak, and unproductive. The effect of privatisation means that everything becomes marketable and consumer choices become the main tool by which people construct their identity. In the Australian context ‘public policies are almost exclusively framed in abstract terms of competition, economic efficiency, supply and demand, or the need to address market failures. This is the lexicon of neoclassical economics, which portrays the market as a normative ideal framed around a set of abstract assumptions’ (Chester 2010: 314). One of these assumptions is that the individual is responsible for their own self-development and that hardships such as poverty, disability, or mental health issues can be overcome through individual hard work. Class solidarity, collectivity, and other forms of community capital—such as union membership—are dismantled in neoliberalism as individuals are responsible for arbitrating their own living and working conditions. This leads to assumptions that if that a person is not successful, then failure is the fault of that individual. These individualised assumptions about concepts of self-responsibility are present in neo-Pentecostal theology.

Understanding the self as project of individual construction is a central tenet of neo-Pentecostal theology. Researching Pentecostal churches in Kenya, and Tanzania, Lewison (2011: 32) observes narratives of salvation within internationalised forms of Christianity that ‘provides the believer with a new form of self-definition that is firmly founded in the direct, personal relationship with God’. Observing a neo-Pentecostal church in Hollywood California, Marti (2012: 11-12) argues ‘the power of religion to foster coherent identities is enhanced when contemporary social structures oblige and enhance the actualisation of individuality.’ The sustenance of this personal spiritual relationship with God is the method that Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors offer their congregants to actualise their individuality. Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders preach instructions for realising a personalised

relationship with a God who is instrumental in realising an individual's potential. Brian Houston (Brian Houston TV 2015) preaches to a Hillsong congregation 'It's not God's will for his promise and purpose in your life to fade'. This claim proposes that God has a particular interest in the details of an individual's life, with a specific purpose and will for that person. Discussing prayer, Phil Pringle (2013) says to a C3 congregation 'You can survive six weeks without food, you can survive three days without water, but you can't survive more than three minutes without air. Prayer is your spirit breathing'. This metaphor positions prayer as a survival strategy, one which the individual is responsible for maintaining. Ashley Evans (2014) at Influencers Church Atlanta says, 'We're going to give you an opportunity, if you don't know Jesus, to accept him, reconnect with him, if there's some challenges in your life'. This teaching puts the onus 'to know Jesus' on the congregant, requiring the individual to actively seek a continued relationship with the divine. Neo-Pentecostal thought expressed by the Australian pastors requires that the believer is responsible for realising a personal relationship with God.

Positioning the individual as responsible for pursuing spiritual understanding aligns with the aspirational consumerist elements of late-modernity. The embodiment of individualism in late-modern capitalism lies in consumerism and the perception of choice within markets. Bauman (2000) observes the main form of self-construction in late-modernity is structured by the logic of markets and expressed in consumerist behaviour. According to Franklin (2012: 16), particularly in Australia, 'Consumerism now organises our individual stance to things in general; everything, including relationships, is aestheticised and evaluated in terms of their capability to offer beauty, desire and pleasure'. It is the individual that is responsible for making the choices of which products to consume. Politicians use the rhetoric of consumerism to speak to an 'aspirational' class of Australians and, particularly throughout the 1990s as the size of the Australian economy increased, consumerism became the dominant mode of cultural expression. Politicians draw on this narrative of self-management by referring to constituents and citizens as 'consumers' in policy arguments (Anderson 2015, Hutchens 2015). The intentional construction of the individualised self in modernity through the logic of markets means the aspirational consumer becomes the central figure of agency in late-modernity. Access to consumer choice then guides the availability of products and services while remaining the mechanism for identity construction. Choice of fashion, housing, media use, and even religion becomes a political statement, an identity marker within a proliferation of potential product choices. Hunt (2000b: 76) argues that in this 'materialist culture of western societies, religion acclimatises itself to what it can do for

believers in the here and now and towards this-worldly concerns'. Bridging business and religion allows Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to capitalise on this feature of late-modernity. As Hey (2010: 73) observes of COC, while 'emphasis on individualism has benefits in encouraging greater reflection, self-awareness and personal responsibility, it has also encouraged consumerism and self-focused narcissism'. The range of products available for purchase in Australian neo-Pentecostal churches and through their websites is an extension of the individualised consumerism actualising the modern self.

The neo-Pentecostal emphasis on personalised spirituality creates an aspirational theology that aligns with the abundance of modern consumerism. Mark Ramsey (2015), Senior Pastor of Citipointe Church, says in a sermon

None of us are designed to like losing... God never said go broke, have less, he said have more. Please notice there's no poverty in heaven. The streets are made of gold. And in everything of God there's a sense of bigness, a sense of more than enough. Poverty and lack are not of God.

In neo-Pentecostalism, the connection of prosperity theology to faith healing and 'positive thinking' movement means that personal empowerment becomes a method of spiritual fulfilment. In a message to the Singaporean City Harvest megachurch, Pringle (2013) states that God wants his people to go

from one degree of glory to another, getting larger and larger, even though it's a nerve-racking journey sometimes, to step out on a level of faith that you've never been at before... There is a supernatural God ready to support you and supply for you, even in difficult times when others might be struggling.

Pringle teaches his followers that no matter what happens, as long as the individual believes in the ability of God to forever supply support, that believer will be blessed. In his study of Korean neo-Pentecostalism, Kim (2012: 59) argues that neo-Pentecostal congregants assume that 'God knows and loves them "personally" and is willing to redeem them, and that something inside them is in contact with this divine reality. This belief conjures a powerful affirmation of human potentiality'. Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors admonish their congregants to position themselves as leaders in their communities and workplaces as examples of Godly empowerment and Christian aspiration. In his TV program, Russell Evans (2016) says 'That word, power, means ability, efficiency and might. God's ability in your life, God's efficiency and might. When he comes upon you, he defines your future. He

empowers you to live the great commission.’ In their vision statement, Influencers Church (2018) states

Prayer & Fasting is the driving force behind everything we do & this only further fuels the insatiable urge inside of us to make a real difference in our world; a difference that we can only make together. The tangible reality of this can be seen as we equip and empower people to lead and influence in the places that God has called us to.

Here, Influencers Church places the empowerment of people on their own ability to perform faith activities of prayer and fasting. For Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders, empowerment and success is demonstrated through the mechanism of consumerism. Maddox (2013: 110) observes in her analysis of Hillsong Church’s women’s conferences that a theology of consumption is an underappreciated second strand to neo-Pentecostalism’s well-documented orientation towards prosperity gospel. Consumption theology is evident in encouraging congregants to buy the church-branded products: music CDs, books, Bible translations, teaching CDs, clothing and apparel, even church-branded USBs. However, a theology of consumerism comes not just from buying church-branded products, but also valorises a lifestyle of conspicuous consumerism in which displaying the ownership of luxury goods are justified as an obligation of demonstrating the success that salvation brings (Maddox 2013). Through the image-sharing social media platform Instagram, between promotions of church events, the senior pastors display images of their successful lives working, eating, and shopping in beautiful and exotic locations. Bobbie Houston (@bobbiehouston 2017) attends Harrods fashion week in London, Sam Evans (@samantha_ann.evans 2017) poses with her Vespa scooter, and Leigh Ramsey (@leighramsey 2017) poses with her son and daughter-in-law laden with shopping bags captioned ‘The pink section behind us says it all... little bit of shopping before the new little Ramsey princess arrives’. Hashtags of international locations abound: Bali, Byron Bay, Paris, Shanghai, Cape Town, New York, Los Angeles, Bulgaria, London. Planetshakers senior pastor Russell Evans posts on his Twitter page ‘fav eating places in the world: 1. Shangri-la (Singapore) 2: (Five star hotel) Langham (Melbourne) 3. Little pasta place in Rome 4. Angelinas Paris 5: mi cocina Dallas (Texas)’ (Shand 2013). The success promoted by the Australian neo-Pentecostal senior pastors is actualised in the demonstration of material success, displaying an exciting and exotic lifestyle of travel and consumerism. This produces a religious form that theologically justifies individualised consumerism as an identity marker of the successful modern Christian.

Conclusion

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches adapt to conditions of late-modernity, which assists them in creating opportunities for church growth and achieving influence. Examining neo-Pentecostal technology use finds that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are adept at using mass-communication technologies to expand the reach of their message into non-physical spaces, ensuring that the church's brand of Christianity is communicated in a unified way. The implementation of economic rationalism in Australia and the development of a neoliberal policy environment meant that neo-Pentecostal churches had many opportunities to expand their church-branded activities. Entering the market in schooling, tertiary education, community care, superannuation, and investment services assisted neo-Pentecostal churches in growing their institutional foundations. Using the theoretical lens of globalisation to examine the Australian neo-Pentecostal expansion into church planting and the development of the pastorpreneur style shows that the churches implement and actualise a global outlook in their activities. Elucidating individualised consumerism as a form of identity construction in late-modernity demonstrates the affinity neo-Pentecostal theology has with modern ontological constructions of the self. Australian neo-Pentecostal church leaders display their consumer choices as evidence of their success.

The next three chapters of the thesis discuss how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate elements of late-modernity in more detail. Having established features of late-modernity—consumer capitalist economic circumstances, dynamics of globalisation, and the primacy of the individual in modern understandings of the self—that Australian neo-Pentecostalism incorporated into their theology and operations, the next chapters focus specifically on the post-2000 period as Australian neo-Pentecostal churches expanded their operations further and developed their institutional structures. Religions established within late-modern societies require examination to determine the cultural, political, and social dynamics that impact on their abilities to achieve goals, aims, and outcomes. Developing such understanding discovers how modern religious forms can use cultural justifications to create, sustain, and adapt theology and organisational modes to suit contemporary dynamics. To build on this analysis, the next chapter of the thesis will show how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have continued to incorporate dynamics of modern consumer capitalism into their theology and operations. Given that the economy—through marketisation, privatisation, and corporatisation—has become a central element of late-modern society, there remains a need to examine how Australian neo-Pentecostalism adapts to modern economic conditions. This is important to understand as the neo-Pentecostal focus on growth

and aspirational living means that dynamics of modern consumer capitalism have an impact on how the churches organise themselves in relation to economic modes of organisation and late-modern material conditions.

Chapter 4: Australian neo-Pentecostalism and consumer capitalism

Introduction

The previous chapter identified elements of late-modernity that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have incorporated in their theology and activities. The chapter found that neo-Pentecostal theology emphasising prosperity, growth, and aspiration incorporates a conception of the self as an individual. This modern understanding of individualisation positions consumerism as an important activity in modern life and through this process, the economy becomes one of the main operating forces of modern progress. The present chapter advances the arguments of Chapter Three through an assessment of the relations between Australian neo-Pentecostalism and consumer capitalism. The chapter identifies three features of contemporary capitalism that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate into their theology and operations: commercialisation, corporate governance and responses to recession. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches sell products such as books, branded apparel, spiritually instructive CDs and DVDs, and branded Bibles. The churches have commercialised access to experiences such as attendance at conferences, prayer breakfasts, online courses, and pay-per-view television shows. Through this process, the churches use modern marketing techniques to create a branded church experience, furthering organisational goals of growth. Neo-Pentecostal churches use corporate governance to organise institutional aspects of churches and church-branded organisations. Corporate governance provides neo-Pentecostals with an organising framework for designating roles and managing expectations within the church structures. Corporate governance in Australian neo-Pentecostal churches centralises power to the board of directors, which usually consists of the senior pastoral leadership. This has consequences for decision-making within the church, particularly when questionable or transgressive behaviour occurs. The neo-Pentecostal emphasis on growth, abundance, and aspirational living provides a response to recession and financial crises, theologically justifying these economic dynamics as evidence of the ways in which God may choose to ‘bless’ Christian believers. Economists understand that contemporary capitalism does not lead to infinite growth, but experiences cycles of boom and bust. Australian Neo-Pentecostalism outlines a theology that encompasses responses to recession. These three elements of late-modern consumer capitalism are evident in an examination of Australian neo-Pentecostal church activities, institutional structure, and theology.

Examining Australian neo-Pentecostal theology and activities in relation to late-modern capitalism reveals developments in Australian neo-Pentecostal operations and expansions. The chapter argues that through responding to and interacting with the economic dynamics of modernity, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have developed a modern religious form that provides theological explanations for material success. The chapter examines materials produced by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches—C3 Church, Hillsong, Influencers Church, Citipointe, and Planetshakers—to show how the churches have responded to changes in economic conditions in the early years of the 21st Century, incorporating specific elements of late-modern consumer capitalism into their theology and, by extension, into their operations. Chapter Four analyses sermons, interviews, governance documents, financial reports, websites, and digital artefacts created by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to assess the links between elements of modern consumer capitalism and neo-Pentecostal theology and church operations. These materials were found using online search methods, collecting digital artefacts that the churches created from the early 2000s with the purpose of representing theology and promoting activities through online communications mediums. The chapter applies the consumer capitalism element of late-modernity—specifically, commercialisation, corporate governance and responses to recession—to link the production and presentation of these digital texts and artefacts to consumer capitalism in late-modernity. The first section of the chapter explains how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use marketing and branding strategies to commercialise aspects of their version of Christianity, participating in developing reputable brands to access the lucrative global Christian resource market. The second section assesses the impact of corporate governance on the churches' institutional arrangements and finds that centralising leadership in corporate governance structure has an impact on how the churches are accountable in their activities. The final section of the chapter examines responses to recession outlined in Australian neo-Pentecostal theology, finding that these responses justify economic circumstance in which survival is interpreted within the churches as evidence of the ways in God may test a believer's faith through hardship. In this way, the chapter shows how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate dynamics of late-modern capitalism into their theology and operations.

Commercialisation: branding and marketing in Australian neo-Pentecostalism

The purpose of this section is to show how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use modern marketing and branding techniques to commercialise aspects of their religion. This section is

important for showing how the churches incorporate consumerist commercialisation strategies into their theology and operations. The section argues that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches commercialise products and experiences to create a brand association with their positive, aspirational version of Christianity. The section finds that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use specific strategies of commercialisation to further goals of developing a globally-recognised brand of prosperity Christianity and competing within the lucrative global Christian resources market.

Commodification and commercialisation are integral processes to the expansion of consumer capitalism. Commodification is a way of determining the value of an object including not just the materials required but also the necessary human labour for production (Wunder 2015: 511). Commodification in modernity accounts for the socially-necessary labour time required to produce a service or good, and this impacts the product's economic value. The commercialisation process orients the relationship between labour and production to making a profit (Wunder 2015: 511). This is particularly the case in consumer capitalism as citizens are transformed into consumers and many areas of life become markets in which the ability to generate profit is the most valuable contribution to society. In consumer capitalism 'social relations and our behaviour are in the process of being transformed into commodities, which can be bought and sold... everyday space is becoming commercially organised' (Johansson & Bengtsson 2016: 141). Commodification in late-modernity is extended beyond manufacturing 'as new dimensions of human life, such as communication and information, are enclosed by commercial actors' (Johansson & Bengtsson 2016: 143). Wittel (2013: 315) outlines the significance of this process arguing 'commodification is a fact, the capitalist market has become increasingly powerful, pervasive and hegemonic... the market swallows more and more areas and aspects of life that hitherto have not been regulated by monetary measurement and monetary exchange.' The language of modern economics shapes both social and material relations in late-modernity.

The key development of late-modern commercialisation is the extension of brand creation to aspects of life beyond the corporate culture that invented globally recognised brands. Klein (2010) observes that the critical insight of modern corporate culture was to shift corporate organisational goals from manufacturing products to producing brands. This created what Klein (2010) refers to as 'hollow corporations', in which corporations began to outsource their manufacturing processes through networks of contractors and subcontractors 'to transcend the corporeal world of things so they could be an utterly unencumbered brand'. Their ability to invent brands meant that the work of corporate business shifted from

manufacturing to marketing (Klein 1999: 2). Klein (1999: 3) uses the examples of transnationally-recognised brands such as Nike and Microsoft who have outsourced their manufacturing processes to second and third parties, so that their main activity is to develop awareness of their brand. As Klein (2010, original emphasis) argues ‘Nike isn't a running shoe company, *it is about the idea of transcendence through sports*, Starbucks isn't a coffee shop chain, it's about the *idea of community*.’ The power in the ability to create brands is evident in Klein’s (2010) observations that ‘increasingly voracious marketing culture was encroaching on previously protected non-corporate spaces – schools, museums, parks’. The import of branding processes to areas beyond commercial and corporate ventures means that in late-modernity anything can be commercialised and sold.

Pentecostal Christianities and modern consumer capitalism maintain close conceptual links. Martin (1995: 25) argues that Latin American Pentecostals respond to the economic development brought about by modern capitalism by adopting a range of views on the way their faith influences economic behaviour which leads to a selective acceptance of consumerist elements. Martin’s (1995) work is influential in that it observes that the economy does not control people, but conditions their range of choices within an economic structure. Comaroff and Comaroff (2000: 293) observe relations between neo-Pentecostalism and reproductions of capitalist culture focusing on ‘prosperity gospels and fee-for-service religions’ in post-colonial Africa to argue that these neo-Protestant movements ‘enchant’ or revive the signs and values of neoliberal economic order. In the Australian context, Yip (2014) argues that Hillsong Church’s music production is central to the church’s branding strategies. Furthermore, Maddox (2012, 2013) links Hillsong Church theology to a culture of growth and ostentatious consumerism. Maddox (2014b) also illustrates the branding processes of COC/inc, observing the links between COC/inc’s brand and marketised approaches to religion. The effects of a global capitalist economy in Australia are reflected in Hillsong’s theology which explains these processes as a way in which God might choose to bless believers and the individual believer is ultimately responsible for seeking this blessing (Maddox 2013). The churches comprising an Australian neo-Pentecostal movement extend these understandings to create theologies that encompass religious explanations and justifications for economic dynamics in late-modern consumer capitalism. This theology is then enacted in church operations through the commercialisation of both the items and experiences the churches produce.

The dominance of commercialisation, corporate culture, and brand creation in late-modernity has been absorbed into Australian versions of neo-Pentecostalism. Kitiarsa (2010)

states that ‘religious commodification exists everywhere as it forms a crucial part of complicated human religious ventures’. Commodification of religion—seen in the sale of sacred objects and religious experiences—is hardly new. As Ward (2006: 185) observes, ‘Many of the great medieval churches in Europe are built on the funds of the commodification of religion in terms of endowing chantries to sing masses for souls following death.’ While religious commodification as a fundraising venture may not be new, the driving forces of globalised consumer capitalism within late-modernity offers unique opportunities for religions that are comfortable in the modern marketplace. Kitiarsa (2010: 565) defines religious commodification as:

an emerging multifaceted and multidimensional marketized process which turns a religious faith or tradition into consumable and marketable goods. It is an interactive and iterative relationship between religion and market, simultaneously involving both market force commodifying religion and religious institution taking part in marketplace and consuming culture.

This is particularly significant in the globalised context of consumer capitalism. While religion-marketplace interaction may not be new, what is unique to modern times is the technology that facilitates the global systemisation of this commodification process (Ward 2006: 185). In his study of contemporary Christian economic ethics, Abraham (2009: 55) argues that pro-capitalist theologies ‘intimately identify Christianity with capitalism and its culture. This approach... looks to capitalist individual ethics such as self-interest to regulate the economy’. Coupled with the advent of a globalised consumer society, churches that actively embrace commodification and commercialisation maintain a competitive advantage in a global market for good and services that carry the brand of Christian church or ministry; a market that offers products ranging from church-branded praise and worship music to purchasing a ticket for an annual church conference.

In a study of Christian consumption of religious goods in America, Park and Baker (2007: 501) note that religious consumption comprises a multi-million-dollar market indicating that Christians are ‘getting religion’ in ways other than going to church on Sundays, purchasing products designed for a Christian market in mass quantities. Park and Baker (2007: 502) observe, due to ‘improvements in manufacturing and developments in non-print media technologies... more religious products were available than at any other time’, noting the popularity of products such as Californian megachurch pastor Rick Warren’s positive and aspirational book series *The Purpose Driven Life*, the *Left Behind* books (a fiction series speculating on the effects of the rapture), films such as *The Passion of Christ*,

and children's television programs that carry a Christian message such as *VeggieTales*. Park and Baker (2007: 502) argue

consumable religious goods can enhance attachment to a particular religious culture, (e.g., Christian "witness wear" that reminds one and others of evangelical identity) and they can reflect mastery of that culture (e.g., purchasing a study Bible for a small group study).

In their study of a Christian bookshop in the United Kingdom, Stoddart and Johnson (2008: 335) note the lucrative nature of the Christian resources market and argue that such purchases offer ways for Christians to express aspects of their identity. Thomas (2009: 58) points out the diversity of good and services offered within the market, using an example of a hypothetical Christian mother

taking out an insurance policy from a preferred Christian insurance company, following a Christian diet programme and buying Christian branded food products (Griffith, 1997), buying a car from a Christian car dealer, products from a Christian grocery store and persuading her children to find partners through a Christian dating service – thus affirming a life lived within the confines of an exclusive religious economy.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches participate in this market, commercialising aspects of their religion, products, and experiences to maintain a reputable church brand within the lucrative Christian resources, goods, and services market.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use marketing techniques to create church brands emphasising aspects of their advertised church experience and adopt marketing language to promote their church activities. Each of the churches constructs their brand to signal the type of religious experience they advertise while controlling their public image. The rebranding process that COC undertook to transition to International Network of Churches (abbreviated to the lower-case 'inc') is explained in a 'brand documentary' on the inc website as 'we get the opportunity to rewrite our future, we get the opportunity really discover who we are' (inc 2013). For COC, the activity of rebranding was deliberate strategy for controlling the representation of the COC/inc name. As COC brand strategist Ray Bull (inc 2013) says, the brand name 'actually lives in the public domain. So, you've really got to spend some time asking questions and getting insights into what the customer feels, what the customer's thinking. That's the starting point for all great branding.' Positioning COC/inc as a church developing an interaction between brand and 'customer' was central to the rebranding process. For COC/inc, the intentional development of a church brand was directly inspired by

global corporations. Bull (inc 2013) explains ‘When we look at brands, you know, we’ll often see the Nike tick, or the MacDonald’s, the yellow M. And it’s not so much about the graphic or symbol, it’s what they stand for that’s important.’ Through the rebranding process, the COC national executive decided that they want to emphasise the goal of making the church’s pastors and volunteers ‘great’. Similar to Nike’s ‘Just do it’ or Microsoft’s ‘Be what’s next’, COC/inc chose the slogan ‘Born for More’ to signal what they see as their supporting role in helping inc-branded pastors and volunteers realise their potential. ‘Hillsong’ invokes the church’s songs—praise and worship music for which the church is globally recognised—and signals the Sydney suburb Baulkham Hills where Brian Houston planted Hills Christian Life Centre. ‘Planetshakers’ emphasises the goals of achieving world-wide outreach and creating a religious movement that refuses to be ignored and the ‘Empowering generations for generations’ slogan signals the church’s focus on youth. Interviewing Russell and Sam Evans on his US Fox Channel show, former governor of Arkansas Mike Huckabee observes ‘it really does sort of indicate that you’re asking young people to do something that’s going to shake up the world.’ The couple nod in agreement. Influencers Church signals their mission to cultivate influence, and C3 Church’s abbreviated name (from Christian City Church) removes the ‘Christian’, indicating the church’s seeker-friendly branding approach to marketing the church as relevant and, importantly, different from older Christian denominations. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are acutely aware of how branding and marketing strategy can assist them in representing their churches to the public, this this awareness is developed in their choices of church names.

The ability to successfully commercialise aspects of a religion lends to enormous possibilities of growth for a church in a globalised consumer economy. For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, the possibilities of growth are enhanced by commercialisation particularly through the technique of brand management. Casidy (2013: 231) argues that using branding strategies attracts congregants and enhances congregant’s perspectives on the benefits of belonging to the church. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches deliberately operate in the realm of the market through their ties to businesses and encouragement of financial success amongst their congregants. Gordon and Hancock (2005: 394) argue that within corporatised versions of Christianity, such as neo-Pentecostalism, ‘branding is the key to success’. The branding strategy is secularised for neo-Pentecostals in that church-branded objects are not imbued with sacred or mystical properties. The neo-Pentecostal branded activities—such as leadership conferences, concerts, and annual conferences for congregants—encompass the opportunity for transcendental worship experiences, and access

to sacred experiences can be purchased by buying tickets to the event. Poon, Huang and Cheong (2012: 1969) argue that the commodification of the communication process is central to successful modern religions, stating, ‘digitalization facilitates a process of mediatization that converts religious performance into forms suitable for commodification and commoditization’. Thomas (2009: 57) observes the synergistic relationship between media corporations and the commoditisation present in Christian production houses that has developed a market for Christian products in the US. The processes of commodification and commercialisation are amplified in the modern economy using emerging media forms available through the Internet. According to Lyons (2000: 78), this consumer culture ‘arises from the expansion of capitalist commodity production with its vast accumulation of material culture, both in goods for purchase and sites – above all the mall – for consuming.’

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches capitalise on digitalisation to create commercial ventures in online ‘stores’ around branded church events that promise an experience of the sacred. The proliferation of digitalisation and new media forms have allowed Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to commercialise the Pentecostal theological emphasis on experientialism facilitated through the orientation to growth, consumerism, and material aspiration as a measure of success within consumer culture. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches create a church brand to unify associations between church experiences and church products. Branding provides neo-Pentecostal churches with the ability to commercialise almost any aspect of their religion (Ellingson 2013: 65). In addition to receiving tithes, sales of a range of products, from T-Shirts to books written by the leaders of the churches, increase the income the churches gather. Charging congregants to attend annual conferences, music concerts, prayer breakfasts and youth events provides further revenue for the church. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have a unique church logo that appears on all promotional materials. Hillsong, C3 Church, Planetshakers, Citipointe, and Influencers manage online stores selling tote bags, hats, USBs, coffee mugs, notebooks and Bibles that display the church logo. Both products and events are marketed with the church logo and the process is curated by lead pastors and, often, a team of marketing managers. Hillsong Church employs several marketing experts on its board of directors with specific skills in brand management and sales (Hillsong *Board* 2016). Similarly, C3 Church has several marketing and communications experts working in church plantings such as Cairns and San Diego (C3 Cairns *Worship + Creative* 2016, C3 San Diego *Creative Teams* 2016).

Creating a brand to associate with the church provides Australian neo-Pentecostal churches with ways to distinguish themselves amongst church attendees. The websites of the

churches planted by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches prominently display the original church logo and church services use the logo throughout to reinforce brand association. Particularly amongst the music-producing churches—C3 Church, Hillsong Church, Citipointe and Planetshakers—the heavy use of church logos on promotional material leaves no doubt as to which church owns a particular song or album. This marketing technique of brand differentiation provides congregants with a point of difference to compare the churches, despite their similarities in theology and overall aesthetic. These points of difference are managed by the senior leadership team and the entrepreneurial pastors integrate their personal aesthetic style into their church brand (Klaver 2015: 146). Using marketing expertise to create a strong brand presence allows Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to differentiate themselves and commercialise a range of products that are not necessarily used for sacred purposes but are specifically associated with the church brand.

Using a brand to unify product commercialisation provides Australian neo-Pentecostal churches further avenues for increasing growth in church membership and finances. Commercialisation of these products is unique to neo-Pentecostalism because the branded products are not imbued with religious significance but are used to create a church brand. In the case of churches such as Hillsong, ‘the brand becomes cultural material with which participants shape, generate, express, and understand “personal” values’ (Wagner 2014: 12). Australian neo-Pentecostal churches provide a variety of ways to express these personal values through consuming products and experiences, using marketing strategies to create campaigns for particular events. Products are created and sold for specific events such as the women’s, youth, men’s and leadership conferences. The products display slogans referencing these events and are only available to buy before, during and, for a limited time, after the event. Before the 2016 women’s conference, Hillsong’s online store offered a range of plain T-shirts emblazoned with references to the upcoming conference including such slogans as ‘Found in his love story’, ‘Royal’, and ‘Love lead me home’ (Hillsong *Store* 2016). Hillsong’s online goods store is organised in sections according to the importance of the promoted event. In preparation for the youth conference, attendees could buy T-Shirts, hats and beanies that display the conference title ‘Young & Free’ (Hillsong *Store* 2016). Updating the brand requires the development, manufacture, and sale of new items for purchasing. These church-branded products give an attendee the opportunity to own a souvenir from a particular event and demonstrate loyalty to the church through their public display: wear the T-Shirt, own the coffee mug. The branded products also provide the churches with a unifying image to present publicly and promote their church. Photographs

from the 2015 Hillsong youth conference show young people wearing their Hillsong-branded clothing and are displayed in the promotional website for the 2016 youth conference (Hillsong *Conference* 2016). The Planetshakers online store sells music products, apparel, accessories (including hats and bags), and books written by senior pastors (Planetshakers *Store* 2017). Apparel is branded in conjunction with music releases; hats, jumpers, and a coffee table book were sold branded with the 2017 album *Legacy* (Planetshakers *Store* 2017). The commercialisation strategies of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are unique in that the products themselves do not carry religious significance. Rather, the products provide an attendee a souvenir for their participation in a significant church event such as a conference or album release.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches create marketing campaigns for Christian holy days and specific events using commercial branding strategies. For the 2009 Easter service, Hillsong Communications Director Jay Argaet wanted to promote Hillsong Easter services to potential attendees and, true to the church's seeker-sensitive style, created a marketing campaign for Easter that would reach non-church-attending people (Russell & James 2017). The Hillsong Communications team made up cards displaying the symbols '† = ♥' (Russell & James 2017). Argaet says his team asked the church to

go out and do random acts of kindness, maybe buy someone a coffee and just leave a card behind. And the church jumped in like, crazy, like we couldn't print enough cards. And that year we just saw so many people get saved at Easter. So, I think that was like the original point where we were like, oh maybe we should try this again (Russell & James 2017).

Argaet attributes the conversions to Christianity that he observed during 2009 Easter to Hillsong's rebrand of the Easter message. Explaining the theological thinking behind the symbol Argaet (Russell & James 2017) says

when Jesus died on the cross, the veil was torn. You know, it meant that anybody, anyone, any culture, any background, can actually feel the presence of God and find Jesus. And so, we were thinking, imagine if we can do a campaign that is, um, more about, I guess, unity in the fact, or inclusiveness, that His love is for everyone.

Argaet drew inspiration for '† = ♥' from the story of Arthur Stace, a reformed alcoholic who converted to Christianity and spent his adulthood writing the word 'Eternity' in yellow copperplate script in public spaces throughout Sydney in the mid- 20th Century, with the aim getting people to consider their beliefs (Russell & James 2017, Hogg 2017). Argaet says that

the Arthur Stace story ‘just shows the power of one. And it shows the power of one person, you know, in their area of life doing something that led people to Christ’ (Russell & James 2017). In 2010, Argaet sought to capitalise on what he saw as the success of the ‘† = ♥’ symbology, and Hillsong gave their congregants pieces of chalk encouraging people to draw the symbol all over their cities in the lead-up to Easter. This operates in a similar way to Arthur Stace’s writing and Argaet says ‘maybe if someone sees it, it’ll stir a thought’ (Russell & James 2017). The ‘† = ♥’ campaign is an example of how the Hillsong Communications Team use branding strategies, drawing on recognisable, simple symbols and drawing on the volunteer capacity within their large church congregation, for marketing a significant event to potential congregants. This is an extension of the seeker-sensitive practices creating branding strategies with the aim of encouraging non-churched and unchurched people to convert to the neo-Pentecostal brand of Christianity.

Selling access to church events enables Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to facilitate experiential participation in the branded church experience. C3 Church, Hillsong, Influencers, Planetshakers and Citipointe all hold annual conferences over several days and conduct marketing campaigns leading up to these events to encourage as many people to attend as possible. The churches charge conference attendees a registration fee ranging from thirty-three dollars to attend the Planetshakers 2017 international conference in Malaysia (Planetshakers Awakening Asia 2016) to three hundred and forty-nine dollars to attend the four-day annual Hillsong conference held at a sporting arena in Sydney (Hillsong *16 The Invitation* 2016). The bigger church conferences, Hillsong and C3 Church, cater to the needs of a family, supplying crèche facilities, breastfeeding rooms and offering parents the opportunity of paying for their older children to attend specific children’s activities (Hillsong *Kidsong* 2016, C3 Church *Presence* 2016). The conferences operate as revivals and the conference marketing materials claim that attendees will experience the work of God by coming to the conference. However, the key difference between traditional revivals and the neo-Pentecostal version is that in the past, people were not necessarily required to pay to attend. The marketing video advertising the 2016 C3 annual conference *Presence* states ‘He is our support system. In the beginning and after the end. A journey and destination. The mystery and revelation. As two become one. For He pierced our gravity. Running at us. Son of God. Rescuer. Jesus.’ (C3 Church *Presence* 2016). The video uses sloganeering language, single word and short sentences, to capture attention. In the video, a sense of C3 Church’s largeness is implied through the images of forests racing past, cliffs beside an ocean, and a

man falling from a waterfall (C3 Church *Presence* 2016). The video uses footage of huge crowds dancing with raised hands and bands performing in front of C3 Church song lyrics projected onto large screens (C3 Church *Presence* 2016). These images and words promise a conference experience that engages with the global aspect of the church, where like-minded Christians from all over the world gather for the opportunity to participate in mass-worship and discussion.

The juxtaposition of scenes of nature with dancing crowds signals neo-Pentecostal theological perspectives on the relationship between humans and nature, a specific aspect of the church brand. Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders believe that nature exists to remind humans of God's love. In a blog post titled 'Creation Shouts!', Phil Pringle (2014) argues that man is the pinnacle of God's creation. After appreciating abundance of animal life on Earth, Pringle writes 'And then man himself, with all the glory of his intelligence, his dance, songs, art and rhythms, discoveries, inventions and adventures.' Pringle (2014) states that the existence of nature and animals reveals

a creator who loves, in the colors, the scents, the nutrition yet not purely utilitarian, but beautiful in taste, scent and feel. The rains, the sun, the oceans, the mountains, the sheer breathtaking pleasure of the beauty of it all is love.

Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders see God as source of infinite grace and love, and that God provided nature to remind humans of God's power. Evoking the natural environment in the context of God's love is evident in Hillsong (2013) song titles including 'Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)', 'Touch the Sky', and 'Desert Song'. In 'Shout to the Lord', one of Hillsong's first chart-topping songs, the lyrics are 'Shout to the Lord, all the earth, let us sing/Power and majesty, praise to the King/Mountains bow down and the seas will roar/ At the sound of Your name'. Lyrics for the Hillsong (2007) song 'God of All Creation' state 'I'm totally abandoned to You/I'm lost inside the rivers of your love'. Here, the river metaphor implies that environmental phenomenon exists as all-encompassing reminder of God's love for people. Using 'rivers of love' evokes erotic imagery, inviting the worshipper to imagine themselves as loved, intimately, by God. The juxtaposition of these images with crowds of people implies that every person on Earth can also access this love signalling an element of the brand of Christianity Australian neo-Pentecostal churches market; that nature exists to remind all humans of God's love, suggesting intimate and even erotic dimensions to that love and power. Using these images in promotional film clips signifies a brand of global church

that is available to all humans, through participating in the Australian neo-Pentecostal church brand.

The advent of digitalisation and social media marketing assists in cultivating Australian neo-Pentecostal ability to commercialise aspects of their church brand, providing a virtual space through which they can curate images and symbols of church in a unified way. The advent of these virtual spaces provided opportunities for the churches to market products and services without having to pay for access to broadcasting space on commercial television or radio. The popularity of social networking sites and increased smart-phone use meant that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches had access to cheaper forms of brand dissemination through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, while creating and selling smart phone apps for a range of church-related activities. All Australian neo-Pentecostal churches developed user-friendly websites with regularly updated graphics through which interested parties access information about the church's Sunday services, locations, upcoming events, charities, and senior pastor biographies. The Planetshakers website offered a streaming service allowing access to video recordings of sermons across multiple Planetshakers church locations (Planetshakers TV 2016). Recordings of church sermons were made available on video streaming services such as YouTube and Vimeo; Hillsong and C3 Church manage multiple YouTube channels for church services, music releases and live performances from the church band (Hillsong Church 2016, Hillsong Worship 2016, HillsongunitedTV 2016, C3 Church NC YouTube Channel 2016). Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use their online presence through well-maintained websites and video streaming services to form the centre of an online hub extending to social media strategies.

The churches maintain multiple social media accounts for separate branches of church activity, different events and personalised accounts for leaders. For example, the Influencers Church homepage is linked to the official Influencers Australia Twitter account (Influencers Home 2018). As at 2018, this account followed ninety-four Tweeters including several personal accounts of the senior ministry team: senior pastor Ashley Evans, his wife Jane Evans, Atlanta campus pastor Mark Evans, church staff member Judah Cheah, and Perth campus pastor Sarah Gibson (Twitter *InfluencersAUS* 2017). Influencers Australia on Twitter also followed ten accounts dedicated to individual church plantings and specific events including the annual conference, the youth-oriented arm of the church, and the church music band (Twitter *InfluencersAUS* 2016). These Twitter pages were linked to personal Facebook and Instagram accounts for the senior ministry team and for particular events and church-run

activities (Twitter *InfluencersAUS* 2016). Hillsong, C3 Church, Citipointe and Planetshakers manage similar social media strategies which serve as a platform for posting church-related images, events, and products online.

Rinker et. al. (2016) observe the increased use of apps—short for ‘applications’, computer programs that perform a specific function on smart devices and computers—for religious purposes. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches offer church-branded apps which centralise online church services on a smart device. As at 2018, C3 Church had thirty-three apps for the iPhone and twenty-seven for the iPad available for download through iTunes (iTunes *Search C3 Church* 2017). These apps provide a platform for congregants to conduct church activities through their smart devices, offering prayer requests, absentee registration, short reflections on Bible verses, and social networking opportunities with local congregants registered to the app (iTunes *Search C3 Church* 2017). Hillsong Church’s mobile app provides access to blogs, TV episodes, music updates and videos, livestreaming from Hillsong events with the tagline ‘Be a tap away from Hillsong wherever you are’ (Hillsong *APP* 2017). Planetshakers (*Planetshakers App* 2017) and Citipointe Church (Google Play *Citipointe Church* 2017) create a similar centralised virtual space with their apps that provide access to church-branded social media accounts and online visual content, along with services such as tithing platforms through PayPal and credit card facilities, prayer requests, and connection to local church-branded homegroups. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have adeptly embraced digital media and marketing strategies to create a sophisticated and well-managed online presence. The churches use these online platforms to develop marketing strategies for consolidating the creation of a church brand.

Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders use social media to unify the church brand aesthetic. This is particularly evident through promotional campaigns for significant events. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches capitalise on the conference model by holding separate events targeted at a particular congregant demographics: youth, women, men and business leaders. These events are supported with their own marketing campaigns and branded promotional material. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches coordinate their events across social media platforms to create a unified brand aesthetic. After the final Planetshakers 2017 Conference event, the same image of Sam Evans leading the Planetshakers Band was posted to Planetshakers’ Twitter (2017), Instagram (2017), and Facebook (2017) with the caption

That's a wrap on our first #Planetshakers Conference in Austin, Texas! us "Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the whole earth as your possession." Psalm 2:8 🙏 We asked & He is always faithful to provide! We are

believing for the greatest outpouring of His Kingdom across Texas and the USA over the coming months. Let's shake the planet!

This social media coordination allows Planetshakers to communicate a unified message to a global audience. These social media platforms provide links to videos of the conference events from around the world which were posted on the Planetshakers' YouTube (2017) channel and Planetshakers TV website (2017). Promotional images and film clips for the Planetshakers 2018 conference are posted to the church's social media accounts during the ending of the 2017 conference with links to the website for purchasing tickets (Planetshakers 2017). This kind of social media marketing unifies the presentation of the church brand and provides promotional opportunities for future church events. In this way, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have incorporated digital marketing into their promotional operations.

The commercialisation activities of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches contribute to a global Christian resources market, developing reputable brands to compete with other offerings from similar growth-orientated churches. In his study of a growth church in Hollywood, Marti (2008: 188) observes the adaptability of Pentecostal belief systems to modern economic demands, arguing that Hollywood's Oasis Church's deliberately constructed corporate identity provides congregants with religious meaning in a new global economic structure. Yip and Ainsworth's (2013: 513) examination of two Singaporean megachurches concludes that the use of marketing discourse not only assists Harvest City Church and New Creation Church in developing a reputable brand but changes the practice and substance of religion orientating these towards growth. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches conduct themselves similarly and the churches are aware of the significance of the Australian neo-Pentecostal brand, particularly when it comes to marketing music. Influencers Church's 2017 album was marketed within the Australian neo-Pentecostal church brand, marketing material referred to Influencers Church as belonging to 'the Hillsong family church network' and also linked Influencers to the Planetshakers band and church (*CCM Magazine* 2017). Furthermore, non-Australian celebrity pastors of megachurches and growth churches speak at Australian neo-Pentecostal church conferences. T.D. Jakes's preaching at Planetshakers's 2014 conference was televised on the Christian cable television channel Daystar TV (Daystar TV 2016). Jakes is the senior pastor of The Potter's House, which his website describes as a 'multicultural church and global humanitarian organization in Dallas, Texas... [and has] more than 30, 000 members, with more than 50 diverse ministries' (T.D. Jakes Ministers *About* 2018). Steven Furtnick—senior pastor at Elevation Church, a multi-

site megachurch with campuses in North and South Carolina, Virginia, the Canadian city of Toronto, and Melbourne—is billed to speak at the Hillsong 2018 Conference. Joel Osteen and John Gray, senior pastors of megachurch Lakewood Church in Texas—are advertised speakers at both Hillsong and C3 Church’s 2018 conferences (Hillsong 2018, C3 Church *Presence* 2018). By speaking and promoting their products at each other’s churches and events, these leaders participate in shaping the Christian resources market, promoting their churches and ministries while encouraging congregants to purchase church and ministry-branded resources, books, and conference experiences.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have responded to social dynamics to preserve the reputation of the church brand. In 2015, Mark Driscoll—former senior pastor of megachurch Mars Hill Church in Seattle—was due to speak at the Sydney Hillsong Church annual conference. In 2015, Driscoll was removed from leading his Seattle church due to allegations of financial misconduct and ‘abusive’ behaviour (Barlass & Aubusson 2015). Australian feminist activists requested that Hillsong rescind Driscoll’s invitation to speak at the Hillsong conference, citing Driscoll’s preaching ‘that women were created to house a man’s penis’ (Barlass & Aubusson 2015). In a media release addressing the controversy, Brian Houston explained that Driscoll would not headline as a speaker at the conference, but Houston conducted a live interview at the conference with Driscoll and Driscoll’s wife Grace to ‘discuss some of the issues that have been raised, what – if anything – he has learned, and for me to understand better how he is progressing in both his personal and professional life’ (*Australian Broadcasting Corporation* 2015). Here, Brian Houston registered the broader social expectations regarding Hillsong’s responsibilities to the public as perceived in the type of speakers the church supports. By giving Driscoll’s presence at the conference a lower-profile platform, Hillsong Church sought to preserve their conference’s global reputation as an event that showcases credible Christian celebrity speakers.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have embraced the commercialisation aspect of modern consumer capitalism by creating a branded religious experience. The churches sell branded products and commercialise access to church events, participating in developing market for consumers who want Christian products, services, and experiences. This process consolidates association with a particular product or experience with the church brand. Church logos prominently displayed on products and promotional material provide a central image for recognition of that particular church’s aesthetic style. Products relating to that event are made and sold so that attendees have a souvenir and participate in creating images used in promotional material for future events. Attendance at conferences is marketed as

participation in the mega aspect of the church, where nature images signify God's infinite love. The churches capitalise on the increased use of online marketing platforms through social media strategies and development of church apps for smart devices. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have successfully used commercialisation to sustain a form of branded religion operating in the late-modern marketplace of consumer capitalism.

Corporate governance and Australian neo-Pentecostal church structure

The purpose of this section is to explain how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have incorporated corporate governance into their institutional structures. This is important for understanding the ways in which Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have responded to Australian Charity and Not-For-Profit Commission requirements to organise structures to create external accountability mechanisms. The section argues that corporate governance, as developed within consumer capitalism, is a policy framework that the churches use to organise their structure and create the appearance of transparency to government. The section finds that, despite appearances of accountability, the ways that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches implement corporate governance principles centralises decision-making to the senior pastoral team, which provides the senior pastors with significant personal discretion in the ways in which they manage church organisations.

Corporate governance is key dynamic of modern consumer capitalism. Throughout the early 2000s, international corporate scandals caused a re-evaluation of developing corporate culture within globalised business operations. Incidences of fraud and corruption within companies such as Enron and WorldCom generated a need for disclosure requirements and ethics compliance documents as a standard within corporations (Hermalin & Weisbach 2012). As a result of these requirements, commitments to corporate governance and responsibility became a feature of post-2000 consumer capitalism (Eagleton-Pierce 2014: 12). Corporate governance provides accountability mechanisms for a business outlining the ethical frameworks within which the corporation operates (Lessing 2009). Chan and Cheung (2012: 45) argue that good corporate governance practice 'means that the corporate management has demonstrated its responsibility to protect the interests of shareholders and other stakeholders... and promoted corporate fairness, transparency and accountability to its stakeholders'. For corporations, protecting the interests of stakeholders means that financial commitments are honoured. Eagleton-Pierce (2014: 16) argues that the concept of governance 'has been adapted to manage problems of legitimacy within relations of power'. In Australia, as charitable organisations become more responsible for undertaking work in the

public sphere, corporate governance has become one of the main methods for measuring accountability within these organisations. For churches that present a corporatised version of Christianity, such as Australian neo-Pentecostalism, corporate governance documents define protocol for ways in which churches and associated organisations should operate. Ensuring that stakeholders are protected and informed remains in the underlying organisational strategy of corporate governance and this strategy is particularly well-suited to supporting the organisational structure of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches and their church-branded organisations.

Australian neo-Pentecostal church leaders' adoption of corporate governance accountability mechanisms were preceded by a US probe into financial wrongdoings by prominent megachurch leaders. Swanson (2012) notes the implosion of Californian Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral in 2011 after accusations of financial misconduct, which culminated in court-ordered sales of the church's property and ended Schuller's ministry career. Hillsong Church, Planetshakers, and Citipointe Church's COC/inc denomination weathered their own scandals, during which leader and staff conduct within the churches was publicly called into question. In 2009, Mercy Ministries—funded by Hillsong Church and staffed by the church's employees—was closed as the organisation faced allegations of fraud and manipulation from former residents (Pollard 2009). Mercy Ministries' US-based website states that the organisation's live-in programs help young girls 'facing difficult personal situations including sexual abuse, drug or alcohol abuse, depression, and unexpected pregnancy... by teaching God's unconditional love'. The *Australian Broadcasting Corporation* reported that women living at the centres

had been promised they would see a team of doctors and psychologists and dieticians to work with... When the women arrived at Mercy Ministries, they found out over the course of time that there was actually no professional intervention. The only intervention they got was from a Pentecostal Christian perspective (*Australian Broadcasting Corporation* 2009).

While the federal Australian consumer affairs commission investigated claims that Mercy Ministries coerced residents into signing over access to welfare payments and restricted residents' spending, Hillsong Church told the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation* that they would develop 'tighter guidelines about what other organisations its staff can work with' (Griffiths 2009). In 2008, Hillsong worship music composer and Planetshakers' pastor Michael Guglielmucci was exposed as a fraud after admitting in a television interview to falsely claiming to have terminal cancer in order to 'hide an addiction to pornography' (*Daily*

Telegraph 2008, Wheatley 2009). The Australian AOG organising body Australian Christian Churches stood Guglielmucci down from his ministry positions and police began investigating claims that he had deceived people into donating money to fund his cancer treatment (*Australian Broadcasting Corporation* 2008). COC/inc founder and senior pastor Clark Taylor resigned from his ministry position in 1990 after facing allegations, for the second time, of sexual impropriety (Hey 2006). In 2000, Brian Houston removed his father Frank Houston from his leading preaching position (Hey 2006, Davidson 2015), and later revealed that his decision resulted from accusations of paedophilia against Frank (Davidson 2015). Such scandals facilitated the introduction of corporate governance as a key transparency and accountability strategy into Australian neo-Pentecostal church organising frameworks.

For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, corporate governance outlines a framework of institutional accountability. Since many social services were formally contracted out to religious organisations in Australia during the 2000s, there was a requirement for mechanisms to ensure that these services were carried out effectively. As the size of the not-for-profit sector increased throughout the early 2000s and the processes of marketisation incorporated business management techniques into the operations of charities and not-for-profit groups, corporate governance became one of the main strategies for measuring success and accountability in the industry (Tournour 2014). The requirement of corporate governance in the not-for-profit sector meant that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches receiving charity status had to devise corporate governance strategies and documents to justify their purpose and measure achievements. For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, corporatised governance documents effectively structure large sections of the organisational accountability of the churches. In his study of the institutionalisation of the Australian Assemblies of God movement, Clifton (2009: 213) observes that the experiential nature of Pentecostalism requires flexibility in church structure and the Australian Assemblies of God have resisted centralisation of bureaucratic methods in church organisation. However, this flexibility in leadership and church structure is challenged when faced with the need to provide measurements of accountability to organisations outside of the church. C3 Church, Hillsong, Influencers, Planetshakers and Citipointe use corporate-style governance documents to provide accountability mechanisms to the government for their purpose and success within that purpose. Cettolin (2006: 91) observes that since the early 2000s, many Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal Australian churches have changed ‘their governmental style from ‘congregational’, with power vested in the board of elders over the senior minister, to a

‘leadership-driven’ model where the pastor works with a board driven by a vision statement and values’. This change means that Australian neo-Pentecostal church organisations structure presents a corporatised model for decision-making.

Since the institution of the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission (ACNC) in 2013, religious organisations are required to submit governing documents and annual financial reports to the Australian government. The ACNC was commissioned to increase accountability and transparency in the multi-billion-dollar Australian not-for-profit sector (ACNC 2016). Previous to 2013, the Australian Tax Office determined the charitable status of an organisation, and governing documents and financial records were not easily accessible (Tournour 2014: 6). Under the commission of the ACNC, all charitable organisations’ governing documents were made available to the public via the ACNC website. The institution of the ACNC meant that those documents formalising the operations of charitable organisations, such as those churches and church-branded groups managed by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, could be analysed (ANCC 2016). Although churches have always had governing documents, particularly when running charity organisations whose purpose is for the public good, the creation of the ACNC meant that to receive tax-exempt status as a not-for-profit group Australian neo-Pentecostal churches had to produce written documentation that formalised their organisation in the view of the Australian government (ACNC 2016). This process meant that the corporate governance codified in Australian neo-Pentecostal church governing documents took on significant meaning. The leadership-driven model that the churches had already adopted was well-suited to the environment of corporatised accountability the ACNC required.

When the ACNC was instituted, Planetshakers director Graeme Kirkwood gave an interview to *The Australian*, Australia’s only national broadsheet newspaper, vociferously opposing the increased reporting requirements. Kirkwood said that the changes contained measures ‘within various proposals that specially will limit our ability to finance the cause of Christ and be flexible to meet community needs as they arise’ (Shand 2013). While Kirkwood acknowledged the importance of accountability, he claimed that the church was providing some self-limitation and governance, ‘which nobody is giving us any credit for. I wish some reporter would have the balls to report that’ (Shand 2013). These self-governance mechanisms, that Kirkwood claimed were sound, include a tax-exempt fringe-benefits package for Planetshakers’ senior pastors Russell and Sam Evans, that Shand (2013) observes amounted to more than five hundred thousand dollars a year: Kirkwood said that this is seventy-five percent of what the senior pastors could earn under bonds of the Planetshakers

constitution. Shand (2013) notes that Planetshakers collected up to two hundred thousand dollars in tithes and donations on Sundays, and in 2011 the church earned almost seven million dollars in annual revenue. Comparing the success of neo-Pentecostal churches like Planetshakers to the diminishing attendance of congregants in other churches, Kirkwood argued

Why aren't they [the government] giving the churches land, as they did at the turn of the century in the centre of town for the Wesleyans, Anglicans and Catholics? They were gifted the land for their cathedrals, which are mostly half-empty (Shand 2013).

As well as tax-exemptions on donations and fringe benefit packages, Kirkwood implies that religious organisations should receive increased material support from the state. For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, the benefits of retaining not-for-profit status are clear and scrutiny from the ACNC has not precipitated in shifting decision-making power from the central interests of the senior pastors.

Australian neo-Pentecostal church governing documents justify the legitimacy of church operations and organisation structure. The language of corporatisation features within the governing documents of the churches particularly within the responsibility to protect members of the church association; the key stakeholders. For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, congregation attendance does not guarantee a say in church governance matters, congregants are not necessarily defined in the governing documents as stakeholders in church business, or as voting members of the church association. 'Leadership-driven' models mean that the senior pastoral leadership team serves on the board of directors. In the case of Hillsong Church, the same twelve people make up the board of directors for the church and church-branded charity and ministry organisations (ACNC *Hillsong* 2016). The Hillsong Church Constitution submitted to the ACNC in 2013 outlines the process for becoming a member of the church association: 'A meeting of members of the Church may, upon the nomination of a person by the Senior Pastor and by special resolution, appoint such person as a member of the Church provided such person has signed a document agreeing to be bound by this constitution' (Hillsong Constitution 2013: 4). To be nominated by the senior pastor for membership 'the person's life exhibits the Biblical characteristics in line with that of an overseer/elder described in 1 Timothy 3: 2-7 and Titus 1: 6-9 of the NIV translation' (Hillsong Constitution 2013: 5). For the churches, legitimacy is derived from their interpretation of Biblical principles which are codified in their constitutions and governing documents. The shift from defining church leaders as 'eldership' to a board of directors is a

process of corporatisation. The difference in language provides a corporate image to the public, despite the codification of Biblical principles and senior pastoral discretion in deciding who may belong to the church association. Planetshakers has four organisations registered with the ACNC; Trustee for Planetshakers Trust Fund, Planetshakers Ministries International Inc, Planetshakers Empower Limited, and Planetshakers City Church Ltd (ACNC *Planetshakers* 2018). Senior pastor Russell Evans has a position on the board of directors for each of these organisations, making him an important decision-maker in all of Planetshakers' operations. The board of directors are the main beneficiaries of centralising decision-making capabilities through corporatisation. For each church, the board of directors wields power to include and exclude members and decide how finances are organised, including how staff members may or may not be paid for labour contributing to church-related activities. While this process centralises decision-making power to a limited number of people in the organisation structure, having a board of directors legitimises these processes through the corporatised language in the church governing documents.

The neo-Pentecostal orientation towards growth is well-suited to the corporatised charity environment the ACNC's existence encourages. Neo-Pentecostal organisations and church-branded groups are generally defined as charities for the purpose of advancing religion. While profit may not necessarily be an explicit theological goal of neo-Pentecostal churches, their ability to generate large amounts of money is a convenient by-product of their orientation towards growth in congregation size and finances. Annual financial reports for Planetshakers City Church registered to the ACNC shows the church generated a total revenue of \$9, 994, 568 in 2014 and \$11, 304, 754 in 2015, an annual revenue increase of \$1, 310, 186 for that financial year (Planetshakers City Church Ltd Financial Statement 2014-2015). Most of this revenue is listed as 'Building Fund Offerings' and 'Tithes & Offerings' on the financial statement (Planetshakers City Church Ltd Financial Statement 2014-2015). This increase in revenue was used to develop church activities, such as church planting and associated costs. However, Planetshakers City Church governance documents deem the board of directors responsible for distributing funds generated by the church (Planetshakers City Church Constitution 2001). The process for deciding how this revenue is spent is not transparent. While the revenue increase is not profit, because Planetshakers is a charitable organisation, the corporate documents bestow the board of directors with power to make decisions regarding how the money is spent. The Planetshakers City Church Constitution (2001) defines the financial powers of the board of directors as:

All cheques, promissory notes, drafts, bills of exchange and other negotiable instruments, and all receipts for money paid to the Company shall be signed, drawn, accepted, endorsed or otherwise executed, as the case may be, by any two Directors or in such other manner as the Board from time to time determines.

The neo-Pentecostal church structural resemblance to a corporation essentially centralises power to board of directors. It is difficult to determine how these board members are remunerated for this responsibility, as the churches do not disclose specific wages or salaries for their senior leadership teams on their financial statements to the ACNC. The implications of codifying corporate governance and centralising power to the board of directors in Australian neo-Pentecostal churches means that there is little transparency concerning how money is spent within these tax-exempt organisations.

Corporate governance provides a framework of accountability within an organisation. This accountability is vital when questionable behaviour occurs in the church. Neo-Pentecostal churches use their governing documents to determine a course of action when transgressions occur. These accountability mechanisms were tested in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse hearings when allegations of misconduct were brought against Brian Houston for the actions of his father Frank Houston. The Royal Commission found ‘the head of the church Brian Houston ignored a conflict of interest when dealing with allegations of sexual abuse against his father’ (Worsley 2015). The conflict of interest occurred when Houston confronted his father about the allegations while holding the position of president of the Assemblies of God Association and Senior Pastor of Hillsong Church (Browne 2015). The centralisation of power to the directors of the church association meant that Houston and the directors could (and did) remove Frank Houston from public ministry responsibilities within Hillsong Church, and Brian Houston assisted in discouraging the victim in making criminal prosecutions against his father (Worsley 2015, Browne 2015). Brian Houston and fellow Hillsong board member Nabi Saleh offered the victim a sum of ten thousand dollars to ‘forgive’ Frank Houston and Brian Houston maintains in his Royal Commission testimony that this money did not originate from church funds (Worsley 2015, Browne 2015). The processes undertaken by Houston to protect the reputation of his father and his church from public shame did not follow Hillsong’s protocol for child protection and disclosures of abuse. These policies, dated 2013, were submitted to the Royal Commission and it remains unclear when these policies were ratified by Hillsong Church (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2016). Despite the inclusion of protocols for Hillsong Church concerning allegations of abuse, some aspects of

accountability remain unclear and this lack of clarity can be exploited through the centralised organisational structure. The organisational structure carries an appearance of responsibility through the inclusion of corporate governance language. However, the Royal Commission findings revealed that there remains scope for corruption through the centralised decision-making structure used by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches.

Australian neo-Pentecostal theology is well-suited to including corporate governance in their day-to-day operations. Scandals involving Australian neo-Pentecostal churches such as the closure of Mercy Ministries, Danny Gugliemucci's cancer hoax, and Clark Taylor and Frank Houston's sexual misconduct show that accountability mechanisms are necessary to ensure transparency in church operations. The requirements of the ACNC to submit governing documents to the government meant that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches documents took on significance in their organisational structure and decision-making capabilities. The churches use corporate language to justify their use of a board of directors while centralising decision-making processes and accountability mechanisms to that board of directors. The orientation toward infinite growth encompassed in neo-Pentecostal theology is well-suited to a corporatised charity environment. The neo-Pentecostal churches and associated charities actively seek to increase revenue to support their ever-growing expansion of activities and congregants to fund financial growth. The centralisation of power to the board of directors means that, despite the appearance of accountability, there remains areas open to exploitation when serious transgressions occur by senior church members. This lack of transparency may be utilised in attempts to protect the church from scandals. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have embraced corporate governance to ensure their organisational survival within late-modern capitalist structures. As the ACNC requires corporatised accountability mechanisms, these governing documents take on significant meaning for the workings of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches and corporate governance is integrated into the everyday operations of the churches.

Theological responses to recession in Australian neo-Pentecostal churches

The purpose of this section is to examine how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches respond to recession and economic downturn. This is important for developing understanding of impacts of 'boom and bust' cycles within capitalism on the churches' theology and operations. The section argues that, due to an affiliation between consumer capitalism and Australian neo-Pentecostal church theology, the churches have formulated responses to the 'bust' dynamics within consumer capitalism. The section finds that Australian neo-

Pentecostal churches see economic hardship as a test of faith and, also, the churches have used recession to capitalise on and expand their ventures.

Capitalism works on an expectation of return on investment to create accumulation of wealth and, as such, one of the main features of capitalism is sustained economic growth. The infinite growth model encompassed by modern capitalism is a ‘social structure of accumulation... formed based on global segmentation of labour, financialization and neoliberal trade regime’ (Asimakopoulos 2009: 175). Roy and Willett (2014: 2) argue that there are difficulties in assuming that financial markets will self-regulate observing, ‘The financial crises that have surfaced across the globe in recent decades vividly illustrate the point that increased financial liberalization and globalization can also come with enormous costs.’ The 2008 collapse of the US housing market caused the US to enter prolonged economic recession. Due to the globalised nature of the banking, credit, and finance industries, the effects of the mortgage crisis were not contained to the US and global markets suffered prolonged recession through the late 2000s. Although many analysts had abandoned infinite growth models long before the 2008 global financial crisis—for example, in their book *The Limits to Growth* Meadows et. al. (1973) pointed out that on a planet with finite resources, infinite growth is not possible—the severity of the crisis meant that theorising recession became a key theme of academic investigation into dynamics of capitalism, especially since the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis revealed the globalised instability of contemporary finance markets. Sewell (2014: 1) argues that creative destruction through periods of recession and economic depression ‘capitalism’s key mechanism for producing sustained economic growth, has also produced an unmasterable cyclical pattern of boom and bust, creating new forms of insecurity at the same time that it tends to lift people out of absolute poverty’. The ‘creative destruction’ that corrected the instability of the subprime mortgage market in the US cost global markets an estimated twenty-two trillion dollars (Melendez 2013). As Laibman (2010: 380) points out, analyses of capitalism post-global financial crisis can no longer necessarily assume an infinite growth model as a stable basis of globalised capitalism.

This mistrust of one of the basic tenets of capitalism means that understanding dynamics of economic downturn has become a significant theme in post-global financial crisis business operations. Australia avoided much of the financial fallout from the 2008 global financial crisis, in part due to a government-funded stimulus package designed to boost local consumer spending, but also because of the thriving commodities market between China and Australia that facilitated the mining boom in the 2000s. The decade from 2000 to

2010 saw Australian living conditions improve with continual wage rises, mainly due to the thriving resources export market (Megalogenis 2012: 1). In 2015, the fall in global commodity prices caused the Australian stock exchange to lose 4.1% of total value; seventy billion dollars disappeared from the wealth of Australian companies (*News Corp Australia Network* 24 August 2015). Increased awareness in Australia of the instability of globalised capitalism, through reactions to the global financial crisis and falling international commodity prices, prompted local neo-Pentecostal pastors to develop theological and operational responses to recession and economic downturn.

Infinite growth models feature as an element of Australian neo-Pentecostal theology. Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Planetshakers, Influencers Church and Citipointe Church view the entire world as a mission-field of potential converts, seen in their church planting ventures and commitment to achieving influence around the world. Growth narratives are central to the senior pastors' understandings of their churches' global success. For the Pringles, the emphasis on growth is central to the way that C3 Church explains the success of their church planting. C3 Church's growth narrative, including the attitude of incredulity that Phil and Chris Pringle continue to maintain about their church's success, is a key part of C3's brand development with the movement's small beginnings emphasised at every opportunity. Chris Pringle says of C3 Church's first meetings 'We had, I don't know, about ten, twelve, thirteen people, maybe fourteen. It was just this tiny crowd, but it felt huge'. Hillsong Church is similar. Brian Houston's 2015 appearance on Australian morning television was preceded by a video package which said, 'It all started in a small warehouse... now Hillsong has hundreds of thousands of followers from over sixty countries world-wide' (Studio 10 *YouTube* 2015). The websites for Citipointe, Planetshakers, and Influencers mention that the churches began in small warehouses, with small numbers of people attending services, and then contrast these images with claims about how many church plants and congregants the churches have around the world. These growth narratives, which assumes that every person on Earth is a potential covert, are similar to the infinite growth models assumed in consumer capitalism. However, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches require explanations for when this growth does not occur in their congregant's lives and are affected by economic recession.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have responded to the instability inherent to globalised capitalism by articulating a theology that includes responses to recession and economic downturn. Bowler (2013), Kim (2012) and Cox (2001) argue that neo-Pentecostal theology provides people with a meaning-making framework that outlines explanations and solutions in the face of economic uncertainty caused by 'boom and bust cycles' within

consumer capitalism. Given that prosperity, abundance, and growth are central theological tenets of neo-Pentecostalism, responses to recession are formulated within Australian neo-Pentecostal theology and operations. Barker (2007: 407) argues that Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches foster ‘norms and behaviours that harmonize with neoliberal economic restructuring... [and] embed the self-regulated aspects of neoliberal capitalism’. The ability of neo-Pentecostal churches to grow their congregant numbers and finances within capitalist structures is well-documented (Barker 2007, Burity 2013, Ellingson 2013). Less-well known is how neo-Pentecostal leaders explain and deal with failure in these areas, particularly when a lack of financial success may occur for neo-Pentecostal church congregants and within their own church operations.

Australian neo-Pentecostal theological response to economic recession concerns an individual Christian’s responsibility to seek a relationship with God and not to be deterred in faith by trials and hardship. Biblical examples of Old Testament hardship in famine, the story of Job’s trials, and selected New Testament Bible verses promising eternal glory to those with unwavering belief during times of suffering are used to provide a solution to financial struggles. Wendy Grages (2016), senior pastor of Hillsong South Africa, writing for the Hillsong Sisterhood blog, argues that ‘You were designed for the difficult’ quoting Peter 4:13 ‘be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering’ to preach the importance of a hopeful attitude in the face of difficulty. Grages (2016) uses the metaphor of a teabag steeping to write ‘There is something inside you that the world around you needs to experience. Only when you are put into hot water, into difficulties, can what’s in you be released for those around you.’ In the Hillsong movie *Hillsong: Let Hope Rise* (2016) Brian Houston’s son (leader of the Hillsong band Hillsong United) Joel says, ‘We’re at our best when we’re broken.’ This call to embrace hardship as an element of God’s plan extends to financial difficulty where the solution offered by the church is found in faith, prayer, and tithing. The senior pastors and church leaders use their own experience of hardship to provide evidence of God’s ability to test and bless believers through tough times, especially when those believers find it in themselves to give generously to the church. Claude Corelli, Senior Pastor of C3 Church Rockingham in Western Australia, says of financial hardship:

When the Global Financial Crisis hit, one of my staff gave an offering message and declared God had his own GFC (God’s Financial Covenant) and she was choosing that! It was simple but powerful. It put hope in our people. Hope is the ability to see opportunity beyond obscurity.

For neo-Pentecostal theological responses to recession, the responsibility for mustering hope and belief remains in the individual and is enacted through offerings to the church. Graeme Kirkwood (2011), finance advisor to Planetshakers, observed changes in offerings and tithing behaviours amongst congregants because of the GFC, notably that a few years after 2008 tithes and offerings had started to decrease. Kirkwood (2011) wrote in a letter titled ‘Lingering Effects of the Global Financial Crisis’ posted on his website,

To those who may be experiencing this pattern, you are not alone. I encourage you to stay committed to run your course, be diligent in controlling outgoings and build an atmosphere of faith and expectation with the Board, Elders and leadership.

Here, Kirkwood encourages pastors to demonstrate faith in the face of financial hardship. Neo-Pentecostal theology works to shore up congregant commitment to seeing the church through monetary difficulties. The message for the individual congregant is to pray that God will guide them through such hardship and to continue tithing in ‘good faith’ to the church.

Neo-Pentecostal church responses to recession develop from the links to positive confession within Australian neo-Pentecostal theology. In Brian Houston’s (2001) book *You Need More Money* he argues that Christians have a ‘poverty mentality’ that prevents them from enjoying God’s blessings. Houston’s (2001) solution is for Christians to think positively about their finances and they will receive material prosperity. In an interview in 2009, when asked explicitly about the effect of the global financial crisis on his congregants, Houston stated

Definitely people are asking deeper questions about life and spirituality... The people in our church are hurting like everybody else is, which means that we’ve got more call on us to be giving assistance to people and reaching out to people ... That’s definitely been magnified through the global crisis (Mariner 2009b)

Phil Pringle’s (2005) book *Keys to Financial Success* puts forward a similar argument that Christians should expect to receive financial prosperity by arranging their money according to messages received through prayerful reflection. Rajan Thiagarajah, Senior Pastor of Good Success Church in Perth, wrote a book called *Prospering in Times of Global Financial Crisis* that carries endorsements from COC/inc leader Phil Campbell and other neo-Pentecostal church leaders associated with Australian Christian Churches (ACC) in Australia. Thiagarajah regularly speaks at events sponsored by ACC, the Assemblies of God representative body of which Brian Houston was president (Christian Life Assembly 2016). In his book, Thiagarajah (2008: 22-3, original emphasis) argues ‘the Kingdom of God does

not suffer from financial crisis, famine or lack of food. There is *total provision and continuous supply* in the Kingdom of God so that its citizens can enjoy abundant Life [sic]'. Thiagarajah (2008: 38) states that Jesus cares about individual finances and that 'You will receive a hundred fold [sic]... now in this life (not when you get to heaven)'. When listening for the Lord's instructions on preaching about the financial crisis Thiagarajah (2008: 43-7) discusses his interpretation of the meaning of divine and uncommon wisdom drawing conclusions from the stories of King Solomon and Joseph that if the believer asks God, they will receive wisdom for gaining the riches that these men were promised and received. Thiagarajah (2008: 57-9) claims that this wisdom will be delivered via dreams, visions, circumstances, or the Word of God and if the believer remains 'in Christ', asking for wisdom, trusting, and praising God, then the ability to deal with financial crises will be received. This theological interpretation of recession and financial crises places the individual believer as responsible for receiving God's wisdom for dealing with these issues. The Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders see the 'enemy' as a spirit of fear, confusion, and poverty (Thiagarajah 2008: 108). In Australian neo-Pentecostal theology, poverty is specifically seen as an un-Christian circumstance. This interpretation of recession and crisis puts the onus on the believer to change their circumstances through prayer, faith, and trust in God.

The acknowledgement of recession in Australian neo-Pentecostal theology effected church expansion strategies. The churches continue their appeals for extra tithing and donations, and this strategy is linked to developing bigger building funds to establish more churches. C3 Church developed a building fund strategy called 'Rise and Build' through their Vision Builders organisation specifically to raise money for developing existing churches post-global financial crisis. These 'faith funds' and offerings are not tithes, C3 Church Coomera (2016) states in an appeal for Vision Builders 'Tithes are allocated for the day-to-day running operations of the church, offerings are gifts over and above our tithes'. Richard Green (2013), C3 Church Senior Minister of Ryde in North Sydney, outlines the difficulties of building a church during a period of global recession

We had sunk years of work into what we believed was to be the ideal place. At the last hour and directly related to the GFC, our plans changed radically. We were unable to go ahead with plan A and were looking at the loss of a ¾ of a million dollar deposit, plus contractual obligations of multi-millions. It was at a few moments before the 12th hour that we were thrown an unexpected opportunity – the Lord's plan A.

Green (2013) credits an open and transparent process with his congregation for acquiring the building funds, emphasising the importance of a ‘giving concept’ in which the senior leadership team has faith. The C3 Church at Ryde, Green (2013) says, was built as a result of intentionally developing a giving concept that worked for his local church community. This deliberate consolidation of the church community in times of crisis is seen as evidence of God’s blessing. Prayer, reflection and public commitment to donation pledges is at the centre of Vision Builders’ strategy for generating building funds. Vision Builders’ (2016) purpose states that a commitment—donation—to Vision Builders ‘is shining light into darkness, despair and discouragement and bringing the message of salvation to the ends of the Earth.’ Through Vision Builders’ and senior ministers’ efforts, such as that of Green, C3 Church seeks to consolidate church community in times of financial crisis. The Vision Builders flyer for the Mackay C3 Church (2015) requests that potential donors ‘Prayerfully consider the level of giving that you feel is appropriate for you’. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use their theology of recession—God tests faith through challenging times—to create building funds and increase people’s dedication to seeing their churches grow.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches used the global financial crisis as an opportunity for expansion at the domestic and international levels. In her book *The Shock Doctrine*, Naomi Klein (2005) observes state tactics ‘of using the public’s disorientation following a collective shock – wars, coups, terrorist attacks, market crashes or natural disasters – to push through radical pro-corporate measures’. Klein (2017) argues that such a collective shock need not necessarily ‘be an event as radical as a military coup, but the economic shock of a market or budget crisis would also do the trick.’ Schuller and Maldonado (2016: 62) note that from such collective shocks ‘nonprofits and increasingly for-profit corporations are receiving no-bid contracts for reconstruction—justified by a systematic undermining of state capacity that neoliberal policies portend’. After the global financial crisis, smaller Australian churches struggled to continue to fund their own activities and Australian neo-Pentecostal churches were able to take over these churches. In 2009, after Brian Houston resigned as president of the ACC, Hillsong Church took over the management of Garden City Christian Church, a megachurch on Brisbane’s Southside (Mariner 2009a). The congregation voted to become a Hillsong Church after the church eldership encouraged Senior Pastor Bruce Hills to resign on the basis that ‘We’d rather have more of a CEO leader than you’ (Mariner 2009a). Using the resources of Hillsong Church and expertise from Brian Houston, who planned to personally pastor the church through the transition with his wife Bobbie, the initial Brisbane outpost would develop to encompass two more Hillsong Church campuses with nine permanent

senior ministry leaders (Hillsong Brisbane 2016). During 2009, Houston stated his intention to continue establishing Hillsong churches in Europe, outlining international expansion strategies despite the effects of the global financial crisis on Europe (Mariner 2009b). Similarly, Planetshakers sought to expand into the inner-city Southbank area of Melbourne, signing a one-million-dollar lease on several office spaces in 2015 (*Australian Financial Review* 2015). Planetshakers has increased their church planting operations and church buildings in the years following the global financial crisis. However, the building and development bids are not always successful for Australian neo-Pentecostal churches. Hillsong sought to develop a block of land in the central business district suburb of Rosebery in Sydney (Gora 2011). The application was rejected multiple times due to concerns over increased traffic caused by the church services and breach of height regulations (Gora 2011). Hillsong reportedly did not want to sell the block because of a decrease in inner-city property prices as a result of the global financial crisis and worked with property developers to manage applications on the site (Gora 2011). The Australian neo-Pentecostal response to recession does not cause the churches to reassess growth trajectories. On the contrary, economic downturn can provide opportunities for the churches to continue in their expansions through property development and taking over struggling churches. In this view of recession, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches can benefit from events which may amount to disaster for others, in a manner similar to the corporate entities Klein (2005) identifies.

Recession and economic downturn affected Christian Super and inc Invest, the financial groups associated with Australian neo-Pentecostal churches. Christian Super, the superannuation fund that appoints directors from the leadership of ACC, acknowledged the effect of the global financial crisis on the group's investment strategies in the 2009 Annual Report. Peter Murphy, Christian Super CEO in 2009, wrote that the organisation sees economic downturn as part of the long-term investment cycle and 'From a Christian perspective now is the time to establish... good stewardship principles that will empower us to cope with any fluctuations in the economy' (Christian Super Annual Report 2009: 2). Despite these assurances to fund members, Christian Super suffered investment losses as a direct result of the global financial crisis (Christian Super 2011). Several major businesses that Christian Super had invested in went into receivership, including Queensland caravan parks and losses on a property investment in Fiji (Christian Super 2011: 3). Rodney Peters, Chairman of Christian Super at the time, wrote in a May 2011 'Significant Event' notice to members of the fund that 'Investments such as these offer the potential for high returns, but are also vulnerable to events like the Global Financial Crisis... and resulting world-wide

credit crisis. This was a key factor that led to the collapse of these investments' (Christian Super 2011: 1). Christian Super assured its members that corrective action had been taken to mitigate the effects of these losses (Christian Super 2011: 1). Christian Super was directly affected by the global financial crisis. By involving themselves in the financialisation element of contemporary capitalism, Australian neo-Pentecostal church organisations develop operational strategies to cope with recession and economic downturn.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have developed a theology encompassing a contemporary development in consumer capitalism: an acknowledgement of recession and responses to economic downturn. This theology considers financial hardship as a test of faith and requires individual congregants to donate to church building funds and continue to tithe to the church. The individual is responsible for developing prayerful reflection that seeks an openness to God on financial matters while trusting in tithes and donations to the church to fulfil signs of good faith. This response to economic downturn ensures that building funds increase, and tithes are maintained through periods of recession. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches developed their operations to take advantage of economic downturn. Two neo-Pentecostal churches expanded elements of their operations: Hillsong has taken over struggling churches to develop a thriving Brisbane outpost of the church's brand and Planetshakers developed inner-city operations in the years following the global financial crisis. Christian Super was forced to respond to the global financial crisis when investments collapsed and to provide mitigation strategies for fund members. Promoting prosperity gospel and infinite growth in church members and funds, neo-Pentecostal responses to recession develop positions financial hardship as a test of faith and an opportunity to prove strength of belief. Australian neo-Pentecostal church operations turn economic downturn into opportunities for growth. However, they also face increased barriers to developing property and building more churches. Their theology of recession insists the cycles of boom and bust in globalised capitalism are challenges from God and should be combated with prayer, faith, and tithing.

Conclusion

The chapter explains how Australian neo-Pentecostal church theology and activity incorporates aspects of late-modern capitalism. Examining commercial activities of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches demonstrates an ability to brand and sell both products and church experience. The churches' embrace of commercialisation allows them to create a brand of Christian church using marketing techniques particularly for church events such as

the annual conferences and significant days on the Christian calendar. The institutional structure based on principles of corporate governance provides Australian neo-Pentecostal churches with a centralised organisational structure that allows the senior pastoral team discretion to make decisions on a broad range of issues. Corporate governance provides the churches with the appearance of transparency and accountability. However, the centralised structure of the churches means that the senior pastoral leadership has scope to wield this power, particularly when issues of misbehaviour occur. Assessing the Australian neo-Pentecostal response to recession shows the developments in their theology and operations according to a market logic which is sensitive to the boom and bust cycles of globalised modern capitalism. Positioning the individual as responsible for keeping faith in challenging financial times, through donating to the church, allows the churches to continue to generate funds through periods of recession. Economic downturn may lead to investment opportunities for a market-savvy church or affect a church's ability to develop property. The sensitivity to the fluctuations of the modern market displayed by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches orients their theology to adapt to globalised capitalism. The chapter found that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches respond to and incorporate the dynamics of commercialisation, corporate governance, and responses to recession.

Having established the links between Australian neo-Pentecostalism and dynamics of late-modern capitalism, the next chapter progresses the argument of the thesis—that Australian neo-Pentecostalism reflects and incorporates elements of late-modernity—through a discussion of globalisation as a dynamic of late-modernity. Globalisation is a vastly complex process with multiple dimensions that has had an impact on understandings of modernity. The next chapter argues that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches astutely operate within the dynamics of globalisation to continue their theological developments towards ever-growing expansion in members and finances. The growth aspect of Australian neo-Pentecostal theology mirrors the paradoxical dynamics of globalisation as the churches seek to bridge the local and the global. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are highly successful in replicating their churches around the world through the process of church planting and the churches coordinate and contribute to aid programs for assisting disadvantaged peoples and communities around the world. The next chapter will build on the arguments of the present chapter to argue that a similarity to transnational corporations enables Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to successfully plant churches globally. The churches have engaged with issues of social justice and globalised inequality, creating and running aid programs that engage with communities all over the world. Examining these abilities—bridging the local

and the global, church planting, and developing global aid programs—shows how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate elements of late-modern globalisation into their theology and operations.

Chapter 5: Globalisation and Australian neo-Pentecostal churches: Ensuring international success

Introduction

The argument of the present chapter is that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have incorporated dynamics of globalisation into their activities. The chapter identifies three elements of globalisation in late-modernity—glocalisation, transnational corporatism, and globalised inequality—and analyses international activities undertaken by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches through these lenses. These activities include creating overseas home groups using church-branded products and resources, overseas church planting, and developing and supporting international charity programs. The development of localised church-based networks through establishing home groups overseas uses glocalisation—bridging the local and global—to bring congregants to participate in creating a globalised Australian neo-Pentecostal church. Glocalisation is an important step for Australian neo-Pentecostal churches in their globalising activities because it allows a small congregation or newly branded church to participate in the creation of a global religious movement, a key organisational goal for Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use international church planting as a method of achieving growth around the world. Corporatisation is a significant dynamic within modern capitalism and globalisation facilitates the transnational expansion of corporate culture. Analysing church planting through the lens of transnational corporatism reveals that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use similar techniques to corporations to achieve their global growth goals through church planting. Globalisation has caused inequality as capital is distributed unevenly around the world. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have developed programs and work in partnership with charities to assist poverty-stricken and trafficked peoples. For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, the programs create opportunities for encouraging individuals to convert to Christianity and attend the local church plant. This assists the churches in developing their globalised imaginary, as their charity work assumes that all people are potential converts to their brand of Christianity. Analysing international activities undertaken by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches shows how the churches incorporate elements of globalisation into their operations.

Globalisation is a feature of late-modernity and the beneficiary of significant theoretical analysis. For Lechner and Boli (2015: 2), globalisation means the processes ‘by

which more people across large distances become connected in more and different ways'. Globalisation is a multifaceted process which 'involves growing diffusion, expanding interdependence, more transnational institutions and an emerging world culture and consciousness' (Lechner & Boli 2015: 2). While global connectedness has been occurring for many centuries, scholars argue that after the end of the Cold War in 1989 globalisation entered a new phase which oriented these processes towards expanding the dominance of Western ideals of liberalism centred around the dissemination of consumer capitalism (Lechner & Boli 2015: 8). Globalisation in late-modernity is a vehicle for exporting the language of entrepreneurialism as a globally equalising force in which business mechanisms are the way to create an equitable global society. Hamelink (2015: 25) observes that while the supporters of globalisation claim that global institutions promoting capitalism and liberalism have liberated many people from economic and cultural oppression, sceptics point out that these same processes have created unequal structures through which very few people benefit, and those who do benefit become the owners of vast amounts of capital. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches engage with features of globalisation to achieve their organisational goals with particular emphasis on increasing their growth and realising their vision of becoming a global religious movement. Globalisation, similarity to transnational corporations, and responses to globalised inequality are incorporated into Australian neo-Pentecostal global activities. These three features of globalisation will be used in the chapter to analyse the international activities of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches.

Scholars have employed the theoretical lens of globalisation to understand the international nature of Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal church activities around the world. Robbins (2004: 117) argues that Pentecostal Christianity should be counted as a globalisation success story, emphasising Pentecostalism's paradoxical nature in its ability to contribute to the processes of Western homogenization and indigenize differentiation. Burity (2013: 21) illuminates the entrepreneurial spirituality present in globalised neo-Pentecostal forms, particularly when dynamics of globalisation reinforce neoliberal regimes. Ellingson (2013:59) illustrates the importance of a global perspective when explaining the emergence and expansion of megachurches. Ellingson's (2013: 73) work is a reminder that the emphasis on growth, abundance, and success in neo-Pentecostalism provides a theological explanation for seeking increasingly large congregations and selling an ever-greater range of church-branded products on a global scale. Klaver's (2015: 146) research into the Pentecostal leadership style argues that the global reach of these pastors is integral to the construction of their authoritative and entrepreneurial preaching aesthetic. Ignatow, Johnson, and

Madanipour (2014: 827) observe the rapid global growth of Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches, providing a class analysis of the transnationality of capital that globalisation seeks to unlock. Garcia-Ruiz and Michel (2014: 2) go so far as to argue that a homogenous form of neo-Pentecostalism is ultimately the religion of the globalised world, due to its integral market logic, ability to bridge the local and global, and production of congregants with a global awareness of political issues. In the Australian context, Maddox (2012, 2013) has linked Hillsong's ability to attract large congregations to growth theology and a vision of the entire world population as ripe for conversion. Riches (2010) uses the lens of mission to establish the long-term connections between Australian Pentecostal congregations and US liturgical practices. Yip (2014: 107) makes the link between marketing and Hillsong's abilities to propagate its brand around the world. The studies in the Australian context remain focused on Hillsong as the key example of a globalised church brand. There remains considerable scope for using the theoretical lens of globalisation, as a feature of late-modernity, for analysing Australian neo-Pentecostal overseas activities and extending this analysis to include non-Hillsong Australian-based neo-Pentecostal churches.

The chapter is structured to analyse international activities of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches using elements of globalisation: glocalisation, transnational corporatism and responses to inequality. The first section of the chapter outlines the processes of glocalisation through which Australian neo-Pentecostal churches link their local congregations to their vision of their church as a global religious movement. The section analyses the language of growth theology used in neo-Pentecostal church services, the images used in promotional materials for church events, and the formation of small home groups to argue that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches construct links between the local and global to actualise their vision of global church growth. The second section of the chapter discusses transnational corporatism as an animating element in Australian neo-Pentecostal church planting techniques. The section uses financial reports, promotional materials, and sermon recordings from overseas church plantings to argue that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches copy transnational corporation expansion and growth techniques. The final section of the chapter examines Australian neo-Pentecostal churches' aid programs in the context of global inequality. Analysing a range of aid programs implemented and supported by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches—including Citipointe Church's Global Care, Hillsong's CityCare, C3 Church's Beyond International, Mercy Ministries, A21 Campaign, SHE Rescue Home, and Hillsong Africa Foundation—the section finds that Australian neo-Pentecostal supported programs promote discourses where disadvantaged peoples are portrayed as requiring

‘saving’ (in a spiritual sense) or ‘rescuing’. These practices lead to simplistic ideas in which the program volunteers are ‘saviours’ and the people they work with are perceived as having little agency or self-determination. This analysis illustrates the complex nature of the effects of the international aid programs undertaken by not-for-profit church groups such as Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, as not all people who come into contact with these programs are better off. The section shows that the international aid programs assist the churches in achieving their goals of global growth and realise a global imaginary in seeing conversions to Christianity as ‘success stories’ for their church. Digital artefacts produced by Hillsong Church, Citipointe, C3 Church, Influencers Church and Planetshakers and international organisations associated with the churches were found through online search strategies and are analysed in the chapter through an application of the theoretical lens of globalisation, key aspects of which are defined in the chapter as glocalisation, the dominance of transnational corporatism, and the presence of globalised inequality. The chapter advances the overall argument of the thesis by showing how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate late-modern dynamics of globalisation to support their activities and define their theology.

Glocalisation: how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches link the local and global

The purpose of the section is to explain how Australian neo-Pentecostals incorporate glocalisation into their theology and operations. The section is important to developing insight into how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches maintain their operations around the world. The section argues that the churches use specific glocalisation tactics to link local church plants to a global religious imaginary. Analysis of church resources distributed in church plants around the world finds that the churches are adept in using glocalisation to link their church plants and unify their brand of church in a global context.

Glocalisation is the term used by globalisation theorists to analyse links between the local and the global to investigate the challenges of including locality within analyses of globalised systems. While Berger (2013) points out the centrality of economies and markets to late-modern globalisation, Robertson (2012: 192) argues that ‘globalisation has... tended to assume that it is a process which overrides locality, including large-scale locality such as is exhibited in the various ethnic nationalisms which have arisen in various parts of the world’. According to Maynard (2003: 6), the term glocalisation was originally used in the economics discipline to describe ‘the process whereby global corporations tailor products and marketing to particularly local circumstances to meet variations in consumer demand’. This economic

lens has been expanded to include analysis of cultural practices which acknowledge the differentiating effects of globalised systems on local realities and every-day interactions. Glocalisation exists as a response to concerns about the overarching narrative of globalisation theory as being overly reliant on defining cultural homogenisation as the dominant element of a globalised world. Porto and Belmonte (2014: 14) state that glocalisation has come to illustrate the idea that globalisation does not only perpetuate homogenising trends, and that globalisation has differential effects. Thinking of global dynamics through the lens of glocalisation allows local networks agency while simultaneously placing the actions of individuals in a global context. In this way, globalisation seen as conditioning both local and global elements through glocalisation is helpful because it allows analysis of specific local operations to develop understanding of organisations that conduct activities in multiple locations across many countries. Glocalisation as a concept has uses for understanding the activities of transnational groups in the early stages of establishing themselves, particularly religious groups who conduct their activities across multiple countries.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, much like other globalised neo-Pentecostal ministries, show an astute understanding of the importance of maintaining links between the local and global within their religious imaginary. Appadurai (1996: 31) argues that in late-modernity globalisation is a fluid process in which, role models, and lifestyles become disconnected from a certain country or nationality and become a part of a global imaginary that are linked to transnational networks, 'the imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and the key component of a new global order.' Roudometof (2014: 10) observes that in globalised modernity,

Although communities continue to be formed around the notion of 'locality', this category can be divorced from its connection to a specific geographical area. Locality can be constructed transnationally or symbolically alongside its traditional connection to a specific place

Neo-Pentecostalism embodies a global imaginary by facilitating transnational networks and propagating a particular brand of church or ministry in localised contexts. In his study of a prosperity church in Hollywood, Marti (2008: 177) observes

the goal for a Christian ... is not just to succeed but to be part of transforming the world in partnership with God. Individual-level ambition makes way for a grand, cosmic ambition that encompasses the greater world and the flow of world history.

For neo-Pentecostals, choice is the operating force that guides these globalised ambitions. In her study of Ghanaian prosperity gospel, Agana (2015) points out that prosperity pastors with international reputations, such as Joel and Victoria Osteen, Paula White, Kenneth Copeland, and Creflo Dollar preach that believers must choose to have faith that God will provide health and wealth to obedient Christians. These prosperity pastors link the actions of individual Christians to global responsibilities, reiterating the importance of tithing to support the continued expansion of their ministries and a key part of receiving God's blessing. With their cable television shows, international speaking tours, internet streaming, and book sales, these internationally recognised prosperity preachers provide access to this message on a global scale. Specifically, Sinitiere (2015: 211) notes the global and influential reach of Texas-based Joel Osteen's ministries

a television broadcast that beams into millions of homes, an Internet presence that engages at least as many fans and followers, and a radio program on SiriusXM heard by countless others, not to mention a steady stream of New York Times bestselling books and his role at pastor of the nation's largest megachurch.

On Joel and Victoria Osteen's blog, Victoria Osteen (2014) reiterates the importance of tithing, 'Remember, you can't out give God and when you become a giver and a tither, you can wake up every morning and say, "I am positioned for a blessing!"' Brian Houston and Joel Osteen are friends. Houston interviewed Osteen for Hillsong's podcast, introducing Osteen as 'a great friend, great man of God' (Hillsong Leadership Podcast 2017). Osteen responds 'Brian, it's been our honour to be here, we love you guys... Just, all ya'll standing all over the world. All the Hillsong songs that we sing in our worship services and just what you guys have meant' (Hillsong Leadership Podcast 2017). The Australian neo-Pentecostal churches participate in creating these transnational neo-Pentecostal networks, using strategies to link their local churches and church plants to a globalised religious imaginary, in which every person is a potential convert for growing the neo-Pentecostal branded church.

Hillsong, C3 Church, Influencers, Citipointe Church, and Planetshakers deploy expansion strategies that reflect an awareness of glocalisation through their engagement with local communities overseas. This demonstrates an astute sense of the need to bridge gaps between the local community and a church organisation that operates transnationally. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have established multiple church locations in countries other than Australia. Hillsong runs churches in fifteen major city centres—including New York, Los Angeles, London, Paris, Cape Town, and Kiev—and events on seven continents

(*Hillsong Fact Sheet* 2016). According to C3 Global, C3 Church has branded churches in four hundred different locations—including Manila, Toronto, New York, and London (C3 Global *Find a Church* 2017). Planetshakers operates two churches in the USA, one in Switzerland and another in South Africa (Planetshakers *Plan a Visit* 2018). Influencers Church (2018) has three campuses in the USA. COC/inc (2017) claims to have ‘over 400,000 International Network of Church members world-wide!’ and the Citipointe (2017) brand of church has planted in three overseas locations: Northern Colorado, the city of Auckland in New Zealand, and Bulgaria.

While Australian neo-Pentecostal churches maintain multiple campuses in Australia, their establishment of churches internationally provides growth opportunities. Their strategies for successfully undertaking these global ventures encompass dynamics of glocalisation. Klaver (2016: 423) observes that neo-Pentecostal churches ‘are at the centre of innovative global religious networks that successfully “franchise” churches in global cities in different part of the world’. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches tailor their overseas ventures to suit local conditions while maintaining strong links to the style and theological underpinnings of the original church brand. The churches’ slogans reflect their globalised imaginary while linking to personal, local action: C3 Church’s ‘A global community’, Hillsong’s ‘Welcome Home’, COC/inc ‘Born for More’, and Planetshakers’ ‘To empower generations for generations’. Their ability to establish and sustain a visible church brand in multiple overseas locations uses knowledge of local communities—including recruiting local pastors and taking over struggling local churches—and employing local cultural and material resources assists in integrating their brand of church with the community, to ensure a viable church plant.

The orientation towards growth, abundance, and success in Australian neo-Pentecostal theology incorporates globalised elements of glocalisation. Growth theology justifies global expansion strategies as churches seek ever-growing congregations while accessing increased tithing pools. In his research on Hillsong Church, Goh (2008: 288) argues that churches seeking increasingly larger congregations express a growth orientation that conditions the structure and liturgy of the church. Goh (2008: 288) observes global churches ‘must be seen as institutions whose practices signify and rehearse a material “greatness” ... as a seemingly tangible and concrete “body” of Christ’. Liturgical features of Australian neo-Pentecostalism—the emphasis on the large size of the congregation, the set-up of the church worship area as a performance space (usually in the centre of a major city), the growth theology justifying the inherent sense of ‘bigness’ throughout church services and events—are geared to emphasise the global nature of the church (Goh 2008). However, this is

counterbalanced with a dual theological orientation towards the local. Goh (2008: 301) observes Hillsong's ability construct personalised access to the mega experience 'translating the invisible and transcendent God into the body-sized signs and images which provide accessible cues for the human participant'. The inclusion of the individual participant is crucial to developing congregants' commitment to attending the church. Klaver (2016: 424) observes the beginning of a typical Hillsong worship service that actualises this bridging of the global and local. Projected onto a large screen above the stage, a video:

with fast moving images and loud music... displays shots of a wondering young person, who from scenes in nature, moves into the direction of a big city. Alternating iconic images of global cities around the world, the video finds in climax (supported by music), in shots of a worship space with a stage and a band, resembling the viewer's actual worship space. A smooth transition between the video and a live band on stage is made, blending the world represented in the video and the actual location into one (Klaver 2016: 424).

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches employ a similar style throughout their services around the world; juxtaposition of images that links the globalised nature of the church to the actual space in which the individual congregant is worshipping. The promotional video for the Hillsong 2017 conference shows a series of images linking the micro to macro: images of trees and mountains are interspersed with close-up shots of rock, bark, and leaf surface, an image of a flock of white birds precedes a close shot of three white feathers, a man sitting in an empty auditorium is followed by several images of stadiums filled with people, and of images of populated buildings and cities (Hillsong Church 2017). The video for C3 Church's 2018 Presence conference displays similar juxtaposition: a montage of close-up shots of a white bird, a man in chains, and a woman dancing behind a veil are followed by scenes of a flock of birds flying over a city, chains falling to the floor, the veil pulled away to reveal a lit-up cross, and, finally, clips of audiences dancing and praying (C3 Church *Presence* 2018). This ability to blend perception of the global with a local space within Australian neo-Pentecostal produced images mirrors glocalisation in an ability to bridge the local and global both symbolically and physically within promotional materials made by the churches.

One of the main ways that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches maintain the similarity of their church around the world is through style, particularly through their music production and performance in services. Riches (2010) observes Hillsong Church's global vision is evident in an analysis of their music production. Riches (2010: 153) argues Hillsong's global growth is an element of a brand creation strategy where 'sophisticated'

locations in Paris, London, Kiev and Cape Town are shown in music videos and film clips promoting church events, overcoming transnational borders to link the original ‘local’ Baulkham Hills congregation to the world-wide Hillsong-branded locations. The development of the appearance of a global religion is reinforced through song lyrics that evoke a sense of participation in an overwhelmingly large religious force. Riches (2010: 150) notes that dance and movement ‘are incorporated into most album recording events, and Hillsong emphasises physical participation – a mass of people gathered together expressing themselves in unified movement.’ The lyrics of neo-Pentecostal worship music further the emphasis on the performance of a globalised religious movement. The lyrics from Hillsong Church’s (2000) song ‘Here to Eternity’ express this as ‘We see your spirit moving, we burn with holy fire/And your glory is seen through all the earth’. In the song ‘God be Praised’ from C3 Church, the lyrics ‘Let the nations sing/God be praised/Let the earth rejoice/God be praised’ expresses a sense of the global to the congregation in which the individual attendee actualises through the act of singing in a mass audience (Korocz & McGruther 2013). In the Hillsong movie *Hillsong: Let Hope Rise* (2016) there are multiple references to the importance of displaying a global church. The church band Hillsong United plays a significant role in this globalising dynamic. In the movie, there are several montages of the band’s world-wide travels, and captions explaining the band’s locations in these scenes are provided to the viewer to reinforce the global nature of the band’s expeditions. Planetshakers, C3 Church, and Citipointe have worship bands that perform a similar function—their travels are displays via social media and in promotional film clips—linking the global and local church through the production of praise and worship music.

The lyrics sung by both the church band and the congregation, accompanied by video images of similar performances at church locations around the world, allow Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to use their worship music as a way of ensuring the international church locations stay connected to the original church brand. The Sunday worship services follow similar liturgical structures across the churches: music and singing, followed by message from a speaker which usually culminates in an invitation to make or renew a commitment to be a Christian, and finishing with more music (Klaver 2016). The use of a particular music style is important for linking worship performances to the global aspect of the church. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches favour rock, pop, and hip-hop sounds when arranging their music. Joel Houston, leader of the Hillsong United Band, says that he researches ‘secular music’ to ensure that the worship music he writes remains relevant (*Hillsong: Let Hope Rise* 2016). Evans (2007) observes that for five hundred years, church music led

compositional innovation. However, Houston's comment reveals that neo-Pentecostal composers replace innovative musical approaches with music derivative of 'secular' popular culture to ensure 'relevancy'. The churches use electronic instruments to construct lulls and crescendos within services, seeking to heighten the sense of an encounter with God as a mighty global power (Jennings 2014: 211). For example, in their song 'Endless Praise' (*YouTube* 2014), the Planetshakers band begins the song leading the congregation through an acoustic guitar arrangement where a lyrical refrain is softly repeated. The band builds on this refrain adding drums, piano, electric guitar, choir voices and finally, the congregation and band jump ecstatically in time with the synthesiser-led beat (Endless Praise / Planetshakers *YouTube* 2014). The performance crescendo and unified dancing accompanied by images of large crowds engaged in a similar performance (shown on screens to the audience) is used in Australian neo-Pentecostal church services around the world to reinforce the sense of the church's global presence. Through the creation, production, and performance of their music, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches emphasise their link to a sense of the global in their dissemination of church-branded resources. This creation of the global is counter-balanced through maintaining localised connections and networks within and across church plants.

Similar to other international prosperity churches and ministries, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches engage with a global religious imaginary to propagate a homogenised type of spirituality in local contexts. Chong (2015: 215) observes of Singaporean megachurches their 'integration of trans-nationalizing networks and local indigenizing cells also enables them to combine global connectivity with local relevance amongst distinct groups of Singapore society.' In her study of American megachurch pastor Creflo Dollar's global ministry, Mumford (2011: 223) observes in Dollar's focus on transforming the individual 'As individuals change and decide to live their lives according to the will of God, the world will change accordingly.' Dollar's preaching teaches that people do not have to be poor anymore, and, as Mumford (2011) points out, coupled with the emphasis in individual transformation, this assumes that poverty will simply disappear when people change their thinking. This homogenisation of individual circumstance is transported to a global scale as prosperity churches and preachers teach a similar message around the world. The Association of Vineyard Churches, based in Redding California, claims to have over two-thousand four-hundred associated churches around the world, states 'The kingdom of God is not a geo-political territory, nor is it the people of God. Rather, the kingdom of God is a dynamic realm' (Vineyard 2018). Similarly, the Australian-based Citipointe Church states 'In our eyes, Church is one of the greatest miracles on the planet! One body: working, living, loving

and praying together for the advancement of God's Kingdom and the salvation of souls'. The understanding of the individual's role in realising God's kingdom consists of assisting in growing the neo-Pentecostal brand of church. Explaining the success of its US church planting, Influencers Church claims

Influencers USA is growing consistently and in just 4 years since it's [sic] inception with 1 family in a lounge room has grown to over 2500 people... The global goal is to plant over 200 congregations in the next 10-15 years around the world and to raise 10,000 leaders in the next 6-10 years (Influencers Church *About* 2018).

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches participate in the creation of a homogenising global imaginary that is present in other international neo-Pentecostal churches and ministries, in which all people and localities are potential converts to the neo-Pentecostal brand of church.

The overseas church plants use the original church's branded music and logos to build awareness of the church brand, and the church plants also receive regular visits from the senior leadership team. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches' overseas ventures are not reproductions of the original churches. The churches located away from the original or main church campus use local resources to develop their activities and attempt to create strong links with the local community. When establishing the London Hillsong campus, Brian Houston's son Joel Houston, the leader of the Hillsong church band Hillsong United, was tasked with developing the church community (Riches 2010: 154). Part of Joel Houston's strategy was to engage the local church-goers by inviting congregants to host casual Bible study sessions throughout the week in their own homes (Riches 2010: 154). Similar to David Yonggi Cho's cell-church tactic, Joel Houston provided a way of creating routine gatherings between congregation members outside the Sunday service. Hillsong encourages all congregation members to meet informally with fellow Christians, but this is particularly important for furthering establishment of the church brand overseas. According to Hillsong London's 2014 Financial Report, submitted to the United Kingdom Charity Commission, the church established 'more than 400 mid-week home-based Small Groups' (2014: 9). Australian neo-Pentecostal churches draw on local resources to engage the newly planted church with the local community. This data is reported as growing the church, enacting strategies of achieving growth around the world.

The home-group strategy has the advantage of negating the effects of participating in a large congregation. In his study of British cell churches, Harvey (2003: 96), and Zech (2003) in his study of churches as franchises, both argue that the establishment of home fellowship groups is crucial for a growth church because these groups can be tailored to fit

congregation demographic profiles while encouraging congregants to bring non-churchgoing friends and acquaintances. In their church planting training literature, C3 Church encourages new pastors to operate small home-groups out of their church congregation (C3 Global *C3 Connect Group Leader Training* 2016) and provides literature to assist these home groups in creating Bible-study groups. Hillsong Church has proved adept at using pre-existing church communities by taking over the management of existing churches and rebranding them as Hillsong. In 2016, the City of Grace Church in Arizona became a Hillsong Church and the Senior Pastors, Terry and Judith Crist, affiliated their church with the Hillsong brand, becoming ‘a global Hillsong campus’ (Hillsong, *Hillsong Phoenix* 2016). This meant that the original City of Grace Church gained access to the resources Hillsong offers, including a new website, visits from the church band, Hillsong United, and Brian and Bobbie Houston’s ‘visionary leadership’ (Hillsong, *Hillsong Phoenix* 2016). On the City of Grace Church website, the new Hillsong management team has access to data collected in the ‘personalisation’ survey that new congregants are encouraged to undertake (Hillsong Phoenix *myHillsong* 2016). This data allows Hillsong to tailor the rebranded Phoenix campus to suit local expectations, effectively drawing on the established City of Grace Church congregation and resources. The use of localised resources—establishing home fellowship groups around new church locations and rebranding already-existing churches as their own—assists Australian neo-Pentecostal churches in creating the ‘local’ aspect of glocalisation in their curated church experiences.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches support the establishment and expansion of church activities internationally employing particular funding structures. All organisations associated with Australian neo-Pentecostal churches carry a mechanism for collecting tithes and donations. Donations are the biggest sources of revenue for the churches world-wide and Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are adept at soliciting donations to support their activities. The websites for each group, event, and ministry promote a section for online donations and monetary offerings are solicited at all church-related events including conferences, church services, youth meetings, and aid program meetings. In the financial year 2013-2014, Hillsong Church London had an annual income of almost thirteen million pounds, ten million pounds of which was generated from voluntary donations (UK Charity Commission *Hillsong Church London* 2016). According to Hillsong London’s expenditure report for the 2013-2014 financial year, three million pounds was spent on events that generated more voluntary income and nine million pounds was spent on charitable activities (UK Charity Commission *Hillsong Church London* 2016). Charitable activities as listed in

the 2014 Hillsong London annual financial report include conferences and events, resource sales, teaching and ministry, and missions (Hillsong London Annual Financial Report 2014). This revenue stream is used to further awareness of the church's brand on a global scale.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches provide financial support for international activities from their non-profit bases in Australia, at least in the initial stages of establishing churches, events, and aid programs. Planetshakers City Church, registered on the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profit Commissions, lists the South African Planetshakers church plant as an expense on the 2013, 2014, and 2015 annual financial reports (Planetshakers Annual Financial Report 2013, 2014, 2015). Initial spending on the South African Church plant in 2013 was almost two-hundred and eighteen thousand dollars, reduced to one-hundred and eighty-nine thousand dollars in 2014 (Planetshakers City Church Directors Report 2014: 10). Planetshakers decreased spending by some further eighty-thousand dollars on their South African church in 2015 (Planetshakers City Church Directors Report 2015: 9). While remaining a Planetshakers-branded church, the funding structures for this church planting are organised to allow such overseas activities to eventually self-fund, making extra income for further expansion activities. The flexibility and growth-orientated nature of the neo-Pentecostal international funding structure coupled with the establishment of branded non-profit organisations in multiple nations allows Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to gather revenue from all over the world. This funding process incorporates dynamics of glocalisation, as they use donations, tithes and profits from localised churches to fund their international expansion.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches effectively incorporate glocalisation to support the global expansion of their churches. Using their brand recognition, cultivated and curated in Australia, the churches successfully engage with local communities to establish a range of activities in international locations. Through their music and promotional imagery, the churches develop tactics to link local congregations in participating in creating the appearance of a global religious movement. Their ability to encourage home groups within large church congregations ensures that participants feel connected to a local community of like-minded worshippers. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have the institutional structure to take over existing churches and successfully rebrand them by offering struggling churches resources and international brand recognition. The churches' funding structures allow donations made around the world to be used to further expand their activities, both in a local sense by organising community-based events and the international sense by supporting a visiting pastor with a call for an offering at a Sunday service. Similar to other prosperity

churches with an international presence, these activities assist to bridge local and global, providing dynamics through which an individual congregant can connect to a global church brand.

Church planting as transnational corporatism

The purpose of this section is to explain how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use techniques similar to transnational corporatism in their church planting ventures. This is important for understanding how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate corporate culture as a key dynamic of globalisation into their global operations. The section argues that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches mimic aspects of corporate culture in their approaches to church planting and expanding their overseas activities. The section finds that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches display a strong similarity to transnational corporations in branding and operational aspects of international church planting ventures and deliberately mimic aspects of transnational corporate culture to support the viability of their church plants.

The global dominance of the transnational corporation is a significant economic and cultural development in late-modernity. Transnational corporations, as institutions that can often transcend the power of the nation state, have extensive influence around the world (Garret 2008: 131). The global dominance of transnational corporatism means that ‘production processes within large firms are being decoupled from specific territories and being formed into new global systems’ (Howells & Wood, cited in Sklair 2015: 65). A transnational corporation operates in multiple countries and has a management system that focuses on global outlooks. Features of this globalised corporatism include pursuit of profit and growth, operations that seek to negate competition, and a hierarchical institutional structure. Barber (2015: 32) argues that the dominance of economic competition has led to a global corporate culture that emphasises ‘one commercially homogenous global network... tied together by technology, ecology, communications, and commerce’. The transnational corporation is the institution through which this dominance is mediated, ensuring long-term economic expansion and survival for the company. As Nuebenbuer (2014: 272) points out,

corporate activity as being propelled into extensive communication environments in which the dynamics of competition frame much of their behaviour and make activities such as the ability to establish, maintain and extend corporate brands an intrinsic element of global capital – literally the point at which material capital (that required to produce, deliver and make a product or service known) becomes inseparable from symbolic capital.

This inseparability means that the ways in which a brand is communicated becomes an operational aspect for TNCs. Using the branding strategies established in Australia, neo-Pentecostal churches operate in a manner similar to transnational corporations to ensure that international church planting ventures are successful and continue the expansion of congregations and finances. The development of transnational corporations and corporate culture is a significant dynamic of globalisation and, in many ways, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are similar to other international growth church and megachurch operations, mimicking strategies and culture of transnational corporations to appeal to a global congregation pool.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches leverage their Australian roots in the creation of an international church brand. Del Castillo-Musset et. al. (2013: 219-20) make a distinction between multinational corporations (MNCs) and transnational corporations (TNCs) arguing:

whereas MNCs have extensive international operations yet are clearly identified with a home base, the TNC business model is based on cross-border diversity in market capitalization, ownership, administration, production and so on. It is also widely seen as far less identifiable with one home country. In recent decades, the TNC model has clearly become the standard form of top corporate organizations.

For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, identifying with the Australian nation is not central to their international expansion strategies. The senior pastors make self-deprecating jokes about their own accents during their speeches and sermons overseas, and imagery from the Australian landscape features in event promotional material, particularly when the church's annual conference is held in Australia. However, being Australian is peripheral to an Australian neo-Pentecostal church's international expansion ventures. Given that the population of Australia is relatively small, neo-Pentecostal growth churches based in Australia had to develop church planting to fulfil ambitious goals of growth. C3 Church (2018) says that they wish to plant one thousand churches by the year 2020. Influencers Church (2018) states on their website they want to 'plant over 200 congregations in the next 10-15 years around the world and to raise 10,000 leaders in the next 6-10 years.' These goals require a world-wide outlook with a strong institutional culture to achieve. As discussed above, central to the Australian neo-Pentecostal church brand is a globalised religious imaginary. Hillsong, C3 Church, Citipointe, Planetshakers and Influencers specifically market their international church planting efforts as an element of cultivating a global religious movement. The churches seek to create a transnational space within their churches

by framing their theology as purposeful for the entire human population. Hillsong, C3 Church, Planetshakers, Citipointe, and Influencers all make multiple reference to their churches as ‘global’ on their websites and promotional materials. For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, church planting is the operational strategy that provides access to many different locations around the world, operationalising their vision of a global religious movement. Church planting works in a similar way to that of a transnational corporation establishing outposts in many different locations. This process subsumes identification with a particular nation, which means that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are more interested in emphasising transnationality in their church planting strategies, rather than their Australian-based heritage.

Church planting is an activity undertaken by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to increase their access to larger congregations and finances, realising their vision of being global churches. Church planting occurs when entrepreneurial pastors establish a church in a different locale to that of the original church. Church planting does not necessarily take place internationally, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches initially established branded churches in multiple Australian locations and then started overseas church planting ventures. The evangelical elements of neo-Pentecostal theology frame the entire world as a mission field (Krakkainen 2004: 168) and church planting is different to missionary work in that the new church established within a community then takes on the brand of the original church. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are prolific church planters. C3 Church claims to have planted over four hundred and fifty churches internationally (C3 Church *C3 Global* 2018). Hillsong Church does not specify an exact number of church plantings, stating they have ‘churches in city centres in 14 countries and on five continents and the church has an average global attendance approaching 100,000 weekly’ (*Hillsong Fact Sheet* 2016). Planetshakers’ and Influencers’ church planting programs are not as established as the other Australian neo-Pentecostal churches. Planetshakers has established several church plants in South Africa and the USA (Planetshakers 2018), Citipointe Church has three overseas church plants in the USA, New Zealand, and Bulgaria (Citipointe 2018), and Influencers has three in the USA (Influencers Church 2018).

The geographic areas Australian neo-Pentecostal churches chose to plant reflects a similarity to transnational corporations. Del Castillo-Musset et. al. (2013: 219) analyse the top 2000 Forbes companies to find that the penetration of transnational corporations dominates in the global North. Hillsong has successfully established church planting ventures mainly in the global North, targeting developed Western nations with an emphasis on

cosmopolitan ‘global’ cities such as London, Paris, New York, Los Angeles, Kiev, Sao Paulo, and Cape Town in South Africa (*Hillsong Fact Sheet* 2016). C3 Church provides a map of their church plant locations around the world on their website (C3 Global *Search* 2016) and they have thirty church plants in Africa—most of these in Uganda—, twenty-seven in the United States, and twenty-five in Europe. While COC/inc has church plants on Pacific islands and in South America, Citipointe has yet to establish a location in the global South. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches seek to establish plants where they are most likely to be successful and the global North attracts the most church planting locations, similar to the penetration of transnational corporations in the global North. The locations of Australian neo-Pentecostal church plants reflect the attraction of neo-Pentecostalism for aspirational middle-class congregants. In his study of megachurches in Singapore, Chong (2015: 217) argues that the churches are successful because they appeal to the

young professionals making the socio-economic transition from working to middle class within an achievement-oriented culture in Singapore is a key reason for their success. It also notes that to assure their contemporary relevance, megachurches, more than any other, almost seamlessly marry their theology with the “marketplace” or business sphere.

Similarly, Koning (2017: 1) observes the popularity of prosperity churches in amongst the Indonesian aspirational middle-class. Neo-Pentecostal growth churches appeal to aspirational middle-classes in Los Angeles (Marti 2012), the Netherlands (Klaver 2015), cities in Ghana (Agana 2016), Seoul (Kim 2012), Guatemala City (Ignatow et. al. 2014: 834), and other Latin American cities (Martin 1995). Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders encourage similar type of aspirational success to these churches. For example, Mark Ramsey pastor of Citipointe Church preaching at C3 Church San Diego says

If you’re not receiving all that God has for you, you’re not outworking the plan of God for your life yet, and you’re watching other people get blessed and moving forward, then maybe it’s not God doesn’t love you, maybe you’re just out of position a little bit... You have to be flexible (Ramsey 2017).

Here, Ramsey (2017) uses middle-management jargon (outworking, flexible, moving forward) to emphasise aspirational understandings of spirituality to his inner-city San Diego audience. The brand of prosperity theology that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches offer appeals to urban-based, aspirational middle-class congregants, and they plant their churches in cities mostly in the global North, like TNCs, to ensure that the church plants are viable.

TNCs create brand management strategies to ensure the globalised growth of the company through brand recognition. Australian neo-Pentecostal international brand management is similar to the ways in which smaller TNCs create and manage their brands. According to Fujita (1995: 251) small to medium sized transnational corporations use intangible assets ‘derived from the possession of... advanced technology, brand names, marketing skills and efficient organisational structures’ to increase their growth. These smaller TNCs produce a restricted range of products that target a narrow market segments which means that they can exercise ‘a relatively high level of market power’ through the cultivation of ‘deep niche market strategies’ (Fujita 1995: 251). For a transnational corporation, its brand is ‘the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of an organization’s identity and its unique business model’ and is enacted in the every-day practice of the corporation (Jarventie-Thesleff, Moisander & Laine 2011: 197). Church planting is one method through which Australian neo-Pentecostal churches display the use of a deep niche marketing strategies while expressing the church’s organisational identity. A newly planted church takes on the original church logo and is usually pastored by a graduate—often a married couple—of the original church’s Bible-college. This means that a newly planted church is managed by people schooled in the church’s identity, that includes an intimate understanding of values, institutional structures, behaviours, and orientations. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches provide financial support for church plantings, at least in the initial stages of the process. The Planetshakers financial report for 2014 submitted to the ACNC lists the South African church plant as an expense (Planetshakers Financial Report 2014: 9). The Planetshakers South Africa church plant in Cape Town uses social media to consolidate the Planetshakers brand across multiple platforms—Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. The church plant uses the Planetshakers brand, including associated hashtags and online images, to link into the global network of Planetshakers-branded churches and events. The promotional material for all advertised events displays the Planetshakers church logo and follows a recognisably cultivated aesthetic and linguistic style. The Planetshakers South Africa (2017) Facebook page posts pictures and videos of Sunday services, interspersed with posts promoting the Planetshakers band and annual conference. The networking opportunities presented on social media allow for the church plants to use resources from the original church—images and promotional videos—while contributing to the global unifications of the church brand. Hillsong Church, C3 Church and Influencers conduct comparable brand management strategies across their church plants: images, resources, music, aesthetic, and style are created and maintained with a global outlook. Australian neo-Pentecostal church

plant management mirrors a similar organisational identity to a transnational corporation. The presentation of the church through control of the church plant aesthetic using branded resources mimics the ways in which transnational corporations present their identity through brand management.

The institutional structure of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches participating in church planting is similar to transnational corporation in that decision-making is centralised to the senior levels of the hierarchy. De Pueblos (2006: 545) states that the transnational corporate structure involves:

a corporation with operations and investments in many countries around the world. It has headquarters in one country and operates wholly or partially owned subsidiaries in one of more other countries. The subsidiaries report to the central headquarters.

Hillsong, C3 Church, Influencers, Planetshakers and Citipointe manage a range of activities—and church plants—around the world. They all operate their main church campuses in Australia and the church plantings act as ‘subsidiaries’ for the original church with the purpose of propagating the church brand around the world. Pentecostalism is flexible about leadership appointment, and a leader is often found through ‘divine means’ involving prayer and receiving a message from God to confirm leadership (Maddox 2014b: 134). As discussed in Chapter Four, the organisational structure of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches encompasses a board of directors appointed by, and generally including, the senior pastoral leadership, which often involves multiple generations of the same family. The constitutions the churches follow are based on corporate governance principles that make the board of directors—the senior pastoral leadership—responsible for following the rules of the church association. The church constitutions effectively centralise the power to change anything relating to the operation of the church to the board of directors; that is, the senior pastors.

This is similar to the structure of organisation employed by transnational corporations where the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is ultimately responsible for decisions. For a transnational corporation, the CEO’s role is to manage internal and external expectations (Washington et. al. 2014: 200). Australian neo-Pentecostal church leaders act as CEOs. Hillsong, Planetshakers, and Influencers Church belong to the Assemblies of God denomination in Australia, now known as Australian Christian Churches (ACC). However, as Clifton (2009) points out, the senior pastors of individual churches associated with the Australian Christian Churches believe in strong pastoral leadership and the ACC

denomination does not dictate to senior pastors on matters of church governance. COC/inc and C3 Church are both independent of the ACC, and their institutional structure is similar with the senior pastors on the board of directors. Australian neo-Pentecostal senior pastors, not denominations, are therefore responsible, like CEOs, for managing expectations about their churches. De Pueblos (2006: 545) observes that transnational corporations often act solely in their own self-interest. Tax exemptions for religious organisations in most countries that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are located are not required to pay tax to a nation-state. This means that the churches are not accountable to a single nation-state. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches can act in their own self-interest as they are not required to be transparent with a government or shareholders. The board of directors wields decision-making power, like that of a board of directors for a transnational corporation. Australian neo-Pentecostal church hierarchical structure provides a similar power arrangement to that of a transnational corporation. Centralising decision-making capabilities to a board of directors means that the senior pastoral leadership is responsible for choices that affect the global activities of the church, mimicking the structure of a transnational corporation while at the same time, presenting as organisations that can operate over state boundaries. Despite denominational affiliations, the hierarchical structure of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches mimics the transnational corporation organisational model.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches resemble family-owned TNCs in their succession of church leadership positions. To facilitate the move from domestic to international markets, a family-owned firm requires: socialisation of 'trusted members into the corporate 'family'', provide a training ground for the future heir to the patriarch, and consolidate networks of personal and business relationships' (Wai-chung Yeung 2000: 55). Australian neo-Pentecostal churches tend to pass senior leadership positions onto family members and the churches choose trusted people to travel and establish church plants. Transnational corporations, particularly family-owned companies, tend to teach trustworthy people how to take on leadership roles in the company and they pass on their profit-making abilities through internal company rules (Wai-chung Yeung 2000: 55). This is similar to the succession arrangements of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches. The board of directors, with its powerful decision-making abilities, can decide who will succeed leadership positions within the church, without consulting the congregation. Hillsong, Influencers Church, and Planetshakers have all established senior pastors' family members in leadership positions and senior positions within the churches have passed through multiple generations of the same family. Similar to Joel Osteen's inheritance of Lakewood Church from his father John Osteen

(Sinitiere 2015), Hillsong Church was established by Frank Houston and then the leadership passed to his son Brian, who expanded Hillsong into a globalised church. Brian's wife Bobbie is a senior pastor of the church and runs the annual women's conference, a prominent leadership position. Brian and Bobbie Houston's adult children have leadership roles in the church. Joel Houston leads the church band Hillsong United and is assistant pastor at Hillsong New York (Paulson 2014a). Brian and Bobbie Houston's other son Ben is the pastor at the Los Angeles church plant (Paulson 2014a) and daughter Laura runs the Sydney Hillsong children's ministry Kidsong with her husband (brianandbobbie.com *Home* 2017). The Paradise Community Church, pastored by Andrew Evans until 2000, changed its name to Influencers Church after his son Ashley and daughter-in-law Jane took on the church leadership. Andrew Evans's second son Russell Evans and his wife Sam started Planetshakers in 2004. This means that two of Australia's most recently established neo-Pentecostal churches—Influencers Church and Planetshakers—with a focus on global expansion are led by members of the same family. The new leader needs to be trusted to manage the church brand, continue to grow the congregation and keep relationships with local and international church leaders. As mentioned above, Brian Houston and Joel Osteen are friends, and regularly speak at each other's churches. Phil Pringle is friends with David Yonggi Cho and is also an 'Advisory Pastor' to Kong Hee's Singaporean megachurch City Harvest Church (City News 2017). Choosing family members to take on leadership positions within the church allows Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to pass on the care of important relationships within the international prosperity church community to foster globalised growth.

De Pueblos (2006) states that motives for transnational corporatism include desire for growth and preventing competition. Australian neo-Pentecostal prosperity theology encourages an orientation towards infinite growth in church membership and finances while using 'envy evangelism' as a key strategy for competing with other churches (Maddox 2013). Australian neo-Pentecostal churches employ an organisational model that enacts the achievement of growth through evangelising and church planting. The Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders encourage their congregants to promote the success they experience in their lives to their non-church going friends, a process Maddox (2013: 109) terms 'envy evangelism'. One of the key ways that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use envy evangelism is to encourage their congregants to actively participate in the 'marketplace'. As part of their strategy for maintaining contemporary relevance, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches run business management courses to help their congregants succeed in the market.

These courses are available to congregants both online and run through international church plants. Planetshakers' 'Planet Business' is 'the business ministry of Planetshakers Church. Its vision is to empower and equip professionals and business people for Kingdom influence in the market place' (Planetshakers *Planet Business* 2016). Kingdom influence—a revised form of the millennial doctrine—seeks to actively establish the conditions for Jesus' return to earth by placing Christian in positions of influence in public life (Maddox 2014b: 144).

Planetshakers encourages congregants to be successful in the modern marketplace as a method of piquing the interest of non-church going people and, as discussed in Chapter Two, for putting Christians in positions of wealth, power and status to prepare for Jesus' return to Earth. Hillsong, C3 Church and COC/inc host prayer breakfasts and conferences that encourage Christian business owners to learn Biblical principles of leadership while encouraging attendees to see their success as a gift from God. This theological emphasis on business techniques promotes financial success amongst congregation members, which has the purpose of creating attractive reasons for non-church goers to come to a service. Bobbie Houston runs courses at the Hillsong women's conferences aimed at teaching women to cultivate a stereotypically feminine persona to get their non-church-attending friends at come to a Hillsong service (Maddox 2013: 110). These women's programs are run through Hillsong church plants all over the world. By running lifestyle and business management courses through their church plants around the world, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches' theological and operational strategies are oriented to achieving growth on a global scale. These expansion strategies are similar to the ways in which transitional corporations seek growth and profit on a global scale, promoting their brand through multiple locations, channels, and activities.

Transnational corporations aggressively pursue strategies to create competitive advantages for pursuing profit through growth and Australian neo-Pentecostal churches demonstrate similar techniques in their funding and employment structures. Kapler (2007: 287) argues that understanding competition is a central dynamic in the global dominance of transnational corporatism. Jones (2010: 944) observes that the transitional corporation's institutional dominance 'arises from its ability to extract rents from other stakeholders such as states and workers through structurally increasing bargaining power (through globalisation) over these groups'. Neo-Pentecostal churches do not appear compete with each other for congregants. This is evident in the ways in which they speak at each other's churches. For example, speaking at C3 Church San Diego, Mark Ramsey mentions the success of his own church, his Colorado church plant, Citipointe school, and the COC/inc university Christian

Heritage College. Ramsey uses this information in the context of his sermon to position himself as an experienced church leader. As discussed in Chapter Two, The Australian neo-Pentecostals design their services to reach people either unfamiliar with church, or who may find older mainline Christian church services ‘boring’. Thus, cultivating this leadership style of ‘experts’ is a strategy for getting the market share of potential congregants who may be unfamiliar with church or interested in attending a church that offers a ‘contemporary’ brand of Christianity.

The ‘product’ offered by neo-Pentecostal churches is a theology of prosperity practiced in a ‘seeker-sensitive’ style. These services are standardised across the church plants, replicating the ways in which TNCs maintain their brand of product and services around the world. As Kapler (2007: 288) argues, transnational corporations standardise their processes to increase efficacy providing the company with competitive advantages when moving to transnational markets. Australian neo-Pentecostal church plants use language and media elements to create a predictable church-going experience curated to be attractive to a potential congregant already familiar with Christianity. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches refer to the ‘contemporary’ elements that new church-attendees can expect of a particular service at any church plant in the world. The Sunday services held at the neo-Pentecostal church plants are similar; singing followed by an appeal for tithes and donations, a sermon from the senior pastor or a visiting pastor, and a final singing session. This standardisation amongst Australian neo-Pentecostal church plants provides a platform through which to engage new, potentially regular, congregants. For example, C3 Church uses the image-sharing social media platform Instagram to create hashtag threads linking its church plants around the world. The hashtag #seeyouinchurch is used on images of hundreds of its branded churches around the world where congregants are pictured dancing in front of stages populated with several musicians and backlit by large projector screens (C3 Global *Instagram* 2015). The ability of the Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to combine the management of social media platforms with elements of standardisation within the Sunday services throughout the church plants means that the churches engage with contemporary transnational marketing strategy. This process of standardisation is similar to the ways in which smaller transnational corporations compete in the market through creating brand loyalty strategies.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches operate in a similar manner to transitional corporations, particularly in global expansion methods through their church planting ventures. The churches seek to create an image of themselves as global religious movements

through church planting and brand management. A hierarchical and centralised institutional structure allows the senior pastoral leadership to pursue growth at their personal discretion, mimicking the CEO role and ignoring transnational boundaries. Giving family members prominent leadership positions and using Bible-college graduates as church planting leaders ensures that all employees in leadership positions are well-schooled in the church's expectations including theological orientations towards global growth in membership and finances. The churches undertake efforts to create standardised church experiences across church plants. This strategy is particularly apparent through their ability to network their church plants through social media platforms, using hashtags and standardised images to promote their churches all over the world. This has the purpose of appealing to potential congregants looking for a 'modernised' church experience and allowing the churches to compete for congregants who are either unfamiliar with church, or who want an experience different to that offered by the older mainline churches. Australian neo-Pentecostal church planting ventures—supported by the church institutional structures, brand development and competition strategies—mimic transnational corporations. The churches increase their expansion achievements by incorporating elements of transnational corporatism into their global operations.

Australian neo-Pentecostal aid programs and globalised inequality

The purpose of this section is to explain the reaction of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to globalised inequality. Globalised inequality has become a significant dynamic in late-modernity, this section is important for understanding how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches frame and actualise their responses to this issue. While recognising detrimental effects of inequality, poverty, and disadvantage, the programs run and supported by the churches tend to focus on pastoral care in which disadvantaged peoples are portrayed as disempowered and in need of 'rescue' or 'saving'. The section analyses Australian neo-Pentecostal aid programs to argue that the aspirational theology through which the Australian neo-Pentecostal churches frame the necessity of assisting disadvantaged peoples means that the programs often focus on conversion to Christianity as the most important outcome. The section finds that the ways in which Australian neo-Pentecostal churches frame disadvantage means that converting people to Christianity becomes a focus for their aid programs, and, through this, the churches portray themselves as achieving globalised strategies of community development.

The economic element of globalisation is encompassed in transitional corporatism, the dominant organising model of globalised capitalism in which companies increase profits by becoming transnational in their modes of operation. Investigating responses to inequality provides insight to operational dynamics of organisations undertaking global ventures. Schaefer (2002: 112) argues that transnational neo-Pentecostal movements actively participate in globalisation dynamics. The churches are ‘thinking globally’ to create world-wide networks while increasingly orienting ‘themselves in terms of a global charismatic culture consisting of fellowships, transnational organisations (‘para-churches’), high-tech media, international conferences, congregations and mega-churches’ (Schaefer 2002: 112). As churches with a globalised outreach, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are aware of the globalised effects of inequality. Mahutga (2006: 1863) notes that there are ‘high levels in inequality between nations... caused by an uneven spread of capitalism that segmented the international division of labour’. Scholars of globalisation observe that as global outlooks play a greater part in operations of modern institutions—whether that institution be a church, corporation, or government—structural inequality has become more entrenched within globalised systems.

Supporters of globalisation argue that industrial capitalism benefits many people as countries integrate to the global economy and people have access to unprecedented financial mobility, labour mobility, and increased global solidarity as people connect through technological means to share standards of ‘the good life’ (Hamelink 2015: 25-8). However, the trade, labour, and social dynamics of globalisation create an unequal spread of industrialisation—the main way to accumulate wealth in capitalism—in many parts of the world (Hamelink 2015: 25-8). The uneven wealth distribution created by globalising trade, labour and financial markets means that the nations and corporations making the most wealth remain concentrated rather than evenly distributed (Wood 2013: 125). Economically dominant countries tend to use global government forums—such as the World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund—to shore up their political domination ensuring that trade agreements may force developing nations to provide labour to globally competitive markets to successfully industrialise (Kohl 2003: 14). These policies tend to favour the needs of the transnational corporations delivering goods and services (Kohl 2003: 14). Martins (2011: 1) argues that the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 revealed the dominance of certain countries in the world economy and compounded the increasing inequality in income distribution. The effects of the uneven distribution of capital in late-modernity is evident in the increasing gap between the global poor and the elite transnational capitalist

class resulting in increased poverty, human trafficking, refugee movement, and unequal educational outcomes (Kohl 2003: 11). Because of the inequality in wealth distribution caused by globalisation, Kohl (2003: 14) identifies the need for complementary social policy ‘ranging from social welfare systems to various types of investment to increase the productive capacity of the poor’. The Australian neo-Pentecostal theology encourages engagement with people affected by inequality within globalisation. The churches attempt to fulfil social policy requirements by implementing aid programs in which they claim to address some aspects of the inequality that globalisation causes.

The prosperity theology preached in neo-Pentecostal churches teaches congregants that they only need to have faith and make actions within faith, such as prayer and tithing, to receive material blessings from God. The prosperity method of receiving blessing explains class privilege as evidence of God’s favour for the individual and is not caused by structural means. As Ignatow et. al (2014: 836) observe of neo-Pentecostal theological explanations for material wealth in Guatemala, God guarantees success and ‘personal material wealth is interpreted as a sign of God’s favour on the believer’s life and it is believed that people who give much to the church will also be blessed with even more prosperity.’ Brauwer et. al. (1996, in Barker 2007: 416) argue that ‘the appeal of the prosperity gospel for underprivileged groups would certainly seem to lie in its ability to “enchant” people with “the prospect of a miracle cure for their own and their societies’ economic maladies.”’ Barker (2007: 421) illuminates this understanding of inequality in Filipino megachurch pastor Butch Conde’s comparison between the modern Filipino economy and the more successful Korean economy:

The intense prayer life of the Koreans has not only resulted in their miraculous church growth; it has also brought miraculous advancement to the whole nation as well, devastated by two major wars, Korea gradually rose from the economic shambles to become one of the most prosperous nations in the world today—a leading manufacturer of cars, ships, electronics, and other products.

This understanding of prosperity—contingent on faithful actions that are made in order to receive ‘blessing’—frames the way in which Australian neo-Pentecostal churches design and operate aid and community development programs. Citipointe Church (2018) states ‘We are surrounded by a local community within a city that groans under the weight of ever increasing socio-economic disadvantage. There has never been a better time for the church to bring hope and help to those that live in our neighbourhoods.’ Citipointe sees the role of the church as central to assisting disadvantaged peoples, as the not-for-profit sector takes on a

bigger role in social care initiatives. On the website, Hillsong's charity CityCare (2018) explains 'Hillsong CityCare is the expression of the heart of our church in the local community, mobilising volunteers to serve through our programs, services and projects to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of people.' According to CityCare (2018), the emphasis on spiritual care positions Hillsong as a 'beacon of hope in a world looking for answers.' Here, CityCare implies that such answers are found in the company of people ascribing to neo-Pentecostal versions of Christianity.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have implemented a range of aid programs and provide donations to international charity organisations. Through these, they claim to address patterns of exploitation brought about by globalising economic and political forces. Their aid programs engage community development strategies that attempt to address the effects of poverty, war, gendered exploitation, and educational inequality. The churches have dedicated ministry for providing charity services—Hillsong CityCare and the Hillsong Foundation, COC/inc Global Care, C3 Church Beyond International, and Planetshakers Empower—while also partnering with other organisations including Compassion Australia, World Vision, Mercy Ministries, and A21 Campaign to support global charities. A focus on pastoral care means that the programs provide material goods to disadvantaged people while at the same time encouraging them to become Christians and attend the local church plant. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches see these aid programs as integral to their evangelising theology. Influencers Church (2018) explains their understanding of the links between the work of churches and aid programs

The local church is God's plan to get his love to the world. God created the church to be His local family in a local community and its [sic] our vision to raise pastors and leaders to create these local expressions of God's mission. Influencers Church is a cause-driven Church with a focus on reaching people. We understand that we have been rescued to be rescuers. We have been helped to help, healed to heal and loved to love. Influencers church has a passionate commitment to social justice and missions, with feeding programs in a number of countries, disaster relief staff, orphanages, rescue homes, HIV/AIDS nursing and foster care programs, etc and church planters who are making a difference around the world.

Here, Influencers Church implies that the aid programs they support are a part of their 'mission' to 'rescue' others. The implementation of aid programs in disadvantaged communities around the world benefits Australian neo-Pentecostal churches as they encourage people living in these communities to attend a local Australian neo-Pentecostal church plant.

Australian neo-Pentecostal theology justifies the churches' globalised aid programs and intervention strategies for global issues such as alleviating poverty, rescuing trafficking victims, assisting refugees of international conflicts, and providing education programs. King (2011: 21) argues that faith-based organisations play a significant role in international humanitarian work and religion 'remains central in shaping the actual motivations, rhetoric, practice and production among faith-based humanities'. Neo-Pentecostal theology views the entire world as a missional space in which evangelising is a key responsibility for the individual Christian to undertake. In neo-Pentecostal theology 'Salvation is a personal conversion (or regeneration) that is conscious, sincere and freely chosen' (McCleary 2007: 60). Neo-Pentecostals see that every person in the world should have the opportunity to access the salvation offered by the church and experience receiving spiritual gifts. Part of this world missional strategy is justified in a theological response to inequality through interpretations of how salvation relates to prosperity gospel. Salvation is achieved through striving for perfection interpreting 'good works as a spiritual sign and part of the process of perfecting one's faith' (McCleary 2007: 60). Spiritual assurance is perceived as an outward sign and 'human activity that results in material success is interpreted as a sign that God has chosen him/her as one of the 'elect' who will be saved' (McCleary 2007: 60). Part of the responsibility of receiving spiritual gifts is to provide ways for the poor and exploited to access salvation while participating in the individual's own pursuit of perfection. As Kim (2011: 140) argues, Christians support humanitarian development activity because they feel a moral obligation to help others. This is particularly the case with evangelically orientated and globalised churches as they undertake social outreach 'to attain religious virtues associated with grace and compassion... [and] work to insure others to adopt the appropriate moral disposition necessary to enhance volunteer mobilization' (Elisha 2011: 13). Australian neo-Pentecostal churches combine their global evangelising capabilities and resources with elements of their understanding of salvation and prosperity theology to provide aid programs overseas. The programs the churches implement range from providing material goods to victims of disasters to working with victims of human trafficking. The theological justifications for their global aid ventures affect the motivations, rhetoric and practice of Australian neo-Pentecostal church programs.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use their existing local welfare and hardship support programs and volunteer networks to extend their programs to a global scale. Many of these programs aim to address poverty as a justice issue framed in theological terms and within the realm of the responsibility of an ethical Christian to actively participate in

addressing. For example, Global Care (COC/inc's social justice branch) states on their website 'The heart of Global Care is to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ, to extend the hands of mercy to those who need it the most, regardless of age, race or religion' (Global Care *Disaster Relief* 2016). Global Care provides a two main welfare services; funds and volunteer assistance to victims of natural disasters—mainly in Fiji and Vanuatu where COC has established partnerships with local churches—and coordinating an Australia-wide volunteer program for assisting 'people experiencing everyday hardship' which involves mowing lawns, staffing low-cost food stores, and providing school children with free breakfasts (Global Care 2016). The organisation's director Peter Pilt has extended their outlook from Australian-centred to a globalised aid program through his belief that 'we can change the world, one person at a time' (Global Care *Social Justice* 2016).

C3 Church runs Beyond International as an umbrella organisation for coordinating overseas projects aimed at alleviating poverty and ill-health (C3 Community *Beyond International Projects* 2016). C3 Church partners with other international aid programs such as Compassion, Global Development Group and C3-branded church plants in local areas to deliver housing, food, micro-finance loans, education programs and funding for health research to people in Sri Lanka, Fiji, and Uganda. Northern Uganda is a particular focus for C3 Church with four different aid programs accompanied by funding for 'Peace Radio' which provides Christian music, testimonies, Biblical teaching while using the platform to raise health issues, social justice and instructions about dealing with land mines and ammunitions (C3 Community *Beyond International Projects* 2016). Hillsong runs a similar venture called Hillsong Africa Foundation that aims to deliver a wide range of charity services to several different places on the African continent (Hillsong Africa Foundation 2016). Hillsong also partners with Compassion to encourage their congregants to donate to alleviating child poverty, providing a sponsoring program to help children attend school or assist families to provide material resources. In the Hillsong movie *Hillsong: Let Hope Rise* (2016), the band members of Hillsong United visit a family in Manila who are sponsored by Compassion. The Hillsong United band members discuss the positive effects of the work Compassion performs and express their feelings of having 'done something' for global poverty by sponsoring a child for forty dollars a month. The rationale for undertaking volunteer work or contributing funds to the programs comprises a dual theological understanding about Christian salvation and evangelism. In this theology, an ethical Christian is required to undertake 'good works', including child sponsorship, which is interpreted as following the Biblical example of Jesus.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches operate a globalised ministry that supports their theology of growth. For those congregants interested in getting involved with their overseas aid programs, Australian neo-Pentecostal church-branded courses provide students with methods to expand church growth through modernised evangelism techniques. The C3 Church Global Culture facilitator manual includes an activity where participants discuss the MacDonald's fast food restaurant brand as an exercise in understanding how core organisational values can be adapted to include local expressions and style (*C3 Church Culture* 2016). The facilitator is encouraged to explain to participants 'that as a C3 Church, we want to be true to Biblical values and character but express those things in a way the people in our community and culture find appealing and attractive, that we might win them to Christ' (*C3 Church Culture* 2016: 33). COC/inc has successfully 'franchised' their Red Frogs program, named for the Allen's Red Frogs confectionary that the group distributes, whose main purpose is to provide non-medical assistance to Australian school leavers celebrating the end of their high school years. Hey (2010: 276) states that COC has marketed the program to Europe, Canada, and North America. These programs encourage their volunteer participants to model 'Christ-like' behaviours, evangelising through example. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches exercise considerable time and resources developing teachable strategies to equip their students with globalised evangelisation strategies, targeted at encouraging the conversion of individuals. Giving students the opportunity to learn these methods for engaging with the global mission field rewards Australian neo-Pentecostal churches with claims of increased growth as the students become global ambassadors for the church's brand of Christianity.

The Australian neo-Pentecostal programs use partnerships with local churches and travelling ministry teams to claim to rescue individuals. This is evident in Australian neo-Pentecostal church fundraising and partnerships with ministry-based anti-sex trafficking and anti-prostitution organisations. These pastoral organisations tend to focus on material needs and spiritual care for victims. Focusing on this individual level means that these anti-sex trafficking organisations avoid engaging with the processes of globalisation which scholars argue are integral to preventing sex trafficking. Penttinen (2008: 2) observes that the ability to move people illegally around the world through globalised trafficking networks conditions the localised terms and effects of sex-trafficking and prostitution. Poulin (2003: 37) states that modern capitalism has effectively industrialised sexual commodification on a global scale enabling world-wide networks of sex trafficking organisations. Based at the C3 Church headquarters at Oxford Falls Australia, Andrew and Janine Kubala are itinerant healing

evangelists who run Esther's Voice, an anti-sex trafficking organisation operating in Cambodia (C3 Church *Ps Andrew Kubala: Miracle in the Stretch* 2016). The Esther's Voice website states:

As well as ministering with organisations involved with rescue and training, we also focus on prevention through our ministry with women in the villages. The emphasis of the village ministry is on breaking cycles of brokenness and empowering women to bring change into their own lives and families through healthy decision-making... More than just a series of programmes, Esther's Voice is a belief in the 'God likeness' of every person and recognition of our ability in Christ to overcome even the most challenging circumstances (Esther's Voice 2016).

The Esther's Voice website makes use of multiple testimonies from Cambodian women and children, claiming to have rescued them from the cycle of prostitution and trafficking by teaching good decision-making and empowerment through prayer (Esther's Voice 2016). McGrow (2014: 119) points out that Christian assumptions about a spiritual dimension to engaging in sex work

presuppose that all sex workers, for all time, in every circumstance, are passive victims of deep suffering who lack agency... sex workers are seen by Christians as deficient in value, especially spiritual value, because they do not fit the ordered scheme of decency.

Rather than focusing on institutional or structural change—through lobbying activities, working with human rights groups or NGOs—the anti-sex trafficking ministries supported by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches tend to focus on the spiritual journey of the individual victim, working to 'save' people using prayer and, ultimately, salvation. The use of testimonies and stories that involve the rhetoric of ministry, healing, salvation, and conversion means that the approach taken by Australian neo-Pentecostal anti-sex trafficking projects tend to emphasise the importance of converting to Christianity. As such, it is difficult to assess the long-term impact that pastoral care from itinerant Christians may have in alleviating the effects of sex-trafficking and prostitution within the context of a highly organised global sex-trafficking industry.

The discourse of the 'spiritual rescue' plays out in other ways within the Hillsong-supported Mercy Ministries, A21 Campaign—founded by Australian pastor Christian Caine who is a regular guest speaker at Australian neo-Pentecostal church plants—and the SHE Rescue Home program, founded by Citipointe Church's senior pastors Mark and Leigh Ramsey. Mercy Ministries, staffed with Hillsong employees and funded through donations

from the church, closed in Australia after program participants accused the organisation of preventing residents—young women, many of whom had bipolar disorder, anxiety, and anorexia—from accessing psychiatric care. Mercy Ministries choose instead ‘to focus on prayer, Christian counselling and exorcisms to “expel demons” from the young women’ (Pollard 2009). The *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper investigating Mercy Ministries reported

the women who entered the program were required to sign over their Centrelink benefits and were virtually cut off from the outside world, except for a weekly trip to the local Hillsong Church for worship (Pollard 2009).

One participant said to the *Sunshine Coast Daily* newspaper, ‘Unfortunately, many of us turned to Mercy Ministries because we could not afford treatment at other reputable facilities’ (Mundi 2008). Mercy Ministries, which still operates in New Zealand, Britain, and US, claimed to place ‘spiritual care’ at the centre of the program’s focus, but instead resorted to controlling participant access to money, effectively forcing program participants into attending church (Pollard 2009, Holgate 2016). Programs that use such strategies of isolation and control presume that disadvantaged people, particularly women (Mercy Ministries focused exclusively on women) are victims, who are ‘fallen’ and require ‘rescue’. In her analysis of Australian non-profit religious organisations who work with sex industry workers, McGrow (2014: 117) argues that these presumptions result in social helpers—such as volunteers and charity staff in religious non-profit organisations—preventing the people that they work with from accessing self-determination, agency, and empowerment. McGrow (2014: 117) finds that such social helpers ‘consider themselves as wiser, stronger, and more competent, and therefore as “knowing best” for trafficked women, who are then assigned roles like “damsel in distress” while those who work with them act as saviours.’ McGrow (2014: 134) identifies these beliefs, despite claiming to ‘empower, walk beside and give dignity to sex workers’, actually operationalise assumptions that ‘these are qualities mission workers hold and can “impart” to sex workers who lack their own power, sense of dignity and ability to address their needs for wellbeing.’ Controlling participant access to money, isolating them from their social networks, and assuming that prayer and church attendance would treat complex psychiatric disorders, meant that Mercy Ministries failed to empower their residents to self-determine their wellbeing.

Two anti-sex trafficking organisations supported by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, A21 Campaign and SHE Rescue Home, portray people who come into contact with

the sex industry in a similarly problematic way. A21 Campaign—founded by Australian pastor Christine Caine who regularly speaks as Citipointe, Hillsong, C3 Church, and Influencers Church—states its goal as ‘Together, we are eradicating human trafficking through awareness, intervention, and aftercare’ and the organisation’s slogan is ‘Slavery ends here.’ A21 Campaign portrays sex industry workers as powerless victims in need of rescuing. Peach (2005: 119) argues that such traditional Christian abolitionist sees prostitution as ‘sinful and/or immoral, and the view of the prostitutes as innocent victims (with the only alternative being culpable criminals).’ Similar to Esther’s Voice, A21 Campaign uses anonymous stories, such as that of ‘Sarah’:

Sarah met her first trafficker in her late teens and was trafficked throughout the U.S. for 11 years. During that time, she was arrested multiple times for the crimes of her traffickers, but she had been set up to take the blame every time. After one arrest in particular, Sarah was released with an ankle monitor. Because she wasn’t identified as a victim of human trafficking, her trafficker was able to find her again and force her back into exploitation... After years of captivity and false charges, Sarah is in the care of A21 and is finally free (A21 Campaign *Stories* 2018).

‘Sarah’ has no agency within this narrative, she is described as a victim and A21 Campaign takes responsibility for her freedom and care. The story implies that her (male) trafficker holds the power and authorities are portrayed as negligent in failing to identify her victim status. This simplistic view of the power dynamics involved in sex work, common in faith-based non-profit organisations, ‘risks portraying women as perennial victims of false consciousness, incapable of making autonomous choices regarding their means of migration and employment’ (Chuang 1998, in Peach 2005: 119). A21 Campaign’s portrayal of people involved in sex work stands in direct contrast to the language used on the organisation’s volunteer application page. A21 Campaign describes their model volunteer attributes:

You are more than inspired – you’re informed. You’re smart, engaged, and care about creating a better future for us. You formulate your opinions and beliefs with thoughtfulness and openness. You are compelled in more ways than one to look out for others and do good in tangible ways. You are the opposite of apathetic – you are imaginative, bold, and loudly undefeated... And you won’t stop until everyone is free (A21 Campaign *Volunteer* 2018).

A21 Campaign’s ideal volunteer is determined, intellectually empowered, and has agency in developing their own opinions and beliefs. A21 Campaign operates from the perspective that prostitutes are victims who need rescuing, and their volunteers are ‘saviours’ who use their own intellectual resources to facilitate these rescues. While eradicating slavery and human

trafficking is an ambitious goal for A21 Campaign, these problematic portrayals of disadvantaged people position them as projects for reform and targets for salvation, undermining their agency and abilities for self-determination.

For some anti-trafficking faith-based organisations, simplistic assumptions regarding economic and cultural context can result in the organisations doing little to prevent exploitation. Based in Cambodia, the senior pastors of Citipointe Church Mark and Leigh Ramsey founded SHE Rescue Home, an organisation who works with girls under sixteen years of age who ‘have been trafficked, raped, prostituted, or are at risk of these things’ (SHE Rescue Home *Girls in Care* 2018). In the SHE Rescue Home program, girls removed from situations deemed to be ‘at risk’ of trafficking live in residential facilities with twenty-four other girls and a ‘House Mother’ who takes on a primary carer role. In Cambodia, almost forty percent of these type of residential facilities claiming to rescue exploited children are unregistered and, therefore, unregulated by the government, and UNICEF has recommended that children living in such facilities be returned to their families (Hawkins 2017). SHE Rescue Home (*Our Girls* 2018) receives girls from Christian non-profit ‘rescue and remove’ groups such as International Missions for Justice and the Australian-based anti-trafficking organisation South East Asia Investigations into Social and Humanitarian Activities (SISHA). International Missions for Justice has been criticised for abducting girls from their families (McGrow 2014: 116) and SISHA has been accused of financial mismanagement, with donations spent on operational costs rather than on resources for the children they claimed to be helping (Jackson 2013). This combination of the ‘saviour’ mentality within International Missions for Justice and scope for corruption in organisations like SISHA affects the abilities of well-intentioned international anti-trafficking organisations to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people they claim to help.

Despite living away from their families, SHE Rescue Home (2018) says that they allow the girls twice-weekly supervised visits from family members and a key program outcome is to see the girls living with their families. The organisation does not state how these visits are negotiated with families. The SHE Rescue Home program claims to focus on education and reintegration. The type of care that the girls receive comes from the ‘House Mother’ and SHE Rescue Home (*Girls in Care* 2018) states

This relationship is fundamental to the girls healing as they are loved and nurtured on their journey of being survivors. Leisure activities such as music, dance, art and life skills training are also provided for the girls. Within the home is a schoolroom, beauty room, sewing room and counselling rooms. These are places where the girls can practice their vocational skills, complete homework, help each other and journey towards hope and healing.

The volunteer recruitment page, through which people can apply to work directly with the children in the facility, asks potential volunteers ‘Has your time come to make a difference; to help a young generation find their voice; to be the hands and feet of God; to improve the world?’ (SHE Rescue Home *Action and Awareness Teams* 2018). Like the volunteer application for A21 Campaign, the language of this recruitment strategy evokes the ‘saviour’ mentality. In this case, volunteers are expected to teach young Cambodian women how to be good Christian girls, where self-care and survivorship is constituted through the use of beauty products and sewing lessons. Such lessons result in SHE Rescue Home offering girls work at the SHE Rescue Home sewing centre (SHE Rescue Home *Sewing Centre* 2018). According to SHE Rescue Home, the young women and their families ‘are offered training and safe employment sewing and producing products for our marketplace and custom orders for partners and businesses around the globe’ (SHE Rescue Home *Sewing Centre* 2018). This style of aid program in the garment and textiles industry has been found to be problematic, particularly in Cambodia. The *Los Angeles Times* (Miranda 2016) reported on rehabilitated victims of human trafficking

For poor women in countries such as Cambodia and Bangladesh, professional options are limited -- often to an excruciating rock-and-a-hard-place choice between poorly paid sweatshop work and better remunerated sex work, which comes with its attendant legal consequences and social stigmas. Well-meaning nonprofits geared at eradicating human trafficking (many funded, in part, by the garment trade) succeed in getting some women out of prostitution. But once they're out, often the only professional choice they have is the garment industry.

Within the global context of the garment industry, Clayton and Edmunds (2017) report that countries such as Cambodia offer cheaper options for global garment factories because wages are lower and working conditions are less regulated than in other, more developed countries. In their attempts to free young girls from exploitation by teaching them ‘vocational skills’, programs such as SHE Rescue Home, who receive funding from international garment business through their ‘marketplace and custom orders’, can unwittingly support exploitative practices in the Cambodian garment industry. Here, an Australian neo-Pentecostal aid

program claims to be alleviating the effects of globalised inequality, while supporting workplace practices that exploit these unequal structures.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have implemented aid programs that claim to assist entire communities living in poverty with little access to healthcare or education. These broad-based community development initiatives benefit Australian neo-Pentecostal churches as they encourage members of these communities to attend church-branded program sessions and their church plants. The Hillsong Africa Foundation coordinates several community development initiatives that have a range of aims and objectives including providing transitional and permanent homes for orphaned children, food and shelter to tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS patients, a disaster response program in Cape Town, a program supplying wheelchairs to those with mobility issues, and a sports program with the aim of engaging disaffected young people (Hillsong Africa Foundation 2016). The Mitchells Plain Project aims to assist the entire Mitchells Plain community stating a vision to ‘holistically uplift and empower previously disadvantaged communities, using a two-pronged approach of community development and faith-based intervention’. This faith-based intervention

combines the power of personal change through an encounter and relationship with Jesus Christ with tangible, community based interventions, and in doing so addressing both the physical and spiritual needs of individuals. We are designing this approach in a way that it is easily replicated in other neighbourhoods, cities, and countries (Hillsong Africa Foundation *Mitchells Plain* 2016).

For Hillsong, these types of intervention encompass prosperity theology teachings and encouragement to attend the local church plant. Along with providing non-formal schooling, nutrition programs and a sports program, the Hillsong-branded women and men’s programs are used as part of the whole-community approach (Hillsong Africa Foundation *Mitchells Plain* 2016). Hillsong’s women’s program Shine teaches that women should see themselves as ‘Princesses’ who are born to shop (Maddox 2012). Maddox (2012: 111) observes in her analysis of the Shine program that girls are taught that their worth ‘Through skincare, makeup, haircare and nailcare, girls discover their value in their God created uniqueness’. This approach is similar to Citipointe Church’s use of ‘beauty rooms’ as an aspect of rehabilitation in the SHE Rescue Home program. The Shine program updates gender stereotypes about the place of women within consumerist prosperity theology as ‘the whole panoply of consumer goods that might have once been considered guilty pleasure are spread before the Hillsong princesses’ in the Shine program (Maddox 2012: 111). Hillsong

established a flourishing campus plant in the Mitchells Plain area to support the community development initiatives and programs (Hillsong South Africa 2016). The community development programs emphasise the value of the Hillsong brand and, with that, consumerist prosperity theology through the implementation of Shine-style programs. The people living in these disadvantaged communities are encouraged to attend their local brand of Australian neo-Pentecostal church. While attempting to address community disadvantage, Hillsong conveniently manages to contribute to their own growth rate and global expansion.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches claim to address issues of globalised inequality through their international aid and charity programs. Neo-Pentecostalism encourages a globalised evangelical outlook where Christians are responsible for undertaking missions to spread the news of God's desire for abundance. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches say that they seek to provide material care for those adversely affected by globalised inequality, with the aim of modelling Christ-like behaviours in the hope that those they engage with will choose to become Christians. The large charity organisations—COC's Global Care, Hillsong's Africa Foundation and C3 Church's Beyond International—coordinate a wide range of aid programs with multiple material objectives such as providing disaster relief, housing, food, education. These programs also encompass a spiritual objective, encouraging people to become Christians and attend church. Particularly evident in Hillsong and C3 Church's missional strategy, the ideal is for these people to attend their local church plant. Australian neo-Pentecostal support of aid programs such as Mercy Ministries, A21 Campaign, and SHE Rescue Home can lead to community development practices in which disadvantaged people are positioned as in need of 'saving'. The aid programs allow Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to teach their version of the prosperity gospel while conveniently assisting Australian neo-Pentecostal church growth rates that they can tally on their websites. Engaging a globalised community development strategy is an astute organisational move for Australian neo-Pentecostal churches in that it supports their narrative as a globalised religious movement while assisting in achieving their growth goals.

Conclusion

Analysing international homegroups, resource dissemination, church planting, and charity programs reveals the elements of late-modern globalisation in Australian neo-Pentecostal church operations. Using glocalisation to link local church-based networks together in creating home groups contributes to the ability of congregants to participate in the globalised aspect of the neo-Pentecostal church. Glocalisation provides an important dimension to the

neo-Pentecostal ability to position their churches as participating in a global religious movement while maintaining localised networks. For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, glocalisation is integral to the process of globalising the church brand. Transnational corporatism is a significant economic dynamic within globalisation and analysing church planting through this lens reveals that church planting happens in a similar manner. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use international church planting as a method of achieving growth across the world. The churches employ corporate expansion techniques to supply potential congregants overseas with access to their brand of church. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches provide aid programs to those affected by the inequality of globalisation. Providing both material and pastoral care means that opportunities are present for encouraging people adversely affected by globalised inequality to attend their local Australian neo-Pentecostal-branded church plant. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches can claim to be ‘saving’ people around the world and, in some cases, this focus can lead to the churches ignoring the complexities of the contexts in which their programs are implemented, even making assumptions about what is best for disadvantaged peoples. Analysing these international activities undertaken by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches reveals elements of globalisation that the churches incorporate into their operations to ensure their continued expansion and realise their goals of global growth.

Incorporating dynamics of late-modern globalisation provides Australian neo-Pentecostal churches with potential for growth, demonstrating success and abundance within the actual church operations. The next chapter progresses the argument of the thesis by examining how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have incorporated late-modern conceptions of individualism into their theology and operations. In neo-Pentecostalism, success comes from individual hard work and remains the responsibility of the individual to pursue through cultivating a personal relationship with God. The emphasis on individual reasonability has implications for neo-Pentecostal understandings of success. In Australian neo-Pentecostalism, the ideal Christian self is presented as prosperous, healthy, and successful through the realisation of their God-given gifts and talents. The Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors teach wealth accumulation, abundance, and prosperity as the type of modernised success that God desires Christians to achieve. At the centre of this process is a conception of the modern individual as the ideal consumer. Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors promote an approach to achieving this successful life by promoting consumerism as the key identity marker in late-modernity. This aspirational theology aligns with modern

conceptions of the ideal self as an entrepreneurial project realised through acts of consumerism.

Chapter 6: Individualism as the key identity marker of the idealised Australian neo-Pentecostal self

Introduction

The previous chapter established globalisation as an element of modernity that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate in their theology and operations. Incorporating globalisation coalesces around a theological tenet of neo-Pentecostalism: that the individual is responsible for their own salvation and relationship with God. Further to this, the church should facilitate this self-responsibility, providing structures through which believers can undertake evangelising work to teach others of the potential of this relationship. The present chapter argues that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate late-modern concepts of individualism into their theology. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate a form of individualism that is historically specific to consumerist modernity in which conceptualisation of the individual comprises the production of an entrepreneurial self as an autonomous and empowered identity. This process reflects the logic of the consumerist market. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook operate on exchanges of images as reputational currency. With choice as its guiding force, Australian neo-Pentecostal church leaders use this reputational economy to develop their vision of an ideal neo-Pentecostal lifestyle. For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, online image production supports the conception of neo-Pentecostal selfhood as participating within a global community through online social media accounts.

Neo-Pentecostal conceptualisations of salvation have been extensively studied in Africa, Latin America, Britain, and North America. Scholars find that receiving the spiritual gifts signifying salvation—speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing, material prosperity, and personal success—are the responsibility of the individual to pursue, attain, and develop. As far back as the 1960s, academics were investigating what the receipt of spiritual gifts may mean personally to neo-Pentecostals. Lapsley and Simpson (1964: 16-17) argued that neo-Pentecostals who demonstrate glossolalia tend to be ‘problem oriented people who consume much time and energy in attempting to cope with life... everyday events such as the finding of a parking space for one’s car, and being able to ride on an elevator with some “key” person are attributed to the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit.’ The personal attribution of divine intervention in neo-Pentecostal lives is a prominent theme in understanding the nature of God in neo-Pentecostal theology. Golo (2013: 368) observed preachers in African sub-Saharan

neo-Pentecostal churches who ‘emphasize God's blessings of material prosperity and abundance unto those Christians who faithfully depend on God, by virtue of their salvation wrought through Christ’ and this salvation is directly obtained through the personal faith of the born-again individual. Dilger (2007: 60-1) observed a Tanzanian church which offers support to HIV-positive individuals while encouraging congregants to pray for healing from the illness, concluding that the search for physical healing is mediated by the individual’s capacity for faith in prayer. In the North American context, Hunt (2000a: 331) argued that the health and wealth aspects of prosperity gospel teachings means that congregants can expect divinely-blessed physical health and material prosperity, accessing Pentecostal ministries through satellite television and multi-million-dollar ministries. This Christian identity is mediated through consumer choices in which individuals develop their Christian lifestyles. Thomas (2009: 58) argues that the production and sale of Christian products and resources, ranging from church-run childcare facilities to church-branded exercise DVDs, allows Christians to construct their identity through consumer choices. While these scholars have investigated neo-Pentecostal beliefs about individualism around the world, there remains scope for examining these conceptions in Australian neo-Pentecostal theology.

The chapter is structured with the purpose of identifying individualism in Australian neo-Pentecostal theology and outlining how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate this element of late- modernity into their operations. The first section of the chapter investigates the centrality of individualism to neo-Pentecostal theology. The section discusses theory on individualism in late-modernity and links this to Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders’ teachings of theological principles of salvation and methods for being a Christian. Analysis of books, blog posts, and sermons demonstrate that the Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders emphasise the importance of individual choice in seeking salvation, which reflects a similar understanding of individual freedom in late-modernity. The second section of the chapter examines how Australian neo-Pentecostal conceptualisations of leadership and servanthood impact on understandings of the self in the churches’ theology. Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders promote service to the church as a key site for discovering the nature of God’s plan for an individual’s life. This discourse focuses on a Christian version of leadership that is linked to the logic of the marketplace. A Christian leader relies on individual faith and service to the church, bypassing state structures to make the marketplace the most appropriate site for success. The third section of the chapter examines links between the display of Australian neo-Pentecostal entrepreneurialism and the creation of the ideal Christian. The centrality of the individual to the neo-Pentecostal theology translates to a

specific discourse about how a person should use their life to serve God. The senior pastoral teams create the appearance of this ideal life through their social media accounts. The section analyses images produced on Australian neo-Pentecostal social media accounts that rely on image dissemination—Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and church websites—to examine the links between the role of the individual and the significance of the image in mediating leaders’ perceptions of the ideal way to be a Christian in late-modernity. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate individualistic understandings of the self to their theology and this mediates aspects of their online activities, especially for image creation.

Individualism and Australian neo-Pentecostal concepts of salvation

The purpose of the section is to examine Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders’ ideas on salvation to discern understandings of the ideal Christian self. This is important for discovering the theological justifications for individualism in Australian neo-Pentecostalism. The section examines water baptism practices to argue that neo-Pentecostal arguments on the nature of salvation are centred on the idea of individual choice as inherent to the salvation process. The section finds that for Australian neo-Pentecostals, the ‘choice’ to become a Christian, demonstrated in public water baptism, reflects modern understandings of individual freedom as best enacted through personal choice.

Individualism actualised in choice has become a key social dynamic in late-modernity. Ebert (2012: 1) argues individualisation encompasses the liberation of the individual from rigid normative structures through the medium of free choice. This project began in the Enlightenment when philosophers argued that individual autonomy is central to human capacity and agency. In late-modernity, individual agency is linked to the structures of the market, as industrialisation developed into globalised consumer capitalism. Observing these changes, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: xxii) state ‘for the first time in history... the individual is becoming the basic unit of social reproduction.’ These processes of reproduction ‘not only permit, but demand, an active contribution by individuals’ (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 1996: 27). This positions the individual as responsible for orchestrating their own progress through life. Late-modern individualisation has moved beyond freedom from restrictive structures and has become, as Ebert (2012: 2) points out, ‘the compulsion for individuals to use their capacities and abilities to handle freedom.’ Beck (1994: 7) defines individualisation in late-modernity as an individual’s release ‘from industrial society into the turbulence of the global risk society’. Bauman (2000: 60) expands on this idea, explaining that under post-Fordist circumstances in globalised capitalism

chances are that most of human life and most of human lives will be spent agonising about the choice of goals, rather than finding the means to the ends which do not call for reflection ... It is up to the individual to find out what she or he is capable of doing, to stretch that capacity to the utmost, and to pick the ends to which that capacity could be best applied – that is, to the greatest conceivable satisfaction.

In late-modernity, the individual is constructed as solely responsible for realising their capacity for development through making good choices.

Despite the centralisation of individual agency in late-modernity, social structures remain important to mediating the range of choices through which the individual can realise their capacities. In globalised consumer capitalism, the choice of goals is located within the constraints of consumer capitalism. While individual agency enacted through choice appears to promise freedom, the abilities of people to make progress in their lives remains linked to an ability to navigate the modern marketplace, which is characterised by competition in business and a lack of social safety net. Even though late-modern individuals are called to achieve their own capacities, they must do this within the constraints of modern economic conditions. As Baum (2011: 345) summarises:

the well-being of society has been surrendered to the laws of the competitive market system, manipulated by a minority of powerful actors. The economic and cultural neo-liberalism of the present widens the gap between the rich Global North and the poor Global South as well as between rich and poor in the countries of the North, without attention to the limits of nature.

Australian neo-Pentecostal theology emphasises the individual's choice to become a Christian as a key mechanism for realising personal agency and success. This theology supports the economic and social status quo: it does not challenge the widening gap between Global North and South, and fails to question the structures that sanction an economic system in which powerful actors control large portions of the world's wealth. As discussed in Chapter Five, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches leaders see the role of the church in society as providing charity to demonstrate to people the attraction of becoming a Christian. For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, the best method to navigate these competitive, market-driven social structures is to make an individual choice to become a Christian.

Australian neo-Pentecostal theology views the nature of salvation and destiny for a Christian as the responsibility of the individual. For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, salvation occurs through individual choice; a person must 'decide for Christ'. The receipt of spiritual gifts is an element of neo-Pentecostal understandings of salvation and part of this,

particularly in regard to the prophecy gift, is discovering the nature of Jesus' promise to humankind and the God-given destiny of each person. Macchia (2015: 281) states that Pentecostals are devoted to discovering 'Jesus as the coming king who saves, heals, and charismatically empowers and enriches, granting the people of God a foretaste of the kingdom to come and empowering them for missions.' Macchia (2015: 286) argues that 'Pentecostals dream of a great flood of the Spirit in the latter days to unite and to empower the church to do great things in the world'. Neo-Pentecostal leaders teach that the latter days have arrived, and the dreamed-for kingdom is being established on earth in the present day, rather than in a distant future. They see the presence of the Holy Spirit and the experience of spiritual gifts as proof that Jesus' promise to return to Earth is being fulfilled now. On Planetshakers TV, senior pastor Russell Evans ('The Kingdom of God (Pt 1)' 2014) speaks about the establishment of the kingdom on Earth stating:

Jesus says in Matthew 28 'Go unto all the world and make disciples'. There is the commission God has given us, given us authority to make disciples. But the power comes from the encounter. Without the power, you cannot fulfil the commission... His son came and modelled to us the way of the kingdom. He showed us the way to live. He restored the kingdom of God to this earth... Let your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. So obviously, God wants heaven on earth.

This post-millennial doctrine in neo-Pentecostal theology allows Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to see themselves as separate from older Pentecostal churches and they conceptualise the individualised nature of salvation accordingly. Elisha (2008: 57) observes that, when asked what they believe, neo-Pentecostal congregants tell 'individualised testimonies about the experience of being "born again", complete with intimate details of sins committed and lives redeemed through the "surrendering" of oneself to God'. The centrality of choice for neo-Pentecostal beliefs about baptism is evident in the belief that to be properly baptised, the believer should be an adult. Explaining that Christians who were baptised as infants should undergo public water baptism as adults, Singaporean growth church City Harvest Church (*Water Baptism* 2018) states

The baptism of an infant is the decision of the parent. Since infants cannot make the decision to repent or place their faith in Christ, infant baptism would be considered more a ritual. If you were baptized as an infant, you should choose to be baptized again now as a born-again believer in declaration of your faith, since, as an infant, you could not make a conscious choice of your own to be a disciple of Christ.

Similarly, for Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, adults choose to undergo baptism in water as a symbol of their commitment to following the teachings of Jesus. On their water baptism webpage, the Hillsong Church (*Get Baptised* 2017) website says, 'Being baptised is a public declaration of your personal decision to make Jesus Lord and Saviour of your life. It's a declaration that the old has gone and the new is here'. This statement appears under a picture of a young man raising his arms triumphantly as he emerges from a water tank wearing a shirt emblazoned with the phrase 'I Have Decided', surrounded by applauding, smiling congregants. The C3 Church water baptism webpage (C3 Church *Baptism* 2017) features a man waiting to be submerged in water wearing a shirt emblazoned with the statement 'NO turning back'. For Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, a person chooses to become a Christian and this choice may be symbolised in public water baptism for the individual congregant. The emphasis on choice is important because it is through salvation that the individual repents and takes charge of their relationship with God.

Having chosen salvation, the individual becomes responsible for seeking a personal spiritual journey, where success is attained through specific actions and methods taught by neo-Pentecostal leaders. Berger (2013: 254) observes that this emphasis is an inheritance from Protestant traditions, that 'at the heart of its piety is an act of individual decision.' This process centralises the individual within neo-Pentecostal theology. In *You the Leader* (2002: 21), Phil Pringle said, 'Our personal relationship with God must occupy first place in our lives.' Neo-Pentecostal theology teaches that every individual has a destiny ordained by God and the revelation of this destiny is achieved through persistent prayer, church attendance, tithing, and learning from church leaders and courses. To teach people methods of accessing these blessings, neo-Pentecostal pastors' sermons, books, speeches and prayers provide guidelines for their congregants to achieve these personal revelations. Texas megachurch pastor Joel Osteen says, 'When you decide not to give up and put your whole trust in Christ, you pave the way for greater things to happen for you, in you and through you!' (Osteen 2014). Nigerian megachurch pastor Chris Oyakhilome of 'Christ Embassy', who's personal wealth Forbes Magazine estimated to be between thirty and fifty million USD, promises blessings, health, and good luck to believers who choose to 'sow the seed' by giving money in tithes to the church (Kuoppamaki 2017). Similarly, in the promotional video for Brian Houston's book *Live Love Lead* he states, 'I genuinely believe that if we keep making great choices, it's gonna open doors and help us with the great adventure of life' (Live Love Lead *YouTube* 2016). Neo-Pentecostal pastors promise that God has a unique and personalised

spiritual experience waiting for the committed Christian to discover. Brian Houston said at the 2015 Hillsong Church conference chairing a panel called *Leadership and Greatness*:

I challenge everyone in this arena that you are on earth for a great kingdom purpose. You are born with a seed deep down your spirit... that there is something about your life, no one can see it yet, but there is something about your life and you just know that God wants to you do something great (Houston *Leadership and Greatness* 2015).

For neo-Pentecostal pastors, the method for achieving a personalised relationship with God is through discovering gifts and talents; the individual's God-given abilities for success.

Houston (*Leadership and Greatness* 2015) states 'Some people genuinely think it's unspiritual to want to be great... you just accept your lot in life... the tragedy is that you're not giving Him much to give glory for.' Realising gifts and talents through achieving professional and personal success is how Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders demonstrate their method. Houston (*Leadership and Greatness* 2015) says:

In sport... you're taught to play hard. Little kids these days they play sport and get told 'it doesn't matter who wins'. What do you mean it doesn't matter who wins? It's all about winning! In business, how many people do you know who went into business to fail? People go into business to succeed.

The Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors argue that by following their teachings, the committed Christian will become a leader in their chosen field, because God has provided personalised talents for achievement and success. The term 'leader' is used repeatedly in Australian neo-Pentecostal sermons, literature, and promotional materials. The Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors make great effort to identify their congregants as potential leaders, the logical progression for a theology that promises each believer a personalised relationship with God.

Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders define success in a similar way to that of other intentionally-recognised prosperity pastors and megachurches. In this theology, success is something that the individual believer attains through choosing to think positively and actively seeking a relationship with God. At Boshoff, senior pastor of South African-based megachurch Christian Revival Church (Christian Revival Church *Senior Pastors* 2018) and keynote speaker at the Planetshakers 2018 conference (Planetshakers *Awakening* 2018), preaches

The only limitation is the limitation in your mind, because you're unstoppable. God is for you, God is with you. Whatever you can imagine, you can accomplish, because you have the unfair advantage. God is with you, God is for you, and God is

in you. Your thoughts would be the only thing that stand between you and the great future that God has for you (Boshoff *YouTube* 2017).

Boshoff proposes that choosing to think positively is the key to realising the prosperous future that God promises everyone. Boshoff (*YouTube* 2017) admonishes his congregation ‘We choose to be strong and very courageous. People think sometimes weakness is an option... But if you want to possess the land of promise, you have to make up your mind to be strong and to be courageous.’ This focus on individual choice as the enactment of salvation is central to prosperity pastors’ understandings of methods for achieving success. Speaking at Influencers Church’s Atlanta church plant, senior pastor Ashley Evans (*YouTube* 2014) asks the congregation

Have you ever wondered why some people always seem to get ahead in life? Why is it that some people attract great things into their lives and others don’t? Is it because God wants to bless them and not us?... God wants to attract good things in your life. He wants you to attract great relationships. He wants you to have the best of everything.

In his sermon, Evans (*YouTube* 2014) preaches that what stops people from ‘attracting good things ... is not found in unfavourable circumstances, bad economic times, the wrong upbringing, bad personality type, being too short, or too tall, or being born rich, or being born poor’. Ashley Evans teaches that the individual believer is responsible for seeking a relationship with God in their lives, and that broader circumstances can be overcome through the power of faith. In his sermon, Evans (*YouTube* 2014) encourages congregants to demonstrate their faith by bringing five people to church with them every week, stating that in five years, the Influencers Church plant in Atlanta will have ‘One hundred thousand people coming to church, and then we will take this city for Christ.’ This type of service to the church, growing the church, is taught a method for demonstrating faith and commitment to the Influencers Church brand, while at the same time is a way for realising what Evans thinks is God’s plan for Atlanta. Evans (*YouTube* 2014) closes his sermon with encouragement to commit or recommit to following God, ‘inviting Jesus into your life.’ For neo-Pentecostal prosperity pastors, God’s blessing must be ‘invited’; activated by the individual choosing to believe and this is the method through which the individual Christian achieves success.

Neo-Pentecostal pastors teach that individual choice is central to salvation. Enacted through public water baptism, this belief about salvation conditions the nature of the relationship a Christian can expect with God. This relationship becomes the responsibility of the individual to seek and neo-Pentecostal pastors instruct their congregants that faith

activated by the individual believer is the method for receiving God's blessing. The neo-Pentecostal pastors teach that Christians should follow their methods of seeking God while encouraging congregants to attend their brand of neo-Pentecostal church. Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors contribute to the development of these understandings as central to neo-Pentecostal theology. These tenets reflect the late-modern emphasis on choice as the main medium of identity construction, in which human freedom is realised through abilities to choose.

Leadership and 'servantship' in Australian neo-Pentecostal theology

The purpose of this section is to explain the significance of the concepts of leadership and service in neo-Pentecostal theology. This is important for understanding how Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders explain the method of realising the gifts and talents God gives individual believers to achieve success. The section argues that leadership and servantship form key elements for neo-Pentecostal pastors in teaching how to realise the successful Christian self. The section finds that the onus is on the individual believer to have enough faith to achieve a successful Christian life, and the requisite faith is demonstrated in service to the church.

Defining and understanding Christian leadership is an element of the emphasis on individualism in neo-Pentecostal theology. Australian Neo-Pentecostal church leaders—Phil Pringle, Brian Houston, Russell Evans, Ashley Evans and Mark Ramsey—ground many of their ideas in discussions on Christian leadership. In *You the Leader* (2002: 13), Phil Pringle says 'In today's climate of uncertainty and change, financial upheavals and shifting morality, people everywhere need strong, godly leaders'. Pringle identifies circumstances that may feel beyond a person's control and argues that the solution is Christian leadership. Brian Houston's book *Live Love Lead* (2016: 1) begins:

When following Jesus, be careful what you dream. Because you can rest assured that God will exceed the limits of your imagination if you're committed to advancing his kingdom. Living, loving, and leading like Christ will expand your life, stretch your heart, and deepen your faith. I know firsthand.

Developing the qualities of leadership from their readings of the Bible, the pastors provide guidelines for achieving professional success, high social status, and fulfilment in personal relationships. The pastors draw on their own experiences of becoming successful to model qualities of Christian leadership. Houston begins *Live Love Lead* (2016:1-2) with an anecdote about how he and his wife Bobbie discussed building a global church when they first met.

The pastors return to stories about themselves and these narratives provide testimony for the methods of worship the pastors espouse. Houston (*Leadership and Greatness* 2015) says ‘I took on the long-term commitment of raising leaders, building leaders... the culture of our church is evidence of our success.’ The discourse on the concept of Christian leadership reveals the emphasis on the individual in Australian neo-Pentecostal theology. The ability of individual congregants to become leaders provides explanations for unrealised dreams and precarious circumstances. There is little attribution or reference to economic, social and cultural circumstance, indeed these broader circumstances are dismissed; progress relies on a relationship with God, and the realisation of God-given talents and gifts. This is the individual’s responsibility to seek and maintain.

This focus means that the individual is seen to be responsible for improving their circumstances. Deacon and Lynch (2013: 109) argue that neo-Pentecostalism tends not to encourage class-based opposition to structural inequalities and resists socioeconomic or political transformation. A key attraction of neo-Pentecostalism is that it offers a perspective from which people ‘can grasp the changing world and act both upon negative consequences and the attractive forces of modernity’ (Meyer, in Dilger 2007: 62). The pastors teach strategies for coping with the anxieties produced by modern life on an individual level. Pringle proposed, in *Top 10 Qualities of a Great Leader* (2000) that ‘the real cause of perilous times is flawed character, not dire circumstances’. The Australian neo-Pentecostal strategies for dealing with anxieties of modern life tend to avoid discussions of the structural issues that may also affect a person’s circumstances. As Deacon and Lynch (2013: 109) observe, neo-Pentecostal narratives ‘encourage political events, processes, and relations to be interpreted through an idiom of spiritual and material world relations that are inherently ambivalent and can heighten a sense of uncertainty regarding relevant forces and appropriate responses.’ This narrative develops from an interpretation of the prosperity gospel, where the expectation of miracles refers not only to expectations of material wealth but also may ‘frequently refer to survival or limited progress in challenging circumstances’ (Deacon & Lynch 2013: 110). In *Live Love Lead* (2016: 7-8), Houston relates the discovery story of Taya Smith, one of Hillsong United’s lead singers, describing her as ‘just another face in the crowd. Her singing ability went largely unnoticed in our church arena.’ After she was prevented from taking a holiday, Houston’s son Joel noticed Smith during a live recording session of Hillsong’s youth band and asked her to record backing vocals for Hillsong United’s latest album. Houston (2016: 7-8) recounts how Smith travelled ‘about one and a half hours each way’ to and from the Hillsong studio in Sydney. During these sessions, Smith

recorded ‘Oceans (Where Feet May Fail),’ a single from the album *Zion*, Hillsong United’s highest charting album to date, debuting at number five on the US Billboard charts in 2013 (Merge PR 2013). Houston (2016: 8) summarises ‘Taya’s story is like so many. A young girl stepped out, God got in the way of her plans, she chose service over convenience, and her life today is a testimony to her faith and the faithfulness of God’. Houston attributes Smith’s successful singing career to faith in God and suggests that individuals like Smith, who choose to believe hard enough, will be rewarded for work, patience, and diligence. Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors use these types of stories to imply that individual faith is the key to success. This emphasis ignores the possibility that broader social, economic and cultural factors may also play a part in person’s ability to achieve their goals. The Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors view the church as the structural element that is appropriate to recognise in seeking spiritual guidance and providing success. They teach that serving the church is a way that individuals can ensure their success; the church is the communal structure into which it is necessary to put individual time, effort, and energy.

Australian neo-Pentecostalism emphasises the importance of serving the church as a key element for achieving individual success. Phil Pringle says in *Top 10 Qualities of a Great Leader* (2007: vii) ‘the first quality of a leader is that he must have a good reputation in the marketplace, in the community. He must have good references from local businesses and other community leaders... the leader must be a bridge between the city and the church.’ A Christian leader’s main role is to assist with building and growing the church; success for everyone will develop from a successful church. In *Top 10 Qualities of A Great Leader* when discussing ‘Followership’ Pringle (2007: viii) states ‘Our capacities as leaders are determined by our capacities to serve’. Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors use concepts of ‘servantship’ and ‘followership’ to explain expectations about contributing to the church. These ideas extend beyond tithing expectations; congregants should serve the church not just through monetary support but in other ways. Addressing a general perception of a lack of Christian leaders in the Christian community at Hillsong Conference 2015, Houston stated, ‘Jesus said that opportunity is everywhere, the opportunity is not the problem. It’s those who put their hands up and want to serve.’ Houston (2015) drew on his own experience of establishing Hillsong from the ACC movement, saying:

I was a young pastor in that movement, I looked at all the leaders with thriving momentum churches, I saw great role models, I served inside the movement until ultimately my opportunity came... Let’s raise great church leaders. It needs

apostolic leaders. Leaders in every field you can imagine, and I pray that we will see this leadership model all over the country.

The Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors encourage congregants to serve the church and wait patiently for an opportunity to prove themselves as leaders. Pringle (2007: 9) states in *Top 10 Qualities of a Great Leader* ‘Successful businesses understand the power of servanthood. As Jon Rohn says, “One customer, well taken care of, can be more valuable than \$10, 000 worth of advertising.”’ Here, Pringle argues that serving a church should be similar to models of customer service in business. The main practical ways that congregants perform this service is undertaking volunteer work for the church and encouraging people to come to church. The concept of servanthood that the Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors develop is important to establishing the church community, because through service to the church people can expect to receive blessings.

The two concepts of servanthood and leadership work together through ‘Word of Faith’ practices. Words and prayer are ascribed particularly powerful abilities in neo-Pentecostal theology, an inheritance from the globalised Word of Faith ministry in which spiritual and physical powers are manipulated ‘through the “force of faith”’. The positive power (God) is “activated”, and the negative (Satan) is confronted and negated’ (Hunt 2000b: 75). According to Phil Pringle (2016), in a blogpost discussing the nature of prophecy, ‘When we speak the work of God, we activate the word of God’. The inheritance of faith ministry, in which gifts of prophecy and interpretation are coupled with positive speaking, means that there is little differentiation between material and spiritual blessings. Coleman (2004: 423) observes of faith ministry:

activities are all informed by the conviction that, through dominion over consciousness, one may fully develop the potential of one’s innate spirituality. By giving tongue, that is, by making the utterances known as ‘positive confessions’, the believer externalizes the power of the inner, spiritual self and therefore gains power over physical reality.

Coleman (2004: 423) points out that faith ministry allows an agency that is ‘simultaneously divine in origin and emergent from the human believer’. This is evident in the ways in which the neo-Pentecostal pastors cite the difficulties that they have overcome in their own lives as models of leadership and servanthood. The Australian pastors position themselves as ordinary people made extraordinary through faith in God and perseverance in realising their gifts. Their success is both from their own effort (leadership) and through their faith in God’s plan (servanthood). In *Live Love Lead* Brian Houston (2016: 3) says that God helped him to

overcome public speaking anxiety and he was then able to lead worship sessions under the guidance of elders in the Australia AOG movement. In his book *The Honor Key*, Russell Evans (2014: i) says ‘If God can take a terribly insecure pastor’s kid (which I was) and reveal to him a key to His kingdom, He can do the same for you.’ The social capital—raised within the networks of prominent pastors in the charismatic movements of the 1970s—that both Evans and Houston held as sons of senior church pastors is not deemed significant to their successful ministry careers. They teach that their ability to hold faith was the key element that distinguished their leadership capacities. Preaching that words of worship, words of prayer, and reflection on the Bible are powerful instruments of faith allows the senior pastors to model to their congregants the ability to both serve and lead within their churches. Coleman (2004: 433) argues that that both tithing and volunteering, ways of service to the neo-Pentecostal church, ‘do more than fund ministry enterprises; they are central to the articulation of charismatic identity and commitment. The resources released are said to enable missionization of the unsaved but also act to benefit the saved’. Service to the church means performing activities—tithing, worship, volunteering—that encourage other people to join the church which, in turn, is viewed in neo-Pentecostalism as a form of leadership. What may prevent people from achieving leadership and servanthship abilities is not broader social circumstance, but personal trouble resulting from issues with Satan, or ‘the enemy’.

The ways that Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors discuss the nature of Satan contributes to their understanding of leadership and servanthship. In Australian neo-Pentecostal theology, Satan is usually spoken about in generic terms as the ‘enemy’ or ‘adversary’. Discussions on deliverance from evil spirits or demons associated with Satan reveal the effects that Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders teach that Satan has on their lives. Hunt (1998) argues that deliverance—a low-level means of expelling evil spirits—is what neo-Pentecostals believe oppresses Satan, whose main form of activity lies in attempts to prevent Christians from realising their full potential. Houston states in *How to Maximise Your Life* (2013: 40-42)

For centuries, one of Satan’s key strategies has been to destroy the credibility of Christians and undermine the reputation of the Church... The adversary’s plan is to hold you back from the blessing of God, and prevent you from reaching your goal and living a quality life.

Here, Houston teaches that Christians are responsible for guarding themselves and the reputation of the church against being ‘held back’ by this version of Satan. For neo-

Pentecostal leaders, this adversary can be overcome through individual efforts, perseverance is required to break free or ‘be delivered’ of Satan through positive thinking. Asamoah (2016: 1646) observes that neo-Pentecostal understandings of deliverance involve

breaking free from satanic chains, bondages, oppression, possession, influence or attack. It is a process that a person, even a believer may go through in order to be freed from the bonds of evil that are holding him/her down. These bonds of evil mostly have to do with the past of the believer and with other people within that past who attempted to harm the believer.

For neo-Pentecostals, breaking the bonds of oppression involves seeking deliverance from sin, which may involve issues ranging from alcoholism, drug addiction, incurable mental illness and sexual immorality to poverty, marital difficulties, financial stress and issues at work (Asamoah 2016: 1647). Asamoah (2016: 1647) states that these behaviours ‘are perceived to be tied to demonic manipulation and control. Normally, it is believed that sinful behaviour or a breach of a spiritual order paves the way for the demons to harass the victim.’ Vigilance against evil spirits is the responsibility of the individual to maintain and the neo-Pentecostal pastors teach that words have particular power over such evil spirits. Ashley Evans (*YouTube* 2014) preaches Jesus has ‘elevated words to a creative level so it has great power... Control and mastery over every issue, over every part of your life, he says if you can do it with your mouth, you can do it with your life.’ For neo-Pentecostal leaders, words said in faith can release the individual from oppression and it is up to the individual to seek this release through actions made in faith. Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders encourage the belief that this process of oppression, facilitated through negative thoughts brought on by Satan, affects an individual’s ability to unlock the unique gifts of leadership potential and free themselves to take up servanthship in the church. Part of the promise of salvation involves the expectation that the individual will gird themselves against the influence of negativity perpetuated by the neo-Pentecostal version of Satan.

Examining ideas on leadership, servanthship, and the nature of evil reveals how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate a late-modern perspective on individualism into their theology. Salvation is the responsibility of the individual to seek and water baptism is a public declaration of the congregant’s choice to seek salvation. Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors teach that each individual Christian has leadership potential, anointed by God to help grow the church. It is up to the congregant to seek teaching that will reveal unique gifts and talents, similar to how the senior pastors of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches model their own successes. The senior pastors teach that serving the church—

through discussing concepts of servanthship and followership—should develop Christian leadership skills. Patience, hard work, and faith will lead to opportunity for those who believe enough. The pastors tell stories of success from individual members of their congregations and from their own lives to teach others that faith is what God rewards. There is little reference to structural elements that may affect a person's circumstances and discussions on the nature of Satan reinforce the perception that the individual is responsible for resolving their issues through seeking deliverance from evil spirits. Satan is seen as a force that prevents Christians from reaching their full potential and the individual remains responsible for maintaining vigilance against such evil spirits, seeking help from the church if required. Australian neo-Pentecostal theology incorporates late-modern perspectives on the importance of the individual and emphasises self-responsibility within faith practices.

Displaying Australian neo-Pentecostal entrepreneurial selves

The purpose of this section is to examine how Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders display their lives to model their version of an ideal Christian self. This is important for discerning how Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders operationalise their understandings of the ideal self. The section analyses senior pastors' social media accounts to argue that Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders present an understanding of the ideal Christian that is realised through displays of health, vitality, wealth, travel, and maintaining successful relationships. This section finds that this type of ideal Christian self is displayed through simulated intimacy with church leaders and senior pastors on social media, enacted through entrepreneurial and consumerist activities.

The forces of globalisation interact with neo-Pentecostalism to create a transnational understanding of church and community and this provides a perception of control within an increasingly uncontrollable world (Lewison 2011: 32). Neo-Pentecostal theology positions the individualised self as linked to global community through curated images that are digitally disseminated via online social media platforms. Discerning the nature of this aesthetic is important, because these images are created as a marketing tool to assist the growth of the church. The images produced by church leaders function as a way for displaying attractive Christian traits and advertising the ideal neo-Pentecostal type. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches disseminate a specific image of the ideal Christian: youthful and energetic. This aesthetic perpetuates an idea of self-hood that incorporates late-modern individualism, in the sense that the individual chooses to participate in this continued project, which encompasses the spirit of entrepreneurialism that social media platforms nurture

through networking capabilities. The presence of the idealised neo-Pentecostal self is displayed on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, where senior pastors and church-goers share pictures with the purpose of demonstrating the attractions of attending a neo-Pentecostal church and being a church-attending individual. The idealised self that is advertised by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporates late-modern ideas of the ideal individual as an entrepreneur and consumer.

Since the uptake of the internet and smartphone technologies post-2005, social networking platforms have become sites of analysis for understanding late-modern culture. Castells (2009) and Johansson and Bengtsson (2016: 141) both observe that social media and online interaction are integrated into modern lives. Online technologies that involve the dissemination of images facilitate the production of the modern self through commodified forms. While this can create groups that share similar tastes and ideas, the internet allows people to express their individualised autonomy in the sense that people can pick and choose what they display about themselves online. Modern market forces, according to Bauman (2000), threaten togetherness, where other people are ‘recognized through a framework of exchange where they become objects of consumption; they calculate what can be offered in terms of pleasure or social capital’ (in Winch 2015: 229). Winch (2015: 229) argues that in online spaces ‘Effective branding strategies form intimate relationships between the brand and consumers. Significantly, they often harness the assemblage of friendship in order to create networks around, with and through brands.’ The autonomy on offer in online spaces may allay the anxiety produced by a loss of control due to globalised forces in modernity. As Lynch (2016: 536) argues ‘feelings of disillusionment being felt by many people in industrialized societies who have watched helplessly as those in big business have wreaked havoc on the global financial system and continued to reward themselves lavishly.’ In late-modernity, individuals might view consumerism as the solution for resolving anxieties and Lynch (2016: 536) argues that this is potentially disastrous because ‘When high levels of consumption are threatened by financial failure, individuals are left awash in a sea of confusion and unfulfilled desire.’ The media texts available online promote the possibility of intimate networks and the pleasures of belonging to a ‘we’ in the face of anxieties produced by modernity. Simultaneously, however, these spaces may regulate consumers, ‘inducing feelings of shame and humiliation if they do not conform to the implicit templates of normativity’ (Winch 2015: 230). Winch (2015: 232-3) argues that within these online spaces, networks both create and regulate ‘the boundaries of the normative body; a body that speaks, reflects and mirrors its own becoming as entrepreneurial self-brand.’ According to Hearn

(2008: 198), self-branding ‘involves the self-conscious construction of a meta-narrative and meta-image of self ... to produce cultural value and, potentially, material profit’. Online social networking offers the promise of belonging to a group, while at the same time realising the potentials of creating an entrepreneurial citizenship, where ‘likes’ are translated to social capital. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are at the forefront of this online space in their uses of social media networking.

For neo-Pentecostal churches, the solution to modern alienation lies in creating connections through the church community. Lewison (2011) argues that neo-Pentecostal theological ideas on freedom through choosing Jesus means that the language of empowerment becomes a feature of neo-Pentecostal discourse. This community for empowerment transcends the boundaries of nationality, the state, to reinforce the individualised theology centred on discovering a personalised relationship with God (Lewison 2011). The use of online media platforms is a key method for globalising the neo-Pentecostal church in this way, actively constructing an image of the church that exists in transnational online spaces. This leads to a powerful combination of creating physical spaces, enacted in mass Sunday services and annual conferences, and translating these real spaces to the online through image-creation. Coleman (2004: 424) states that neo-Pentecostal churches are adept at using:

electronic media to communicate that message and publicize their activities. Such media contribute to a charismatic economy of sacralized images and words that create ambiguously defined and imagined spatio-temporal landscapes of Christian agency.

For neo-Pentecostal churches, the use of such images on their websites and social media platforms reflect an astute understanding of online trends and branding, in which a simulated intimacy is created through sharing images. Winch (2015: 233) argues that online spaces reinforce pop culture modes, and in this the body becomes an object of labour ‘it is her asset, her product, her brand and her gateway to freedom and empowerment in a neoliberal market economy.’ By creating images from experiences of religion—church services, conferences, prayer breakfasts, and other events—and disseminating these images online, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches reflect this type of marketised empowerment. The experiential religion that is practised in the neo-Pentecostal church is displayed online as asset, product, and brand.

Australian neo-Pentecostals' online spaces take on important functions in church operations. The perspectives on the individualised self that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches offer in their theology reflect an alignment with economic actualisation, modernity's ideal mode of self-governance. The churches create an online presence not to replace physical worship spaces, but to heighten an 'appeal as both a friendly, open organisation and a new, interactive, digital environment' (Wills 2009:3). Australian neo-Pentecostal churches use technology similarly to the ways in which Thomas (2009: 66) observes of American evangelical Christians: technology is an expression of human creativity, mirroring God's plans, 'Therefore, it is a vehicle that needs to be embraced and deployed to spread God's kingdom on earth.' According to Thomas (2009: 69), 'The mobile commodity form is an expression of capitalism's accommodation with religion in search of audiences.' The place of the online activities and social networking in Australian neo-Pentecostal operations does not replace real-world church activities but complements and supports those events. Thomas (2009: 69) concludes that 'The role of the church in actively encouraging the Christian marketplace [is] through 'anointing' products, ratifying preachers and establishing multiple possibilities for the religious market.' Online spaces offer multiple possibilities of competing for congregants for growth-oriented churches. Winzenburg (2001:142) observes that online content for Christian ministries 'is focused first on communication, and then on evangelization. Fundraising and merchandising are important, as well.' Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are adept at using internet communication technologies, including the development of smartphone applications, designing user-friendly websites, and the establishment of a social media aesthetic that values the simulation of an authentic interaction with the senior pastoral leadership teams.

The Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors use their social media accounts to create a perception of the ideal Christian life. In her study of a Dutch prosperity church, Klaver (2015: 146) notes that neo-Pentecostal pastors use new media technologies to instigate 'a rapid spread of performative authoritative modes of leadership on a global scale'. The specific uses of online technologies for the Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors, particularly on image sharing platforms such as Instagram, reflect pop culture trends that develop celebrity and authoritative styles that claim to be 'authentic'. Because the ability to deliberately structure an online profile is so apparent, images that are 'believed to have gone viral "organically" as opposed to being "orchestrated" would tend to be perceived as more "authentic."' (Abidin 2016: 1). As such, social media profiles perceived as authentic tend to generate popularity. In her research on Instagram, Abidin (2016: 1) argues that the image creation and dissemination

occurring through the social media platform is a ‘purposively commercial, thoughtful, and subversive endeavour.’ Instagram allows celebrities and ordinary people to document aspects of their everyday activities and, as Jerslev and Mortensen (2016: 249) argue in their study of Danish celebrity selfies, ‘merges intimacy, access and authenticity with promotion and branding.’ The female senior pastors of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are adept at this style of posting on their Instagram accounts. Bobbie Houston is the most popular of the female senior pastors with one hundred and sixty-nine thousand followers on Instagram. Bobbie Houston (@bobbiehouston 2017) posts images and videos two to three times a day and the images comprise a mixture of ‘selfies’ (self-portrait photographs), group photos of family and friends, Hillsong events she assists in organising and attending, memes, and viral videos. Chris Pringle, Sam Evans, Jane Evans, and Leigh Ramsey post similar content and often reference each other’s churches and books. Jane Evans (@jainejans 2016) posts a picture of herself reading Bobbie Houston’s book with the caption ‘Reading this book for the third time and loving every page!’. Bobbie Houston (@bobbiehouston 2017) posts an image of Chris Pringle while promoting the C3 Church women’s conference. The selfie and family images coupled with inconsequential activities—Chris Pringle (@chrisaprangle 2017) posts images of herself exercising and making healthy snacks—simulates a sense of intimacy with the women leaders. They are sharing personal aspects of their lives and the very inconsequentiality of these everyday activities makes their social media profiles appear as authentic extensions of their offline existence. Their Instagram followers comment with notes of congratulations, gratitude, and love. Instagram makes a space for people to edit aspects of their lives that appear online, and performance is a key dynamic of an individualised selfhood where personal autonomy and control is equated with freedom. The senior pastors of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are adept at stylising the simulation of intimate aesthetic that is central to a successful social media presence.

Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are skilled at deploying the editing choices that image-sharing sites offer users to perpetuate the ideal neo-Pentecostal Christian life. In his research on prosperity churches, Swanson (2008: 616) argues that website communication occurs

in positive ways, with upbeat themes that encouraged the faithful to rely both on God and on personal initiative to live a life of material abundance. Ministries used the visual, operational, and informational enhancements of Web sites to create a perception of inclusiveness.

The features of this idealised Christian life are evident from an examination of the Australian neo-Pentecostal leadership teams' personal social media profiles appearing youthful, healthy, energetic, and maintaining happy heterosexual marriages. Their social media presence actualises theologies of prosperity gospel, faith thinking, health and wealth doctrine, and abundant living. Social media facilitates the appearance of direct contact with the senior leadership teams as they live their lives, traveling and promoting their churches. The social media accounts of the Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors build on the envy evangelism that Maddox (2013) identifies as being encouraged in Hillsong conferences. Maddox (2013: 110) observes 'A styled home, honed figure, elaborate grooming, lavish wardrobe and unmatched sex life stimulate one's unsaved friends' envy and, hopefully, their interest in Jesus, to whom all this is credited.' Social media platforms facilitate a simulated version of intimacy between people who post and their followers, as the people who post construct a simulacrum of an authentic encounter. This style of evangelism makes for a powerful assertion of individualism, expressed through the creation of a heavily curated versions of an online self as an entrepreneurial project. Sam Evans (@samantha_ann.evans 2017), senior pastor of Planetshakers, posts a picture on Instagram of herself wearing a Burberry coat, a luxury fashion brand, with the caption 'Burberry girl confirmed!'. Leigh Ramsey (@leighramsey 2017) poses next to a Vespa Scooter. This display of preference for a luxury brand signals an appreciation of and desire for a lavish wardrobe, an element of the envy evangelism Maddox (2013) identifies. Referring to herself as a 'girl' simulates a personal relationship between Sam Evans and her social media followers. The Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders use social media to edit and curate images of their everyday activities facilitating envy evangelism through their Instagram profiles as they display their maintenance of youthful faces, healthy bodies, energetic travelling schedules, abundance of children and grandchildren, and thriving heterosexual marriages.

Health, energy, and the appearance of youth are key elements in the Australian neo-Pentecostal online aesthetic. The 'selfie'—a self-portrait generated using mobile technology (Koffman, Ograd & Gill 2015: 157)—features prominently as the image of choice for Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders to post on their social media accounts. The selfie is a key method for online entrepreneurs and celebrities to create the appearance of intimate relationships with their followers, in which the labour to produce the image occurs 'behind the scenes' and 'is so thoroughly rehearsed that it appears as effortless and subconscious' (Abidin 2016: 10). The senior leadership teams create the appearance of boundless energy for travel with selfies taken all over the world. Hillsong United band leader Joel Houston

(@joelhouston 2017), who has four thousand six hundred followers on Instagram, posts a black and white image of his silhouette along a corridor underneath a stadium stage with the caption ‘Let’s go Texas. Austin tonight. Dallas tomorrow. Lubbock the day after that... #EmpiresTour’. Selfies from El Paso, Jakarta, Singapore, Ontario and other cities are tagged in the last two years on his Instagram profile (@joelhouston 2017). Displaying the travel undertaken as evidence of commitment to serving the church is one way that the Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders demonstrate boundless energy that they ascribe to blessing from God. This signals dedication to the church as the leaders take on a punishing schedule for the sake of the spreading the Gospel. These images also display success and importance with the pastors broadcasting their itinerary of glamorous locations as congregations and audiences listen intently to their messages and sermons around the world. Furthermore, cameras on smart devices offer filters that automatically eliminate facial wrinkles, whiten teeth, and slim facial features. The filters have the effect of producing a uniformly youthful, bright, and toned face in technologically mediated self-portraiture. For Bobbie Houston, Sam Evans, Jane Evans, and Chris Pringle, youth, energy, and vitality comprise the attributes of the abundant life that the Australian neo-Pentecostal leadership teams promote. Senior pastor of Planetshakers Sam Evans (@samantha_ann.evans 2017) posts a selfie while seated at a laptop in which she has coiffed hair and expertly applied makeup with the caption ‘Final sermon preps for #beautifulwomanconference Gonna be super powerful! If you can’t join us in person you can join us on line @ www.planetshakers.com’. Chris Pringle (@chrisaprangle 2017) posts photos of herself playing volleyball with church staff, swimming laps with her husband Phil, and promoting her personal trainer. Leigh Ramsey (@leighramsey 2017) posts pictures of her home-grown vegetables, preferred kombucha tea brand, and her meat-free, wheat-free, dairy-free, and sugar-free meal plans. Here, Leigh Ramsey appears to engage with the ‘wellness’ subculture, a term that captures the popularisation of diets such as organic (avoiding consuming packaged foods, or foods grown and produced using chemicals), vegan (avoiding all animal products), and ‘paleo’ (only eating foods that humans are assumed to have consumed in the pre-historical paleolithic period) (Hotson 2018). Particularly as the senior leadership couples enter their 50s and 60s, displaying enviable energy levels, youthful appearances, and pursuit of health displays the abundant life available to those who interact with the Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors online.

A thriving heterosexual marriage is an aspect of the ideal Christian life that the Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors promote; successful not only in their chosen field, but also in their relationships. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are run by couples who married in

their early adulthood. A successful heterosexual marriage is a key element of the ideal neo-Pentecostal Christian life and is the model for sexual norms demonstrated within churches. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches do not support same-sex marriage. During the Australian plebiscite on the legalisation of same-sex marriage, the Australian Christian Lobby—founded at Citipointe Church’s COC denomination—vociferously opposed legalisation. Brian Houston (2017) stated ‘I believe God’s word is clear that marriage is between a man and a woman’, and Phil and Chris Pringle encouraged their congregants to vote ‘No’ for the legalisation of same-sex marriage (Pringle & Pringle 2017). When marriages do break down, pastors are expected to leave public ministry in Australia. When allegations of sexual misconduct were levelled at COC/inc founder and pastor Clark Taylor, he stepped down from his leadership position and lived in America for a period of years (Hey 2010). Former Hillsong pastor and Australian Christian Churches national director Pat Masiti was removed from a leadership position in the church in 2001 when Hillsong ‘discovered he was sleeping with prostitutes’ (Begley 2016). The removal of prominent pastors from leadership positions in Australia after these types of allegations stands in contrast to the outcome of sexual scandals amongst prosperity preachers in the US: after suffering scandals in the 1980s, televangelists Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker continue to preach (Biema 2007) and megachurch pastor Paula White, rumoured to have had an affair with fellow televangelist Benny Hinn, has married three times and continues to hold leadership positions at her church and ministries (Funaro 2015).

One of the aspects of envy evangelism that Maddox (2013: 110) identifies is the demonstration of an ‘unmatched sex life’ and quotes Bobbie Houston extolling the benefits of ‘being good at sex’ so that Christian women can say to non-Christians ‘I have a great marriage and a great sex life.’ Demonstrating a thriving marriage is a key asset for the Australian neo-Pentecostal pastor. The younger generation of Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders take the demonstration of a thriving marriage a step further with the images that they post on social media. O’Neil (2010: 132) observes of prominent mega-churches in Guatemala ‘the Christian songs, conversion narratives, and multimedia that contribute to the production of contemporary neo-Pentecostal worlds rely heavily upon an eroticism that both communicates and governs a particular sense of self’. O’Neil (2010: 132) argues that in the context of neo-Pentecostal construction of self the term eroticism ‘is not an autonomous object of inquiry but is rather closely connected with the production (and reproduction) of selves.’ The production of an eroticised Christian self is demonstrated in the images that Joel Houston (@joelhouston 2017), Brian and Bobbie Houston’s son, posts of his wife Esther on

Instagram. A collage of black and white selfies of Esther Houston in bed features her poking out her tongue, putting a finger to her lips, and pursing her lips in a kiss. Joel Houston captions the Instagram post with ‘I miss you x’ (@joelhouston 2017). The image evokes the intimacy of two people in bed together, Esther Houston looks straight into the camera lens at two audiences: her husband and his online followers. Sharing this style of photo creates an appearance of intimacy between the senior leadership and their followers while at the same time the image becomes an object of admiration and a life to which the couple’s online followers can aspire. Esther Houston’s (@estherhouston 2017) own Instagram page showcases her modelling career, professional photoshoots, and racks of designer clothes interspersed with images of her and Joel’s son. A shot of her and her husband holding hands at the beach is captioned ‘5 Years. Half a decade. Lifetime commitment, Love is a choice. Marriage is a choice. Building the life you want is a choice. #5yearanniversary’ (@estherhouston 2017). Esther Houston’s understanding of choice aligns to the individualism of modernity; autonomy is generated from individual effort. Displaying a thriving family life through the creation of online images facilitates the Australian neo-Pentecostal modelling of the ideal modern Christian marriage: sexy, fertile, and enviable, but most of all the responsibility of the individual to aspire to and achieve.

The Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders incorporate individualist elements of contemporary modernity into their online activities. Their social media accounts reflect the late-modern uptake of technologically mediated communications strategies. The ease through which the self can be edited, curated, and commodified as an ongoing entrepreneurial project suits the Australian neo-Pentecostal display of the ideal Christian as youthful, energetic, positive, and vibrant. Social media sites such as Instagram offer tools to support such a display and the Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders have proved adept at maintaining the online aesthetic of perceived authenticity, intimacy, and empowerment. Social media and image-sharing sites facilitate a projection of the idealised self. This self is empowered through what users pick and choose to display about themselves. Edited images of the body, produced through smart-device camera technology, becomes the main vehicle for realising this empowerment as an exercise in self-branding. The individual’s brand preferences become a performance maintained through the constant posting of images. For the Australian neo-Pentecostal pastors, executing stylish social media accounts facilitates the promotion of the ideal Christian self, displayed and maintained through methods of individualised forms of commodified empowerment.

Conclusion

The chapter argues that Australia neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate modern understandings of individualism into their theology and operations. Their conceptualisation of salvation emphasises individual choice to publicly demonstrate a commitment to God and, through discussions on ideal Christian leadership and servanthship, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches outline a theology that rests on expectations of a personalised spiritual relationship with God. The Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders stress the development of an entrepreneurial self as the ideal Christian; the result of a personalised relationship with God is that of success in a chosen field. The Australian neo-Pentecostal senior pastors and leaders use their social media accounts to demonstrate the nature of success that they enjoy, commodifying their everyday lives in the images that they create and post online. The images that they post serve the purpose of creating the appearance of intimacy between the senior pastors and their followers, while at the same time implying that these late-modern forms of commodified empowerment are evidence of God's blessing. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate modern conceptions of individualism as realised through entrepreneurial empowerment. In this conceptualisation, the ideal Christian self develops autonomy through individual effort and the church is the main support structure through which this development occurs. The chapter establishes individualism as a feature of late-modernity that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate into their theology and operations.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Sociologists of religion have found significant and sustained global growth amongst Pentecostal and Charismatic forms of Christianity. From these studies, neo-Pentecostalism has emerged as a fruitful site for scholars to examine developments in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianities. In the Australian context, Hillsong Church's growth and marketing techniques have been noted (Connell 2005, Jennings 2008, Goh 2008, Riches 2010, Riches & Wagner 2012, Maddox 2012, Maddox 2013, Wade & Hynes 2013, Wade 2015, Marti 2017, Riches & Wagner 2017). Denominational studies of COC/inc and Australian Christian Churches (formerly Australian Assemblies of God) have observed neo-Pentecostal features in churches belonging to these denominations (Hey 2011, Clifton 2009). Furthermore, Miller (2015a) argued that Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Planetshakers, and Influencers Church comprise a distinct Australian Pentecostal social movement. However, sociologists of religion have not provided in-depth examinations of incarnations of other internationally-recognised neo-Pentecostal churches based in Australia. The present study contributes to both international and Australian literature on neo-Pentecostalism, analysing the theology and operations of five Australian-based neo-Pentecostal churches: Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe Church, Planetshakers, and Influencers Church. Using a critical religious studies framework to examine materials produced by these five churches, the thesis situated the continued growth and globalised expansion of Australian expressions of neo-Pentecostalism in historical, economic, social, and cultural context.

The thesis sought to answer: what are the elements of Australian neo-Pentecostal theology and organisational practice that have allowed such churches to grow on both a local and international scale? To answer this question, the thesis identified specific theological and organisational characteristics that have facilitated the abilities of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to thrive in local and international contexts. The main argument of the thesis was that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have grown in Australia and expanded into organisations with international reputations by responding to the conditions of late-modernity. The analysis began by synthesising existing histories of Hillsong, C3 Church, Planetshakers, Influencers Church, and Citipointe to discern how neo-Pentecostalism presents in Australia. Through this, the thesis identified broader historical, social, economic, and cultural elements that came to influence and support the churches' mainstream emergence in Australia and eventual global expansion. The research found that Australian neo-Pentecostal

churches actively incorporate features of late-modernity—specifically, consumer capitalism, globalisation, and individualism as a curated self that realises late-modern understandings of personal freedom—in justifying and supporting their theological underpinnings and church-branded activities. By incorporating ideas of consumer capitalism, globalisation, and individualism into their theological practice and the development of their globalised church and church-branded activities, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches demonstrate abilities for adaptation, survival, and expansion in late-modern times. In this way, the thesis showed how Australian neo-Pentecostal churches ensure that they achieve organisational goals of expansion—in both bigger congregations and more congregations around the world—and influence through an incorporation of broader social, economic, cultural, and political dynamics into their theology and operations.

The thesis showed that Australian-based expressions of neo-Pentecostalism adopt aspects of consumer capitalism, globalisation, and individualism into theological teachings and incorporate these dynamics into conducting a range of church and church-branded activities. The thesis demonstrated how churches' theology and the institutional practice can be influenced by the broader social, economic and cultural circumstances in which they operate. In the analysis, the thesis found the presence of several characteristics of late-modernity—neoliberal governance, marketisation and branding, mass-communication strategies, globalisation, celebration of entrepreneurial abilities, and individualised patterns of consumerism—as significant dynamics for facilitating the global expansion of Australian-based expressions of neo-Pentecostalism. The ability of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to incorporate elements of late-modernity in their theology and activities were found to have a critical impact on the churches' abilities to expand and grow. The thesis advances Australian religious studies by developing a scholarly understanding of the emergence of neo-Pentecostalism in Australia and situating the continued expansion of Australian-based expressions of neo-Pentecostalism within the broader dynamics of late-modernity. Furthermore, through an examination of Australian-based expressions of neo-Pentecostalism, the thesis contributes to an international body of literature that seeks to position neo-Pentecostalism as it presents in other countries within conditions of late-modernity. Similar to findings from these studies regarding neo-Pentecostalism based in contexts other than Australia, the development and success of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches should be considered a successful response to conditions of the late-modern epoch.

To explain the significance of the research, the conclusion is divided into three sections. The first section outlines the main findings from each chapter to show how the

thesis answered the central research question to argue that the expansion of Australian-based neo-Pentecostal churches should be situated within the conditions of late-modernity. The second section considers the practical and theoretical implications of the research. The section outlines the significance of the research for sociologists of religion and implications for understanding dynamics of late-modernity. The final section discusses some possibilities for future research that can be undertaken due to the thesis findings. This is important for indicating new research directions that can foster further understanding of dynamics of neo-Pentecostalism in late-modernity.

Overview of key findings

Chapter Two considered the emergence of neo-Pentecostalism in Australia. The chapter used critical religious studies theory to frame religion in late-modernity as subject to influence from social, historical, and cultural dynamics. The chapter found that Australian neo-Pentecostalism developed through a convergence of international factors—the advent of prosperity gospel and Word of Faith theology in the US, the demonstration of faith through individual action in the New Zealand Latter Rain movement, and the development of non-invasive evangelism techniques from South Korea—and these were implemented in various ways in five Australian churches. Chapter Two found that the implementation of neo-Pentecostal features in Citipointe Church, Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Planetshakers, and Influencers Church allowed them to differentiate themselves from the older established Christian denominations, using the style of seeker-friendly services to achieve local growth and using Kingdom Now theology to cultivate influence. Adopting structured organisational practices assisted the churches in competing in an increasingly diverse Australian religious marketplace, as they sought to expand their influence and growth. The findings of the chapter—establishment of the neo-Pentecostal movement in Australian churches and the emergence of the churches in the Australian mainstream—are significant because they show that critical religious studies provide a useful theoretical framework for discerning the characteristics of a religious form. These findings are also important for discovering the impact of globalised neo-Pentecostal beliefs and practice on five Australian-based churches and pinpointing the emergence of neo-Pentecostalism in Australia.

The third chapter advanced the argument through an investigation of the underlying economic, social, cultural, and political dynamics impacting the expansion of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches. The chapter found the development of mass-communication technologies assisted Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to disseminate their worship music

while cultivating global networks with other neo-Pentecostal and growth-oriented churches. The implementation of economic rationalist policies with an emphasis on privatisation and marketisation allowed Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to establish several aspects of their church-branded activities and organisations including charities, schools, Bible colleges, and financial institutions. The chapter found that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches established their globalised outlooks by creating church brands and the senior pastors cultivated the appearance of business acumen through a display of entrepreneurial abilities. Finally, the chapter showed that the development of individualised consumerism as a technique of identity construction in late-modernity facilitated presentations of ostentatious consumerism within Australian expressions of neo-Pentecostalism. The findings from Chapter Three revealed specific conditions of late-modernity that impacted on the continued expansion of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches. Discerning external dynamics that assisted in facilitating this growth is important for understanding the specific conditions of late-modernity that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate into their theology and operations.

Chapter Four began the task of the second part of the thesis, providing a more in-depth analysis of particular conditions of late-modernity that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate in their theology and activities. Analysing elements of late-modern capitalism, the chapter revealed that commercialisation, corporate governance, and responses to recession are present in Australian neo-Pentecostal theology and operations. The analysis found that the churches use marketing techniques—including selling products and access to events—to create a unified church brand. The chapter showed that the use of corporate governance in organising church structures centralises decision-making to a board of directors made up of the senior leadership and there is little accountability outside of this structure. Finally, the chapter demonstrated that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have outlined responses to recession, teaching that times of financial hardship is God's way of testing faith, while at the same time economic downturn provided opportunities to buy property for expanding church operations. The findings from this chapter revealed the ways in which Australian neo-Pentecostal churches incorporate features of late-modern consumer capitalism into their theology and operations.

The fifth chapter continued to provide deeper analysis of specific elements of late-modernity, examining dynamics of globalisation present in Australian neo-Pentecostalism. The chapter questioned how the churches maintain connections and networks between their international locations and found that glocalisation—an organisational ability to bridge the

local and global—is displayed in their cultivations of home groups, the dissemination of church-branded literature and images, and through their worship music. The chapter analysed Australian neo-Pentecostal church planting to find that the churches mimic transnational corporations in their expansion strategies, to create and unify the church brand across church plants around the world. Finally, the chapter investigated international aid programs undertaken by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches to show that the churches focus on pastoral care for people affected by globalised inequality, and this assists in growing their own church numbers and cultivating awareness of the church brand. The section found that, in some cases, this focus can lead to the churches ignoring the complexities of the contexts in which their programs are implemented, even making assumptions about what is best for disadvantaged peoples. These findings establish globalisation as an element of late-modernity that facilitates the global expansion of Australian-based neo-Pentecostal churches.

Finally, Chapter Six examined late-modern ideas of individualism emphasised in Australian neo-Pentecostal theology and activities. An investigation into neo-Pentecostal theological understandings of the nature of salvation showed that church leaders specifically teach individual responsibility in seeking a spiritual relationship with God, and this is actualised in the ‘choice’ of undertaking public water baptism. The chapter found Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders, similar to other internationally recognised prosperity preachers, outline a method of realising God-given gifts and talents that reflect a late-modern understanding of individualism. The leaders teach that service to the church—through volunteer labour—should be undertaken while remaining faithful, and eventually leadership capabilities will be recognised in the wider church community. The individual is solely responsible for avoiding personal failure and there is little acknowledgement of wider circumstances that may affect a person’s ability to realise success. Finally, the chapter found that entrepreneurship is a key marker of success for Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders. This is important for understanding the idealised Christian—successful, wealthy, healthy, youthful—that Australian neo-Pentecostal church leaders display through their social media accounts as enviable and achievable. The chapter discovered that Australian neo-Pentecostal theology and activities emphasise the late-modern version of an individualised self. The findings of the research reveal how Australian-based neo-Pentecostal churches respond to and incorporate the conditions of late-modernity in their theology and operations, positioning the churches within economic, cultural, social, and political contexts.

Practical implications and significance of the research

This section outlines how the research is significant for sociology of religion and discusses practical implications of the findings, including some benefits for scholarly understandings of religion. The thesis revealed insights into dynamics of Australian-based expressions of neo-Pentecostalism in late-modernity. Churches such as Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Citipointe, Influencers Church, and Planetshakers respond to developments in late-modern consumer capitalism, globalisation, and individualism to ensure their continued growth and global success. The findings contribute to a developing international scholarship on churches that demonstrate similar theology and modes of organisation. This insight is crucial to understanding how Pentecostal forms change and adapt in relation to the broader contexts. This, in turn, can foster further debate and discussion within sociology of religion on how religion continues to matter, change, and develop in late-modernity.

Specifically, in analysing the establishment and success of the churches' branded activities—school, charities, Bible college, event management, music recording and production, and financial institutions—the thesis found that Australian-based expressions of neo-Pentecostalism have an impact on areas beyond simply encouraging people to attend their brand of church. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches seek to cultivate influence on people and cities around the world, emphasising the importance of evangelism, conversion, and Christian influence. This has implications for the ways in which the churches view the place of Christians in the world. Importantly, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches encourage participation in either entrepreneurial enterprise, or church-related activities with little reference to the role of the state, except to support business and not-for-profit organisations that do the traditional work of the state (such as provision of welfare services, or education). In this way, the research illuminates the pervasiveness of neoliberalism—with its emphasis on the importance of the individual, privatisation, competition, economic efficiency, and marketisation—to the extent that it can impact on the formation of a religious movement. The development of church-branded activities in neo-Pentecostalism that incorporate neoliberal tendencies has implications for the direction of church-state relations in Australia. This is a religious form that emphasises either service to church or success in business as the best ways to realise a meaningful life. The thesis found that Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders leave little room for structural explanations of people's disadvantageous circumstances in their teachings. In developing the concept of servanthship, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches encourage their congregants to participate in volunteer labour for the church, in the hope of eventually being rewarded for this contribution with the realisation of God-given leadership

qualities. Bypassing the role of the state in developing church-branded activities while encouraging volunteerism as the best way to participate in supporting the church provides Australian neo-Pentecostal churches with influence within a capitalist system that already values business, competition, profit, and exponential growth. The findings of the research indicate that this type of state-church-business relationship, particularly encouraged in a neoliberal policy environment, would continue to benefit Australian neo-Pentecostal churches

The findings of the research have implications for understanding globalisation and religion. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches present themselves as global religions and the research showed that they use specific dynamics of globalisation to support their organisational goals of growth in membership and finances, achieving influence and impact. The analysis revealed that the globalised abilities of Australian neo-Pentecostal churches—their international church-planting ventures, marketing and branding tactics, resemblance to transnational corporations, international conferences, and participation in global aid programs—assist in maintaining their expansion and creating a unified church brand. In taking advantage of globalised structures, Australian neo-Pentecostal churches have actualised their vision of a global church, showing that religion can flourish by incorporating economic conditions of late-modernity, commercialising and developing a global brand. The organisational structure of a centralised decision-making hierarchy in Australian neo-Pentecostal churches means that the senior pastors remain powerful within the church. This type of institutionalisation, coupled with complete control over the church public image, allows Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders to continue to cultivate global networks in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles, leading the way in church growth strategies. Thus, the findings of the thesis contribute to understanding neo-Pentecostalism as suited to becoming a global religious movement and provides further insight into how neo-Pentecostal forms propagate around the world.

The research has implications for understanding religious conceptions of the self in late-modernity. The research showed how the Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders emphasise a particular understanding of the ideal Christian self, seen in an analysis of their use of social media forms. The idealised self is actualised through entrepreneurial activities, in which images on social media platforms are curated to display success, while cultivating the appearance of intimacy with online followers. Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders market themselves as healthy, energetic, and youthful, and these attributes are displayed as proof that God has blessed the leaders. The uptake of modern social media forms to display techniques of evangelism reveals the direct engagement of Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders with late-

modern forms of identity construction. The exercise in marketing the self as a fully-realised entrepreneurial Christian subject has developed a successful integration into online culture for Australian neo-Pentecostal leaders. This self-branding aligns with their ability to communicate a unified church identity through online marketing strategies. The thesis found that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are adept at developing sophisticated marketing and branding techniques deployed through online media. As the internet becomes an increasingly important part of people's lives in late-modernity, there remains the possibility that other, less-successful churches and religious groups will observe Australian neo-Pentecostal online abilities and attempt to replicate these strategies.

The research provides benefits for the understanding of religion in late-modernity. Through an analysis of the conditions of late-modernity in the development and successful global expansion of Australian-based neo-Pentecostal churches, the thesis finds that religions which can incorporate these dynamics have an advantage in achieving their goals. This finding affirms that religions displaying modernising abilities remain important in the late-modern epoch. This is relevant to scholarly understandings of power dynamics in contemporary society. Australian neo-Pentecostal churches continue to operate in the not-for-profit sector, schooling sector, and cultivate an interest within state and local council development issues. Moreover, the research reveals insights into how neo-Pentecostal forms propagate globally, and the impact their church plants, globalised aid programs, and church brands have around the world. Understanding how neo-Pentecostal churches develop their growth strategies and analysing their globalised abilities provides opportunities for religious studies perspectives to contribute to the discussion on developments of religion in late-modernity.

Future directions for research

The final section of the chapter discusses some possibilities for future research as a result of the thesis findings. Firstly, the critical religious studies methodology used in the thesis may prove useful for understanding the establishment and development of other religious identities and movements emerging in the late-modern epoch. In addition to this, research could be undertaken on the impacts of the increasing role awarded to religious organisations in the welfare sector, on both a local and global scale, and what this might mean for political-religious relations in Australia and around the world.

The research provides an opportunity to develop a more complex picture of churches that present neo-Pentecostal characteristics. Applying critical religious studies methodology

to Australian-based expressions of neo-Pentecostalism to discern specific features and characteristics of neo-Pentecostalism facilitates the possibility of a more exhaustive categorisation of neo-Pentecostal churches that operate around Australia, and the world. Such research may discover if other churches are taking notice of the growth strategies Hillsong Church, C3 Church, Planetshakers, Citipointe and Influencers Church present and if they are incorporating these features into their own operations, or even theology. Further to this, the research facilitates the possibility of conducting comparative studies between Australian neo-Pentecostal churches and neo-Pentecostal churches based in other countries, such as in Uganda, South Africa, Brazil, Singapore, Korea, and the US. This would provide valuable insight into understanding how differing cultural contexts and histories, including local differences in conditions of late-modernity, might affect the development of localised expressions of neo-Pentecostalism. Moreover, while this study analyses materials that the churches produce to represent their interests to outsiders, there remains opportunity to conduct ethnographic or participant observational studies that seek to understand what the people who attend the churches think of them, and how they react to the ways in which the churches present themselves. This would assist in developing a deeper understanding of how church attendees respond to the teachings of leaders and how neo-Pentecostal theology might be significant to congregants in their everyday lives.

Finally, the findings revealed that Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are increasingly involving themselves with the charities and not-for-profit sector. Particularly as the push for privatisation and marketisation in neoliberal policy environments increase (in both Australian and around the world), there is a need to conduct more research in this area to develop further understanding of the effects of the changing role of the state with a primary emphasis on the impact of religious organisations within certain policy areas. Further study to understand the significance of these interventions would assist in developing understandings of religious organisations' interventions in the public sphere. Moreover, research could be undertaken on the globalised nature of aid and welfare programs provided by Australian neo-Pentecostal churches, with an aim to understanding in more detail how the programs are formed, funded, and maintained within the churches, and how partnerships with other global charities are affected in these contexts. There is opportunity to develop understandings of religious interventions in the public sector in both local Australian and global contexts. In this way, the thesis provides possibilities for future research in studies of religion, Pentecostal Christianities, and late-modernity.

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