Ex-churched in secular exile

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ABSTRACT

Secular post-modern Australian society is witnessing a decline of the 'church-in-power' model. To suggest that the church is in crisis in this era is an understatement, but this crisis may offer new opportunities for understanding the nature of people leaving church. This paper investigates the phenomenon of Australian evangelical Christians who are leaving the church, but generally retaining faith. An exploration of the reframing of faith via the lens of exilic theology is pertinent to this demographic and offers insights for church leavers, their new communities and the communities from which they have departed. Their voices are worth paying attention to by the evangelical church.

INTRODUCTION

A portion of the population of Australian evangelical Christians is increasingly leaving church whilst generally retaining faith.[1] They may be known as: ex-churched, prodigals, lost-sheep, church-leavers, the churchless, exiles, refugees,[2] the Done (as in 'done with church', as opposed to the None), the Dechurched. The process of leaving may be referred to as 'unchurching'.[3] Metaphors used to image the phenomenon of church-leaving include exodus, exile or even notions of hemorrhaging faith and actions aimed at 'stemming the tide'.[4] These descriptions of the people and the phenomenon are generally framed in negative imagery, depicting the church leaver in terms of where they have left or what they are not, not who they are becoming. The generalised terminology also does not helpfully distinguish between those who are leaving church whilst retaining faith and those who are leaving church *and* faith. This binary in itself may not be helpful at times for those who have left church and are yet to determine the effect on their faith, but for the purposes of this paper I am focusing on church leavers who are retaining faith after departing from Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic (EPC) churches.[5]

Alan Jamieson's important study, conducted as his sociology PhD research, involved interviews with those who had left EPC churches.[6] The study examines key aspects of the churches from which his interviewees were leaving, with the predominant form being conservative and influenced by fundamentalism.[7] These churches are generally characterised by a literal reading of the Bible, a focus on evangelism that seeks conversions (expressed via commitment to the church) rather than faith development, and a minimal spotlight on social justice or political action as an important aspect of faith. Along with

the strong communities that are developed, EPC churches use contemporary worship styles with an emphasis on personal experience. Authoritarian and charismatic leadership styles, the church growth movement, and business models of church structure that focus on numbers (such as the mega-church model) all influence governance in EPC churches. These features affect why people leave EPC churches, but also the specific issues that they may encounter in the leaving process.[8]

I am not principally going to examine the statistics or the major causes of church leaving.[9] I make the assumption that it is happening, advocate for the value of listening to the stories of those who leave and consider the ongoing faith development of those outside of the church. I also appropriate exile as a promising biblical motif to describe the church leaver's situation. Regardless of the transitions the religious landscape is experiencing, I note Bouma's optimistic overview that 'Australia's religious and spiritual life is alive and well: a substantial majority of Australians continue to identify with a religious group, and spirituality is on the rise ... Australia's religious and spiritual life is changing. It is becoming more diverse, less tied to formal organisations'.[10]

THE EX-CHURCHED

In understanding the ex-churched, we need to confront stereotypes of who they are and why they are leaving, and assumptions about whether their faith continues after they depart. Jamieson interviewed EPC church leavers who 'had on average been involved as adults in their respective EPC churches for over 15 years'.[11] He then followed up on this study five years later.[12] The significance of Jamieson's study is that he challenges stereotypes that characterise church leavers as fringe dwellers, low commitment and the young, and that the church-leaving phenomenon was limited to the more mainline traditions.[13] Significantly, the study found that those interviewed predominantly continued to express a Christian faith; very few had chosen other options. Many had previously held positions of leadership in their church, and had been involved in Christian workplaces or theological study environments.[14] This suggests a mature and experienced cohort of church participants and leadership that is being lost from the church.

UK author Dave Tomlinson has described a kind of disenfranchisement arising from problems within evangelicalism itself, thus the name of his book, *The Post-Evangelical*.[15] Using M. Scott Peck's framework, he describes how people transition through normal faith

stages, concluding that people either find alternative forms of church or leave evangelical churches entirely because the restrictive theology and morality of those churches do not deal with their questions and concerns.[16] There is something about the way that many contemporary EPC churches conduct their worship practices, form their leadership structures, approach Scripture, and pastor those who are going through normal and maturing faith transitions that mean that people are not finding it possible to always stay within the bounds of their churches, even if they continue to have faith.[17]

The post-church person is not necessarily post-faith. This movement out of church is not limited to evangelicalism and has been studied extensively in other contexts, the insights of which are beneficial to EPC churches. Taylor uses terms such as 'believing without belonging' (coined by Grace Davie) or 'diffusive Christianity' (coined by Jeffrey Cox) this phenomenon.[18]

IN SECULAR EXILE

Leaving the church is not a simple binary choice of people leaving the holy cloisters of a faith environment for the evils of the secular world - the so-called sacred/secular divide. There are many aspects of church life influenced by secularism that church leavers are rejecting, such as slick mass marketing techniques, hierarchies and bureaucracy.[19] On the other hand, if there is one thing that can be derived from Charles Taylor's work it is that the secular age does not equate to a lack of spirituality or lack of interest in practicing religion in society.[20] However, increased secularisation does mean that people have an option to believe or not to believe - which is preferable over coercion, but there are now more choices than just Christianity.[21]

Sociological theories of secularisation range from classical views and modified theories to outright rejection of secularisation entirely.[22] Earlier theories based on the contentions of Weber and Durkheim argued for a connection between religious decline on the one hand, and the growth of modernity and increased scientific knowledge on the other.[23] Stemming from Enlightenment rationalism and individualism, this religious decline is seen as the normative pattern in Western society, exemplified in the decline of Christendom in Western Europe.[24] However, this presumption has consistently been challenged on empirical grounds. Critics of secularisation theories argue that the evidence beyond Western Europe reveals a far more complex story, with religious adherence exhibited in different ways in other societies.[25] José Casanova suggests that the term secularisation encompasses at least another two theories relating to differentiation and privatisation, arguing for 'better theories of the intermeshing of public and private spheres'.[26] These critiques highlight problems with the direct association of modernity with religious decline. Some scholars now argue for an adjustment to the original secularisation theories, based on the evidence of religious growth throughout the world, whilst others have referred to desecularisation.[27] Correctives in secularisation theories have not overthrown the reality of secularisation, but have brought necessary nuances to the study of secularisation and its implications.[28] For example, studies challenge the myth that the direct cause of empty churches in the UK is increased secularisation.[29] Bouma suggests that, particularly in the Australian context, regular churchgoing has never been a characteristic feature of Australian Christianity,[30] though this does not imply that churchgoing is insignificant for those who attend churches or that the personal impact is diminished for those who leave churches.

The impact of secularisation on those leaving church is unclear. For example, some would suggest that the influence of secular business practices on church governance, the so-called 'corporatisation' of the church, may be something that post-church people are reacting against as a matter of faith and that their leaving constitutes a rejection of this trend.[31] Alternatively, a rejection of secularisation can lead to a heightened trend towards fundamentalism, which some would categorise as evidence of a shift towards post-secularism.[32] However, I am interested that those who are leaving the fastest-growing churches are not heading in the direction of fundamentalism but away from it.[33] Jamieson observes that the people he interviewed did not match secularisation theories in terms of the major causes for their departure from church, as they were continuing in their faith.[34]

EXILE

I have found the use of the term exile helpful to explain the move away from institutional church; but the term is also easily exploited, so I am careful how I use it. The term is fluid, and exile can be understood in a variety of ways - positively and negatively, with many biblical, political and philosophical allusions attached.

There are two main ways in which exile has been used in relation to contemporary Christian settings. The first is the exile of Christianity in general in relation to the wider society. The second is to describe Christians leaving churches, and can encompass those who retain or reject faith.

The concept of Christianity on the margins post-Christendom, and therefore the appeal of the metaphor of exile, has been explored by biblical scholars and theologians. Walter Brueggemann's contribution in this area is prolific and particularly useful because of his cross-disciplinary approach that is appreciative of the nuances of biblical texts relating to exile.[35] He gives prominence to a prophetic voice that critiques the oftentimes too comfortable relationship Christianity has had with the surrounding culture. John Howard Yoder has encouraged Christians to think in new ways about their place in society and public life.[36] Emphasising the idea of 'not being in charge' and highlighting the problems with and seduction of power, Yoder advocates for a faith that remains uncompromised by the state. Using the concept of '*galut* (exile) as vocation', Yoder advocates for an exilic model of Christianity rather than the kingship model of Constantinianism. This approach is sensitive to the marginalised.[37] Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon have further explored the move away from a model of the church in power, with works such as *Resident Aliens* and the use of the *Watership Down* story as a metaphor that appropriates exile as useful for the church.[38] In Australia, Michael Frost has used exile as the theme and

title of his book in relation to Christians on the fringe of society.[39] There's also an earlier work by Michael Goonan that is a very well considered literary study of Australian spirituality, which uses exile as the framing reference.[40]

Biblical scholars such as Fernando Segovia have further extended the incorporation of the idea of diaspora generally into Christianity.[41] Daniel Smith-Christopher has examined the historical situation of the Babylonian exile and incorporated contemporary social-scientific studies of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and refugees, to bring a broader understanding of the phenomenon and therefore of our reading of biblical texts that arise from situations of exile.[42] These approaches have encouraged a re-engagement with the theme.

Turning to where a theology of exile can provide potential resonance and be informative to the experience of leaving church, the first space is in the story of the Babylonian exile and forced displacements of this era.[43] The massive upheaval, the removal of traditional structures and symbols so crucial to the faith (temple, land), and the loss of traditional authority structures all required new formulations of faith expression. Ancient oracles, including the exilic and post-exilic prophets (such as Isaiah 40-55), played an essential role in assisting with the reframing of faith identity. It is very useful that the biblical texts that emerged from this crisis are still available to us today. Fresh readings of such texts can highlight the trauma beneath the layers, such as in the Zion personification or exploring what the anti-idol polemics might speak to us in our contemporary contexts of consumerism and allegiance to imperial military-industrial rule. Or reading Ezekiel, Daniel, Jeremiah. These prophetic readings of exile produce different visions about living out faith when the contexts have changed.

Exile is a useful term to describe church leaving, due to its fluidity. In the biblical tradition, exile came to mean more than geographical displacement and therefore does not need to be limited to discussions about land or nationality.[44] Exile came to be understood as a metaphor.[45] The development in thinking about exile as more than an event, expressing experiences of alienation beyond forced displacement, is the focus of Halvorson-Taylor's extensive study on the formation of the exilic motif.[46] She demonstrates the extension of the term to include all forms of distress.[47] The wound inflicted by exile was so deep, and the questions it raised so big, that a mere return to land could not deal with the theological havoc wrought by the exile.[48] Exile came to be associated in Judaism with '...death, sterility, bodily and emotional pain, and servitude. Exile would thus come to be understood as a paradigm for human suffering and a separation from God'.[49] It was the questions about these key theological traumas with which many prophetic texts sought to engage. These universal questions regarding God's presence in times of loss or change are particularly resonant for ex-churched people, in some ways more acutely than when a theological framework is black and white. In fact, exile required a complete re-boot of the theological framework.

Hopefully, with this brief overview, I have shown that there has been sufficient theological and biblical scholarship to lay the groundwork for reading exile in contemporary settings. However, we need to be careful to acknowledge where the theme does *not* correlate. I take

heed of the clear warnings provided by biblical scholars such as Carolyn Sharp and Mark Brett against the blunt appropriation of the theme without proper exegesis.[50] A straight analogical comparison may be misleading and even damaging, and can lead us not only to misunderstand exile and biblical texts related to exile, but also to apply the concept inappropriately to contemporary situations. Exile from church is not easily equated with situations of political, geographical, economic or conflict-related exile. Therefore, calling church leavers refugees in the current climate seems to me to be particularly insensitive. As one of the strongest critics of the romanticisation of exile, Palestinian Edward Said writes that 'Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience'.[51] And so, in terms of post-church people, I do not think it is helpful to depict exile as a cool, marginal place to exist when we just have angst or want to tap into the anti-institutional or anti-authoritarian inclinations of Australian church goers, which may be better associated with resistance movements or cultural change. My hesitation on this front is because exile from church can be an extremely painful experience that can include loss of one's primary community and place of work, and a re-adjustment of core faith and theological positions previously held very close.

Being in 'secular exile' is not as bad as it sounds if we can incorporate some of the thinking of those such as Charles Taylor. Taylor is best known for his significant contribution to our understanding of secularism; but he also has some interesting things to say about exile. Taylor uses the concept of 'fullness' to describe an experience where life is deeper and more meaningful. The flipside of this experience is a kind of exile, evoking images of loss and captivity in the everyday struggle for fullness.[52] He suggests that there is a third option of living in the middle of fullness and exile, where people are able to find meaning without the fullness, but keep the sense of exile at a distance. These are lived conditions, not just sets of beliefs.[53] As Segovia suggests, 'We are thus always strangers or aliens, the permanent 'others' both where we came from and where we find ourselves'.[54]

CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

I propose that the ex-churched who continue in faith face some particular challenges and new possibilities:

- What does community mean for a new diaspora? Jamieson's work on church leavers concludes with the acknowledgement that groups remain important for the faith development of the leavers.[55] Understanding concepts such as marginality or liminality may assist in reformulating new communities.[56] *Liminal* groups offer new constructions of church communities. *Marginal* groups are a possible locus for the disenfranchised who need to 'grumble', express their doubts and questions. Liminal groups look towards the future whereas marginal groups identify with the past. Both forms of groups may prove useful to a church leaver. Church leavers also have the benefit of flexibility to form new groups.

- How does a church leaver find other ex-churched people? In an era of social media there certainly seem to be many places for connection, but how sustainable are they?

- How does one reformulate leadership in a new community? How do they regain trust in leadership if poor examples have contributed to their departure from church?

- Where is the place of the Bible and the Sacraments in this community?[57] Questions raised may include: How could the Lord's Supper be celebrated with the hungry? How may baptism be significant for those who have had their identities threatened? Where is the place for hospitality for those without a home?

- What is the future of faith for the children of the ex-churched? This is an area that begs more research over a longitudinal study, as the transitionary movements of the parental generation will not necessarily lead to positive faith formation for younger generations.

- Where is the potential for a public voice of the ex-churched, without institutional backing? There is an extent to which leaving an institution is liberating, by no longer having to be associated with a sector of society with negative public associations on matters such as the sexual abuse crisis, same-sex marriage or voting patterns. However, there may be lost positive associations to the churches' voice on asylum seekers and welfare, or the financial and infrastructure benefits that come with institutional alignment.

Being in exile in a secularised context does not mean that Christians have the luxury of only looking inwards at their theological positions, questions and concerns. Rather, it is an opportunity to look outwards towards those who are truly marginalised in society.

I was struck when reading an article on Charles Taylor, written following the election of Donald Trump, about conversations prior to the election: 'Taylor's calm, scholarly empathy is reassuring; his three-point program for engaging with one's political opponents – "Try to listen; find out what's troubling them; stop condemning – is deeply humane"'[58] Listen in order to learn rather than listening in order to correct or speak. Listening to the voices of church leavers will be important for all of those who are interested in the place of church in their own lives, for their children and for the future of the church in public society. Jamieson includes some interesting feedback by pastors on the issue of church leavers that indicates disconnect between the perceptions and realities of the situation. Most pastors were confused about why people leave their churches, considering those who left to be backsliders or never really involved. There was a mutual withdrawal process: when the individual considering leaving stepped back, the pastor or church leader also stepped away.[59] This does not encourage active listening by either party. Formal and informal opportunities can be provided both within and outside the formal boundaries of churches, as a way of offering communal spaces for listening.[60]

Incorporating an interpretation of the biblical exilic motif into our understanding of contemporary Australian church leavers in an increasingly secular society offers insights for church leavers, their new communities and the communities from which they have departed. Not all of those who leave church will retain faith, but for those who do, there are potentially exciting possibilities for how that faith is reframed, informed by biblical texts of exile developed in ancient communities.

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Endnotes

1. For general commentary on Australian religious change, see Gary D. Bouma, *Australian Soul: Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2006, chs 3-5; and Tom Frame, *Losing My Religion: Unbelief in Australi*a, Sydney, UNSW Press, 2009. This phenomenon is not restricted to the Australian context, nor to Evangelicalism. We can be positively informed by the research emerging from other contexts where Australia may find parallels, such as Canada, New Zealand and the UK. The decline of evangelicalism in the US, a quite different context, is producing a flurry of popular books. Some of the US findings are relevant to our context here if we take into account the differences. See for example David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church and Rethinking Faith*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011; and Rachel Held Evans, *Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving and Finding the Church*, Nashville, Nelson Books, 2015.

2. Josh Packard and Ashleigh Hope, *Church Refugees: Sociologists Reveal Why People Are Done With Church But Not Their Faith*, Loveland, CO, Group Publishing CO, 2015.

3. Richard Jacobson, *Unchurched: Christianity Without Churchianity*, Unchurching Books, 2016.

4. On Australian responses to the Canadian research project called 'Hemorrhaging faith' regarding the decrease in church attendance, see Darren Cronshaw, Rowan Lewis and Stacey Wilson, 'Hemorrhaging Faith: An Australian Response in Exile', *Australian eJournal of Theology*, 23 (1), April 2016, 14-31; and Rowan Lewis, 'The State of Faith in Australian Youth: Haemorrhaging, Exodus or Exile', *Equip*, 25, May 2015, 4-6. Jamieson references a British study of survey data on declining church attendance where its author, Dr Peter Brierley, suggests the statistics 'shows a haemorrhage akin to a burst artery. The country is littered with people who used to go to church but no longer do. We could well bleed to death', in Alan Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith: Journeys Beyond Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches*, Wellington, Phillip Garside Publishing Ltd, 2000, 8, quoting Peter Brierley, *The Tide is Running Out: What the English Church Attendance Survey Tells Us*, London, Christian Research, 2000, 236.

5. The social phenomenon and effect of the departure from faith communities is not limited to evangelicalism. It is occurring across the spectrum of Christian churches and away from traditional religions (although not necessarily spirituality) in general.

6. There are only a few differences between Jamieson's NZ context and Australia, mainly the larger size of the Australian church, and the fact that Australians who leave churches have a greater variety of other options to choose from. Nevertheless, statistically speaking, the departure from churches is just as significant in both countries, and the reasons similar. See for example Philip J. Hughes, Margaret Fraser and Stephen Reid, *Australia's Religious Communities: Facts and Figures*, Nunawading, Christian Research Association, 2012; and Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith*, 2000, 23.

7. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith*, 2000, 23.

8. This paper is not specifically looking at what may be termed 'spiritually abusive' churches or faith communities. For studies on this, see Stephen Arterburn and Jack Felton, *Toxic Faith: Experiencing Healing From Painful Spiritual Abuse*, Colorado Springs, Waterbrook Press, 2001.

9. Regarding the challenges in determining exactly what to measure, and the source of the numbers (surveys, census data and church records), see Bouma, *Australian Soul*, 2006, 49-50. The statistical realities of church and religious adherence in Australia are covered extensively in Bouma, *Australian Soul*, 2006, ch. 3; and Hughes, Fraser and Reid, *Australia's Religious Communities*. One way in which religious and spiritual identity has commonly been measured is the ABS Census, where people are asked to identify their religious affiliation. See 'Cultural Diversity in Australia', *Reflecting a Nation: Stories from the 2011 Census, 2012–2013*. The overall picture is of declining church attendance, a decline of Christianity as a percentage of total population, and immigration shaping greater diversity in religious adherence. 'In the past decade, the proportion of the population reporting an affiliation to a Christian religion decreased from 68% in 2001 to 61% in 2011' (Frame, *Losing My Religion*, 2009, 272).

10. Bouma, *Australian Soul*, 2006, 84. On the other hand, Frame takes a decidedly more pessimistic approach that challenges the concept of Australia as a Christian nation, and suggests the Australian personality is essentially apathetic about faith (Frame, *Losing My Religion*, 2009).

11. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith*, 2000, 13.

12. Alan Jamieson, Jenny McIntosh and Adrienne Thompson, *Five Years on - Continuing Faith Journeys of Those Who Left the Church*, Wellington, The Portland Trust, 2006; Alan Jamieson, 'Leaving and Believing: A Longitudinal Study of the Faith of Church Leavers', *Australian Journal of Mission Studies*, 5 (1), June 2011, 53-60.

13. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith*, 2000, 15.

14. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith*, 2000, 11-15. They are invested financially, socially, theologically and sometimes professionally. For example, a church leaver may have previously given income to the church or even derived an income from the church, have married (with such a decision even shaped by the church), started a family within the church, grown up in the church, chosen a career/vocation based on faith leanings, and have had a social life that centred around church life.

15. Dave Tomlinson, *The Post Evangelical*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2003.

16. Tomlinson, *Post Evangelical*, 62. Jamieson also uses a faith transition model based on

James Fowler's work to explain church leaving (Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith*,2000, chapter 8). Jamieson argues that EPC churches have typically neglected the concept of faith as a journey, instead emphasising conversion. He explains how James Fowler's model of the 6 stages of faith was useful to his analysis of church leavers. Fowler is a theologian and human development specialist who saw faith as comparable to stages of maturity. See James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, San Fransisco, Harper & Row, 1981.

17. See Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith*, 2000, ch. 2, for an overview of EPC churches.

18. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge, Mass, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007, 514, 518-519. See also Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1994. I note the staunch disagreement with the idea of religion outside of church by Steve Bruce, *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory*, Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 2011, ch. 4. His understanding of 'fringe' is a better term but does not acknowledge that being on the fringe of the institutional church does not necessarily mean a rejection of faith in its entirety.

19. Tomlinson, *Post Evangelical*, 139.

20. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2007. See also José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1994; and Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom: How the Church is to Behave if Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1991, 26. Note Tom Frame's identification of the shift of many areas of social and political life from religious sectors to the state or private sector. See Frame, *Losing My Religion*, 2009, 270; and Bouma, 2006, 5. On the growth in interest in spirituality see Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: why religion is giving way to spirituality*, Malden, MA, Blackwell, 2005.

21. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2007, 3. Taylor particularly identifies the enormous change that has occurred in Western society from 1500 to 2000 AD, as well as looking at earlier non-Western societies.

22. The well cited classical theorists of secularisation include: David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization*, Oxford, UK, Blackwell, 1979; Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 1982; Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West*, Religion in the Modern World, Oxford, UK, Blackwell Publishers, 2002; Bruce, *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory*; and Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, New York, Doubleday, 1967.

23. The relationship between secularisation and modernity has been well explored, but see Taylor on the effect of what he terms the 'unthought' aspects of secularisation theoretical study. This relates to the biases of the researchers towards declining religion (Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2007, 428). See Cox on the importance of differentiating between the ideology of secularism and the historical process of secularisation. Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Persective*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2013, xx.

24. For an outline of the study of Christendom's decline in Western Europe, including an analysis of secularisation theory, see Hugh McLeod, 'Introduction', in *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000*, Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf (eds), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, 1-26.

25. Modified versions of secularisation theory include: Peter L. Berger, 'The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview', in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, Peter L. Berger (ed.), Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999, 1-18; Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging*, 1994; Grace Davie, 'Europe: The Exception That Proves the Rule?', in Berger, *The Desecularization of the World*, 1999, 65-83. On the rise of religious adherence globally and arguing for more nuanced views of secularisation theory, see Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 1994. A common contrast made is the rise of public Evangelical Protestantism in the United States. See Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 1994, 27, especially ch. 6. In relation to the political impact of evangelicalism, with a particular focus on South America, Asia and Europe, see David Martin, 'The Evangelical Upsurge and Its Political Implications', in Berger, *The Desecularization of the World*, 1999, 37-49. Even Europe evidences diverse responses to the decline of Christendom and rise of secularity. See further in Davie, 'Europe: The Exception That Proves the Rule?'; and McLeod, 'Introduction', both in Berger, *The Desecularization of the World*, 1999. The historical journeys of individual European countries and their relationship to Protestant and Catholic faith expressions have led to differing outcomes.

26. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 1994, 7.

27. For a comprehensive overview see Rob Warner, *Secularization and Its Discontents*, London, Continuum, 2010.

28. Cox's main point is that there are other possible narratives about the story of religion and the decline of Christendom in Europe and beyond that refine rather than discount theories of secularisation, asking different questions. See Jeffrey Cox, 'Master Narratives of Long-Term Religious Change', in *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000*, in Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf (ed.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, 201-217.

29. Gill's analysis of empty churches in the UK (as representative of declining Christian belief and practice) challenges many presumptions made by studies of this topic including the idea that churches were full prior to World War 1, and the emphasis on secularisation and urbanisation as major causes for decline. Systematically exploring a broad range of data, Gill concludes: 'The empty church appears less a product of twentieth-century disillusionment and secularization than of structural problems endemic in the Church of England and the Free Churches facing huge shifts of population in the nineteenth century. It was exacerbated, among other things, by their long struggle for predominance. The empty church characterized most denominations in Britain throughout the twentieth century and continues now into the twenty-first century. And it may well have contributed to the gradual, but much later, decline in distinctively Christian belief' (Robin Gill, *The 'Empty Church' Revisited, Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology*, Aldershot, UK, Ashgate, 2003, 137.

30. Bouma, *Australian Soul*, 2006, 36.

31. See Walter Brueggemann, 'Rethinking Church Models Through Scripture', *Theology Today*, 48 (2), 1991, 128-138.

32. Bouma, *Australian Soul*, 2006, 101.

33. See Jamieson, *A churchless faith*, 2000, 11.

34. Jamieson, *A churchless faith*, 2000, 15.

35. Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1986; *Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles*, Louisville, Ky., Westminster John Knox Press, 1997; The Prophetic Imagination, 2nd ed., Minneapolis, MN, Fortress Press, 2001; *Out of Babylon*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2010; and 'At the Mercy of Babylon: A Subversive Rereading of the Empire', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 110 (1), Spring 1991, 3-22.

36. John Howard Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs (eds), Radical Traditions Series, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2003.

37. Alain Epp Weaver, *States of Exile: Visions of Diaspora, Witness, and Return*, Polyglossia: Radical Reformation Theologies, Scottdale, Pa, Herald Press, 2008, 160. 'Not being in charge' is a term also favoured by Daniel Boyarin.

38. Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1989; Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, 1991; Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Where Resident Aliens Live: Exercises for Christian Practice*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1996.

39. Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture*, Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson, 2006.

40. Michael. G. Goonan, *A Community of Exiles: Exploring Australian Spirituality*, Homebush, St Pauls Publications, 1996.

41. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (eds), *Reading From This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective*, vol. 2, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1995; Fernando F. Segovia, 'Toward a Hermeneutics of the Diaspora: A Hermeneutics of Otherness and Engagement', in *Reading From This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*, Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (eds), Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1995, 57-74; Fernando F. Segovia, 'Postcolonial and Diasporic Criticism in Biblical Studies: Focus, Parameters, Relevance', *Studies in World Christianity*, 5 (2), 1999, 177-195.

42. Daniel L. Smith, *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile*, Bloomington, Ind, Meyer-Stone Books, 1989; Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile*, OBT, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2002; 'Reading War and Trauma: Suggestions Toward a Social-Psychological Exegesis of Exile and War in Biblical Texts', in *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, Brad E. Kelle, Frank Ritchel Ames and Jacob L Wright (eds), SBLAIL, Atlanta, Society of Biblical Literature, 2011, 253-274; and 'Reading Exile Then: Reconsidering the Methodological Debates for Biblical Analysis in Dialogue With Sociological and Literary Analysis', in *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of Exile*, John J. Ahn and Jill Anne Middlemas (eds), Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies, New York, T&T Clark International, 2012, 139-157.

43. Note that the historic situations of exile are much debated. For one thing, there was not just one exile. This is part of the problem with proof texting of biblical texts and when parallels are made between ancient contexts of geographic displacement and contemporary situations. However, these issues are neither insurmountable nor prohibitive to the use of the term for contemporary settings.

44. Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile: The Metaphorization of Exile in the Hebrew Bible*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, Leiden, Brill, 2011.

45. Robert P. Carroll, 'Exile! What Exile? Deportation and the Discourses of Diaspora', in *Leading Captivity Captive: 'the Exile' as History and Ideology*, Lester L. Grabbe (ed.), JSOTSup, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, 62-79, 64.

46. For discussion on the elasticity of the notion of enduring exile, see Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 2011, 201.

47. Halvorson-Taylor (*Enduring Exile*, 2011) cites Daniel 9, the Animal Apocalypse and the Damascus document, which all give far longer durations for the exile than the traditional Jeremiac 70 years. See also the work of 4 Ezra, which was possibly written after the Second Temple destruction of 70AD but uses the Babylonian exile image as a shaping metaphor for their experience. As Halvorson-Taylor notes, the significance of all these documents is the notion that, even post-Cyrus, the authors see exile as continuing, even if they were back in the land.

48. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 2011, 201.

49. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 2011, 203.

50. Carolyn J. Sharp, 'The Trope of "exile" and the Displacement of Old Testament Theology', *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 31 (2), 2004, 153-169; and Mark G. Brett, 'Feeling for Country: Interpreting the Old Testament in the Australian Context', *Pacifica*, 23 (2), June 2010, 137-156.

51. Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile: And Other Literary and Cultural Essays*, London, Granta, 2001, np.

52. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2007, 6.

53. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2007, 8.

54. Segovia, 'Hermeneutics of Diaspora', 1995, 64.

55. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith*, 2000; and Jamieson, McIntosh and Thompson, *Five Years on*, 2006, ch. 8: 'The role of faith groups'.

56. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith*, 2000, see 158-166, for discussion of liminal and marginal groups, with a particular focus on liminal groups. For a brief definition of liminality in the postcolonial studies context, see Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, New York, Routledge, 2000, 106-107, which describes the stairwell analogy. It also makes a link between liminality and hybridity, which is another concept of 'third space' in postcolonial dialogue. See also Alan J. Roxburgh, *The Missionary Congregation, Leadership and Liminality*, Christian Mission and Modern Culture, Harrisburg, PA, Trinity Press International, 1997, ch.2, where he uses the concepts of marginality to describe the situation for the church in North America, and liminality as a 'model for engagement'.

57. Hoch explores the idea of the exiled church theologising alongside those who are marginalised in society. See Robert P. Hoch, *By the Rivers of Babylon: Blueprint for a Church in Exile*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2013, 10, 157. There are relevant points here for church exiles that are forming new communities. The place of sacraments in exilic communities can be informed by meeting alongside societal exiles. Questions raised may include: How could the Lord's Supper be celebrated with the hungry? How may baptism be significant for those who have had their identities threatened? Where is the place for hospitality for those without a home?

58. Joshua Rothman, 'How to Restore Your Faith in Democracy', *The New Yorker*, 11/11/2016.

59. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith*, 2000, 41.

60. See for example the place of groups designed to debrief and explore the leaving process or aspects of faith transition, in Jamieson, McIntosh and Thompson, *Five Years on*, 2006, chs 11-12.