YOUTH MINISTRY

An Inclusive Missional Approach

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Research Justification

The target group of this book is fellow academics on the national and international platform. It aims to contribute to the scientific and academic discourse as regards the 'what' and 'why' of Youth Ministry. In the past, too often Youth Ministry has been approached from a mainly practical point of view, almost asking how we keep young people off the streets. Its methodology has often not included the theological and theoretical presuppositions that lie behind this ministry. Previous scientific reflection has been determined by a one-dimensional and almost exclusive point of view. Compared to existing literature this book, however, does not focus so much on the 'how' of Youth Ministry. It innovates a different approach. The book challenges the existing exclusive approach and develops an inclusive, congregational and missional understanding of and approach to Youth Ministry. The author first developed his understanding of Youth Ministry in his dissertation (published 1982) and in the first Afrikaans edition of this book in 1998. Today, the author finds that there is no room for the so-called 'future church heresy'. This reworked edition represents a more than 50% change compared to the previous edition. The book embodies mainly a literature qualitative and descriptive methodological approach. The bibliography and extensive footnotes are a testimony to this. From the particular perspective of understanding the main objectives of Practical Theology, the author endorses the so-called movement of 'what is supposed to be going on'. He adds the outcome of an empirical round-table discussion with some 16 leaders in this field to the descriptive and interpretive movements in the subject field: What is going on and why is it going on? This newness attributes to the substantial reworking of the material compared to the previous editions and presents the first discussion of this nature in South Africa. The book will form the standard for any new research with regard to Youth Ministry. It is the first scholarly publication in the newly established HTS Religion & Society Series. The book's contribution lies on the level of sound theological reasoning and argumentation. It provides an inclusive congregational understanding of ministry as an integral part of every congregation, in essence being missional. Youth, children, adolescents and emerging adults, are just an integral part of every congregation within which they live and serve. The author calls this an inclusive and differentiated approach.

Prof. Dr Malan Nel: Extraordinary professor, Faculty of Theology, Department of Practical Theology, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

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PART 3: The ministry to, with and by means of the youth: What are we doing?

Abbreviations, Figures and Tables appearing in the Text and Notes

List of Abbreviations

ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
HGJB	Hervormd Gereformeerde Jeugdbond
NIV	New International Version
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NRCA	Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
RCSA	Reformed Churches in South Africa
SATS	Theological Seminary in South Africa
URCSA	Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa
YfC	Youth for Christ
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

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Biographical Notes

Professor Malan Nel did all his degree work at the University of Pretoria where he enrolled for a BSc degree in 1955. At the end of his first year his calling into the full-time ordained ministry made him change course. After ordination he served two local churches (in one as student pastor) and as Director for Youth Ministry in the Synod of KwaZulu-Natal and later the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church. His academic and teaching career started in 1980 as a member of the Department of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria. He finished his doctorate in 1981 with a thesis on youth evangelism. In 1988 he accepted an appointment at the then Vista University. Here he founded the Centre for Contextual Ministry in 1992. The Centre relocated to the University of Pretoria in 2002 and he served as Director until 2012. The main purpose of the Centre is to train Christian leaders for their ministry in church and society. Since his official retirement as Director of the Centre, Prof. Nel is an extraordinary professor, Department of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria. Prof. Nel specialises in Congregational Studies, Youth Ministry, Christian Education and Evangelism. He was and still is deeply involved in consulting congregations in becoming missional in being and doing. He has a deep love for preaching and teaching and has published a book on the impact of personality on preaching. His last official research (current) is on the role of preaching in developing missional congregations. His research profile is on https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2263-9097 and http://www.malannel.co.za

Foreword

Prof. Dr Malan Nel
Extraordinary professor, Faculty of Theology
Department of Practical Theology
University of Pretoria
South Africa

I am writing this foreword myself. I want to explain some of my choices in revising and updating the original book (Nel 1998, 2000).

My *first choice* concerns the title. After much consideration, I have decided to change the title to communicate more obviously an understanding that the congregation, of which youth are an integral part, is in mission. The missional conversation compels me to develop my basic approach to Youth Ministry, as a ministry to, with and through youth, with an understanding that the congregation is in mission. The church is either missional or does not exist. Martin Luther King once said in his plight for justice: It is either non-violence or non-existence. As regards this book: it is either missional or not-church. The book is, however, more than its title. The title tells my Youth Ministry and Congregational Development story. This is what I stand for. I am convinced that this inclusive missional congregational approach is theologically informed. Even more so now than when I first developed this understanding. I am sensitive to gender inclusivity in life and in writing. While using mostly 'he', in my mind, I included both sexes. I did so to prevent the monotonous reference to 'he or she', 'him or her'.

A *second choice* was to try and find a way between an academic book (in the first place) and a book readily accessible to all local theologians, pastors and members alike. This choice

has an impact on quotes and references. These necessary conventions in any academic work often make a book look 'difficult to read' to the non-ordained theologian, the member. I have therefore decided to once again use notes, but this time around, footnotes. I hope that in doing this it brings the reference closer to those who are interested in them, references according to the Harvard system and footnotes have been combined. To make it more reader-friendly, I did not insert the full details of a document quoted, but just the date of publication and page number(s). The detail is provided in the bibliography.

A basic challenge for Youth Ministry has always been an all too obvious absence of deep theological thinking behind what we do. Ministry is plagued by many 'how to' manuals and approaches. Youth Ministry even more so. My *third choice* is to focus on the '*why* we do *what* we do' – at least more so than on '*how* we do what we do'. Therefore, the theological first part of the book has been expanded to include critical theological issues in an inclusive missional approach to Youth Ministry.

A *fourth choice* was to add the results of a round-table discussion with several persons from different denominational backgrounds involved in Youth Ministry in South Africa. I have added this as a separate chapter in the book. This will add an empirical contribution to the book befitting a publication in Practical Theology.

My prayer is that this new edition will continue to be helpful to fellow Practical Theologians in the field of Youth Ministry, and to other non-ordained theologians – of such core importance in this ministry – like parents and the youth themselves.

History of the publication

For further reading in the original Afrikaans series, Studies in Practical Theology, consult:

Pieterse, H.J.C., 1993, *Praktiese teologie as kommukatiewe handelingsteorie*, Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing, Pretoria.

Louw, D.J., 1993, *Pastoraat as ontmoeting: Ontwerp vir 'n basisteorie, antropologie, metode en terapie,* Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing, Pretoria.

Vos, C.J.A., 1995, *Die blye tyding. Homiletiek uit die hermeneuties-kommunikatiewe perspektief*, Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing, Pretoria.

Venter, C.J.H., 1996, *Uitkringende liefdesbetoon. Kommunikatiewe handelinge in diens van die onderlinge liefdes gemeenskap in die kerk,* Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing, Pretoria.

Müller, J.C., 1996, *Om tot verhaal te kom: pastorale gesinsterapie,* Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing, Pretoria.

Vos, C.J.A., & Pieterse, H.J.C., 1997, *Hoe lieflik is u woning*, Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing, Pretoria.

Nel, M., 1998, *Jeugbediening. 'n Inklusiewe gemeentelike benadering*, Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing, Pretoria.

PART 1

Basic points of departure: Why do we do what we do?

Methodological: What we do is Practical Theology

One of my students, who lives in Soweto, South Africa, recently asked me in a personal conversation: 'I noticed that most books you prescribed for us, start with a section on what Practical Theology is. Why is that the case?' I briefly answered:

> Our subject field was, and maybe still is, under pressure to give an account of what Practical Theology is. In post-graduate research, it is custom to give an account of this and motivate one's own understanding of and choices within the field. This is also true for many who wrote on various sub-disciplines within the field.

This is exactly the reason why the first Afrikaans edition of this book contained such a chapter. That was in 1998, even more important than now. The book was first published in the series: Studies in Practical Theology.[1]

1. Nel (1998); cf. see also above (p. xx) for the history of the publication.

It is now also almost common practice to deal with Youth Ministry as Practical Theology. It was not always the case. When I read a paper on this topic in 1995 in Oxford, it certainly was not the case. I had to defend my position against well-known scholars in the field of Youth Ministry. I am glad this has changed. Scholars who have helped a lot in developing this understanding are many.[2] In one of his more recent publications, Root[3] wrote: 'Thus this book is a practical theology of Youth Ministry.' He then continues to give a brief account of his understanding of the subject field. In a 2011 publication, he[4] contributed a chapter on 'Postscript: Reflecting on Method. Youth Ministry as Practical Theology'. Another good example of this development is the work of Jacober[5] on adolescence, her book contains two chapters on Youth Ministry as Practical Theology. More examples are probably to be found in the vast world of theological reflections on Youth Ministry. For example, in the 'Series Preface', Clark[6] wrote that:

> [/]n many ways Youth Ministry has come of age. No longer seen as 'a stepping stone to real ministry' in the church, especially in North America, Youth Ministry is now seen as a viable career option.

He follows this up in stating that the 'purpose of Baker Academic's Youth, Family and Culture series is to raise the level of dialogue concerning how we think about, teach and live out Youth Ministry.' He then makes the point that:

> [A]s a branch of practical theology, Academic Youth Ministry must move beyond a primarily skills-based focus to a theologically driven

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2. Some of these attempts were not directly related to the subject field as it is academically understood, but more a kind of reflection on 'Theology from a Practical Perspective' like in the case of Borgman (1997).

3. Root (2007:19–20).

4. Root and Bertrand (2011:218–236).

5. Jacober (2011:15–48).

6. Clark (2010:ix).

expression of a contextual commitment of the local church to a targeted population.[7]

When I reflected on this in the first edition, I could report a high level of agreement in the methodological debate. Since 1998, however, a lot has happened in the field of Practical Theology. Approaches that have always been there, been dormant, have become more dominant. So, to name but one example, the postfoundational approach as promoted and explained by Van Huyssteen[8] and within the field of Practical Theology by Müller.[9] Osmer[10] contributed hugely to this discussion. As a well-versed scholar in this field he builds on the tradition of Zerfass, Heitink, Browning and others.[11] In an earlier contribution to 'Essays in honor of James W. Fowler'[12] Osmer and Schweitzer already worked with the theory he later published in his now well-known book. Add to this new interest the work by Root[13] on what he termed *Christopraxis*.[14]

The fact that many agree that Youth Ministry is part of Practical Theology – is in fact Practical Theology – does not necessarily mean that all Practical Theologians agree with every detail of approaches and methodologies within the field. There is, however, a reasonable unanimity about the current

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7. He then, in agreement, quotes Fowler's (1987:17) definition of Practical Theology: 'Theological reflection and construction arising out of and giving guidance to a community of faith in the *praxis* of its mission.'

8. Van Huyssteen (1997, 1999).

9. Müller (2011); see also Root (2014b:229ff.) for his discussion on his approach ('critical realism') and post-foundationalism.

10. Osmer (2008).

11. Zerfass (1974); Heitink (1993, 1999); Browning (1991). Add to this, publications like Schweitzer and Van der Ven (1999); Steck (2000); Anderson (2001); Volf and Bass (2002); Veling (2005); Mercer and Miller-McLemore (2016).

12. Osmer and Schweitzer (2003:1–11); cf. also Fowler's response in Fowler (2003:229–250).

13. Root (2014b).

14. Jacober (2011:25) calls it 'Practical Theology. A Christocentric approach.'

paradigm. A broader accord about the subject field and the methodological approach within the field has developed, in South Africa at least, since the publication of Pieterse's book.[15] In Pieterse's book, which deals with the justification of the method, important contributions to the discourse were discussed. Pieterse refers to well-known theologians who have given important insights to the methodology, such as Zerfass, Firet, Van der Ven and Heitink.[16] What Pieterse[17] argued then is probably, broadly speaking, still true today: Practical Theology has in the last years aligned itself more and more with the paradigm of communicative action theory. In the same year, Heitink[18] wrote: '[U]nder practical theology is to be understood the empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith within the praxis of the present-day society.'

Heitink's[19] distinction between two different concepts or understandings of *praxis* is important at this point. He wrote:

> The definition refers to *the mediation of the Christian faith* (praxis 1) in *the praxis of modern society* (praxis 2). Much of the confusion regarding the unique object of practical theology has to do with the failure to make a logical and methodological distinction between the two. Praxis 1 indicates that the unique object of practical theology is related to intentional, more specifically, intermediary or mediative, actions, with a view to changing a given situation through agogics. Praxis 2 emphasizes the context, where these actions take place, as a dynamic context in which men and women in society interact, whether or not their actions are religiously motivated while pursuing various goals.

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15. Pieterse (1993); cf. also Burger (1991).

16. Cf. Pieterse (1993); Firet (1977; 1980; 1986; 1987); Heitink (1991; 1993; 1999); Van der Ven (1988; 1990); Zerfass (1974).

17. Pieterse (1993:3).

18. Heitink (1993:18); cf. also Firet (1987:260); Heyns and Pieterse (1991:49–60); Nel (1991b:20ff.); Vos (1996:50–53).

19. Heitink (1999:8).

Heitink admits that the two 'constantly interrelate' and that their 'interconnectedness must be adequately stressed.'[20] In emphasising that 'Practical Theology is focused on the mediation of Christian faith' he links up with one of my favourite theological fathers, J. Firet: 'This mediation has to do with the core of the Christian conviction.'[21] Firet[22] has put it this way: 'God's coming to humanity in the world is a constant and ever-recurring event that takes place *through the intermediary of human ministry*.' Heitink[23] continued the argument:

> God's action mediated through human action is the theological center of gravity of practical theology. In this connection Firet borrows the Greek word *paradosis* (handing over, tradition) from the parable of the talents. (Mt. 25:14–30)

Practical Theology is caught up in this deep conviction and confession: God is at work, actively involved in his world and so are we, the faith community and as human beings (even outside the faith community).[24] With reference to Youth Ministry as Practical Theology, Root and Bertrand[25] also pick up on this basic notion in the field:

> So while we sought to articulate theological issues and perspectives in connection to concrete communities and practices, we have not yet sought to articulate how to go about discerning the activity of God from the place of human action or how human action is participation in the action and being of God in the world [...] Yet it seems, at least to me, that this association is the heart of ministry. Ministry at its core is human action that participates in divine action. [*They continued*] If practical theology, and Youth Ministry following it, is concerned with the theological activity of local communities

20. Heitink (1999:8).

21. Heitink (1999:8).

22. Firet (1987:31).

23. Heitink (1999:8).

24. Cf. Nel (2015b:104–112) and more for my discussion of this critical departure point in missional thinking.

25. Root and Bertrand (2011:219).

of action, then Youth Ministry imbedded within practical theology is fundamentally about the articulation and association of two distinct forms of action (praxis): God's and humanity's. James Loder called this 'the generative problematic of practical theology.'[26] It is problematic because divine and human actions are distinct [...] It's also generative, because although these forms of actions (praxis) are distinct, they nevertheless do relate.

Osmer[27] discerns between *praxis* and *practice* in the following way:

Praxis. The life of faith is a comprehensive way of life characterizing the church, the *vita passive*, in which the word of grace is received anew each day through the activity of the Holy Spirit. *Practices.* The Holy Spirit works through the 'mediate forms' of church life, its core and auxiliary practices, to communicate the gospel and transform persons toward the like of Christ.

This relationship between divine and human actions has been discussed by many Practical Theologians. We all agree that they are related, but the balance or emphasis may differ. Loder[28] explained his understanding by saying:

One of its tasks is to point to the mystery of God's nature and action. In practical theology, the disciplines that will help us to understand human action must be put into a constructive relationship with the disciplines that enable us to understand who God is from God's self-disclosure.

Our task is to:

[*P*]reserve the integrity of such disciplines and, without losing their integrity, relate them so as to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon in question than any one such discipline may be able to provide by itself. At the same time, such a relation should enrich both sides of this interdisciplinary endeavour.[29]

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26. Loder (1999:359). See also Root (2014b:ix) where he repeated this reference to Loder.

27. Osmer (2005:94).

28. Loder (1999:361), cf. he explains this further in a rather long endnote that I will not repeat here (pp. 375–376).

29. Loder (1999:361–362), cf. for a longer and in-depth discussion on the role and contribution of Loder to Practical Theology and Christian Education in specific, see Wright and Kuentzel (2004).

Root[30] argues that Practical Theologians might have gotten this balance wrong. He even uses the concept of a 'slippage'.[31] He may be right and, maybe in some kind of reaction against certain approaches, concerned that we do not make room enough for 'encountering the divine'.[32] He describes his understanding in great detail and argues his viewpoint well and with reference to many well-known practical and other theologians.[33] To ignore or diminish 'divine action or transcendence [as] impractical seems to me to be a misstep.'[34] He argues that 'practical theology has been magnificent at articulating rich approaches to human action but has been deficient, as I hope to show, in articulating divine action in the same depth.'[35] Even in discussing Osmer's '*what ought to be happening*' fourth task,[36] Root[37] wrote:

> While honouring the concrete and lived commitments of practical theology, such a perspective [*that practical theology is kind of an ethical framework for practice*] nevertheless tends to flatten out divine action, choosing to see normativity as dialogue with the Christian tradition that sets ethical (normative) directions for engagement. Divine action, then, as an independent and free reality, runs the risk of being lost.

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30. Root (2014b:3ff., 27ff., 53–83, 87ff.).

31. Root (2014b:27). Also compare a paragraph on page 13 for what, to my mind, comes close to 'accusing' Practical Theology for using 'theology as a frame to attend to human action (conflating the divine with the human).'

32. For example, Root (2014b:8–9) and several other places in his book. The paragraph on 'My narrative' (p. 9) gives good insight into his approach to 'Divine encounters'.

33. Root (2014b:53–83) with reference, to Browning (1991); Browning et al. (1997); Miller-McLemore (2012a; 2012b); Bass and Dykstra (2008); Dykstra and Bass (2002); Purves (2004), to name but some; cf. also how Jacober (2011:15ff.) thinks along the same lines in a chapter about Youth Ministry as Practical Theology: Trinitarian, Christocentric, Transformational.

34. Root (2014b:x).

35. Root (2014b:x).

36. See reference to Osmer (2008) below.

37. Root (2014b:26).

He continues by saying that, within his perspective, he wants to see Osmer's normative question not only in an ethical frame:

> [*B*]ut also in a revelatory one, that is asking, what ought to be happening (what ways should we perceive of reality, ourselves, the church, our practice, and conception of God) now that God has encountered us? What ought to happen now that we have experienced the event of God's encounter?[38]

In my approach in this book, I am linking up with my departure point from 1998. My research, published in 2015 on developing missional congregations just reinforced my conviction. The Kingdom of God comes and coming, in my mind, holds together the tension and balance we are talking about. In earlier literature[39] it was referred to as the metatheoretical link with Habermas's theory of communicative action. In the case of Practical Theology, the basis theory is about communicative actions that serve both the gospel and the Kingdom of God that has come and is yet to come in modern society. God is still serious (as was revealed in Christ) about the Kingdom coming. In this coming, with which he is busy, he acts with and through people. These acts are communicative in nature and form. God involves man in a reciprocal way by means of and in these acts. Van Ruler[40] said: '[T]he Spirit never acts on his own, but always involves man, and man in his humanity.' Bohren's[41] adaptation of the concept of theonome reciprocity ('*Theonome Reziprozität*') to preaching is a great example of this. An act is to deliberately and intentionally

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38. Root (2014b:27) wrote: 'But Osmer's perspective too is not completely free of slippage.' Root's Chapter 8 (2014b:189–241) on 'Critical realism and Practical Theology' [Root's approach] is a necessary read to understand his argument. His remarks as to the 'Relativity and post-foundationalism' is a must to understand him (pp. 229–232).

39. Cf. Pieterse (1991:43; 1993:53ff.) and his reference to Habermas.

40. Van Ruler (1965:100).

41. Bohren (1974:76ff.); cf. also his use of concepts like *synthesis* and *synergism* in Berkouwer and Van der Woude (1969:49ff.); cf. also Root (2014b:147ff.) for his discussion on 'The Concurring of the Divine with the Human'. As far as I could pick up he does not discuss the concept of theonome reciprocity. He does reflect on 'participation and practice through ministry' (pp. 148–151).

intervene, under the control of the one (the One) who acts, in the course of things (the congregation, man's life of faith or his personal circumstances) in order to bring about change and, eventually, the ideal situation of the coming Kingdom of God.[42]

In my understanding, ministry and ministries are communicative acts in the name of God, and, so to speak, on his behalf.[43] In the case of Youth Ministry, as advocated for in this publication, the deliberate and intentional act is to help youth (children, adolescents and young adults, as they are already an integral part of the faith community) to become what they were created and called to be: people who are already involved in the acts of God, in the service of the communication of the gospel and the Kingdom of God that has come and is yet to come in the world. God is coming to them and through them. As integral part of the faith community, now already, they are *in mission.* Root[44] puts it this way:

> This coming to them I call *Christopraxis*, which is the continued ministering presence of Christ. The very shape of God's coming to people takes the form of ministry; encounters with divine action come as ministry. Therefore, I argue that practical theology *is* ministry and that as ministry it is both practical and theological.

In continuing to make his case for his 'Christopraxis' approach and his choice of name, he links up with this again when he states: 'Therefore, my Christopraxis approach seeks to offer a vision and space for the practice of ministry itself, which is what matters in the end.'[45]

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42. Cf. Heyns and Pieterse (1991:52); Firet (1987:262–263); Pieterse (1988b:181ff.); Heitink (1993:125).

43. Cf. Nel (1994:33ff.; 2015b:63–79).

44. Root (2014b:xii).

45. Root (2014b:89). In a further discussion, he links up with Osmer (2005) and Anderson (2001) with reference to their use of Christopraxis (linking up with Moltmann 1997). Root (2014b:90) quotes Anderson (2001:52) in a footnote: 'Practical theology is thus grounded in Christopraxis as the inner core of its encounter with the Spirit's ministry in the world.'

Before I try to continue my argument for Youth Ministry as Practical Theology, I need to share something of the approach of Osmer.[46] Osmer's work was well received and is still used by many as a 'sufficient' (good to work with) description of a generally accepted approach to Practical Theology. He discerns four 'tasks' in the field, namely:[47]

- The descriptive-empirical task: Priestly listening;
- The interpretive task: Sagely wisdom;
- The normative task: Prophetic discernment;
- The pragmatic task: Servant leadership.

He describes the core content of every task as follows:[48]

- 'The descriptive-empirical task. Gathering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts.
- The interpretive task. Drawing on theories of the arts and sciences to better understand and explain why these patterns and dynamics are occurring.
- The normative task. Using theological concepts to interpret particular episodes, situations, or contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide our responses, and learning from 'good practice'.
- The pragmatic task. Determining strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and enter into a reflective conversation with the 'talk back' emerging when they are enacted.'[49]

This book will not follow these tasks chronologically. Readers will easily pick up that I start with the so-called normative task. The nature of the book almost compels me to do so. The weakness of this book is the lack of thorough empirical research concerning

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46. Osmer (2008).

47. Osmer (2008:Content).

48. Osmer (2008:11).

49. For people in this field it is not too difficult to recognise his association with well-known Practical Theologians like Heitink (1993; 1999).

'what is going on'. I will, however, draw upon such work by others and even a project in which I was involved myself. Data from new research concerning estranged young adults (done by two of my PhD students in South Africa and Atlanta, USA), will also and unfortunately not yet be available to enrich the 'what is going on' task. The book will also, like in the first edition, deal with 'the pragmatic task', or as Heitink[50] has put it, the strategic perspective. I hope that I will do some justice to, what I think is rightly often missed in Youth Ministry research, the theological foundation of why we do what we do in Youth Ministry as Practical Theology.[51]

The theological field of action or ministry in which to place Youth Ministry is difficult to circumscribe. When one accepts my basic thesis, namely that youth (children, adolescents and young adults) are an integral part of the faith community, signified and sealed by their baptism, they can be seen as sharing in all ministries, however, much in a differentiated way. One might argue that Youth Ministry falls mainly within the field of *didache,* but not exclusively so.[52] As I will later show (Part 1, Ch. 6 & 7), this field of action should be understood as inclusive and comprehensive. It is already important here to note that Youth Ministry requires a well-developed communication theory, a practical theological perspective on what now may be called ecclesiology within the perspective of being in mission, anthropology and theory of development and change (agogy). Youth Ministry is about comprehensive, intentional and differentiated communicative acts in service of the gospel of the Kingdom. In Youth Ministry, the modes of the coming of God to people and through people

50. Heitink (1999:201–219).

51. Cf. Hryniuk (2007:61) for his reflection on the 'why' stating: '[W]hen we attend first to the "why" of youth ministry in light of the loving Spirit of God who names and claims us as beloved sons and daughters and then sends us forth to share that love in ministry to young persons, the "how" question begins to look and feel different.'

52. Heitink (1999:274–291) argues that 'catechetics' (p. 287) is one of the sub-disciplines within the larger unit of 'Church and Faith'.

to the world are intentionally blended and differentiated.[53] Youth Ministry theory is built on:

- a theological communicative action theory that is dialogically and relationally grounded in dialogue within relationships (the covenant);
- an ecclesiology-grounded pneumatologically in the *missio Dei;*
- a hermeneutic theory grounded on the family (the covenant);
- a theological learning theory grounded in pneumatology, in development and change (agogy).

However, as much respect and appreciation I have (and I do) for Root's[54] choice of Christopraxis and for Jacober's choice of 'Christocentric'[55] I have opted not to go that route. I am convinced, even more so after writing *Identity driven churches,*[56] that we owe faith communities a new understanding and appreciation for Trinitarian thinking. It is not the place to argue this case here,[57] but I will rest my case that God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit is involved in our justification and salvation (soteriology) – core elements in the action(s) of God in the Kingdom of God come and coming. I personally believe that our understanding of the gospel of the Kingdom compels us to say 'God' when we refer to his action(s), his ministry and our ministry and ministries.[58] To be fair, Root does not argue differently, but opted for the name Christopraxis as he explains in great detail. He even says:[59]

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53. Firet (1977:25; 1986:15); Nel (1982:112ff.; 2000:89–95).

54. Root (2014b).

55. Jacober (2011:25).

56. Nel (2015b:66, 101–107, 117, 135–137, 225).

57. As this is not a book on Practical Theology, approaches to and methodologies of the subject as such.

58. Cf. for more on this in Osmer (2012:29–55); Moltmann (1977; 1993); Van Gelder (2007a: 28–30).

59. Root (2014b:101).

'Christopraxis then is Trinitarian for it is constituted in God's own being as becoming in the action of ministry.' He continues:

> But why then call this Christopraxis and not Trinitarian-praxis, or something else? It is Christopraxis because Jesus is the *hermeneutic of God's ministry, and as the hermeneutic of God's ministry, Jesus is the hermeneutic of God's very being'.*[60]

There is more than one well-developed theory of praxis in the field of Youth Ministry.[61] The praxis that is the focus of this book is the mediation of the Christian faith in current society.[62] As far as Youth Ministry is concerned this playing field is of crucial importance. The aim of this book is not in the first place to investigate the two praxes (1 and 2) empirically, it is more an attempt to formulate an own theory of praxis (sometimes linked to existing theories of praxis and sometimes opposing them).

My observation is that the present Praxis 1, concerned with Youth Ministry and the need of the youth of this country, is at this moment in history (Praxis 2) not only problematical, but urgently requires new theories of praxis. The current South African context gives this remark more than academic importance – even far more so than when I wrote this in 1998. The timely radical changes of the Nineties and early 21st century had, and are still having, far-reaching implications for the youth of this country. These implications will be felt in years to come, and Youth Ministry has to keep account of them (cf. Ch. 3).[63] It is important to state that Youth Ministry in the South African context requires a thorough appraisal.

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60. Having said this about my choice, I once again express respect and a great understanding for the choices of two well-respected colleagues. I agree with them honouring the name of the incarnated One/one.

61. Cf. Nel (1982); Benson and Senter (eds 1987); Richards (1978; 1983); Root and Dean (2011); Senter (2001) and several others; cf. also Dean (2001:27–40).

62. Praxis 1 and Praxis 2 (Heitink 1993:20, 1999:8).

63. What is happening on South African campuses is but one critical example of this.

It is no longer necessary to make a case for the empirical in Practical Theology – as I still had to do in 1998. It is a given that we need to research the actions of faith communities, of human beings in public, et cetera. We do so by using all scientific methods at our disposal. As Root[64] summarises: 'These tools could include case studies, questionnaires, appreciative inquiry, participant observation, and so forth.' There is a new openness towards methodology in the field. Even whether the Practical Theologian works in an interdisciplinary (joining with scholars in, say statistics) or intradisciplinary (mastering the science of, say statistics, oneself) manner. What Heitink[65] argued then already is now well accepted:

> [*A*] practical theology, which chooses its point of departure in the experience of human beings and in the current state of the church and society, is indeed characterized by a methodology that takes empirical data with utter seriousness, takes these as its starting point and keeps them in mind as it develops its theory.

As a Practical Theologian, I find myself at home in the present approach in which the discipline is given a theological[66] and empirical character. The discipline and its students stand in a creative, dialogical, and sometimes also a dialectical field of tension[67] between theory and praxis, 'ideal and reality'. This tension should always be under 'critical evaluation.'[68] Practical Theology, as it is now generally viewed, practiced and taught, is, to my mind, an honest attempt to do justice to both the theological ideal and the empirical reality.

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64. Root (2014b:23). He made this remark referring to Osmer's (2008:11ff.) first task: What is going on?

65. Heitink (1993:19; 1999:7); cf. also Pieterse (1993:19ff.); Van der Ven (1993:77ff.).

66. See the arguments above and in me quoting Root (2014b) and Osmer (2008).

67. Cf. Greinacher (1974:110); Nel (1991b:25, 26, 35); Pieterse (1993:47); cf. also Heitink (1999:9).

68. Heitink (1999:9); Also, Root (2014b) in his critical and honest (to my mind) critique that this tension is not always well balanced in favour of the 'divine encounters', as discussed above.

As far as Youth Ministry in South Africa is concerned now would be the time, as never before, to begin a project of empirical research among children and adolescents. We need longitudinal studies within our own country. There is continuity between research done in the Western world and 'us'. There may, however, also be obvious and important discontinuities between our continent and, for instance, the USA. We need to get this information from and through empirical work. We do not know the 'discontinuities' yet, at least not well enough. Within the three Afrikaans-speaking Reformed churches, such a project was completed in 2015 and was published.[69] The work was conducted in cooperation with scholarly and well-respected statisticians. The sample was, however, small. A follow-up study by the same three churches among emerging adults that no longer participate in congregational life, is currently underway. Something like the longitudinal studies by the renowned Search Institute (previously known as the Youth Research Centre)[70] in the USA is needed in South Africa, more than ever before. This is crucial in our ongoing development of theories of praxis in Youth Ministry.

To summarise: Youth Ministry as an academic discipline, as part of Practical Theology, is Practical Theology. In this subject field we research theories of practice. The theory is about:

- the communication of the Christian faith;
- the communication of the gospel of the Kingdom come and coming;
- parents, faith communities, pastors and other leaders;
- importantly so, by the children, adolescents and young adults themselves;
- an integral part of the faith community.

And in doing so, it is about understanding through empirical research:

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69. Nel and Van der Westhuizen (2015) The title can be translated as 'Shockingly positive'.

70. Cf. Strommen et al. (1972); Strommen (1973; 1974); Benson (1997).

- the current society of which youth are a part;
- 'youth culture';
- developmental theory within this culture;
- socio-economic realities that impact, often without any input by youth themselves, the world they inherit;
- the 'praxis of modern society'.[71]

And in doing so:

- improving the intentional acts;
- directed at ministering to youth;
- minister together with them;
- and through them;
- in modern society.

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71. Heitink (1999:9).

Theological: Because of God

When we do Youth Ministry, we are involved in something very special. We participate in something God is doing, caring for and loving children, adolescents and young adults, helping them discover life and life abundant.[72] We are involved in doing theology. Youth Ministry is deeply theological. Understanding Youth Ministry in this way was not always the case.[73] For example, traditionally Youth Ministry and catechesis and/or Christian Education were sharply differentiated and often separated.[74] In this dichotomy catechesis was usually theologically based while Youth Ministry was left to the incidental or, at least the

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72. Cf. John 10:10b.

73. Cf. for an oversight on research in Youth Ministry, Roebben (2012:192–206).

74. Cf. Kemp (1963); Terblanche (1966); Irving and Zuck (1977); Heitink and Hogenhuis (n.d.)

so-called 'unofficial'[75] category. Borger[76] even stated that the church and organised youth work, are both autonomous. This viewpoint is probably partly due to the fact that Youth Ministry (or youth work as it was then called) 'did not really exist before the Industrial Revolution of the mid-19th [18th] century. In the rural context of the world up to and during the Industrial Revolution'[77], youth[78] were seen as a part of the family and approached as such.[79] Since the time of the New Testament (NT), there have been thorough theological studies of catechesis. Since long ago, attempts have been made to give Youth Ministry a theological grounding – and we are continuing in this tradition,[80] so are many others. In one of the most comprehensive publications in the field, Robbins[81] has a chapter on 'Developing a philosophy of Youth Ministry'. Cannister[82] wrote in a recent publication: 'This dichotomy has plagued ministry to and with adolescents for nearly a century, as the theology of nurture alone has been promoted in Christian Education.' In one of the latest publications,

75. Not part of the responsibility of the 'offices' – pastor, elder, et cetera.

76. Borger (n.d.:133).

77. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

78. I will be using the concept *youth* in an inclusive way, referring to children, adolescents, and young or emerging adults. Whenever I want to emphasise the separate entities I will explicitly refer to *children, adolescents and young or emerging adults.* Dean (2004:2, note 5) explained her use of the term as used in many parts of the world in the following manner: 'I will use the term *youth* as it is popularly understood, as a rough equivalent to the term *adolescent*, which includes young people who, in the early twenty-first century, are engaged in the various psychosocial tasks associated with identity formation. (Ages vary substantially according to cultural and developmental circumstances, but in North America *early adolescence* is frequently viewed as roughly ages 10–14; *middle-adolescence* as roughly ages 14–18; and *late adolescence/young adulthood* as the broad and highly variable span between the ages of 18–30).'

79. Cf. Nel (1982:85ff.).

80. Cf. Bäumler (1977); Nel (1982:112ff.; 2005b).

81. Robbins (2004:422–469).

82. Cannister (2013:35).

Clark[83] wrote: 'Today's Youth Ministry is in desperate need of a theological, psychosocial, and ecological grounding.'

The theological and contextual point of departure in this book is that there is 'more than enough reasons to see Youth Ministry as a comprehensive, […] ministry, with catechesis (that is, Christian education of youths) as a vital component.'[84] Theology and society have been calling for a radical change in the old paradigm of separating catechesis and Youth Ministry for over a century. It may even be found that traditional society with its typically paternalistic attitude towards children has caused catechesis to remain the major subject, as an almost one-sided and often authoritarian transfer of knowledge to those who have not come of age yet. This pendulum has moved dramatically, almost to the point where catechesis or Christian Education is now the 'neglected' part in Youth Ministry. I hope to supply some proof of how, in the past, some specific pedagogical theories blinded the church to a greater reality of a comprehensive Youth Ministry for very long:

> [*The*] Industrial Revolution that put youth ministry on the agenda was no flash in the pan. It drew the attention of individuals and eventually the church to youths inside – but especially outside – their parental homes. This revolution continues daily.[85]

Some societies, like the South African society, are at present experiencing something of the Industrial Revolution and youth revolutions that occurred in other countries in the middle of the 19th and 20th centuries. In all of South African society, youth are the centre of attention – sometimes because of their numbers,[86] at other times as a result of their rebellion, sometimes because of their poverty or their involvement in crime, sometimes as a result

83. Clark (2015a:xiii); cf. also Robbins (2004:422).

84. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

85. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

86. Estimates are that some 50% of the South African population is under the age of 25.

of their academic and/or democratic frustrations. Whatever the case may be, churches are challenged to 'see' youth, to know them for who they are, to sense their needs and to serve them and serve with them as part of the faith community.

Youth Ministry continuously calls for a deep theological motivation and rooting.[87] It has to be theologically founded. My purpose is to participate in this adventure and challenge. Hopefully, it will eventually be clear that, in my understanding, Youth Ministry is inclusive, comprehensive, and that it includes (or at least stands in direct relationship to) catechesis and family ministry.[88] The argument by Schlag and Schweitzer[89] supports my plea for a theological basis for what we do – and for the involvement of children, adolescents and emerging adults in our theological effort. They argue for the necessity of involving even children in our endeavour. In a fairly free, but hopefully faithful interpretation of their contribution in German, they stated that to take youth as subjects seriously, is a central motive in doing 'Youth Theology'. They need to have equal access to opportunities to articulate their life questions. In this way, they will see that their questions are of critical theological value. We need the child as 'philosopher' and the older youth as prophets who confront and encounter their societal realities.[90]

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87. Literature that seeks to contribute are plentiful. I mention but two more: Borgman (1997; 2013); Linhart and Livermore (2011).

88. I do, however, understand that the point can be made that family ministry includes Youth Ministry. One thing is certain: it is impossible to separate two dimensions of the same important ministry as participation in what God is doing.

89. Schlag and Schweitzer (2011:27–30) state that: '*Die zentralen Motive der Jugendtheologie ist an erster Stelle das Anliegen, Jugendliche als Subjekte ernst zu nehmen und ihnen einen gleichberechtigten Zugang zu Artikulationsmöglichkeiten ihrer Lebensfragen zu eröffnen. Dabei zeigt sich dann, dass solche Fragen theologisch höchst gehaltvoll sein können […] Jugendliche als Propheten, die der gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit kritisch und herausfordernd gegenübertreten.*'

90. Cf. also May et al. (2005) for their contribution in *Children Matter* named 'celebrating their place in the church, family, and community.'

◼ Theological lenses: Approaching the 'why' and the 'what' we do

I have already mentioned that one of my main purposes in updating this book is, even more than before, to assure that the missional conversation[91] concerning cultivating missional congregations is being accounted for in this publication on Youth Ministry.[92] The following paragraphs will explore in more depth what I mean by theologically informed Youth Ministry. But I want the reader to see the four theological core issues below through at least three theological lenses: A Trinitarian lens, the gospel of the Kingdom lens, and the discipleship lens.

◼ Trinitarian thinking

The church and congregation, including youth, I will talk about, is a Trinitarian reality: We are being brought into being by the grace of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the essence of understanding ourselves as people in mission. We are, because God is. This is a critical departure point in understanding that the church does not just have a mission, but is a mission and is in mission. We are because of the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – because of God. 'We are a work of God for a God-intended purpose.'[93] One of the main participants in the missional conversation, Zscheile, wrote:[94]

> The Trinity is integral to missional theology of spiritual formation. The God we know in salvation history, in Jesus Christ, and in the

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91. Concerning cultivating missional congregations.

92. Cf. the PhD research by Cory Seibel (2010) that dealt with the problem of what happens to 'our own youth' when we do not take an inclusive view on Youth Ministry. For readers of German cf. Karcher and Zimmermann (2016) for a whole volume on 'Missional youthwork.' [author's own translation].

93. Nel (2015b:49).

94. Zscheile (2012a:13); cf. also Gibbs (2013:184–192) and Nel (2015b:135–136).

community of the church is communal, relational God *for* and *with* us. Such a theology must take into view not only the *sending* concept of the Trinity so characteristic of Western theology but also the *social* doctrine of the Trinity that has been so richly developed in Eastern theology and more recently, by contemporary Western theologians.

Van Gelder[95] (another significant participant in the missional conversation) discussed developing a missiological framework for congregations in context and considered the Trinitarian foundations for missional congregations as a first critical building block. Guder,[96] who many would consider one of the 'founding fathers' in the missional conversation, already in 1998, wrote: '[T]his Trinitarian point of entry into our theology of the church necessarily shifts all the accents in our theology.' Osmer[97] builds an argument, in a chapter on the 'Formation in the missional church', on the relational character of the Trinity.

> He [*Moltmann*] grounds this ecclesiology in his social doctrine of the Trinity, which portrays the divine person perichoretically as existing in *centered openness*. They do not merely have their relationships; they *are* their relationships.[98]

In Youth Ministry, it is recognised too. Michael Hryniuk[99] wrote:

> Theologically, the starting point of our contemplative approach to Youth Ministry is found in a fully Trinitarian understanding of God's life, presence, and activity in the world. We discern God moving powerfully in the lives of young persons and their ministers as a creative, redemptive, and sanctifying force, drawing them into an intimate relationship with him and naming, claiming, and sending them forth as his beloved daughters and sons. Like a dancer who is sensitive to the movements of the other, who is leading, ministers to youth are being invited to respond to what the triune God is

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95. Van Gelder (2007a:28–38); cf. my discussion of this in Nel (2015b:93ff.).

96. Guder (1998:5).

97. Osmer (2012:50–51). Osmer wrote this with reference to Moltmann (1977:158; 1993:43, 116–132); cf. also Nel (2015b:101).

98. For a discussion on 'perichoresis' see Lee (2006:98–110); cf. also Nel (2015b:128–137, especially pp. 134–137).

99. Hryniuk (2007:65).

already doing in the lives of God's young people in calling them to this journey of the Beloved.

Already in 1996 Fowler argued for 'adolescence and ministry in Trinitarian perspective'. In his own words:

> To our human point of view, from within God's oneness God's self-disclosure has manifested a three-ness. The fullness and plenitude of God's allness has come to us in a triplex of relations [...] Trinitarian faith can offer youth the witness that God calls each human being, and has called the church collectively, to vocations of partnership in God's cause – partnership in the divine *praxis.* Trinitarian proclamation offers as a prime theme this news about an ontological calling for human beings – this calling that comes with our very beings.[100]

To confess the unique and only one God[101] is indeed the crux of us being who we are as the people of God. This confession 'defines' our being, as people created and recreated for him. We are because of him. This very confession is a work of God's grace and of the gift of faith. Left to ourselves, the only 'god' we can confess to ourselves, is an idol. One can only put one's trust in the One you do not see (one of whom one cannot say, 'I believe in you because I have made you, I see you') when that One and only One graces you with the gift of faith. We are uniquely his because of this grace and gift.

In Youth Ministry, I consider this a critical confession and departure point. However aware we might be of the sinfulness of us all, and of the 'opponent' of all that is good,[102] we confess that human beings are created (and recreated) by the only one and true God we worship – even though their making, becoming and birth can be explained in precise medical detail.

This being the case, it is also true for our corporate identity as the people of God, as created and recreated human beings.[103]

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100. Fowler (1996a:15, 17).

101. Deuteronomy 6:4–20.

102. In the Bible referred to as the devil, the 'evil one', the opponent.

103. Cf. my attempt to argue this in Nel (2015b).

We are because of God, because God is. We are, however, taking the Trinity, as we confess it, serious, also as he is, we do not only have relationships, we are our relationships.[104]

The gospel of the Kingdom of God

The biblical concept, Kingdom of God, is a powerful but neglected concept in Youth Ministry. As is Trinitarian thinking, so Kingdom thinking is prominent in the missional conversation. It would be unfair not to mention that many others, long before the so-called missional conversation tried, and successfully so, to rediscover Kingdom thinking. Heyns[105] did so in the Afrikaans-speaking world in South Africa. Armstrong[106] did so in his book and in the *Faithful witnesses* course. I too, tried in 1994 already and even more so in 2015.[107]

It is remarkable how often the Gospels refer to the gospel of the Kingdom.[108] It is as if the NT does not know of a gospel of Jesus, but helps us to understand that the gospel Jesus served and proclaimed was (and is?) the gospel of the Kingdom. What does this mean? Many, many things, but let me focus on what it might mean for Youth Ministry specifically. I do not have to argue a case that in Youth Ministry it often was and maybe still often is about 'bringing kids to Jesus'.[109] This purpose is so well accepted that the immediate question then is: How do we do this best?

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104. See again the reference to Moltmann above.

105. Heyns (1970:9–33; 1978:28,352ff.).

106. Armstrong (1979:38–50; 1987a:59–64); cf. also my contribution in trying to apply this to Youth Ministry in Nel (2002:65–87).

107. Cf. Nel (1994:21–33); Nel (2015b:31, 56, 66, 93–98, 105, 110–115, 185, 197, 335, 357, 366).

108. Cf. Luke 8:1, Acts 8:12, to name but two.

109. Hryniuk (2007:60). In a next paragraph, he stated: 'I want to reflect on the deeper theological meaning and purpose of ministry to youth – the "why" behind the "hows"' (p. 61).

I believe that when we understand the deeper 'why' in Youth Ministry, we are able to figure out a number of new 'hows' for ourselves as contexts and challenges change. Hryniuk[110] is right: When we work on the 'why' the 'how' questions, they begin to look and feel different. Rather than focusing solely on how to 'fill the space' with pizza or dogma at a Sunday night youth group, we shift our attention to the deeper question of how to 'create space for God' in the daily lives of young persons through the 'disciplines of the spiritual life'.

There is more to life than waiting to die. Life itself is at stake, Kingdom life. Life here and now, already – knowing and experiencing 'there is life before death'. So 'understanding' the importance of the gospel of the Kingdom is not to lose sight of the importance of knowing the King as Lord and Saviour. But it is also about knowing him as Lord and King of the universe and of 'my and our lives' – now already. The notion of the Kingdom has everything to do with the restoration of life on earth. The encounter between Jesus and the disciples, described by John the Baptist,[111] is a great example of this. The question was 'are you the one who is to come, or should we look for someone else?' The answer is about the mission of Jesus. Where Jesus is, the Kingdom is, and is coming:

> 'Go back and report to John what you hear and see: the blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead people are raised to life, and' – and what? what is the last sign that Jesus' mission is of God? – 'the poor have the good news preached to them' (Mt 11:4–6). And what is the good news? 'That their misery is not God's will but human abomination.'[112]

Where the Kingdom comes, life as it was purposed by God, returns. Life that is worth living, a liveable life one might say.

110. Hryniuk (2007:61).

111. Cf. Luke 7:18ff. (NIV).

112. Warren (2008:62–63).

A relationship with the King does it for us.[113] But with this relationship comes the quality of life, the experience of healing, restoration, reconciliation, justice, et cetera. Everything that goes with life itself is included in the process of becoming what God has in mind for Creation. The dimension of the gospel of the Kingdom of God has to do with this earthly nature of God's healing and restoring presence. This new way of thinking and living is full of surprises. An example of the 'surprises' in Scripture are the people who accompanied Jesus as he went forth proclaiming the 'gospel of the Kingdom'.[114] Keep in mind who they were and how their curriculum vitaes feature in this text – keeping in mind that this was written long after the Cross and Resurrection: the 12? One feels like asking: those 12? Add: Mary Magdalene with reference to her doubtful past (seven demons being cast out of her) and so many more. The surprise is that 'the good, the bad and the ugly' are in here, all are saved by the same graceful God. The shame is gone; the salvation is real, and the new life is worth living. In the Kingdom, such a past is dealt with and 'we' become part of what God had and has in mind for humans. May that be one of the reasons why Paul so often refers to God's amazing grace in involving even him, with his well-known past, in the coming of the Kingdom?[115]

It is as if I hear Jesus repeating the words by which he opened his ministry – as in the gospel records:

> [Y]ou can come back now. The Kingdom is here. I am here. I know you have lost it. I came as the Son of God and Man to help you live again – as was and always will be the plan. After all, you remember that taking care of this world was and is still your creational, Creator given, responsibility?[116]

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113. Cf. the Book of the Psalms that covers the full spectrum of life, life in its entirety with joy, pain, guilt, anger, questions, et cetera.

114. Cf. Luke 8:1–3

115. Cf. Philippians 3; 1 Corinthians 15.

116. Cf. Mark 1:15.

When Fowler[117] referred to this as a Trinitarian calling, he stated that:

> This ontological vocation does not pertain just to Christians. This is a Christian and biblical insight which we take to be revelatory of the true calling of *all* people, whether they know it and acknowledge it or not.

The gospel of the Kingdom of God is more than a slogan in ministry. It is the good news of the story of God for this world. It is a good story, this God story. It ends well with a new earth, but getting there is a good journey too. And according to the King, getting there is his and his disciples' responsibility and priority.[118] And this we do as we confess that only God can bring about the new world. Volf[119] quotes Moltmann[120] and his distinction between *futurum* and *adventus*. *Futurum* is the:

> [*F*]uture with which the present is pregnant and to which it gives birth; adventus is the future coming from outside of time and space as the fulfilment of God's promise. The end of history is future as adventus, not as futurum, he argued; you cannot bring it about by replacing a wrong world system with the right one or by tinkering with the state of the world as you might with a sputtering machine to make it purr. The end of history comes when *God* comes. Christians have always called this the 'second coming' of Christ.

He then continues to how we wait both passively and actively. By the last he means our involvement, my interpretation of him, in bringing about a new creation not out of nothing (*ex nihilo,* as God did in the beginning) but 'out of the old one (*ex vetere*).'[121]

■ Discipleship and discipling youth

Since 2009, I have tried to sensitise colleagues in the field of Congregational Development and in Youth Ministry to a

117. Cf. Fowler (1996a:17).

118. Cf. Matthew 6:18–35.

119. Volf (2015:11).

120. Moltmann (1996:25–26).

121. Volf (2015:11).

rediscovery of the biblical metaphor of 'discipleship'.[122] I am deeply convinced that the 'decision-making' approach to salvation (in Youth Ministry and elsewhere) is backfiring on the church in a serious way. More and more will we have to work on and with a 'disciple-making' culture and approach.[123] This is the impact of the 'gospel of the Kingdom' on, in our case, Youth Ministry. Van Aarde[124] is, to my mind, correct in calling the Great Commission,[125] the manifesto of the NT, putting it on a par with the 'Hear o Israel'[126] in the Old Testament (OT). In 2009[127] I have argued: 'To the extent that we have lost the radical nature of the church, we might have lost the art of discipleship.'[128] In the article referred to:

[*M*]y research hypotheses are [*were*] as follows:

- Kingdom-seeking churches are serious about discipleship and disciple-making churches are serious about the Kingdom of God and his justice under his rule.
- When we recover the 'making of disciples,' youth, together with their 'disciple makers', will 'make disciples', seeking the Kingdom passionately and responsibly.
- I would like to take two well-known periscopes [*texts*] from the gospel of Matthew [*New International Version*] as theological departure points for the above hypotheses:
- Matthew 6, verses 24 to 34, with special reference to verse 33: 'But seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.'

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122. Cf. Nel (2009:1–11; 2015a:1–11).

123. Nel (2015a:1). For the centrality of the concept in the teachings of Jesus cf. Willard (1998:3, 2006:n.p.); Ogden (2003:39–56); and in the Gospel of Matthew, Van Aarde (2006:103–122); Bosch (1991:73–78).

124. Van Aarde (2006:103–122); cf. also Nel (2015a:1).

125. Matthew 28:18–20.

126. Deuteronomy 6:4ff.

127. Nel (2009b:1).

128. Cf. Schaller (1999); Snyder (2005).

- Matthew 28, verses 18 to 20, with special reference to verses 18 and 19: 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples (*mathyteusate*) of all nations.'[129]

In the paragraphs below, I will continue to work with these two vital texts in Matthew. Since the publication of that article in 2009, a personal conviction grew within me: We struggle with many of our evangelism approaches, because we have equated confrontational evangelism with disciple-making[130] – which had and still has devastating consequences when motivating churches for evangelism, let alone doing it. The 'faith-sharing', service evangelism, and lifestyle approach[131] tried to challenge this 'decision-making' approach to salvation.[132]

A further serious misunderstanding is the equation between 'follow me'[133] and a 'once–off' decision for Jesus. It is not easy to explain when and how we have lost sight of the real meaning of the concept (even the word) 'disciple'. It is so beautiful and so close to home, that not rediscovering it will be a sin. Just mentioning that the word in ancient Greek was associated with

129. Nel (2009b:n.p.).

130. Cf. Hart (2014) for his discussion on 'Indoctrination and Youth Ministry. Choice or coercion?'; cf. also Cannister (2013:39,225).

131. Cf. Armstrong (1979; 1987a; 1993) [author's own translation]. Armstrong (1979:38) connected evangelism directly with discipleship: '[W]e show with integrity our belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God if we ask ourselves what it means to be Christ's man or Christ's woman in the world today. The answer to that question defines the quality of our discipleship; and when church members take it seriously, the church will truly become a servant church.'

132. For more on this see Nel (2015a:3): 'We must understand the subtle distinction between evangelism and disciple-making. There is a difference. But: when disciple-making does not include evangelism and vice versa we get the situation we are in at present. Like congregations include youth so does disciple-making include the sharing of the good news of Jesus the Christ. The decisions we are looking for in evangelism should be for a commitment to a life of discipleship – and not to book a place in the waiting room of heaven.'

133. Cf. Jesus's calling of Peter according Matthew 4:18–20.

'apprenticeship' brings it to light already. 'Learning', developing a way of living is at the core of discipleship. We have lost the ability to live the life received. We even have lost the meaning of what life is all about. We seek for life everywhere, so often where life is not to be found, but lost. We have lost the ability to live, to the point that we are lost. One cannot but think of the words of Jesus that it is possible to lose life even when you still live.[134] Dean[135] challenged us in 2004 already as to whether we have lost the plot. And we and our world are paying the price in so many ways, politically, socio-economically, ecologically, legally, et cetera. Dean wrote about the issue of what she called:

> [*A*] more intellectual palatable church [...] one that had been gutted of its most radical and transcendent faith claims, the very claims young people need in order to anchor an organizing worldview. For youth, ridding faith of radicalness and transcendence amounted to castration, and rendered Christianity impotent for reordering the self. With nothing left 'to die for' in Christian teaching, it became increasingly unclear whether or not Christianity offered something worth *living* for.

Root[136] is, to my mind, correct in pointing out how we may even have shallowed the costly concept of discipleship in itself to 'just' *imitation Christi*, while it is far more about *participatio Christi* – as he argued for in his argument for what he later[137] discussed as *theologia crucis*. He quotes Bonhoeffer[138] as having said: '[W]hen Jesus Christ calls a man [sic] he calls him to come and die.'

This may be one of the (main) reasons why we have lost the concept in Youth Ministry and church as such, is it just too costly

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134. Cf. Mark 8:36.

135. Dean (2004:9, 10). Within the same context, she stated: Theology as being 'the weakest link'.

136. Root (2014b:72) in his discussion of the viewpoint of Dykstra and Bass (2002:13–32) in Volf and Bass (2002).

137. Root (2014b:87ff.).

138. Quoted by Root without a reference.

and contra-culture? It is just too inconvenient.[139] It may also be that our misunderstanding of what it means that we are saved by grace has also led to this shallowing of our understanding of our discipleship and the 'making' of disciples. We just do not understand (or take seriously) what it means to live by grace and thanksgiving. Mahan[140] is correct in stating that getting this right again might not be easy: '[T]he inhibitive preoccupations that stand in the way of our full embrace of Christian discipleship will not present themselves on demand. They must be surfaced, studied, and resisted.'

In the article on discipleship and disciple-making referred[141] to I have tried to interpret for my English readers[142] a NT scholar[143] who wrote in Afrikaans and a Practical Theologian[144] who wrote in Dutch. A purpose of the article was to help us understand that we (as a faith community) will first have to rediscover how we have learned to live life as broken people 'who know how dependent we are upon God.'[145] 'One may say that "learning" and coming to terms with "our" own brokenness is almost a prerequisite for disciple-making churches.'[146] We are learners ourselves. We have not arrived yet. We, disciples of the Christ, are learning to live with faith and doubt, with hope and failure. Fowler[147] called this (in his fifth stage of faith) 'conjunctive faith', living with polarities. Conjunctive faith is characterised by the willingness to get involved in the paradoxical and

139. Cf. Warren (2008:64).

140. Mahan (2008:104).

141. Nel (2015a).

142. First as listeners at a conference of the IASYM in 2015 in London.

143. Van Aarde (2006).

144. Stoppels (2013).

145. Cf. Matthew 5:3; Nel (2015a:5); Van Aarde (2006:106–107).

146. Nel (2015a:3).

147. Fowler (1981:184–198); cf. also Fowler, Nipkow and Schweitzer (1991:25).

many-layered realities of everyday life. One of the characteristics in this phase of faith development is the confession of your own ideological perspectives and the need to investigate other perspectives in order to discern the truth.[148] Or to put it in Fowler's[149] words:

> All individual human beings, as well as the species taken as a whole, are unfinished; we are still evolving, still struggling towards the fullness of the dream God has for us, implanted in our being, created *imago Dei.*

In a paragraph on discipleship and the gift of transformation, Cannister[150] wrote, with reference to Burke and Yancey:[151]

> Burke understands the importance of transformation and accepting people where they are. He has nurtured a 'come as you are' culture in his congregation, which invites people who are both near to God and far from God to enter into the community of faith that is seeking understanding. This is a community of people seeking to understand themselves, seeking to understand God and seeking to understand who God is in their lives and their faith community.

In the quote that Cannister[152] refers to, Burke wrote:

> What do a Buddhist, a biker couple, a gay-rights activist, a transient, a high-tech engineer, a Muslim, a twenty-something single mom, a Jew, a couple living together, and an atheist all have in common? They are the future church in America! Most of them are in their twenties or Thirties and became followers of Christ in the past five years. Many are now leading others in our church. This is the generation the church must reach if it is to survive. It is an eclectic generation on a winding, wayward spiritual quest, and the church has an incredible opportunity to be a guide for the journey.

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148. Cf. Osmer (1990:242–251).

149. Fowler (1996b:16).

150. Cannister (2013:41); cf. also compare his paragraph on 'A theological understanding of discipleship' (Cannister 2013:35–40).

151. Burke (2005:15ff.); Yancey (1995:148); cf. also Sjögren (2002).

152. Cannister (2013:41).

Only disciples 'in the making',[153] growing in their realisation of brokenness, are therefore even more deeply aware of being saved by grace alone, 'make disciples.' To them the Great Commission is not some kind of military command. They, as they go anyway, are showing forth a life worth living, how they continue to learn how to live life, and how to cope with life in a Christlike way. I have quoted[154] Van Aarde[155] who stated it as follows:

> The verb 'to go' [*poreuthentes – Mt 28:19*] they heard is not a strong verb – not in the grammatical form of a command, but an infinitive. It is like 'I am going to eat'. Not to be understood as command: GO and eat! What is imperative in what they hear is *'make disciples'* [*matheteusate*], make the church one large school of Jesus followers.

Stoppels'[156] choice of a 'motto' is important in this regard: 'Jesus called learners, not church people.' To stress the importance of this special kind of learning, I gladly and in agreement quote Cannister:[157] '[C]learly, Jesus calls his disciples to be more than learners, he calls them to a radical commitment to himself and to the Kingdom.'

Root also directly relates the calling to discipleship to the mission of God's people. Root[158] wrote in a chapter titled 'Eschatological discipleship and mission':

> Rather, we've asserted that faith is trust in the action of God; it is trust that God is moving between possibility and nothingness [...] Rather, young people have faith when they trust in the coming of God, when they bend their lives toward God's future by seeking to participate now in the action of God who encounters us in nothingness and

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153. Cf. Firet (1986:112) for the expression *Christianus est in fieri* ['To be a Christian is to be in the making'].

154. Nel (2015a:5).

155. Cf. Van Aarde (2006:114).

156. Stoppels (2013:13). My free translation of: '*Jezus roept leerlingen, geen kerkmensen*'.

157. Cannister (2013:37).

158. Root (2012:97–117), quote (pp.103–105, 113).

death [...] Faith is becoming [...] The disciple, the one who follows the action of God, is on a mission. But it is God's mission, God's activity, which brings the fullness of God's future.

I have tried many a time,[159] to give an account of what Firet[160] has taught us concerning the ministry which has everything to do with learning and discipleship and with life: The *didache* as initiation into discipleship calls for a person who himself lives 'the way' and is exemplary in his entire life, not just in what he says as a teacher.'[161] In essence this is a relational ministry. It is about being invited, initiated into a new way of life, being guided on this way and being helped to discern the things that really matter in this way of living life.

With permission and for the sake of the importance of this lens in my theological grounding of Youth Ministry, I repeat the section on understanding discipleship.[162]

☐ Learning and discipleship[163]

The concept 'disciple' has a unique dimension in the NT. The NT writers did not invent the word. In the antique Greek world, the concept was used to refer to an apprentice.[164] The concept also refers to the intellectual bond between teacher and pupil. Such a meaning is rooted in the verb *manthanein*, which literally means focusing your thoughts on something.[165] The verb, which is used 55 times in the Greek translation of the OT, is used to translate

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159. Nel (2009a:11; 2009b:2–4).

160. Firet (1986:68, as part of pp. 50–68).

161. Nel (2009b:n.p.); Firet (1986:67).

162. Nel (2009b:2–11).

163. Republication with permission from *Verbum et Ecclesia*, granted on 08 August 2017, for sections 'Learning and discipleship' and 'Teaching (*didachein*) and discipleship'.

164. Rengstorf (1967:415).

165. Rengstorf (1967:391).

more than one Hebrew word. It is clear that the 'attitude sought in *manthanountes* is that of obedience of the whole man to God in the doing of his will.'[166] 'Learning' is the process by which a people apply themselves to the doing of the will of God, as revealed to them in the *Tôrâ.* An obedient Israelite is a pupil or disciple of the Law. He not only understands the Law, but is also obedient to the person of God – he does God's will. As time went by, the teaching of rabbinic Judaism developed an intellectual bias.

The verb *manthanein* is found, surprisingly, only 25 times in the NT, while another word for teaching, *didaskein*, is used four times as often. Similarly, the word *manthanein* is found only six times in the Gospels and Acts. Scholars say this is because the verb 'to follow' (*akolouthein*) is the word used most often to describe the NT disciple, rather than the term *manthanein,* which is used for 'teaching' or 'instruction'.[167] Such a finding does not imply that teaching and instruction are treated as being unimportant in the NT. The NT teaching, however, differs from the rabbinical emphasis on mere intellectual teaching and instruction. Jesus neither merely conveys information, nor does he tend to enshrine reigning attitudes, rather he seeks to awaken an unconditional dedication to, and bonding with, himself.

The term 'disciple' (*mathytys*) is a derivative of *manthanein.*[168] As stated above, in the Greek world, the word has been used for an apprentice, as well as for an enthusiastic follower, even an imitator, of a teacher.[169]

Manthanein also refers to a 'process by which one arrives at an understanding which seems to be semantically dominant in the meaning of this series.'[170]

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166. Rengstorf (1967:401).

167. Rengstorf (1967:406).

168. Louw and Nida (1988:328).

169. Cf. Rengstorf (1967:417).

170. Louw and Nida (1988:381).

The NT term for 'disciple' (*mathytys*) does not appear in the Greek translation of the OT. The Hebrew equivalent for disciple is found in the OT only in 1 Chronicles 25:8, where it is translated in the NIV as 'student' (the Hebrew *Talmid*). It is striking that, in the OT, it is the people of God as a whole, that have to teach and instruct. All the people of God must know and obey his will. The vocation to be God's people and to know and obey his will is of the greatest importance in the revelation of God in the OT.[171] Such communal following on the basis of God's choice of Israel, is seen as the most important reason why the noun is not used in the OT. The use of a noun would emphasise the individual, which would contradict the tenet of the OT with such an individual being seen as one who gives merely of himself. Such a focus on self would tend to have separated the individual from the other members of the 'chosen people' as a whole.[172]

Similarly, the Greek emphasis on the Lord-pupil relationship is missing from the OT, in terms of which God himself is the teacher, as is the *Tôrâ*. The strong revelatory character of OT religion relativises man as teacher. The rabbinic disciple was not an individualist, if he had been, he would have placed himself outside the circle of other rabbinic disciples. Jesus encountered rabbinic Judaism and its idea of the teacher (rabbi, pupil or disciple) in the Israel of his time. The system he encountered, contained a distinction between two types of disciples – those who were just starting out on their study of rabbinic writings, and a second group of scholars that were so far advanced that they could choose what to study independently. However, the rabbinic ideas on discipleship were now also influenced by ideas from the Hellenistic world. The rabbis integrated many such ideas into their own mindset,

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171. Cf. Deuteronomy 4:10, 5:1, 6:1; Smart (1954), for an overview of how Old Israel approached the practice of teaching.

172. Cf. Rengstorf (1967:412).

especially regarding their own concern for and preoccupation with the *Tôrâ*. A legalistic bent dominated religion and the teaching of the rabbis and their pupils. Jesus often criticised the Pharisees for their preoccupation with the teachings of men, rather than for focusing on an understanding of the real meaning of the will of God, as revealed in the *Tôrâ*.[173]

As has already been said, the term 'disciple' in the NT is found only in the Gospels and Acts. The noun is used about 250 times[174] in contrast to the verb, which is rarely used especially in the Gospels. The noun refers to those who are committed to Jesus as their master or rabbi. Such is, indeed, the main point of NT discipleship – 'disciple' implies the existence of a personal bond, which determines the whole life of the individual. The bond is clear in respect of which of the two (the teacher or the pupil) has the power and influence to change people.[175]

Therefore, NT discipleship reminds us of the OT bond between God and his people. What distinguishes NT discipleship is the person and work of Jesus, who calls people to become his disciples. While the initiative in rabbinic Judaism lay with the individual to join the righteous (with the pupil choosing the rabbi), it is Jesus himself who saw, chose, and called his pupils. Although there are examples of such occurrences in Greek literature, it remains a dimension unique to the Gospels. The accent is exclusively on the person of Jesus, with this truth explaining the strong emphasis on his words in the context of discipleship.[176] After the Resurrection, too, the disciples rallied around the risen person of the Christ (and his words).

173. Cf. Matthew 12:1–8; 15:1–23.

174. Some say 259 times; Lawson (1981:51).

175. Cf. Rengstorf (1967:441).

176. Cf. John 8:31, 15.

While rabbis and Greek philosophers all presented a specific subject to their pupils, Jesus Christ presents (sacrifices) himself. Two things constitute biblical discipleship:

- acceptance of a personal relationship with him who calls you to belong to him;
- a vocation, which means that you have to be a follower and pupil of the Christ who has called you.[177]

In other words, according to Rengstorf[178] (1967):

Jesus's concern is not to impart information, nor to deepen an existing attitude, but to awaken unconditional commitment to Himself. That mathytys, as akolouthein, is also manthanein, is self-evident. (p. 406)

In contrast to both Rabbi Akiba and the philosopher Socrates 'Jesus binds exclusively to Himself.'[179] In addition, according to Louw and Nida,[180] the verb *mathyteusate* [to make disciples] refers to disciple:

[*I*]n the sense of adhering to the teachings or instructions of a leader and promoting the cause of such a leader [...] In many languages, the equivalent of 'to follow' (in the sense) of 'to be a disciple' is literally 'to accompany' or 'to go along with' or 'to be in the group of'.

Louw and Nida[181] also state that the verb means to:

[*C*]ause people to become followers [...] In order to avoid a wrong implication of a *causative* it may be important to use such expression to '*convince them to become disciples*' or '*urge them to be my disciples*'. [*author's added emphasis*]

□ Teaching (*didachein*) and discipleship

Discipleship can easily degenerate into the rabbinic and Greek notions of the word, with it then referring to an endeavour to be

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177. Cf. Rengstorf (1967:446).

178. Rengstorf (1967:406); cf. also Matthew 11:29.

179. Rengstorf (1967:447).

180. Louw and Nida (1988:470–471).

181. Louw and Nida (1988:471).

like a rabbi, or to become a rabbi yourself (with your own disciples). For the disciples of Jesus, their discipleship was not the first step, with a promise of greater things to come. It was rather the fulfilment of their very existence.[182]

In this relationship, the Lordship of Jesus (as the *Kurios*) was, and became increasingly more, vital. He was not only the Teacher of the congregation – he was the Lord of his disciples. He was not merely the Rabbi (the teacher), but the *Kurios*.[183] Such an attribution gave authority to his words in the lives of the disciples.

Is such a quality not what we have lost? Often, we teach as though teaching in itself makes disciples. God, in Christ through the Spirit, makes disciples of us in and through ourselves and our teaching. Have we lost the scriptural meaning of teaching? We should consider what kind of teaching God has employed, all through history, to make people his followers, learners or disciples.

Firet[184] has often provided guidance on what it should be to invite, and where we might have lost the 'art' of inviting youth into a life of discipleship. He[185] invites his readers to 'first savor the spirit of the *didache* in the world of the OT.'

☐ Initiation (*Chanukkâ*)

Drazin[186] reflects that:

> Jewish education was rather synonymous with life. It unfolded life, giving it direction and meaning. In fact, a modern Hebrew term for education, Chinuk from a root found twice in the Bible in the sense of to 'train', etymologically means dedication or initiation.[187]

182. Cf. Rengstorf (1967:448).

183. Cf. Dulles (1980:19).

184. Cf. Firet (1986:50–68).

185. Firet (1986:53).

186. Drazin (1940:12).

187. Cf. Proverbs 22:6.

The verb, as a rule, refers to the dedication of a house, which makes the house fit for a purpose. Firet[188] adds that:

> [*T*]he 'way' (Proverbs 22:6) is the life of a person seen from the perspective of destination. Lives do not just 'run out': as a rule, they go somewhere. Every life has its own purpose; to direct oneself to that end is mandatory; in order to be able to direct oneself to it a chanukkâ is needed – a 'transfer of dedication'.

The use of such a word explains the atmosphere of Jewish upbringing and *didache* best. According to Firet:[189]

> This appears most clearly in the family where the upbringing, and hence the *didache*, begins and belongs [...] The 'transfer of dedication' consists especially in the initiation of the child into the story of Yahweh and his people: it implicates him personally so that it becomes his story. The child is initiated into the story with a view of where he has to go. The 'way' did not begin when he was born: it started with the Exodus. He was there when it happened [...] The *didache* is not primarily an explication of history, or of the words and works of Yahweh. It is first of all the act of implicating the young Israelite in the story of salvation. He learns to say and experience 'we' – the 'we' of the covenant.

☐ *Tôrâ*

The OT contains numerous references to the way of God.[190] That 'way' must be learned. In order to find it and to walk in it, one needs *Tôrâ*. Buber[191] writes:

> The Torah of God is understood as God's instruction in His way, and therefore not as a separate objectivum. It includes law [...] but Torah itself is essentially not law. A vestige of actual speaking always adheres to the commanding word; the directing voice is always

188. Firet (1986:53).

189. Firet (1986:54); cf. Exodus 10, 12, 13; Deuteronomy 4:6; Ball (1988:1, 8–13); Dingemans (1986:159ff.); Downs (1994:23–30).

190. Cf. Psalms 25:4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12; 119:1, 3, 5, 9, et cetera.

191. Buber ([1951] 2003:57).

present […] To render Torah by 'law' is to take away from its idea this inner dynamic and vital character.

Firet[192] makes an additional point in this regard:

> Torah is 'direction, instruction, information.' It points out the way, offers guidance on the road. It is the word of revelation in which God comes to a person […]. To direct a person to her destination, to initiate her into the story, to take and lead her on the way – that is the Jewish *Didache* […] life shaping pointers for concrete situations [..]. Torah in their totality, are the means by which God's coming to direct and redirect his people continually takes place.

☐ *Chokmâ*

Vriezen[193] explains the subtle, but important, distinction between law and wisdom, in terms of the fact that 'fundamentally the laws are looked upon as received directly from God, while wisdom is, as it were, the human reflection on this.'

Chokmâ has its own function in the Jewish *Didache*. Firet[194] refers to such a function in relation to the everyday question: 'Now what do I do?', with regard to those situations in which one must arrive at one's own answer. Knowledge of 'the way' is not enough, one also needs knowledge of affairs, a perspective on specific situations, insight into problems.[195] *Chokmâ* addresses itself to such a need. Fohrer[196] writes that the reference is to 'prudent, considered, experienced and competent action to subjugate the world and to master the various problems of life and life itself.' The wise one is not a superior person, but 'wisdom begins – and this is the essential and unique feature of the Israelite

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192. Firet (1986:55).

193. Vriezen (1958:315); cf. also Vriezen (1970).

194. Firet (1986:55).

195. Cf. Micha 6:8.

196. Fohrer (1971:476).

concept of *chokmâ* – in the "fear of the Lord" (Pr 1:7, 9:10; Ps 111:10).'[197] Firet's[198] summary of such a point is striking:

> To be truly human, according to the OT, is to be implicated in the story of the covenant, to live in the fear of the Lord, to walk in the way of the Lord amid the complexities of the life of every day, at work and in social activities [...] To help human beings gain and experience this humanity is the purpose of the *didache* in its various forms.

Firet[199] continues to discern the uniqueness of Christ's teaching, and what impact it has on the teaching of the church. Osmer[200] phrases such discernment well, finding that: 'Discernment, thus, is a weaving together of our stories, learning to see the unfolding dramas of our lives within the larger Theodrama of God's dealings with the world.' Osmer wrote this while emphasising the *koinonia* that we share with, and in, Christ.[201]

☐ Discipleship: Currently rediscovered

My two articles on Youth Ministry and discipleship[202] refer to scholars that focus their research on discipleship in Congregational Development and in Youth Ministry. As this book is not about discipleship per se, but about developing discipleship as a theological perspective on Youth Ministry, I am not going into the detail of the 'new interest'.[203]

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197. Firet (1986:56); cf. also Philippians 1:9–11; Müller (1980:370–385); Harris (1981:59–74).

198. Firet (1986:58).

199. Firet (1986:58–68).

200. Osmer (2005:284).

201. Here ends the repeat of my argumentation (Nel 2009b:2–11).

202. Nel (2009b, 2015a); cf. also Nel (2015b:186ff.).

203. As I have called it in 2015b:186; cf. for a more detailed discussion and research as such Ogden (1990; 1998; 2003), Ogden and Meyer (2007) and the emphasis on discipleship within the Fresh Expressions Movement; cf. also Niemandt (2016); Malphurs (2009:13–74).

As far as this rediscovery concerns Youth Ministry, Root is probably the leader in the international discussion. In several of his latest publications[204] he deals with the concept, its meaning and implications. When I discuss the relational or covenantal perspective below, I will briefly return to how Root, relates discipleship with the incarnation[205] and other deep theological roots, like, what he calls, 'Practical theology of the cross'.[206] A discussion on relational Youth Ministry as such, will only be done in Part 3 of this book.

Another author that emphasises the importance of discipleship is White[207] who stated that his 'book is about one thing – inviting young people to be Christian disciples.' This, after explaining:[208]

> Discipleship [...] is characterized by a multifaceted commitment to act in the world as Jesus acted, rather than merely identifying with Jesus as one's 'personal' savior [...] Discipleship requires *attentiveness to the holy*, that is, to God's ongoing activity in the world. It requires *prophetic social critique,* engendered by seeing the world as God sees it and speaking out for that vision. Discipleship in its fullest sense also requires *justice-seeking action* in the world on behalf of 'the widows and orphans' and the neediest of God's children. These practices are partnered with *compassionate responses to all creation*, the powerful and the oppressed, in the awareness that all are beloved of God. And Christian discipleship in its fullest sense includes *a commitment to transformative, mutual relationships* among all people, so that all participants in those relationships are brought into closer relationship with God and greater congruence with the *imago Dei* within each one.

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204. Root (2007; 2012; 2014a; 2014b).

205. For example, Root (2007:101–102).

206. Root (2014b:87ff.).

207. White (2005:x).

208. White (2005:vii–viii).

Two more examples of this rediscovery. In using this term (rediscovery) now again I want to relate it to a remark by Osmer[209] when he wrote that often when we want to recover something we first have to rediscover what we have lost:

> Rediscovery is the activity of discerning once again the meaning and power of tradition that has been repressed or forgotten. Recovery goes further. It involves the positive evaluation and appropriation of that tradition, using what has been rediscovered to structure present patterns of thought and action.

It is probably obvious that we need to rediscover in order to recover this critical understanding of who we are and why we do what we do in Youth Ministry.

The book by Mahan, Warren and White[210] was written in this spirit. The title and subtitle say it all: *Awakening youth discipleship. Christian resistance in a consumer culture.* In a chapter on 'Youth Ministry in an inconvenient church' Warren[211] wrote that when examined through:

> [*T*]he lens of the NT churches, one can see that much (but not all) Youth Ministry in today's churches lacks this character of inconvenience – let alone danger. It is a ministry of enticement by way of fun […] The ministry is vague about the gospel but clear about its goals: have a good time under the aegis of the church […] Although there has been an important recent redirection [*rediscover*] of Youth Ministry toward meeting and serving the poor, that redirection is more the exception than the rule of Youth Ministry in most parishes. What might be the character of a Youth Ministry in a church of radical discipleship? What is a church of radical discipleship? How would young people get from A to Z in the pursuit of discipleship? How would they go from being spectators to full members in the household of the Spirit? […] What changes would have to be made to make radical discipleship accessible to

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209. Osmer (1990:141).

210. Mahan, Warren and White (2008).

211. Warren (2008:63–64); cf. also Rainer and Geiger (2006) on what they call 'Simple Church. Returning to God's process for making disciples.'

the young? These questions are about dilemmas that do not go away and decisions that must be made.[212]

One cannot but think of a remark made by Brueggemann[213] already in 2006 in his reference to the disciplines within discipleship:

> The disciplines function to inconvenience us enough that we become conscious, self-conscious, and intentionally aware of who are and what we are doing with our lives [...] I submit that only those who are inconvenienced enough to be intentional will have the energy for mission.

Hryniuk[214] touched on a similar truth and calls it fostering 'Christian communities that are attentive to God's presence, discerning the spirit, and that accompany young people on the way of Jesus.' He continues to describe the disciplines within a life where God has space and, at the same time, disciplines that create space for God.[215]

I so hope that this rediscovery and recovering of radical discipleship in Youth Ministry will continue and be enjoyed. This lens (of radical discipleship) helps me to understand that developing missional churches is almost a prerequisite for faithful Youth Ministry and vice versa.[216]

The last author I would like to refer to in this brief reflection on discipleship as being important for Youth Ministry does not apply his understanding directly to Youth Ministry. I would consider his contribution to provide deep theological roots for the rediscovery and the recovery of this critical metaphor of discipleship in why

212. Warren (2008:64) follows this up with an interesting discussion about 'primary and secondary doctrines'.

213. Brueggemann (2006:109).

214. Hryniuk (2007:62, 77–82). He does not call what he proposes 'discipleship' to be, but from the context this is what it is about.

215. Hryniuk (2007:77–82).

216. Cf. Nel (2015b:186–202); cf. also Baxter (2010).

we do what we do – actually who we, who are doing it, are: disciples. Volf[217] published a new book in 2015 in which he states:

> As it travels in time and space, the Christian faith needs regular realignments with its own deeper truth; such realignments are termed reformations. Christians, too, and not just their convictions, will need to keep realigning themselves to the authentic versions of their faith; these realignments are termed renewals. I exhort us as Christians to reform and renew our faith so as to lead lives worthy of the calling to which we have been called (Ephesians 4:1). If we don't, the Christian faith may well turn out to be a curse to the world rather than a source of blessing – an embodiment of the fall into the temptation to live by bread alone rather than a means of resisting it, a faith insufferably self-righteous and arrogantly imposing itself on others to control and subdue them, a source of strife over worldly goods rather than a wellspring of confident humility, creative generosity, and just peace.

In an earlier publication[218] he reflected on 'Theology for a way of life'. In that chapter, he deals with the general accusation and question: What has this to do with real life? He acknowledges that often in theology we spend so much time on highly academic issues[219] and far less on 'daily work that fills our lives Monday through Saturday.'[220] He then reflects on the 'distinction' between theoretical and practical sciences.[221] The important point on which I want to pick up, is his statement[222] that:

> [*T*]heology is an (academic) enterprise whose object of study is God and God's relation to the world and whose purpose is not simply to deliver 'knowledge', but to serve a way of life. Put slightly differently, my contention is that *at the heart of every good*

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217. Volf (2015:26).

218. Volf and Bass (2002:245–263).

219. As an example, Volf uses the many discussions and writings concerning 'transubstantiation' (Volf & Bass 2002:245–246).

220. Volf and Bass (2002:246).

221. Referring to the difference in the viewpoints of Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus (Volf & Bass 2002:246).

222. Volf and Bass (2002:247).

theology lies not simply a plausible intellectual vision but more importantly a compelling account of a way of life, and that theology is therefore best done from within the pursuit of this way of life. [emphasis in original]

He then continues and works with the concepts of 'beliefs' and 'practices' – meaning: 'core Christian beliefs', our 'authentic doctrines' and 'practices' in the sense of 'cooperative and meaningful human endeavours that seek to satisfy fundamental human needs and conditions and that people do together and over time.'[223] The chapter further deals with what Volf[224] calls 'belief-shaped practices' and 'practice-shaping beliefs'. He eventually asks: 'What grounds what'?[225] As one can expect he touches on the so-called 'indicative' (what God has done already in Christ on our behalf) and 'imperative' (what is expected of us) discussion.[226] He is critical of this distinction, but also acknowledges the value. My understanding of him is that he is sensitive about a possible division between belief and practice. His understanding is that:

> Christian practices are such that a Christian normative vision is part and parcel of what these practices are; and Christian beliefs are such that informing Christian practices is part and parcel of what these beliefs do. Practices are essentially belief shaped, and beliefs are essentially practice-shaping.[227]

My reason for referring to his viewpoint is that he connects 'grace, beliefs, practices'[228] as part and parcel of a way of life. If I was even close to the core of what discipleship is about (in the paragraphs above) then it is indeed about this way of life.

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223. Volf and Bass (2002:247–248). He uses this understanding, picking up on how Dykstra and Bass defined it in the contribution in the same volume (2002:18).

224. Volf and Bass (2002:250–262).

225. Volf and Bass (2002:258).

226. Volf and Bass (2002:262).

227. Volf and Bass (2002:254).

228. Volf and Bass (2002:254).

Because 'grace' is so often not understood or misunderstood and Volf's emphasis is critical. Discipleship in Youth Ministry should not be shallowed down to another legalistic and moralistic way of life. However well-meant this is, it is not good news. The good news is the news of being saved by grace to a new life, one cannot but live! Volf closed his chapter with a brief discussion of 'the Apostle Paul, theology, practices.'[229] The 'therefore'[230] connects grace and life in such an inseparable way. We are because God is. We do because God did. Paul's deep understanding of what God has done for humanity, make him claim what humanity does for God – not as a new 'law' that compels, but a love, a gratitude, that compels, in the words of Paul in another setting:[231] I do because the love of God has taken a complete hold on me. Our involvement in the gospel is because of what God did. But our practice, our way of life, our discipleship is in this sense part and parcel, inescapably part of belief and practice. Volf[232] relates this to how 'past' and future' come together in our 'therefore', we cannot but be involved. Or to put it in the words used by Lee:[233]

> Through a performative, persuasive work of the Spirit the heteronomy of laws is overcome. Laws are no longer experienced as an alien or estranged entity, but gladly and voluntarily accepted into one's heart as the guidance and directives of life. It is different from a blinded, fearful form of submission to law where no human voluntary consent is involved. The observation of law becomes theonomous through the communicative work of the Spirit.[234]

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229. Volf and Bass (2002:262–263).

230. Romans 12:1–2.

231. Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:11–21.

232. Volf and Bass (2002:263). He did so with reference to Engberg-Pedersen (2000:294).

233. Lee (2006:102).

234. Ridderbos ([1975] 1997:281) in his thorough research on the outline of Paul's theology, refers to this as 'the new obedience'.

Many others are writing about this nowadays. Cannister[235] is working with this departure point in his book on student ministry and refers in the process to many other authors. We are being called into this relationship. This relationship with the Christ determines our beliefs and our practices. We are disciples, learning how to live the life we have received in Christ, and in doing so (while we faithfully struggle, holding together faith and doubt) we are making disciples. We do so because we no longer can even think of living this life without God in Christ.

With these few lenses in our theological glasses what then might one discover as core theological departure points in and for Youth Ministry – as a field of study and ministry? When we accept:

• that we are because God is;
• that we have been saved by grace into the Kingdom of God and we participate in the gospel of the Kingdom;
• that we are lifelong learners of how to live, enjoy and cope with the life we have received in Christ.

As we learn from the Christ, what other theological insights impact Youth Ministry? To my conviction at least the theological perspectives covered below are at stake.

◾ Theological perspectives on 'why' we do 'what' we do
◾ The Bible, children and other youth

In the same way that the Bible is not a handbook for any discipline, say for example, liturgy, it is also no manual for Youth Ministry. On the other hand, as the Bible gives direction to the study of liturgy, in the same way it points the way for Youth Ministry.[236]

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235. Cannister (2013:xxiii, 18, 35–40, 222, 225); cf. also his chapter in Cannister (2016:136–149) under the heading: 'Thinking ecclesiologically. Teenagers becoming part of the Church'.

236. Cf. Bertolini (1994) for an attempt to give the respective aspects of Youth Ministry as a biblical foundation, although it is sometimes exegetically less accurate and specific.

My purpose with this section is in no way to 'prove' that this ministry is biblical. The theological justification argued above and that follows here, and the argument for a more inclusive and comprehensive or holistic approach to the ministry in Chapter 7 of Part 1 will, I hope, answer this need. The intention here is to show that Scripture does indeed contain theological insights about children and older youth.

It is important to state what my use of Scripture entails. In order to make authoritative 'deductions' about what can be found in the Bible about children and Youth Ministry, it is quite important not to use the Bible in a fundamentalistic[237] and/or biblisistic[238] way.

237. This 'concept' is so loaded, but I must use it. By oversimplifying it, it would refer to any form of fanaticism about meaning. Fundamentalists are very sure of what they understand something (in our case a biblical verse) to mean. Extreme forms of fundamentalism would even say this is 'the only meaning'. Cf. Ruthven (2007) for a good explanation of the phenomenon. Also cf. Root (2007:36, note 30): '"[F]undamentalism" refers to a twentieth-century movement closely tied to the revivalist tradition of mainstream evangelical Protestantism that militantly opposed modernist theology and the cultural change associated with it.' (cf. Marsden 1995:303). For a more recent description of 'evangelicalism', 'evangelicals', and 'fundamentalistic evangelicals' cf. Marsden (2006:232–236).

238. For a very good evaluation and discussion on biblicism cf. Smith (2011). He 'defines' it: By 'Biblicism' I mean a specific theory about and style reading the Bible that is defined by a constellation of related assumptions and beliefs about the Bible's nature, purpose, and function. That function is represented by ten assumptions or beliefs' (2011:4). In an overview of the book an unknown reviewer wrote: 'Biblicism, an approach to the Bible common among some American evangelicals, emphasizes together the Bible's exclusive authority, infallibility, clarity, self-sufficiency, internal consistency, self-evident meaning, and universal applicability. Acclaimed sociologist Christian Smith argues that this approach is misguided and unable to live up to its own claims. If evangelical biblicism worked as its proponents say it should, there would not be the vast variety of interpretive differences that biblicists themselves reach when they actually read and interpret the Bible. Smith describes the assumptions, beliefs, and practices of evangelical biblicism and sets it in historical, sociological, and philosophical context. He explains why it is an impossible approach to the Bible as an authority and provides constructive alternative approaches to help evangelicals be more honest and faithful in reading the Bible. Far from challenging the inspiration and authority of Scripture, Smith critiques a particular rendering of it, encouraging evangelicals to seek a more responsible, coherent, and defensible approach to biblical authority.' (Goodreads n.d.)

The text within its microcontext and macro context should underscore the validity of any deduction. Reading the Bible can be like sitting next to a furrow or a trench of clear, running water. The researcher knows that this 'water' is clean and gives 'insight'. It is life-giving water. Millions throughout the history of humankind have quenched their thirst for life here. Next to this trench, in this stream of live-giving water, God is met in a unique way. When one lingers at the trench, you get to know God – from and through his dealings with people. To 'watch' the water of revelation from the viewpoint of Youth Ministry, is like tarrying at a vantage point. One could say that at this vantage point one waits patiently to see if the stream also contains water of revelation concerning children and what we today call adolescents. Did and does God also act for their sake? Did and does he deal with them? Is he also their God even though they are only children? The one who waits and watches the revelation of Scripture observantly from this vantage point is often astonished. One sees the periods of revelation flow by, and in time the picture becomes clear. What follows then is merely like a momentary pause for the watcher at the points overlooking the stream of God's communicative acts of gracious dealings with all people through the ages – irrespective of age and culture.

The intention in this book is to assist the reader to wait and discover alongside this stream that God is indeed the one and only One:[239]

> Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. [5]Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. [6]These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. [7]Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. [8]Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. [9]Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

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239. Cf. Deuteronomy 6:4–8 (NIV).

Often in books on Youth Ministry the Bible is indeed used as 'core foundation' number one,[240] or as 'building block' number one.[241] The issues are often about the authority of the Bible and applying the Bible to what we encounter when ministering to youth. These are indeed important issues. My intention is not to get into this now. My attempt is what many others have tried as well: What should we try to understand when we read carefully; when we take the historic and cultural realities concerning the Bible seriously; when we take the science of hermeneutics seriously – what do we learn at this stream of living waters flowing over so many years from the heart of God? I think this is what Dean[242] struggled with in her dissertation and as quoted already above. Robinson[243] picks up on her statement that 'the weakest link is theology' in his reflection on what he calls the 'current malaise of many mainline Protestant congregations and denominations.' His point of connection with Dean is her statement[244] concerning Youth Ministry:

> By the late twentieth century, Youth Ministry analysts had launched a cottage industry of lament, blaming Youth Ministry's failures on everything from insufficient leadership training and lack of denominational support to sociological cycles and the invasion of secular culture. The literature flourished but the whole Youth Ministry did not. Something remarkable was missing from all these explanations [...] Nowhere did we suggest that theology may be partly responsible for the church's diminishing influence on young people. While Youth Ministry has routinely capitalized on the passions of adolescents, little (if any) attention has been given to connecting them to the Passion of Christ.[245]

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240. Cf. Yaconelli (2003:8–17).

241. Black (1991; 1998:14).

242. Dean (2004:9–10); cf. footnote 130.

243. Robinson (2006:5–6).

244. Dean (2004:9).

245. Which is the theological issue in her PhD Research.

Robinson continues by quoting two more respectable scholars who write on the same issue. He quotes Hall[246] who in 1995 already wrote that we:

> [*H*]ave two or three generations of people in and around the churches who are, most of them, not only unfamiliar with the fundamental teachings of the Christian traditions but ignorant even of the Scriptures.

The point I want to make is: Even when we often still 'use' biblical verses and apply them (often out of their biblical context) to the youth, we may not yet 'do theology'. Theology is more than knowing, adding and applying biblical verses to whatever issues there are and in whatever way to issues in the lives of the youth. However difficult, we need to apply our minds to 'finding out' what God wanted the first readers of any text (and for that matter a verse or verses) to hear and understand. Robinson[247] is correct in stating that 'the wells of Scripture, theology, and historic Christian faith are deep and refreshing, and they are largely untapped in the ongoing life of contemporary congregations.'[248]

What then might one see when you sit and wait at this stream of life-giving water that God's people lived by for centuries? I only highlight a few insights that I picked up over the many years at this stream, cleaning my own theological lenses.

☐ God is dealing with households

In more than one way our 'faith story' starts in Genesis 12, actually at the end of Chapter 11 already. The last few verses of the chapter refer to a whole family:

> Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they

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246. Hall (1995:47). He also quotes Rutledge (2004:252).

247. Robinson (2006:7).

248. He refers (2004:7) in this regard to the insightful text in Deuteronomy 30:11–14.

set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Harran, they settled there.[249] [*And when Abram moved*] He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.[250]

The story of our 'Father in faith'[251] continues in Genesis 17. Once again, we learn about the emphasis on a family. And when we begin to see this way of God's dealing with what he has created, it pops up all over and right throughout Scripture. The Bible is in so many ways the book of family stories: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Samuel, the Kings, Ruth, Jesus, Peter. Do you remember how often the Bible uses the phrasing 'son of […]'?

We just continue to discover that God is faithful to what he created us for. We are creators on the eighth day.[252] I believe one can say that God is the God of households without ever becoming a household God. A household god, one can hide from a seeking father who realised he lost some of his 'household gods.'[253]

Not all (not even many) of these households were what we would consider 'normal'. So many came from what we, from our Western understanding, would consider 'abnormal'. To name but a few: Both Leah and Rachel gave their servants (Zilpah and Bilhah respectively) to Jacob to have children with.[254] In the case of Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, the same thing happened.[255] In the case of the one after whom the Messiah would be named, David, we have this very strange phenomenon again:

249. Genesis 11:31 (NIV).

250. Genesis 12:5 (NIV).

251. Cf. Galatians 3:29, 4:21–31.

252. Cf. Nel (2015b:209); Firet (1986:226).

253. Cf. Genesis 31:32, 35: 'So he searched but could not find the household gods.' (NIV).

254. Cf. Genesis 29, 30.

255. Cf. Genesis 16:3.

However, broken the reality might be, God works in and through households. In David's case one cannot miss God's grace in restoring and almost starting all over again: Out of the 'mess' David made concerning the death of Bathsheba's husband and the death of the firstborn, came the third king of Israel, Solomon.[256]

God is the God of households without ever becoming a household god.

☐ God's special interest in children and their teaching

God is in a special way involved in the 'giving' of children. One sees that children are 'a reward from him.'[257] The confession that God created man, is also the basis of this confession.[258] Children are not a surprise to God. God knows about their existence, even though the ones from whom they spring are not even aware of their moment of conception – or may not even have planned for that to happen.

God is involved in a special way with those who are born. He is the God of their parents, and he wants to be their God as well.[259] Even the 'outcast's' cry is heard by him, even though the promised one has just been born.[260] And again, when the poet sings about the power of God, it is part of his prayer that boys should grow high, like plants, and that daughters should stand firm and beautiful, like pillars.[261] They share in God's blessings

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256. Cf. 2 Samuel 11ff.

257. Cf. Psalms 127:3; 128.

258. Cf. Genesis 1:26–28; Psalms 139:14–16.

259. Cf. Genesis 16 and 17 again.

260. Cf. Genesis 21:17; 21:2.

261. Cf. Psalms 144:13; 115:14–15.

when the covenant is sealed and people start living from the fullness of the caring grace of God.

I once had an OT scholar as a good friend and colleague. He so often mentioned to me in conversation that Deuteronomy 6:4 is the 'core verse on which our Bible hangs' – meaning if we do not understand and confess this we have no book and no Christian faith, this is indeed the case. Think of it as if I, in a way, oversimplify an understanding of the verse: Deuteronomy 6 was written sometime after the exile. In Babylon, many gods were worshipped, among them Marduk who the Babylonians believed made heaven and earth. Back in Palestine then the author of the book confessed:

> Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. [(5)]Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.[262]

To people who over the many years in exile probably had become used to 'seeing' the gods people believed in, this must have been nothing but strange: Where is he? Can we see him?

The meaning is that one should at least hear that he is not to be seen in the same way. In him one believes with faith given. We need God's help to confess that God is the One and only One. This is what concerns us as believers in the Bible: We confess with faith given that God is One, the only One. And we love him. It was this very same verse that Jesus[263] quoted when asked what 'life' is all about.

But it is also exactly this verse that has become a technical departure point in all our theological reasoning concerning Youth Ministry. When you love God, you remember his 'ten words'[264] and you:

> Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and

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262. Deuteronomy 6:4, 5.

263. According to the Mark version: Mark 12:29–31.

264. The *Tôrah* as in Deuteronomy 5 repeated and not as made powerless by the Pharisees.

when you get up. [8]Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. [9]Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.[265]

When you read through the chapter you will notice that children are brought into this discussion again: '[20]In the future, when your son asks you: "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you?" [21]tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand".'[266] You can imagine a clever son saying: Dad that happened some 400+ years ago. What do you mean by 'we' and 'us'?

You probably know what the answer is: If we cannot tell the 'salvation' story as if we were there, we just cannot tell it. Confessing that God is the One and only God has everything to do with children, adolescents and older youth. We almost confess even 'on their behalf': You were made by him, given by him, cared for by him, being nurtured by and for him, et cetera, et cetera. God is involved in the giving of children and their becoming!

☐ Children's special place in God's dealing with people

God involves children and other young people in his coming to his people right through the ages. It pleases him to incorporate children when approaching people. Or let me say it differently, to take seriously that they are not mere instruments: Children and other younger people participate in what God is doing in this world. They always have, and they should do so now also.

They were (and in Jewish culture still are) in a special way part of religious ceremonies. Is it not a child at the Passover meal that starts the conversation of why we are having this kind of a meal?

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265. Deuteronomy 6:7–9 (NIV).

266. Deuteronomy 6:20–21 (NIV).

The instruction by the Deuteronomist[267] is sufficient evidence for the involvement of children and what we would call adolescents in household faith nurturing. They are dialogically involved in these events and are not mere receivers of information.

The strange but important story of Abraham and Isaac,[268] is a great example of God dealing with Abraham, involving Isaac almost to the point of death. To add one more example from the book of Genesis: I do not want to equate it at all, but it is worth noting – had Joseph lived today we would have called him an 'emerging adult':[269]

- The young Samuel participated in God's dealing with Eli in a special way.[270]
- They were present at and participated in the family rituals at the sacrifice: 'Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters.'[271]
- They were included in the dealings of God with his people and with people outside the community of his covenant people. A 'young girl from Israel'[272] told Naaman's wife of the prophet in that girl's country – with the well-known, of what we today would call, missional outcome.
- David was probably, what we today would call, an adolescent, in his mid-teens when he participated in God's dealings with Israel. At this age, he was already anointed to become king of Israel.[273]

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267. Deuteronomy 6 again.

268. Genesis 22. I often wonder how often sermons on this chapter focus on Isaac rather than only on Abraham?

269. Genesis 41:46: 'Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt' (NIV).

270. Cf. 1 Samuel 3.

271. 1 Samuel 1:4 (NIV).

272. 2 Kings 5:2ff. (NIV).

273. Cf. 1 Samuel 16–17.

- Daniel was, according to some, an 'early adolescent' too when he refused, to eat and drink what was set before him, at the table of the king himself.[274]
- There are many instances of children and other young people that were included by God in his dealings with people. Jeremiah is yet another example.[275]

☐ Jesus and children

And after a long and quiet time in 'revelation history', almost as if the stream for some time stopped flowing almost unexpectedly, but in the fullness of time, one sees the image of a new person in the stream of revelation. It may seem as if he brings a new dimension, a new truth, but this is not really the case. His dealings with children are like his entire ministry – the manifestation both of existing and ancient views of God. It is not true that Jesus loves children and therefore brings about something new that has never been before. God loves children and Jesus confirms this in a society and culture that has lost this insight. At this point in the stream of revelation the truth is rediscovered: God knows about children. He gives them. He cares for them.

It seems to me that at least four 'observations' are made when one watches closely and in expectation that he is indeed revealing God in his fullness:

- While culture in his time 'prohibits' it to happen, he wants children to 'come to him'. He even admonished adult mindedness not to keep them from coming to him.[276] This is a critical observation for us in Youth Ministry especially when one adds what the Matthew text adds: '[2]He called a little child

274. Cf. Daniel 1:8.

275. Cf. Jeremiah 1 – albeit that young did not exactly mean what we mean by it today.

276. Cf. Matthew 19:14: 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these'. (NIV).

to him, and placed the child among them. [(3)]And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven. [(4)]Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. [(5)]And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me."'[277]

- Would it then not be true that if and when children are not welcome(d), Jesus feels left out too?
- Similarly, he reminds us that if we do not become like children we may miss the bus of the Kingdom. It is as if one can have grown too tall in one's own mind to think to bow down low enough to get in.[278]
- He blessed the children that came to him.[279] Within his culture, that more or less means: May everything that God in his goodness has planned for you, be so. Being blessed by him is no small matter!
- He warns in no uncertain terms against causing them to stumble. An older Dutch theologian once said: I do not know of any other word in the world that takes sides with children more than this word of Jesus: 'If anyone causes one of these little ones – those who believe in me – to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.'[280]
- In the language of our times one would say that Jesus stood up for the rights of children in a very profound way.

Jesus helps us understand how the triune God feels and thinks about children and may I say other older youth too. Here God's love for children is fully recognised.

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277. Cf. Matthew 18:2–5 (NIV).

278. Cf. Mark 10:15: 'Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it'. (NIV).

279. Cf. Mark 10:16: 'And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them'. (NIV).

280. Cf. Matthew 18:6ff. (NIV).

☐ In the rest of the NT

As it is not my intention to mention everything I have observed and am still discovering, let me at least share the following observations. The NT emphasises the importance of children in the acts of God:

• Pentecost is the fulfilment of an OT prophecy concerning young people being filled by the Holy Spirit;[281]
• young men are involved in the first tragic and disciplinary act in the Early Church;[282]
• children kneel, together with their parents, during a prayer meeting with a departing apostle;[283]
• 'unmarried daughters' have the gift of prophecy;[284]
• they attend worship services and are directly addressed in the so-called *Haustafeln.*[285]

The fact that they together with women and slaves were mentioned in the NT letters is exceptional in itself.

☐ In summary

Who would ever try to assert that they have never missed precious 'truths', even though they have watched the stream closely as it went by – and for long times in their lives? And who would assert that they have noted all the 'truths' about the youth in the stream of God's gracious dealings with human kind over so many centuries? The examples mentioned above are merely

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281. Cf. Acts 2:17–21; Joel 2:28–32.

282. Cf. Acts 5.

283. Cf. Acts 21:5: 'All of them, including wives and children, accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to pray'. (NIV).

284. Cf. Acts 21:9.

285. Cf. Ephesians 6; Colossians 3:18ff.

instances of God's dealings with and through children and other young people.

We can therefore deduce that the Bible is not a book about the youth; it can never be that. It is a book:

> [A]bout God and his dealings with people - and the youths [*Children and other young people*] are essentially a part of these people. What God did and still does, he also does for, with, and through the youths (as a part of his people) [*them*]. That is why the Bible is as rich in principles for Youth Ministry as it is in principles for any other ministry.[286]

I think it is fair to say that the Bible leaves us with one conclusion and at least three consequences. I will work this out as we go along, but do state this here already.

☐ Youth are an integral part of God's people

There is just no justification to 'count youth out' because they are young or counting them out until they reach a certain age. They are part of God's faith community because God brought them into life.

Integral means to be part of, in such a way like every single chord in a woven cloth is part and parcel of the whole. There is no way of separating that chord from the whole without damaging the whole. Many local churches have tried it. The approach in this book is about taking 'integral' seriously, even before they lie in the cradle, before birth.[287] God knows about them. He, and he alone gives life. Therefore, to say: From the cradle until they are standing at the cradle of a next generation they (as youth) are an integral part of the faith community.[288]

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286. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

287. Cf. Ephesians 1:3–14.

288. I will come back to this conclusion and consequences again in Chapter 7.

☐ Three consequences

- though youth are unique, they should never be 'apart' from the rest of the faith community;
- they should never and nowhere be ignored (not seen or not taken seriously);
- they are the responsibility of the local faith community of whom they are an integral part.

What follows below is an attempt to describe some of these principles as they emerge from Scripture.

■ Relational or covenantal perspective[289]

'He who understands the covenant has reached the very core and marrow of the Gospel.'[290] This is so true, but so often missed and neglected. Maybe, partly because we have started to differ on the sign(s) of the covenant, the sacraments, rather than jointly as God's people on earth, continuing to discover the meaning and beauty of this biblical line of thought.[291] 'It is clear from the Bible that God created humankind [man], binding himself forever to people [man] as his creation.'[292] As Josz wrote so long ago already: 'The covenant stands for the fact that this is God's world and belongs to him in the double sense: he created it and he redeemed it.'[293]

> Although man often rebelled and pushed away the Creator's hand, God remains true to his creation. According to the Bible this relationship was seriously damaged, broken off by

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289. My intention here is not to discuss relational Youth Ministry as the core 'one-thing' in our ministry to, with and through youth. Here it is about the basic theological departure point of God in his 'covenantal' relationship with us and his world.

290. Spurgeon as quoted by Golding (2004:185) without reference to the Spurgeon source.

291. Cf. Griffiths (2016).

292. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

293. Josz (1966:204); also quoted by Golding (2004:194).

humans themselves [*man himself*], one could say. One could also say that the relationship was reinstated from God's side. The Bible is clear about this: God was and is always a saving God, healing those with whom he deals.[294] God is involved with creation and humankind [*man*] by means of grace that repairs and restores what is broken. This restoration [*making whole*] can only be understood in a covenantal way. [295]

God's commitment to a relationship with what and who he made and is making, God's commitment to restore and heal within this relationship. At the root of the covenantal thinking are relationships that are restored – relationships with God, with one's fellow beings, and with Creation itself. The beauty of grace is that he did so, on his own. In the first account of how it all started, Abraham is even asleep – to emphasise: God did it, on his own and of his own![296]

The story of Abraham illustrates it very well. Many things become clear to us when we read of God's dealings with the person of Abraham. God's initiative is primary. He begins, he maintains, and he completes what he has started. Within this way of thinking:

> The story and its every detail is fitted into thisscheme. God binds himself to a human being, to a stranger from a foreign land. It is this binding - this bond or covenant - that is so important for the theological grounding of youth ministry.[297]

God wants to become known to a person and to his descendants, not only for their sake, but by means of them.[298] In this we again

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294. Cf. König (1991).

295. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

296. Cf. Genesis 15:12–20. Often referred to as the 'monopleuric' nature of the covenant. (cf. Heyns 1970:22–24, 1978:202).

297. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

298. Cf. Genesis 12;17; 22:18; Galatians 4.

see God's devotion as Creator to his Creation.[299] The nations, those that:

> [D]o not (yet) know, love and serve God - are his goal. God never discards what he has made. His plan to take creation toward its fulfilment is on the agenda. Through a human being - here, Abraham - and his descendants, God's uniqueness as Creator-God is again acknowledged and confessed before the nations.[300]

The above does not only place Youth Ministry in a relational perspective, but also in a missional and ecological one.

The good news is the message of the Bible: God remains true to his relational commitment to this world. No matter how many people daily despise and reject this relatedness with God, God still maintains his relational commitment with people and their descendants. It is in Christ that he confirms this relatedness with man in a unique way. We know that he demonstrated his own love for us when Christ died for us while we were still sinners.[301] In his argument for relational Youth Ministry as 'place-sharing', Root[302] grounded his viewpoint in the Incarnation of the Christ. This is indeed God's 'final' and 'complete'[303] proof of his relational commitment to full restoration of his world and everyone in it.[304] To quote Root[305] here:

> The incarnation is not a metaphor but the very ground of our being, the place where we meet the person of Christ as *who*, where we encounter the incarnate, crucified and resurrected One.

299. Cf. also Genesis 9.

300. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

301. Cf. Romans 5:1–8.

302. Cf. Root (2007:85–104).

303. Cf. the book of Hebrews.

304. Cf. the beautiful and almost hidden reference to this in Genesis 19:5–6: '(5)Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. *Although the whole earth is mine*, (6)you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' (NIV, [*author's added emphasis*])

305. Root (2007:102).

Dean[306] argued this even earlier when she wrote: 'We prefer the term incarnational to relational when we speak of ministry. Anybody can have a relationship, but only God takes on flesh in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.' This after having said that 'Youth Ministry focuses on relationships, not only because of who teenagers are but because of who God is.'[307]

With the coming of the Holy Spirit this truth acquired even new and 'for-ever-more' validity. God lives in people. His relational commitment has become flesh in a 'new' way. Humans are his temples.[308] The relationship, initiated and maintained by him, has a new dimension and reality. What was done by God through the ages, 'incarnated in the Christ' is decisively continued in the work of the Spirit. Man was completely excluded from what happened in Christ: What happened in Christ, happened without any contribution from our side and happened on our behalf, in our place. This was indeed place-sharing.[309] We added nothing to his vicarious sacrifice. When the Spirit came, this changed completely and forever. As never before we understand that God works relationally or covenantally. As Dingemans[310] said:

> [W]hen the Spirit works in men, they change, and are freed and renewed. The Spirit, by dwelling in us, takes our human methods and work in hand, and uses them as a way in which God influences people.

Firet[311] calls 'Pentecost' 'the beginning of the future'.

By the ongoing healing of relationships, God imparts salvation and healing to this world and man is involved in this

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306. Dean and Foster (1998:28–30).

307. Dean and Foster (1998:29) and refer to what we have discussed already as the Social Trinity.

308. Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16.

309. Cf. the way it is stated in 2 Corinthians 5:18–21.

310. Dingemans (1986:42); freely translated and interpreted from the Dutch by author.

311. Cf. Firet (1986:95–99, 116)

ongoing healing.[312] The Spirit involves man in the Kingdom of God that has come and is yet to come. Dingemans[313] says that the Kingdom of God is about recreation: it is this Creation but changed. Reality is purified and humanised; again, directed at its original purpose – love and justice, peace and righteousness. The outpouring of the Spirit of Christ on all people means an unremitting war of God's love on the injustice and lethargy of our world.[314] And we are relationally and fully involved. We are involved, and we participate:

> [A]ctively and creatively in the acquisition of salvation; but [...] the divine called person does participate actively and creatively as subject in the work of God by which he makes salvation known and communicates it to people. Humans can do this as God's partners by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.[315]

Referring to Bosch[316] when he wrote that 'missio Dei enunciates the good news that God is God-for-people', Ward[317] said: 'Our vacation arises from our conviction that God invites us as Christian people to share his relational care for this world.'

These relational dealings of God with man and Creation are given a covenantal character in the Bible.[318] It is much more than a relationship without any commitment.[319] The relationship compels a covenant. God wants to execute his providence

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312. Cf. Van Ruler (1969:175ff.; 1973:9ff.); Rebel (1981); Bohren (1974:76ff.); cf. also Firet (1986:129–130) discussion of 'synergism' and Van Ruler's concept of reciprocity.

313. Dingemans (1986:44–45); freely translated and interpreted from the Dutch by author.

314. Cf. Heyns (1970:99ff.; 1978:127ff.); Snyder (1991).

315. Firet (1986:130).

316. Bosch (1991:10).

317. Ward (1995:16).

318. Cf. Griffiths (2016:9) stating 'A covenant is a relationship between two or more parties.'

319. The Afrikaans word is 'vryblywend'.

(among other things, his care for Creation) in a covenantal way.[320] The covenant is the mode by means of which Creation is propelled towards its goal. In the covenant, God wants to say to man that his dealings with Creation – man included – are dealings directed at the salvation of Creation. It is ultimately not an agreement with conditions, but one with consequences.[321]

I need to say a little more about this – even though this paragraph is not in any way a systematic description of the covenant. Not only would such an attempt be outside my ability as Practical Theologian, but it is not the intention of this section of the book. It is, however, necessary to dwell on this a little more. When we accept that God has, gracefully so, committed himself to an eternal restorational relationship with us and his world, what would that entail? I am using the material of Lee[322] to explain something of this reality:

> The economy of the Triune God in history takes a communicative form. The Trinitarian persons work together to restore the Kingdom on earth. The Spirit and the Logos work in unity to bring the glory to the Father. That is, God as the all in all, is the final goal of the Trinitarian economy. When God is the all in all, all creatures are also restored to their particularities to the fullest potential and extent.

Our involvement is almost a creational given. Already then it was clear that it was an 'our' responsibility. Lee[323] explains how the 'social doctrine of the Trinity emphasises the relational of human personhood over the individualistic personhood of liberalism.' But also, how the particularity of each one of us finds its resemblance in the Trinitarian persons. I also obtain my specificness in relation to others. 'Individuality and relationality are not antithetical [...]. In relationship, there is an otherness of

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320. Heyns (1978:216).

321. Cf. Heyns (1970:9–33; 1978:219).

322. Lee (2006:101–108).

323. Lee (2006:104–105).

each person from each other. Without the basic particularity of individuals, relationship is not possible.'[324] Furthermore:

> The Sprit liberates and restores us to be ourselves in our particularity and uniqueness as intended by God for the service and realization of God's Kingdom […] [*This*] social notion of the Trinity helps to reconstruct the *imago Dei* in Trinitarian, relational terms. The *imago Dei* is more accurately the imago trinitatis, the image of the triune God. The *imago Dei* has a communicative-covenantal structure […] A human being is not an isolated individual but a relational being in essence. A human being was created a free, reciprocal partner of God's covenant. As God is relational, a human being, created in the image of God, is relational in his or her disposition.

In focusing further on how this characteristic gives human beings a desire for communion, how this fundamental desire is often expressed in destructive ways, even demonic ways of control, domination and subjugating others – there is a strong yearning:

> [*F*]or true relationship, for coming to mutual understanding and reconciliation. In other words, the *imago Dei* does not designate the image of a solitary, isolated God, but that of a relational, other-caring God […] A true personhood in a Trinitarian understanding is neither autonomous nor heteronomous but theonomous. A theonomous person is intersubjective in disposition. And intersubjective human interaction requires freedom as its precondition. Human freedom is anchored in human relationship to God, as God created human beings as God's covenantal partner.[325]

Within this relationship (the covenant) God commits himself to be a God-for-people and he wants mankind to commit their humanity to him.[326] The nature of this relational createdness of

324. Lee (2006:104). He continues: 'The respect for freedom in reciprocity, and the reciprocity in freedom, is a constitutive norm of social trinitarian theology. In social trinitarian thinking, freedom is inseparable from love.'

325. Lee (2006:107). For a good and in-depth discussion of the nature of the covenant by a NT scholar cf. Gräbe (2006); cf. also Grant and Alistair (2005); cf. also the ubuntu concept in Africa as discussed from many different angles in Dreyer et al. (2017).

326. Cf. Heyns (1978:216).

humans, the nature of this relational covenant is that God has a covenantal right to man by being Creator and Redeemer, but man also has the 'claim' of being the creature and redeemed.[327]

Youth Ministry does not merely receive a number of fringe benefits from these truths. It is fully and deeply rooted in God's relational or covenantal commitment to people and the world at large. God has founded the relationship in Christ and through his Spirit. No new sacrifice is necessary, never ever again.[328] It is fulfilled – for children and adolescents as well. To be active in Youth Ministry is nothing less than participating with and as youth in what God is busy with and has relationally or covenantally set himself out to do, and we do so in the name of this God. A ministry is, after all, all that is done in the name of the living God, on his behalf.[329] God has never excluded youth in this his covenantal plan:

> God has always been dealing with youths. He has kept them in mind from the very beginning. Parents and others need merely get into line with what he has been doing all along [*anyway*].[330]

In Youth Ministry, we respect this, and we shout it from the mountains: they are included in what God is up to! And when they are still too young to participate in a self-reliant way, we 'older people' are to represent them before God in God's relational commitment to all of Creation. Youth Ministry is about facilitating this understanding: we are all (children and adolescents included) participating in, taken up into, involved in, the covenantal dealings of God with Creation – 'borne by the certain knowledge that God

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327. Cf. Heyns (1978:209) who referred to it in this way: God has a covenantal right to man, but man also has the right to address him on the basis of his Word, because it is typical of the covenant that man has covenantal rights.

328. Cf. again the core message of the book of Hebrews, for example Hebrews 7:27 (NIV): 'Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first *for* his own sins, and then *for* the sins of the people. He sacrificed *for* their sins *once for all* when he offered himself.'

329. Cf. Anderson (1979:6–21) for his argument on the Trinitarian nature of ministry.

330. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

has covenantally attached [committed] himself to dealings with and through them.'[331]

◾ Ecclesiological, somatic perspective

'A human being is not an isolated individual but a relational being in essence.'[332] God sees the we in the me. A human being may have come into being as 'one', being born as one. But in biblical theology one is being born as one of the many. I hope that I have pointed out sufficiently that the particularity of each individual is not lost in the relational disposition of human beings.[333] McKnight[334] devoted a whole chapter to what he calls 'we is bigger than me'. He argues against the trend where:

> [L]ots of people think following Jesus and fellowshipping at a church are disconnected. I disagree because the NT teaches that the Christian life occurs primarily in and through a local church.[335]

In the relational or covenantal history of humankind, is this how God deals with his people?

> [From] the inception of the covenant and all that followed in its wake, it is clear that God begins with one person, but his aim is the many. From the 'One' comes the sand of the sea and the stars of heaven. Out of the One the whole is born. When the whole is established [takes shape], the One is part of the whole. The One is not absorbed by the whole but is taken up into it.[336]

The 'one' gains its significance and fulfilment from the whole.

The importance of the one is related to the whole, and it does not stand detached from, and independent of, the whole. This

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331. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

332. Lee (2006:107) as quoted above.

333. See the argument of Lee (2006:102ff.).

334. McKnight (2014:105–112).

335. McKnight (2014:105).

336. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

corpus way of thinking in the Bible is striking. Families, groups, nations, play a great role. One could say with respect that God thinks in terms of the corpus. One may even say that: 'God thinks ecclesiologically, thinks in terms of his gathered people,[337] his assembly. He makes it clear that the person who belongs to him is part of his people.'[338] The *kahal Jahwe* and the *ekklesia tou Theou*[339] is central to Scripture.

We get this line of thinking from many different portions in the Bible. It is especially obvious in the Pauline letters. To name but one example: A member of the body gains its importance from being 'a member of the body'. My reference to the body is not a choice in favour of a specific metaphor. I am not choosing a model here; my reference to the body is only to emphasise that the relational character of the covenant is clear even from this metaphor of the church; separated from the body (in this case the congregation), and alone, the one loses its importance. As part of the whole the one is irreplaceable and maintains its particular importance. The well-known Pauline scholar, Ridderbos, once wrote regarding Paul's pneumatology, that one (as an individual) only shares in the Spirit once and as one shares in the body, as it is the Spirit of the body and not of the individual member.[340] His argument is that we should think of the Spirit as:

> [*T*]he gift in which believers share in virtue of their incorporation into the body. For to be in Christ, to belong to his body, means to be in the Spirit (Rom 8:9), to have been brought under the rule of the Spirit. In this train of thought it is not the Spirit who incorporates into

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337. Cf. Firet (1986:82–86) who called this 'the basic form': 'The act of assembling together as a church is the basic form in which the body of Christ functions' (p. 85).

338. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

339. 'The gathering of the Lord' and 'the congregation of God' respectively.

340. Cf. Ridderbos ([1966] 1973:404–441; 1997:372–373) – as discussed in his section on 'The Church as the body of Christ'; also Lategan (1984:57–59); cf. also Horton (2008:155–189) for a good discussion on '*Totus Christus*. One and many'.

the body by means of baptism, but, just the reverse, incorporation by baptism means being baptized with the Spirit of Christ.[341]

'[O]ne could therefore say that God thinks somatically, or corporately. He takes pleasure in the wonder of the unity of his people.'[342] He even connects our unity to the clarity of our witness that the world may understand his coming into this world. 'Their unity is a witness to his glory. In this way, the restoration to wholeness attains its peak. God restores to relatedness.'[343] The covenant leads to covenantal (relational) commitment – to God and the others in the covenant. As Jesus said:[344]

> [22]I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – [23]I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

The me becomes a real and fruitful me within and as part of God's, 'we'. To say it with Lee[345] one more time: 'A Trinitarian understanding of personhood challenges the Enlightenment notion of individuality.' In a certain sense the plan has come full circle: God started our covenantal history with 'one' (Abraham) and the 'many' came of it, but the 'many' only find their unique unity in the One, Jesus the Christ. A sentence written by Ridderbos[346]captures it well:

> Both the characteristic expression 'the many' and the definite 'in Christ' are borrowed from the familiar terminology that denotes the many as having been included in the one, the church as being represented by Christ.

341. Ridderbos ([1975] 1997:373).

342. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

343. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

344. John 17:22–23 (NIV).

345. Lee (2006:104).

346. Ridderbos ([1975] 1997:371).

In Youth Ministry, this principle is critical, and it provides this ministry with integrity. Youth Ministry is often threatened by individualism – or, put in another way, 'by a lack of insight into the corporate and interdenominational purpose and dealings of God. Maintaining this theological principle [starting point] in Youth Ministry'[347] […] would not always be easy.' The degeneration of some congregations into the sum total of 'individuals' makes this principle difficult to maintain. In a culturally 'determined' '*Volkskirche*' the sacrament of the incorporation of an individual into the body of Christ often becomes the mere application of a cultural symbol and another number. In such a case the corporate nature of the body, as the body of Christ, as such is likely to be viewed with theological suspicion. In what way, then, does one still have a *Corpus Christi*? This principle is even difficult in traditions where the 'decisions' of individuals to join and be baptised are accepted as a biblical principle and in more than one way enhance and promote individualism.[348] The important issue in the theology of Paul is, to put it in Ridderbos's words:[349]

> To that end (that with all the diversity of gifts one is yet always to keep in view the unity of the Spirit [*added from the context*] the apostle now points in verses 12 and 13 to the unity lying 'behind' this unity of the Spirit, the unity of the body, and he reminds the church of the moment of their baptism as the incorporation into the body of Christ ('baptized into one body') […]The term employed here – 'to baptize into' – denotes that the one baptized is brought into relation with an already existing person of unity (cf. 1 Cor 10:2; Gal 3:27); this means therefore incorporation into an already existing body, namely the communion of those who have been comprehended in and baptized into Christ.

For the sake of the long-term outcome of Youth Ministry, however, that which is difficult to preserve or develop must

347. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

348. Cf. Nel (2015b:25–50) and other references to the corporate nature of the church as indicated in the Limited Index on page 407.

349. In his discussion of 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13 in Ridderbos ([1975] 1997:272).

not be compromised.[350] This ecclesiological principle is not negotiable. This challenge is even larger: Often how the corporate character of this ministry is understood, leads to yet another form of 'individualism' or independentism – denominationalism. Youth Ministry often lacks a real ecumenical perspective and respect for the larger corpus.

The basic theory maintained here is that the children of the people of the covenant, people who live in a relationship with God and with one another, are an integral part of the community of faith, of the congregation in its many '*Gestalts*'.[351] Faith is basically understood as a relationship that grows in direct proportion to the measure in which believers share in relationships with others.[352] During man's youth, in which relationships are of cardinal importance, it is essential that Youth Ministry should have an ecclesiological and somatic foundation. In the relationships with others the youth grow spiritually and learn that they are part of a serving community of believing persons.[353] This theological starting point is admitted by more and more leaders in Youth Ministry. Black[354] calls it 'building block 4: the church as the basic unit for ministry.' This departure point is not new, it is part of the history of the Christian movement, it has only been forgotten and neglected. Sometimes it seems as if authors stumble over this point and state it almost without reason, unintentionally, or only with reference to one or two biblical texts. Ludwig,[355] as part of his answer to the question as to why Youth Ministry is necessary, states twice, almost as if it were self-evident, that the congregation is important, and that

350. Cf. König (1986; 1995) for an in-depth discussion of baptism as the seal of the covenantal relationship.

351. Cf. Smit (1996:120).

352. Cf. Benson and Wolfe (1981:311–314); Osmer (1992:27–30).

353. Cf. Robbins (1990:20–29); Veerman (1992:13–20).

354. Black (1991:15); cf. also Myers (1987:xviff., 15ff.).

355. Ludwig (1979:37); cf. also Ludwig (1988:18–37).

the youth should be integrated into the life of the church. Doug Frank[356] reflects on it in this new wave of recovering what we may have lost – at least from time to time and place to place. In 1998 already Benson[357] in a well-researched book by the Search Institute tradition, wrote that this research:

> [A]ffirms the power of all faith communities to nurture centered, focussed, and healthy youth by uniting and mobilizing all of their relational and programmatic resources. Indeed, I would argue that after the institution of family, the communities known as temples, synagogues, mosques, parishes, or churches have the greatest potential to help youth emerge into adulthood as caring, responsible, and committed citizens.

Cannister[358] also argues this important truth in quoting several well-known scholars:

> While Smith[359] has identified several factors that contribute to high levels of faith among emerging adults, personal relationships with adults (parents and other caring adults) who connect teenagers to the faith community in the middle and high school is necessary in almost all cases. Further, Lisa Pearce and Melinda Lundquist Denton found that teenagers who were most committed to their faith reported that, in addition to having parents and close friends who shared their beliefs, they were also connected to a faith community that provided 'a welcoming, challenging atmosphere that *values and integrates youth*'.[360]

Lytch[361] reports that 'the majority of teens in my interview sample said that their parents influence their religious beliefs more than anyone or anything else.'

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356. Frank (2007:116–147) in a chapter titled: 'The beloved community: Covenant community in Youth Ministry.'

357. Roehlkepartian (1998:ix). Benson is the President of the Search Institute. I will repeat this quote later in this book again, Part 2, Chapter 8.

358. Cannister (2013:116ff.); cf. again his chapter in Cannister (2016:136–149) under the heading: 'Thinking ecclesiologically. Teenagers becoming part of the Church'.

359. With reference to Smith and Denton (2005) as quoted by Ham and Beemer (2010:227).

360. Cf. Pearce and Denton (2011:70–71); italics added by Cannister (2013:117).

361. Lytch (2004:141ff.); for the details, 'validity, reliability and generalization of the findings' of her empirical research see (2004:203ff.).

This section is merely about the theological starting point. Why and how the historical development was such that youth work was often something apart from, or appended to the congregation, is discussed in Part 1, Chapter 4. Suffice it to say that there are no theological grounds for this false dichotomy.[362]

'Children and adolescents [and emerging adults (youth)] are an indispensable and essential part of the congregation. Like all other members, they too are [an integral] part of the congregation.'[363] As being young, they are also the congregation's responsibility. Myers says:[364]

> Key to a church's faithful Youth Ministry is the presence of *faithing* adults who incarnate God's love in genuine, appropriate ways. *Faithing* describes the intentional and appropriate activities of those who embody God's love [...]. While the presence of such individuals (the '*faithing*' individuals) is critical, no less important is [...] *Collective Incarnation*, i.e. the presence of the gathered body of Christ, the congregation, the community of the faithful.

In a more recent publication it is said that:

> [*P*]articipation in a faith community is consistently found to have a positive impact on young people's development in multiple domains of life, from reduction in high-risk behaviors to increases in resilience and thriving, physical health and overall development.[365]

I am deeply convinced that Zirschky[366] is correct when he states in his short but very good book on *Youth Ministry for the Connected But Alone Generation* that:

> We must examine what it means to be the church in the social media age. By doing this we may be able to reclaim the church's God-ordained role of offering young people the intimacy that social

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362. Cf. Nel (1982:108ff.) and my reference to several others above, among others Cannister (2013).

363. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

364. Myers (1987:xviii).

365. Roehlkepartian and Patel (2006:324) in a chapter titled: 'Congregations: Unexamined crucibles for spiritual development'.

366. Zirschky (2015:6).

apps promise but cannot deliver. Teenagers want neither technology nor mere connections with other people, however, they *are* longing for the intimate form of community and relational presence that, I will argue, is most characterized by the Christian understanding of *koinonia* – communion.

Schweitzer[367] already wrote in 1987 that the more parents are connected to the 'body', the more the children are connected. The connection with the church is dependent on socialising and this goes back to the influence of the parents.

I am not sure that it is any longer fair to say that 'Protestant Youth Ministry has all but deleted ecclesiology from the theological radar. It's not so much that ecclesiology has become unimportant; rather, it is non-existent in contemporary Youth Ministry.'[368] While I have pleaded enough already for more theological (and ecclesiological) reflection, and while an obvious ecclesiological golden thread is not always obvious enough in many books, this is probably no longer a fair assessment to say that ecclesiology has been 'deleted' or become 'non-existent'. I hope the above paragraphs point in the direction of new and sincere theological reflection on the local church. To add just one more author who reflected on this: Dean[369] acknowledges that congregations are partners with youth and parents (who are so directly involved in Youth Ministry). In her core argument for 'Godbearing Youth Ministry' she argued:

> Godbearing youth ministry embraces all the formal (Sunday School, confirmation, worship, youth group) and informal (worship, casual mentoring, participation in community rituals) ways of passing on faith. Godbearing youth ministry helps church members and governing boards own that it takes an entire church to raise a Christian and not simply the youth pastor or Sunday School teacher

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367. Schweitzer quoted from the 7th edition ([1987] 2010:181–182).

368. Arzola (2015:113) in the opening paragraph of his contribution on 'View Four' (2015: 113–143) in the new book on five views on Youth Ministry.

369. Dean and Foster (1998:100–101) for her argument on the congregation as 'partner'; cf. also Lytch (2004).

[…] When congregations claim their roles in the formation of youthful disciples, the body of Christ is the real beneficiary.

One of the strongest arguments for the importance of the above-mentioned is found in the work by Root[370] on 'relational Youth Ministry'. He refers to how Bonhoeffer viewed the church and the importance of such a viewpoint in Youth Ministry. In this 'church community'[371] Christ is:

[P]resent in the spirit of relationships that holds the community together as they love one another through the sharing of the sacraments and submission to the Word of God. It is in persons meeting persons, in relationships, that the concrete presence of Christ is experienced.

Root[372] continues on how Christ is also present in the world and how we meet him in the 'you' of the other. He then adds, and I should let him say this in his own words (people who have known my ecclesiological departure points, since my doctoral work in 1981, will appreciate how this is music to my ears):

Relational Youth Ministry has often neglected the importance of the church community, and by doing so has unknowingly become irrelevant to the world and impotent to stand for it. We can trace this neglect back to its birth in parachurch organizations. The ministry models that have migrated from parachurch organizations to the church often do not have a deep understanding of the church. But as we have learned from Bonhoeffer, the church is essential for relational ministry.

Root[373] discusses Bonhoeffer's eight theses on Youth Ministry. The above quote relates specifically to thesis 8:

There is no real 'church association'; there is only the church. The church youth association is not the youth of the church community;

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370. Root (2007:107ff.).

371. Root (2007:108) makes the point that this is how '*Gemeinde*' should be understood in English, quote pages 108–109.

372. Root (2007:111).

373. Root (2014a:117–136).

that youth includes, rather, all baptized young people. Every church association as such already discredits the cause of the church. Such associations can only be perceived as makeshift entities, which as such have only relative significance.[374]

Hermeneutic perspective: The family as a space where understanding is being facilitated[375]

There is little doubt among most scholars in the field of Youth Ministry that families are important in this ministry, very important. Anyone who still doubts this should read at least the challenging story of Ben Freudenburg and how he was changed before writing the book on *A family-friendly Church*.[376] As a result of his own journey and research, he coined a 'working philosophy' for the book and ministry:

> Parents are the primary Christian educators in the church, and the family is the God-ordained institution for faith-building in children and youth and for the passing of faith from one generation to the next.

Kopp[377] refers to a study done among young adults by Martinson[378] stating that:

> Among the 25 percent who have stayed involved in the church, we have discovered varying, combinations of eight characteristics:

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374. Root (2014a:134–135).

375. In the first edition, I called it a 'hermeneutic Lebensraum'.

376. Freudenburg and Lawrence (1998). He also refers (1998:9) to research done by the Search Institute (Roehlkepartian & Benson 1993:24–25) and worded it as: 'a parent's positive influence on a child's faith development dwarfs all other influences.'

377. Kopp (2010:66).

378. Martinson (2002). Kopp quoted him from an online source. The article was published in *Currents in Theology and Mission*, October 2002; Avenant (2011) came to the same conclusion in his master's degree research among adolescents; cf. also Avenant and Hoffman (2015:63–74).

> Faith was deep in the identity and practices of their family [*indicated as the first characteristic*].

In older books on Youth Ministry, even on 'relational' Youth Ministry, references to families are fewer, some do not even mention family ministry specifically.[379] The positive side is that the emphasis on the importance of the family is now almost all over the academic world.

Garland[380] published her monumental book on *Family ministry: A comprehensive guide*. She defines 'family' as:

> [*T*]he organization of relationships that endure over time and contexts, through which persons attempt to meet their needs of belonging and attachment and to share life purposes, help and resources.[381]

She refers to the word 'attempt' in her definition to point out that 'families are not always successful' in fulfilling these functions. Nevertheless, these are the relationships through which persons continue to *attempt* to live out what it means to be family.'[382] In another paragraph she refers to a question by Hebbard that, if families are so important, why did God not provide us with 'one perfect or near-perfect model? He [Hebbard] concludes, there are no ideal families, just real families.'[383]

In her groundbreaking work, Dean[384] then already argued for 'families: Little congregations' and 'Congregations: Extended Families.'[385] She did so under the touching heading:

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379. Cf. Ward (1995) for example the essays on 'Relational youth work'.

380. Cf. Garland (1999, 2012).

381. Garland (2012:56).

382. Garland (2012:56).

383. Hebbard (1995:59); Garland (2012:123).

384. Dean and Foster (1998:77–85).

385. Cf. Holmen (2005:91–115) for his chapter on 'The extended family makeover'.

'Godbearing on Holy Ground'. Reporting on very recent research, Clark[386] wrote:

> In this study, however, the erosion of the family as the central, stable, institution designed for and dedicated to the protection and nurturance of the young revealed significant (if not devastating) consequences for the psyches, relationships, worldviews, and overall lives of mid-adolescents [...] Recent studies have demonstrated that during mid-adolescence peers have more influence on adolescents than family and parents do. I observed this during my study as well. I also observed, however, that during adolescence, teens have a desire to find safe and satisfying relationships at home. In fact, adolescents actually desire the approval of the family system for the way they live and the choices they made [...] Parents must commit to two vital strategies in leading and loving their mid-adolescent children: first, to understanding them and their world, and second, to providing them with safe and secure boundaries while still allowing them the necessary room to grow.

Turpin[387] refers to small groups as 'circles of grace'. To my mind, this is what a family is supposed to be or to grow into. Add to this an important remark in a good and well-researched chapter on how the influence of parents in the lives of children and adolescence changes and returns, Erwin[388] states 'how the family network shapes the peer network.' She says[389]: 'Adolescents don't transition into adolescent peer relationships with a blank slate. They bring with them all of what they've learned from their families about cultural standards, norms, and values.'

In a publication worth reading by everyone interested in family ministry, and to which I will come back in Part 2, Chapter 9. Nelson and Jones[390] refer to this important insight as well:

> Family ministry is the process of intentionally and persistently coordinating a congregation's proclamation and practices so that

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386. Clark (2011:95, 100); cf. also Clark (2015a).

387. Turpin (2006:194ff.).

388. Erwin (2010:117–145).

389. Erwin (2010:121–122).

390. Nelson and Jones (2011:15).

parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their children's lives.

In an important chapter in this book, Ware[391] argues:

> In short, the Trinity provides us with a model in which we understand the members of a family as fully equal in their role and dignity as human beings made in God's image. Yet each member has distinct roles and relationships within the family; these roles and relationships are worked out within an authority-submission structure that God designed as purposefully reflective of God himself.

Nobody doubts it anymore. Since my research on youth evangelism[392] I am convinced that this is almost the only way forward for Youth Ministry. I tried then as I am trying now again to find deep theological roots for this way of thinking – as many others do as well.[393] Why is it so important to understand this theological departure point?

Theologically, there is little doubt that man can only come to understand his own createdness and who his Creator is, when God, the Creator, initiates that insight.[394] The break between man and God was an effective one. Man cannot, of his own accord, get 'back to God' and know him as the only One and true One.[395] The creature needs God to get to know God. One gains insight by being given insight. You are helped – given the grace – to understand. That God wants to be known is also such a 'given' insight. How else?[396] The Creator calls the creature. He wants to be known, loved and served by him. Fleeing, fearful man flees a searching God.[397] Because of this fact, God is always at work

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391. Ware (2011:61–73), quote from (2011:67).

392. Cf. Nel (1982).

393. Only think of people like DeVries who in 1994 wrote his now well-known book on family-based Youth Ministry.

394. Cf. Heyns (1978:298–328).

395. Cf. Deuteronomy 6:4ff.

396. Cf. again the paragraph on relational or covenantal above.

397. Cf. Genesis 3:8.

trying to bring his own to insight by means of his own. The corporate or ecclesiological or congregational sphere (touched on already above) points to this truth too.[398] God makes the whole grow out of the one and involves the whole in and by means of the coming to insight of the one (as part of the whole).

'Within this ecclesiological [corporate] sphere (lebensraum), there is a smaller unit to which God grants, in a special way, the hermeneutic function: the family.'[399] In the Bible, the family has a unique hermeneutic function. One could say that the child needs parents or a parent, in order to gain understanding. In addition to the almost obvious nature of this reality, the Passover meal is a unique example.[400] And so is 'also the well-known reference to families and faith education in Deuteronomy 6. Children must understand who God is and how he deals with people.'[401] Often children place the concept of *God's salvation* on the agenda by raising a question. On the Passover table, there is more than bread and fried lamb. Metaphorically, on the table lie the questions raised by people who have not yet heard the whole story, and do not understand it in its covenantal context. In this way, I learn as a child what the way of Jahwe with his people entails, and that the same way is also Jahwe's way with me:[402]

> When the story of God's dealings with his people comes from the people whom youths are supposed to listen to [*hear*] first and [*whom you*] can trust [*as to the authenticity of the story*], a story makes more sense.[403]

> Children ask questions and parents answer - this pattern is so children can learn [*know*] that 'the Lord brought us out of Egypt with

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398. Cf. Myers (1987:6ff.) again.

399. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

400. Cf. Exodus 12.

401. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

402. Cf. Firet (1977:71ff.; 1986:53ff.).

403. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

a mighty hand.'[404] What today's parents once heard as children from their parents, they recount, [*almost like children who have heard and now being parents, themselves understand*], to their own children.[405]

They tell the upcoming generation of 'the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power.'[406] In this sense, the 'house tables' of the NT should also be understood. They are about the handing down of this knowledge from generation to generation.[407] In the words of the Psalmist:

> [(1)]My people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. [(2)]I will open my mouth with a parable; I will utter hidden things, things from of old – [(3)]things we have heard and known, things our ancestors have told us. [(4)]We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.[408]

Within the family, God and his ways are interpreted to the members of the family in the most natural way. In this hermeneutic space, one learns to understand – in the most spontaneous way possible. Certainly, God is not only to be known in this space, and insight can be attained where this space is lacking or broken. God is not limited to the family when he wants to enlighten someone. He is sovereign and works as he pleases:

> Yet [*it is also true that*] he has offered [*made*] the family as [*the*] primary hermeneutic sphere, and it pleases him to grant an understanding of who he is and how he acts within the security and intimacy of a family [*form of human relationships*].[409] Our era requires a special sensitivity to the crisis of families.[410]

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404. Cf. Deuteronomy 6:20ff.

405. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

406. Psalm 78:3, 4.

407. Cf. Bijlsma (1962:13); Dingemans (1986:223ff.); Evenson in Gilbert (1969:37–51).

408. Psalm 78:1–4 (NIV).

409. Cf. again the argument above about the relational being of the Trinity and we as being 'relational'. As to the importance of this in Youth Ministry, cf. Root (2007).

410. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

Thousands of children are not born into so-called traditional families, they are part of single-parent families or come from 'broken' and dysfunctional homes.[411]

Thousands are not born into any kind of family connection at all. I remember a day, on a street in Pretoria, South Africa, asking a young adolescent who wanted to get me a parking space: 'Where are you from?' He mentioned the city and then I asked: 'Why so far from home?' His answer was that he was looking for a job in Pretoria, as there were no jobs in his city. I then asked (we were close to one another during the moment that I showed that I was caring): 'Where are your parents?' After his answer that he 'did not know', I asked: 'Your dad?' 'I have never seen him in my life and do not know where my mother is.'

Facts like these have to be fully considered in Youth Ministry when we make a theological point that the family is the natural space for understanding who God is and how God loves us. When this space is absent, we and our Youth Ministry are challenged. We then should provide many and good emergency procedures to cultivate such safe spaces for understanding to take place. The emphasis on the family as being such a given space, as a hermeneutic principle, should in no way be used to cause people who are hurting already to 'hurt even more, nor to create the idea that one who is born into a family has a head start on grace.'[412]

The truth highlighted here – the truth that the family is a hermeneutic space – means at the very least and at the very root, that God, in his wisdom, works in the realm of relationships. His covenantal dealings with people also underscore this idea. And parents and children, a parent and a child, are or is the most 'natural' form of these relationships. Families are not constituted by numbers, but by relationships.

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411. Cf. Holmen (2005:9–15) for his chapter on 'The functional dysfunctional family'.

412. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

Where the ties between fathers, mothers and children are deficient for some reason or another, the principle that God works within relationships is not invalid. Other relationships can also be established with similar effect. In many cultures the extended family often plays this role. Independent churches in Africa often function on this basis.[413] The congregation as 'extended family', as family in this regard, is an unnoticed and underutilised support system.[414] In Western cultures, there are other ways of making up for the lack of relationships 'at home' – as in day-care centres and kindergartens. The integrating approach to relational groups as a means of ministry in many congregations holds great promise for the development of the congregation as an extended family:[415]

> Relationship is the password to understanding, and the most natural form of relationship is the biological or custodial family. God is indeed the God of households [*even though he does not thereby become or turn into a household god*]. In a unique way he is known within the hermeneutic sphere of the family. Here a lived and shared faith in God plays a crucial role in the understanding of him by the next generation.[416,417]

■ Agogic perspective: The congregation as a space for change

From the perspective of the lens of discipleship, no disciple has ever arrived. We are all disciples in becoming:

> Nobody is ever finished in the sense of being changed into perfection [*born whole*]. Yet every adolescent [*child*] is a total

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413. Cf. Oosthuizen (1996).

414. Cf. Burger (1995:1–12); cf. Burke (2005:285–300) for 'The family I never had: Creating a culture of family' in congregations.

415. Cf. Veerman (1992); Beckham (1995); Potgieter (1995); Burger and Simpson (1996).

416. Cf. Sell ([1981] 1995); Myers (1987:xviii;15ff.); Faber and Mazlish (1990); Bibby and Posterski (1992); DeVries (1994); Foley (1995); Hebbard (1995); Cooey (1996); Dekker and Pieterse (1996).

417. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

person [*a human being*] and must be accepted and respected as such. The development [*formation*] of a person into someone who can represent God anew, as the Creator originally visualised him, is in continual process [*a work in progress*]. As people in Christ, we are new creations - an irrefutable fact.[418]

In Christ, we are new people.[419] We merely become what and who we already are in him. Elsewhere[420] I have tried to explain this in terms of our God-given identity and we 'becoming' who we already are in Christ. This constant change, this becoming, this continuing conversion[421] to the position and status, already granted by God in Christ, is the central principle of change[422] in Scripture. God has finished creating, but he has not yet finished with his Creation. He is bringing Creation to its fulfilment:

> God created the end in the beginning and he has already begun to realise this end for which he created everything. In a certain sense, he starts with the end. In fact, in another sense he starts with the end [...] Perhaps it is for this reason that he has never tired of starting anew with people.[423]

In this regard, every new birth is a new beginning. With the expectation of the Messiah, every boy-child could be him! Every new child announces the possibility of a person with a destination – the coming of a person that can represent God better and more fully than all before 'me'.

In theology, change or agogy can only be understood as the work of the Holy Spirit (pneumatologically). As such, the agogic moment gives theological impetus to Youth Ministry. This moment propels all ministry, but one especially experiences this

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418. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

419. Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17 in context.

420. Cf. Nel (2015b:25–50).

421. Cf. for a book which even carries this as a title, Guder (2000).

422. Agogic principle.

423. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

theology in the ministry to people who are in any case changing dramatically and sometimes traumatically. Agogy is never as striking a reality as in adolescence. Through the pneumatological understanding of agogy, hope is founded and borne in Youth Ministry. Change is not only possible, but an everyday reality in and of life.

The important matter in focus here is that God supplies such a space for change, such an agogical space. Out of the one who has been called the whole of the *kahal* Jahwe grows, the *ekklesia* of the Lord. Constant change is normal within this gathering of people that have been changed by their calling. They have become the people of God by being changed by him. One's calling changes one. Ur is left behind. The journey to the unknown fatherland (that has been promised, and where you belong, but which you have not yet reached) has begun. Turning around and going back is no longer possible. Neither is sitting down. Calling changes, the 'called'. One's calling calls the agogic into being. The gathering of the called ones is the gathering of people in transition. According to Jesus[424] this basic change (setting continuing change into motion) is so radical that it can only happen with God's help, from above. It is so radical that it is as if one is being born all over again.

By creating the congregation, God has created such a space of changed and changing people – an agogical sphere – a space in which change is normal. Here, in the congregation, to grow, and to continue to do so should be self-evident. Those who turn back, or sit down, or remain the same, should feel uncomfortable and may not even really belong to a group of changed and changing learners (disciples) of the Christ. In answer to the question whether this doctrine (of being saved by grace through faith) 'does […] not make people careless and depraved', the answer of this 'teacher' is: 'No, because it is impossible for those

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424. Cf. John 3.

who are grafted into Christ by true faith to fail to produce the fruit of thankfulness.'[425]

Nowhere should people who are changing feel more at home than in a congregation. Conversion in the catechetic meaning of the word is here the most normal thing which takes place daily in all the members of the faith community. In the sense of the Heidelberger,[426] we, in our process of change, are actually learning how to say, 'thank you', showing our gratitude for salvation. It may be true that, within the community of the faithful, conversion may often no longer be a fundamental change. Even so, this continuing conversion often is a very intense process of becoming aware, of new insight, choice and discernment of what is the most important issue in life.[427] Myers[428] refers in this regard to the terms 'faith' and 'faithing' to show that belief is more a verb than a noun – 'more of a total lifestyle than a commodity to be possessed, more of a process than a product.'

This agogical sphere, space for change, is more than merely normal in the sense of a given, existing space. As such the congregation motivates and facilitates growth and change, or at least it should, as that is what they are about, to be changed into the likeness of the Son:[429]

> (16)But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. (17)Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (18)And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

In this safe space, almost a new family-like safe space, the 15-year-old sees the changes in the 60-year-old and vice versa.

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425. Cf. Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 64; cf. the translation by Hansen (2012).

426. Cf. Hansen (2012, Part 3).

427. Cf. Philippians 1:9–11; Dingemans (1986:113); Firet (1977:256–295; 1986:192–230).

428. Cf. Myers (1987:xviii, xix, 61ff.).

429. 2 Corinthians 3:16–18 (NIV).

Even more: some changes are difficult and painful. The new person does not become what he is in Christ without a struggle. Sometimes the struggle against sin is a bloody one. Myers[430] refers to the older members as:

> [G]uarantors [...] who [are] appropriately anchored in adulthood but who will walk with youth on their journey. Guarantors share the burden of the journey, help read the road maps and offer encouragement.

As Hebbard[431] says: For this the congregation, and also the pastors, should be often willing to confess: 'I don't know all the answers, but I am here to cry with you' and 'a new definition of valid, God-blessed ministry awaits.'[432]

To change, one needs others, others who are changing and have learned to do so. They are not better learners or disciples, but they may be longer on this journey of learning, how to live life to its fullest as one of and as part of God's sent people in this world. Basically, you need the wholly Other ('*den ganzen Anderen*'), but also those that have been changed by him. In a sense one could say that he changed them in order to help 'you' change through them. Through his called ones, he does so many unique things in this world. He has prepared everything in order to change those through whom he wants to change the daily realities of sin and injustice in his world. As Cannister[433] remarks:

> Transformation happens most deeply in the lives of teenagers when they are engaged in the broader life of the church and connected to a network of caring adults. This is not meant to minimize the role of student ministries, which are the launching pads of adolescent faith transformation. Nothing is more reflective of healthy student ministries than students who launch into the full and robust life of the church. In order for this to happen, though, the broader church must be prepared for and committed to receiving teenagers into its midst

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430. Myers (1987:35).

431. Hebbard (1995:15).

432. Cf. Hargrove (1983:72–81) and his reference to a congregation as a 'mediating structure'.

433. Cannister (2013:117).

by valuing them for who they are and allowing them to contribute to the whole life of the church. This is a very countercultural perspective, as few institutions embrace the notion of allowing students to contribute to the adult world.

Naturally, he does not want to change only those who have already become part of the group of changers. God's involvement in the congregation (of which the youth are an integral part) is always understood in a missional sense. The congregation grows so that others, yes, the whole of Creation, can become through them what God meant them to be. The Holy Spirit binds the congregation to Christ so that the congregation can demonstrate a Christological existence. In this way, it becomes a change motivated by the love of Christ for the sake of reconciliation and justice in this world.[434] And in the context of the biblical proclamation 'love is always partial: It defends the voiceless and the deprived, the sick and the poor, slaves and exiles, orphans and strangers.'[435,436]

Here two realities stand in creative tension to one another. The dynamics of rapidly changing youth raises the question to the rest of the congregation whether they are in any way still in an agogical space, an example where the changing processes of children and adolescents (the younger members of the family of faith) can and will be facilitated and allowed. The congregation as agogical space, and hopefully as an example, naturally invites the youth that is changing and seeking change: Come and change here, in the sphere of the Spirit, and together with us in whom he lives, to attain the image of the Son; come, become with us, ever more effective representatives of God here on earth.

This departure point coincides with what is called wisdom. Wisdom has a lot to do with experience, experience takes time.

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434. Cf. for example 2 Corinthians 5:11–21.

435. Cf. again the paragraph above on the gospel of the kingdom; cf. also Dingemans (1986:51); Bosch (1991:8–10, 349ff.).

436. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

Young(er) disciples may be even more committed to the Christ than old(er) disciples. Experience is gained through what one knows and what one does together. Jones[437] wrote that concerning the process of developing wisdom, Christianity is no different:

> You can get kids to memorize all the Bible verses you want in Sunday School and Vacation Bible School, but until they have got to put their Christianity into practice, those verses aren't worth the piece of candy that the kids get for reciting them.

I am sure that Jones in no way means that learning these verses is useless, but the point he wants to make is valid. And this is what happens in the process of learning how to live life, the Christ way. We are there for one another as we learn together how we grow practical wisdom (*phronēsis*). Jones[438] in a paragraph on 'why you can't find a wise teenager' refers to Socrates,[439] who, without 'the benefit of pediatric neurological studies', wrote:

> An indication of what has been said is that while young people become geometers and mathematicians and wise in such things, they do not seem to become practically-wise (*phronetic*). The explanation is that practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) is concerned also with particulars, knowledge of which comes from experience. But there is no young person who is experienced, since it is quantity of time to produces experience.[440]

The last-mentioned reference is in no way, at least not to my mind, a way of belittling the commitment of youth to discipleship. I referred to this to emphasise my point that we are involved, together and with an inclusive faith community, in learning, gaining experience – and so becoming even more today than

437. Jones (2016:214).

438. Jones (2016:215).

439. Aristotle (2014:120).

440. Jones (2016:215).

yesterday, wise followers of the Christ. Jones[441] is making the same point when stating that:

> Christianity is fundamentally a *lived human endeavour.* No amount of study is a substitute for that. Youth group, camp, retreats, lock-ins, you name it – each serves a purpose and each is valuable in its own way, but none of those activities or events has anything like the effect of living the Christian life on a day-to-day basis, over time.

When Youth Ministry takes this basic theory as a starting point, this ministry (as part of the total ministry) is obliged 'to create a context in which faith can be awakened, supported, and challenged.'[442] In the creation of such agogic situations where change is possible within the congregation, agogical space becomes crucial.[443] Hryniuk[444] in his contribution in the book on contemplative Youth Ministry has a whole section on 'creating space for God'. He continues and discusses the disciplines of disciples such as 'attentiveness', 'discernment', and 'accompaniment'. Faith communities are to facilitate change and be examples to the whole world of how God is changing us back to our original purpose.

It is exactly on this level that my own deep change in research fields lies. My research on youth evangelism led me to the conviction that local churches or congregations are not functioning as such 'gestalts' of what God is doing in and for his world. Why would people even consider our way of life as Christians if it were not as clear as daylight in the everyday life of Christians that God, in Christ, changed us and is changing us to be like him, people for the people, deeply involved in what he is up to and busy with, renewing his Creation to become what he intended it to be all along? My involvement in

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441. Aristotle (2014:120).

442. Osmer (1992:15).

443. Cf. Firet (1977:296ff.; 1986:231).

444. Hryniuk (2007:77–81).

developing missional congregations is because of this insight into 'Youth Ministry'.[445]

Stating the above as a theological departure point in Youth Ministry is therefore more than an academic exercise to me. It is at the very core of my academic, ministry and missional being or identity.

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445. Cf. again my attempt to reflect academically on this in Nel (2015a; 2015b).

Chapter 3

Cultural: Because of where we are who we are: The world we live in!

In more than one way the world we live in, the way people think and behave – codetermines us. Each one of us is born into a local context, which is influenced by the culture of our parents and their parents and their parents and no one can escape this, as coming into this world is not decided or determined by oneself. We were 'made' by cultural human beings. This is how it works. The child, which we as Christians confess to be a gift of God,[446] is in so many ways a 'cultural product'.[447]

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446. Cf. Psalm 127:3: 'Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him' (NIV).

447. Cf. the monumental volume on this, edited by Trommsdorff and Chen (2012). In the first chapter, Trommsdorff (2012:4) states: 'The present volume attempts to clarify the role of culture, values, and religion as the assumed major factors in adolescent development. These factors are seen here as part of interrelated meaning systems influencing self- and world-views.'

This reality becomes complex when we consider the many influences on our cultures, and the many cultures themselves. There is a history to every culture, and every culture is being influenced by contextual, national and international 'thinking patterns' or paradigms. No one can escape this. So, we are being born 'influenced', people under cultural influence. I am in no way referring here to the terrible truth that many children are born with an alcohol syndrome. This phenomenon may be influenced by culture, but this is not what I am discussing here.

Cultural Studies is an academic field in its own right and a challenging one indeed. For many years, but especially since the work of Niebuhr,[448] theologians are thinking seriously about his book *Christ and culture*. My attempt is in no way to venture into the complexity of culture and Cultural Studies.[449] I do, however, want to reflect on cultural trends that are of vital importance in the grounding of Youth Ministry.[450] Youth Ministry does not merely require a theological justification, but also a justification for its cultural, contextual, and teleological basic points of departure. As far as culture is concerned, we need 'a commitment to be a student of culture.'[451] Below I will refer to youth culture as a subculture or as Savage and others[452] have called it – a popular culture, including all 'art forms such as music, dance, visual

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448. Niebuhr ([1951] 1975); cf. also Erwin (2010:161–191) for a discussion about Niebuhr's 'Christ and culture' (Erwin 2010:169ff.); also about Paul Tillich's 'Religion and culture' (2010:161–168), and on Barth's 'Bearing witness to culture' (2010:181–191).

449. I refer in the reference list at the end of this volume to a number of publications for further reading.

450. Cf. Borgman (1997:62–88) for his discussion on what he calls 'Toward a theology of culture: What in the world is going on?'

451. To quote from a helpful contribution by Mueller (2016:115–135), quote (p. 133).

452. Savage et al. (2006:8).

imagery, storytelling, design, etc'.[453] In Youth Ministry we need to see the bigger picture, as culture is hardly ever simplistic in nature. Robbins[454] reminds us of a remark by a 'missionary anthropologist'[455] that an 'integrated approach gives us a better look at the complete picture.' Below are some remarks about the cultural and psychological reasons for this ministry.[456]

■ Postmodernism as a cultural paradigm

As is the case with culture itself, it would even be presumptuous to try to describe postmodernism here. It would fall outside the scope of this book anyway. The paradigm, this way of thinking, this thinking pattern, is complex and is also still developing. In the first edition of this book, I think I rightly asked the question whether an attempt at describing it would not be premature. It was then also valid to ask whether South Africa was really grappling with postmodernism as it is understood at present. Smit[457] regards, to my mind, correctly the then (1991–1994+) reactions[458] towards change in South Africa rather as modernistic reactions to the typical premodern society of the 'old' South Africa. People react differently when groupings, tradition and authority, after having been central for so long, suddenly fall away. One of the responses was that only now the modern world

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453. Cf. also in this regard the important contribution by Erwin (2010:53–60) and her response to youth culture, and whether it is a subculture, quote Volf and Bass (2002:254).

454. Robbins (2004:248).

455. Hiebert (1985:30).

456. See chart on the names and percentages of 'age-groups' and their names (in the USA) at the end of this chapter. For a very good brief summary on each of these generations cf. also Savage et al. (2006:4–7).

457. Smit (1997:14–15 [*author's free interpretation from the original Afrikaans*]).

458. Especially within denominational circles.

has 'dawned' upon this country and impacted its people. In a democratic consciousness, still unsteady in itself, people were then (and now?), often for the first time, thinking for themselves. This 'thinking reaction' varies; yet, the personal choice accompanying it is typical. The individual, his own insights, and his autonomy become the new triumvirate. These responses may look like postmodernism (as it is understood), but are actually only typically modern reactions to premodernism. People all over the world now have a choice – thousands of choices, even about the most important issues in life. There is constant pressure to make choices, for nothing is self-evident any longer.[459] According to Willimon[460] the whole modern paradigm came about because Descartes, in the devastated France of his time, 'started thinking through doubting.' Here is the 'genesis of what would become the modern way of dealing with the world. We see there that birth of the sovereign "I," the ego, as the center of reality.'[461]

Mueller[462] describes these three discernible periods: premodern[463] as from the beginning of time to 'roughly 1700 A.D., people believed in the supernatural realm'; modern as from 'the dawn of the 1700s'; postmodern as having 'dawned

459. Cf. Smit (1997:16 [*author's free interpretation from the original Afrikaans*]).

460. Willimon (1999:79, 80).

461. Willimon (1999:80).

462. Mueller (2006:58–62). According to him, postmodernism in his country (USA) is sometimes connected, and '[T]ook root when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963. It was then that Americans began to wake up to the fact that the modernist promise of progress and a better world had failed' (p. 61). Dean (1999:Foreword) suggests that some others also traced it back to Hiroshima and the Challenger explosion.

463. Cf. Marsden (1984:94–102) for his references to the relationship between 'evangelicalism' and premodernism and modernity. His reference to how evangelicalism 'demands some essentially premodern beliefs, beliefs that people should get past when they get a proper education' (p. 97) and that 'instead of being premodern, evangelicals have been distinctly early modern' (p. 98) – this was significant for the time he wrote this. How much of it is still true today?

as a popular movement in the West in the 1960s.' I may be oversimplifying it a bit, but it may help to think of it in the following terms: premodern thinking is expected from someone, a leader or the supernatural; modern thinking does not believe or trust anything that cannot be scientifically proven; postmodern thinking is open to the uncertainty of not knowing.

To link up with the difficulty of describing this pattern of thinking: the well-known author, Nancy Ammerman[464] in 1999 still wrote that: '"Postmodern" is a vague and often contested term that requires definition.' Since then one can imagine that much has happened and many others tried to, if not define, then at least describe, what it means or might mean. The book under the title 'Postmodern'[465] helps to understand something of the complexity and meaning of this concept:

> Postmodernism is a big word and a big concept. Many believe it's the most profound societal change since the Enlightenment.[466] [...] The last century has been a time of questioning and deconstruction, especially in the upper echelons of academic philosophy, literary criticism, architecture, and art history. In literary criticism, for example, postmoderns have argued that no text has as actual meaning since each reader imports meaning into the text; even the author's meaning for the text has been deconstructed. Postmodern philosophers have argued that there is no grand metanarrative (an overarching story of common experience that unites all human beings), and they have thereby attempted to deconstruct most philosophies and religions.

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464. Ammerman (1999:11); In the same publication Willimon (1999:81) wrote: 'That longing for more, the desire for a "thicker" description of reality, I would call *postmodern*'; cf. also Prins (1997).

465. Jones (2001:14, 25). The book tries to be faithful, even in the appearance to its content. Eleven people contributed, but it is hardly ever possible to determine who wrote what. I will just quote the source under Jones's name.

466. Jones (2001:17): 'The Enlightenment was a time of great intellectual growth following the rediscovery of classical thought and art in the Renaissance. The Enlightenment project was meant to show that human beings were kings of the universe, and, although God was still a major player, many thinkers were out to show that human beings are not dependent on him.'
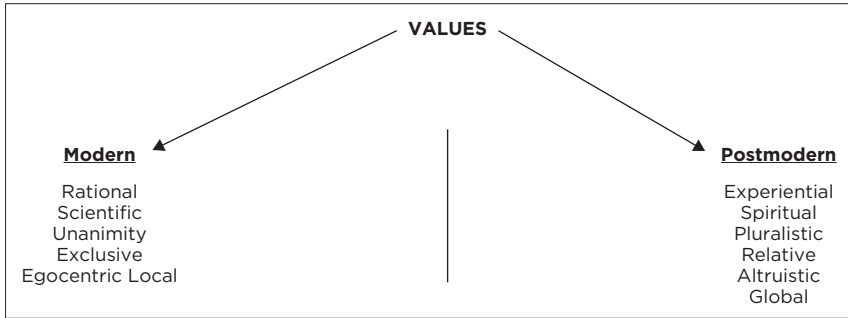
Source: Jones (2001:29, 31–37).
FIGURE 3.1: Differences between modern and postmodern values.

The authors name a few and an incomplete list of postmodern credos:[467]

- objectivity is out, subjectivity is in;
- question everything;
- there is no truth with a capital 'T';
- tell stories;
- never make lists.

In another 'list' (Figure 3.1), which explains the differences of the modern paradigm, to which postmodernism is very much a reactionary pattern of thinking, the authors explain some obvious differences which are helpful for our understanding of the 'reigning school of thought'.[468]

In a later publication, Mueller[469] reflects on postmodernism too. He calls it among other descriptions 'a worldview without a

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467. A concept which, to my mind, is in some way a terminus in contradiction. Postmoderns 'do not make lists' as the authors state themselves (Jones 2001:27). For the list, see Jones (2001:26–27).

468. Jones (2001:29, 31–37); cf. Ammerman (1999:12–18) who then already named many of the now generally accepted challenges and characteristics; cf. also Richter (2001:63–76) for his chapter on 'Growing up postmodern: Theological uses of culture'.

469. Mueller (2006:58–79); for the distinctives, see (pp. 62–77).

center' and 'a worldview of distinctives'. He then names 11 such distinctives, such as:

> [*S*]tories and words are power grabs; uses feelings, not reason; embraces moral relativism; celebrates pluralism, diversity and tolerance; replaces immorality with amorality; promotes an agonizing pessimism; displaces hope with despair; fosters a longing for connections and permanence; advances interest in spirituality; dismisses Christianity; sees faith as a smorgasbord.[470]

This pattern of thinking opens culture and man up for many options. It is, of course, also an ideal opportunity for the 'autonomous man' and his own insights, which is often going astray. I sense a challenging situation when, in the choices we have, some people become more certain of the things we do not know, than uncertain of the things we think we do know. This imbalance in us Christians is, to my mind, even dangerous for ministry.

Another option is reactionary rejection. Think of people's disappointment in Christianity, often so authoritarian, and its terrifying mistakes over 2000 years. Thinking people (in other words, modern people who think, and who think that they think and act correctly) with reason ask, on the basis of their right to choose, why then Christianity, and why only Christianity. Are not all religions, or the best aspects of all religions, better than one with all its shortcomings? If one thing about this paradigm is already recognisable, it is the almost limitless openness to other viewpoints and to other people. People who think for themselves react differently: Some view (think) the past as being superior to the present, and others view (think) the present to be an improvement on the past. There are also others are others that expect the future – all that is taking shape (the postmodern way of dealing with reality) – to be even finer than the present.[471]

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470. Mueller (2006:62); see also (pp. 62–77).

471. Cf. Tilley, Edwards and England (1995); cf. also Vukich and Vandegriff (2002:19–25) for a discussion of the tension between the older generations and young people. 'Tension with the adult world' is, according to them one of the characteristics of youth culture. They add 'impatience with institutions' (pp. 32–34).
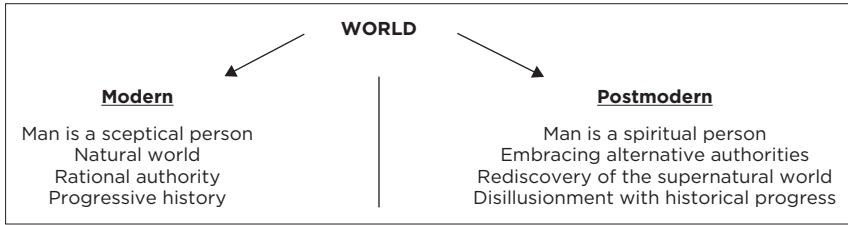
FIGURE 3.2: Rabey's summary of transition.

Rabey[472] reflects on postmodernism in a chapter titled: 'New world-no world. Wrestling with the implications of Postmodernism.' He also noted, that through the ages every generation insisted upon doing things their own way, 'believing that its approach represented an improvement on the methods of the older generation.' While this is 'normal' from time to time, something more dramatic happens. To say it in the words of Peter Drucker:

> Every few hundred years in Western history there occurs a sharp transformation. Within a few short decades, society rearranges itself – its worldview; its basic values; its social and political structure; its arts; its key institutions. Fifty years later, there is a new world. And the people born then cannot imagine the world in which their grandparents lived and into which their own parents were born. We are currently living through just such a transformation.[473]

See Rabey's summary[474] of the transition in Figure 3.2 above.

In this connection, it is worthwhile to link up with Smit[475] again. A certain view of religion plays an important role in the reaction of churchgoers – a specific type of religion, one that

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472. Rabey (2001:31–46).

473. Drucker (1993:1); cf. also Taylor (2007); Heitink (2012).

474. Rabey (2001:39).

475. Smit (1997:16 [*author's free interpretation from the original Afrikaans*]).

knows and accepts its own place, that is directed at the private sphere, the inward, intimate, emotional and religious life and needs of the individual. He then correctly proceeds to say that many churches react like this and, may I add, perhaps for the very reason that, in doing so, they think they are reacting against postmodernism. The 'enemy' has been wrongly identified. Churches mistakenly flee back to a religion that controls – the typical premodern security in which the group, tradition, and others have authority.

Yet, the true response to postmodernism would be a growing openness. I need to get back to the argument in Jones's book.[476] The authors state the obvious but important truth:

> The Millennials are getting full-blown, no-holds-barred postmodern thought [...] The students with whom we work were born into a culture of transition, and children born today are entering a thoroughly postmodern world. This is not to say that all students will adopt postmodern traits, but postmodernism will be the reigning school of thought, and postmodernity will be the reigning culture when our students arrive at college.[477]

They also acknowledge that postmodernism is not the 'evil':

> [W]e cannot afford to have another cultural watershed pass the church by. And neither can the church become too accommodating of a cultural movement as it did with post-enlightenment modernism. These itches on either side of the road must be avoided. In the middle is a road of levelheaded wisdom: being aware of culture and its changing emphases without blindly embracing these characteristics [...] Postmodernism is not the evil that some Christian thinkers make it out to be. On the contrary, many postmodern critiques of modernism should be welcomed by the church. No longer are we beholden to the scientific proof model of evangelism – everything does not need to be explained and rationalized. This should come as a relief to Christian youth workers who have been attempting to *explain* great mysteries like the incarnation, the resurrection, and

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476. Jones (2001:29, 38, 39).

477. Cf. also Mueller (2006:80–108) for a well-documented challenge to the Emerging Generation in a chapter titled: 'Welcome to their Jungle'.

the Lord's Supper. There is new room in our faith for experience, for mysticism, and for mystery. We can recover the *story* as the great conveyer of truth, and we can use it to great effect just as Jesus did. We can welcome people into a journey instead of getting them to assent to an oversimplified version of the gospel and recite a three-sentence prayer. In other words, we can recover some of our lost heritage. For a long time, Christians have been consumed with maintaining political power, conquering lands, writing laws, and a lot of other things that Jesus did not seem the least bit concerned with. We were side tracked during the modern era, and postmodernity may afford us the ability to recover some aspects of authentic Christianity.[478]

The youth and their parents are part of this present-day reality where a shifting and developing paradigm is active.[479] South Africa probably still subscribes to a strange mixture of premodern, modern and postmodern philosophies. Yet, the postmodern consciousness is certainly prevalent and growing. I also agree with the authors quoted above that the church's reaction to this pattern of thinking should differ from its former reactions to modernism and premodernism.

Postmodernism, as it is currently understood, presents the church with great new possibilities of representing and serving God on earth with integrity and in a convincing way. Kopp[480] also recognises this by saying that: '[T]he effect postmodernism has had on our youth has been both a challenge and a blessing.' In all dimensions, as in rationality, affection, diversity, plurality, individuality and the broader anthropology,[481] the gospel of

478. Jones (2001:38–39).

479. Cf. Shawchuck and Heuser (1993:219ff.); Bosch (1991). For a good and well-researched chapter on how the influence of parents in the lives of children and adolescents change and return, cf. Erwin (2010:117–145). Her reference to 'how the family network shapes the peer network' (2010:121–122) is of critical importance: 'Adolescents don't transition into adolescent peer relationships with a blank slate. They bring with them all of what they've learned from their families about cultural standards, norms, and values.'

480. Cf. Kopp (2010:88).

481. Cf. Prins (1997).

Jesus Christ can enrich, heal and save. Postmodernism is a reality. Typical modernistic people would rather withdraw back into the securities of premodernism, but the church should rather see this new reality as a challenge towards becoming creatively involved with contemporary culture. To name but one example:

- If Mueller[482] is correct in stating that 'broken relationships' are part of their jungle and that 'perhaps *alienation* is the word that best describes this sense of homelessness';
- Kelly[483] is correct in stating that alienation is the most common and strongest thread woven through the tapestry of today's youth culture: 'The irony of the "new global youth club" is that the one thing young people most share the world over is this sense of lostness';
- Jacober[484] is correct in stating that: 'The identification of adolescents as feeling first lost and then the almost palpable feeling of being abandoned drives them into a frenetic push for affirmation, loyalty and solid relationships.'

What an opportunity for a faith community to represent God and the incarnated Christ in the power of the Spirit with integrity and be there for them! Just be there and let them experience that, in our being there with and for them, God is there – with them (through 'us'), but that God is also existentially there![485]

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482. Mueller (2006:93–96).

483. Kelly (1999:151).

484. Jacober (2011:88). She adds: 'This assertion is confirmed in the work of Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, who remind us of the profound change from a society where young people were closely involved in the productive activities of and supervised by the watchful eyes of adults 'to one where a structural disconnection is present between adults and teenagers'; cf. (Smith & Denton 2005:182–186).

485. Cf. Armstrong (1987b:38; 2007:39).

■ Recognisable cultural trends

Within this broad paradigm there are many other obvious prevailing paradigms in the adult and youth worlds that influence culture. In the first edition of this book, I covered this under the subheading 'adult culture'. Present and reigning adult cultural trends determine to a great extent, the character of the youth subculture concerned. This is a logical inference from the viewpoint as discussed in the previous section. More often, the distinguishable youth subculture is a contextual reaction to adult culture.[486] This does not mean that youth subculture is only reactionary in nature. In the sense that youth subculture is an attempt to express the 'time in-between' it is certainly reactionary at certain places and times. As Jacober[487] stated:

> Adolescents do not grow up in a vacuum. In fact, one of the markers of adolescence is the entrance and transition into a world of adolescents, known as *youth culture.*

A remark ascribed to Socrates (5th century BC), and quoted by Van den Heuvel[488] is intriguing:

> Youth today loves luxury. They have bad manners, have contempt for authority, no respect for older people, and talk nonsense when they should work. Young people do not stand up any longer when adults enter the room. They contradict their parents, talk too much in company, guzzle their food, lay their legs on the table and tyrannise their elders.

According to Van den Heuvel,[489] this reference to young people's behaviour is typical of the decline of Greek culture where adults

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486. Cf. Dean (2004:10–17).

487. Jacober (2011:77).

488. Van den Heuvel (1966:106) with no reference to the Socrates source.

489. Van den Heuvel (1966:109). Remember the quote from Smith and Denton (2005:182–186) that refers to: '[T]he profound change from a society where young people were closely involved in the productive activities of and supervised by the watchful eyes of adults to one where a structural disconnection is present between adults and teenagers.'

'no longer produced the clear leadership and inspiration that could be accepted happily by young adults.'

One would expect that the adults of this day (the young people of yesterday) would succeed in phasing out the 'anticharacter' of youth subculture. But when yesterday's young people become today's adults, a strange thing happens. The new adults begin, perhaps in another way than their parents and the latter's contemporaries, to (re)define and protect the symbols of 'their' adulthood. In this way, the anticharacter of youth subculture is maintained. I do not want any reader to take this anticharacter as absolute. What is true is what Erwin[490] calls 'youth culture practice only in response to dominant culture.' It is, however, not always so clear. Smith and Denton[491] reported that they found that 'the widespread and persistent stereotype about teenagers in American culture is that they are intractably rebellious' is not true:

> [*This*] impression is fundamentally wrong. What we learned by interviewing hundreds of different kinds of teenagers all around the country is that the vast majority of American teenagers are *exceedingly conventional* in their religious identity and practices. Very few are restless, alienated, or rebellious; rather, the majority of U.S. teenagers seem basically content to follow the faith of their families with little questioning. When it comes to religion they are quite happy to go along and get along.

The findings of a study conducted in the United Kingdom in 2006[492] are somewhat different: Their study found that young people's stock of traditional religious knowledge and levels of religious engagement are very limited indeed. However, lack of overt religious sensibility did not appear to result in young people feeling disenchanted, alienated or lost in a meaningless world: 'This world, and all life in it, is meaningful as it is.'

490. Erwin (2010:54).

491. Smith and Denton (2005:19–20).

492. Savage et al. (2006:36–47).

The authors coined the phrase to describe this storyline: 'Happy midi-narrative'. Over and against a metanarrative, this is not an individualistic, mini-narrative. It is communal on a small scale (me, my friends and my family): a midi-narrative. 'Happy' refers to the fact that, central to our young people's world view is the belief that the universe and the social world are essentially benign, and life is life is rather good.[493]

Jacober[494] refers to a statement she made many years ago, and for which she was harshly criticised, that 'we seem to be raising a generation that is Biblically illiterate and theologically void.' She then refers to, what she sees as a confirmation of her observation, namely, Dean's[495] discussion of the concept 'Moralistic therapeutic deism'.[496] Dean asks: Why do teenagers practice moralistic therapeutic deism? Not because they misunderstood what we have taught them in church. They practice it, because this is what we have taught them in church.[497]

In fact, 'American teenagers are barometers of a major theological shift taking place in the United States.' Within this paradigm, she sums up the core understanding of it by teenagers:[498]

* 'a god exists who created and orders the world and watches over life on earth;
* God wants people to be good, nice and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions;

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493. Savage et al. (2006:37–38).

494. Jacober (2011:9–10).

495. Dean (2010:29); cf. also her chapter on 'The triumph of the 'cult of nice' (pp. 25–42).

496. For the background of this concept as coined by Smith and Denton as a finding in the 'National study of youth and religion', cf. Smith and Denton (2005).

497. Dean (2010:29).

498. Dean (2010:14).

- the central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself;
- God is not involved in my life except when I need God to resolve a problem;
- good people go to heaven when they die.'

One may challenge the international generalisation of this paradigm, but one cannot escape the almost obvious validity of such thinking within many church circles. I cannot but agree with Smith and Denton[499] when they wrote: 'Our religious conventional adolescents seem to be merely absorbing and reflecting religiously what the adult world is routinely modelling for and inculcating in its youth.' To this, Dean[500] adds:

> To be sure, churches neither intend nor acknowledge this religious position, despite its considerable appeal. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism makes no pretense of changing lives; it is a low commitment, compartmentalized set of attitudes aimed at 'meeting my needs' and 'making me happy' rather than bending my life into a pattern of love and obedience to God.

What is typical of an adult culture? This question has no simple answer. The brief description of postmodernism above, hopefully sensitised us to the complexity of cultural trends. The reality of today's society of which the congregation is a part and in which the congregation has to function, and Youth Ministry takes place, is almost incomprehensible. Pieterse[501] has aligned himself with many others and stated that it is very difficult even to define the term 'society'. Many things play a role.[502] Tradition and history, for instance, play a crucial role. It is indeed different in Africa than it is in Europe. Different in Northern Europe than in Southern Europe, and the same goes for Europe and the USA. Many factors come into play. Our

499. Smith and Denton (2005:166).

500. Dean (2010:30).

501. Pieterse (1988a:62).

502. Cf. Pieterse (1988b:63ff.).

present time is different from the one just after the Second World War. It also varies from city to rural area. A great role is played by philosophical paradigms over the whole globe. On top of all this, we have generally accepted paradigm shifts that take place in today's society, as referred to above.[503] There are, however, distinguishable trends. Some of these have long been present. Others are more recent (a few are mentioned below).

■ A secular attitude

The Enlightenment society has been increasingly characterised by an optimistic outlook in which God plays a decreasing role.[504] In the beginning it was a mere emancipation from domination and enslavement by the church. But as time went by, the growing faith in man's ability and science degenerated into an emancipation from God himself. The Second World War accelerated new disillusionment and an attendant coldness towards God and the church. God became 'bagatellised'[505] into a peripheral figure that can do nothing for the real life of man and his world. At worst, we have secularism here – even if people should think that God exists, they still ignore him, and sometimes even actively reject him. In a discussion by Osmer[506] on 'subcultural identity theory' he refers to how sociologists like Berger and others expected that secularism would diminish the influence of religion and that religion might even disappear – it turned out differently. He quotes Smith[507] in agreement:

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503. Cf. Bosch (1991:1–4, 349ff.) for an overview of paradigms; Pieterse (1993:1–18, 53ff.).

504. Cf. the description in Jones (2001:17) of the enlightenment: '[A]lthough God was still a major player, many thinkers were out to show that human beings are nor dependent on him.'

505. Verkuyl (1978:57).

506. Osmer (2012:43ff.)

507. Smith (1998:118).

> Religion survives and can thrive in pluralistic, modern society by embedding itself in subcultures that offer satisfying, morally orienting collective identities which provide adherents meaning and belonging.[508]

What is meant here by a typical secular stance is the general idea that 'we can actually live life without God.' He is, at most, a spare tyre, and in today's world one hardly ever needs that. Help is always as near as the nearest garage. This stance is sometimes even typical of churchgoers, it seems as if all mankind has been infected. In some (perhaps in many) this adult ailment has broken out in a rash and developed into full-blown secularism and agnosticism.

Modern paganism

Verkuyl[509] called it neopaganism, a new form of heathenism. Like Barth, he assumes that man, as a religious being, can never live in a religious vacuum. When the true God is denied and/or rejected, man becomes his own god. Man's life always revolves around someone or something. If it isn't God, man almost automatically seeks another focus. In this search man's life starts revolving more and more around himself. The strange thing is that man seldom worships only himself. The man who worships himself simultaneously starts creating his own gods. He makes gods that suit him – gods to serve the god that is man himself. Because of his rooted religiosity, man then lives the illusion that he does indeed worship. In this way, the heart of ancient paganism lives again. Man creates gods to draw the cart of his fertility, his safety, his health, his vitality, and so on.

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508. On how this whole movement of 'eliminating' God may have failed, for an overview of what secularism is, and the world experiencing a new wave of interest in spirituality cf. Dekker and Gäbler (n.d.); Dekker, Luidens and Rice (1997); Gräb and Charbonnier (2009); Van der Walt (2007); Taylor (2007); Paas (2016); cf. also Ratcliff (2004) on Children's spirituality.

509. Verkuyl (1978:57).

In this modern paganism, in which gods of wood and stone would be considered unscientific, God's gifts are sometimes (often?) raised to the level of deities. Four of the most important 'gifts' that people idolatrously depend on are science, technology, politics and economy.[510] The introductory words in modern paganism are therefore no longer, '[o]ur help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.'[511] The cross section of society rather says, '[o]ur help comes from science, technology, politics, and economy.' During the 20th century, faith was directed, and probably will be for very long into the 21st century, at man's abilities and almost dogmatically acknowledged and confessed. In the reigning humanism, man's original sin is cultivated: man's declaration of independence and the belief in his own ability to save himself. Science, technology and today's planning techniques, have to help man to organise a secure future, and in that way accomplish the ideal of total control.[512] It is true that in the postmodern lifestyle, other and more 'spiritual' dimensions are valid. Yet, these so-called new dimensions in a certain sense do not, for a moment, call man's abilities into question. The undertone of self-sufficiency is still there, albeit in a lower key.

We are indeed called to participate in a self-reliant way in what God is doing. This is in more than one way the essence of missional thinking. The point made in this paragraph is not our self-reliant participation in what God is doing – after discerning, as a faith community, what is being done already. The point is that we have often lost our sense of deep dependence upon the Lord. We have lost the attitude of knowing 'how dependent we are upon the Lord' – a concept that is still translated by many as being 'poor in spirit'.[513] To work with all the gifts God has given us

510. Cf. Van Riessen (1973).

511. Psalms 124:8 (NIV).

512. Cf. Van Riessen (1973:26, 31); Loen (1967).

513. Cf. Matthew 5:3 (NIV).

such as science, technology, politics and economy (and so many more) is not the point. Neopaganism is when 'I' become the god and God (if he even exists) has to serve me and be at my disposal. When this happens, God becomes just another one of my many gods.[514]

Other popular gods are what Verkuyl[515] called vitalism, pansexualism, and that old idol, 'nation'. The point is, so people think, because of the idea that God does not really contribute to this life and its realities, he is ignored, denied, and even rejected. His place is taken by as many gods as man may deem necessary for a blissful life, as if man is never going to die.

■ 'The fall of public man'

The private and public spheres of people's lives are strikingly separated in the reigning adult culture.[516] Bell[517] argues that people in this century actually live in three spheres: the technological and economical system, the system that can broadly speaking be called politics (government), and thirdly, the sphere of what he calls 'culture'.

By culture he means all of those dimensions of our lives where we have discretionary time and where we can use the money we have left over from the struggle for economic survival and well-being.[518]

The spheres of religion and the church are also contained in this sphere. Religion, like the symphony, is something one

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514. Cf. Nel (2005a), my book on *Godsbegrip en gebed* [God concept and prayer].

515. Verkuyl (1978:57).

516. Cf. Sennett (1977).

517. Bell (1978).

518. Cf. Fowler (1991:153).

participates in if one has a 'taste' for such things. Culture – including religious participation – becomes more and more a matter of voluntary and privatised meanings and relations in which we associate with persons very much like ourselves.

This sphere has almost no impact on the other two more public spheres of life. It is rightly called the disengagement of spheres in our lives. Many people live in compartments, and it is especially striking that the compartment of the organised church has little or no effect on any other sphere. Osmer refers to this same phenomenon in our modern-day societies (and how it impacts on adolescents): 'Work, religion, family, recreation, and shopping are all carried out in contexts that are relatively independent of one another in daily life.'[519]

Materialism

Among other things, materialism is defined as the idea that the only or highest values and goals lie in material prosperity.[520] Parents and children who believe this think that 'things' are the causes of happiness, money buys these things. Therefore, money buys things that bring happiness, and to have money and things is to be successful.[521] Almost all advertisements use this principal and shape, and confirm and preserve this notion. 'To possess', to have, becomes the driving force behind one's choice of calling and labour. The idea is like a cultural whirlwind. Resistance is almost impossible. Not to have, to be poor and without qualifications, is on the same level as failure. The urge to possess is so dominant that thousands of people live above their 'having', above their means. To have more is more important than what

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519. Cf. Osmer (1996:14); for his discussion of individuation during adolescence (pp. 3–26); cf. also Nel (2003) on the same subject.

520. Cf. Fowler and Fowler (1964:750–751).

521. Cf. Mueller (1994:235ff.).

you already have. This idea drives economic systems and compels economic manoeuvres.[522]

Another aspect of this almost undefined materialistic idea is that the self-centeredness of man is declared sacrosanct. If this is how everyone thinks, if this is what success in certain companies means, what could be wrong with self-centeredness? And on this, the culture of 'I shall never have enough' is built. It is this culture, among other things, that drives parents to give their children materially only the best. To do this, both parents work and the pattern for life is established, this is what a successful household looks like. When we adopt this attitude, we cannot even see that materialism is the prime mover in our society. Even in the congregation, it is accepted as a fact that successful Christian households look and live in this way. Within the Reformed tradition, it is even theologically rationalised with the biblical 'work as if for the Lord'[523] principle. The question is whether it is not this very principle, and others, that in the end becomes 'success theology'? That the way of Jesus may look different is often, under the influence of materialism, not even considered. Mueller[524] quotes an article from *Psychology Today* in which research in the USA, on 20-year olds is summarised: Their first priority is themselves. They avoid the so-called 'love-vocations' and choose careers that offer more opportunities for personal development and promotion. They are materialistic. 'They want money, power, and status'. The article shows that 40% of these 20-year-olds come from broken homes, both their parents earn a living, and their (the parents') status in society is expressed by this fact.

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522. Capitalism, as such, is not discussed in this book. For more cf. Lanz (2008) and Sassen (2014).

523. Cf. Colossians 3:23: 'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.'

524. Mueller (1994:247).

This paragraph is not about investigating and judging materialism as such. The purpose is to underline it as a dominant attitude inside and outside the church. To deny one's own materialism is to bury one's head in the sand. It is like having a disease, many struggle against the symptoms, but still cannot escape the virus. Materialism is nothing other than greediness, the only part of the 'old man' which the Bible calls idolatry.[525] Scripture means that the covetous man expects his help from 'money'. God's gift itself becomes a god. Money becomes the 'seductive mistress'.[526]

When the above, with all its possible variations and nuances, becomes the reigning attitude of the parents, the children are influenced. The narcissistic materialism of the youth cannot be blamed on them, at least not in the first place. They can almost not live otherwise than from the desire for more. They often see their parents overworked in order to have and give more. They grow up with the idea that this is the way it should be. Mueller[527] is correct when he says that this only goes to prove a biblical truth that has been confirmed by research, observation and experience throughout the ages: 'Kids become like their parents. They learn what they have seen lived out in the home.'

Dean[528] discusses this in a very insightful way. She wrote:

> Passion is a symptom of adolescence, but it is also a symptom of being human. Young people have always served as barometers of the human condition, indicators of rising and falling pressures on the human psyche.[529]

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525. Cf. Ephesians 3:5; Colossians 3:5.

526. Campolo (1989:179).

527. Mueller (1994:247).

528. Dean (2004:10–11).

529. Dean (2004:10).

She quotes Michael Warren[530] as having said: '[T]here are no so-called "youth problems" that are not, in fact, *human* problems found among all age groups, "now come to roost among the young".' She[531] continues:

> Because adolescence itself is a modern invention that weds social location with psychological development, young people inevitably 'act out' – acutely – what is required for being human in their particular moment in history. As a result, the signature assumptions of global culture – radical pluralism, a heightened awareness of risk, and a view of life as a journey in which the self is continuously 'under construction' – are writ large across the experience of contemporary youth [...] Adolescence is not the 'disease'[532] [*referring to a Rolling Stone headline in 1993*]. Rather, young people reveal society's fault lines, including violence, despair, technological dependence, and poverty, precisely because they are so sensitive to the tremors of culture [...] Like metal filings in the presence of a magnet, youth orient themselves toward a culture's peculiar seductions, and align their desires with the most powerful force that seems to desire them. This alignment is in the service of identity formation as adolescents try to measure their inner sense of self against various external standards searching for fit.[533]

■ Discernible youth subculture

In making my decision to discuss adolescence, I took a lead from Osmer[534] when he discerns 'adolescence as a social category' as well as a psychological one. In the chapter on pedagogical departure points I will come back to it as for the importance of developmental theory in education. The phenomenon 'adolescence'

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530. Dean (2004), from an address given at the Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC, 09 March 1990 on 'Youth and the evangelization of American culture'.

531. Dean (2004:10–11).

532. Dean does not refer to this but cf. also Narramore (1980).

533. Dean does not refer to this, but Osmer (1996:3), with reference to Erikson ([1963] 1965:13), also relates adolescence and social history.

534. Osmer (1996:3–26).

brought with it a discernible (growing) youth culture. As this is part of something bigger, it is termed a subculture.

At the end of the century in which the time span of, and the term 'adolescence' were created, coined and established,[535] it was no longer doubted whether or not there really exists such a phenomenon as a youth subculture. The question was, and still is, how it is to be defined and described, and whether one should rather speak of more than one subculture.[536] As yet these and similar questions have not been fully answered, we still grapple with these questions. Not because youth as a subculture is vague, but because of its many faces, and because of its rapid and constant changes. It differs from place to place – from a residential area in which violence and gang power rule to a wealthy and economically more stable suburb, from a subculture of criminality to youth groups in a strongly religious community. Cultures in the sense of distinctive ways of thinking and doing, distinctive creations, language and symbols among the youth, can in a sense only be described retrospectively. Because the term 'culture' usually refers to a blueprint for the behaviour, norms and values in a given society; subculture often refers to the same kind of phenomenon, but then in a smaller group within society.[537] It seldom happens that certain trends last long enough to manifest themselves clearly and recognisably in subcultures. As so often happens in Youth Ministry, it is like working next to a conveyor belt in a great factory in which new lives pass on to become an 'end-product'. In addition, there are often not one but dozens of belts, emerging from a reaction to certain cultures in which the generation in question has been born.[538]

535. Note my reference to new research in this regard later in this chapter.

536. Cf. for instance Roehlkepartian (1989:52–80) in a chapter 'The many faces of urban teenagers'.

537. Cf. Davies (1991:9).

538. Cf. the chapter by DeVries (2008:74–89) on 'Changing culture: The work of the environmental architect'.

Any attempt to describe youth subculture in some detail, is merely a present-day sketch, codetermined by the time and culture of the researcher. The value of these attempts is that it shows certain trends that have value for Youth Ministry and this in itself makes such attempts necessary. The fact that youth subculture can almost never be described exactly and is in part out-of-date by the time the study has been completed, does not make the description irrelevant.

In Youth Ministry, it is one of the central concerns to understand and know the youth and their 'reigning' culture well. A particularly valuable and valid description is that by Campolo,[539] almost 30 years ago when, already at the time he described two main subcultures. One focuses on the here and now and often finds a religious link with the Pentecostal and charismatic section of Christianity. A second, visible subculture is one that is focussed more on the future. Here the children have a clear picture of what they desire for themselves in the future. They are also purposefully moving towards their goal. It influences the way in which they order their present world – for instance they take their studies seriously. They are convinced that all the energy they now expend will one day produce great rewards. Those that are at home within this subculture also often find themselves at home in the Calvinistic tradition. Both subcultures need to be challenged. Their idea of God is especially crucial. Campolo[540] rightly thinks that the cultural lenses of both obscures their understanding of God as sovereign. This God calls people within every culture to become what he has meant them to be, rather than to try and make himself or herself fit into the niche of their own cultural creations. However, when these youth subcultures are weighed there is little doubt that the influence on the youth in the church is momentous. In a comprehensive empirical study, Francis[541]

539. Campolo (1989:35–49).

540. Campolo (1989:46–49).

541. Francis (1984).

showed how teenagers are influenced by the reigning culture and what its effect on involvement in church life is. Under the heading 'self-concept' Francis[542] shared the findings of his investigation which shows that the type of reactions adults show towards youth groups can estrange or propitiate them. The same cultural trend can exclude or include individuals and it can render young people intensely lonely.[543]

▌ Adolescence and youth subculture

As already referred to above, one of the most important developments towards a distinctive and definable youth subculture was the emergence of adolescence. Osmer[544] states:

> Adolescence represents a special kind of social role in contemporary society. Although given shape in specific contexts – for example, the youth group, the high school and university, the mall, and the rock concert – the role stretches beyond any of these contexts and embraces young people in their totality [...] In modern society, adolescence has come to occupy this kind of general social role, representing a special time of transition from childhood to adulthood.

In a sense a new code of conduct develops, one that is determined by adolescence and adolescents. Below these trends will be touched on.

Koteskey[545] refers to adolescence as a 'cultural invention'. Root[546] in referring to Kett[547] even calls it 'an invention

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542. Francis (1984:118–121).

543. Cf. Strommen (1974); Nembach (1987).

544. Osmer (1996:10–11).

545. Koteskey (1991:42); cf. also Root (2007:25) states that: '[T]he developmental "stage" of adolescence only burst on the scene of the American consciousness in 1904 with the publication of Stanley Hall's *Adolescence*.'

546. Root (2007:27, note 1).

547. Kett (1977:36).

of modernity'. Root continues by saying that 'in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the transition from childhood to adulthood was most often based not on age but on size.' Up until the end of the 19th century a person between the ages of 12 and 14 was already regarded as an adult in many cultures and specifically so in the Jewish culture. Boys at age 13 (plus one day) and girls at 12 (plus one day) observed the rite of bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah respectively. On that day, the father prayed the blessing: 'Blessed is He who now frees me from responsibility for the one here.'[548] From that day forward you were of marriageable age and, in many ways, also responsible for yourself. With regard to marriage itself, several parts of the Talmud encouraged marriage at the age of 13.[549] Perhaps this is the basic reason why parents had chosen spouses for their children. Early marriage is found in many (most?) cultures during the 17th century, and even deep into the 19th. In some cultures, this is practised even in modern times.

This notion that adolescence is a late social and cultural invention is widely accepted. Kirgiss[550] in her research on the history of the concept challenges this in more than one way. She[551] wrote:

> There is general agreement among sociologists and developmental psychologists that adolescence is new and that before the late nineteenth century there was not a recognized stage of life that came between childhood and adulthood. No in-between. No coming-of-age as a process […] Childhood. Adult roles. Puberty. Adulthood. Declaration of Independence. It's all so very neat and tidy – but not true.

Because of the importance of this historical challenge I need to share more of what she did and intended to do. Her research is

548. Koteskey (1991:43).

549. Cf. Koteskey (1991:44).

550. Kirgiss (2015).

551. Kirgiss (2015:21).

welcomed and endorsed (in the first pages of the book) by well-known scholars like DeVries, Dean, Clark and Mueller.[552] It is worth quoting a few lines from some of them:

> [*Mark DeVries*] 'Crystal Kirgiss unmasks the simplistic assumptions we've held for so long about the nature and importance of adolescence [...] blows away falsehood after falsehood with perfectly aimed research.'

> [*Dean*] 'If we'd done our homework more carefully, maybe we wouldn't have swallowed the 'adolescent-as-recent-social-construct' thesis so readily.'

> [*Mueller*] 'I owe a big thanks to Crystal Kirgiss for adding some significant research and ideas to my ongoing quest as a parent, youth worker, and youth culture analyst.'

Kirgiss[553] states that her use of the concept adolescence as meaning *'the stage of life that includes the latter part of middle school, all of high school, and an unspecified amount of college [emphasis in original]*.' This, after having said that:[554]

> If someone says 'adolescence is new' and means by that '*the practice of sequestering American teenagers in high school for four years* is new', then that person is correct. But if someone says 'adolescence is new' and by that means '*the stage of life following childhood when a person has developed sexually but is neither viewed nor functions as a full adult in society* is new', then that person is wrong. [*emphasis in original*]

According to herself, the book is *'a sliver of historical evidence that places us on a very long continuum of adults with distinct views and opinions about adolescence'* [*emphasis in original*]. She then traces back the use of the concept in history for the person and the phenomenon, choosing to use the word

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552. Kirgiss (2015:1).

553. Kirgiss (2015:36).

554. Kirgiss (2015:36).

adolescence when referring to both.[555] As to the medical history she refers to 'numerous medical treatises from 1250 to 1500'[556] that were concerned with childhood, puberty and adolescence. 'The end of adolescence, at whatever age it may occur, was the start of complete independence and full adulthood.'[557] She followed her chapter with on how 'thinkers' saw *adolescence* with a chapter on how 'creators' (like artists) and a chapter on how 'preachers' viewed *adolescence.*

In the last chapter of her book (and hopefully not her research) she wrote:[558]

> Thinkers, Creators, and Preachers throughout recorded history have said many things about *adolescence*. So have lots of other people not discussed in this book, including policy-makers, parents, and educators. Most of what this book has examined are verbal and visual representations and descriptions of *adolescence,* which are not necessarily an accurate reflection of actual adolescent experiences. Still we have to start somewhere, and those representations and descriptions do provide concrete information about (no surprise here) how (some) Thinkers, Creators, and Preachers presented and described *adolescence* throughout the centuries.

Her reason for why this knowledge is important to us is a core issue:

> [*W*]e risk becoming less and less aware of and connected to a real (versus an imagined) past. We risk becoming not just people who forget, but people who never knew in the first place.[559]

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555. I would have preferred a more academic approach that is well accepted in historical research. She wrote the book for youth workers and the informal approach is therefore understandable. The book left me with some uneasiness as to references to historical sources – even though I acknowledge that she 'proved' the sources are there. It is a matter of 'taste' of the presentation of historical facts.

556. Kirgiss (2015:48).

557. Kirgiss (2015:49).

558. Kirgiss (2015:113).

559. Kirgiss (2015:115).

In a postmodern world where, according to my observation, one finds an obvious lack of a historical consciousness, this is important not only for her research as such, but for Youth Ministry as a whole.

In my view Kirgiss adds value to our discussion of adolescence. In her own words:

Adolescence has been a recognized stage of life – biologically, socially, culturally, and relationally – for a very, very long time. I would argue that in its essence, it is a natural stage of life, one that is specifically and intentionally created by God.[560]

She continues by quoting Eugene Peterson,[561] as an ending to her book, in his reference to the beauty of each stage of life as a gift of God:

And then God's gift: In the rather awkward packaging of the adolescent God brings into our lives a challenge to grow, testing our love, chastening our hope, pushing our faith to the edge of the abyss. *It comes at just the right time.* [*emphasis in original*]

To my mind, it does not take away from what we know of this lifespan and how it was and is described by many as a century-old phenomenon. She helps us understand that the concept is older, much older. It takes nothing away from what we already know about adolescence as the new kid on the block some 100+ years ago – as an almost socio-economic-cultural phenomenon. I can agree with Clark[562] in his endorsement in and of the book, *In search of adolescence*[563] provides solid research and reflective insight into how this season of life change has always been a contextual struggle – not only for the adolescents themselves but for parents, communities, and the church – and what it means to encourage and care for those moving through this historically 'normal' stage of life.

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560. Kirgiss (2015:132).

561. Peterson (1976:3–4).

562. In Kirgiss (2015:1).

563. Kirgiss (2015).

I find myself agreeing with a remark in a footnote in a chapter in a recent publication edited by Clark.[564] The authors also note this research and adds:

> There is new evidence that this long-held theory regarding adolescence as an 'invention of modernity' may not be completely accurate [...] While this data is too new and, by the author's admission, understudied at this point it is important to note.

The concept adolescence is derived from the Latin verb *adolescere* which refers to the 'one that grows'. Today the term adolescence refers to the time between puberty and adulthood.

Up until the 1800s, children became 'adults'[565] at ages 12 to 14. There was no 'in-between' time as we know it today, this has changed. People are no longer regarded as adult at ages 12 to 14. In the process the word puberty, which means maturity, has had a change of meaning. Puberty was merely the beginning of maturity, and not the beginning of adolescence. Adolescence has become the new time between biological maturity and social-economic maturity. Although a puber is biologically mature, and can procreate, it does not mean that he or she is treated as an adult. In the meantime, it has been determined that the time of puberty in Western societies comes even four-and-a-half years earlier since the end of the 17th century, when research in this regard was first begun.[566]

Adolescence as a phenomenon has largely been created, and dictated to, by the labour market. As long as children could work, first in the rural areas with their parents and later in the industrial cities, they were part of the adult community from an early age.

564. Clark (2015a:358); cf. Doong and Jin (2016). The full quote includes this sentence: 'Scholar Crystal Kirgiss (Purdue University), in an unpublished but well-researched PhD dissertation, contends that adolescence was present throughout the Middle Ages and for centuries afterward, especially in the West (pp. 165–179, 358, note 1).'

565. Even if it was not 'complete independence and full adulthood' – as we have learned from Kirgiss (2015:49).

566. Cf. Koteskey (1991:43).

When work became scarce they got in the way of the older people who were competing for a place in the market.[567] Koteskey[568] is probably correct when he remarks that although the argument usually had a humanitarian notion, the motive to keep children out of the labour market, was often due to economic and selfish reasons. This was accompanied by the insistence that they should get a good education 'in the meantime', in order to prepare them for the adult world of work, their own money, marriage, and all that adults viewed as symbols of maturity.

Osmer[569] refers to the same reality when he states that the emergence of adolescence as a distinct stage in the life cycle is a relatively recent phenomenon. In large measure, it has taken place during the 20th century and it is the by-product of social change related to advanced industrialisation. Two factors in particular can be seen as contributing to its emergence: industrial mechanisation and prolonged education.

Part of youth subculture then is the existence of an adolescent subculture. Every person between 12 and 14 is expected to wait at least until the ages 21 to 24 (and later) before being allowed to enter adult society and sharing in the symbols that adult society attaches to maturity. The in-between-time, as one could call it – a time in which the adult society has determined the terms for maturity and provides an education at school where adolescence is being enforced by law. With a body that is ready for the one and most important 'symbol' of maturity, namely procreation (participation in the survival of humanity), the adolescent must wait for authorisation by those that have already done their waiting.

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567. Cf. Bakan (1971).

568. Koteskey (1991:48); cf. also Clark (2001:41–62).

569. Osmer (1996:6); cf. also his reference to the two-volume work by Stanley Hall (1908) which 'was the most popular and influential (book) of many written-on adolescence' (1996:7).

This time of waiting is filled with the frustration of emotions of 'I can't wait any longer'. As if this is not enough, the 'growing person' grows in an almost artificial emotional and social vacuum, where, for the greatest part of history, he had been accepted as part of adult society, he does not belong there anymore.[570] Those that break out or away and marry at 14, are sometimes rejected by society in a most cruel manner. The corporate sphere that should have been a safe space in which to change becomes an inhospitable counter group. People and structures that were supposed to support and motivate change become a hostile opponent in the process of change. One still changes, but no longer 'because of'. The changes that take place now are rather 'in spite of' and often 'to spite'. It is almost changing 'against' the adult community and no longer in fellowship with them. In this subculture people that were supposed to be co-workers become 'opponents'. The adolescent often experiences mature society as being antagonistic. It is as if the latter were saying: Keep out of our sphere as long as possible. Do your master's degree, 'steal' so-called privileges in the meantime, travel overseas, but your place among us is not ready as yet. We are extending your time in the 'waiting room' of so-called adult life.

I want to 'interrupt' this discussion here with an important piece of research about this by Clark.[571] In a chapter on 'the world beneath' he focuses – building on earlier remarks – on how deeply adults may have failed adolescents – in specific, mid-adolescents:

> The world beneath is a broader concept than the notion of a youth culture or a generation gap. This world has been evolving over several decades, but within the last several years, it has shifted from a rather innocuous and at times innocent withdrawal to a unique and defended social system […] the world beneath today's adolescent

570. Cf. again the quote from Smith and Denton (2005:182–186) referring to 'the profound change from a society where young people were' closely involved in the productive activities of and supervised by the watchful eyes of adults 'to one where a structural disconnection is present between adults and teenagers'.

571. Clark (2011:43–56).

landscape is much more like an underground society: sophisticated, pervasive, and not meant to be seen. It is not unlike the social system of any culturally oppressed subgroup: while its members know, they must live in the majority world, they also have a distinctively different world that is reserved just for them, where 'few' outsiders are welcome. It has its own rules of relating, moral code, and defensive strategies that are well known to midadolescents and are tightly held secrets of their community […] The contributing factors are varied and complex, but the foundational reason behind the separation between the adult world and the world of adolescents is that society has abdicated its responsibility to nurture the young into adulthood […] Three major issues are related to the world beneath. First, adolescents intuitively believe they have no choice but to create their own world, to survive, they have to band together and burrow beneath the surface to create a safe place. Second, because midadolescents sense an emotional and relational starvation, the most important thing in their lives is a relationally focused home where they know they are welcome. Third, midadolescents have an amazing ability to band together in a way that satisfies their longing to connect with others as they try to navigate the challenging and at times harrowing journey of adolescence.[572]

As Robert Putman[573] put it in *Bowling alone*:

The absence of positive norms, community associations, and informal adult friendship and kin networks leaves kids to their own devices. It is in such settings that youth are most likely to act on shortsighted or self-destructive impulses. It is in such settings too that youth are most prone to create their own social capital in the form of gangs or neighborhood 'crews' […] In tunneling beneath the observable adult landscape and creating the world beneath, the primary preoccupation of midadolescents is to find a place of relational safety […] But I cannot affirm that 'the picture of adolescence today is largely a very positive one'. I instead prefer the image of the vaudevillian plate spinner who is skilled at getting several plates to spin at once and even making it look easy at times […] There are many good things going on in the world beneath, but the plates are spinning at an alarming speed, and the energy it takes to keep them on their poles is taking its toll on the hearts and psyches of midadolescents […] The

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572. Clark (2011:43).

573. Putman (2000:312).

most visible mark of the world beneath is the callousness that most adolescents wear like a defiant badge of honor when adults try to penetrate their world. Adults often mistake this air of callousness for a genuine hardness and indifference, thus increasing the distance between them. […] Adults are, frankly, afraid of most adolescents and therefore too intimidated to see how deep the layers of hardness go. This is most often misinterpreted by adolescents as a lack of care and concern for them, and thus the cycle continues.

In many communities, this subculture often becomes an anticulture. Yet it is not antimaturity. One should rather see it as a pirate culture. Adolescents cross the border and take what is supposed to belong to the so-called adult culture. One can also see it as a raid on adulthood. The symbols are looted and shared. The life of matrimony (reserved for 'adults') is plundered, after-school work (as in a restaurant) is at least a foretaste of earning one's own money and this piece of independence (yet another 'adult' symbol), is taken as loot. Other symbols are complacently granted by adults; they 'provide' them across the frontier – a car, and lots of pocket money. Adults make the in-between waiting period bearable in a variety of ways, at least so parents and other adults think. Usually it does not prevent the anti-character of this subculture – as if they are saying, according to your rules we are not allowed this or that therefore, in the meantime, we do it like this: our language, our values, our fashions, our terms, our religion.

Dean[574] also pointed this out. She refers to the concept 'moratorium' as coined by Erikson[575] as a:

[S]ocially-sanctioned 'time-out' from adult roles and commitments in which young people could construct an integrated self that both responded to their historical context and cohered across time and social roles.[576]

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574. Dean (2004:12–13).

575. Erikson (1964:92–96).

576. Dean (2004:12).

This has become very troublesome, if not impossible.[577] The choices are just overwhelming. The well-known institutions like school, family, and religious communities grew weaker and the 'new institution, the electronic media (embryonic in Erikson's time but monstrous in ours) started to make fragmentation look normal.'[578] She then continues and makes the same point I made in 1998 already: 'The line demarcating adolescence from adulthood faded; the adolescents played adult roles prematurely, and adults played adolescent roles immaturely.'[579] She later refers to this as 'the Atomized Self: Falling apart at the Seams and the 'plural self'.[580] Dean's[581] point is important here. The developmental task of finding identity has always been challenging.

> What *is* new for postmodern youth is the growing assumption that this fluctuating self is normative; maturity is no longer necessarily a goal of adolescence. In consumer culture, purchasing power – not an integrated identity – is the ticket to full franchise.[582]

Before moving on to a next few traits of adolescent culture it may be worth at this point to refer, one more time, to another important contribution by Clark[583] concerning mid-adolescence.

> A shift began as early as 1980 with the emergence of an entirely new stage in the adolescence process. Early adolescents were still defined as junior-high-aged students, but several studies included children as young as ten years old, considering them adolescents. Late adolescents were still studied, but many of these studies

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577. Cf. Cannister (2013:59) and his paragraph on what he calls '*The mess of moratorium*', after stating that 'moratorium matters' (p. 51ff.).

578. Dean (2004:12–13).

579. Dean (2004:12–13).

580. Dean (2004:60, 85–87) respectively.

581. Dean (2004:61).

582. She then refers to research stating that in 1998 already 31 million teenagers spent 141 billion dollars in the USA. I am not sure that any such figures are available for South Africa; cf. Turpin (2006) with a subtitle: 'Adolescents converting from consumer culture'.

583. Clark (2011:17–20).

focused on college-aged students or even graduate students and young adults. The newly appointed stage known as *midadolescence* emerged as a distinct phase in the 1990s, but little work has been done to define precisely the differences among these stages[584]

Clark then continues in pointing out why this is such a crucial new area of study:

- 'First, most of the newfound freedoms that accompany midadolescence were originally designed for late adolescence.' With reference to the fact that late adolescents were better equipped to handle the consequences of these freedoms, he continues: 'a mid-adolescent, in contrast to a late adolescent, retains the residue of self-centred childhood and may not have the developmental acumen to make the kind of choices that makes driving, to use that one example, safe.
- Second, because today adolescence lasts up to 15 years, a mid-adolescent has a more difficult time than did previous high-school-aged students seeing college and career as the hope of a secure and fulfilling future.
- Third, it has generally been assumed that high-school-aged students have the capacity for abstract thinking. What I noticed during this study, however, is that mid-adolescents's ability to engage in abstract thought is limited to the immediate context of discussion. I observed a nearly universal inability to integrate the multiple selves of their lives with any sense of abstract cohesion. Mid-adolescents miss the ability to integrate and make connections.'

Traits within adolescent culture

Many books have been written about adolescents. When I recently searched the Library Catalogue at Princeton Theological Seminary under the keyword 'adolescence' a total of 432 books were found, and since 2006 some 100 of them were published. My intention and ability are not to give in any way an overview of even some 10 of these good books and research. What I am trying to do is to

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584. He refers to an e-letter from the American Counseling Association on ages 15–18.

supply some insight into the phenomenon of traits and characteristics concerning adolescents and their culture.

Many years ago, the well-known Sarah Little[585] summed up the heart of adolescents in four statements, which I still find to be a piece of wise insight:

*   'I want to be me;
*   I want to make a difference;
*   I want to be a part;
*   I want to love and be loved.'

Since the Eighties and early Nineties, a number of people wrote on this subject. To refer to but a few:

*   Pipe[586] wrote from the perspective of parents.
*   While Olson[587] studied the types of personality found in adolescence.
*   Others like Elkind and Campolo[588] approach adolescence especially from a sociological perspective.
*   Benson, Williams and Johnson[589] look at it more from an emotional and psychological viewpoint.
*   Shelton[590] named his own approach in the subtitle to his book 'a pastoral psychology approach'. In an earlier book[591] he also wrote from the perspective of 'spirituality'.
*   Dykstra[592] has a pastoral and psychological approach, yet he also takes Fowler's[593] theory of faith development into account.

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585. Little (1968:43–47).

586. Pipe (1985).

587. Olson (1987).

588. Elkind (1984); Campolo (1989).

589. Benson, Williams and Johnson (1987).

590. Shelton (1989).

591. Shelton (1983); cf. also new research and a publication with more than 30 contributing authors: Roehlkepartian et al. (2006).

592. Dykstra (1990).

593. Fowler (1981).

- Nipkow's[594] theories link up with those of Fowler and are made pedagogically viable.[595]
- Narramore's[596] description picks up on many of the characteristics, also the physical ones.
- Benson and others.[597]

One thing remains certain, namely that adolescence is 'a distinct stage in the life-cycle'.[598] Characteristics of this stage in the life cycle are at least the following:

☐ Emerging individuation

In her chapter on 'Overlapping spheres in adolescent development' Jacober[599] used the following as a subheading: 'Healthy individuation'. Within their world adolescents are trying to find an integrated self. A self that has been negotiated in interaction with 'the other' and the world that 'self' is becoming. It is exactly this 'becoming' into your own, knowing who you are, to whom you relate, and what your beliefs are that was somewhat easier in earlier more simplistic, pre-industrialised societies. The 'moratorium' Erikson spoke about even meant some:

> [S]ocially-sanctioned 'time-out' from adult roles and commitments in which young people could construct an integrated self that both responded to their historical context and cohered across time and social roles.[600]

594. Nipkow (1990a; 1990b; 1992).

595. Cf. Osmer (1990) and his linking up with Fowler.

596. Narramore (1980).

597. Benson, Roehlkepartian and Hong (2008). They edited a book on *Spiritual Development* in a series on 'New Directions for Youth Development'.

598. Osmer (1996:6).

599. Jacober (2011:49–73).

600. Dean (2004:12); Erikson (1964:92–96).

In a chapter worth reading on 'When teenagers matter: Transformation happens' Cannister[601] wrote a paragraph on 'moratorium matters'. He works with 'four categories of identity status' as discerned by James Marcia.[602] The four are: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and achievement. I am not describing these in detail here. In short, they are:

- *Diffusion* is the status where people 'have not made any commitments regarding their identity or their faith'.
- *Foreclosure* is the status where people 'conform to the expectations of others (such as parents, teachers, coaches, and pastors) without exploring a range of possibilities concerning identity, faith, values, and character'.
- *Moratorium* is a time of 'active reflection on the beliefs and values as a person decides whether or not they actually believe what they uncritically accepted during *foreclosure'*.
- *Achievement* is a status when: '[P]eople have gone through an identity exploration process in *moratorium,* questioning, searching, and evaluating their options. As a result, they have made a commitment to an identity, faith, values, ad character [...] Identity *achievement* should not be thought of as a final destination.'[603]

Cannister makes these points to argue that when teenagers are important, culture should allow 'adolescents space to wrestle with their faith in the midst of a caring community of believers.'[604] Later in the same chapter he has a paragraph on 'creating space for *moratorium'*.[605] In a good book on 'making sense of generation Y', Savage and others[606] make the same observation in the

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601. Cannister (2013:33–71). Paragraph on (2013:51ff.).

602. Cf. Marcia et al. (1993).

603. Cannister (2013:53–54).

604. Cannister (2013:52–53).

605. Cannister (2013:61ff.).

606. Savage et al. (2006:121–135).

chapter on the 'Implications of the worldview of generation Y for Christian-based youth work'.

During this space in the time of their development is troublesome and many adolescents stumble on the way. The culture within which they need to fulfil this developmental task, this natural drive and desire, has become complex and confusing.

Jacober[607] picks up on earlier research on how complex this process is. She refers to Carl Jung[608] who 'offered the first understanding of this concept [individuation] when referring to the task of those around age 30 as "becoming one's own person", "coming to selfhood" or "self-realization".' She continues with the line of thought that, as from the days in the womb, the child through all developmental phases is torn between wanting to be close and yet to have to be born. The second separation-individuation phase is adolescence. Blos[609] viewed 'adolescence in its totality as the second individuation process.' Loder[610] also refers to this. To put his contribution in the words of Jacober:[611] 'Adolescence is a renegotiating of space.' Loder compares it to an infant who, growing too large for the womb, must move into the world. So too the adolescent grows too large for the confines of the structured life under their primary caregivers. Loder offers four themes which become a part of the core struggle for the adolescent:

> (1) [*T*]he inevitability of order, (2) the eventual emergence of disorder, (3) the possibility of new order and (4) the relationality that underlies all forms of order and their explanations.[612]

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607. Jacober (2011:53–55).

608. Cf. Jung (1971:121–122).

609. Blos (1979:142); Jacober (2011:53 note 13).

610. Loder (1998:203). Jacober also refers to Loder's (1989) important book '*The transforming moment*'.

611. Jacober (2011:69).

612. Loder (1998:203).

Jacober continues by pointing to the endless choices adolescents have, negotiation difficulties and how disappointments in this process lead to what Erikson would call 'role-confusion'.

Taking the research by Osmer and myself[613] on individuation into account again, one may probably say that this process is part of adolescence and that it is challenged by the youth subculture and by adult society. Individuation and identity-finding is characteristic of adolescents. It has, however, become troublesome, to say the least.

☐ Confusion: The plural self

I cannot imagine anyone not agreeing to the fact that growing up in this era is not easy. Becoming a non-integrated self, in more than one way looks easier than developing an integrated self. This does not mean that there is a 'finished' self, one that one can put on the shelf of life as a showcase. Dean[614] in her paragraph on the 'plural self' refers to the fact that even Erikson in his research already admitted that: 'Identity is never "established" as an "achievement" in the form of a personality armor, or of anything static and unchangeable.'[615]

Dean [616] is, to my mind, correct in stating that there is common agreement that no single identity describes us and:

> [T]hat who we are varies according to our shifting contexts and that the need to 'keep up' with the complexity of postmodern culture requires different identities at different points throughout the life cycle. Unlike its adolescent cousin, the 'patchwork self' – a makeshift identity held together on the outside by psychological duct tape rather than by internal integration – the plural self is the result of chameleon adaptations to the multiple roles demanded

613. Osmer (1996:9–26); Nel (2003).

614. Dean (2004:85),

615. Erikson ([1968] 1994:24). Quoted in Dean (2004:85 note 34).

616. Dean (2004:85).

by postmodern culture. The plural self seeks infinite flexibility, not integration, and thereby sacrifices 'integrity' for a widened repertoire of potential selves, and the agility to shift between them.[617]

The world in which adolescents develop is no longer coherent itself. Osmer[618] already in 1996 referred to the gradual separation of life spheres into 'relatively autonomous subsystems that play different roles in society as a whole.' He referred to the political, educational, familial, religious and other spheres of life. Life is lived within spheres and contexts that are 'relatively independent of one another in daily life.' Children and adolescents can almost but not learn how to behave in each one of these contexts. They develop a personality for the mall, the school ground, the classroom, the dinner table at home, the church group, the conformation class, and whichever other context calls for a certain behaviour. And they then often cannot 'distinguish between "selves" and "social roles".'[619]

Bonner[620] refers to this as 'multiple selves'. In a chapter titled 'Understanding the changing adolescent' he explains how the adult culture within which this dimension of youth culture is developing often plays in negative on the developing and integrated self. To quote him on this:

> When we couple the social comparison perpetuated by adults with conditionality of adult support, adolescents struggle to keep up. Adults force adolescents to adopt the new self when they communicate that their approval is conditional. Of course, this is not really support; the conditions placed on the adolescents are actually socially constructed hoops they must negotiate in order to please

617. I am tempted to go into her well thought through discussion with Schweitzer who is more positive towards the plural self and how it may open opportunities for the Christian identity. She quoted Schweitzer from a recorded lecture at the Princeton Theological Seminary, March 2000 (Dean 2004:86–87).

618. Osmer (1996:14).

619. Dean (2004:86).

620. Bonner (2016:30–32).

adults in their lives. This performance-based acceptance is particularly damaging when it comes from trusted adults: parents, grandparents, coaches, and ministers [...] Consequently, the adolescent experiences the developmental need to protect the emerging self, causing the proliferation of multiple selves.[621]

☐ A sense of homelessness

When discussing the reality of the postmodern mindset, I already referred to a remark by Mueller[622] in this regard. In his discussion of 'the unique marks of the emerging generation' he refers to broken relationships as one of these marks, saying that 'Gen-Xers inherited a relationally broken world. Much of the brokenness came from their family relationships. But the Millennial generation actually has it worse.'[623] He is probably on target, even in an international sense, in stating that 'broken relationships' are part of their jungle and that 'perhaps *alienation* is the word that best describes this sense of homelessness.'[624] Mueller's reference to a finding by Kelly[625] is critical here again since alienation is the most common and strongest thread woven through the tapestry of today's youth culture: 'The irony of the "new global youth

621. Quote from Bonner (2016:31).

622. Mueller (2006:93–96).

623. Mueller (2006:93ff.). He continues to refer to statistics of divorce and among other realities mentions that many of the Millennial children will never live in a home with both biological parents. (He quotes Wallerstein, Lewis and Blakeslee 2000:xxvi, 160, 162, 239).

624. Mueller (2006:95). The other 'Unique marks of the emerging generation' (Mueller 2006) are: 'Without a moral compass; culturally diverse; pluralistic and tolerant; media saturated; experience and feeling-driven; suspicious of truth; overwhelming options; globalized youth culture; pervaded by violence; pushed, hurried and frazzled; materialistic; concerned with appearance; despairing and hopeless; deeply spiritual; crying out for redemption' (pp. 89–108); cf. also the global research project and the publication on its findings, Osmer and Dean (2006).

625. Kelly (1999:151), quoted by Mueller (2006:93).

club" is that the one thing young people most share the world over is this sense of lostness.'[626]

Many others point to the same reality. Clark[627] stated in his well-researched and documented study:

> As a result of this study, I became aware that the adolescent world is not as saturated with sex as it is infused with palpable loneliness [...] it is a temporary salve for the pain and loneliness resulting from abandonment.

I have already referred to his finding[628] that:

> [*T*]he erosion of the family as the central, stable, institution designed for and dedicated to the protection and nurturance of the young revealed significant (if not devastating) consequences for the psyches, relationships, worldviews, and overall lives of midadolescents.

Their way of being and doing may even be a way of survival, as this finding by Clark points to:

> Middle adolescents band together to create their own world where they hold the keys to dealing with their perception of abandonment and their need for relational stability, protection, social guidance, and belonging.[629]

As Hersch[630] describes middle adolescents:

> Their dependence on each other fulfills the universal human longing for community, and inadvertently cements the notion of a tribe apart. More than a group of peers, it becomes in isolation a society with its own values, ethics, rules, worldview, rites of passage, worries, joys, and momentum. It becomes teacher, advisor, entertainer, challenger, nurturer, inspirer, and sometimes destroyer.

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626. Mueller (2006:93).

627. Clark (2011:116).

628. Clark (2011:95).

629. Clark (2011:39).

630. Hersch (1998:21).

Fowler[631] referred to this as a deep longing to be initiated into the adult world: '[Y]outh are acting out their hunger for initiation and incorporation into adulthood and into meaningful group identity through a wide variety of ad hoc patterns of ritualization.'

Jacober,[632] in the same year as Clark, came to a similar conclusion: 'The identification of adolescents as feeling first lost and then the almost palpable feeling of being abandoned drives them into a frenetic push for affirmation, loyalty and solid relationships.'

This loneliness, abandonment,[633] alienation is more serious than most realise:

> When I was able to get close enough, to be trusted enough, to get a glimpse of life in this world, I did not hear a few voices crying out. I hear an overwhelming chorus of longing to be cared for and to be taken seriously. The collective adolescent society may appear impenetrable and may even be a powerful social force to be reckoned with, but beyond the perceived hostility that surrounds the midadolescent is a fragile soul hidden behind a sophisticated layer of defense and protection. Even the most 'solid' student confessed that life is far darker, far more violent, far more difficult, and far more tiring than adults, including their parents, realize.[634]

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631. Fowler (1996b:25). He does so in a chapter titled: 'Grace, repentance and commitment: Youth initiation in care and formation'.

632. Jacober (2011:88). She adds: 'This assertion is confirmed in the work of Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, who remind us of the profound change from a society where young people were' closely involved in the productive activities of and supervised by the watchful eyes of adults 'to one where a structural disconnection is present between adults and teenagers. (cf. Smith & Denton 2005:182–186).'

633. Clark (2011:23–41) devoted a whole chapter to: 'Abandonment – the defining issue for contemporary adolescents'.

634. Clark (2011:40). In a 1999 publication (Hale & Bazzana 1999:15–16) refer to the Cross as answer to 'futility' and answer to 'loneliness'.

In 1994 already DeVries[635] discussed this loneliness in a chapter he titled: 'The developmental disaster. The impact of teenage isolation'.

☐ Narcissism

As is clear from the limited description above: Adolescence is characterised by a number of things. Among others it is a time of idealism and experimentation with norms. Osmer[636] asserts that modern interpreters especially refer to it as a time of 'age-appropriate narcissism and moral relativism.' Sometimes being young is referred to as narcissism.[637] Usually the specific context gives particular substance to what is understood under adolescence. The reason why narcissism is referred to under a special heading is because of the different forms and the effects of narcissism on adolescent development. Research shows that it influences the socialisation of the youth acutely.[638] The term narcissism is indeed a loaded one. In its simplest form, it refers to self-centeredness. In a more complex sense, from a psycho-dynamic point of view, it refers to behaviour such as megalomania, self-centred involvement in objects even to the extent of dependence, the manifestation of feelings of inferiority, the need for admiration, and so on.[639]

I do not want to describe or discuss narcissism as such. Not only is it not part of my field of knowledge, but it also falls outside the scope of this book. Yet it is important to know that youth subculture cannot be understood without these insights. I have attained my goal if I have succeeded in sensitising the reader to

635. DeVries (1994:47–57).

636. Osmer (1996:9).

637. Cf. Markefta and Nave-Herz (1989); cf. also Lasch (1979).

638. Cf. Bohleber (1989:93).

639. Cf. Bohleber (1989:93).

the importance of this perspective. It is crucial to know how narcissism as a phenomenon influences the socialisation of the child and young person. What is often negatively thought of in this ministry as 'the sin of selfishness', has deeper causes and often borders on pathological phenomena. Bohleber,[640] for example, refers in this regard to the development of a new socialising type and how it is influenced by the patterns of separation between mothers and children in modern society. Especially illuminating in his theory is the development of autonomy in the child (at about 18 months) and how that can, though perhaps unconsciously, awaken the pain of separation in the mother. As a result of this the child experiences his or her desire for autonomy as dangerous. The developing child's need for self-development can be impaired in more than one way and, of course, on the other hand, be encouraged. Among other things a megalomania can develop which is in essence nothing other than an unassimilated reaction to the conflict of separation with the mother.

The child's and adolescent's phase of life is characterised by a striking involvement with the self, an involvement which is normal. This should be handled in a balanced way in their education. If this does not happen it may give rise to pathological deviations of self-love that can destroy the child. My own observation is that in an educational system where the mother narcissistically puts the child first, this unassimilated conflict of separation often turns into an authoritarian megalomania and what Bohleber[641] calls an '*omnipotente Selbstgenügsamkeit*'.[642]

What makes this view of and insight into youth culture all the more crucial, is the process of individualisation that characterises

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640. Bohleber (1989:94–101).

641. Bohleber (1989:100).

642. An almost 'godlike self-sufficiency' [author's free translation].

modern society. Although I have touched on this already above,[643] I need to come back to it one more time.

Osmer[644] is convinced that the stage of life which we call adolescence can be summed up by two basic concepts – individualisation and identity formation. The two matters are of course linked, as he acknowledges and shows. What is especially important is the fact that the critical process of socialisation is not a takeover of the self. In this process, the individual himself plays a decisive role. Firet[645] has also dealt with this matter and shows that socialisation is no 'takeover' of the self. There is no zero point in the life of a new person. The zero point of coming into life is one already loaded and full of potential.[646] Although contextual influences should be taken seriously, we should, according to Firet[647] rather talk about a process of personalisation, '"personality formation", and "humanization".'[648] This he understands as the '*Auseinanderzetzung*' between a person and the world. 'Person' he understands as a self-reliant, acting being with an own nature. Every person has an 'original system' with which he or she enters the civilised world. The developing person is constantly involved in a dialogue with his civilised world, his or her contextual influence.[649] This 'becoming human' is more or less what he understands as '*Auseindanderzetzung*' – with reference to reading and understanding texts: 'A word or a sentence acquires its meaning, colour, and value from

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643. Cf. my reference to Jacober (2011:49–73) who uses 'healthy individuation' as a heading for this stage in life.

644. Osmer (1996:9).

645. Firet (1977:181ff.; 1986:138–150).

646. Firet (1977:136–138, 145).

647. Firet (1977:171ff., 178). He refers to 'personality formation' as 'the dialectics between a person and her world' (1986:144).

648. Firet (1986:178).

649. Firet (1986:138ff.).

that context. But it also contributes meaning to the totality of that context.'[650]

Although Osmer does not overtly align himself with Firet (or refers to him), many of Firet's views are present in Osmer's theological approach. What is important are his insights into the ways in which modern society hinders individualisation by expecting more and more of individuals without supplying the necessary support during the process. Adolescence then becomes a social role of transition instead of what it originally was – a 'rite de passage'. Adolescents according to Osmer[651] should define or redefine at least three social roles:

- 'renegotiating their relationship with their family of origin, moving from a position of economic and psychological dependence to a relationship of relative independence;
- acquiring the repertoire of knowledge and skills necessary to participate in the wide range of institutional contexts characterizing modernity; and
- constructing a personal system of moral meaning in response to the challenges posed by cultural pluralism, generational discontinuity, and instrumental reason.'

Individualisation relates to all three of these fields. It is fundamentally about finding and forming one's own identity. It is about who I can and want to be in these three relational fields. What is characteristic of modern society in which this process of socialisation or personalisation runs its course? According to Osmer[652] the main characteristic is the process of 'individuation' and identity formation. He distinguishes between 'individualisation' and on the other hand, 'individualising'. The last-mentioned is what society does to people and which is not necessarily positive. He aligns himself with the German sociologist Luhmann[653] when

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650. Firet (1986:150).

651. Osmer (1996:11–19).

652. Osmer (1996:14ff.).

653. Luhnman (1982).

he shows that the choices set to the individual by society are at a maximum. Attendant to these maximum choices is the freedom to choose. Yet these choices take place in a compartmented society. Modern society has robbed society of relationships. Societal relationships operate with relatively autonomous independence and as autonomous subsystems. An ordinary person's life is therefore influenced (controlled) daily by autonomous subsystems that do not even refer to the influences of other equally prominent subsystems.

And where and how do the members of this society learn to find their way through the labyrinth of these important institutions? A great deal of this adaptation takes place during adolescence. During this time, adolescents are allowed to, or are almost overnight expected to, choose between the institutions their parents have until now chosen for them: home, school, shopping centres, theatres and church. Now socialisation takes place, they have to start choosing for themselves how much time they want to spend for each of the different spheres of life. They must learn to know the value system of each institution and the expected and accepted behaviour in that institution. They also have to learn to distance themselves from the value systems of the other institutions while and as long as they are with any given one of them. In this way, they learn to behave according to the rules of the institution at which they are at any given time, while having no or little loyalty or attachment to the rules of the other institutions within their sphere of life. After all, society itself does not relate these institutions to one another. The youth start playing roles and they do it well. At church, you behave in one way, and when you are doing sport in another and in often a completely different way, and so on. The tragic thing is that this can happen without any meaningful identification with any of these institutions. According to Osmer[654] this kind of distancing of roles is one of the 'most powerful individualizing forces in

654. Osmer (1996:15).

modern society.' In this process, the making and development of individuals becomes almost a kind of survival mechanism.[655]

When this individualising process runs its course in modern society, it aligns itself with other trends that are linked to the shaping of values in adolescence: clothing, music, religion, sexual behaviour, and so on. Often the result is what is called 'utilitarian individualism'.[656] This type of individualism (also called 'expressive individualism') fits the consumer patterns of advanced capitalism like a glove. Turpin[657] dedicated a whole volume in the series 'Youth Ministry Alternatives' to 'Adolescents and the consumer culture' and how to nurture youth to 'convert from consumer faith'.

In the process of becoming in this century, materialism, consumerism and narcissism so often go together. What is useful and available 'to me' becomes the norm and way of life. It is not difficult to see how narcissism as a system of self-love finds an outlet here. Instead of personalisation or personality formation where healthy self-love can find a place in the (my) inhabited world (context), it degenerates into a philosophy of 'everything revolves around me'. When this philosophy coincides with the 'wrong' theological departure points, it becomes dangerous. Where religion is not driven by the worship of the only living and sovereign God, it degenerates into a utilitarian 'God-for-me' ideology. Prayer, for instance, is then not much more than standing before a gambling machine. The person who can keep at it long enough with the insertion of 'prayer requests' will eventually win something. Narcissism in modern society, narcissism 'assisted' by this process of individualisation of society, is extremely detrimental to forming and finding an identity.

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655. Cf. again my article on Youth Ministry and this process of individuation (Nel 2003).

656. Osmer (1996:19); cf. also McKoy (2013:34–41) on what he calls 'the inadequacies of individualism'.

657. Turpin (2006).

For Youth Ministry, there is, with regard to the philosophy of postmodern society, light as well as darkness. Prins, with reference to Tracy[658] points out that young people show a new awareness of 'the other'. The acceptance of the other, tolerance towards the other, is foremost. While one builds on this, one should not forget that this new form of individualisation also has its own core of individualism. The choice for the other within the pluralism[659] so characteristic of the postmodern society, is still made on the basis of personal considerations. The accent is still on the self-conscious, self-responsible, self-acting free-self.[660]

The trends mentioned above can also be attributed to the process of secularisation. In today's world help is certainly not only expected from God – and most certainly not exclusively from him. People expect aid from God's gifts rather than from God himself, from science, technology, politics and economy. And this is true only of those who still see and acknowledge these resources as gifts. In a society where the gospel of the Kingdom functions, the principle of the Kingdom is the connective tissue between the different spheres of life and of society. In a strongly secularised society this is no longer the case. In a typical Western society, each institution is an autonomous entity. In this way, the process of individualisation gains momentum. The system of narcissism (that so easily aligns itself with man's 'nature') merely becomes the fuel for speeding up the process.

By this I am not in the least trying to discredit youth because they are reputed to be narcissistic. I have among other things tried to awaken an understanding for their new struggle in the process of individuation, socialisation, and personalisation. And I also want to petition against oversimplification when the youth and their subculture are culturally and psychologically outlined.

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658. Prins (1997:3); Tracy (1990).

659. Cf. Tracy (1990).

660. Cf. Prins (1997:3) and his reference to Beck (1993:128).

☐ A creative polar relationship

The youth subculture and the reigning culture of the parental community are inextricably linked. The one calls the other into being, and the emerging one so often challenges the previous one. It can be safely said that youth subculture in history has usually been a certain 'reaction' to the culture of the parental community. The idea here is not negative per se. The very fact of being a reactionary is interwoven with the character of adolescent development. When you accept responsibility for your own life you experience times of intense emotional insecurity, accompanied by suspicion of reigning customs and adults. It is only logical, when we note the insecurities prevalent in the parental community, that the subculture often strikingly develops and functions in opposition to the existing parental culture.

The history of families and communities contains accounts about how two cultures can destroy one other. I remember a story about a church elder in Soweto, South Africa who in 27 years was never absent from his work at the Administration Board for even one day. In 1966 children, among them his own, obstructed his way to work. Here the culture of acceptance clashed with the culture of rejection and resistance against a government and a system that the younger generation experienced as humiliating and discriminatory.

Does it always have to be like that? Should not these two cultures rather function in a creative tension with one another? In dialogue the two cultures can challenge one another to evaluation, correction, and enrichment. Every culture has its story, and only in dialogue the story is heard, understood, and appreciated. Only in dialogue can the 'therapeutic story' be heard and understood.[661] Here two stories are actually competing so as to be understood, to give direction to what they try to understand. From the two 'cultures in conversation' there flows

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661. Cf. Francis (1984).

a further conversation, at least within the faith community, with the culture of the Kingdom of God – that has come and is yet to come. In this way, a culture of the Kingdom is shaped, a culture in which man can again live and create as a free being. In this conversation parents play a vital role.[662] It is in this regard that we need to rediscover the powerful concept and practice of intergenerational ministry.[663]

Dean[664] makes out a point for what she calls 'The unity of divine momentum: A perichoretic view of self'. She discussed this in a section about the adolescent's longing for fidelity. In the process of becoming an integrated self she is of the conviction that we are invited into 'participation in the Trinity not by analogy, but by real incorporation into the life of God.'[665] My reason for coming back to this for a moment is to emphasise my conviction: Becoming a true self, 'personality formation'[666] within the society adolescents grew up is indeed a 'dialectic between a person and her world.' It is supposed to be a creative tension within which we 'become' and, within the perspective of discipling, continue to become. Dean[667] supports her argument in this regard by referring to Moltmann[668] again:

> The fellowship of Christ is experienced in common resistance to idolatry and inhumanity, in common suffering over oppression and persecution. It is in this *participation in the Passion of Christ and in the passion of the people that the 'life' of Christ and his liberty becomes visible in the church.* [*emphasis in original*].

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662. Cf. Coalter and Cruz (1995:55–61).

663. Cf. among others Seibel (2010). We return to this subject in Part 2, Chapter 9.

664. Dean (2004:87ff.).

665. With reference to Moltmann (1993:172).

666. Firet (1986:144).

667. Dean (2004:88).

668. Moltmann (1993:97); italics added by Dean.

My understanding of youth being an integral part of the faith community with its many adults is that it is in this passionate community that we help and support each other to become who God planned us to be in this world (Table 3.1).

TABLE 3.1: Generations involved in the becoming of youth within a faith community.

Generation name	Birth years	Age (in 2010)	Total adult population (%)	Internet-using population (%)
Millennials	1977–1992	18–33	30	35
Generation X	1965–1976	34–55	19	21
Younger boomers	1955–1964	465–55	20	20
Older boomers	1946–1954	56–64	14	13
Silent generation	1937–1945	65–73	7	5
G.I. generation	–1936	74+	9	3

Source: Zickuhr 2010 Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project, April 29 – May 30, Tracking survey.
N = 2252 adults 18 years and older
The percentage of the population refers to the USA.

Pedagogical or educational: Because we learn as we develop

It is almost logical that historically Youth Ministry has been approached with a strong emphasis on education, sometimes exclusively so. The biblical community, the Early Church community and the following centuries, were characterised by strong patriarchal leadership. Fathers had authority in and over their families, sometimes even absolute authority. Children, although very important in themselves, were immature and had to be taught. In the time of Jesus this idea was so prevalent that children, in a religious sense, were 'outsiders' up to the age of 12–13. The references in the Gospels to the dealings of Jesus with children plays a significant role in this regard. One such critical

incident concerns the purification of the Temple.[669] Jesus did not purify the Temple to become a place of preaching and prayer, but to become a 'hospital'.[670] People who traditionally did not belong in the Temple found healing there. There the children called Jesus 'the Son of David'. The offence taken by the head priests and the scribes was not merely about the title accorded him by the children, but also against the children themselves.[671] Historical accounts often tell of cultures in which children and other young people stand outside religion and only gain importance when they reach a certain age.

Educating the youth was even seen, until the middle of the 17th century, mainly as the 'making' of a person by imprinting the 'right' data and withholding the wrong ones.[672] The reaction of youth movements against adult dominance and involvement can largely be explained as a reaction against the strong pedagogical nature of youth organisations and churches that have strong adult leadership.[673] Dean[674] refers to the change to a more balanced understanding of both as a part of the theological turn in Youth Ministry:

> [*F*]or a century Youth Ministry has been conceived of as a junior partner in the Christian Education enterprise rather than a pastoral calling – and certainly not as a colony of Practical Theologians whose engagement in and reflection on ministry is for the sake of the church, not youth alone. Surely Christian Education is a critical component of mindful Christianity but it is not the only component, nor is it the primary one.

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669. Matthew 21:12–17.

670. Cf. verse 14.

671. Cf. Nielsen (1973:178–181).

672. Cf. Richards (1983:89) and his quotations of Plato, Aristoteles, St Jerome.

673. Cf. Nel (1982:110).

674. Dean (2011b:76–77) – under a heading: 'Practical Theology: Fresh stream for Youth Ministry'.

On the other hand, one cannot deny that Youth Ministry always has to be pedagogical in nature. The older section of the people who live in a knowing and loving relationship with God has, after all, lived longer in this relationship. In the story of salvation[675] the older generation was involved in a different way. In handing down this story, from generation to generation, there is indeed the important dimension of 'taking by the hand' with reference to education. In this sense, there should not be any negative 'reaction' against the pedagogical dimension and emphasis in Youth Ministry. The reaction comes when churches see their involvement with children and adolescents as being only educational in nature, and then education as teaching from above, handing down facts, and with authority. The question can be asked whether the almost fundamentalistic explanation of *katechein* was not perhaps the foundation of the historical distinction and/or separation between the church's official work on the one hand and voluntary youth work on the other. Firet[676] showed with great scientific integrity that this traditional understanding of *katechein* was flawed. Why this situation was not adequately addressed during the Reformation can be understood historically.[677] The Reformers were confronted with the staggering ignorance in parents and children.[678] The driving force was to disseminate knowledge by means of the households, churches, schools, and in this way to form anew a basis of true biblical knowledge.[679] However explainable, this struggle during and after the Reformation in the 1600s for 'pure doctrine' immediately played, in a sense, a deforming role. Orthodoxy almost became a way to heaven in itself – a new system of being

675. Cf. Deuteronomy 6.

676. Cf. Firet (1977:68ff.; 1986:50ff.).

677. Cf. also Osmer (1990).

678. Cf. Prins (1973:85).

679. Cf. the book that for such a long time was the basic textbook in Catechetics: Bijlsma (1962).

forgiven and saved. The dialogical acts were once again disregarded by education and did not receive due attention. The tradition of catechesis in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) confirms this development. Pietism was in more than one sense an attempt by theologians to bring a balance to this intellectual one-sidedness. Pietism, alas, has also brought other imbalances, and even heresies, according to some.[680]

In a sense, Youth Ministry has always been caught up between various pedagogical imbalances. A comprehensive historical study of the subject may show that the churches have always moved along a continuum between the truth and the correctly formulated transmittal on the one hand, and experience and its attendant decisions of the will on the other.

While in Chapter 7 there is a reasoned plea for a more comprehensive and inclusive approach, it must be said that in this book I find myself pedagogically at home within the newer taxonomies. Research on the developmental approach to children,[681] the theories regarding faith development[682] and educational theories[683] should be seriously considered in theories of praxis for Youth Ministry. While, in Part 3, Chapter 11, I will briefly return to the above-mentioned about teaching as part of what we do in Youth Ministry, within the context of catechesis – as a crucial component of Youth Ministry. I have decided to cover these perspectives here already and as part of why we do what we do. The most important principle to be stated here is that the teaching of and ministry to, with and through the youth is dialogical and relational in nature.[684]

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680. Cf. Malan (1984).

681. Cf. Richards (1983:89–176) and his discussion of familiar theories like those of Erikson, Piaget, and Kohlberg.

682. Cf. Fowler (1981); Nipkow (1990a:25ff.); Dykstra (1986:251–304).

683. Cf. Martin and Briggs (1986); Osmer (1990, 1992).

684. Cf. for instance Babin (1991:14ff.); Prins (1995b:27ff.).

■ Teaching in theological perspective

Without going into too much detail, a few basic premises for teaching as a ministry are expounded here. The section in Part 1, Chapter 2 covers most of my understanding of teaching and learning (discipling) as vital to Youth Ministry. What follows below under this heading is almost just a summary of what has been argued already.

In the Bible, a person's life is often described as a 'way'. Good examples are the well-known passages in Proverbs. In some translations, this way is understood as 'how one should live'. This beautiful passage[685] tells the story:

> [1]My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, [2]for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity. [3]Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. [4]Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. [5] Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; [6]in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

And again:

> [5]In the paths of the wicked are snares and pitfalls, but those who would preserve their life stay far from them. [6]Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.[686]

The way (life) of man is understood in the context of a certain destination. The way leads somewhere. Man, as creature does not live by accident or for nothing. Life has a destination. This destination is not death. The life of man has a purpose and therefore also a meaning.

How ancient Israel viewed this was dealt with in the section on discipleship. Teaching and the accompanying learning was seen

685. Proverbs 3:1–6 (NIV).

686. Proverbs 22:5–6 (NIV).

as initiation of this new person (who had a road ahead of him, one with a destination) into the way of Jahwe with his people. In a certain sense one could say that they were God's people because God told them of the unique destination he had in mind for them, they had to be his and had to be a blessing to the nations in his name.[687] The child is, as it were, dedicated, consecrated to this way and destination (cf. the meaning of *chanak* and *chanukkah* in the OT). In this sense, the child is initiated into the story of Jahwe with his people and is personally drawn into the story in such a way and to such an extent that the child more and more experiences that the way of Jahwe with his people is also the way of Jahwe with 'me*'*. The story of God with his people also becomes 'my' story: God's story with 'myself' as part of the 'we'. Teaching as initiation is first of all an 'act of implicating the young Israelite in the story of salvation. He learns to say and to experience "we" – the "we" of the covenant.'[688]

The second part of teaching in the Bible refers to the guidance on the way. For this the believer needs the Torah. He or she needs God's care and instruction. We also need the third dimension of teaching as guidance in the way of wisdom. Wisdom is a more pedagogical expression of ethics in religion. Wisdom is to a great extent a human reflection on the words of the Lord. Believers are on the way, searching for that which pleases God. On the way, many others help you to come to an understanding of the way. On the way, every person needs help. In this way experience grows, as well as the ability to make choices that take the Torah into account, together with the reality in which the Torah is relevant. It becomes the wise discernment of 'what is best'.[689]

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687. Cf. Genesis 8, 9, 12, 17.

688. Cf. again as quoted above: Firet (1986:54); Exodus 10;12;13; Deuteronomy 4:6; Dingemans (1986:159ff.); Downs (1994:23–30).

689. Cf. Vriezen (1958:315); Philippians 1:9–11; Müller (1980:370–385); Harris (1981:59–74).

The teaching of Jesus is built on these concepts, and so too, the NT emphasis on discipleship. Yet there is another, strikingly new accentuation, to which I have referred already in the section on discipleship. People come to Christ and remain with him, not in the first place because of his teaching, but because he has called them to 'belong' to him and to follow him. Here lies the uniqueness of biblical discipleship, people are called to him. In the Christian movement, we as his people do not choose the Teacher. The Teacher calls his pupils into a relationship with himself. With full authority, he calls disciples, and takes control of their lives. In this sense, his teaching cannot be received like knowledge in a lecturer's classroom. Who he is for his followers is central to the authority of his teaching and its determining influence on their lives (their way). Therefore, discipleship is a way of life, it is more than a way of acquiring 'knowledge' in the sense of having facts available. The Gospel of John casts strong light on this idea.[690] The teaching of Jesus does not only (at least not in the first place) correspond to teaching as conveying information, it is linked to the fact that the believers are followers or disciples of the living Lord and as such are learning from the Master.

Teaching in the local church means unfolding Jesus and his teaching. Here the Holy Spirit is chiefly at work, and here he involves parents and other believers.[691] We are indeed, in attempting teaching from a theological perspective, deeply dependent on the One who came as promised:[692]

> [25]All this I have spoken while still with you. [26]But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

690. Cf. John 8:14–16.

691. Cf. Dingemans (1986:133–156) section on this with relationship to us being followers of the Christ in our 'learning process'.

692. John 14:25–26.

Haitch[693] quoted Farley[694] who wrote an article on 'Does Christian Education need the Holy Spirit?' The context of this quote is his question: 'Should "education" be understood as church school instruction or as the overall formation of a Christian way of life?'[695] He argues for 'both' in his contribution to the life and work of James E. Loder, the world-renowned scholar in the field of Christian Education.

When the Spirit is involved, and we humbly acknowledge that and (in that same dependence on him) participate, we may do what Osmer[696] wrote of Loder (in the Foreword to the same book): 'His larger goal was always to open them [his students] up to a life of authenticity before God.'

The local church participates in the further unfolding of the events of salvation and their meaning.[697] The *didache* unfolds the significance and consequences of what, for example, is preached. In a sense, it is a constant unfolding of the insight that Jesus is the Messiah, and what the consequences of this insight and relationship are.[698] Therefore teaching is more than conveying knowledge about the ethical significance of the Law. The inclusive and comprehensive character of the *didache* should help us to reform the teaching of the local church. The fact that believers are in Christ emphasises the dimension of initiation in this ministry. The local church does not teach in order to initiate. In the local church the initiated are taught. It is teaching by initiated learners to initiated learners, by disciples to disciples. It is the

693. Haitch (2004:298–321).

694. Farley (1965:430).

695. Haitch (2004:299).

696. Osmer (2004:xi).

697. Cf. Dingemans (1986:133ff.); cf. also (p. 79ff.) and his choice of the word '*Mathetiek*' *From the greek word mathytys* for catechism teaching – to associate it more closely to discipling and in his words 'leren geloven' – learning to believe, 'how people become 'pupils of the Lord' (1986:81).

698. Cf. Firet (1986:66).

teaching of life, unfolding the life we have received and the life we live because we have received it. It is unfolding the life we live. And this very life is more than ethical training, more than dogmatic instruction. All distinctions fall short of doing justice to the comprehensive character of the biblical teaching of life. Theologically speaking, teaching is help in living, help in faith, help in relationships ('*Lebenshilfe*'). Theologically speaking this is the central question: How does one become 'a pupil of the Lord'?[699] Of course this unfolding is a lifelong process. The continuing training mentioned in the Bible,[700] for example, is nothing other than equipping (training) people for life, and thereby building the local church.[701]

It is worth adding at this point Fowler's[702] preference for the concept *paideia* as his fifth dimension of:

> [*F*]ormation and transformation [...] the Greek term for the comprehensive process of intentional and indirect formation by which men and women were prepared for participating roles in the *praxis* of the city-state.

It is befitting to end this paragraph with a quote from Osmer. I do so for two reasons, the first is to stress once again that Youth Ministry should never dismiss a healthy 'educational' approach and secondly because of the congregational emphasis in his description of catechesis. According to Osmer:[703]

> *Catechesis is an interpretive activity undertaken by congregations and their individual members who see themselves as participants in the Theo-drama of the triune God and are seeking to better understand their roles in this drama by deepening their understanding of Scripture and Christian tradition.* The purpose of catechesis is

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699. Dingemans (1986:81).

700. Cf. for example Ephesians 4:12.

701. Cf. for example Hull (1988); Nel (1994; 2015b:148–155) and several other pages.

702. Fowler (1991:187).

703. Osmer (2005:237, 238); cf. also a comprehensive book on *Teaching the faith, forming the faithful*, by Parrett and Kang (2009).

to help congregations and their members better understand their identity, mission, and vocation as God's people within an unfolding Theo-drama. [*emphasis in original*]

Osmer[704] then identifies 'four *patterns of interpretation*' in this kind of catechesis:

1. 'Interpreting the texts of Scripture and tradition: exegesis and mimesis.
2. Interpreting the present activity of the Holy Spirit: reading with the Spirit and reading the Spirit.
3. Interpreting the praxis of the congregation: the practices of the congregation as the embodied interpretation of Scripture and tradition.
4. Interpreting the contemporary context: congregation as participants in continuing creation.'

■ Teaching in psychological perspective

Teaching from a psychological perspective gives special account of 'God's design of people'.[705] In the church's instruction, the receiver of the instruction has often not been taken seriously enough. The theological reasons for this are not important here. One of the reasons was (and is?) that believers of certain traditions do not take the 'createdness' of man (as created by the Creator according to the biblical story) seriously enough. God takes people seriously, just as he takes his perfect acts of salvation in Christ seriously, so he takes the people seriously for whose sake it all happened. What psychologists and other scientists discover in their research of man is primarily for the sake of healing people. The medical sciences are a striking

704. Osmer (2005:239).

705. Downs (1994:69).

example. As the science of healing takes the knowledge about the functions of man's body seriously, so the science of education takes the psychological functioning and development of man seriously.

Richards[706] sums it up correctly, with reference to remarks by Plato, Aristotle and St. Jerome, when he states that:

[/]n a real sense it was assumed that children were simply raw material, that human beings, like statues, could be carved. It was similarly assumed that this shaping would follow if one could only manage the information fed to the mind.

Until the 17th century children were regarded as raw material to be 'moulded' into shape by educators according to the plan of the reigning culture and society. The first educator that seriously challenged this approach was Comenius (17th century). He argued that education should take the developing abilities of children into account.[707] In the words of Richards:[708]

Like Plato, Aristotle, St. Jerome, Comenius believed that childhood is important. But unlike them, he rejected the notion that nurture is merely mechanical patterning. Looking at nature as a whole, he saw growth processes that led him to a unique theory of nurture, a theory that teaching and learning must be adapted to the characteristics of the child.

In a certain sense one could see this as the beginning of the developmental theory in Youth Ministry and especially catechesis as a component of it.

Teaching in Youth Ministry should take account of the findings of developmental psychology. Research like that by

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706. Richards (1983:89). Plato (1946) in *The Republic*, 7:221; Aristotle (2014) in *Politics*, Book VII, section xv; St. Jerome (1893) in *Letters to Laerta*, 17:164.

707. Cf. Richards (1983:90).

708. Cf. Richards (1983:90).

Van Gennep,[709] Erikson,[710] Piaget,[711] Kohlberg,[712] Fowler[713] and others[714] is well-known and of importance.[715]

It is neither necessary nor possible to cover in any detail the theories on child development,[716] yet some information is important.[717] Freud played a prominent role in the development of theories about child development. Erik Erikson[718] went further than Freud and adjusted the latter's dark picture of the nature of man. He saw children as seekers discovering things and trying for themselves to control their surroundings. His emphasis was on healthy development and he tried to identify and describe the phases of the child's development. He also developed the important concept that became so indispensable in education, namely developmental tasks. His research stimulated, and is still stimulating, much research on adolescence, but also on the development of the child.[719] Erikson's approach is part of what is called 'psychoanalytic theory' or 'depth psychology'. Associated with this approach are, among others, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and Anna Freud. The characteristic thing about this approach is that man is basically proactive. 'Behaviour is

709. Van Gennep (1960).

710. Erikson (1963).

711. Cf. Piaget (1971; 2015).

712. Kohlberg (1969; 1981).

713. Fowler (1981).

714. Cf. Osmer (1996:21–26).

715. Cf. for a good overview on these important insights Robbins (2004:182–245).

716. See some of the best-known literature in the 'For further reading' list and the references.

717. I take my lead from the well-researched work by Richards (1983).

718. For a good and in-depth discussion of most of the theories Erikson, Freud, Piaget and Kohlberg, mentioned above, cf. Schweitzer ([1987] 2010:61–71, 87ff., 110ff.).

719. Cf. for example the remarks by Osmer (1996:21ff.) about research on female adolescents; cf. also Dean (2004) and her several references to his work, starting on page. 12 and many more. [See the Index of her book (2004:258–259)].

best understood as a result of the internal forces operative within people [...] human activity is initiated from within the person.'[720] One of the huge benefits of Erikson's work is, as Dingemans[721] also pointed out, his observation of humans as a whole person. He tried to portray the human in his or her totality in their development.

Another distinguishable theory to be mentioned here is behaviourism. Names linked to it are those of Pavlov, John B. Watson, Edward Thorndike and B.F. Skinner.[722] The basic premise here is that people's behaviour can be understood in terms of the influences of the person's surroundings, including society.

Probably the social learning theory in its various forms is most influential when understanding social and personality development. Here the general premise is that significant aspects of personality are acquired through learning.[723] In this approach there are a number of variations. Richards[724] emphasises concepts like socializing, modelling, role-taking, identification, and imitation,[725] internalisation, and reinforcement. The structure theory is also related to the social learning theory. The shared praxis-approach by Groome[726] can also be included here.

In the wide context of what is usually called structure theory, a large group of psychologists and other scientists are found. Important names here are Piaget and Kohlberg. Often Carl

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720. Downs (1994:70).

721. Dingemans (1986:99–101).

722. Pavlov (1928); Watson (1925); Thorndike (1914); Skinner ([1953] 1964).

723. Cf. Richards (1983:95).

724. Richards (1983:95–98).

725. Cf. also Dingemans (1986:120).

726. Groome (1980); cf. also Prins (1995b:24–35).

Rogers, Maslow, Erich Fromm, and Fowler[727] are also mentioned as part of their company.[728] This theory accepts that learning, social activities, morality, and personality development are analogous to the physical development of man.[729] Not all the important insights from this approach will be discussed here. It is, however, important to stress that these insights view development holistically. The influences from and in the context of the developing person, and of broader society, are just as important as the development of that person's body, as the psychological ability to take part in development, and so on. People (including children) do not really have a zero point – neither genetically nor contextually. Structural theoreticians are making substantial efforts to study the relation between man and his education and systematically describe such influences.[730]

An extremely significant point for teaching in the local church, is that made by Piaget and Kohlberg[731] about the development of the mental ability of the child, and how man's mental ability is connected to his moral development. Cognitive development and the cognitive processes attained by children at certain ages are intimately linked to their behaviour. In a certain sense Kohlberg builds on Piaget, and according to him 'moral thought, like any other, is determined by the development of cognitive structures,'[732] In social learning theory it is accepted that parents,

727. Cf. Rogers (1961; 1980); Maslow ([1954] 1970); Fromm (1994); Fowler (1981).

728. For example, by Downs (1994:73).

729. Cf. Richards (1983:99).

730. Cf. again, as already referred to, Firet's (1986:136ff.) own description of what he calls contextual influences; also, Englert (1992); cf. Dingemans (1986:108–109) of what one may call motivational learning theory as systematised by Maslow ([1954] 1970), with his distinction of a hierarchical structure of needs.

731. For a brief but good discussion of both cf. Dingemans (1986:102–106).

732. Richards (1983:100).

peers, social models and all other interpersonal contacts play a role. The child's observation of these social experiences is determined by, among other things, cognitive structures. There is a fundamental unity between social and intellectual development[733] and add to this research the valuable contribution made by Fowler[734] concerning people's faith development. Fowler's fictional conversation[735] between Erikson, Piaget and Kohlberg is a skilful way to obtain an understanding of their viewpoints. The independent contribution made by Fowler regarding the stages of faith development is an attempt to take the insights from psychology seriously.[736]

Teaching can only be effective when psychological perspectives on development are considered. Those who do not do so deny the importance of man as a created being. Those who take God and his Word seriously, seek knowledge about who man is. Anthropology from a theological perspective forces all who teach in the tradition of faith to do so sincerely. We learn because and as we develop.

■ Teaching as pastoral guidance towards change

Teaching in the local church, the learning community, can be described as 'communicative movements of searching'.[737] In the

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733. Cf. Richards (1983:101).

734. Fowler (1981); cf. a good and concise discussion on the 'Faith Development Theory', Fowler and Dell (2006:34–45). For a shorter, but comprehensive discussion of his theory, cf. Fowler (2000:48–71).

735. Fowler (1981:41ff.).

736. For an excellent and in-depth discussion on the implications of stages of faith for church, education and society cf. Fowler et al. (1991:67–100) – especially Part 2: 'Developmental theories and education: Historical and theological perspectives'.

737. Prins (1995a:58).

community of believers, and together with this community, there is a search for contextual faithfulness in following the Christ. Jan Hendriks[738] refers playfully to it in the context of building up the local church as 'the communal trek'. All people keep growing while they share in such a learning community. As a learning community, the local church sees its own existence as a continual learning situation and process.[739] According to Schippers[740] three motives play a role here: The involvement of the whole person in this learning process (the dedication of the *fides quae* and the experience); 'the overt presence of Christ in his appeal to change; and the strength drawn from the support of the community of believers.'[741,742]

Such understanding is widely accepted. As teaching is approached more and more holistically, these insights are even more relevant. Development consists of several interwoven aspects – physical, cognitive, affective, social and moral.[743] The existence of so many books about the pastoral care of children and adolescents, stresses, among other things, the lack of pastoral empathy and involvement during the education of the youth.[744] Like a golden thread it runs through publications: teaching is pastoral guidance towards change.

The rediscovery of the importance of affection in the education and development of people should give the local church a new

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738. Hendriks (1995:149–153).

739. Cf. Schippers (1977; 1996).

740. Schippers (1996:476).

741. Cf. also Pazmino (1994:37–58).

742. Yousuf (2008:n.p.).

743. Cf. Downs (1994:74).

744. Cf. for a source with references to more sources, Gillis (1994); cf. also the recently published eBooks, edited by Grobbelaar and Breed (2017a; 2017b): *Theologies of childhood and the children of Africa* (2017a) and *Welcoming Africa's children – theological and ministry perspectives* (2017b)

awareness of the pastoral dimension of teaching. Babin[745] stresses this truth when he writes that:[746]

> [*T*]he youth are not so much interested in classes, courses and discussion groups, but rather in contact with spiritual personalities. Talks and discussions should be connected to prayer and sincere Christian lives.

The youth are more interested in covenantal relationships than in dogmatic formulas.[747]

These insights are not new. The crux of Firet's thesis was the description of agogy as a pastoral situation.[748] The way in which the educator is involved pastorally, for example as 'equihuman'[749] in the education of others, largely determines to what extent the pupil will become actively involved in his or her own process of change. Only in such a pastoral involvement can development (growth and change) be understood 'as a matter of losing limitations'.[750] Many others agree with this departure point. Jahnke and Depuhl[751] in writing on the humanness and 'value' of children and other youth said: '[T]o live to work with them as "*ganze*" people, I have to accept and respect them in their totality' [author's own translation].

Further motivation for this indispensable trace element of teaching can be found in the essence of covenantal teaching in a community of believers. Dingemans[752] says that learning to

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745. Babin (1991:14).

746. Yousuf (2008:n.p.).

747. Cf. also Prins (1995b:28).

748. Cf. Firet (1986:246ff.).

749. Cf. Firet (1986:138, 156–171, 178, 246–272).

750. Downs (1994:76). For a very good discussion and interpretation of Fowler's (2000:57–75, 115–116) understanding of 'transformation' cf. Haitch (2004:319 note 37).

751. Jahnke and Depuhl (1999:27). '*Und mit dem ganzen Menschen zu leben und zu arbeiten, muss ich ihn in seiner Ganzheit erkennen und respektieren.*'

752. Dingemans (1986:119).

believe begins with the encounter of the individual with the faith experiences of the community. This is how he understands socialisation. The purpose of education, as he sees it, is man becoming human.[753] This emancipation is accompanied by socialisation. In this process, in this communicative search or communal trek[754] learning takes place by imitation, by modelling,[755] and by identification. Yet it all happens on the basis of trust. And where this 'primal' trust[756] is deficient, learning either never takes place or leads to neuroses. It pleases God to grant the understanding of himself in and by means of the experiences of the faith of the believers, as those experiences are described in the Word and exemplified by the lives of the believers in congregational life.

In the theory of praxis this premise requires a healthy pastoral relationship between the people who teach in the local church and those who are taught. This relationship is the prime facilitator for conveying knowledge. The development of a person (also and especially the child and the adolescent) is reinforced by the humanity and the pastoral 'equihumanness' of the educator. Prins[757] correctly says that *intergenerational* relationships facilitate the processes of faith formation.

■ Teaching as faith development and finding an identity

In the Reformed tradition, there is sometimes doubt about the validity of the term 'faith development'. The objection is usually

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753. In Dutch: '*mens-wording van de mens*'. He relates this process directly to the faith community.

754. Prins (1995a) and Hendriks (1995) respectively.

755. Richards (1983:192, 225–229, 240).

756. Dingemans (1986:123). Dutch: '*Basisvertrouwen*' [basic trust].

757. Prins (1995a:59).

that faith is a gift from God and cannot be 'developed'. But this is not the actual meaning of the term. In Fowler's research[758] the phenomenon of faith is investigated on the basis of the truth that man is also a religious being. People believe. Faith as an insight that Jesus is the Christ, is a gift brought about by the Holy Spirit. Yet even this latter premise does not exclude the sharing and the growth of faith. That God grants faith and that man cannot believe of his own accord is upheld in this book. Yet this indeed implies that God also grants faith by means of people. Only he can grant it, and he employs his creatures by giving faith. The triune God works through his Word (organically inspired), and the local church, parents, catechists (Sunday School teachers), and others, for 'giving' what only he can give, faith that Jesus is the Christ and Lord.

If we, for a moment, work with an understanding that faith is reckoning with God, with the help of God – this gift of faith (reckoning with God, taking God seriously) and insight can grow, and this is where teaching fits in. In this light Osmer's[759] contributions to the rediscovery of the teaching office by the church, how to teach about faith,[760] and a new approach to the confirmation in the Reformed tradition[761] should be understood. When Osmer[762] discusses teaching from the perspective of development, he strongly links up with Fowler. His insights in this regard are illuminating and striking. Local churches that take faith development seriously help themselves by developing and offering material that is phase relevant and simultaneously facilitates development towards the next phase. If not, members probably remain somewhere in the phase of synthetic-

758. Fowler (1981).

759. Osmer (1990).

760. Osmer (1992).

761. Osmer (1996); cf. also Myers (1993:23ff.).

762. Osmer (1990:219ff.).

conventional faith[763] where they agree in an intellectual way to what they know about the faith. They know the customs of the church, participate in specific ways, but do not live by what they know, it does not even determine their value systems. Their faith is not individuative-reflective, let alone conjunctive and universal.[764] Conjunctive faith is characterised by the willingness to get involved in the paradoxical and many-layered realities of every day. One of the characteristics in this phase of faith development is the confession of your own ideological perspectives and the need to investigate other perspectives in order to discern the truth.[765] Universal faith is more or less understood as that which in Christianity would pass for insights into the Kingdom. The world belongs to the Lord and we are part of it. We also participate in this new reality in a restorative and healing way.[766]

In line with my own theory,[767] about how Youth Ministry is part and parcel of every bit of congregational ministry, I appeal to the theology of Youth Ministry for teaching that takes faith development seriously. Faith development within the Reformed tradition is nothing other than discovering, finding and understanding your God-given identity. In the local church in the Reformed tradition youth are helped by means of a holistic ministry to become what they already are in Christ. No ministry, including teaching, adds anything to their status before God. Who and what we are, we are on the basis of God's acts in Christ

763. Fowler's phase 3 (1981:151–173).

764. Phase 4, 5 and 6 respectively; cf. the contribution on 'Postconventional faith for public life' by Kim (2003:157–173).

765. Cf. Osmer (1990:242–251); cf. also Fowler (2000:14–36) for his understanding of Erikson's 'model of the mature adult, a person who has reaped the fruits of a more or less successful negotiation of the crises of the epigenetic schedule.'

766. See for a discussion on this Part 1, Chapter 2; cf. also White (1988:69–158) for a meaningful discussion of these theories for adult instruction.

767. As worked out in *Gemeentebou* (Nel 1994:2–20, 126–147) and *Identity driven churches* (2015b).

through the Holy Spirit, no one needs to doubt this. Anyone who tries to add to this in some way belittles the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice of reconciliation. Such a person understands little of the completeness of the reconciliation, of the restoration of the relationship between God and man. In the theology of the book of Hebrews it means that man cannot, does not have to, should not try to, do anything to be acceptable to God.[768] Ministry to people, including teaching, is not adding something which is not there yet. Ministry, including teaching, is disclosing what has been given by God in Christ. No deed of grateful obedience should ever be taken out of this context. Should this happen, such deeds (whether they are for example central issues like repentance or confession) are degraded to conditions for constituting salvation. Salvation has been constituted by Christ by means of his sacrifice – once and for all. Ministry, including teaching, unfolds this conferred salvation intensively and systematically.

In his thorough study of the tradition of confirmation Osmer[769] works with the insights mentioned above. In the 'choice aspect' of coming to a confession of faith he calls confirmation, to my mind correctly, 'choosing to become what you already are.'[770] Children are guided by means of teaching to become, in the realities of life, what they already are in principle. This goes for the whole local church, and so much more for those who have only recently, as children, begun the journey together on the way of Jahwe with his people.

I see a direct relationship between what is written above and developing a missional congregation.[771] Osmer[772] contributed to

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768. Cf. Hebrews 2, 8, 9.

769. Osmer (1996:170ff.).

770. Osmer (1996:170); cf. also Myers (1993:1–22).

771. Cf. Nel (2015b:223ff.).

772. Osmer (2012:29–55).

this discussion with an article on the formation of the missional church. The concept I used above is more or less what he understands 'formation' to be: faith development. He rightly, to my mind, observed that formation (or in the context of this section of this book, Christian Education) is more than a programme. It is about working on the congregation and their understanding of themselves. He says: 'Formation is not something the congregation does to others, especially new members. It is something that must first happen to the congregation itself.'[773] Within the context of the lens of discipleship, only learners, as they follow Jesus, 'make'[774] learners who follow the Christ.

773. Osmer (2012:36).

774. Cf. Matthew 28:18–20.

Historical: Because of where we come from

■ Introduction

A brief history of Youth Ministry is necessary here. Like other ministries (such as the worship service and liturgy) Youth Ministry can (almost) only be understood in terms of its historical development. The distinction by Kemp,[775] for instance, to reserve the name 'youth work' for organised forms of work with young people, forms that are *not official ministries or catechesis* (emphasis added), cannot easily be explained without understanding its historical development:

> The term 'youth work', or 'youth ministry' came into being after the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century. Before this the congregation was a family organisation with very few activities for specific age groups.[776]

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775. Kemp (1963:275).

776. Corbett and Johnson (1972:3) and cf. Yousuf (2008:n.p.).

Terblanche wrote[777] that for at least the first two centuries after 1652 there was, in South Africa, no real mention of caring for the youth in the contemporary sense – or, as Root[778] has put it, 'age-specific ministry to young people – Youth Ministry – is no older than the late nineteenth century.'

My intention is not to cover in any detail the somewhat complex historical development of what was called '*Jeugdarbeid*' (youth work) in the Netherlands, '*Jugendarbeit*' in Germany, '*Jeugwerk*' or '*Jeugarbeid*' in South Africa. In a recent publication on the history of Youth Ministry in the USA Clark and Senter opted to use the term 'Youth Ministry' right from the beginning of the book.[779]

■ A short walk through history

With the migration to the cities during and after the Industrial Revolution children and other young people for the first time in history lived and worked outside their parents' homes. This circumstance was new and strange to the church. The churches, though, were not the first to recognise this new opportunity, individuals took the initiative.

■ Discernable influences: From the USA

In 1998 I wrote that in more than one way the roots can be traced back to the establishment of the first Sunday School. Root[780] acknowledges the same when he wrote that 'we must start in the busy streets of London at the height of industrialization.' The

777. Terblanche (1966:6).

778. Root (2007:26).

779. Senter (2010:ix,xi), Clark (2010).

780. Root (2007:30).

Sunday School originated in 1780 in England from the vision by Robert Raikes regarding his concern about neglected children and children working in industrial factories. His purpose was to teach them, one day a week, to read and write. This movement played a major role in the development of youth ministries around the world as well as in South Africa. Concerning the USA Root[781] declares that: 'The Sunday School became the first distinct ministry to youth in America, arriving from England in the middle of the nineteenth century.'

The great missionary awakenings in 1787–1830 also played a big role in the launching of a whole range of young people's societies.[782] Root[783] relates the development of what he calls '*American Evangelicalism*' [*emphasis in original*] to a change in the nature and purpose of the Sunday School Movement in America:

> The uniquely evangelical flavour of American religious life following the two Great Awakenings eventually modified the Sunday School. Discarding its educational emphasis and replacing it with an objective of converting young people to Christ. The Sunday School became a program for youth evangelism.[784]

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781. Root (2007:30).

782. Cf. Sholund (1968:59–71.); Borgman (1987:61–74).

783. Root (2007:28–31). His account of the development of 'evangelicalism' and 'fundamentalism' within the historical development of Youth Ministry is worth reading (2007:35–39). He even connects the developments in modernized and industrialized culture, the different reactions of the so-called 'modernists' and 'evangelicals' to the development of 'dispensationalism'. Also cf. Marsden (1984:xv) for his association of leaders in well-known youth societies (he mentions all the known ones) with 'evangelicalism'. He calls these leaders 'card-carrying evangelicals'.

784. Root (2007:28); cf. Kett (1977) states: 'The first of several changes which were to affect Sunday School came in the 1820s when, under the impulse of evangelical revivals, Sunday School promoters began to emphasize the possibility of converting children *en masse* [...] Sunday Schools were now portrayed as divinely appointed instruments of the nation. (p. 117)' I have not researched this dimension in South Africa, but my limited knowledge and perceptions of this field are that exactly this also happened in South Africa, mainly under the influence of Scottish Pietism. Further research is needed to either confirm or refute this perception.

Urbanisation eventually asked for more. For many youth, now outside of a parental home, more was needed. As Root[785] pointed out, as to the USA, the coming and rise of the high school played a major role in the development of Youth Ministry. Children remained in their parental homes much longer (while at school), but they spent fewer meaningful hours with their parents:

> Whereas in the decades of agrarianism and apprenticeships, young and old worked side by side and skills were passed on through working together, in the high school young people spent most meaningful hours with their peers, away from the work of parents and other adults.[786]

He refers to a sentence in the work by Ueda[787] which states that: 'The high school institutionalized the peer society.'[788] This development in schooling plays a vital role in the development of Youth Ministry. Root,[789] in a footnote, even states that 'it must be recognized that without the high school, the concept of adolescence as a distinct stage of life would never have come to be.' He refers to a remark by Schweitzer[790] that one of the factors for the 'historically late emergence of adolescence as a distinct stage within the life cycle is the scarcity of educational institutions in the earlier history and cultures.'

It was in these cultural and almost socio-economic realities that the great youth movements like the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) were formed, typified by an attitude of

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785. Root (2007:32).

786. Root (2007:32).

787. Ueda (1987:120).

788. Root (2007:33) relates this phenomenon almost directly to Hall's (1908) coining of the concept of 'adolescence': 'Reflection on these experiences led psychologist G. Stanley Hall to assert that those in high school were not children and not yet adults, but adolescents.'

789. Root (2007:34, note 23).

790. Schweitzer (2004:43).

compassion.[791] Root[792] states that the main purpose was twofold: '[T]o reinforce Christian commitments and to protect young people from the perceived threats of menacing city life.' From the start, young people played a role in the inception of these societies. Twelve young people, with George Williams as their leader, began the YMCA.[793] In the 20th century it became more noticeable that the inception of youth leagues also featured an element of reaction to the existing adult community.[794] During the 19th, and for a great part of the 20th century, youth work was undertaken by societies. Sholund[795] writes about the USA that 'the period from 1830–1860 was fertile with ideas for youth groups, but this stirring was only a suggestion for the rapid birth of youth organizations following the Civil War.'

The most important of these organisations eventually found their way to South Africa. The YMCA, founded in 1844 in London, started in the USA and Canada in 1851, in 1853 in the Netherlands and in 1874 in South Africa.

Two other well-known societies, also with their roots in the USA, were founded at the end of the 19th century at the Cape: The *Christelike Jongeliede Vereniging* and the *Christelike Strewers*. The first was started at the initiative of Prof. Hofmeijr, and the latter, as far as we know, by Dr A. Bliss in Wellington, South Africa, in 1887.[796]

The founding of the *Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour*[797] is an important link in this brief historic account.

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791. Cf. Nel (1982:108); Schambardt (1955:5).

792. Root (2007:31).

793. Cf. Sholund (1968:61).

794. Cf. Schambardt (1955:5).

795. Sholund (1968:61–62).

796. Cf. Nel (1982:93–94).

797. In South Africa founded as the *Christelike Strewers.*

Around 1860, Dr Theodore Cuyler in Brooklyn, New York, NY, organised young people into a group within the congregation. Three 'ideas' guided the group: Men and women were part of it; they gathered weekly; and committees consisting of the youth prepared and presented spiritual programmes every week. Dr Francis Clark of the Williston Congregation Church in Portland, Maine visited Dr Cuyler and was so inspired that he launched the *Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour* in 1881. His frustration was that young people did not become 'vital members of the congregational life after initial conversion experiences. He and his wife searched for a way to engender commitment and continued involvement among the congregation's young.'[798] One of the main benchmarks was Bible studies led by the youth themselves.

This society was ecumenical and Protestant and opened the way for many churches to work together. In the words of Sholund:[799]

> Cuyler set a pattern that has been expanded in thousands of churches in America [...] The success of the Christian Endeavour societies was unprecedented as a religious movement. The time was ripe for such an effort.

From the end of the 19th century onward more and more churches began entering this ministry. Denominations began to build large and strong youth ministries and 'head offices'. In the words of Root:[800]

> By the 1920s most denominations had constructed their own youth societies, complete with curriculum and summer camps. Thus the youth society became a denominational activity, as denominational officials took responsibility for Youth Ministry.

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798. Root (2007:38).

799. Sholund (1968:62).

800. Root (2007:38).

Dean[801] described the Christian Endeavour movement as a:

> [*C*]oeducational, interdenominational, interracial, and international Christian 'youth club' model of Youth Ministry that virtually all major denominations copied – (and one that) sought to protect rural and small-town youth from the evils of urban life through 'meetings' that encouraged teenagers to practice the Christian behaviour they might later employ as adult church members.

These societies served adolescents well in the early 20th century. In order to make sense of the next movement in this history I quote from Root:[802] '[T]he 1930s foreshadowed the end of youth societies.' He especially mentions what may be called denominational ministries, to which he[803] refers as follows:

> In the 1920s and 1930s Youth Ministry was governed by large denominational bodies that provide youth societies to train young people and hold them accountable to the Bible. But in the 1940s and 1950s what became important was evangelistic engagement through nationalistic and relational strategies. The leadership of this new evangelistic engagement was not coming from denominational bureaucrats but from grassroots entrepreneurs, such as the founders of Young Life and Youth for Christ Nathan Hatch and Michael Hamilton explain: 'Para-church groups [had] picked the denominations' pockets, taking over denominational functions, inventing wholly new categories of religious activity to take into the marketplace, and the transmitting back into the denomination an explicit nondenominational version of evangelical Christianity.

This explanation, in addition to being informational, also challenges an almost innocent claim by para-church youth movements that they only 'started' because denominations did not do their part. This is indeed true, but the additional reason is the perception that denominations are probably not 'evangelical'

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801. Dean and Foster (1998:213).

802. Root (2007:39).

803. Root (2007:48).

enough. Root[804] continues by stating that 'from 1940 to 1960 the parachurch movement swept the nation and the primary model of relational ministry was unleashed.'

Almost as an interpolation I want to add an evaluative remark by Smith and Denton[805] to the fact that other people took over and made Youth Ministry entertainment:

> Congregational Youth Ministry over the last half century has undergone a seduction or abstraction from its own sense or place, from a sense of local history, indigenous theological perspectives, material conditions of particular communities, and the idiosyncratic wounds and signature gifts of local youth [...] Abandoned by its proper guardians – those more representative of its particular theological traditions and social contexts – Youth Ministry was left to roam from pillar to post, from parachurch organizations to Youth Ministry resource organizations-cum-corporations that eagerly accepted the role of surrogate parent – supporting, educating, and forming the imagination of local congregations, and ensuring the survival of Youth Ministry. The responsibility of developing the theory and practice of Youth Ministry shifted away from congregations, denominations, and their theological centers to these authorities.

In summary of the scene in the USA, I want to share the observations by Senter.[806] He discerns four cycles in the 'desire [in Youth Ministry] to create social settings in which young people would experience God.'

- 'In the first cycle of Youth Ministry (1824–1875), young people sought to encounter God through the organization of societies dedicated to the task [...].
- The second cycle (1881–1925) emphasised education as a means of experiencing God. Especially by the end of this cycle, youth societies took on educational functions and were compared with the approaches of progressive education [...].

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804. Root (2007:49). For a further discussion of a relational approach, see Part 3, Chapter 13 below.

805. Smith and Denton (2005:4, 5).

806. Senter (2010:xii–xiii).

- In the third cycle (1933–1989), youth fellowships became relational at their cores. This was especially apparent as parachurch agencies attempted to win the right to be heard by unchurched youth. In church-based youth groups, fellowship became the focus, and Christ's relationship with his disciples served as the model for Youth Ministry […].
- A transition to a fourth cycle of Protestant Youth Ministry began in the 1990s […] Clear descriptors of a fourth cycle have yet to emerge. Yet a desire among young people to experience God's presence persists, perhaps even intensifies, as young people continue to gather in Youth Ministry settings.'[807]

A closing remark to this section is necessary. Let me use the words of Dean:[808]

> The tension in Youth Ministry between protecting youth and empowering them still exists. The most promising models seem to be those that combine the protection of adolescents from premature adulthood with the empowerment of adolescents for ministry in their own right.

She continued by referring to the promising signs of Youth Ministry in 'ethnic-minority congregations', that to her mind have more holistic approaches[809] to Youth Ministry than some found in 'Euro-American congregations'.

■ Discernable influences: From the Netherlands and Germany

What follows below is no attempt to investigate the historical development of youth work in the Netherlands. This has already been done by Le Roux.[810] Yet it must be pointed out that events in

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807. Cf. also Yaconelli (2007).

808. Dean and Foster (1998:214).

809. Dean and Foster (1998) My interpretation of her words: viewing salvation 'of their youth as a matter of physical and economic as well as existential protection.'

810. Cf. Le Roux (1962:429–531).

South Africa, at least on a more philosophical level, followed developments of youth work in the Netherlands and to a great extent also in Germany[811] – and, as I have already tried to discern, the influences from the USA. Broadly speaking, developments (as documented) resulted in an ecclesiastical involvement with the youth and either an independent, or strongly church-related, youth movement or society.[812]

The church-related youth movement usually bears the name of organised youth work.[813] In the Reformed Church ('*Gereformeerde Kerk*') in the Netherlands there has long been the distinction between Reformed youth developmental work ('*gereformeerde jeugdvormingswerk*') and Reformed work of care for youth ('*gereformeerde jeugdzorgwerk*'). The first is understood to be the so-called 'voluntary work', or voluntary youth developmental work. This work is divided into two sections. In the first section baptised and other young professing members gather of their own accord, and the responsibility is borne by the youth themselves. This work is headed by a special board. The second part of this work has a strong evangelising nature and has at times been under the auspices of the Foundation for Evangelical Restoration ('*Stichting Evangelisch Herstel en Opbouw*').

'Reformed work of care for youth' is distinguished from the above in that it is directed at the youth coming from poor social conditions, from 'dubious' backgrounds and it therefore has a diaconal nature. This was also called special youth work or clubhouse work.[814]

The distinction between catechesis, as the official instruction by the church, and voluntary youth developmental work is also

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811. For a fairly recent study in Germany cf. Ueberschär (2003:24–36).

812. Cf. Nel (1982:109).

813. Cf. Schambardt (1955:22).

814. Cf. Firet and Van Riessen (1960:52ff.); Van der Made (1963:27).

maintained by Dijk.[815] These last-mentioned organisations intend to serve the church, yet their work 'is not church work'. Dijk says that one has to draw a sharp distinction between catechesis *and religious youth work in association with the church*. This did (and does) not mean that the church has ever been indifferent to this work. Schambardt[816] stated that the work is also part of the church's duty and that the congregation has to stimulate this work and help wherever possible. My own literature research, and many conversations with leaders on youth work in the Netherlands and Germany, confirms this. The work would, according to Schambardt,[817] be unthinkable without the background of a living congregation. The church also has a direct duty:

> [*T*]owards young people, a duty shared by the parents, a duty to be achieved through special care for (and attention to) young people, as well as help with work among young people, so that young people do not drop out of the line of generations, but live by the gospel. [author's own translation]

This special care, attention and aid has, as far as organised youth work is concerned, not gone much farther than local support and cooperation with the youth organisation in question. In the late Seventies, Borger[818] wrote that: '[C]hurch and youth work (organised) are both autonomous. Church and youth work have two distinguished functions. Each has its own domain and situation.'

Pastoral care for youth ('*jongerenpastoraat*') is seen as the duty of the congregation and is taken care of by the congregation, to a great extent this is still the situation today. During visits, for research purposes, to the *Landelijke Centrum voor Gereformeerd*

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815. Cf. Dijk (1954:21–22).

816. Schambardt (1955:23).

817. Schambardt (1955:21).

818. Borger (n.d.:133).

Jeugdwerk and to *De Evangelisch Alliantie*, new information was acquired. My impression was, however, that in some cases the cooperation between church and youth work had weakened and that now the distinction is sharper, and in some cases theologically rationalised.

According to information that was recently obtained from two colleagues deeply involved in Youth Ministry in the Netherlands, the situation is as follows:[819]

Youth work ('*jeugdwerk*') in the Netherlands is organised in many different ways. Organised youth work happens among others through para-church youth organisations like the 'Hervormd Gereformeerde Jeugdbond (HGJB)' and 'Youth for Christ' (YfC). The first mentioned, historically has had a close relationship with the organised church and this is still the case. YfC is a player that is related to the official church in a different way, not as close as the HGJB. Each denomination also has its own youth organisation.[820] In the case of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands this is called the Youth Organisation of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands ('*Jeugdorganisatie van de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland*'), this relationship is really close. Such church-related organisations cooperate with the para-church organisations. Personally, I differentiate between organised youth work on a national level and that on the local level. In local congregations, their own programmes and methods or the programmes and methods of the national organisations are used. Some congregations link up with a specific organisation while others would shop around for such programmes and material. On the local level a number of youth workers (volunteers)

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819. Information supplied by Dr Ronelle Sonnenberg (Coordinator Research Centre for Youth, Church and Culture, PThU, Amsterdam) and Dr Jos de Kock (Assistant Professor in Practical Theology [Education & Catechetics] at the PThU, Amsterdam). [The information supplied is freely translated from Dutch].

820. Cf. Zonne (2008:24–40).

are involved, who may or may not be involved in a national youth organisation.[821]

De Kock[822] shared the following: Each denomination has its own 'official' youth organisation or '*jeugdbond*', sometimes even two. In addition to this, youth work is done by many para-church organisations and particular initiatives ('*stichtingen*'). The picture is very diverse. While, some ten years ago, there was still a high level of loyalty in local churches toward the denomination's own organisation, these are now much looser relationships ('*losse verbanden*') and choices are made on pragmatic grounds.

The situation in Germany and the USA did not show such a direct influence on local traditional attitudes (at least, within Afrikaans-speaking churches in South Africa) as those of the Netherlands.[823] Today it may be just the opposite. The situation in Germany and in the USA is not entirely different. There are examples of strongly developed church youth work, but the youth work was (and still is) mostly done by societies. Societies like *YfC*, *Campus Crusade for Christ*, and *Young Life* are internationally developed and well-known.[824] What Corbett and Johnson[825] wrote is still valid today:

'[L]arge youth organizations emerged as the predominant form of this early Youth Ministry [...] these large organizations encompassed all of the youth activities of the church and developed into highly structured national bodies.'[826]

These organisations did, however, also (like the denominations) suffer setbacks during the youth revolution of the Sixties and

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821. See Sonnenberg (2017) Coordinator Research Centre for Youth, Church and Culture, PTHU, Amsterdam.

822. See De Kock Assistant Professor in Practical Theology (Education & Catechetics) at the PTHU, Amsterdam.

823. Cf. Le Roux (1962:429ff.); Naude and Strauss (n.d.:2, 4, 5).

824. Cf. Borgman (1987:61–74.).

825. Corbett and Johnson (1972:3–5).

826. Corbett and Johnson (1972:3–5); see also my summary above, using the work by Senter (ed. 2010).

Seventies. The reaction against the established churches had an effect on them as well. Adults that wanted to secure the permanence of the status quo maintained their support of these organisations in the hope that the youth would eventually remain in church.

This was also the case in Germany. The society was the primary structure and the latter, rather than the church, representing the ideal image of the Kingdom.[827] Böggeman's[828] summary of six authors' theoretic concepts of '*Jugendarbeit*'[829] also supplies an interesting historical overview of ideas on Youth Ministry in Germany. In nine statements, he outlines the characteristic distinctions on what is expected of Youth Ministry. The most important are that Youth Ministry should:

• cultivate communication in good style;
• bring about involved, critical enlightenment;
• cultivate abilities and the development of pursuits;
• supply phase-directed education and a visible connection with the community;
• be a mobilisation strategy;
• reinforce solidarity as an educational goal;
• be oriented towards competence and abilities.

No matter on which continent the youth groups and societies were, several qualities were responsible for their success. For instance:

• the fulfilment of the need for comradeship in the cities;
• the experience of belonging (most of the groups demanded some form of commitment or pledge);

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827. Cf. Seydel (1974:95).

828. Böggeman (1985:90–104).

829. It is worth noting that even in 2000 Höring (2000:22–26) prefers the concept '*Jugendpastoral*' over '*Jugendarbeit*'. His argument is that '*Jugendpastoral stellt eine alters-spezifische Facette kirchlichen Handelns dar.*' ['Pastoral care of youth almost assume an age-specific facet of congregational involvement']

- involvement with and responsibility for the planning and presentation of programmes;
- enthusiasm and hope prevailing in the group;
- democratic leadership in which the youth could share.[830]

The South African situation

In South Africa, the development followed along much the same lines, but it may be that there was more congregational involvement from the outset. For instance, the first Sunday School in South Africa was founded by the minister of the DRC in Cape Town, ds. A. Faure, from within the congregation.[831] The development of the *Kerkjeugvereniging* in the DRC, out of two existing societies, the *Christelike Jongeliede Vereniging* and the *Christelike Strewers,* also tells the story of direct and intentional church involvement.[832] In 1974 the General Synod of the DRC approved a groundbreaking report and recommendations that this church society would stop being a society with its own membership and that membership of the congregation (by baptism) would in itself be the only requirement for belonging to and being involved in a congregationally organised movement.[833]

Christian young people had to work together and fight together. From these motivations, large and strong denominational ministries grew. One of the largest in the world is the Southern Baptist Youth Ministry.[834] In South Africa the development of the Youth Ministry in the DRC tells a similar story.[835]

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830. Cf. Sholund (1968:63).

831. Cf. Greyling (1955:14–15); Nel (1982:85ff.) for a more comprehensive discussion of the development of Sunday school and/or catechesis in the Dutch Reformed Church.

832. Cf. Nel (1982:93–98).

833. The Afrikaans name was: *Kerkjeugaksie* [Church youth action or movement].

834. Cf. Borgman (1987:71); Ross (1988b:6–17).

835. Cf. Nel (1982:85–112).

The fact is that the churches intensely examined their youth ministries especially during the latter half of the century.[836] There has always been disquiet about the state of Youth Ministry. The viewpoint is still prevalent that Youth Ministry in the church is a stepping stone to a 'real' ministry.[837] This uneasiness is still shared today[838] – although it is indeed challenged. In 2010 Clark[839] wrote:

> In many ways, Youth Ministry has come of age. No longer seen as 'a stepping-stone to real ministry in the church', especially in North America, Youth Ministry is now seen as a viable career option.

In South Africa, Youth Ministry in many denominations still has a long way to go.[840]

It would seem that the need for able youth leaders is growing, but often the congregations want 'a single, dynamic person – usually male – who will serve at a low salary for a few years before moving on.'[841] These denominational ministries strongly rely on the vision and keen insight of para-church movements. Many full-time youth workers and ministers in congregations come from these movements.[842] This fact is not mentioned in a negative sense, but is important in its historical context.

In short it can be said that, in the course of history, several factors led to an undefined and unjustified distinction between

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836. Cf. for the results the deliberations of the Dutch Reformed church's report by the Jeugstudiekommissie (1966); in the Presbyterian church [USA], Little (1968); in the Lutheran church [USA], Gilbert (1969); in the Reformed church in the Netherlands, Heitink and Hogenhuis (n.d.).

837. Cf. Borgman (1987:72).

838. Cf. Ross (1989); Black (1991); Trimmer (1994); Bertolini (1994).

839. Clark (2010:ix); cf. also remarks made in the round-table discussion as reported on in Part 3, Chapter 16.

840. Cf. also Walker (2017); Aziz (2017) for their research on the place and role of fulltime youth workers in the United Methodist Church in South Africa and the Baptist Union in South Africa, respectively.

841. Cf. Borgman (1987:72–73).

842. Cf. for instance the examples of the successful group ministries in Veerman (1992:79ff.).

the responsibility towards the youth as regards the official ministry and catechesis on the one hand, and the so-called 'organised youth work' on the other. These distinctions can be explained historically, but history should not be used to maintain or even defend them. Below (Chapter 7) I will attempt to show that, for some time, another approach has developed and is still developing, but is also already well-established.

Teleological (the purpose of Youth Ministry)

The survival of a particular denomination has often been the purpose of a Youth Ministry. Dubose[843] shows, for instance how most denominations reacted during the so-called youth revolution (the late Sixties and early Seventies) and focussed on preserving their own. The youth then became an investment in the future of the church. According to such an approach, they were also called 'the future church'. As far back as 1964, Little[844] referred to this attitude as the 'future church heresy' and adds the fallacies of 'the numbers-game', 'street-cleaning', and the 'stop-gap'. Because of the complex history of Youth Ministry, one could expect many motives for the ministry over time – some

843. Dubose (1978:146).

844. Little (1968:15).

further from the mark, others closer.[845] It is important to note that the goal in Youth Ministry is closely, if not directly, related to its theological departure points. Someone with departure points different from mine may decide on goals different from those listed below.

■ Building the local church

In the theological account above, Youth Ministry is embedded in the more comprehensive concept of developing or building up a missional local church.[846] This is not the place to motivate and explain the concept and ministry. I have tried to do so in other publications.[847] It should be said, however, that God does want to build his people according to what he planned for them all along. He is busy doing exactly that, he works towards that goal. In his wisdom, he has made necessary 'arrangements' to empower the development or the formation of the congregation. In the final instance the congregation builds itself up under the guidance and by the gracious gifts of the Spirit.[848] To this end, God employs gifted people[849] in a special way. It is almost as if God loves the world too much to leave the congregation 'incapable' of or unprepared for its comprehensive contribution to God's coming to them and, through them, to the world. God is taking his Creation towards its final fulfilment. The movement towards the

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845. Cf. Böggeman (1985:90–109).

846. The subject field is called Congregational Studies or *Gemeindeaufbau* in German.

847. Cf. Nel (2015b). The book was first published in Afrikaans in 1994, translated in 2000, revised and updated in 2015.

848. Cf. Ephesians 4:1–16. Verse 16 is important here: 'From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.' (NIV).

849. In many traditions also referred to as the 'offices'; cf. for a more detailed discussion Nel (2015b:143–184); cf. also Hirsch and Catchim (2012) and Hirsch (2017) for the current discussion on what he calls APEST with reference to the five functions mentioned in Ephesians 4:12.

fulfilment, includes salvation that restores and heals. For this very reason, yes, for his glory, God is building his congregation. It is his will and his work. Our involvement in developing or building up a missional local church is to humbly and trustingly participate in what God is already doing: the *katartidzein* and the *oikodomein*[850] of his congregation. In this way, the purpose of the mystery is being revealed and executed in our time and society:

> With all wisdom and understanding, [(9)]he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, [(10)]to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment – to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.[851]

Youth are by nature of their initiation into the faith community incorporated into this dynamic plan of God for his congregation, and through it with the world:

> God's purpose with the congregation is also God's purpose with the youth as an essential part of the congregation. The purpose of youth ministry should be aligned with this purpose of God for us and with his church [*people*].[852]

Jürgensen[853] correctly writes that Youth Ministry is a factor in building up the local church if we take the tension between the realities of the Kingdom of God and the realities of the world in which we live seriously. The theological departure point of both Youth Ministry and building up the local church confirms this relatedness, and so too the challenge of empirical realities to the congregation and the youth in the community.[854] I am deeply convinced that if we do not relate the purpose of Youth Ministry

850. The two Greek verbs which are used for what is happening: preparing and building up respectively; cf. Nel (2015b:17ff.).

851. Cf. Ephesians 1:9–10 (NIV).

852. Nel (2000:64).

853. Jürgensen (1982:195–196).

854. Cf. Roadcup (1987:61–65); Mette (1987:228ff.).

to God's purpose for all his people, the congregation itself suffers and grows poorer. See the German quote in the footnote where it is stated so beautifully: Where we neglect the encounter with children, we lose more than the children themselves, we grow poorer in our faith and life.[855]

Developing a missional congregation or building up the local church is a ministry of growing together and searching together. In this ministry, the identity of the local church is decisive. The local church does not grow in order to become what it is not yet. In developing missional congregations, there is no mention of something 'produced' by the congregation itself. It is not something to be manufactured by us. God is building his church and it pleases him to incorporate his people and involve them in his work. Man believes because faith is given to him. Man acts with given willingness and ability:[856]

[12]Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed – not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence – continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, [13]for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

The congregation is what it is because of what God did in Christ and granted by means of the Spirit. What is now happening is the realisation of salvation received – it extends into the tips of our fingers and tongues. The Spirit draws the congregation into the process of developing into what we already are in Christ. This is what the Spirit does in the congregation. Due to disbelief and disobedience we can, however, resist it. Although we cannot bring it about, we work towards making it happen.

855. Spenn, Brandt and Corsa (2005:5; see also pp.5–8). The authors quoted the introductory sentence to a report that served before the 8th Synod of the Evangelische Kirche Deutschland in 1994: *'Kirche sollte den Reichtum entdecken, den sie met den Kindern und deren lebendiger Art des Glaubens in ihrer Mitte hat […]. Wo die Kirche sich der Begegnung mit Kindern entzieht, verliert sie mehr als nur diese Kinder. Sie verarmt auch selbst in ihrem Glauben und Leben.'*

856. Philippians 2:12–13 (NIV).

Growth as a goal is often found in youth literature.[857] The involvement of adults is also emphasised regularly. What is lacking is a more open approach where we, as a congregation, grow together. The reason for the deficiency may have been, and in some cases may still be, the 'autocratic' stance of many churches. There is, however, an obvious change taking place. More and more I find in overseas literature[858] the prepositions that I used way back in 1982[859] in my working formula: Youth Ministry is to, with and through the youth. These prepositions were probably first used by Little.[860] It is an attempt to grant the youth their self-reliance and maturity as part of a faith community. They may be young and as such their contributions may be less tested than those of older and more experienced members – but not less substantial. Their contributions are certainly not worth less, because they are for some reason considered to be a lesser part of the whole than the contributions of those who are older. The greater value of older people may be in the quality of the contribution and not in the quality of their humanity on the basis of age.

As far back as 1982, it was clear from the literature that insights were evolving worldwide that would help the church to discontinue her paternalistic attitude towards 'her own' children and adolescents.[861] Today these insights are generally accepted, sometimes not as insights from Scripture, but as a result of the democratisation of the youth. Whatever the motive, it is heartening to observe that these togetherness dimensions of

857. Cf. Potts (1977:43–56); Schweitzer ([1987] 2010:252–259) and his remark that education and training always have development as a goal; cf. also, Cannister (2013:33–71) and his description of transformation when ministering to teenagers.

858. Cf. for instance Black (1991:29).

859. Nel (1982:128).

860. Little (1968:17).

861. Cf. Nel (1982:141ff.); Te Winkel (n.d.:115–116); Bäumler and Krusche (1985:83–89).

Youth Ministry are finding a growing recognition by means of words like 'with, for, and to' or 'to, with and by' in descriptions.[862]

This approach fits developing or building up a missional local church like a glove. In developing or building up a missional local church, whatever happens to parents has to happen together with their children; what happens to older members has to happen together with the youth and vice versa. This 'together with' cannot and will not always imply a physical together with, yet the principle always applies. When this theory functions as a principle in deliberations and planning with them, the practical ministry with them becomes easier.

The first goal for Youth Ministry then is the participation, as part of the local church, in developing or building up a missional local church – aligning it with the will and plan of God for every congregation in its context. This means that all the goals for qualitative growth in the local church include and concern the youth as an integral part of the body of believers. Often these goals are set for the youth, leaving one with the question: Why not for the others too? Sometimes it works the other way around: Goals are set for older people, and then the question arises: Why not for the youth also? Examples here are the commendable goals set by Potts:[863]

- to lead the youth to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ;
- to meaningfully challenge the youth with the message of the Bible concerning their own experiences;
- to help the youth to think seriously and constructively about the consequences of God's Word;
- to train the youth to study the Bible enthusiastically, and to act self-reliantly according to the basic matters emerging from it;

862. Cf. Myers (1987:xvii); Black (1991:29); Trimmer (1994:20); Seibel and Nel (2010).

863. Potts (1977:49–53).

- to guide the youth through experiences which will help them to evaluate their insights and develop a 'Christ-centred view of life';
- to help the youth to honestly and openly deal with matters concerning the relationship faith and reason.

The latter goal was closely connected to the spirit of the Sixties when the so-called conflict between faith and reason in Youth Ministry was crucial.[864] But as to the rest – which of these goals would not apply to an older person? And if they were goals in some book on developing or building up a missional local church, which of them would not be applicable, as they stand, to the youth as well?

Cannister[865] also mentions 'building up the body' as being important in Youth Ministry. He does not refer to my work in this paragraph (as he did in discussing the modes of ministry), but argues the same case: 'Every teenager should be encouraged to become a fully contributing member of the body of Christ that is the local church.'[866] It is in the same vein that he argues for 'practices of the intergenerational church', stating that being intergenerational is more than a programme: 'Intergenerational ministry, however, requires an intentional interaction among generations that promotes the faith formation of all ages.'[867] He distinguishes, rightly so, between intergenerational and multigenerational:

> Most churches are multigenerational: many generations are represented [...] Such congregations strive to create ministries for children, adolescents, and adults, but they may not integrate these age groups. Intergenerational ministries strive to integrate multiple

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864. Cf. Little (1977:311–322).

865. Cannister (2013:136–145).

866. Cannister (2013:136).

867. Cannister (2013:136).

generations through meaningful conversations, interactions, and service on a regular basis.[868]

■ Making the Kingdom visible

It is liberating to realise that it is not the 'Kingdom of the church' but the Kingdom of God that is important. It puts our presence here on earth, our reason for existence as a local church, in a new perspective.

The church exists for the sake of the One who brought it into being. The church as the Creation of God in this dispensation is fully accountable to God. In essence the church should express the new humanity, recreated in God's image, which represents God on earth.[869] Heyns[870] is, to my mind, correct in reminding us 'that we will have to admit: the centre of Scripture is God's Kingdom, and the centre of this centre is Jesus Christ.'

This principle, and others related to it, is of more than academic importance for the goal of Youth Ministry. It is the guiding principle for the existence (identity) of the local church and for the functioning of the congregation in the service of the King and his Kingdom. Whenever one's hold on this principle is weakened in the least, the local church starts going off track, and the goal slowly degenerates into the upkeep of clubs of people that, for whatever reason, and sometimes for exclusively cultural reasons, want to remain members of the club. And before one knows, the goal is 'the Kingdom of a denomination or local church itself.'

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868. Cannister (2013:137); cf. Seibel and Nel (2010).

869. Cf also the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians; cf. also Nel (2015b:31, 56, 66, and many other pages – see limited index, p. 408); cf. also the theological lens of the kingdom of God on Youth Ministry in Part 1, Chapter 2 above.

870. Heyns (1978:28 [*author's free translation from Afrikaans*]).

The local church should never lose sight of this comprehensive *raison d'être* which is to be a symbol of the Kingdom – to the glory of the King and to the expansion of his realm. It is even more: The church is supposed to be a 'gestalt' of the Kingdom of God, a small and very imperfect 'example' of what life in the Kingdom is all about.

In Youth Ministry, this means cultivating a living relationship between the youth and the King, and a commitment to an ardent search for his Kingdom. This relationship is comprehensive and includes restoration in all its comprehensiveness. The term 'emancipation', often used for example, in the German theory on '*evangelischer Jugendarbeit*', often bears this meaning. The term has been borrowed from politics. In Youth Ministry, it refers to concretising the truths, the values of the Kingdom, like liberation from domination and self-reliant participation in the coming of the Kingdom. Among other things, it is about 'human freedom under Christ's rule'.[871] Bäumler[872] refers in this regard to the 'future of the Kingdom of liberty.' In the context of Youth Ministry, it is also the goal of education, which is not merely integration into the local community, but also participation in the emancipation of the community.

■ The *shalom* of the Lord

In the framework of the above-mentioned goal, Youth Ministry is committed to participate in the bringing about of the shalom Jahwe. In the OT, this well-known term refers to the well-being of people. It has strong material overtones,[873] and it also has a strong tie with health.[874] 'More commonly *shalom* referred to a

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871. Cf. Teschner (1982:161–173); Schanz (1982:153–160).

872. Bäumler (1982:61–67), quote on p. 65.

873. Cf. Judges 19; 1 Samuel 16; 2 Samuel 18.

874. Cf. for example Jeremiah 6; Isaiah 57; Psalms 38:3.

group, e.g. a nation enjoying prosperity.'[875] The very use of this word led to the conclusion that shalom is relational in nature and '*denotes* a relationship rather than a state.'[876] For the believer in Israel shalom was God's gift. The gift that brings about this well-being comes from Jahwe. While shalom also plays a strong role in the prophets, and while there is certainly an eschatological side to this peace, 'we are forced to say that in its most common use *shalom* is an emphatically social concept.'[877] In this regard, there is a strong link between God's righteousness and God's peace.[878] Fuellenbach,[879] in a good book on the Kingdom of God, states the meaning as follows:

> *Shalom* is one of those words in Scripture which cannot be translated literally. This word and its derivatives occur more than 350 times in the Old Testament. The root meaning of *shalom* in the Old Testament is 'to be sound', 'to be safe'. It means 'well-being' with a strong material emphasis.[880]

Unfortunately, it is true that the personal salvation of the individual has often been the main focus in goal-setting. This book does not want to underemphasise this objective, but it does want to give it a broader framework – that of the Kingdom and, more specifically, of the shalom of the King. Not only is it important for the youth as receivers of the ministry, but also for the youth as a part of the local church that ministers to each other and the world. The spirituality that pleases God is more than a fasting and praying without the acts of justice and righteousness. After all, one cannot call such feast and day 'a day acceptable to the Lord.'[881]

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875. Von Rad (1964:402).

876. Von Rad (1964:402).

877. Von Rad (1964:406).

878. Cf. Von Rad (1964:406); Quell (1964:177).

879. Fuellenbach (1995:167–173).

880. Fuellenbach (1995:167).

881. Isaiah 58:5 (NIV).

(6)Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? (7)Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

The goal for Youth Ministry is the shalom Jahwe within society. I believe Fowler's[882] emphasis on the 'public church' fits in with the emphasis above on the shalom of the Kingdom. The shalom Jahwe is no private matter, and in Youth Ministry children and adolescents should be helped again to attain to a new sense of personal and public religion.[883] Fowler[884] borrows the term *Ecclesiogenesis* from Boff[885] to explain what he means. It refers to the process of revitalising the local church from within and from the ground level. The description of such a public church and its primary goals is important in the context of goal-setting for Youth Ministry. Fowler[886] lists seven things crucial to building up or developing a public church or, in my terminology, to strengthen the shalom Jahwe with regard to the perspective of the Kingdom. Public church:

- fosters a clear sense of Christian identity and commitment;
- manifests a diversity of membership in congregations;
- consciously prepares and supports members for vocation and witness in a pluralistic society;
- balances, nurtures group solidarity within with forming and accountability in vocation of work and public life beyond the walls of the church;
- evolves a pattern of authority and governance that keeps pastoral and lay leadership initiative in fruitful balance;

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882. Fowler (1991).

883. Cf. also Hargrove (1983:76ff.).

884. Fowler (1991:173).

885. Boff (1986).

886. Fowler (1991:155–170).

- offers its witness in publicly visible and publicly intelligible ways;
- shapes a pattern of *paideia* for children, youth, and adults that works towards the combining of Christian commitment with vocation in 'public'.

The goal of Youth Ministry is always about preparing people who are entirely part of the local church to understand their personal and public responsibility, and about guiding them into accepting this responsibility. Fowler[887] shows in an excellent way that several modes of ministry can be used for this task, and how all can be linked to the stages of faith identified by him.

■ The *koinonia* of the Kingdom

Citizens have a share in the King as well as in the other citizens of the Kingdom. In the Kingdom, no person is an island, and no one can fully understand it alone, without the others. In the account of the goal of Youth Ministry under discussion in this paragraph the essential issue is not a validation of *koinonia*. There are enough elements of such a validation throughout this book. The emphasis here is on the important insight that we need Jesus Christ for *koinonia* within the Kingdom (and within the local church as a manifestation and sign of the Kingdom). Part of the secret of the Kingdom to be revealed in the local church (as it can be expected nowhere else in this world) is that people are one in Christ, though they may differ radically. This is the challenge to the church according to the NT.[888] Admittedly, there is not a perfect model, but the radical nature of this unity is one great proof of what God meant his congregation to be:

887. Fowler (1991:173–197).

888. Cf. once again the letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians.

> His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,[16]and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.[889]

The 'two' in the above quotation refers to believers with Jewish background and believers with a 'gentile' background. But one needs Christ for this kind of *koinonia*. There is 'community' for which one does not need Christ. It may be good and enriching in itself, but even without Christ it is still there. It can be community constituted by a specific culture, language, sport, among others.

In the *koinonia* within the Kingdom as a goal in Youth Ministry, it is about much more. For real *koinonia,* we all, young and older, need Christ. To align oneself with the mind of the King one needs redemption of the *koinonia* of the Kingdom. You are born into this new family.[890] The very existence of the adult section of the local church, where children and adolescents grow up, should express this quality of *koinonia*. When the youth perceive it happening before their eyes, it becomes almost a built-in goal of Youth Ministry. And yet it should also be an explicit part of the formulated goals.

The importance of this aspect of the goal of Youth Ministry cannot easily be overstated in a diverse society like the one we have in South Africa. The local church is the bearer of this 'revealed' mystery in Christ, through the Spirit and Word:[891]

> With all wisdom and understanding, [9]he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, [10]to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment – to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. [11]In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, [12]in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. [13]And you also were

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889. Ephesians 2:15–16 (NIV).

890. Cf. the Johannine literature for this dimension, for example John 3.

891. Ephesians 1:9–11 (NIV).

included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

When the adults are liberated and understand that Christians are redeemed to be one in Christ, we stop looking for reasons why we should or need not to be one. In doing so, we may find ourselves resisting the work of the Spirit of Christ towards the unity of his congregation. In letting go of our resistance, we discover that the *koinonia* of the Kingdom is as important to the congregation as the holiness within the Kingdom is and should be.[892]

■ *Diakonia* out of love for the King

Diakonia is part and parcel of *koinonia*. The above-mentioned quality of *koinonia* includes *diakonia*.[893] Service, as integral to our discipleship of Christ, is to a great extent more than a goal; it is part of the way the congregation exists. It is the true identity of God's people. The local church follows, like pupils, the *diakonos*. In relationship with him and from his Word, the local church learns daily what service really means. To state it in terms of John's theology, with Jesus one learns that *diakonia* means giving yourself. It is called 'self-giving service'.[894] *Diakonia* is also a desirable part of the identity and goal of the local church. In giving our lives, we find life. The well-known 'law of the grain of wheat' is a gripping and inspiring example. While not serving (giving yourself), man remains 'alone', without fruit:[895]

> (23)Jesus replied, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. (24)Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. (25)Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who

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892. Cf. also Philippians 1:27–2:10.

893. Cf. Nel (2015b:117–159 and more specific pp. 128–140).

894. Shelp and Sunderland (1981:226).

895. Cf. John 12:24 (NIV).

hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. [26]Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

In the OT, too, it is God who shows his people through his actions what doing good means, and then asks them to 'walk in all his ways'.[896] Serving while following, and as part of our following, is part of the quality and joy of life for a Christian. Within the local church, it should be clear that life becomes fruitful when you share it with others. In the rhythm of giving and receiving in true *koinonia* lies the germ of true fulfilment in life.

As a goal for Youth Ministry, this matter affects the education of the congregation as a whole – and the youth as an essential part of it – towards *diakonia* out of love for the King. Greater joy no one knows, and no one has greater love.

◼ Good news people: People who make a difference

This dimension is an essential part of the perspective of the Kingdom. Society urgently needs believers that can make a difference to the brokenness within ourselves and in the world. This difference is not made by believers, because they are good. The difference is that they know who God is, they know him, love, trust, and serve him. No one can do this of his or her own accord. To be God's very own people, and in that sense, being different from the other (our holiness), is a status bestowed on believers. This is part of the identity of the local faith community. Believers hear this in almost every letter of the NT. In this 'belonging to God'[897] lies the distinctness and 'separateness' of God's people. Being in Christ (and in this sense, distinctly different), is the way in which we are in the world. The presence of believers in the world becomes, on

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896. Cf. Deuteronomy 10:12–22; Micah 6:4–8; Van der Woude (1976:210–220).

897. Cf. for example Philippians 1:1–11.

the basis of this bestowed distinctness, an involvement with the world in the name of – on behalf of – God. We are different in the sense that we are (in Christ) what we should have been and were supposed to be: people created in God's image, his representatives.[898]

While believers outwardly resemble unbelievers, and experience and do the same things as other employees and employers, they are present in the world in a different way. They have the calling to say and do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and give thanks to God the Father.[899] From the context of this expression, it is clear what this saying and doing consist of. Among other things it entails that the believers will work wholeheartedly, not to be seen by people, but by the Lord.[900] Believers believe in what they do. They are different from this world, different in their attitude towards working for their daily bread. It affects productivity, labour ethics, giving aid, forgiveness, deeds of righteousness and unity. It affects life in all its aspects. The believers serve (work) to heal, to restore. They are proud and hardworking representatives of the only true God and his healing gospel – this is the test of our sincerity, of our discipleship.[901]

The purpose of Youth Ministry is to train the youth as an integral part of the local church that makes a difference. No country, especially not South Africa, can afford to have so many Christians without their presence having a visible and practical effect on its schools, universities, factories, streets, residential areas, farms, managerial and governmental bodies. Something is amiss if this does not happen in a country where so many people declare in a census that they are loyal to Christianity. Christians, the people of the Kingdom, make a difference. This is the local

898. 1 Peter as notable example of what it meant in a world that they as Christians did not even have the 'right' to speak about the Good News.

899. Cf. Colossians 3:17.

900. Colossians 3:23.

901. Cf. Armstrong (1979); Aldrich (1987); Bosch (1991).

church's calling. The local church 'owes' people of quality to the cosmos and Youth Ministry is directed at 'producing' local church members of this quality.

In short, determining the purpose of Youth Ministry boils down to comprehensively develop the missional local churches as servants within the Kingdom of God that has come and is yet to come. This purpose is more than a particular end result. It is like the second coming of Christ. This is what the local church has in view, and this is the destination of its journey. And yet it is more than an 'until then'. It is also the congregation's 'because'. Because Christ is coming, we will persevere until he comes. Because we as a local church are serving the Kingdom of God that has come and is yet to come, we persevere until we are, much more than at present, a local church serving the Kingdom. Those who understand the fact that the coming of the Kingdom is also the glorification of God are motivated by the highest purpose life can afford man on earth and in eternity: *Soli Deo Gloria!*

A comprehensive and inclusive approach

◼ A choice against the traditional distinction

'To my mind there is no argument that holds water for the preservation of the traditional dichotomy between youth ministry as a duty of the'[902] ecclesiastical offices, on the one side, and Youth Ministry as organised forms of working with youth that are not part of the ministry of catechesis.[903]

> Young people [*youth*] are not just partly the congregation's responsibility, they are wholly so. The essence of God's dealings and relationship with people– and especially with those in the community of believers [*yes, God's covenant with the faithful*] - makes such a distinction indefensible.[904]

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902. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

903. Cf. Kemp (1963:138, 275).

904. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

Youth Ministry is simply part of a comprehensive ministry of the congregation. It includes more than simply the organised efforts of some or other institution that, in some or other association with the congregation, organises the youth. Beyer[905] is correct in stating that Youth Ministry (*Jugendarbeit*) is part of the total congregational ministry and not a separate entity. It is part of the whole and not the whole as such, although it is equally true that the whole is never complete without Youth Ministry. Dean[906] mentions, even in 2011, that it is still 'common for congregations (and seminaries) to consider Youth Ministry as either a tool for evangelism or *as a subarea of Christian Education'* [*author's added emphasis*]. The whole is the congregation, and of this whole the youth and Youth Ministry are a vital, integral and important part. Therefore, Youth Ministry cannot simply be 'moved' to the youth's free time.[907]

■ A few consequences

'[B]efore a case for a comprehensive and inclusive approach to Youth Ministry is argued, a summary of the'[908] one conclusion and three consequences of the theological justification given above[909] is necessary:

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905. Beyer (1978:7).

906. Dean (2011a:20).

907. It should be mentioned that several terms have been used in the course of history for this ministry. When discussing the historical departure point in Chapter 4 I have already referred to several of these. Of the most familiar are youth work, youth care*, Jugendpastoral* (Bleistein 1976:74), and developing young people (*jeugdvormingswerk*). In this book, I have chosen the concept 'Youth Ministry', which I deem to be comprehensive. It is most commonly used in the Anglo-Saxon world to describe this ministry. The term 'youth work' has also been used for 'Youth Ministry'.

908. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

909. Cf. Part 1, Chapter 1.

◼ Conclusion: Youth are an integral part of the faith community

The congregation should never think of faith life and experiences of children and adolescents as something separate from the faith life and experiences of the adult members:

> People do not need to reach a certain age before God becomes interested in them and starts working with and through them. Youths are part of the congregation's service to God because they share in God's relationship with his people (the covenant) and are incorporated into the congregation [*local church*].[910]

◼ Consequence 1: Though unique, never separated from the rest of the faith community

The preceding point means that youth are not:

> [*A*] separate group within the congregation. Even though they are unique and have distinct characteristics, they are not apart [*or separated from the rest*]. The relationship of God with the believers and their children, as well as the nature of the congregation [*local church*] as something created by God, makes this impossible. So although the youths, because of their distinct nature, require and need to receive specific attention, they should still be approached and ministered to as essential members of the congregation.[911]

Where this sense of wholeness is lacking, the parts may degenerate into counterproductive youth programmes.

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910. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

911. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

■ Consequence 2: Youth should nowhere, ever be ignored

Nowhere in the congregation can the youth be neglected or ignored. The local church does not consist only of adults, as it does not consist merely of youth:

> The youths have to be incorporated into every line of thought and received into every part of the ministry. They have to be taken into account, regardless of the type of ministry on the agenda.[912]

■ Consequence 3: Youth are the responsibility of the whole faith community

The youth are the local church's responsibility.[913] Children and adolescents are not simply the charge of a few people who love and understand them and want to help them – how well these people might mean. They are the responsibility of the parents,[914] the Sunday School teachers, the elders, the deacons, the membership, as well as the responsibility of one another as youth themselves. 'This responsibility is inalienable and not transferable.'[915]

These premises have been stated over many years by a number of renowned people. The well-known Bonhoeffer,[916] in his eight theses on youth work, already stated the same departure points. He rejects the existence of something like a church youth league because its very existence discredits the cause of the

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912. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

913. Cf. Smart (1954:13–17).

914. Smart (1954:180) said it well: 'They too must share in the new life that had come to the parents.'

915. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

916. Bonhoeffer (1960:292–293); cf. also Root (2014a:117ff.)

church. Beyer,[917] too, thinks that the idea of the youth 'and' the congregation should change to the youth 'within' the congregation. Little[918] is of the same opinion and states that they are a part of the 'ministering body of Christ' 'now'. For some reason this comprehensive approach is not easily and readily accepted by the local churches. One of the reasons may be that in theological faculties 'Youth Ministry' is still taught:

> [*A*]s a kind of supplement to catechesis (and in Anglo [*English*] circles, to Christian education). As long as the whole is reduced to a part, even the part – in this case, education/catechesis - will not come into its own.

■ How should a comprehensive and inclusive approach be understood?[919]

■ God comes to his people[920]

God approaches people and his Creation in many ways. He does so also and mainly by means of other people. Man's creation and his recreation in Christ makes him accountable to his Creator as representative. God approaches and meets people primarily through the Spirit, the Word, and the ministry of people. The sovereign God can, however, approach and meet people in any way he pleases. All our attempts to understand ministry (pastoral mediation and pastoral role fulfilment)[921] are attempts to explain God's coming by means of his Spirit, his Word, and people's service. As such, our insight and wording are limited and incomplete. That God approaches people by means of people is

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917. Beyer (1978:7).

918. Little (1968:11).

919. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

920. For a more in-depth discussion on what ministries are about and more on this subject cf. Nel (1994:27ff.; 2009a; 2015b:63–79).

921. Firet (1986:15).

something the Bible shows quite clearly. How this coming of God is to be understood, is the question Practical Theology is trying to answer.[922]

One such an attempt is to investigate the ways in which God approached people in Scripture. In Practical Theology, it is now generally accepted that one way of referring in a comprehensive way to this coming of God is by saying that the communication of:

> [*T*]he gospel is primarily about the kingdom of God that has come and is yet to come. [*In this way, it is affirmed that God's coming is basically good*.] He God comes to people by means of the gospel; furthermore, God includes the people to whom he has come and is yet to come in the very act of bringing the kingdom to us.[923]

With this complex phenomenon[924] of the coming of God as starting point, Practical Theology is trying to describe how this coming takes place. It is tempting to go much deeper into this 'encompassing' issue of ministry. Someone who has given great parts of his life in studying and writing about this is the late Ray S. Anderson. Two of his publications specifically deal with 'Ministry'.[925] Of great importance at this point in my argument is his description of 'A Practical Theology of Ministry'.[926] Below I will refer to his work a number of times.

God came to us in Christ,[927] God is coming to us through 'the praxis of the Spirit and a theology of liberation',[928] God is coming

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922. Cf. Part 1, Chapter 1.

923. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

924. Firet (1986:39).

925. Anderson (1979; 2001); cf. also for another discussion on ministries in the church Ross, Bingemer and Murray (2010).

926. Anderson (2001:61–76).

927. Anderson (2001:47–60).

928. Anderson (2001:102, see also pp. 102–112).

to us and through us 'through the church and its ministry'.[929] Root[930] is correct in drawing our attention to how serious this understanding of ministry is. In his chapter on 'A Christopraxis Practical Theology of the Cross'[931] he wrote:

> And what has to be emphasized is that this ministerial action is not God's simple transcendent function (God's hobby), it is not naively asking what God is up to as if it were an obvious catchphrase or trivial knowledge – Christopraxis is much deeper than this. Rather, *ministry as the act of God is the event of God's being*[932] coming to humanity; this being is always becoming because this being is always moving and active. It is, then, the *event* of God's moving that makes ministry an ontological encounter of the divine with the human; it is the infusing of time with eternity, the making of the event in history the place of the transcendent God's becoming. *Gods' being as becoming is God's very ministry, God's giving Godself to humanity so humanity might be with God.*[933]

Dean[934] refers to what is described above as 'God's grace in human practice'. And, God's coming must be given a name or names.

■ Giving names

It is almost generally accepted that the church participates in the witness about Jesus Christ. The Gospels are about what happened in Christ. The church is the witness of these Christ events. The Lord Christ himself is a witness in his person and work – in a sense he is the first witness. The apostles and the first congregation are the first witnesses of his life and work, the Lord's crucifixion, Resurrection, and ascent. Their witness about the Witness (God)

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929. Anderson (2001:113–131).

930. Root (2014b:94).

931. Root (2014b:87–115).

932. Italics by Root.

933. Italics by Root. Root (2014b:94 note 16) refers to and even quotes in a footnote Jüngel (2001:14–15, 30).

934. Dean (2004:151–157).

becomes the message of the Early Church. In this way, their witness continues to be the witness about Jesus. By this I do not in the least mean to disparage or oversimplify problems the exegetical sciences experience in their attempts to analyse and understand this witness. However, what what is important here is to state that the church's primary ministry is the *marturia* of Jesus Christ.[935] Whatever names are given to the ways in which God comes to people, these ways of coming are a participation in the *marturia* of Jesus Christ.

With reference to Moltmann, and in agreement with him, Osmer[936] motivated ministries by referring to them as a way in which a missional congregation participates in what God did in Christ (Figure 7.1).

CORRESPONDENCE

Christ's fivefold office

Prophetic
Priestly
Transfigured
Royal
Open fellowship

Congregational Christopraxis

Marturia
Diakonia
Doxology
Didache
Koinonia
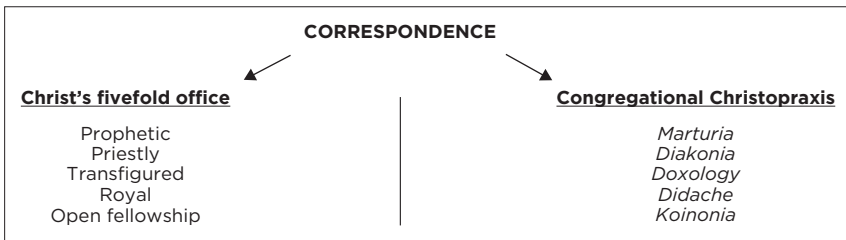
Source: Osmer (2005:222).

FIGURE 7.1: Correspondence between Christ's redemption work and the congregation's participation.

To be fair to this important input, I quote:

In *The church in the power of the spirit*, Moltmann develops his ecclesiology in conjunction with a highly creative reworking of the traditional Reformed doctrine of the *munus triplex*, a way of looking at the 'work' or 'mission' of Christ in terms of the threefold office as prophet, priest, and king. Looking at Moltmann's reworking of the *munus triplex* will provide a helpful link between his Christology in *The way of Jesus Christ* and his fuller description of the church in

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935. Cf. Firet (1986:40ff.).

936. Osmer (2005:222); for the detail of the Moltmann sources that he refers to, see the Bibliography.

The church in the power of the spirit. An important part of Moltmann's reappropriation of the *munus triplex* is his addition of two new dimensions to his description of Christ's mission: Christ as transfigured humanity and Christ as friend. Thus, we find correspondence between Christ's work of redemption and congregations' participation in this work. While this fivefold office of Christ in '*The church in the power of the spirit*' does not precisely parallel Moltmann's treatment of the five dimensions of Christ's 'way' in *The way of Jesus Christ*, I find enough similarities to warrant a reworking of this concept to bring it in line with his later Christology. My purpose here is twofold: (1) to provide a Christologically grounded, normative perspective on the Christopraxis of congregations; and (2) to offer an account of the core practices of congregations that embodies this Christopraxis.

Traditionally 'God's ways of coming by means of his Word and by means of people's'[937] ministry is listed under seven headings. In Figure 7.2 I have added an eighth. In developing or building up a missional local church as well as a Youth Ministry the ministry of *kubernesis* plays an important role:

In all eight ministries it's about serving God, serving one another and serving the world – in all cases, as a community of the faithful. In this way every designated mode of God's coming is founded on God's communicative involvement in the church and the world.[938]

The names traditionally given to these modes are used in Figure 7.2.

Several attempts have been made to cluster these ministries. The most general one is as shown in the last line in Figure 7.2. Firet[939] himself described *kerugma, didache,* and *paraklesis*, but admits that all three represent a cluster of other terms that belong together. Whether to cluster and how-to cluster, is basically a methodological question. What is important here is the recognition that ministry has different nuances or modes. Even though some ministries have related meanings, there is a unique dimension to God's coming in each of them – a dimension

937. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

938. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

939. Firet (1986:39ff.).
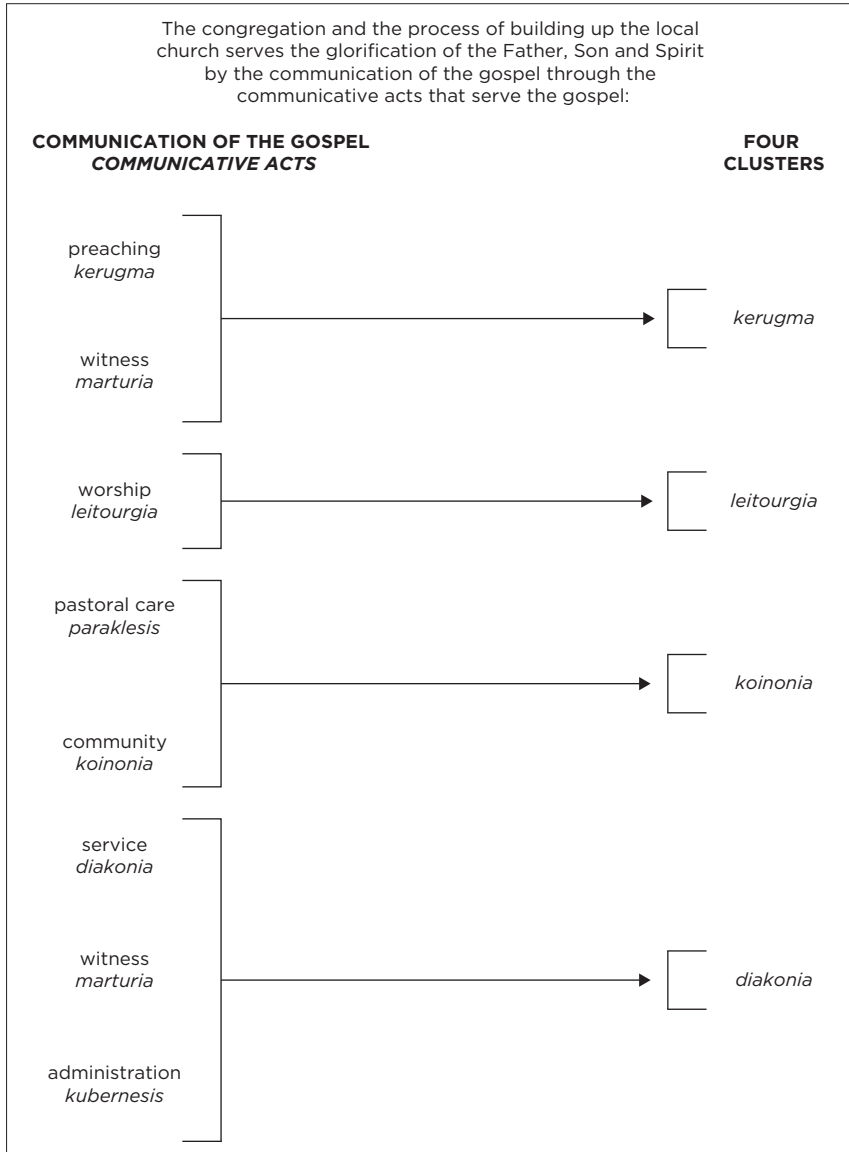
Source: Nel (2015b:71).

FIGURE 7.2: Designated modes of God's coming.

that asks to be distinguished, no matter what name it bears and what that name may communicate in a specific language. It is this unique dimension of each ministry that must be rediscovered again and again in the context of Scripture where this ministry is referred to. And what is even more important in the context of this approach is that the totality of ministry also applies to the youth (children and adolescents). No matter what names are applied to God's modes of coming, God comes in these ways (and also in ways as yet undiscovered and unnamed in theology) to and through the youth. Cannister[940] refers to Fields[941] who discern 'five components of comprehensive ministry: *worship, discipleship, evangelism, fellowship, and ministry*' [*emphasis in original*]. Cannister refers with appreciation to my description and explanation, but considers it to be 'overwhelming' and overlapping. I respect this remark, but hope that I have explained to some satisfaction, what is meant by 'interwovenness' in this context.[942] It should also be mentioned that what Fields described is not so much what I mean by modes of ministry, but rather are meant to be understood within the 'purpose-driven' paradigm – the 'Five purposes of Youth Ministry'.[943] Dean[944] discerns six such, in her words, 'practices' (acts). Without mentioning it, she covers 'shepherding' (*paraklesis*) under *koinonia*. Her diagram is of great importance. In a way, all the ministries revolve revolve around the *marturia* as, in her words, 'witnessing to the self-giving love of God in Jesus Christ.'[945]

I find myself quite at home with the traditional names given to the ministries, but less at home with certain clusters that boil

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940. Cannister (2013:17–19).

941. Fields (1998:43–54).

942. Refer to the section 'The interwovenness of the ministries' below.

943. Fields (1998:43).

944. Dean (2004:153–154).

945. Dean (2004:154); cf. also Fowler (1991:178–188) for his discussion of five dimensions in 'forming personal and public faith': *kerugma, leitourgia, koinonia, diakonia, paideia.*

down to fastidious selection, and even less when such choices, for whatever reason, represent certain ministries as more important than others and when these choices are rationalised theologically.[946] This book is an attempt to give every ministry its due from beginning to end. If all the ministries do not receive equal attention, it is because of the limited nature of this publication.

Add one more thought to this: Whatever the name given to a ministry, it is not the ministry as such that is coming: God is coming to us and through us to one another and his world – and his coming has been given names.

Finding a place

An important premise is that Youth Ministry is not a separate or additional mode of God's coming to the youth. In the table above (Figure 7.2), there is therefore not a ninth ministry:

> Youth ministry is not about finding an extra place for yet another ministry, but about finding a place for the youth within every ministry, and among the people at whom the ministries are directed: the people to whom God comes by means of the ministries.[947]

Therefore, it:

> [/]s more about finding a place for children and adolescents than about dreaming up new modes of ministry. The modes of ministry are largely fixed [*to a great extent 'a given'*], and as such they should be studied and developed as far as possible.[948]

Whatever is described and discovered in these ministries is relevant to the youth. Every ministry has relevance for the youth. Every ministry contains rich potential for Youth Ministry. The task in Youth Ministry, as is the case in developing or building up

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946. For a discussion of such possibilities cf. Nel (1994:9–27; 2015b:70ff.).

947. Nel (2000:83).

948. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

a missional local church, is not to study and describe the ministries as such. The scientific work done in homiletics, liturgy, pastoral care, *diakonia*, et cetera is not repeated.

> Rather, the task is twofold – to sensitise every discipline of ministry for its relevancy to the youths (as part of the whole) [*on the one hand and, on the other*] to rediscover and [*re*]define the place of the youths as part of the congregation [*local church*]. The question then becomes, how can theology and the congregation [*local church*] (in which theology functions) become more sensitive to and aware of the youths? [*and, how the youth can become more sensitive to and aware of theology and the local church as a whole?*].[949]

One could call it 'finding a place'.

It is worthwhile to return for a moment to a remark made by Dean[950] as to the above issue. She also states that Youth Ministry is almost implied in all ministries in discussing the following:

• the agreement among youth ministers that 'relationships, evangelism and discipleship are important for contemporary Christian youth work';
• and how Youth Ministry was used 'either as tool for evangelism or as a subarea of Christian Education.'

She wrote: 'What makes Youth Ministry distinctive is not its form, but its flock. Ministry with young people is, after all, *ministry* – not so different from ministry with anybody else.'[951] She then continues to emphasise what I call, below, differentiation because of the unique flock. In her words:

> [*Y*]outh ministry serves as a laboratory where we can learn to contextualize ministry. When we walk alongside young people as Christ's representatives, we become incarnational witnesses, people who must use our own lives to 'put wheels on the gospel' for the flock at hand.'[952]

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949. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

950. Dean (2011a:20–21).

951. Dean (2011a:20).

952. Dean (2011a:20).

■ The interwovenness of the ministries

Firet[953] made a meaningful contribution to Practical Theology. He not only served the reflection on a workable terminology (conceptualisation) and scientific basis for the subject, but also opened our eyes to the interwovenness and interdependence of the differentiated modes of ministry. There is *didache* and *paraklesis* in the *kerugma*, and vice versa. Although *kerugma* is the central mode of preaching, it does not follow that preaching contains no *didache* and *paraklesis*.[954] This is not only true of the three forms of ministry discussed by him, it is true in all ministries. In an attempt to demonstrate this, the diagram used to explain developing or building up a missional local church is given in Figure 7.3.

In Figure 7.3 the ministries are separated by means of dotted lines to symbolise their interwovenness. The ministries are interwoven and function in an interwoven way. Developing or building up a missional local church is just such an attempt to integrate and coordinate the ministries.[955] In order not to create the impression that the ministries are limited on the outward side, the outer circle is also a dotted line – merely to symbolise that no mode of God's coming can, in any way, be captured and confined. In God's coming, the wind indeed blows wherever it pleases. This does not mean that God acts in an uncontrolled fashion and that his acts cannot be studied and described. But it does mean that no one has ever described them in full, let alone controlled them. We do not manage God's coming. We describe it and participate in it. God and his acts are not captured by words or churches in the sense that

953. Firet (1977; 1986).

954. Firet (1986:82ff.).

955. Also cf. Marais (2018) for detailed research among pastors concerning the integration and coordination of all ministries.
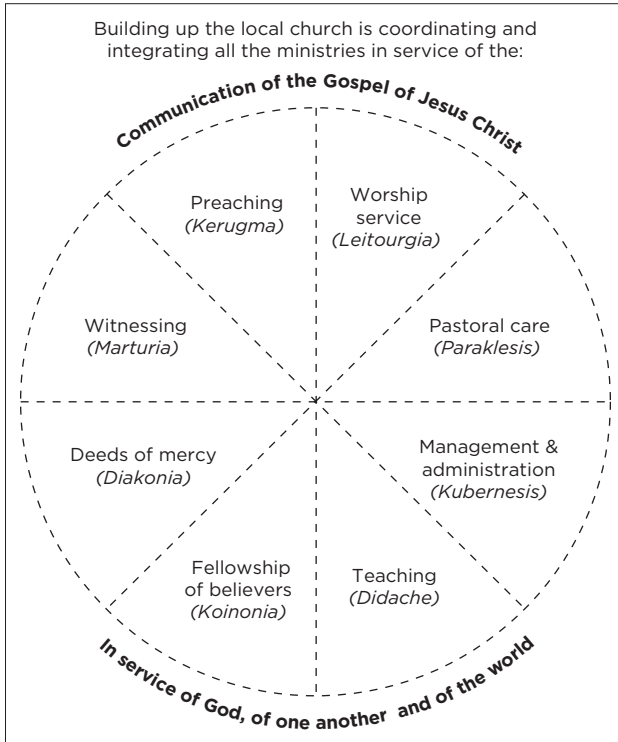
Source: Taken from Nel (2015b:78).
FIGURE 7.3: Developing or building up a missional local church.

we can master them. Our formulations as well as our ministries are preliminary and incomplete.

The interwovenness and the differentiation should be preserved. The differentiation within the interwovenness lies in the fact that a different mode is central in each form of ministry.[956] In this way the uniqueness of each ministry and the interwovenness of the ministries, are seen as basic premises in this chapter and approach.

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956. Cf. Firet (1986:89).

◼ Comprehensive, inclusive congregational ministry

There is no single theological reason why that which is valid for adults, in the sense that they need this or that, is not valid in the same way for the youth. Ministry is also meant for them, and then within and as part of the local faith community. It is time for us, once and for all, to lay to rest the era where adults miss:

> [*T*]his comprehensive and inclusive perspective. Though there should be differentiation – as discussed in the next paragraph – the first step is to establish a comprehensive and inclusive perspective on ministry. There is quite enough proof that the traditional idea of youth work grew out of and was fed by congregations, parents, Sunday school teachers (catechists), ministers, elders and deacons [*who did not succeed in taking the youth into account in, and as part of the local church*].[957]

Strommen[958] shows how the impersonal approach in the Lutheran church (in itself a reaction to historical events) led to a formal, impersonal, intellectualised approach to the youth by the 1860s – at about the time when many youth leagues came into being. As far back as 1908, a youth committee wrote: 'We look forward to the day when we have only the devil and not also our church fathers to fight.'[959] Such an approach is counterproductive to a comprehensive, inclusive congregational ministry and to differentiation as such.

The absence of such a comprehensive and inclusive congregational approach (where the youth are accepted as an integral part of the local church and where Youth Ministry is integral to the total ministry of and in the local church):

> [*H*]as often led to a negative evaluation of the congregation by children and adolescents.[960] In such a case the youths often seek

957. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

958. Strommen (1963:3).

959. Strommen (1963:4).

960. Cf. Brierley (1993:89–168).

to meet their spiritual needs and worship elsewhere – historically in the youth organisations. The matter of identification with the congregation, which is so crucial to teaching, is important here[961] [– *and is what youth miss in this divisional approach*].[962]

It can be said with a great deal of confidence that 'youth work' in its traditional forms was fed not only by the Industrial Revolution and the consequent cultural changes. It was also fed by the inability of adults and churches or congregations that could not (or would not?) change or adapt old traditional forms and thought patterns in order to integrate the youth meaningfully into the local church and minister to them as part of the whole. In a sense the church culture, on the one hand, was too paternalistic and legalistic to open up, and on the other hand, too evangelically-individualistic to appreciate the whole. Some would call it the legacy of the individualistic spirituality of Pietism. While this may be true to a point, it is not that simple either.[963]

In Reformed theology the question remains whether the traditional attitudes were not, at least in part, the result of the encyclopaedic categorisation of theology by Kuyper. In his work, some functions belong to the duties of the 'institute' while others, like evangelism, are the duties of the 'organism'.[964] Yet the fact remains that this idea led to a worldwide loss of the youth (especially adolescents) in churches.[965] All communities, countries and denominations were affected by it, some only sooner than others. During the American youth revolution, Louis Cassels[966] wrote, on the basis of what young people themselves were saying, that the church was losing them because of cold

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961. Cf. Sibley in Gilbert (1969:124ff.); Van der Ven and Berger (1976:20).

962. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

963. Cf. Marsden (1995:303; 2006:232–236).

964. Cf. Te Winkel (n.d.:8, 9).

965. Cf. Droege (2017) for his research suggesting that it may be this lack of holistic thinking and ministry that might be partially behind the decline in mainline churches.

966. Cassels (1973:8, 9).

worship services, lack of involvement and phoniness.[967] In my own country, South Africa, the question is whether we are not, for the first time in our history, involved in a similar kind of revolution?[968] Under the former government untill 1994 cultural groups were stabilised in an artificial way, and the disappointment of the 'young people [youth] in the adult section of the church seldom led to a large-scale withdrawal from catechesis.'[969] Yet it did lead to uninvolved spectators among a significant percentage of the youth who were sometimes still under the pressure of the traditional church culture. Consequently, many young people 'departed' after they had done what the community expected of them: confirmation.[970] It was almost as in Germany where this same phenomenon was often referred to as 'confirmation out of the church':

> After 1994, everything has changed in South Africa. Disillusioned white young people find it more and more difficult to see the past through the eyes of those who [*helped*] shaped [*the past*] it.[971]

Frustrated as well as unrealistic expectations of the youth in formerly disadvantaged communities are not less serious. The test for the churches concerning ministry to the youth has probably just begun.

Churches are sometimes disloyal to their very own identity as Christ's congregation, and this unfaithfulness is rationalised in all kinds of ways. It is often expected of:

> [*C*]hildren and adolescents to grow up (to an age determined by adults) before they can share in who Christ is, [*what he stands for*] and has done for his congregation and [*before they can*] participate in

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967. Cf. for a more comprehensive discussion of the reasons for the alienation of the youth Nel (1982:179ff.); Senter (1992).

968. I refer to the recent uprising in the country, especially on university campuses; cf. also Haldenwang (1994); Slabbert (1994).

969. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

970. Cf. remarks made by participants of the round-table discussion, Part 3, Chapter 16.

971. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

the comprehensive ministry entrusted by Christ to his congregation. This kind of church, firstly, loses the youths and shoves them into the arms of any person or organisation that cares and seems to treat them like they're important. Secondly, such a church rears a generation – even generations – of adults with whom the youths don't want to identify or associate.[972]

How fatal the latter is with regard to the identity formation of the youth and their faith development, neither the youth nor the adults know. I am attempting, as consistently as possible, to argue from a comprehensive inclusive congregational perspective as core to the future of Youth Ministry.

■ Comprehensive and inclusive – but differentiated and focussed

Differentiation in Youth Ministry refers to at least two levels: the ministry itself and the youth themselves. With regard to ministry it refers to the fact that the youth needs all that adults need, but that there is indeed a difference between people aged 10 and people aged 50, one has to differentiate within the ministry. The second level concerns the typical characteristics of the youth in different age groups – what Root[973] calls '*age-specific* ministry to youth.' It is this fact that causes and guides differentiation on the first level:[974]

> Youth Ministry is not a separate or different ministry. It does, however, take into account that which is typical of a specific ministry and what is typical of the specific age group at whom the ministry is directed.[975] For example, in youth ministry, preaching

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972. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

973. Cf. Root (2007:30) where he uses it for the first time in his description of the history of relational ministry.

974. Cf. again the importance of knowing the recipient and participants in Youth Ministry as, for example, discussed by Savage et al. (2006).

975. Cf. Dean (2011a:20–21) as discussed above.

is still preaching, but it is focussed on and directed at the youths. This focus is determined by the youths' phase of life and the needs peculiar to that phase.[976]

◼ Youth Ministry as a differentiated, focused, inclusive and comprehensive congregational ministry

In the light of the preceding paragraphs, and especially in the light of the unity and interwovenness of the modes of ministry, we can now attempt to summarise what Youth Ministry means. It is at the very least the mediation of the coming of God through his Word and through the service of people, by means of all modes of ministry, in a differentiated and focussed way, to the youth as an integral and a vital part of the local church. The following discussion of these modes is given in no specific order.[977]

☐ *Kerugma* or preaching

Through *kerugma* as the central mode of preaching God comes to the congregation, and in a differentiated and focussed way to the youth. The youth should feature in preaching. Or should I just say: youth feature in preaching. After all, the youth feature in the biblical text as well as in the context as the second text of preaching. This is not difficult at all when the youth are part of the preacher's agenda or text. Those who 'think youth' and take the youth into account as part of their life, do the same when they preach. The *kerugma* must:

> [*E*]nter the here-and-now of the youths and proclaim the new reality that has arrived with Christ's coming. The youths (children and the adolescents) should also be summoned by the *kerugma* to a new existence.[978]

976. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

977. For a fuller discussion on the ministries, cf. also Nel (2009a; 2015b:64ff.)

978. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

The better the dynamics, so typical of preaching are understood, the more the relevance to the youth will be evident in it. The two main elements of the *dabar* Jahwe is but one example of this.[979] Each *dabar* contains a thought – the meaning of something is explained. Each *dabar* Jahwe is also filled with power and is dynamic. Everyone who hears the word and absorbs it, experiences it. The *dabar* wants and has to lead one to the understanding (it bears meaning) and its power wants to influence and change.[980] This does not mean that every preached word is of itself a *dabar* Jahwe. The challenge of preaching is that the preacher should with veneration discover the *dabar* Jahwe by means of exegesis and give 'word' to the d*abar* in her or his own, contemporary language.[981]

Modern insights in homiletics, insights that emphasise the dialogical character of the sermon, also emphasise in a characteristic way, the relevance of the sermon for the youth. Children and adolescents are almost, by definition, people 'built' and ready for dialogue, for the very reason that they are relational in nature.

☐ *Leitourgia* or worship service

The gathered congregation is the basic form of the functioning of the congregation [*local church*] and its ministries.[982] Where people, on the basis of the *leitourgia* or the *latreia*[983] of Christ, enter into the presence of God, there is a dynamic that no one should deny the youths. They should never miss out on it. They should be an integral and a vital part of it. If this mode [*dynamic*] has stagnated'[*solidified*] as a result of unchanging liturgical agendas, the fault is not in

979. Cf. for instance Kittel (1967:91–143); Nel (1991a:632).

980. Cf. Firet (1977:124; 1986:93).

981. For a thorough discussion on hermeneutical preaching and the impact on identity-formation, cf. Linden (2015); Linden and Nel (2016).

982. Cf. Firet (1977:113; 1986:82).

983. Cf. Anderson (2001:113).

the *leitourgia* mode itself [*of ministry*]; the Church fault should be identified and corrected in a practical theological way in the subdiscipline of liturgy.[984]

What is important here is to state what is basic in the theory of liturgy, namely that this corporate encounter between God and his people includes the youth. It always has. In worship the young and the old need each other like anywhere else in the life of the local church. Add to this that this whole encounter, which we call 'worship', is rich in potential for the youth. By way of example: The rediscovery of the symbols and the use of symbols to enrich worship by the congregation are beneficial to the youth.

It may well be true that the (re)discovery of and the:

> [*W*]illingness to be relevant to the youths during worship services may have [*perhaps*] more far-reaching consequences than any other mode of ministry. To be contemporary as well as traditional is no easy matter.[985]

☐ *Didache* or teaching

In Part 1, Chapter 4, I dealt in more detail with this mode of ministry and will briefly return to it again in Part 3, Chapter 11. In Youth Ministry, this mode of God's coming to people is important for more than one reason. First of all, Youth Ministry is about people who, relatively speaking, have only 'recently' joined the older people on the road of Jahwe with his people. Initiation into the way, guidance about it and wise choices for living on the way, are part of this congregational ministry to:

> [*W*]ith, and through the youths. This is the central aspect [*mode*] of the *didache*: It is about a lifelong commitment to be a disciple, or pupil [*learning from*], of Christ. Like other modes of ministry,

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984. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

985. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.); cf. for a reflection on this point and further reading Victor (1987); Nel (1982:208ff.; 1985a:14ff.); Vos and Pieterse (1997); cf. also Jansen van Rensburg (2015) for a discussion on the impact of worship and liturgy on the formation of God concepts and the impact this has on developing missional congregations.

didache seldom if ever occurs in isolation. It emphasises that the congregational *didache* become part of the edification (*oikodomein*) and training (*katartizein*) of the people of God to ably represent him as his people in this world. Thus the inclusive congregational approach [*comprehensive perspective*] once again gives integrity to the differentiated focus.[986]

☐ *Paraklesis* or pastoral care

I focus continuously on this mode of ministry and will do so in more detail in Part 3, Chapter 13. In this paragraph, it is important to show this mode's connection with other modes and to shed some light on its differentiation and focus. It is possible that pastoral care is the most neglected ministry when it comes to children and adolescents:[987]

> The youths are at a time in their lives when they especially need all the facets [*nuances*] of pastoral care in a congregational context [*local church*]. They need to know that this mode says that God is with us in all circumstances and situations - in anxiety, pain, sin, doubt, error, weakness, loneliness, and success. God is with us to free [*help*] us from the constraints of brokenness that [*always and everywhere*] threaten us. *Paraklesis* wants to lead us out of a life of imperfection and into a life of wholeness in spite of and in the midst of all the brokenness within and around us.[988]

There is almost no other mode of ministry that can explain, as does this one because of its very nature, 'that children and adolescents need all that other believers need, only to a greater extent and in a differentiated, yet focused way.'[989]

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986. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

987. Cf. Raubenheimer (1984:309ff.).

988. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.); cf. Firet (1977:118ff., 1986:68–71, 89ff.); Nel (1982:127–128); Raubenheimer (1984:322ff.); Nel (1985a:35ff.).

989. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.); cf. for a longer discussion of this ministry, Anderson (2001:189–232).

☐ *Koinonia* or mutuality

This mode of God's coming to people, and by means of people to other people, is intimately connected with *paraklesis*. It is built on the truth that God is with people by means of other people, because he so uniquely came to us through the Word made flesh (man). Through the indwelling of the Spirit people also become people through whom we live and discover our humanity. 'Christians are people for one another and are the people of God in their togetherness.'[990] This mutuality should be intensely focussed on the youth in the local church. The time when the church could accept that family relationships, as taken for granted, would provide for the needs of children and adolescents has passed for the foreseeable future.[991] Young lives can, in more than one way, only mature fully in a climate of *koinonia*. Much has been written on this subject.[992] In this book, we will return (in Part 3, Ch. 12) to the important place of this approach in Youth Ministry. 'It is enough to say that the youths need *koinonia* as part of the whole, and in a focused way.'[993]

☐ *Diakonia* or service

'The term *diakonia* underwent its own development throughout history.[994] *Diakonia* was a comprehensive term that denoted everything in which humans were [man was] involved in the name of God.'[995] For instance, in Scripture the term is used to

990. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.); cf. the discussion of the incarnation and the Trinitarian lens on Youth Ministry in Part 1, Chapter 2; cf. also Versteeg (1979) for a good study of the 'one another' texts; the 'one another' series by Gene Getz (1976–1984).

991. Cf. Strommen (1974:33) for his 'cry of psychological orphans'; cf. also Strommen (1963:105); Strommen and Strommen (1985).

992. Cf. for instance Cassels (1973:42–43); Richards (1978:221–226); Black (1991:16, 29ff.); Osmer (1992).

993. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

994. Cf. Collins (1990); cf. also the article on the work of Collins by Gooder (2006:33–56).

995. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

show that man finds the fulfilment of his calling in service. Therefore, *diakonia* is the umbrella term for all the local church does – for all its ministries. What we today call modes of ministry was then simply the *diakonia* of the local church:[996]

> The term refers to an activity performed out of love for God for the sake of one's fellow man – so much so that it is called a service of love.[997] It is easy to understand how the term changed to refer mainly to the ministry of care: in acts of caring and deeds of mercy the *diakonia* finds special expression.[998]

In this chapter, I strongly link up with the broader as well as the more limited understanding of *diakonia*. First and foremost, it is necessary in Youth Ministry to express the diaconal character of all ministries. The interwovenness is once again on the agenda here and is demonstrated by the example of the worship service. The service rendered is not only at 'the altar', but it also reaches out, away from the altar to man in his daily life. This is the true worship service of the community of the faithful, the worship service of life.[999] As regards, the more limited meaning of *diakonia*, that is, as the ministry of mercy, it is equally crucial that the youth should participate in this comprehensive congregational ministry. Just imagine how local churches and countries will change if parents and children once again understand that the local church is a living and serving organism in this world:

> Among the youths there is a striking, characteristic selfishness that is almost antiserving – yet at the same time [*other hand*], there is a paradoxical [*surprising*] readiness to serve in a way that befits their phase of life. Strommen[1000] has determined in his empirical studies, in fact, that the youths have a specific inclination to a service-oriented life. […] This mode is therefore about involving the youths, at their level of maturity [*readiness*] for certain kinds of service, in the comprehensive service of the congregation [*local church*] in this world.

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996. Cf. Nel (1994:33–36, 2015b:117ff.).

997. Collins (1990:11–14).

998. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

999. Cf. Barnard (1981:459); Nel (1994:37–40, 2015b:124–128).

1000. Strommen (1974:xi).

They are, after all, part of the ministering body of Christ - even now.[1001] Congregations [*local churches*] should therefore continually discover, cultivate, and live their identity as the serving people of God, and at the same time involve the youth in service suitable to their age. In this way the *diakonia* becomes the central mode of the serving ministries of the congregation [*local church*] - including its ministries that serve children and adolescents.[1002]

Is this not what being missional is all about?

☐ *Marturia* or witness

The church is to be understood in missional[1003] perspective, not because it is the primary activity of the church, but because we know that God is constantly involved in bringing wholeness - that is, salvation - to his creation. The *missio Dei* includes the *missio ecclesia*.[1004]

The local church participates in, is involved with, the *missio Dei*.[1005] The church does not do missions but is in mission.[1006] Once again we 'see' (encounter the insight) that:

[*T*]he church is not the one who sends, but rather the one who is sent. This 'sentness' is therefore not one of the results of being a church, but a prerequisite.[1007] It is a characteristic of the true church.[1008]

1001. Cf. Little (1968:11); Corbett and Johnson (1972:16); Black (1991:18)*;* Dean (2004).

1002. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

1003. For a discussion on the concept 'missional', cf. Nel (2015b:8, 90–98, and the limited index for all the other pages where this is discussed, p. 408).

1004. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

1005. Cf. Bosch (1991:389ff.).

1006. This is not the time and place to argue the case of being missional. I have done so with reference to the leading scholars in this field in Nel (2015b); cf. also Guder (2015:63–77).

1007. Cf. Heyns (1978:381).

1008. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

It is 'our' very being:

> To understand that youths are an integral and a vital part of the church is to understand that they are also an integral and a vital part of the congregation's [*local church*] mission. This raison d'être of the local church can only be understood as missional in being.[1009]

Obviously, in the comprehensive perspective on congregational ministry, each ministry will then acquire a missional thrust. Sermons can no longer imply that 'some may be sent'. Sermons address people who are being sent. The local church is not ministering as if some may be called to be witnesses, we are ministering to witnesses.[1010] 'All that has to be understood is that this *marturia* also has to be relevant to the peculiar needs and characteristics of each age group.'[1011] There is a difference in the way in which one witnesses to a 10-year-old, and that the 10-year-old again witnesses differently from an adult. This mode of God's coming to the congregation and through the congregation to the world, includes the youth and should be differentiated with an eye to, among other things, their missional involvement in this world through every bit of their lives. In the paradigm of communicative acts in the service of the gospel of the Kingdom of God that has come and is yet to come, the importance of this mode cannot easily be overrated.[1012]

☐ *Kubernesis* or administration

With the concept of the 'helmsman'[1013] the ministry of the management and administration of the local church is usually explained.[1014] The 'Early Church was often contemporarily

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1009. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

1010. Cf. Guder (2015:90–103) for his discussion of 'missional hermeneutics'.

1011. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

1012. Cf. Nel (1994:21–23; 2015b:90ff.).

1013. 1 Corinthians 12:28.

1014. Cf. Beyer (1965:1036–1037); Luecke and Southard (1986:50).

described as a ship with Christ himself as the helmsman.'[1015] This ministry is connected to the term for leadership used in 1 Corinthians 12, a term with a strong and obvious pastoral character. It is about a pastoral ministry of care and empathy. It is explained by the fact that caring was the duty of the leading members of the Early Church.[1016] This ministry is about caring guidance, in the name of the Helmsman, towards a destination. This ministry is about an orderly and appropriate journey to a destination.[1017] It brings forth the image of someone who was hired to take a ship (that belonged to someone else) with cargo that belonged to someone (who hired the boat), to take this cargo on a ship (that is not his own) to a destination determined by the owner of the cargo. It is a selfless faithfulness to get God's people to God's destination. Luecke and Southard[1018] think that a modern-day thermostat is a dynamic equivalent to this ancient world concept. It is set for a certain temperature as its destination, it can pick up when that destination is not reached (yet), and it can set in motion a process to get back in the direction of the set destination.

The unity and the edification of the local church should be served in this way. Is there one reason why the youth are not or should not be part of this? Indeed, their interest in complicated regulations, structures, administration and church orders may be weak. They are often unconcerned about dogma and administration. The 'expressive and performative'[1019] play a far greater role. Yet they should not, for this reason, be excluded from it:

1015. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

1016. Cf. Reicke (1968:700–703).

1017. Cf. the context of 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14.

1018. Luecke and Southard (1986:50).

1019. Cf. Van der Ven and Berger (1976:201).

They need it for healthy growth and development as part of the whole. When administration makes sense and is handled in a pastoral manner, the youths often surprise the older generation with their abilities and insights into this ministry.[1020]

■ A special focus on parents

In the theological justification above[1021] I discussed the family as the basic hermeneutic *Lebensraum*, a space of coming to understanding, where 'God comes to the youths (both children and adolescents). Parents are primary mediators in the relationship (or covenant) between God and families.'[1022] While there is only one Mediator of the covenant, a parent or parents play a key role in mediating the coming of God to children. Youth Ministry should bear this in mind. Once again, I do not mean that families are exclusively important and that people who no longer are born and/or live within a 'traditional' family should, as such, be regarded in a negative light or with suspicion. Here Youth Ministry should, in a caring way in light of the gospel of Christ, be realistic and open:

> [*F*]amilies require intensive [*sensitive*] and focused attention. Where natural family ties are lacking, youth ministry once again requires intensive attention to the founding of other relationships that can facilitate growth and development. Each child that is ministered to, is ministered to with an eye to the founding of a future family. Not that procreation is the goal of youth ministry, but that reinforcing [*establishing and cultivating*] relationships is [*are*] part of the goal - and for this the family remains the ideal *lebensraum* and structure.[1023]

1020. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

1021. Part 1, Chapter 2, refer to 'Hermeneutic perspective: The family as a space where understanding is being facilitated'.

1022. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

1023. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

Therefore, Youth Ministry is also focussed on parents in a differentiated way. This insight, fortunately, is acknowledged generally in Youth Ministry.[1024]

■ A theologically working formula

In the light of the departure points described above Youth Ministry can be described in the following way:

> Youth Ministry is the mediation of the coming of God through his Word and through people, by means of all modes of ministry, and in a differentiated and focussed way, to, with and through youth as an integral part of the local church,

> **or**

> '[*Y*]outh ministry is a comprehensive and inclusive congregational ministry in which God comes, through all modes of ministry and with especial regard to parents (or their substitutes), with a differentiated focus to youths (as an integral part of the congregation [*local church*]), and also with and through the youths in the congregation [*local church*] to the world'.[1025]

> **or**

> Youth Ministry is a comprehensive congregational ministry:

> • through all modes of ministry
> • with special reference to parents (or their substitutes)
> • in a differentiated and focussed way
> • under the guidance of the office bearers
> • to, with and through youth (as an integral part of the local church)
> • also with and through the youth in the local church to the world.

1024. Cf. Strommen (1963; 1973; 1974), Strommen and Strommen (1985); Sell (1981); Nel (1982:244ff.); Ross and Rowatt (1986); Fuller (1989:80–91); Black (1991:137ff.); Bertolini (1994:101ff.); DeVries (1994); Trimmer (1994); Hebbard (1995).

1025. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.); cf. Nel (2000:97).

PART 2

People involved in Youth Ministry: Who are involved in what we/us do?

The youth themselves

The very fact that children and adolescents exist, means that people were and are involved in their very existence. Human beings do not fall from the sky. Although children are a gift from God,[1026] he brings them into life by means of other people. People are involved in the development of children and adolescents and Youth Ministry takes that into account. At least three 'groups' are involved in the development of the youth: parents, the youth themselves, and 'other adults'. Because this book is primarily about the youth, I will discuss them first. The question at stake here is especially who they are as co-workers in Youth Ministry and how they are involved. Youth Ministry is, according to our definition, a ministry *to,* but also *with* and *through* (by means of) the youth. The departure point behind this is that children and older youth are included in God's dealings with people. He is not only dealing with them, but also comes through them to each other and to the world.[1027]

1026. Psalms 127:3.

1027. Cf. Part 1 again; cf. also Dykstra (2013:639–647).

The understanding of the 'with' and 'through' youth has already been gaining ground for some time. Dean[1028] argued for youth as partners in a 'godbearing ministry'. Asking the question where we should look 'for elders with gifts worthy of cultivating Youth Ministry', she answered:

> One often overlooked source is adolescents themselves [...] Many youth have reflected deeply on what it means to be young and faithful, wisdom worth sharing in the meeting tent [...] adolescence provides a gold mine of leaders waiting to be asked, waiting to be gathered for God and to share the load in God's plan of deliverance [...] Godbearing youth ministry does not abandon its responsibility 'to' youth and 'for' youth, but is always conscious that ministry exists 'with' youth as well. We are Godbearers to youth so that they become Godbearers in their own right.[1029]

She acknowledged that youth brings much to the table and their involvement 'creates an atmosphere of mutuality in ministry.' Earlier in the book,[1030] she stated that: 'Youth Ministry is more about ministry than about youth, for Jesus Christ calls young people – like all of us – into ministry and not into a youth program.' As regards to us 'helping' in this regard, her 'helpful model' helps indeed:

1. I do it;
2. I do it, and you help;
3. You do it, and I help;
4. You do it, and I move on to something else.[1031]

Creps[1032] devoted a book to *Reverse mentoring* and in the subtitle catches what I am trying to argue here: youth are so much more than recipients of ministry. They are involved in ministry in many

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1028. Dean and Foster (1998:98–99).

1029. Cf. also Schweitzer (2014:184–200); cf. Schlag and Schweitzer (2011) for the ability and value of youth.

1030. Dean and Foster (1998:17).

1031. Dean and Foster (1998:17, 98).

1032. Creps (2008); cf. pp. xv-xxii his chapter on 'It takes a child to raise a village'.

ways, anyway. His subtitle reads: 'How young leaders can transform the church and why we should let them'.

■ Finding an identity

Adolescence is thought to be a time for finding one's identity.[1033] Although, throughout life a person is working on her or his identity; in adolescence it is a developmental task of high priority. What is important here is that individuals who are finding their identity are involved with others who are in a similar developmental phase. In this sense, children and adolescents are all in the same boat. The people with whom and through whom the ministry takes place, and the people for whom the ministry is meant, share an identity-finding phase of life.

What is finding one's identity about? Theologically, it is in essence about becoming who you already are, it means going back to God's Creation of relationships. God has acted, and his acts are indicative in nature. What has been given by God in Christ and through the Spirit is what counts. Children of believers are in Christ. This is true of them, even if they do not completely understand this fact yet, or do not live fully according to it yet. When one speaks of developmental tasks regarding finding one's identity the frame of reference is first and foremost that of developmental psychology.[1034] These important and useful insights should be applied to the church's Youth Ministry. But one should not get the impression that this means theologically, that children become spiritually what they are not yet. In Youth Ministry to find one's identity means becoming the person God created and recreated you to be: someone in Christ. In this regard, the church is always confronted with its theological axioms. What God has done in Christ, constitutes the new reality

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1033. Cf. also the discussion in Part 1 above on *Adolescence*.

1034. Cf. the discussions in Part 1, Chapters 3 and 4 and the references to, especially, Erikson (1963; 1964; [1963] 1965; [1968] 1994).

rather than what is sometimes (or often) not yet seen in the lives of children and adolescents.

All of 'us' involved in Youth Ministry should be thoroughly and well-informed about this theological premise. These truths bring calmness and peace of mind, and in Youth Ministry this is crucial. Finding one's identity is normal, no matter how much *Sturm und Drang* sometimes may take place. The theological content of finding the identity eliminates fear. Children and adolescents become who and what they already are, the outcome is 'given'. This goal can be set before one's eyes in the total ministry. In the meaning of the *didache* it is about being guided to discover and find one's given identity. When this does not happen, Youth Ministry often degenerates into an Arminian 'making' of children and adolescents into 'identities' that are often interpreted in a lopsided soteriological way. When God's initiating acts are in any way belittled or dismissed, his comprehensive purpose with his acts of grace and mercy (namely the Kingdom) are also belittled or dismissed. The involvement of man in God's Creation is one of the most important pieces of the identity to be found. For this we were created and for this we were recreated. About this, there is no theological doubt. Finding one's identity should be seen and communicated in this light. Youth Ministry, seen in this light, is the facilitation of 'becoming' in a phase of life where such 'becoming' is a developmental task which is theologically motivated and informed. Possibly one of the more serious abuses of the nature of the youth and Youth Ministry is found in this area. It is about becoming a responsible, self-reliant spiritually functioning[1035] human being. In a sense, it is true that when one can say 'I', you have found your own humanity - taking responsibility for who you are, what you have done or not done.

When we speak about the youth as persons with whom and through whom Youth Ministry happens, what was stated above should be considered. Children and adolescents should

1035. Cf. Firet (1986:182–186).

understand their own journey, and in that way become involved in the journey of their contemporaries. Developmental phases are of great importance in this regard. Yet, this should in no way detract from the fact that even children can understand that they, as ministers and as recipients in the ministry, are becoming who and what they already are in Christ. The youth that have discovered this dimension of hope and excitement in finding their Christian identity become enthusiastically involved in helping their peers find identity. The challenge here is to constantly give guidance to the youth that work with the youth. They should deal positively with their own finding of identity and use it constructively. I take it for granted that we accept that youth need guidance on this 'way' of God with all of his Creation. When and if this does not happen, it easily follows that finding one's own identity hampers effective involvement with others engaged in the same developmental task.

Cannister[1036] covers about the same ground when he discusses the 'gift of transformation'. According to him, transformation happens when 'we move from being the person that we are to be becoming the person we were created to be.' For anyone to be involved in the transformation of another, we have to be willing to see others as God sees them:

> [W]e must see the potential in others to see them for who they can become, not simply for who they are. Teenagers are not, in the words of Richard Lerner,[1037] 'problems to be fixed, but people to be developed. They are not immature or incomplete adults; they are active partners in their own positive transition to adulthood.[1038]

1036. Cannister (2013:41); cf. also DeVries (2008) contribution to what he calls 'sustainable Youth Ministry'.

1037. Lerner (2007:10).

1038. Cannister (2013:41).

With reference to a book and a living example of a church with a 'come as you are' culture, Cannister[1039] makes the point for the involvement of these 'becoming' people in the lives of people in becoming. The contribution by Roehlkepartian,[1040] in the typically well-researched style of the Search Institute, brings a lot to the table on what congregations can do to build assets and make a difference for the youth. The departure point is what I have covered in this book already.[1041] In the foreword to the book, Benson[1042] stated that this research:

> [A]ffirms the power of all faith communities to nurture centered, focussed, and healthy youth by uniting and mobilizing all of their relational and programmatic resources. Indeed, I would argue that after the institution of family, the communities known as temples, synagogues, mosques, parishes, or churches have the greatest potential to help youth emerge into adulthood as caring, responsible, and committed citizens.

Jahnke and Depuhl[1043] said that this can only happen when each generation realises that they are dependent upon one another, and when they acknowledge and discover the potential within one another. 'The critical factor about youth is not their ability to stir (*Störfaktor*) but their valuable potential that is codetermining the vitality of the congregation in a remarkable (decisive) way.'[1044]

1039. Cannister (2013:41ff.). With reference to Burke (2005:97ff.) and the church, he has 'nurtured'.

1040. Roehlkepartian (1998).

1041. Cf. Part 1, Chapter 2 on the importance of the congregation in Youth Ministry.

1042. Roehlkepartian (1998:ix).

1043. Jahnke and Depuhl (1999:45). '[D]*ie kritische Einstellung der Jugendlichen ist nicht der Störfaktor, sondern das wertvolle Potential, das die Vitalität der Gemeinde entscheidend mitbestimmt.*' Later in the book (1999:238–239) they submit 13 theses on Youth Ministry. Number one supports my argument above: '*Jugendliche sind Gemeinde von heute*' [Youth are the congregation of today].

1044. Jahnke and Depuhl (1999:45).

■ Reciprocity

How people are involved with other people is influenced and informed by their anthropology (their understanding of humanity) and, especially, their pneumatology (their understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit). In Youth Ministry (which includes catechesis or Christian Education), these assumptions are crucial. The Creation of man implies his self-reliant (but not independent) participation in the continuing preservation of Creation.[1045] Man represents God on earth. This honour and privilege is never rescinded. The salvation wrought by Christ is about reinstating man in order that we may fulfil our original function and purpose in Creation. It is true that this new, recreated man in Christ is still in conflict with the 'old man' while he strives to attain this goal and does his duty. The new reality, recreated in Christ in order that this goal may be reached, is the indicative, what God has given already. Here too, the indicative (given) informs and shapes the imperative (what is required). This new possibility is the new reality. On this basis, man goes about his duty in Creation. The coming (incarnation) of the Holy Spirit is also such an indicative, a given. It is the Spirit that constantly reminds man that he is not on his own in this calling. The Spirit himself is involved in this work, he still hovers over reality – a reality and earth, no longer formless and empty, but broken, and in more than one way, in distress. The Spirit, himself, is continuing the work of the Father and the Son. His help does not only consist of assuring us of his aid, it lies rather, on the level of reminding us that we are involved in his work. Pneumatologically speaking, humans are involved and incorporated beings. God continues his work, he does so by means of man. In this process man is not reduced to be a useful instrument in God's hand, at least not like a hammer in the hand of a carpenter.[1046] Man is engaged as a self-reliant human being. Through the gift of faith and love, man wants to be God's self-

1045. Cf. Genesis 1 and 2.

1046. Cf. Firet (1977:168ff.; 1986:127ff.).

reliant, but also dependent, co-worker. This is what the concept of 'reciprocity' is about.[1047]

It is important to instil (especially through the parents) in the youth as God's co-workers this respect for the value of man, a value incorporated by God in God's dealings with the world. This should begin in childhood. In the Reformed tradition, this truth has always been maintained in principle. Within the tradition there has always been a fundamental respect for the dignity conferred by God on man as his Creation. It is, for instance, not a sign of greater piety if someone is healed immediately (without means) rather than by means of whatever and whomever God chooses to use. God is not glorified the more should he 'exclude' man. He is glorified by means of his own Creation and how he 'employs' us in what he is doing. The Psalms are good examples of this. González[1048] describes how this principle was understood in the early Reformation when it came to the evangelisation of the world. The central fact is that God works in and through people.

In South Africa, Calvinism is sometimes used to make people feel like failures and to keep them feeling that way. In such a context, it is not self-evident that children and adolescents will think positively about themselves and their inclusion in ministry. A purposeful effort will have to be made in Reformed churches to establish a new biblical attitude towards man and his self-reliant (though not independent) collaboration and participation in the coming of the Kingdom. Of course, this starting point is also valid for parents and other adults involved in Youth Ministry. I discuss it here, because it has been my observation that especially children (in certain educational and instructional paradigms) suffer from feelings of inferiority. They experience 'I-am-good-for-nothing' emotions. In ministry, they are the last people who begin to accept, 'this is also meant for me. I have been created and re-created for this.' Add to this the 'adult'

1047. Cf. Nel (2015b:68ff.); Van Ruler (1969:181; 1973:12, 28–29, 36–37).

1048. González (1995:73–91).

mentality prevalent in many congregations, and the result is that the youth scarcely see themselves as people with whom and through whom Youth Ministry can take place.

For the theory of praxis in Youth Ministry, this has dramatic consequences. First of all, it is not the youth that have to change in order to make the above happen, the local faith community, as such, has to reform. Parents and other adults have to change. The premise, developed in Part 1 of this book, should be put into practice.[1049] To mention an example: The fact that children and adolescents are an integral and vital part of the local church means that they are also a vital part of the ministering faith community. Sometimes local churches accept the above premise, but it merely means that children and adolescents are included among the 'receivers' of the ministry. As people, they are more than just receivers. They do receive, but like other, older members, also receive – throughout their lives; and they also serve – like other, older members, serve.

In the confirmation classes and the preparation of the youth for confirmation, it is emphasised more and more in Reformed traditions that multiple dimensions of membership are at stake. Confirmation is about the teaching and training of baptised members, about the development of persons by means of, among other things, discovery and nurture. As to the character of confirmation, people strive for 'public' confession (of faith in Christ and of the teaching of the church), affirmation of commitment and commissioning.[1050] Part of this process is the guidance of the youth by means of spiritual mentors.[1051] Whether this guidance is given by parents or other mentors, education on the basis of one's baptism can be nothing other than teaching children what is true of them – their becoming (of who and what

1049. This is what my book (Nel 2015b) on *Identity driven churches* is about: local churches changing into faith communities where such reformation and transformation might happen.

1050. Cf. Osmer (1996:162ff.).

1051. Osmer (1996:202).

they already are in Christ) has everything to do with a growing understanding of the truth that they have been liberated to serve (because they are in Christ). Children are also healed in order to minister, or should I say: Even children are being saved in order to participate in ministry.

In the theory of praxis, the assumptions above demand the creation of a new climate in the local church. Youth Ministry (in the approach of developing or building a missional local church) serves the edification of a local church to live by what God has given to them – in this case they live by the given fact that the ministry belongs to the people of God. A Youth Ministry, engaged in developing or building a missional local church, strives to give that ministry back to the people in the local church – and also to the children and adolescents as an integral and vital part of the local church – according to the abilities relevant to their age-specific phase of development.[1052] All modes of ministry are suitable and available for this purpose. When the basic frame of reference has been established, the ministry takes place within it and the guidance towards the insights, mentioned above, take place spontaneously. We will later return to how this climate is created.

1052. Cf. Nel (1994:9–20; 2015b:268); Ogden (1990) and the subtitle of his book: 'Returning the ministry to the people of God'.

The parents

Parents play a decisive role in Youth Ministry. This has already been discussed in some depth.[1053] I return to the subject briefly for two reasons. The discussion regarding those involved in Youth Ministry (the theme of this section), must be completed. Secondly, the emphasis on parents and their role in Youth Ministry has serious consequences for the theory of praxis in Youth Ministry.

To recap my argumentation for the family (in whatever form) as a space where youth come to understanding of who God is and how 'life works' (a space for discipling), I want to quote DeVries[1054] and some others on this again. DeVries wrote that family ministry is not a new programme or model as such. It is about creating:

> [*A*]n ongoing ethos (what might be called a 'new normal') in the ministry [...] Family-based Youth Ministry [...] is rather a foundation that e*very* Youth Ministry needs to ensure its long-term impact.

1053. Part 1, Chapters 2 and 6.

1054. DeVries (2004:176).

Cannister,[1055] also referring to DeVries, argues for partnering with parents and equipping parents in and for this important ministry.[1056]

In the same line of thought, Strother[1057] argues as follows:

Family ministry of the sort we were seeking – an approach that has now become known as 'family-equipping ministry' – coordinates the entire congregation's culture to connect church and home as co-champions in the disciple-making process. Every practice at every level of ministry is reworked completely to champion the place of parents as primary disciple-makers in children's lives. Family-equipping is not a program that you can *do*, it is a key part of who you *are*. It is central to the culture, ethos, and DNA of your congregation.

Freudenburg and Lawrence[1058] devoted a whole book on how to change the DNA of congregations that run youth programmes upon programmes and still remain church-centered and family-supported congregations for their Youth Ministry. The book, with Freudenburg's own intriguing ministry story[1059] as part of it, aims at cultivating a family-centered, church-supported ethos and, if I may quote Strother again, DNA. In Garland's[1060] 1999 comprehensive guide for family ministry she argued that:

Today it is right for parents to be involved in their children's lives, even if it occasionally compromises their work performance. This is especially true for fathers, who had for several decades been seen as peripheral to their children's well-being but are being

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1055. Cannister (2013:203ff.).

1056. Cf. also Root (2009) for helping parents develop authentic relationships.

1057. Strother (2011:256). Strother continues and names 'Marks of a family-equipping congregation' (2011:256–259); cf. also for the need of helping parents in this time and day, Anderson (2001:250–265) for 'The Church's mission to the family in a postmodern culture'.

1058. Freudenburg and Lawrence (1998).

1059. Cf. Freudenburg and Lawrence (1998:1–29).

1060. Garland (1999:32; 2012:50–67); cf. also Jacober (2011:88–89). Gothard (1979) pleaded a case for the father's involvement too. For a brief discussion on some of his viewpoints on gender roles in families, and with which one has to differ, see Garland (2012:372–377).

discovered as necessary ingredients in the lives of healthy, well-adjusted children.

I have already referred to Dean's[1061] reference to families as 'little congregations'. In the same section where she argues for 'partnering with youth' she argues a case for 'partnering with parents' in a godbearing ministry – as 'it takes a whole church to make a Christian.'

■ Primary mediators

Parents, too, are a gift from God. Just as children are gifts to parents, so parents are gifts to children. By means of their parents, children are incorporated into the way of Jahwe with his people. From them, children receive, among other things, what Firet[1062] calls their 'original system'. In the process of the personalisation of their children the parents are the primary mediators of the salvation wrought by the Mediator of salvation. What is true of parents as believers is true also of their children. Here we could bolster our argument with a negative reason. There is enough 'proof' in research that parents play an important role in the process of alienating children and adolescents.[1063] When the youth do not develop an identity of faith it has been found that their parents were largely or totally estranged from the church, but were not as yet willing to be known as pagans.[1064] Since Peters[1065] emphasised the central importance of parents in what he called 'household evangelism', this insight has gained ground, any form of Youth Ministry should thoroughly take the

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1061. Dean and Foster (1998:99–101).

1062. Firet (1977:191; 1986:145).

1063. Cf. Nel (1982:176–179).

1064. Cf. Nel (1982:177).

1065. Peters (1977).

parents into account.[1066] Senter[1067] correctly says in his fourth statement on Youth Ministry: 'The influence of the student's family on his or her value system will exceed the influence of the youth worker on most occasions.' In a study of 8 156 adolescents and 10 467 parents Strommen[1068] found that adolescents 'share the personal conviction of their parents about the importance of religion.' Most adolescents affirm that it is one of the most important influences in their lives. Yet, while religion is seen as important by parents as well as adolescents, 'it is almost a taboo subject at home.' Nelson and Jones[1069] say that: 'Family ministry is [...] [where] parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their children's lives.' They continue[1070] to argue this departure point:

> Family-based churches retain separate, age segmented ministry structures. The difference between family-based models and typical segmented-programmatic models is that family-based churches intentionally include intergenerational activities in each ministry and consistently train parents to function as disciple-makers in their children's lives [...] The family-equipping Model for Family Ministry is transforming Age-Organized ministries to Co-champion the family and the community of faith [...] family-equipping churches cultivate a congregational culture that coordinates every ministry to champion the role of the parents as primary faith-trainers in their children's lives.

■ Modelling

In the social learning theory, it is emphasised that people learn especially by means of observing and following (almost copying) examples of social models. The 'normal' exposure of children to

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1066. Cf. Peters (1977:162); DeVries (1994), and other sources on family ministry to which I have already referred in Part 1.

1067. Senter (1987a:207).

1068. Strommen and Strommen (1985:133).

1069. Nelson and Jones (2011:15).

1070. Nelson and Jones (2011:25, 26, 27).

parents causes this learning mostly to take place within this primary relationship. Social learning theory affirms, to my mind correctly, that a long-term relationship, in which people are close to each other, heightens the impact of modelling. This relationship should be characterised by warmth and sensitivity. This also requires that the 'pupil' should have the opportunity to see the model in a diversity of situations, and the model should have the opportunity to explain his or her behaviour, as well as the values, 'faith' and feelings motivating that behaviour.[1071] Cannister, as well as Smith and Denton,[1072] argue that there 'is nothing more influential in the faith development of teenagers than the modelling of parents.'[1073]

Socialising takes place in direct personal relationships, relationships with a person or groups with whom one shares intimate bonds. Within the intimate context of a loving community, where individuals are known by other individuals and share love, the Christian faith is discovered by older persons and children.[1074]

The emphasis on parents as models for life, is about much more than verbally teaching children what is right and wrong. Verbal modelling probably has a much smaller effect than lifestyle and modelling by example.[1075] Parents should understand the quality of the relationships that enhance social learning: Repeated long-term contact with those loving persons who are to serve as models; warm and loving relationships with these persons; disclosure of the 'inner states' of these people – the feelings, thoughts and values behind the behaviour of the children's role models; opportunities for the child to observe these people's

1071. Cf. Richards (1983:96–97).

1072. Smith and Denton (2005:57).

1073. Cannister (2013:179).

1074. Cf. Richards (1983:136).

1075. Cf. research as quoted by Shaffer (1979:391).

lives; and, of course, the commitment of the role model to live a lifestyle of faith in which 'belief and behaviour blend and produce the beauty that Christ came to reintroduce into the world of lost humanity.'[1076]

According to Richards[1077] it is often necessary to take up more than short-term, one-on-one contact with parents on the subject. Intervention is often necessary. With this he means a long-term process of six to eight years. In this process, results should not be expected too soon. The aim is 'to teach gradually through such experiences those new patterns of life for the family that facilitate the free flow of the processes related to faith communication.' Two aspects of this process are crucial here, namely: firstly, sharing 'inner states' and, secondly, understanding education or teaching as an 'interpretation of life'. It is difficult for parents to share their emotions with their children. Fathers especially are often not at all equipped to own or share any feelings. Even mothers, who share in more intimate relationships, find it difficult to share such emotions with children. One way to establish such patterns over a long time is to expose both children and parents in Christian Education (for example in Sunday School) to the same material, each at his own level.[1078]

The second assignment – 'teaching as an interpretation of life' – is about parents learning to connect their faith in God with their daily life. Although this sounds logical in a Christian household (with two parents or one, or in the case of a combined family), this is not the case. The research by Strommen and Strommen[1079] shows that, although Christian households agree

1076. Richards (1983:136).

1077. Richards (1983:239ff.).

1078. For such material, see Richards (1983:242ff.). For an example for training with an eye on worshipping with children, cf. Castleman (2013).

1079. Strommen and Strommen (1985:135).

that religion is important to them, they seldom talk about it. In the framework of modelling, in the theory of social learning, it is maintained that socialisation takes place when the behaviour of the model is interpreted by the model. The many conversations of Jesus, alone with his disciples, to interpret what he did and why he acted in a certain way, is a unique example. In the context of discipleship (modelling in the social learning theory) he says, 'everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.'[1080] Modelling by parents is about transformation, not to make children become like 'us', but to guide them into following the One followed by 'us'.[1081]

Therefore, modelling by parents, or (for the sake of the argument) by other significant 'adults' in Youth Ministry, is not about perfection. As regards perfection, Christ is our only model. Rather, it is about an honest instruction in the struggle and the art of a life in following of and learning from Jesus, the Christ.[1082] 'Interpretation of life' also denotes the values, faith and emotions behind our response to life's failures. It is about sincerity and an honest way of life 'before the Lord', therefore, in his presence. One thing is certain, parents are the most essential for such models. Life within a family is life playing out in front of our eyes.

How broken the relationships within many families in today's society may be, here lies great hope for and in Youth Ministry. Any church with a long-term vision begins with the development of models for children, and parents are, as the prime choice for models, first in line.

1080. Luke 6:40 (NIV).

1081. Cf. the example of Paul in this regard, 1 Corinthians 10:23–11:1; cf. also Cannister (2013:33–77, 179–211).

1082. Cf. Nel (2009b; 2015a) on discipleship.

■ Natural differentiation

In the definition of Youth Ministry used in this book, differentiation is referred to as a principle.[1083] The child and adolescent need the total ministry, as any other member of the local church does. Because it makes a difference whether the receiver of the ministry is 15 or 35 years old, Youth Ministry is, among other things, about a differentiated and focussed approach in the total ministry to children and adolescents on their level of development – age-specific. This principle of differentiation must also be considered when ministering with and by means of (through) the youth; differentiation is not only for the receivers, but also for all people involved in this ministry.

In this paragraph about the central importance of parents in Youth Ministry, it should be stated that: of all the people involved in Youth Ministry parents have the most natural ability to differentiate. It is true that the youth themselves probably know how to relate to people their own age, they share after all an age and a stage of development. Differentiation, however, is more than the ability to communicate well with someone your own age. Differentiation is about discerning how to deal with a group consisting of people of different ages. This is what distinguishes differentiation and specialisation. The last mentioned is also necessary, but differentiation more so. It is about knowing that the local church is made up of people of different age groups and to take these groups into account in a focussed and intentional way. Differentiation includes specialisation. People in a specific age group should be taken separately from time to time and be ministered to specifically. In differentiation, the whole is being taken seriously and within the whole the special needs of the parts are being acknowledged and served.

In this regard parents are the most natural 'differentiators'. At their breakfast or any other meal table are children of different

1083. See again Part 1, Chapter 7.

ages and the parents, communicate easily within the family as a whole, and with every individual in the family separately. It is as though the ability to differentiate is a given benefit that comes with parenthood, and it makes parents unique co-workers in Youth Ministry as a part of a comprehensive and inclusive ministry in the local church. The parents' ability to differentiate not only shifts the most basic Youth Ministry to the home, but has great advantages for the more organised forms of Youth Ministry. Parents are the ideal leaders for intergenerational groups. Of course, many of them can also be trained for more specialised forms of Youth Ministry in order to focus on a certain age group. In any form of Youth Ministry where the integrated whole is taken seriously, parents should play a central role. Their natural ability for differentiation is beneficial to any local church's Youth Ministry.[1084]

■ Indispensable partners

Strommen[1085] writes that most children and adolescents follow the example of their parents, whether good or bad. Every local church, convinced of the importance and the goal of Youth Ministry, should also be inspired towards the effective participation of parents in Youth Ministry. In Youth Ministry, parents are more than suppliers of funds, they are more than the people who make the camping possible, provide transport, buy equipment, or pay the youth worker. They are indispensable partners in every aspect or Youth Ministry. A partnership is an agreement in which two or more persons or institutions commit

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1084. For an argument on how important the above is, cf. Jahnke and Depuhl (1999:27–28, 42, 238–239). They refer to the '*Erlebnisorientierten Schwerpunkt*' and '*Sozial-Diakonischen Schwerpunkt*'. In thesis 3 and 13, they refer to how adults and youth need one another; cf. also Müller (1984:26–28), his departure point is very much that while needs differ and differentiation is needed, the congregation is a *gemeinsamer Lernort* [A place where we learn together].

1085. Strommen (1973:28); cf. also Kohnstamm (1948).

themselves to working together for a mutual benefit. In Youth Ministry, the local church is such a partner to the parents. Parents are not merely required to help sometimes, the covenant 'compels' them to be 'first' in this partnership. In this regard, a local church could even be described as parents who serve God in partnership with one another, who build their families, who reach out to the world as families of the covenant. Organised Youth Ministry is almost a promise to parents that the rest of the membership will work in this partnership with the parents. The theory of the praxis of Youth Ministry stands and falls with this commitment to which the covenant constrains us.[1086]

This means, in the theory of praxis, that parents and their representatives participate in each facet of Youth Ministry. Here the planning phase is the most crucial of all, often they are drawn into planning as indispensable helpers towards the execution of the plan. But their role is greater - they have a role as partners. It is their children who are involved. In the Reformed tradition, this relationship, as God has established it (in the covenant), compels the community of faith (or of the covenant) to think, plan and execute the whole of Youth Ministry together with the parents. Parents in Youth Ministry are strategically important and do not merely have a utilitarian function.

1086. Cf. my previous references to Freudenburg and Lawrence (1998) and Cannister (2013).

The adult youth leader

■ 'No youth leader, no Youth Ministry'

'Youth ministry stands and falls with good leaders, whether they are part-time or full-time or both.'[1087] The youth have a capacity for being followers, and this makes leadership in Youth Ministry easy as well as problematic. Dow[1088] wrote that he found that the youth 'reacted positively when the leadership was ready and willing "to take the church to them" and when the leaders was ready and willing to meet them where they are,'[1089] they would in an accepting way begin to build a rapport and relationship that one day will facilitate growth in both the seeker and the finder.

This capacity for following the leader is at its strongest during the preadolescent phase; yet, it is always present. Tendencies in

1087. Nel (2000:116).

1088. Dow (1977:129).

1089. Nel (2000:n.p.).

the so-called youth subculture[1090] affirm this spirit of 'followership', especially the influence of the example of parents on their children is related to this aspect. The above discussion on modelling is also relevant here. In the community of believers, other believers are extensions of the parents. Dean[1091] refers to families as 'little congregations' and to congregations as 'extended families'.

Youth leaders, especially, have a distinctive function. The fact that especially children follow easily, makes the responsibility of those who led so much greater.

The central importance of youth leaders is probably more seriously regarded in youth organisations and movements than in congregational youth ministries. On the surface, it may seem to be one of the obvious reasons why things go more smoothly in these organisations than in congregational youth ministries. Usually these leaders are appointed on the basis of their gifts; they are also well-trained, work in a team and under good supervision of the organisation. Local churches, however, often have to depend on the so-called volunteer youth leader, who usually has little time for the work and who may be untrained as to Youth Ministry specifically. While these leaders render a valuable service, the difference between their leadership and that of trained, selected and gifted youth leaders, is striking. Large local churches that have the latter kind of youth leader, usually attract the youth in the district. Where there is leadership, the youth will be. To go against this natural 'grain' of the youth and expect their loyalty in a local church with no youth leader is like blowing against the wind. The same principle applies in outreaches to the youth that are not part of the church. McGavran

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1090. See Part 1, Chapter 3.

1091. Cf. Dean and Foster (1998:79, 82). In a sense Dean's work, to my mind and understanding, is an 'unspoken' argument for youth leadership. In both *The godbearing life'* (Dean & Foster 1998) and *Practicing passion* (Dean 2004) I find an undertone for people working with youth.

and Arn[1092] have shown convincingly that there is a direct relationship between the so-called 'class-two' leaders in the local church and the growth of that local church in numbers. The balance between the number of informal leaders and more formal leaders in Youth Ministry, like catechists and other chosen leaders, is also important. Burns[1093] reflects on this as well and shares valuable insights on developing a 'dynamic volunteer team'. He also discusses the possibility of developing an internship programme in a local church, and why and how to build support among the staff and church leadership.

In many denominations, the presence of full-time youth leaders, youth workers or 'ministers of youth' are already established traditions. Since the era of Youth Ministry began (about 1960), Youth Ministry has undergone many changes. Ross[1094] showed, for instance, why this new approach did not deliver the expected results. While church leadership began to understand that the youth were part of the local church, this era was followed by dramatic sociological changes. In spite of the new insights churches were not skilled to minister to the youth, nor in guiding and retaining them. Borgman[1095] showed how the demands regarding civil rights, minority rights, drugs and the 'sexual revolution shocked churches. These challenges in the ministry 'moved churches toward a concept and into an era of Youth Ministry almost without design.' The result was a new stage in Youth Ministry which can perhaps be called the era of professional Youth Ministry. These new challenges can almost unnerve the ordinary volunteer leader.

In many ways, South Africa is confronted, only now in an open society, with the severity of children's and adolescents' problems – and this is happening while many denominations

1092. McGavran and Arn (n.d.:90–95).

1093. Burns (2008:150–182).

1094. Ross (1989:9, 10).

1095. Borgman (1987:71).

have not even yet established a proper theology for Youth Ministry in the local church – let alone a theology for understanding youth leaders and pastors.[1096] This may lead to churches that still live in the era of youth leagues moving straight into an era of professional Youth Ministry. In some social contexts in South Africa, the challenge is indeed so overwhelming that one can easily believe that only professionally trained people can remedy the matter. Youth workers are almost raised to the level of a special task force. In denominations and local churches with established youth ministries it will, I hope, lead to a situation in which youth leaders become more important, while retaining a place for the informal or volunteer leader. The systems approach to Youth Ministry in this book has room for the less trained but evenly gifted leader. When Youth Ministry is part of the whole and fits into a theology of developing or building up missional local churches, many stabilising factors are built into the process.

While much can be learnt from literature about youth leaders or 'ministers of youth', the reader of this kind of material should always distinguish between an almost exclusively professional approach and a systems approach. In saying this, I do not mean that the professional approach to youth leadership has no understanding for or sympathy with the more local church or the ecclesiastical approach to Youth Ministry. However, good leadership material, seen from the angle of large and effective youth organisations, may often miss or unconsciously understate the local church perspective. The question is probably whether someone is a full-time or part-time worker in a local church or a youth organisation.[1097]

1096. Cf. two recent studies: Aziz (2017) and Walker (2017); cf. also Heflin (2009) again for a theology and practice for Youth Ministry – from the perspective of the 'youth pastor'; cf. also the book on 'Youth Ministry in the Black Church: Centered in hope' (Wimberley, Barnes & Johnson 2013).

1097. Cf. Borthwick (1987:95); cf. also Burns (2008:128–139).

It is important here to underscore the central importance of leadership and leaders in Youth Ministry. Senter[1098] emphasises the following truth in one of his 'axioms' in Youth Ministry:

> Youth Ministry begins when a Christian adult finds a comfortable method of entering a student's world (axiom 1); Youth Ministry happens as long as a Christian adult is able to use his or her contact with a student to draw that student into a maturing relationship with God (axiom 2); Youth Ministry will reflect the vision of adult leaders (axiom 10); the development of Youth Ministry will not exceed the public communication skills of the primary adult leader (axiom 12).

■ Demands on personality

This aspect could fill a small book. To prove my point, this may be the right place to refer to two books which are, in toto, devoted to the 'hopes, frustrations, and effectiveness of today's youth workers' – the subtitle of one of these books. Both books[1099] cover detail about the office of youth workers and qualifications of such workers. The well-known Merton Strommen, who has devoted most of his academic and professional life to research on adolescents and Youth Ministry, covers topics like personal inner strength, three top ministry priorities and many more. In the second book, Heflin zooms in on the many different expectations there are for youth pastors such as being a pastoral shepherd,[1100] bold prophet, compassionate priest, spiritual friend, and more.

Yet, this book would be incomplete without reference to some of the most important matters concerned.

1098. Senter (1987a:202, 204, 217, 221).

1099. Strommen, Jones and Rahn (2001); Heflin (2009); cf. also Work and Olson (2014).

1100. Cf. a good chapter on 'The youth worker as a Pastor-Shepherd' in Vukich and Vandegriff (2002:225–239).

■ Calling

As in all ministries, calling is also central to this ministry through the body of Jesus Christ; one serves because one has been called to do so. Often Youth Ministry is regarded, by those inside and outside, as 'temporary'. A full-time Youth Ministry is often seen as a stepping stone to a 'real' ministry. Others assume that Youth Ministry is chiefly connected to one's age and can only succeed if the 'minister' is also young. Many factors make it necessary for the person in this ministry to 'recall his calling'. In this way, a calling to Youth Ministry often becomes a renewed calling. Dennis Rogers[1101] referred to it as the 'remembered call' and a 'renewed call'. This does not mean that God never changes the direction of someone's calling, he often does. The point to remember here is to stay involved in Youth Ministry because of a calling.[1102] Each person involved should be able to give account of his or her calling:

> Youth ministry in itself is exhausting and draining enough […] without the 'support' of a calling it cannot be sustained […] perhaps this is one reason for the large turnover of personnel in youth ministry.[1103]

Youth Ministry is also attractive to people in some other ways, they can become involved for the wrong reasons. Specialised Youth Ministry can, for instance, include the possibility of being in the limelight:

> Honesty about one's call is one way of dealing with oneself and one's motives and determining why one [*you*] are in the ministry – especially in youth ministry – in the first place.[1104]

1101. Rogers (1989:19–23).

1102. Cf. Nel and Scholtz (2015).

1103. Nel (2000:n.p.).

1104. Cf. Borthwick (1997:21–27); cf. also Nel (2000:n.p.).

It is indeed a call to 'a ministry of incarnation' – appealing to such leaders to be persons of compassion.[1105]

■ Inclusive perspective

One of the most important demands on any person in this ministry is his or her philosophy or theology of Youth Ministry. Even in para-church Youth Ministry it seems to me extremely crucial to have a congregational perspective. The local church as the faith community is too central to the Bible to replace it with any substitute of Youth Ministry. When people are won for Christ from the world, the incorporation into and growth in the faith community is vital. After all, the future of every believer is primarily a future in the local church. So much more than does this apply to Youth Ministry. Youth leaders should see the whole picture. By this I mean that there should be an inclusive approach to this ministry as it has, among other things, been discussed in Part 1. When youth leaders miss this comprehensive and inclusive insight, they busy themselves with the parts, as if the parts were the whole itself. In this way, the children and adolescents are deprived. They miss the enrichment of the whole of which they are part because of God's work in Christ.[1106]

■ Finding an identity

This topic appears under more than one heading in the literature. Borthwick[1107] referred to it as the consciousness of 'who I am' and 'who I am not'. This demand on leaders relates to the fact that finding identity is one of the major developmental tasks in adolescence. The youth wonder who they are and what they

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1105. Cf. Robbins (2004:472–475); Dean (2004:176ff.) – referring to the art of 'being there'.

1106. Cf. Droege (2017).

1107. Borthwick (1987:99).

should be. A youth leader does not have to be perfect, otherwise there would be no youth workers. How people in Youth Ministry see and have esteem for themselves is vital to the growth of the youth in the local church. When youth leaders and other adults have a striking lack of consciousness of their identity, the youth themselves have no clearly circumscribed value system with which they can measure themselves and discover their own.[1108] In context it does not mean that youth workers have completed their search and growth, if that were the case, there would be no youth workers. Man continues to find his own identity even though it is true that this developmental task is supposed to be 'completed' at a certain age and in a certain way. Theologically[1109] it means the constant becoming of God's human being. A person's certainties, his clearly defined value system, are rooted in what God has given us. We celebrate this gift, we are humbly proud of it, it is our everything. This very 'givenness' (indicative) motivates us towards a life befitting the salvation granted us, in which we participate. In this way we are developing 'towards greater growth'.[1110]

Here I would like to refer to other traits of the person in Youth Ministry, such as:

• self-acceptance;
• integrity;
• sincerity;
• adaptability;
• the courage to persevere;
• a life adjusted to priorities.[1111]

One of the most important demands on personality in the context of finding one's identity is what one would call balance. Youth

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1108. Cf. Elkind (1984:9).

1109. As discussed earlier in Part 2.

1110. Borthwick (1987:99).

1111. Cf. Borthwick (1987:99–105; 1997:71ff.); Rogers (1989:18–30).

Ministry is filled with emotion – that is a simple fact. The youth (certainly not all of them) are not interested in dogma yet. They feel the pulse of life. For them the Christian faith only has meaning in so far as it 'fulfils an expressive and performative function, that is, if it brings their lives into expression and changes it.'[1112] For this, but also for other reasons, Youth Ministry sometimes attracts people who are emotionally unstable. In their own search for identity, there is sometimes not as yet an established emotional and confessional balance. DeVries, whose book is, in more than one way, about leadership and discernment in planning Youth Ministry, devotes a whole chapter to 'the emotionally healthy youth worker'.[1113] Here, too, one cannot demand perfect balance, but there should be enough signs that this person, who works with children and adolescents on behalf of parents, and often in the parents' absence, possesses spiritual equilibrium. With adults one could perhaps afford mistakes - adults should be able to discern and evaluate - but the younger the child, the more important is this requirement. After all, the children of other parents are ministered to here. For this, the entreaty of Paul to the elders of Ephesus is very fitting.[1114]

■ Leadership style and task
■ Dependent child

It should be a comfort to leaders that the Kingdom of God is for children, as Christ says.[1115] Within the faith community leaders do not have to be 'big'. Being big and important can even be dangerous. One can be too 'big' to fit in. One can become so 'big'

1112. Van der Ven and Berger (1976:201). [*author's free translation*]

1113. DeVries (2008:107–123); cf. also the chapter on 'From camp counselor to sustainable leader' (2008:140–158).

1114. Cf. Acts 20:28.

1115. Cf. Matthew 18:1–5.

and important that one misses out on the Kingdom and fails to achieve one's purpose. Why this childlike leadership? Because children are still able to look up to someone they are dependent upon, they do not yet understand what 'looking down at' means. For them the fact that someone has taken their hand and is leading them along the road is not yet a humiliating fact, dependence comes naturally to a child. 'I need someone' is a normal confession. And children do not yet take themselves seriously, they take their play seriously.[1116]

Something else is probably related to this matter. Shawchuck and Heuser[1117] call it the 'pauper' image of the leader. The connection with 'the child' lies in the fact that the Kingdom is also granted to those who know how dependent they are on God.[1118] The expression of this benediction ('blessed are they who are poor in spirit') refers to people who are in no way highly regarded in society. But God has time for them, they are suitable for his Kingdom.

Sometimes leaders within the community of the faithful confuse this qualification with 'weakness' or 'of little value'. In theory, we all agree with this teaching of the Bible. Yet man often has an 'espoused theory'[1119] while one's 'theory in practice' determines your behaviour. The theory of praxis within the church is often the 'espoused theory' of those outside the church. Childlike dependence and the spirit of dependent childlikeness make no sense to many leaders in today's society, for such it borders on weakness.

Within Youth Ministry the above requirements for a leadership style should be asserted as authentic for Christians, as followers

1116. Cf. Shawchuck and Heuser (1993:32–34).

1117. Shawchuck and Heuser (1993:32–34).

1118. Cf. Matthew 5:3. The 1983 Afrikaans translation even uses the concept of 'dependence' ('*afhanklikheid*') instead of 'poor in spirit' like in the NIV.

1119. Shawchuck and Heuser (1993:225).

of the Christ. Youth leaders and youth workers should be taught that humility is not a weakness. It is the primary attitude of people who participate in what God is doing. Humility is not a weakness, neither is a childlike dependence. This attitude is merely a confession that God is the One who acts. He is the Creator; I am involved as his creature. It is a confession that I am small enough to fit into the key role which he has for me in his dealings with others and the world.

■ Servant

Leaders do not merely serve, leaders are servants. It is part of their identity. People in high positions also render a service, and in more than one manner. Yet a president who serves is not essentially a servant. This 'title' for leaders in the community of faith does not imply that their work is of little value. It is a confession of who the Head of the local church is; he is the present and reigning Head, that is, it is he who has every right to reign. He did not 'come to be served, but to serve.'[1120] He, the King and Judge, and not the leaders of the local church, is the Head of the local church.[1121] This is why Paul calls himself a 'servant of Christ'.[1122] This sense of identity should never escape us. Ministry means service.[1123]

It is important to note that the youth are sensitive to the attitude of Christ in their leaders. Jesus Christ makes an impression on the youth. Cassels[1124] wrote that we should get out of the way so that the youth can see for themselves that Jesus is indeed the way, the truth and the life. Cassels wrote at a time when the

1120. Mark 10:45 (NIV).

1121. Cf. Nel (1994:50ff.; 2015b:143ff.).

1122. Cf. Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1.

1123. Cf. Watson (1978:254).

1124. Cassels (1973:9).

youth were stumbling in great numbers over the 'phoniness' and superficiality of adults in the church, especially in the organised church.[1125] When youth leaders do not, in their following of the Christ, model his servanthood, being a Christian as such becomes implausible and problematic. However important the youth leader may be in the eyes of others the youth should know him or her as a servant. Paul Borthwick, who was a national youth leader in his country (at present he is deeply involved in missionary work), relates how surprised someone in the local church's youth group was when someone else asked whether they knew that their youth leader was a national leader in Youth Ministry. A member of the group's reaction was, 'Paul Borthwick? He's just the bald guy who runs the youth group.'[1126] Borthwick states, 'If I am to fulfil my role as a servant of our students, being "just the bald guy who runs the youth group" is enough.'[1127]

Growth and development of the others

In the style of leadership mentioned above, the task of the leader is the development of the people whom the leadership serves, that is also the joy of leadership. Naturally, the sense of this ministry lies in the fact that God's will is sought and executed, and also in the fact that people grow, that the youth are empowered to become the people of God that they are meant to be.

They become who and what they already are in Christ. In the unbroken flow of children becoming adolescents and yet more children becoming adolescents, the youth becoming 'adults' and yet more young people becoming 'adults' – this is the joy, children and adolescents grow and make a difference. The determining question in youth leadership is: Do others grow by means of what I

1125. Cf. also Nel (1982:176–186).

1126. Borthwick (1987:112).

1127. Borthwick (1987:112).

do, through my ministry? When that happens, there is the joy of leadership, namely 'pastoral joy'.[1128] This joy is strongly linked to what is called 'craftsmanship'. In agreement with what Erikson said,[1129] I mean that the successful completion of a task gives the leader a feeling of fulfilment, a feeling of having attained a goal. This experience of 'I have done my duty and achieved the goal' affirms your own identity anew and the leader knows that: I am where I should be, and I am who I am meant to be! Our task is to see people grow, to see people become who they were meant to be!

This premise has significance for the development and training of youth leaders. Youth Ministry requires dynamic leadership. It should not be confused with the 'glamour boy' and 'glamour girl' image of the leader. In Dean's[1130] words, becoming a 'godbearer' is indeed a spiritual discipline. We will have to cultivate a new culture among leaders in Youth Ministry. For so long 'they' have been expected to be 'miracle workers' with the children and adolescents of other people, that adopting a new 'image' may look like a demotion. In the good book about *Experiments in contemplative Youth Ministry*, Yaconelli[1131] has a chapter on 'formation' in the process of becoming a 'spiritual guide' in leadership. I have already referred to this author's strong emphasis on discipleship for all involved in Youth Ministry. Youth leaders are in more than one way involved in what is called 'reverse mentoring'. While involved in the becoming of children, adolescents, and emerging adults, leaders themselves are being changed and formed.[1132]

1128. Luecke and Southard (1986:13).

1129. Cf. Luecke and Southard (1986:14).

1130. Cf. Dean and Foster (1998:43ff.); cf. also (1998:73ff.) for the important relationship with God and how to 'tend the fire'.

1131. Yaconelli (2007:38–59). Within the broader spectrum and also applicable to Youth Ministry in my understanding of it, cf. also Willimon (2011) with title: *A will to lead and the grace to follow;* cf. also Rahn (2001:167–180) on student leadership.

1132. Cf. Creps (2008) on *Reverse mentoring* – especially Part 4 on 'Developing reciprocity' (2008:135ff.); cf. also Canales (2014:24–44).

In the local church the link between charisma and service should be maintained unfeignedly. If the assumption in this book holds water, it means that God grants his local church all that is necessary for it to function. This gift cannot clash with the biblical requisites for leadership. To put it in another way: one should expect that God would grant people in the local church this childlike dependence and the attitude of servanthood. One should expect that he will also, with his gift, grant the insight that the duty of these leaders is the growth, development and empowerment of children and adolescents to serve God in this world. One should expect that he will grant the insight that this leadership does not make the leaders 'great', but prepares the youth to lead and serve in their own right. One can expect that God will provide what is necessary so that neither the Kingdom of the leaders nor the Kingdom of the church is sought, but the Kingdom of God.

■ The 'equihuman' approach

This norm for pastoral mediation[1133] is indeed a 'breakthrough in pedagogic' thinking. I think Firet[1134] is correct when he says that 'the person who cannot acknowledge the core of the life he is called to promote, cannot in his relationship to another be of any positive significance.' According to him, the 'equihuman' approach is one of three 'preagogical'[1135] categories. The other two are: Consciousness of yourself, experiencing yourself (as the educator) as the fellow human being of your fellow human being (the one who is educated), and the recognition that the one who is educated has the responsibility and right to choose, although you must keep in mind that it is the choice of a child. Firet[1136]

1133. Cf. Firet (1977:203–222; 1986:156–171).

1134. Firet (1986:169).

1135. Firet (1986:169).

1136. Firet (1986:160).

himself deliberately refers to 'equihuman and not to the fellow human'. He did so, not in contrast to Barth's use of the term 'fellow humanity' as the basic form of humanity:

> The humanity of human being is this total determination as being in encounter with the being of the thou as being with the fellow man, as being with fellow humanity.[1137]

Firet's choice of 'equihuman' is to emphasise, what is more obvious in his home language, Dutch, namely *evenmens* – equally human and not just fellow human (*medemens* in Afrikaans).[1138]

The importance of this matter in Youth Ministry cannot easily be overstated. Many communities have a great love of children, but not the necessary appreciation of and respect for their humanity. Strongly patriarchal societies think that children have yet to become 'people', and that becoming a human being has something to do with age. The expression 'equihuman' emphasises and expresses that the child is more than just human. The one who is served by Youth Ministry is equally human. As a human being the child is the educator's equal.[1139] He who does not regard the other as a human being, as a peer, as a person with equal value, does not enter into a relationship with that person. 'He not only does not come close to the other, he cannot even maintain distance: he is simply not there.'[1140] This does not mean that there is no inequality, or asymmetry, between educator and pupil, between the minister and the member, between the youth leader and the young. But:

> [*T*]his does not mean that the person who is the growth promoter in each of these relationships does not appear as equal in the qualities which express and make for humanity. If this quality were not present and presupposed, there would be no sense in speaking of

1137. Barth (1936:III/2:247).

1138. Cf. again Jahnke and Depuhl (1999:2): '[*U*]nd mit dem ganzen Menschen zu leben und zu arbeiten, muss ich ihn in seiner Ganzheit erkennen und respektieren.'

1139. Firet (1977:208; 1986:156).

1140. Firet (1986:164).

asymmetry. The term refers to a disparity which exists on the basis of a fundamental and essential equality.[1141]

There is an essential equality that precedes all inequality and clothes the inequality with a credibility as regards education – an essential equality that makes all relationships in Youth Ministry the kind of relationships that beget and enhance life. It is as if the 'beginning' of man at conception also mirrors this state of equihumanness, from two people who have an 'equal share' a person is born who is equally human. To be ahead of someone as regards age is not to be superior in humanness.

This matter is significant for people involved in Youth Ministry, and for more than one reason. Especially in education (as an essential part of Youth Ministry) the asymmetry is often emphasised to the detriment of the equihuman approach. For many centuries catechesis has been explained on the basis of etymology. Catechesis is, in this sense, 'to teach with authority from above.' 'From above' in such a supposition often leads to an autocratic and condescending 'handing down' of knowledge. Knowledge seen as passing from the more informed to the less informed person, and from the experienced to the inexperienced, easily becomes from the 'higher person' to the 'lower person'. In the many years of experience in Youth Ministry in more than one denomination, I have become aware of how easily children in Youth Ministry can be treated as being 'inferior'.

According to the theory of praxis, this means that all who work with the youth should be examined as to their perception of the 'other person'. This requirement is linked to the insight of youth leaders, parents, and other young people into what it means to love others. Too often in Youth Ministry it happens that especially children arouse a certain emotion in workers. The Bible says love is chiefly about 'deep appreciation and high regard',[1142]

1141. Firet (1986:162).

1142. Louw and Nida (1988:294).

from this flows the important attitude of 'treating with respect.'[1143] This love is linked to God's respect for his own Creation and the high appreciation of man as the creature to whom he entrusts his Creation. Here again we have proof of the total interwovenness of all theology, especially in Youth Ministry. Anthropology itself is at stake in this case. How the child and adolescent are perceived and 'regarded' by the equihuman approach makes the involvement of the people in Youth Ministry agogic in nature – it makes change possible. Through the premise of equihumanness agogical situations (for change) are created, these situations are primarily pastoral in nature and are directed at change in man. The actual change (agogy) exists in the spiritual functioning of man, in the function of his involvement in a relationship that is directed towards this change.[1144] All people in Youth Ministry should be tested as to their awareness of the equihuman approach and be trained in this approach and its consequences. For many years, this requirement has already been set in so-called 'open youth work'.[1145] Is it not one of the reasons why churches have little or less success in youth evangelism? The demands of equihumanness play a vital role in the approach to people outside the church. In other words, the prejudices of Christians against those outside the church (so-called non-Christians) are fatal to the interpersonal communication of the gospel.[1146] Only when 'the other' is accepted and approached as equihuman, the person in the Youth Ministry becomes effectively involved in a relationship that strengthens the independent spiritual functioning of that 'other'. Here the attitude of Jesus Christ is a daily example to his followers. From him the believer learns the principle of equihumanness – unconditional acceptance of who you are and where you are – and who the 'other' is.

1143. Nielsen (1971:120).

1144. Firet (1986:195).

1145. Cf. Hoffmann (1980).

1146. Cf. Armstrong (1979); Sjögren (1993).

In short, no one becomes effectively involved in the changes in someone else if that other person is not accepted and approached as being equally human.

■ Recruiting, selection, and training

Selection is the responsibility of the youth committee or youth workgroup of the local church – and ultimately the decision-making body of the congregation. This search 'committee is made up of the parents, the youth themselves and leaders drawn from the governing body of the local church.'[1147] A body that supervises and determines the total need for youth leaders takes on this responsibility. The 'best' people can in this way be sought for every aspect of the ministry, they can be trained and positioned. Without overhead planning, recruitment and selection, departments begin competing, as it were, for the limited number of members available to do the work. Then the possibility of matching people to needs and responsibilities in an orderly way, as well as the likelihood of successful recruitment, is lessened.[1148] If a local church has a full-time youth worker and/or youth pastor, he or she too, is part of the selecting body. Such a person has, hopefully, also been appointed after the necessary selection has been made by the committee. It must be taken for granted that interviews with candidates are critical. It should be stated that selection takes place with the clear understanding of what Youth Ministry is, the role for which the person is selected, and the details of the expectations linked to the 'post'. Stewart and Yeager's basic worksheet[1149] for a full-time director of Youth Ministry can easily be applied by the selecting body:

1147. Nel (2000:n.p.).

1148. Cf. Goetz (1977:285); cf. also Cannister (2013:73–113) for a good chapter on resourcing Youth Ministry and 'staff building'.

1149. Cf. Steward and Yeager (1987:122–124). The 'nine Biblical principles that marks healthy youth ministries' (Yaconelli 2003) will also help with what to look for in a youth pastor.

- recruitment of people who have the gift of working with the youth;
- supplies, at the very least, a yearly evaluation of each member of the group working with the youth;
- meeting with workers individually and as a group;
- supports workers to draft personal goals in ministry and to reach those goals;
- ensuring pastoral care of workers;
- developing the curriculum;
- developing a programme;
- planning;
- maintaining relationships between the departments of Youth Ministry.

The question whether there are general (basic) requirements for older co-workers in Youth Ministry has been referred to above. What Goetz[1150] calls qualifications for 'adult leaders', is of importance here:

- a confession of salvation and a radiant Christian life;
- a sincere love for and sympathetic understanding of the youth;
- a good basic knowledge of the Bible;
- available time and the ability to work hard;
- to be faithful and dependable;
- maturity – spiritual and emotional (cf. what has been written on balance above);
- the willingness to learn;
- the ability to give pastoral care to the youth;
- awareness of the total programme of the local church for the youth.

From people with these qualities youth leaders and/or youth workers are recruited and selected for the various branches of Youth Ministry in the local church. Perhaps it is necessary to say that the energy- and time-intensive procedure mentioned above can only take place when the local church places a high premium on inclusive Youth Ministry. If not, recruitment and selection are

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1150. Goetz (1977:283–285); cf. Nel (2000:131–132).

almost left to chance. Youth Ministry in many local churches is in a bad state for this very reason. If it is true that Youth Ministry almost stands or falls because of the availability and competence of youth leaders, it is logical that the recruitment and selection of these leaders is of crucial importance.[1151] In this regard, DeVries[1152] made a valuable contribution as to how local churches can rethink and develop sustainable Youth Ministry – the title of the book. The author provides many valuable questions to use as well as a compliance checklist for the local church. In a later publication[1153] he and Dunn-Rankin offer valuable help for churches in the process of finding a youth pastor that will 'fit best'. They even start with a chapter on identifying the right 'point person for the Search Team.' The book contains 19 appendixes with detailed help on job descriptions, and even planning the welcoming party.[1154] DeVries is absolutely the right person from whom to accept help when it comes to developing sustainable Youth Ministry in a congregation.

Training of parents, youth leaders (part-time and full-time), and of youth who work with other youth, is an essential part of Youth Ministry. There is no member involved in developing or building a missional local church who does not need training.[1155] Training for Youth Ministry (as for other ministries) is almost a question of 'to be or not to be'. Here the crisis in Youth Ministry is often linked to a tradition of a church without an established membership culture. In many churches, there is even no culture

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1151. Cf. Senter (1987a:202ff.).

1152. DeVries (2008), Appendixes on (2008:205ff.).

1153. DeVries and Dunn-Rankin (2011) on *'Before you hire a youth pastor: A step-by-step guide to finding the right fit';* cf. also Riddle (2009) for guidelines on 'staffing and leading youth pastors'; cf. also Freudenburg and Lawrence (1998:64ff.) on 'staffing properly and supporting home-centered staff'.

1154. DeVries and Dunn-Rankin (2011:2–5); see also Appendixes pp. 74–120.

1155. Cf. the intent of Ephesians 4:1–16 in this regard; cf. also Creps (2006) and his spiritual disciplines for missional leaders.

of office bearers that are trained. Worse still, some traditions are antipathetic or even antagonistic towards trained ministers.[1156] Developing or building missional local churches as ministries of training, should have a positive effect on Youth Ministry.[1157]

1156. Cf. Kotze (1993).

1157. Cf. Nel (1994:83ff.; 2015b:185–202).

PART 3

The ministry to, with and by means of the youth: What are we doing?

Chapter 11

Teaching

We have already noted that Youth Ministry was, for many centuries, a footnote or an annexure to catechesis.[1158] Catechesis[1159] was regarded as the real and official way in which the church dealt with the child. Youth Ministry, or, as it was often called 'youth work', was left to the initiative of the volunteer. Consequently, a dichotomy, a false distinction arose between teaching as a ministry and Youth Ministry as a local church ministry, and this dichotomy often still exists.

This viewpoint, together with other reasons, turned teaching into a very formal, almost mechanised impartation of information (facts). The more this happened and happens, the smaller the number of the youth who become inspired and committed members of local churches, and the sharper the division between 'formal classroom' teaching and the more informal youth

1158. Cf. Part 1.

1159. Referring to the teaching of catechisms which basically were documents of the church for teaching and learning. In our day, this would be referred to as Christian Education.

movement (irrespective of its nature or of who the organisers are). Add to all this a significant percentage of the parental community that has learned over many years (as has been taught) that only the church has to teach; a parental community that has, where the church is concerned, become averse to teaching; that has forgotten what it means to feel and share the joy of communicating one's faith. The result is an ecclesiastical educational system that urgently requires reformation worldwide.[1160] In many ways neither parents nor children nor the office bearers have retained 'a teachable spirit'.

The rediscovery of the biblical concept of discipleship' is partly because of this deformity in the system of the church, but not always constructively.[1161] Local churches often address this lack of willingness to learn in a lopsided way, discipleship is then conceived as a qualification for special Christians, of the 'A-type', the very committed. When this happens, it is forgotten that discipleship is merely another way in which the Bible refers to Christians.[1162] In a time of renewed interest in discipleship we should not be led astray and buy into the lie that discipleship is a special title for special people. I have tried elsewhere[1163] to argue this case and make a point on how, in a sense, only 'broken people' can disciple youth and others in our sphere of contacts.

However attractive it may seem, to classify Christians is an easy way out of the hard work of missional congregational reformation. It is only a temporary solution. Most churches that go the way of independentism or 'mentality churches'[1164] have to

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1160. Cf. Osmer (1990) in his book *A teachable Spirit: Recovering the teaching office in the church.*

1161. Cf. my attempts to point this out (Nel 2009b; 2015a); cf. also the section on discipleship as a theological lens on the theological departure points in Youth Ministry.

1162. Cf Acts 11:28; Nel (1994:84–85; 2015b:186–202); In case the Dutch language is accessible to the reader, cf. Stoppels (2013).

1163. Cf. again Nel (2009b; 2015a; 2015b:186ff.).

1164. Cf. Schippers (1996:481).

discover later that the same process of deformation overtakes their so-called newly found 'purity'. In another publication[1165] I suggested that within a '*Volkskirche*' where there often is more commitment to the culture of a specific group than to God in Christ, this is often the case: leaders are afraid to challenge this system and rather work with the so-called core-committed and accept that the estranged members remain part of the Christian faith community. Reforming the faith community to become and remain a 'learning community'[1166] with 'a teachable spirit'[1167] is our challenge in Youth Ministry. On this way of joyful, albeit exhausting, reformation we should discover how rich the ministry of *didache* [teaching] can be for the whole local church and also for the Youth Ministry.

What this ministry of teaching entails has been covered above in more than one way.[1168] The goal for touching on it here again is to complete the picture on 'what' we do in Youth Ministry. What was covered in the 'why' should give enough information on the 'what' as well. I therefore refrain from repeating what was argued and discussed in those sections.

1165. Nel (2015b:186–187).

1166. Cf. Schippers (1977).

1167. The title of Osmer's book (1990).

1168. Cf. Part 1, Chapter 1 in discipleship and also Part 1, Chapter 4.

The youth organisation: The relational approach

■ Development of meaningful relationships

When I discuss this approach here, I do not imply that it was previously absent in Youth Ministry books and approaches. Yet, the approach is so striking, of such core importance as to what Youth Ministry is, that it also cannot be explained without admitting that youth movements in the past perhaps did not make enough effort with relationships, and if so sometimes for the wrong reason. Although this approach may seem recent, it is not. Little[1169] already showed the weaknesses of the

1169. Little (1968:15).

traditional approaches. She quotes an article from 1964 that summarises a number of mistakes made in the past:

> The 'future church' heresy, dealing with the youth as the church of tomorrow. The 'numbers-game' heresy, measuring success in youth work by the number of the youth who can be persuaded to be 'active' in one aspect or another in the total youth program; The 'street-cleaning' heresy, setting up programs to keep the boys and girls off the street even though secular organizations as well as other churches are also ministering to the same young people; The 'stop-gap' heresy, involving the youth in a variety of organizations which substitute busy work for solid nurture in faith and preparation for mission in the world.

That Youth Ministry is primarily a relational ministry has already been stressed by Richards[1170] in the first edition of his renowned and authoritative book. At least for the past 40 years or more the relational emphasis has been growing in strength. In personal research over 25 years my observation is that in local churches with effective youth ministries 'relationships' were and are of the utmost importance. Some churches, like the Chase Oaks Church[1171] work with a mission of one youth leader for every ten children.

McKee[1172] writes about the obvious need for relationships in our society: 'The need for face-to-face relationships is becoming so readily apparent that even advertising targets this felt need.'

Studies are also showing that youth and young adults are participating less in team sports and more in individual activities:

- 'Since 1998, the number of young adults participating in team sports has decreased from 19 percent to 13 percent;
- The number of young adults going out to the movies has decreased from 13 percent in 1998 to just 3 percent in 2008;

1170. Richards (1978).

1171. Formerly called The Fellowship Bible Church, planted by Dr Gene Getz.

1172. McKee (2009:14).

- The number of adolescents staying home to watch television or rent videos has increased from 24 percent in 1998 to 32 percent in 2008.

It seems to me students today are more isolated, have fewer close friends, and are drifting away from activities with personal interaction. This is creating a relational void in their lives. Add this to the growing levels of stress and pain teenagers already face as part of adolescence, and it is no wonder we are seeing an increase in teenage anxiety, depression, violence, and self-injury. Teenagers are hurting more than ever before.'[1173]

He continues by telling real stories about youth who were uninvolved, some believers and others, are 'plugged into a church home to continue to grow in faith. The common denominator [is] adults who spent time with them *one-on-one*'[1174] [*emphasis in original*].

In another chapter, McKee[1175] reports on research among youth workers about this number-one priority in Youth Ministry: 'Equip your staff to love students and connect with them.' After some doubt about this 'number-one' he surveyed youth workers about this. He sums up the outcome in these words:

It doesn't matter what you call it: Contacting, connecting, building relationships – it's all about our relationships with students. I don't think I received a single response that didn't include this important element. We need to connect with students.[1176]

The background to this approach is also the growing insight that faith is to be understood relationally. Faith can, in a certain, way only be described as a relationship. Faith development, learning

1173. McKee (2009:14).

1174. McKee (2009:19). The heading of this section is: 'The common denominator'.

1175. McKee (2009:22–33)

1176. McKee (2009:24).

to believe, learning to trust, is a relational event.[1177] Discipleship is a relationship with the Lord,[1178] and we learn this in relationships with other people. Whatever other approach there may be in Youth Ministry, and for whatever reason it may be chosen, if the relational nature of Youth Ministry is not taken seriously, the outcome remains limited and short-term. The well-timed publication by Zirschky,[1179] to my mind, just reminds us again of the importance of significant relationships with youth in a time of electronic isolation. Zirschky refers to it as 'networked individualism' and later in his book he talks about the 'full presence in a world of partial relationships.' However challenging relational Youth Ministry may become in our world of the 'connected but alone generation',[1180] nothing can replace relational integrity in Youth Ministry.

■ Pastoral foundational attitudes
■ Respect for youth as fully human

The greatest challenge on the road to establishing a Youth Ministry as a relational ministry is probably the basic pastoral attitude of the people who work with the youth. I have already referred to this.[1181] Some additional remarks are necessary. The matter itself requires much more time and space. This is not a book about pastoral care as such (it would also be outside my field of expertise), but what is relevant in Youth Ministry and especially in the relational approach, will be mentioned briefly.

1177. Cf. Dingemans (1986:116).

1178. Cf. Part 1 on discipleship; see also Dingemans (1986:138).

1179. Zirschky (2015:51, 89); df. for the broader discussion (pp. 51–63, 89–103).

1180. Part of the subtitle of Zirschky's book.

1181. Cf. Part 2, Chapter 10.

Clark's[1182] remarks on how important a relationship with adults is, but also how difficult it is for adolescents, may help me to emphasise the essence of the research problem here:

> Contrary to what most adults may think, middle adolescents want significant relationships with adults who care about them […] The difficulty comes when they attempt to reconcile this need with their perception of lack of trustworthiness in adults […] Due to the midadolescent's recognition that for most of his or her life the norm has been a lack of authentic concern and care at almost every turn, few are able to easily trust an adult who does reach out […] If adults cannot be trusted to be authentic, committed, and selfless advocates, then the only alternative available to adolescents is to flee. With early adolescents, families still hold the greatest possible hope of providing the care, protection, and support that kids need. But with the development of abstract thought in later adolescence comes the heightened ability to recognize the complexity of the world and to be able to read mixed motives and inauthentic or inconsistent treatment from adults and adult institutions.

Linking up again with equihumanness discussed earlier[1183] I should mention some of the other trace elements of a basic pastoral attitude – elements that are seldom (if ever) obvious in Youth Ministry. Matters like motivation and training have already been dealt with in this book. In addition, it is crucially important to note that equihumanness is characterised by 'the principle of basic reciprocity.'[1184] This in turn puts basic respect for humanity on the agenda. It is not age that compels love or respect. Humanness calls for the fulfilment of the Great Commandment. What is more, when a person opens up to the truth that God approaches people through other people, such a person is also

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1182. Clark (2011:39), in a chapter titled: 'Abandonment – the defining issue for contemporary adolescents'. Clark (2011:193–196) also emphasises the necessity of relationships: 'Youth need a stable and secure loving presence.'; 'Youth need to experience authentic, intimate relationships with adults' and then continues to describe 'Five strategies to turn around the tide of systemic abandonment' (pp. 197–202).

1183. Cf. Firet (1986:138ff.).

1184. Firet (1977:317; 1986:249).

open to the idea that God approaches also the people who work with the youth through the youth themselves.

The above means that the person with whom the believer stands in a relationship is taken seriously, and the believer has to listen sincerely to this person. By listening, others learn that we care, and respect them, and are serious.[1185]

Furthermore, a basic pastoral attitude means that a pastor and any other worker should be critical about any leaning towards 'psychagogic action',[1186] meaning an attempt to change people through psychological pressure. In Youth Ministry, the danger is by no means imaginary that even age and experience can be used to force people to change – as also fear of punishment, of hell, and so on.

A last matter is identification while retaining a healthy distance.[1187] Although it may be very difficult, one's identifying involvement with the youth cannot be substituted. Because of their over sensitivity, they know – in any case – whether those who led them are emotionally and pastorally dedicated to them. Richards[1188] as well as Richards and Hoeldtke[1189] have described these relationships as 'body relationships' and 'shared life' respectively. Within such relationships, one cannot avoid sharing pain or joy. Happy is the believer who can, within the framework of identifying with another as part of the body of Christ, retain a distance for the sake of healthy evaluation and help. Firet[1190] states:

1185. Cf. Armstrong (1987a; 1987b); Johnson (1994).

1186. Firet (1986:252).

1187. Cf. Richards (1978:137ff.); Borthwick (1997).

1188. Richards (1978:245ff.).

1189. Richards and Hoeldtke (1982:219ff.).

1190. Firet (1986:258).

> That which makes a person a human being is for the pastor the condition sine qua non. Only that person can be a pastor who respects the other as his fellow human being in equality.

▮ Incarnational

Root[1191] followed up his doctoral thesis on the relational approach in Youth Ministry with a now well-known and well-read book on the same subject. It is not the time yet for any new research on this subject. Root has done well and for some time this will be the lead document on relational Youth Ministry. In the words of the late Ray Anderson:[1192]

> Root exposes the sand on which much 'relational Youth Ministry' of the late twentieth century has been based, and recasts the church's ministry with young people in the Christology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In so doing, Root injects Youth Ministry with both a needed missional direction and a welcome theological humility.

Since this was written, Root[1193] did what many of us hoped for and published a book titled: *Bonhoeffer as youth worker.*

Having said this, I am certainly not trying to add to what Root wrote. I do, however, want to discuss some of what he wrote for the sake of enriching this section of this publication. Four of his works[1194] are playing in on my brief discussion of his view on relational Youth Ministry. Root shares something of his own journey and rediscovery of what relational Youth Ministry is. In a chapter on what it is not, he shares some stories of how difficult (if not impossible) it is to even have or build a relationship with hurting youth. He wrote:[1195]

1191. Root (2005, 2007).

1192. On the back-cover page of Root (2007).

1193. Root (2014a).

1194. Root (2007; 2009; 2014a; 2014b).

1195. Root (2009:15–16).

> I started to realize that relational Youth Ministry was much more difficult than I had previously thought or experienced. It appeared that, because of these adolescents' deep suffering, they were unable to be influenced toward the ends I desired for them. Their deep wounds of poverty, abuse, abandonment, and violence kept them from trusting me.

As already noted about the remark by Anderson, the work of Bonhoeffer plays a vital part in Root's thinking, and that in itself attracts my attention. Bonhoeffer's eight theses on Youth Ministry were quoted by myself when I wrote my doctoral dissertation (as it was then called). To be expected when one takes Bonhoeffer's work seriously, is an exposure to the Christ and his crucifixion. Our participation in what God is doing is participation in what he did in Christ. In the words of Root:[1196]

> This participation, I'll argue, happens only through a death-to-life, life-through-death paradigm of divine action (this is the *theologia crucis* element of my perspective and the fundamental core, I will argue of ministry itself). We participate in Jesus, are called disciples, because we have died with Christ, and we are now given life through Christ's ministry of cross and resurrection (this is Christopraxis).

Without a specific source reference, Root[1197] then quotes Bonhoeffer as having said: 'When Jesus Christ calls a man he calls him to come and die.'

I am leaving out a lot of his argumentation and instead now jump to the implications for relational Youth Ministry. Root[1198] shares how he discovered that when Bonhoeffer spoke about our experience of God's presence in Christ, he (Bonhoeffer):

> [S]ought to place God's presence somewhere other than in our subjective and individualistic experience. Instead he placed God's

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1196. Root (2014b:73).

1197. Root (2014b:73).

1198. Root (2007:105, 106). Root explores in the following pages Bonhoeffer's understanding of encountering Christ in Word and sacrament; cf. also the book edited by Jones (2007) on the writings of Gregory Dix.

presence in the social experience of community in relationships […] Where do I encounter this one to whom I am called to conform? […] He [*Bonhoeffer*] answers that Jesus is present to us in two interconnected locales, one is the church community and the other is within the world, standing alongside and with distinct persons.

By this understanding of 'the other', the 'you' takes on a transcendent dimension.[1199] Root's point is that God is present in relationships – in the church and in the world. Jumping to Youth Ministry, Root noted:[1200]

Using relationships as an end is a mistake because it assumes that there is a third thing (a relationship with Jesus) that can be attained outside of the relationship between I and you.

According to Bonhoeffer there is no such third thing:

One does not love God in the neighbor, nor are neighbors loved to make them Christian – neighbors are loved for their own sake, and in this love of the human companions one serves the will of God.[1201]

Root[1202] continues by saying 'the way to Christ is through the other, the neighbor'. He then quotes Bonhoeffer:[1203]

I do not love God in the 'neighbor', but I love the concrete You; I love the You by placing myself, my entire will, in the service of the You […] The person who loves God must, by God's will, really love the neighbor.

Root makes several 'deductions' [author's word use] of what the implications for relational Youth Ministry then would be. As we

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1199. For a fuller discussion, cf. Root (2007:110–120).

1200. Root (2007:116).

1201. Green (1999:58).

1202. Root (2007:116).

1203. Bonhoeffer (1963:169).

participate in what God is doing in Christ[1204] we are part of an 'incarnational community'.[1205] For us:

> [*T*]he incarnation is not a metaphor but the very ground of our being, the place where we meet the person of Christ as *who*, where we encounter the incarnate, crucified and resurrected One. The relational minister is called to live conformed to the incarnate, crucified and resurrected person. This happens when we seek the person of Jesus within the world loved by Christ (incarnate).[1206]

It is not difficult to see why Root and others argue that relational ministry should never be used to influence or to reach another goal than just being in relationship with the other. In Root's words:[1207]

> To assume that there is a third thing, that the relationship with an adolescent is the means to another end, is to deny both the *transcendence of the adolescent and the transcendence of the person of Christ*. [*emphasis in original*]

Nothing else calls our integrity and sincerity into question as does this claim of the Incarnation of the Christ and our very being as people in relationship.[1208] I have already mentioned how we are to be understood as relational in being. Let me briefly repeat the argument by Lee. Lee[1209] explains how the 'social doctrine of the Trinity emphasises the relational of human personhood over the individualistic personhood of liberalism.' But also, how the particularity of each one of us finds its resemblance in the Trinitarian persons. I also obtain my specificness in relation to others. 'Individuality and relationality are not antithetical […] In

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1204. Root's 'Christopraxis', cf. (2007:87ff.).

1205. Anderson (2001:117), quoted in Root (2014b:106); cf. also Arzola (2015:113–143) on reclaiming the 'incarnational view on the church'.

1206. Root (2007:102).

1207. Root (2007:116).

1208. Cf. also Dean *imitation Christi* and 'cruciform pattern of self-giving love' (2004:45ff., 152, 238–256).

1209. Lee (2006:104–105).

relationship, there is an otherness of each person from each other. Without the basic particularity of individuals, relationship is not possible.'[1210] McKoy[1211] also reflects on our 'relation being'. He even differentiates between a traditional view of relationships and what he calls 'a relational view of relationships'. In his reflection on our relational responsibility he points out, what I have observed so often, namely that if we do not take the essence of the 'relational' serious, we address 'serious problems without taking them too serious.'[1212]

No wonder that Root[1213] prefers to use the concept of 'place-sharing'[1214] to explain our selfless involvement with the other. Place-sharing 'is possible only by completely devoting one's life to another person. Only those who are selfless, live responsibly, which means that only selfless people truly live.'[1215] Root[1216] discusses a relational Youth Ministry as place-sharing in-depth. In summary it comes to:

• A relational Youth Ministry of place-sharing means standing in for the full person of the adolescent;
• A relational Youth Ministry of place-sharing means 'to suffer with';
• A relational Youth Ministry of place-sharing is a richer picture of the incarnation and the *koinonia* of the Trinity.

1210. Lee (2006:104). He continues: 'The respect for freedom in reciprocity, and the reciprocity in freedom, is a constitutive norm of social trinitarian theology. In social trinitarian thinking, freedom is inseparable from love.'

1211. McKoy (2013:42–61). He relates how we change within every relationship, with our identity and our stories.

1212. McKoy (2013:212–230), quote (p. 220).

1213. Root (2007:20, 124ff.). He also has a chapter on 'How place-sharing works' (2007:142–165) with in-depth reference to especially two works by James Loder (1989) and a collection of his lecture notes (1993).

1214. German: *Stellvertreter.*

1215. Bonhoeffer as quoted by Root (2005:221)

1216. Root (2009:49–64). The three dimensions: (Root 2009:54–58, 58–61, 61–62).

One cannot but be reminded of the words of Jesus that, only by giving away life, one gains life:[1217]

> (23)Then he said to them all: Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. (24)For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. (25)What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? (26)Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Relational Youth Ministry is now a well-known concept. Below I will refer to several others who have pointed out the importance of this approach. The fact that I pay a little more attention to Root's work has many reasons, but in particular that hopefully, the debate that relationships are a tool or a way to influence matters are put to rest. Not only for Youth Ministry, but also for evangelism (and probably also in disciple-making) it is so often used as a stepping stone to, what is called above, a 'third thing'.[1218] However valuable that 'purpose' might be, it is just not what relational ministry is meant to be. We care because God makes us people who care – no strings attached. Root[1219] refers to it as 'personal-influence ralationalism'. The first part of his book points out in more than one way that this was and is part of evangelicalism. How well intentioned it may be, this is exactly what gives even the relational approach a bad name.[1220]

Relationships cannot be just about 'influence'. It is difficult to get this motive (to influence) out of even or subconscious.

1217. Luke 9:23–26 (NIV).

1218. Cf. a remark by Dean (2011a:19) that 'Youth ministry as Practical Theology is neither "relational evangelism" nor Christian education – though it involves both.'

1219. Root (2007:70).

1220. Root (2007:17; 2009:18) refers to this as well.

Even when the goal of our influence is so well-meant. In the words of Root,[1221] whom I am trying to interpret here:

> If the goal of our relationship is growth, commitment and conversion, eventually I am completely justified in abandoning the relationship. I can say to an adolescent through words or actions. Let's face it, this isn't working. I am moving on to someone more receptive to my efforts (i.e. easier to influence).

He[1222] continues and asks:

> *Have we convinced them to be who we want them to be? Have we tried so hard to save them or change them that we've ignored the deep dreams, joys, pains, and fears that live within them? Have we somehow told them through our influence-based relationships that there is no room for the messiness of human existence in the Christian faith?*. [*emphasis in original*]

Burns and DeVries[1223] in a chapter on 'what is relational Youth Ministry' are correct in pointing out that:

> [*Y*]oung people tire of shallow and hollow programs or manipulative methods. They can see through false pretences. They are looking for something deeper, something real, something authentic. While building relationships we become the hands and feet – and even the voice – of Jesus in their lives. As we seek to build relationships with the students we minister to, they will see us as real and approachable, genuine in faith and a friend to be trusted […] We believe that students who remain active in in the Youth Ministry will stay, not because of our creative programming, but because of healthy and genuine relationships.

They continue to name six basic ingredients of an effective relational Youth Ministry:[1224] team ministry, modelling,

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1221. Root (2009:24–25).

1222. Root (2009:26).

1223. Burns (2008:20). The book was first published under the title *The Youth Builder* (2001). This edition goes back to an earlier edition with the same title: *The Youth Builder* (1988). Then it had a subtitle 'Today's resource for relational Youth Ministry'.

1224. Burns (2008:20–26); cf. also Ward (1995:13–40) for his discussion on 'Christian relational care'; cf. Cannister (2013:48ff.) for the importance of what he calls 'genuine relationships' in the transformation within adolescents.

unconditional love, nurturing, meeting students on their territory, and spending time with students.

It is fitting to close this paragraph with reference to Root[1225] on 'why relational Youth Ministry cannot be about influence':

• 'Relational Youth Ministry cannot be about influence because it would use relationships as a means to another end'; [1226]
• 'Relational Youth Ministry cannot be about influence because then the person isn't important; only that person's decision (or will) is';[1227]
• 'Relational Youth Ministry cannot be about influence because the incarnation of Jesus Christ has nothing to do with influence';[1228]
• 'Relational Youth Ministry cannot be about influence because the *koinonia* of the Trinity is not about influence'.[1229]

■ Group-oriented approach

Youth Ministry has from early on made use of group work. Since books have systematically described Youth Ministry (or youth work, as it was called then) in the Sixties, there have been references to group work. It seems as if it has been an obvious method from the start; it has not been motivated, but merely mentioned and discussed.[1230] I am convinced that group work has been part of Youth Ministry since the very beginning, even though it has not always been scientifically motivated. The youth's need for nearness, and the greater openness within a smaller, more secure group, has made it almost a matter of

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1225. Root (2009:33–43), for the four reasons (pp. 33–37, 37–39, 39–41, 42–42).

1226. Root (2009:33–37).

1227. Root (2009:37–39).

1228. Root (2009:39–41).

1229. Root (2009:42–42).

1230. Cf. Getz (1968:371-385).

course. In our time, this approach is more than a method used for purposes of discussions. It is part of a whole movement for the sake of *koinonia* as an essential component of the way in which the local church exists and serves.[1231] Literature about groups and their significance in building up the local church is almost inexhaustible. One could very well say that it can all be applied to the youth. It is about building relationships in which growth, change and missional relationships are cultivated. Snyman's[1232] 'growth model' for Youth Ministry is essentially a group model. Veerman's book[1233] on 'small group ministry with youth' abounds with examples of how groups in Youth Ministry can be used for all these purposes. The book[1234] also contains valuable references to other literature and material that can be used in groups. Groups in Youth Ministry are established and developed more and more for the sake of relational Youth Ministry.

An additional remark needs to be made about the need for 'intergenerational groups in congregational youth ministry […] the older members and the youth alike have an urgent need for it.'[1235] Youth Ministry models have to be chosen and developed contextually. But for all concerned, communication is the watchword, especially within an inclusive missional and local church theory of Youth Ministry – like the one suggested in this book. If the points of departure, as they have been presented above,[1236] are valid, then they need open channels of communication. Parents and children, children and older members from other families, families as such, should be helped

1231. Cf. Nel (2015b:129–135).

1232. Snyman (1993; 1994:138–150).

1233. Veerman (1992).

1234. Veerman (1992:159–164).

1235. Nel (2000:163),

1236. Cf. Parts 1 and 2.

to understand one another better.[1237] Communication among them is one of the youth's basic needs. Marshall[1238] is right when she says that the older group within the local church has so much to contribute while the youth are looking for what we already have, a way of making sense of the world and the interpretation of experiences, a way of thinking, a perspective on life and the world. For this very reason, opportunities for communication are necessary – as spontaneously and as often as possible. These opportunities should, after all, be part of a healthy life in and as part of the local body of believers. Marshall goes on to say:

> [*T*]rue renewal in Youth Ministry will always suggest, grow out of, be rooted in and related to renewal of the church. This is not to say that Youth Ministry cannot be the beginning point. It may well be the stimulus for genuine revival, by God and through God's Spirit, of the entire faith community, the Body of Christ.

The distinction Cannister[1239] makes between multigenerational and intergenerational is so vital that I repeat the quotation from his work here again. It is in the same vein that he argues for 'practices of the intergenerational church', stating that being intergenerational is more than a programme: 'Intergenerational ministry, however, requires an intentional interaction among generations that promotes the faith formation of all ages.' He distinguishes, rightly so, between intergenerational and multigenerational:

> Most churches are multigenerational: many generations are represented [...] Such congregations strive to create ministries for children, adolescents, and adults, but they may not integrate these

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1237. See the very good article by Neff (1991:162–177); cf. Fine (1979); Barna (1995); Cooey (1996); Seibel (2010).

1238. Marshall (1989:48).

1239. Cannister (2013:137); cf. also Clark (2015a) for a number of contributions on 'integrating emerging generations into the family of faith'. I refer especially to Cannister's chapter (2016:136–149); and a chapter by Diaz (2016:335–346).

age groups. Intergenerational ministries strive to integrate multiple generations through meaningful conversations, interactions, and service on a regular basis.[1240]

■ Team approach

One of the most striking developments in Youth Ministry is the insight that a youth pastor and/or any other full-time or part-time worker cannot work only with the youth. In a series of publications by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board on Youth Ministry each contains a chapter devoted to the youth worker and personnel, the youth worker and parents, and the youth workers and other youth workers.[1241] This principle runs like a golden thread through many publications about Youth Ministry, which is a team effort - an inclusive congregational approach. In the inclusive approach proposed in this book teamwork is very important. The covenantal or relational approach almost automatically puts it on the agenda, that we are not working with our own children. The prime facilitators, the parents, are basic and essential team members of this ministry.[1242] The modelling aspect of Youth Ministry also requires a team that demonstrates that being a Christian is never a one-man show.

I mention this important aspect of Youth Ministry under the heading of the relational approach as it fits well there. Within healthy relationships the youth are guided towards the cultivation of healthy relationships. This guidance is often not accomplished by means of the formal transfer of information, but develops best by means of demonstrated and healthy team relationships.

1240. Cannister (2013:137).

1241. Cf. Ross and Rowatt (1986); Ross (1984; 1988a; 1988b; 1989).

1242. Cf. the important contribution by Freudenburg and Lawrence (1998:1–55).

Earlier on[1243] leadership was discussed and this aspect of leadership in Youth Ministry is directly linked to this, it could be called a basic approach in leadership. One could describe the basic work of a youth pastor or worker as being the building of relationships. All other forms of effective Youth Ministry, like youth programmes, are built on developing relationships of trust. The team approach needs to explore this. For this reason, it is almost impossible to have long-term successes in Youth Ministry if the senior pastor does not have a comprehensive and inclusive idea of Youth Ministry as a congregational ministry.[1244]

1243. Cf. Part 2, Chapter 10; cf. also Nel (2015b:143ff.) on leadership in developing missional congregations.

1244. Cf. also Benson in Benson and Senter (1987:291–295) for his remarks on 'bonding with the pastoral team' and 'teaming up with the home front'; cf. also remarks made by participants in the Roundtable discussion, Part 3, Chapter 16.

The youth organisation: Basic approaches

Youth Ministry is a ministry within the local church *to, with* and *through* the youth (children and adolescents). In Chapter 1 above mainly teaching was discussed. Some would think that teaching is seen as ministry to the youth, but this is not my intention. The whole theological and psychological basis of the *didache* renders such an approach impossible. Teaching is also a ministry with and by means of the youth.[1245] Where this does not happen in congregational teaching, the holistic nature of Youth Ministry, and teaching especially, is probably not yet understood and/or taken seriously.

Youth Ministry, in the traditional sense, was for a long time regarded as being separate from teaching, as the actual and official ministry of the local church.[1246] Looking at the development

1245. Cf. Nel (1985b:171–181; 1991a:631–643).

1246. Cf. again Part 1, Chapter 4.

of Youth Ministry and youth organisations there is a striking resemblance in the historical development in many traditions.

My intention is not to respond in any way to two books[1247] in which different authors reflected on 'views of Youth Ministry'; both books are a 'must read' for any scholar in this field. In the first part of this book and in the previous chapter I have again tried to argue a case for 'my view' on Youth Ministry already. What follows below is to help the reader and student to be aware of a few more discernible approaches to Youth Ministry.[1248]

■ Pedagogical approach

The origin of youth organisations and youth societies was often pedagogically inspired. Youth societies were often initiated based on evangelical motives. The Bible and its knowledge is central to this tradition. A good example in South African history is the *Christelike Jongeliede Vereniging* which was founded on 23 November 1874 in Stellenbosch. This society developed out of the *Bible class* of Prof. N.J. Hofmeijr,[1249] the same was true of '*jeugdzorgwerk*' in the Netherlands. In the latter case, the intention was to help and educate the youth from disadvantaged backgrounds.[1250] To a great extent this was also true of the origin of one of the oldest youth societies – the YMCA – the society upon which the *Christelike Jongeliede Vereniging* was based. The purpose of the latter league was to foster one another's and others' spiritual progress.[1251] The other prominent Afrikaans youth

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1247. Cf. Senter (2001); Clark (2015b). Clark (2015b:xii) who participated in the first book too, refers to the content as 'four positions' in Youth Ministry.

1248. Cf. also Senter (1995:105–131) for 'emerging patterns of youth ministry at the end of the twentieth century.' It is worth referring again to the work by DeVries (2008:51–73) on 'A systems approach to Youth Ministry'.

1249. Cf. Nel (1982:93).

1250. Cf. also Le Roux (1962).

1251. Cf. Terblanche (1966:43).

society in this country, the *Christelike Strewers*, was founded in 1887 in Wellington. This society played a significant educational role (also in the maintenance of the Afrikaans language) with prisoners of war, among others.[1252] These developments generally followed the pattern of events in the USA and Europe. Getz[1253] for instance, discusses a variety of creative methods in 'youth work', but all against the background of 'learning'.

The dominant opinion was that these societies had to give the youth a spiritual education, Bible studies were often the main focus. This is not meant in a negative way, I merely want to show that the pedagogical approach in education influenced the very nature of the youth's organisations. The young person is basically still 'immature', and more 'mature' Christians take the lead in the organisation of the society for the sake of the (further and ongoing) education of the youth. As has been mentioned, this approach was usually accompanied by a zeal for the evangelisation of the youth and the building of their faith. In voluntary youth work, as it was called, the youth also took the lead and participated actively. Yet, adult guidance and supervision were solidly built into the organisation and administration of these societies. In the Dutch Reformed tradition, this was usually entrenched in the constitution of the youth organisation. Of course, it was (in the case of the DRC) a church organisation and supervised by the church board or session. I do not want to evaluate these facts here. The point is that youth organisations then and now, too, still have a strong pedagogic bias, it is about 'learning'. People who know 'more' and often 'better' become involved with the youth in an educational way by means of a youth organisation. Sholund[1254] was correct when he said that based on the pattern of the Sunday School there soon were other organisations that tried to draw the youth 'in an effort to guide them to Christian

1252. Cf. Kemp (1963:225).

1253. Getz (1968:371–386.).

1254. Sholund (1968:61).

doctrine.' The period in history (19th century) explains this emphasis. The 'true doctrine' still played a decisive role in the Reformed tradition. Simultaneously, the stream of growing Pietism already flowed strongly. Evangelical fervour and a zeal for the 'correct content' and its conveyance still reigned in great parts of the 'Christendom'. Add to this the idea prevalent at the time that especially children were impressionable non-adults, and we can understand how youth movements could develop such an almost lopsided pedagogical view.[1255]

■ 'Programme' approach

The remark by Sholund[1256] quoted above is important here. Sunday School was by definition a programme for children and, since 1798 (Nottingham, England), also for older young people. The founding of the Sunday School by Robert Raikes in 1780 was motivated by a desire to teach the Bible to neglected children. These children could not attend school because of their daily work. They were deprived, some were probably already involved in crime.[1257] About the intentions of the organisers there should be no doubt, they wanted to help children and adolescents, even if it only meant keeping them off the streets. They did so by developing programmes that addressed certain needs. The programmes usually included Bible study, discussions of Christian issues, ethical and world problems, readings, lectures on relevant matters, social visits and relaxation evenings. This variety was meant to attract the youth. The difference between these programmes and 'Sunday School' was that the youth were at least more involved in their own programmes.[1258]

1255. Cf. a good contribution in this regard by McKoy (2013:174–196) about 'thickening the presentation of the Bible Story' and for example, 'from the individual interpreter to God's community of interpreted individuals.'

1256. Sholund (1968:61–71).

1257. Cf. Greyling (1955); Sholund (1968).

1258. Cf. Sholund (1968:63).

■ The 'service' approach

We should bear in mind that in the programme approach the programmes were also aimed at rendering a service – service to one another and to the so-called 'youth population'.[1259] Many youth organisations, for instance, were founded in the USA just after the Civil War. In South Africa, in the Afrikaans-speaking community, an organisation like the *Christelike Strewers* blossomed in 1901. In the USA there were singing classes for the youth in the 18th century already – before the actual 'official' establishment of youth organisations. Such a class existed in Boston in 1717.[1260] The 'missionary awakening' in the late 18th and early 19th century also stimulated mission-oriented youth movements. The YMCA and the YWCA were primarily service-oriented when they were founded, they were to supply lodging, and healthy spiritual and physical relaxation for the youth.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the desire to serve was and is prominent in the youth. Although in their phase of life, self-centeredness is normal, they do have a need and a desire to serve. Strommen[1261] already in 1973 mentioned 'the sense of commitment found in mission.' In 1974, he discussed a 'desire to serve' (as part of the chapter on 'joy') as one of the 'cries of the youth'.[1262] According to Strommen's[1263] empirical research the youth that have found their identity and revel in it, also long to serve. Part of the in-depth analysis was that 'the two most powerful predictors of a life alienated from God are the opposites

1259. Brink and Kitching (1994:13).

1260. Cf. Sholund (1968:61).

1261. Strommen (1973:88).

1262. Strommen (1974:92ff.); cf. the research by Roehlkepartian and others that affirms this and provides help on 'engaging youth in giving and serving'.

1263. Strommen (1973; 1974).

of mutuality and mission. They are feelings of isolation and feelings of purposelessness.'[1264]

The history of youth organisations affirms this approach of rendering service.

■ 'Decision' approach

As we have remarked, many youth organisations originated from within evangelical circles. The reasons for this are obvious. One notable reason is the fact that the local church often did not discharge its responsibility towards the youth. Because of this, Christians who were serious about ministering to the youth often began youth movements, even outside of the church, to win children and adolescents for Christ. This truth runs almost without exception through the history of the origin of youth organisations.[1265] To an extent this approach is linked to the whole history of the origin of the Evangelicalism movement, and the Anabaptist movement even before the Reformation. But even within the so-called covenantal tradition and the concomitant and unfortunate '*Volkskirche*' mentality, children and adolescents within the church were regarded by some as lost and were approached as such. Within Reformed circles this is often because of the ignorance about baptism (its meaning and implications) or almost completely 'ignoring' the baptism of children.[1266]

The relationship of the youth with Christ and through him with the Father is of vital importance in Youth Ministry. The problem here is that this emphasis is sometimes oversimplified into what I call 'a decision-approach' – and almost against a 'disciple-making approach'. In this approach, there is often the

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1264. Strommen (1973:88); cf. also Fletcher et al. (1974).

1265. Cf. Irving and Zuck (1977); Borgman (1987).

1266. Or for this matter dedication of babies in the Baptist tradition.

demand that children and adolescents should 'give their hearts to Christ', 'accept Christ', 'surrender themselves', 'be converted', 'become sure of their faith'. It may be true that all these phrases do have a place sometime or other during evangelisation. But such expressions are dangerous when put into a 'decision context' in Youth Ministry. Life is like an unfolding road. On this road there are often choices, so much so that the way of the youth can be described as a way of 'choices'.[1267] In no way should the impression be created that a relationship that is as important as the one with God in Christ is settled by means of a single decision at any age. Each decision is but one step - a next step. Neither should anyone be sure enough to say to anyone else who has decided, that this has been the 'first' step. Nobody ever gets up earlier than God when it comes to the restoration of people's relationship with him.[1268]

The above approach was especially prominent in the youth revolution of the late Sixties.[1269] The youth movements that originated after that time still strongly bear the character of 'decisions for Christ'. What is true, however, is that many of them have since developed a stronger discipleship approach.[1270]

1267. Cf. Van Duinen (n.d.), and Kohnstamm (1948), whose research has often been affirmed in the course of history.

1268. Cf. Armstrong (1979:32).

1269. Cf. Enroth, Ericson and Peters (1972).

1270. Cf. Part 1, Section on discipleship as a core theological lens in Youth Ministry.

Chapter 14

The youth organisation: Basic models

Models of Youth Ministry are numerous. Up until the middle and late Seventies especially denominational 'youth work' (as it was mostly called) was highly structured. Marshall[1271] mentions a number of characteristics of structured youth work of the church since the Thirties. (My own research has often made me realise with surprise how the development of denominational 'youth work', even on different continents, and without contact or detail information, could develop so similarly). The characteristics were:

- the character of unity throughout the denomination and even outside of it;
- the unified program included the total work of the church – in the DRC it seemed as if the system of committees had been decentralised down to youth level;

1271. Marshall (1989:44–46).

- the work was carefully articulated, structured and handed down in detail (today this would be called prescriptive);
- the model gave youth a voice in making decisions about their own programs;
- there was a high degree of social concern and action;
- the model often served as a vehicle for idealism and vision;
- the fellowship model, with its common commission plan, was both ecumenical and relational or connectional (think of the regional and national gatherings);
- the quality of leadership was exceptionally high.

This period of highly structured youth ministries has passed, at least for the time being. They worked – and worked well. In a way, the scene today is characterised by the opposite of what has been.[1272] Some believe Youth Ministry is, at present, in total chaos. Others say that there is 'not a disarray but a variety of models and options from which to choose.'[1273] The scene is diverse, to say the least. Denominational youth ministries are perhaps struggling more than before while interdenominational and para-church youth movements (sometimes also called specialised agencies) are also battling. In the process, there are more and more efforts to study Youth Ministry, to give it a foundation, to enrich it ecumenically. An example of this was the founding of what was then called the 'Conference on Youth Ministry' and that grew into the founding and establishment of the International Association for the Study of Youth Ministry.[1274] In South Africa there were several such efforts, for instance is the National Youth Committee of the DRC that provided leadership for all facets of Youth Ministry within that denomination for many years. Many similar examples could be added.

The scene is diverse, yet it must be so. 'The society in which the youth live is many-faceted. Ministry to the youth from

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1272. A good historical example will be a descriptive study of the gradual and even total dismantling of the well-structured and organised 'Church Youth Activities' of the DRC.

1273. Marshall (1989:47).

1274. Founded in 2001 in Oxford.

different cultures and from different backgrounds requires contextual and creative approaches.'[1275] The challenges in this regard have only just begun in South Africa.

A number of models can, however, be distinguished. Perhaps some of these models will supply the necessary continuities to guide Youth Ministry in the creative and contextual development of models – especially with families in mind,[1276] a 'cookie-cutter' approach is no longer possible. If something works somewhere, it works because people have thought about the matter, have prayed about it, have listened to one another and to others, have waited a little, have invested much time and energy in reflection and planning, and have succeeded in getting the whole local church's help and support for their approach and model. An approach can seldom if ever be simply copied. Models are contextual. What follows below is hopefully only an incentive towards the creative use of principles on a local level. Perhaps the distinguishing characteristic of the models since the late Seventies was the movement in the direction of 'youth empowerment'.[1277] In this approach, Youth Ministry is about activities, support systems and programmes developed to help the youth to be, to a greater extent and in a more authentic way, involved with and visible in every subdivision of congregational life. And maybe Cannister[1278] is right in saying: 'When teenagers matter: Programming is simple' as he is in saying 'When teenagers matter: Parents matter' – and if I may add: They matter even when we plan, they are after all their children.[1279]

1275. Cf. for instance Myers (1991); Perkins (1995); Nel (2000:169).

1276. Cf. Freudenburg and Lawrence (1998:60–63, 74–95).

1277. Cf. Marshall (1989:46).

1278. Cannister (2013:149–177, 179–211).

1279. Cf. Freudenburg and Lawrence (1998:14–21).

For models like those mentioned below, I refer to reliable research and distinctions developed and published by Senter.[1280] Senter must get full credit for all of these clarifying distinctions.

■ Community model

According to Senter[1281] the philosophy behind this model is that the youth should develop the attitudes and abilities necessary for representing God in this world, or making God present in this world. This is done in order to give youth an essential and living share in all aspects of the life of a Christian community, the local church.

This model is a sincere attempt at expressing the theological principles as set out in this book. The main activities of the model are therefore:

• the training (teaching) of youth;
• youth meetings that accommodate one another and the others in our local church with whom we share our faith and with whom we grow;
• corporate worship services as one of the most essential activities of the model;
• ministry activities that include children and adolescents.

Leadership is shared, and parents play an important role. The next remark by Senter[1282] is of critical importance:

> The community model works best in churches where there is a large constituency of non-legalistic parents who are more interested in seeing their adolescent children explore the outer reaches of their faith than protecting them from the corrupting influences of society.

1280. Senter (1987b:239–269); cf. also Cook (1995:92–104) for a chapter on 'programme and relationships in youth ministry'.

1281. Senter (1987b:240).

1282. Senter (1987b:243).

■ Competition model

The philosophy behind this model is mainly to put the natural leaders to use in a given set of circumstances in order to act as servants and motivators of their teams in the context of competition between teams to draw the youth to attend well-articulated confrontations with biblical truths. These discussions take place in the larger group and also in the smaller discipleship groups. The background to this approach probably goes as far back as the apologetic approach during the growing (so-called?) conflict between faith and science.[1283] Senter[1284] links it with developments under the leadership of Bill Hybels who was asked to build up the music ministry of Holmbo (1972) for the sake of evangelising the high school pupils of South Park, Illinois.

This model's activities usually consist of meetings during the week, discipleship groups, training of team leaders for this challenging model, camps and retreats. As to leadership, the pastor is usually an above-average communicator, youth leaders play an important role and other staff members supply high quality support in terms of the types of competition, like drama, music, or media. Parents do not play a significant role in this model.

■ Discipleship model

In this model teaching or/and training play an important role. The philosophy is to train youth to be God's people in a 'godless' world. They are trained through Bible study, and the ability to pray is taught in a caring atmosphere. The purpose remains the idea of 'making' more disciples.

1283. Cf. Little (1977:311–322).

1284. Senter (1987b:245).

The basic activities are of course core-group meetings, large group meetings, meetings for the leaders of the core-groups, camps and retreats.

In leadership, the pastor plays an important role as trainer and administrator. The core-group leaders are the backbone of this model. Parents play a supporting role. Christian parents usually see this model as an extension of their parenthood.

■ 'Fundamentalistic' model

The philosophy behind this model is the following: Build tomorrow's church by challenging today's youth to live apart from the world and to supply opportunities to actively share in the evangelising responsibilities of the church while they enjoy the support of a Christian school, college and home.

Activities usually consist of a well-developed and established Sunday School, group meetings where they are trained in Bible knowledge and from which they reach out with 'soul winning' activities, usually a Christian high school, camps, and revival meetings.

The ordinary leadership structure here is well developed, an able communicator as youth pastor, Sunday School teachers, Christian teachers and parents play a strong supporting role.

Senter[1285] makes a relevant remark regarding the context in which these groups usually work, they work where there is a dominant group of 'bimodal thinkers':

> Bimodal thinkers tend to see life in mutually exclusive categories. Things are seen as black or white, good or bad, right or wrong. In this context, authoritarian leaders who are willing and able to lead people in the 'right' way are highly respected.

The model is also very successful where numerical successes are important to the churches and are presented as evangelistic

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1285. Senter (1987b:254).

obedience. The model should also work well in a society where people still largely live in a premodern paradigm where others think and decide for them.

■ Gift development model

The philosophy here is to give the youth the opportunity to explore their gifts and natural abilities by supplying them with short-term opportunities for service, performed within small groups and guided by a spiritual and trained adult with skills for the tasks at hand.

Some of the most important activities are the meetings of the 'task force'. Here the youth discover and explore their interests and abilities. Making opportunities for service known, Bible studies, Sunday School, camps, service trips and social involvement in the community are some of the possibilities.

Once again, the local youth pastor plays an important role in the leadership. Other important role players are, the people who financially sponsor the work, student leaders and the parents as a core support group.

■ Service model

Although this model is closely linked to the preceding one, it has another dimension also. The philosophy is to develop the youth's skills in ministry and then to expose them, in a planned way, to human and spiritual needs, even outside the cultural context of the local church, but supported by meeting similar needs in the community of which the local church is a part. Support by other subsystems within the youth group is also part of this approach.

The most important activities are 'missionary' trips or visitation, weekly outreaches to the community, Sunday School and other weekly meetings, care groups to encourage one another and to sharpen a sense of responsibility and camps and retreats.

The leadership centres on the youth pastor, volunteer leaders and sponsors. They often act as guides during the cross-cultural visits. Parents play a strong supporting role in this concept and practice and have to accede that missions are the focal point of the local church's Youth Ministry.

■ Urban model

This is a model especially for reaching schools and colleges in the city. The philosophy is to use the facilities and equipment of the local church or local churches to build spiritual and responsible relationships with scholars and students in the city. The cooperation of adults who are respected and trusted within the city is sought.

Some of the most important activities in this model are the formation and cultivation of contacts by the adult youth leader, on campus and in the streets, the use of a 'ministry vehicle' like a relaxation centre, gymnasium, or other meeting place, Bible studies and camps.

Here, too, someone takes the lead, a youth pastor and/or youth worker, or leaders that play a supporting role (as in the ministry model), and student leaders. Parents usually do not play a significant role in this model.

■ Youth fellowship model

In this model, the youth are trained to serve the Lord by serving the youth group, especially by preparing and presenting programmes based on the Bible and its application to life.

Activities include meetings of leaders to plan tasks and to allot them, small group meetings to do the preparation, weekly meetings and social activities and retreats.

The leadership in this case also includes leadership roles for youth themselves with parents playing a strong supporting role.

■ Growth model

The philosophy behind this model finds expression in the purpose, as Snyman[1286] defined it, to lead the youth to a personal encounter with God, and to guide them eco-systemically in the dynamic process towards spiritual maturity.

The activities in this model are mainly group sessions. Small growth groups are the core and 'hothouse' of this model. In these growth groups the focus is on a total Christian life and also on its 'missionary' character.[1287]

Because of the character of this model the group leaders play a pivotal role. There is no direct reference to parents or at least, not in the description of the model in the source referred to here.

■ Choice of models

The descriptions above are not meant to be estimates of the value of the various models. The nature and character of Youth Ministry at present make such estimates almost redundant. Those who hold on to the principles of inclusivity and continuity can evaluate the models for themselves, as long as they remember that the eventual choice will be determined by the principles and the context. Senter[1288] says that three reasons are probably responsible for the failure of models:

- the situation is not relevant;
- the abilities and gifts of the youth leader are not relevant;
- the Holy Spirit may be at work establishing something else that has been neither foreseen by the youth leader nor the local church.

1286. Snyman (1994:140).

1287. Cf. Snyman (1994:144–145).

1288. Senter (1987b:267).

The first two reasons can be distinguished more readily. Clearing the third hurdle has to do with determining the will of God for and in the specific local faith community. In the process of determining God's will the context in which God has created his local church, and which is also a part of his Creation, plays a decisive role.[1289]

1289. Cf. Nel (2011) for a discussion in broader context on the relationship between missional integrity and contextual relevancy.

The perspective of building up the local church and/or developing a missional local church

◼ A differentiated focus and integration

This is not the place to repeat what was explained in Part 1, Chapter 7. What needs to be emphasised, after the description of the different approaches in the organisation of the youth, is that Youth Ministry, to my mind is and should be motivated and informed by an inclusive approach. The purpose of this section of the book is to interpret the *to, with* and *through* character of Youth Ministry. For this reason, teaching as an essential part of Youth Ministry is also dealt with in this section of the book. After

the above description, it is necessary to attend once again to the integrated character of Youth Ministry as well as to the need for a differentiated focus. In practice these principles have to be kept in mind.

Successful Youth Ministry is contextually developed. Marshall[1290] called it the continuity and discontinuity of Youth Ministry. There are abiding truths that encourage us in this challenging ministry. The context changes often, therefore youth ministries should be creatively designed, as long as the basic 'principles' are remembered. The youth are an integral part of the local church and what the local church receives in terms of ministries, they also need as part of the local faith community. Yet the youth are unique, just as any other 'older' member is unique. This means that they should be ministered to in a differentiated and focussed way. This 'art' may never, because it requires much of leadership, be neglected. Pastors and other full-time and part-time youth workers may never stop practising the art of integration and differentiation.

■ Being built as a part of the whole

Eventually it is all about building Christ's congregation to the glory of God and the 'healing' of this, our world. Simultaneously those that confess that they are a part of the body are cared for, and those that not yet confess Jesus as Lord and Saviour are reached in a relationship of love and grace. While the local body of believers is cared for and in turn cares for one another, they grow and are being changed into the likeness of the Son. While this is happening, others 'that do not as yet confess are cared for on behalf of God and are ministered to with'[1291] the good news of salvation towards becoming whole – and hopefully also becoming part of the faith community and participating in what God is busy doing anyway. Within the local church each age group is

1290. Marshall (1989:48).

1291. Nel in Senter (ed. 2001:n.p.).

incorporated into this 'building' process. Being young in itself disqualifies no one from contributing to developing or building a missional local church. Age is not a requirement. The requirement is the confession that Jesus, the Christ is Lord.

Children and adolescents should therefore be built up as a part of the whole. They are in no way a group that is being built up elsewhere (separate from the whole body, in youth organisations or independent church youth ministries), only to be added later at a certain age, as a supplement to the whole. If this kind of approach to Youth Ministry had been successful, there should have been many examples today of local churches that have gained a new life as a result of this addition. The average experience is that they may never 'join' a community in which they have never experienced being a part of anyway – and this during all those years of sensitivity while they developed as and into self-reliant spiritual functioning human beings.

The local church plays a pivotal role in Youth Ministry. I am convinced that many so-called para-church and interdenominational youth organisations would never have existed if the local churches had been willing to change in order to fulfil their calling. A 'changing', transforming, reforming, local church is therefore the principal temporal agent in Youth Ministry. It is part of the continuity of Youth Ministry that has to be maintained: 'The youth, time after time, have responded to genuine warmth and care evidenced by adults in the faith community.'[1292]

1292. Marshall (1989:48).

Perspectives on the state of Youth Ministry in South Africa: What is going on?

■ The round-table discussion

I invited some 17 people from diverse backgrounds to participate in a round-table discussion on three questions concerning Youth Ministry in South Africa. The questions were sent to them in good time in order to ensure a well-prepared and well-informed input from each member. I explained, in writing, to every participant what would happen during the day and each signed a consent form giving permission to be quoted, even by name, should I prefer to do so.

Eventually, 14 people could participate in this discussion on 27 June 2017 in Pretoria, South Africa. Three were absent due to circumstances. The 14 participants came from both academic

and ministerial backgrounds in Youth Ministry. In this way, nine denominations were 'represented' in the discussion. Four of the participants are in the academic life and one of them carries a PhD with a thesis on Youth Ministry.[1293]

The three questions were asked separately, and each participant had some five minutes to reply. The replies were recorded and two of the participants made notes of the replies. I worked through the recording and the notes and what follows below is an account of what I heard the group say and share.

■ Question 1: How is youth and Youth Ministry seen and done in your denomination and context?

■ How is youth seen in your denomination and context?

While I shared with the group that I use the concept 'youth' as referring to children, adolescents and emerging adults, I encouraged the participants to share how the concept is viewed in their contexts. In almost all the contexts represented the concept is used as covering the spectrum to which I referred. One person added that it sometimes is used as a social concept

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1293. The full list: Dr Garth Aziz (Unisa) and Rev. Dan Riddell, both members of the Baptist Union South Africa (BUSA); Rev. Theo Groeneveld, United Presbyterian Church in Pretoria (UPCSA); Bishop Steve Moreo, Bishop of Johannesburg, Anglican Church in South Africa (ACSA); Dr Thinus van Staden, Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa (NRCA); Mr James Rogers and Mrs Wendy Walker, both members of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA); Rev. Johan Avenant, Rev. Fouche de Wet and Dr Willem Semmelink, all three members of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), South Africa. Dr Semmelink is teaching at SATS; Dr Albert Coetsee, North West University and a member of the Reformed Church in South Africa (RCSA); Rev. Berryl Arends and Mr Ivor Schwartz, members of the Congregational Church in South Africa (UCCSA) and serving in a unified congregation of 4 denominations, St. Paul's United; Prof. Reggie Nel, Unisa and a member of the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa (URCSA).

and according to age, it can go as high as 35-40 years in a rural setting.[1294] In some cases, it is referring to a:

> '[S]ocial understanding', like being unmarried, and can even exceed 40 years of age. The General Synod defines youth as 16–35 years of age. There is however disagreement with this decision.[1295]

In some other cases it refers mainly to children and adolescents.

Most of the participants referred to an obvious discrepancy between general policy and what happens in congregations. In local congregations, youth are still sometimes (often?) seen as the 'church of tomorrow' as if they are not important enough now already.[1296] In the Baptist tradition where baptism is seen as a confession of faith, this view also plays a role.

It is, however, fair to say that the participants see youth (defined as above) as an integral and inclusive part of the local congregation or faith community.

How is Youth Ministry seen and done in your denomination?

Even though the general understanding may be that of an inclusive perspective the practice is often different. In some cases, the way Youth Ministry is done may even more so reflect on how 'youth' is viewed. A few remarks by individuals point to this:

• In the Anglican setting, there is children's ministry and three associations in Youth Ministry. There is 'no common objective for all the young people in the church.' Youth Ministry is mainly done in three guilds.[1297]

1294. James Rogers, MCSA.

1295. Reggie Nel, URCSA.

1296. Thinus van Staden, NRCA.

1297. Steve Moreo, ACSA.

- Youth Ministry is done mainly by societies. In the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa (URCSA) there are two such societies, each with its own constitution, and membership is required. One is known as 'Christian Youth Ministry' and the second one is known as the 'Youth Brigade'. The last-mentioned membership is open to older people too. Both societies have regular meetings, also on a national level. The Christian Youth Ministry reports to the General Synod of the URCSA. Locally there are no full-time youth workers or youth pastors, mainly because of economic reasons. Local committees organise the programmes and structures.[1298]
- How they are viewed and how it is done is often dependent on the 'heart of the local pastor'. Three ways of doing Youth Ministry: A 'youth convention' (more so in rural settings); 'school ministries' (in suburban settings) and 'outreaches' (on a national level). The emphasis is very much on 'faith formation'. The work is mainly done by lay leaders, but in 30 congregations there are full-time youth workers and pastors. On a national level the focus is on training and organising camps and playing a supportive role.[1299]
- In Youth Ministry, there is an obvious moving away from a 'cognitive approach' to a relational and missional approach. The focus is all over towards a network approach and an almost pragmatic approach. Moving away from a more structured approach is also a problem as there is a lack of unity in approach. The size of the local church also plays a role. What is still prevalent are at least catechism groups and classes. The denomination still provides curriculum material for use in local congregations. Lay leaders (mainly adults) are leading these groups. These leaders are equipped for their tasks, maybe not enough so in smaller churches. The focus is more and more on family ministry and faith formation.[1300]

1298. Reggie Nel, URCSA.

1299. Garth Aziz and Dan Riddell, BUSA.

1300. Fouche de Wet and Johan Avenant, DRC.

- The situation differs in suburban, rural and township congregations. In doing Youth Ministry there is emphasis, in some congregations, on the participation of the leaders and pastors in Youth Ministry rather than delegating it to others. In suburban settings, there has been an emphasis of integrating the youth into the life of the broader church. In the township and rural settings, the youth associations play a significant role and, when they function well, they have a positive and good influence on the denomination. In the practice of Youth Ministry in the townships there is sometimes an overemphasis on the spiritual dimension, rather than on addressing the issues of the day and context.[1301]
- There is no culture of Youth Ministry in the broader context of the church. Youth Ministry issues are discussed on the level of the General Synod. Approaches may differ on a congregational level – from them being the church of tomorrow to some extreme examples where they are the only ones that count, being the people who understand the future. Youth Ministry is done by teaching (Sunday School) and some social activities. There is (and should be) a sincere attempt to listen to the youth.[1302]
- The primary means of Youth Ministry in the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) is catechesis. From an early age, children are taught the Bible in all its facets in order that the knowledge part of their faith may increase. This is coupled with continual pastoral guidance to ensure that the biblical facts do not merely stay biblical facts, but contribute to the growth of their wholehearted trust in the Lord. As the years of catechesis advance, catechumen is taught the finer dogma of the church as received from Scripture and confessed in our confessions. When they feel ready, they approach the church council with the request to confess their faith. After successfully completing the questioning by the church council, they publicly confess their faith in the congregation. Apart from catechesis, many congregations have special youth groups

1301. Theo Groeneveld, UPCSA. He consulted with pastors in the three contexts mentioned before the meeting.

1302. Thinus van Staden, NRCA.

and events to effectively minister to the youth. To give a couple of examples:

o Some of the congregations have special 'youth worship services' (whether for toddlers, children or teenagers).
o Many of the medium to bigger size congregations have youth groups that meet regularly and informally for a social event and discussion (or Bible study).
o Some of the congregations I know of actively try to guide their youth to minister in their own contexts by (safely) exposing them to different social and economic areas of life. Afterwards they discuss how they can help, and actively do so.
o Many congregations organise a retreat or camp for late primary school and/or high school children. Some congregations put their strengths together to organise such events. The congregations near to certain universities (e.g. Brooklyn, Potchefstroom, Stellenbosch) do the same for students.[1303]

• Within the setting of the Theological Seminary in South Africa (SATS) the view of youth and Youth Ministry was deeply influenced by the Cape Town Commitment (Lausanne Conference). 'Initially the idea to integrate a focus on children and youth in the curriculum was to focus on (a) awareness and (b) advocacy – to make students aware that young people are an important mission field and mission force and become advocates for children's ministry and help our students to do likewise. With an outcome within a course that contextualises the subject matter in relation to children and youth – e.g. Homiletics. Adapt the general principles of preaching to preach effectively to children. In writing courses authors and reviewers are motivated to find ways to integrate children and Youth Ministry in the curriculum. Recently we decided that there should be at least three to four tiers [South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Levels 5–7/8] with the focus on children and Youth Ministry.'[1304]

1303. Albert Coetsee, RCSA.

1304. Willem Semmelink, SATS.

- In a follow-up, general discussion on Question 1 attention was drawn to the importance of dealing with youth as self-reliant participants in the congregations of which they are an integral part, and the role that youth synods can play in taking them serious even on a decision-making level. Emphasis was also put on the critical importance of leadership training and leadership formation and opportunities. A long discussion also followed on the way budgets are dealt with and how this often reflects on 'how' integral they really are to the whole. On the other hand, there is almost a unanimous concern that young people leave the church, referred to as the 'departure of the youth'.[1305]

◼ Question 2: What do you think is the state of Youth Ministry in your denomination and in our country?

Some interesting viewpoints came to the fore in the remarks by the participants. I think it is fair to summarise the remarks as follows:

- While leaders agree that youth and Youth Ministry are, in principle, important for the denomination, often 'lip service' is payed. This is reflected in cuts in the budget, often the Youth Ministry budget first. 'We serve the people that pay.'[1306] 'Budgeting determines our priorities.'[1307] It even reflects in theological training where courses in Youth Ministry are often electives and not mandatory or core courses.[1308] In some cases, youth are still important for tomorrow and in other cases they are idealised. 'Youth month may be an example of idealising youth' and this while our schools are 'in a mess' and the church experiences these struggles. This means that youth are not

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1305. Theo Groeneveld, UPCSA, in referring to a survey done in presbyteries.

1306. Theo Groeneveld, UPCSA. This issue was also mentioned by five other participants.

1307. Reggie Nel, Unisa and URCSA.

1308. Garth Aziz, Unisa.

prepared for their role as citizens and a commitment to seeking [sic] the Kingdom.[1309] Both in denomination and nationally the 'church is not active in forming national policies on youth.'[1310] Considering the number of youth in South Africa, this 'quantity' alone should mean that we prioritise and budget to meet the need.[1311]

- There often still is a top-down approach in Youth Ministry. This may relate to a cultural viewpoint that they are not as important yet. Because of this we are not dealing with the issues of their (youth) day. 'We should ask youth and listen to them.'[1312] A general conviction is that we minister to youth but do not allow them to minister to us. And when it does happen churches are often reactive rather than proactive.[1313] A participant even said that: 'They do not want grants, they want to be part of the economy.'[1314]

- There is often an overemphasis on numbers and that determines success. This goes with delegating 'responsibility from parents to "teachers" and others to make a success of Youth Ministry.'[1315] Quite a common concern is the measuring of success by numbers and as someone has put it 'an obsession with numbers like in a business-like, hi-tech approach – especially in affluent communities.'[1316] In such cases where numbers are counted the 'praise and worship is the main emphasis.'[1317]

- There is often still an overrated expectation of curriculums and almost all the participants referred to the 'exodus' after the confirmation of faith. One of the participants referred to

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1309. Reggie Nel, Unisa and URCSA; Dan Riddell, BUSA; Fouche de Wet, DRC.

1310. Garth Aziz, Unisa and BUSA.

1311. Theo Groeneveld, UPCSA.

1312. Steve Moreo, ACSA.

1313. Theo Groeneveld, UPCSA.

1314. Steve Moreo, ACSA.

1315. Thinus van Staden, NRCA.

1316. Thinus van Staden, NRCA; also, mentioned by Johan Avenant, DRC.

1317. Johan Avenant, DRC.

some 500 people being confirmed in one year and 'where are they now?'[1318] Another participant put it this way: 'My perception is that congregations within the RCSA tend to spend almost all of [sic] their time and energy and budget on teaching catechumen the Bible and the confessions of the church. Although I personally see the importance of teaching this to catechumen, and wholeheartedly agree to this, the danger is to inadvertently give the impression that knowledge is all there is to the Christian faith. A lot more emphasis should be given to wholehearted service of the Lord and serving our neighbours. That said, I must admit that I think Youth Ministry in the RCSA is on the rise. More and more churches actively try to minister to their youth in their various circumstances.'[1319]

• It is more positive where there are full-time youth workers and/or pastors. Even then there is often still compartmentalisation[1320] – you now even have someone paid to do a specific job and get the youth off our hands. Church politics plays a role in this understanding within a mindset of 'youth ministers must graduate into a "real minister".' This points to a dangerous 'hierarchy' in congregational ministries.[1321]

• When we consider where we were some five years ago the picture is not that negative. 'We know where we are heading as to inclusiveness, family ministry and faith formation. When we consider where we want to be, we have a long way to go.'[1322]

• There was some agreement that there are examples of success stories where congregations are serious about inclusiveness and a missional understanding of the church, one that is also inclusive of the youth. This again goes with a theological integration, one can say a Kingdom perspective, on responsible citizenship.[1323] Within one of the denominations there is a

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1318. Steve Moreo, ACSA.

1319. Albert Coetsee, North-West University and RCSA.

1320. James Rogers, MCSA.

1321. Theo Groeneveld, UPCSA. Also mentioned by Wendy Walker, MCSA.

1322. Fouche de Wet, DRC.

1323. Fouche de Wet, DRC.

conviction that to accomplish this there is still not enough emphasis on spiritual formation, the critical role of parents and the formation of youth in home and congregations to be faithful disciples of Christ.[1324] There are not enough of the marks of the Early Church in youth ministries.[1325]

• A very positive evaluation came from a young full-time youth worker. Coming from a troubled background himself he now works with adolescents and young adults both in the congregation but also with so-called 'outsiders'. He sees them come to Christ and make a difference, while still teenagers – because they understand the challenges. Within a system approach of 'groom to grow and belong to believe' they learn in a playful way to participate and to grow in discipleship and in mentoring one another. His senior pastor added: 'This is the evidence of practice when having a youth minister where an investment is made in youth for the future.'[1326] Youth want to associate with a group before they become interested in what the group believes and says. 'Discipleship and mentoring are the buzz words among youth. When it is contextually relevant, they become connected.'[1327]

• Within denominations there is often a 'silo' approach to Youth Ministry. This ties in with a lack of consequent inclusive thinking. So, for instance, although youth pastors in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa are expected to attend their respective Youth Synod, concern has frequently been raised that many fails to do so. 'Some youth pastors in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa have described Connexional and District events such as Youth Synod as irrelevant to their ministries because of a difference in age range between different youth organisations – some including people well into their forties as members of youth organisations'.[1328] In this critical time of life the youth have to

1324. Johan Avenant, DRC.

1325. Thinus van Staden, NRCA.

1326. Ivor Schwartz and Beryl Arends respectively, CCSA.

1327. Ivor Schwartz, CCSA.

1328. Wendy Walker, MCSA.

discern and ask a lot of questions they often lack leadership and good education within a hierarchical system.[1329]

- A few general remarks raised during open discussion time are worth mentioning:

  o It is not a problem to get young people come to church – but how to keep them.
  o Follow them – go meet them where they are.
  o Ministering to the 'after matric (life stage)'.
  o Strategic coordination of Youth Ministry in the congregation. It must happen in the congregation and/or parish.[1330] How do we motivate and/or get youth involved, how do we roll out what we believe locally?
  o How do we create safe spaces where, say the young people who come out of prison, can feel safe and find acceptance? 'There is a desperate need for people to become Christian and when they leave there are no support structures.'[1331]
  o The necessity of becoming missional to the core of our being, asking where God is active in our world, and 'we', old and young discerning together where and how we join God in what he is doing already.

- One of the participants wrote up his response and because of the importance of this for the South African perspective, I quote it in full: 'Young people are playing a significant role in political strikes, vandalism and crime. There is a high percentage of dropout from basic and tertiary education. The low morals and values, lack of discipline and the incline in corruption from local and national government officials, [and] business people, places a challenge on the role and responsibility of the church in South Africa. From the research done by the DRC on the spiritual formation of the youth it was evident that the church and family played a vital role in protecting their youth from falling in the same traps as many children and youth in South Africa. From my research and

1329. James Rogers, MCSA.

1330. Steve Moreo, ACSA.

1331. Ivor Schwartz, CCSA.

involvement in youth development over the past 40+ years on the youth at risk, some of the following aspects were highlighted. Over and above the general aspects such as sex, sexuality, the incline in teenage pregnancy, HIV-AIDS, and substance abuse, there are [sic] also the:

o   Incline of youth suicide within the African population.[1332]
o   Eating disorders (60% of people older than 15 are obese).
o   Chemical disorders including depression, impulsive disorder – Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperacitvy Disorder (ADHD) respectively.
o   Trauma (as result of crime, abuse, rape, etc.).[1333]
o   Terminal illness (focussing on death and the dying).
o   With the focus on holistic child and youth development we need to address aspects of the physical, mental, social and spiritual development from birth to adulthood. It is evident that abuse and exploitation of children and youth has become a global challenge. Children and youth trafficking in South Africa is not well documented.'

Other aspects that are becoming a concern are:

•   Violence against children and youth – in addition to vandalism and crime.
•   Bullying – not only physical and mentally but also in the form of the social media.
•   Racism – experienced by youth because of apartheid and the Black Economic Empowerment policy. In addition to this would be aspects such as unemployment, cross-cultural relationship building, restitution, corruption, xenophobia, et cetera.

An aspect that is close to my heart is the lack of parental involvement due to absenteeism or the ignorance of the parents. There is such a need for parental guidance to raise the children entrusted to them. The role that teachers, coaches and other professional people play in the holistic development and spiritual

1332. Research done between 1982 and 2007.

1333. For ten years, I was responsible for trauma counselling after an armed robbery in the Ackerman's Group.

formation of children and youth cannot be overvalued. The latter are involved with the child or youth more daily than most parents and other professionals are in a week. All training is done from a humanistic point of view. Thus, SATS has become a registered service provider for the South African Council for Educators to provide:

[C]ontinued professional development from a biblical, Christ-centred and Spirit-led viewpoint to give Christian teachers the opportunity to develop a Christian worldview, connecting with children, walking with wounded children, serve children and youth based on Christian ethics.[1334]

I asked the participants to assign a mark out of 10 (10 being the highest) as to how they rate the state of Youth Ministry in the denomination of which they are a part, and how they rate the state of Youth Ministry in the Republic of South Africa. I list these ratings in Table 16.1 without mentioning the name of the participant.

TABLE 16.1: The state of Youth Ministry per denomination and in South Africa.

Participant	In denomination (1 low/10 high)	In South Africa (1 low/10 high)
1	1	1
2	3	2
3	2	0
4	3	2
5	3	1
6	3	1
7	4	not completed
8	6	not completed
9	4	2
10	6	3
11	3	1.5
12	4	1
13	3	not completed
Average	**3.5**	**1.5**

1334. Willem Semmelink, SATS and DRC.

■ Question 3: Please discern (a maximum of 2) critical areas in need of serious attention when it comes to the youth and Youth Ministry in your denomination and our country.

For the sake of doing justice to the input of the participants I have decided to first, to just list the number of critical areas as mentioned by the group. I report this under the 'name' of Participant 1, Participant 2, et cetera as we moved around the table in a random way.

■ Participant 1

- The church should develop an intentional viewpoint on and with Youth Ministry. God loves, reaches and saves young people – they are as important as all other members.
- They should be empowered to participate in all practices.

■ Participant 2

- exposure – provide spaces of togetherness;
- provide direction.

■ Participant 3

- Holistic development with attention to unemployment and family structures, education and empowerment in skills, recognising their life skills.
- In rural areas: Holistic development of young people; we can talk of family-centred ministry. Christ-centred movements that challenge children to deep spiritual growth.
- Develop deep relationship with Christ that will help in moral regeneration.

- Spaces where they can be safe and be themselves, a space where youth are obviously a priority. We owe our young people a development that isn't just spiritual, but holistic. Journey with them, being there for them. Supply more resources.

Participant 4

- help for parish that will reflect the broader ministry in the denomination;
- develop a heart for the Kingdom of God, where a heart for youth and Youth Ministry is reflected.

Participant 5

- Prepare and assist parents in what they are supposed to do.
- Learn that the church is the place and space to help one another and help youth learn as they see how church in done.
- Why do we need Youth Ministry? Why aren't the ways that we are church not enough? Why are our sermons not enough to inspire and transform people? Why are our congregations not enough? My hope is that one day we will not have to talk about Youth Ministry by parents, but just about being disciples, and as disciples discipling their children. Everywhere there is so much energy thrown everywhere [sic]. I really think that it was easier in the first church. Most of what I learnt was by doing it. Most of our members are not involved in this way. Are we part of the Acts 2 narrative? Are we really part of the first Jesus movement?

Participant 6

- Get the points of departure clear in both formal and informal Youth Ministry. Before we move along we need to think of where we are going.
- Open communication systems in both the formal and informal structure.

■ Participant 7

- Family ministry as biblical departure point and the role of family in faith formation. Training and equipping the youth to minister with their desire to be involved and their God-given gifts in the context.

☐ Family ministry

When it comes to Youth Ministry, we tend to separate children from their parents. But the passages in the Bible that refer to Youth Ministry are all written in the context of the family (e.g. Dt 6:6–9; Ps 78; 2 Tim 1:5). Moreover, recent studies again indicated that parents play the biggest role in the formation of the faith of their children. Consequently, the church should stop thinking about the youth alone, and start thinking about families. A lot more emphasis should be placed on family ministry, and the church should actively enable parents to perform their God-given calling. Include parents in Youth Ministry. I think that youth pastors know this, but do not know how to get them involved. This is a lack of holistic approach.

☐ Equip the youth to minister

My perception is that the youth do not merely want to learn certain things; they want to 'do'. The church should urgently equip their youth to reach out with the gospel in their immediate contexts. To do so, the church should create opportunities for the youth to use their God-given gifts to serve the church and the community.

■ Participant 8

- Develop inclusivity where they are also part of decision-making as equipped members who will guide us in what they need.

- Intentionally request theological institutions to equip ministers for Youth Ministry. Lack of morality (drugs, sex, crime, etc.). To have an intentional theological understanding of youth and Youth Ministry. God loves young people. God reaches out to young people. Ministry to young people is as important as ministry to adults.

Participant 9

- Education to be contextual and do Youth Ministry in context. Spend a lot more time to train ministers to perform Youth Ministry in their contexts. Too often there is a top-down approach where young people should be seen, not heard. We should empower them. Give them the opportunity and authority to inform how they should be ministered to.
- Building bridges, across cultural backgrounds and being ecumenical. There needs to be more bridge building between churches to minister together to their community.

Participant 10

- Work on the disconnection between confession and what we practice, theologically we know what should happen but lack leadership to go there. Direction: Young people desire direction, and so often we do not give them that. Regaining integrity is significant. What we confess of Youth Ministry and how it plays out in practice is our biggest problem. Theologically we know what we want to achieve. But are we on the road to get there? Probably linked to 'there is [sic] not enough resources'.
- Cultivate inclusivity also ecumenically and do so in a bottom-up way, with youth – reflect on their needs and deliberate the country's issues. Cultivating inclusivity and togetherness. Youth should be part of decision-making.

Participant 11

- Include parents, find out why they are not involved and get them involved as leaders in Youth Ministry.

- Intergenerational faith formation – work on inclusivity and the learning of faith while we imitate. If one of the main ways of forming faith is formation, why do we separate youth from adults in our Youth Ministry? We do not know how to minister to more than one generation at a time.

Participant 12

- Discern together with youth where God is at work in our country and within a specific context, for example, in addressing inequality.
- Younger generation needs elders (level of spirituality and maturity). To what do they aspire? Where families are fractured, this is even more important. How do we discern the role of elders in the lives of younger people?

Participant 13

- 'The consequences of urbanisation and the loss of cultural identity of the youth. As mentioned in point two, there is evidence that African youth are considering suicide as a manner to deal with their crises. In my research over 5 years, 2002–2007, with the help of my students from all provinces in South Africa in urban and rural areas, two points surfaced:

  o Children and youth from an African background and migrated from the rural to urban areas lacked the support of the 'broader family' and were not equipped to handle the crisis. The loss of cultural identity develops a lack of self-identity, self-esteem, interpersonal and cross-cultural relationships.
  o From all respondents in the then research, 74% had someone close to them that died in the previous 12 months. This coincided with the AIDS pandemic. Children and youth felt a lack of support during the trauma and after the death of the parent, sibling, family member and/or friend. The more concerning aspect from

this research is that where in the initial period of the research there was a clear difference between urban and rural youth, as rural youth would not consider suicide as a possible manner to deal with their crisis (it is against African culture to commit suicide). In 2007, there was already evidence that youth from rural areas such as Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal indicated that suicide had become an option.

- The significant role of the family in the spiritual formation of the youth.

In writing a Youth Theology from a biblical, Christ-centred and Spirit-led viewpoint the role of the parents and family in spiritual formation need to be readdressed. Parents tend to delegate their responsibilities to the church and school as they do not receive any or very little training and education on parenting. Youth leaders and teachers have little or no training and education in children [sic] and youth development. Children adapt to the world we create. They accept the examples from parents, youth leaders and teachers as the norm. If there is a lack of spiritual formation in the early years, it is even more difficult for the youth to develop their own identity during their adolescent years.

As an evangelical seminary, we would want to focus our mission *to*, *for* and *with* children and youth [on] the training and education [of] parents, teachers and other professionals that have children and youth entrusted to them. Daily we are giving them a mandate to develop the child and youth towards spiritual maturity.

As a lifelong youth worker and parent, I believe in a proactive holistic youth development where every phase is used to prepare the child or youth for the next phase from birth to adulthood. This will include a spiritual formation based on a personal relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, the guidance of the Holy Spirit and a sound biblical hermeneutic.'

▮ Participant 14

- allocate more time and resources to the disadvantaged: In rural context congregations and leaders have not had access to resources and needs [for] Youth Ministry training;
- develop working 'with' youth: To, with and through, young people should be mandated to reach out to their generation, doing things together!

▮ General discussion

In an open discussion on this question the following critical areas were either highlighted again or added:

☐ Anxiety

- Considering where we come from. How do we restore the church to be influential in society?
- The church is going to be the minority in the society and this may be a good thing. We must 'find' ourselves again without seeking 'authority and position' again.
- Alternative communities.

☐ Will we have the same struggle in a decade?

- We have an ideal in mind, (I have a dream) and this is good, but the realities are not new. This has been a struggle for the church from the start.
- Numbers should not be the aim. Should we not rather walk with two or three people in a mentoring relationship, people who are serious about discipleship?
- Rethink your own place in the congregation.

☐ Our terminology

- deconstruct the terms: not youth pastor, but a pastor to the youth;
- 'Pastor' to youth is on the same level as any other pastor;

- phrases – rephrasing;
- changing how we speak about youth, Youth Ministry and the local church itself.

☐ Investing time

- youth are very busy, and this is a challenge;
- cannot compete with the world, rather spend time discerning where God is at work.

☐ When a young person comes to church – God is at work

- People come to church to experience Jesus.

☐ Youth Ministry cannot be separated from family ministry

- Parents need support. They do not need our condemnation and being blamed for everything that happens in the lives of our children.

■ An interpretation

My agreement with the group of participants was to give back what I have heard, to allow each one to either confirm agreement with what he or she said or to change or add to my understanding of her and/or his contribution, and to reply to my interpretive remarks below.

1. The group is almost unanimous about the fact that leaders and denominations are in principle often serious about Youth Ministry, but in practice it is still too often 'lip service'. They are at the same time convinced that the same might be true for South Africa as a nation and for political leaders. The participants shared a deep concern about how we deal with youth in denominations and countrywide.

2. There are mixed evaluations of where we are at this point. While there is gratefulness for the road we have come, we often still lack direction and an intentional focus of where we want to be. This is especially true when it comes to seeking the 'Kingdom and its righteousness',[1335] both in congregational and national contexts. The ills of society as reflected in each context are challenging and we do not prepare youth to become self-reliant participants in bringing about a just society where reconciliation has become a reality. The church will do well to be such an alternative society where Youth Ministry is almost 'unintentionally' done while youth observe what it is to be church and participate in such a fellowship of faith.

3. In direct relationship to the above there is consensus that we should invest in family ministry and in a system where the church in partnership with the home (in whatever '*gestalt*') makes disciples of youth. While intergenerational ministry was often mentioned the conviction is that youth need 'elders', mentors and people who are willing to journey with them – as they face the challenges in and during their phase in life. However important this may be, youth must be allowed to also minister to one another. The group agreed that in this regard much more emphasis should be on ministering 'with' them and not only to and through them.

4. It would be fair to say that the group is also unanimous as to the importance of family ministry as the best way of doing Youth Ministry. There is agreement that faith formation takes place best when at 'home' (in whatever form) and that much more can and should be done to support families that are challenged by many realities. Sometimes parent(s) are just not equipped to deal with the growing challenges of children, adolescents and emerging adults. And even when

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1335. Matthew 6:33.

they are equipped the relational skills are missing or are undeveloped.

5. There is agreement that the '*didache*' remains important in Youth Ministry. It is, however, not enough to share information. When youth do not feel that they belong, they not only find it hard to believe, they may not even be interested in what adults believe. A deep relationship with God and well-developed relationships with the faith community are critical for any intentional Youth Ministry and for retaining youth, even after any form of public confession of faith.

6. The issue of budgeting for Youth Ministry was mentioned again and again. The group is unanimous as to how budgets eventually tell where priorities for congregations and denominations lie. Budgeting for Youth Ministry on a denominational level (for say research and strategic thinking and planning) and on a congregational level for resources, facilities and part or full-time well-trained youth workers and/or pastors need serious attention in the years to come.

7. The group is aware of the important contribution by volunteer and part- or full-time leaders. In both cases, better training in Youth Ministry is needed. The importance of this should permeate the system. So-called senior pastors should realise that what they do in ministry is not one bit more important than what happens in Youth Ministry. There is no place for unwarranted hierarchies in congregational ministry.

8. A lastly, and to my mind, a critically important observation, is that denominations and congregations are in serious need to work towards inclusivity, however challenging that may be. Not working towards a faithful inclusive understanding of children, adolescents and emerging adults as an integral part of the local faith community may be the reason why they depart after any form of public confession of faith. This is directly related to intentional missional inclusivity. When youth are an

integral part of the faith community they participate in the *missio Dei.* They are part of a congregation that, in a growing way, is understanding itself as being sent, discerning together as faith community where and how God is at work, and joining in with what he is doing already and anyway.

PART 4

Organisation and administration

Chapter 17

Organisation and administration

The purpose of this section is not to describe the organisation of Youth Ministry in detail. The nature of this book does not permit it. Yet the picture would be incomplete without a short and relevant reference to the importance and place of the organisation in Youth Ministry. The temptation is to leave Youth Ministry to the free flow of ideas and plans. For free flow, there should be ample room, but still organisation is needed. The ministry involved here is that of *kubernesis*.[1336] The local church is like a ship sailing towards a specific destination. Leaders are the God-given 'helmsman' on board. The ship is not their own and they have not chosen the destination themselves. In the image of the helmsman it is the task of the overseers to keep the ship on course towards its destination, to register or identify any deviation in course, and to take corrective action to get and stay on route. Local church organisation and administration is

1336. Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:28.

therefore about moving people (who do not belong to us) in the direction of a destination (one we have not determined or chosen ourselves).[1337] In places where this 'work' is not regarded as a ministry, pastors and other youth ministers usually see it as an interruption of their 'real ministry'. Many investigations confirm this perception.[1338] Organisation and administration (*kubernesis*) is a field of ministry which in Youth Ministry is lacking, but is seriously needed and which should be marketed much more as a ministry in its own right.

■ Planning

Planning is a part of the science of management and, as such, a field of study. I attempted[1339] to describe it in relation to and as part of developing or building a missional local church. Here it is enough to mention that matters like a thorough analysis of the local church by the local church itself and an analysis of the context of the local church is an essential part of planning. Youth Ministry requires a similar analysis. No one can really know in which direction the movement should take place, how it should take place, or who should make it happen without a thorough analysis of who and where the local church is, or how it is doing (functioning).

■ Part of the congregation's planning

With the approach promulgated in this book the planning for Youth Ministry is an essential part of the planning of the local church itself. To put the principles of this approach into practice means that the youth should be considered in every aspect and

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1337. Cf. Luecke and Southard (1986:50-51).

1338. Cf. Brekke, Strommen and Williams (1979:130–149); Luecke and Southard (1986:11ff.).

1339. Cf. Nel (1994:148–202; 2015b:305ff.). As for Youth Ministry also cf. Burns (2008:194–202).

ministry (or practices as Dean[1340] calls the ministries) of the local church. More still, they themselves should become involved (together with all other members) in every step of the planning process. Otherwise Youth Ministry will simply not happen or be left to what may be called an appendix approach. This can also happen when a certain local church does nothing, and other capable and well-meaning organisations take over the Youth Ministry on their behalf. When planning for Youth Ministry per se is not an essential part of the local church's planning, even the 'own' denominational and/or local church youth movement becomes an appendix. Sometimes it may become an accommodating approach, but it still never grows into an integrated inclusive strategy.

In the theory of praxis, it means that youth leaders and the youth themselves actively work together in the planning of the local church and in the differentiated youth ministries. It is vital, for example, for other adults and parents to work together on these latter aspects of local Youth Ministry. Otherwise the differentiated focus again easily degenerates into a shredding of the corporate emphasis within an inclusive approach.

The above should in the long run help Youth Ministry to find its rightful place in and as part of the local church's planning. As any other local church event, Youth Ministry is part of planning. It may, in some cases, take long to establish or re-establish this approach. Local churches have become used to the idea that youth submit their plans or not even do so. What happens in 'Youth Ministry' sometimes (perhaps often) happens unobtrusively alongside the normal work of the local church. By way of example: How often do small groups (as a method of ministry) meet in local churches without any questions like: 'Where are the children? Should they be here? Why aren't they here? Why should they be here?'

The point that is made is that youth too belong where any of the other members belong. If the youth are not present, it may be because they have been held up or are busy elsewhere, and

1340. Dean (2004:153–154).

not because they are young. Good local church planning should in the course of time make it easier for the communal, corporate and specialised differentiated focus in Youth Ministry to be equally and justly handled.

For needs peculiar to a certain phase

The focussed emphasis on needs peculiar to a certain phase fits in with the above direction for the planning of Youth Ministry. This planning is not done separately. It flows from being part of the whole. The whole cares for individuals, who have the needs of a certain age group. The whole forms, as it were, a protecting wall around all that is characteristic of the group and even of the individual. After all, pastoral care of the individual also takes place within the framework of the acceptance and care by the whole. Where this protected space of life is lacking, pastoral care for the individual is not only extremely wearying, but practically impossible. Healing should at least have the support of the family.[1341]

In Youth Ministry, the approach used should be that planning for the whole takes the parts serious. 'The whole' here is also greater than the parts. In this way, the main elements of a comprehensive and inclusive ministry are taken seriously – without losing the focussed and specialised attention the children and adolescents need during their distinct phases. When a local church must choose (because it cannot do otherwise) the choice should, to my mind, always be in favour of the whole. Fortunately, many local churches live in a context where specific matters can receive attention. Sometimes specific matters occur in a public or private school where Christian parents have a say. Sometimes it is necessary to call in the help of a 'specialising agent' in the form of an interdenominational youth organisation. Larger local churches usually have the human resources to plan for the

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1341. Cf. Metcalfe (1981); Southard (1981); Müller (1996).

differentiated, age-specific, focus themselves. Where the whole is lacking, the specialisation can even be 'perfect', but in the long run the child's socialisation with the faith community suffers. The research and seminars presented by Bill Gothard in this regard simply affirm insights mentioned in Section 1, Chapter 1. He traces almost all solutions to problems the youth have back to the parents and, if possible, to the father.[1342] The system of the local church and all its subsystems, of which the family is a primary one, play too crucial a role in the development of a person to relinquish it in Youth Ministry.

Differentiated focus is indeed important in Youth Ministry. Just how important it is, is affirmed by the work of several specialist agents like YfC, Young Life, Scripture Union, Christian Student Movement. However, when it is not kept in balance with the comprehensive and inclusive character of Youth Ministry, it can become counterproductive.[1343]

The local church that has mastered the art by trial and error, of being fair to both inclusivity and differentiation, can be considered fortunate. Youth themselves, and the local church of which they are a part, are important enough to take both (inclusiveness and differentiation) seriously in all aspects of planning.

■ Programme planning

The corps of leaders, including youth themselves, develop the general plan for the Youth Ministry in the local church. Here the basic issues like the 'philosophy' of ministry, in alignment with the local church's mission, are clarified and decided upon. Any detailed programming should take this directive and policy into account.

1342. Gothard (October 1979); cf. also Gothard (1987).

1343. Cf. Recent research by Droege (2017).

The preconditions for the planning of the programmes of the different divisions of the local church's Youth Ministry are the corporate principles for ministries that are well-established and planned into the local church's overall programme. Here specialisation and creativity are needed.

☐ Programmes should positively enhance the participation in the whole and be part of the faith community

Even when there are separate meetings for the sake of needs typical of a certain phase of life, it is the leaders' responsibility to represent the whole and 'make them present'. For that matter, the children of their own accord do not have this awareness, and it is not their fault in this individualised society in which they find themselves. Youth leaders, even on the level of preschool Youth Ministry, make themselves guilty of the presentation of programmes that are almost totally isolated from the whole.

☐ Programmes should always actively take the mission of the local church into account

Youth leaders and children who are inspired by the *raison d'être* of the local church do not find this difficult. The mission pervades believers who have taken ownership of it. Inspiration for God's purpose with the local church is conveyed. It is no extra. It acts like a filter for whatever programme.

☐ Programmes should give ample opportunity to youth themselves – regardless of the age group

During the more corporate elements of the programme, like the worship service, family groups, and intergenerational meetings, one age group may from time to time contribute more than

another. During an age group's 'own' meeting they should participate as actively as possible in the planning and execution of the programme. In the language of group ministries, programmes should leave ample room for fellowship with one another. *Koinonia* is the glue that binds programmes into a meaningful whole. Without it the separate points become mere items on the agenda and only fit into what Senter[1344] called the competition model.

☐ Programmes in local church's Youth Ministry provide ample room for communion with God

Communion with God includes communion with the Bible and with God in prayer and song. It also includes the communal search for and discussion of the relevance of God and his Word in the context of each age group. Here the communion with the One to whom the local church belongs, and for whom we live, is enriched when parents and children frequently grapple with the text together and in this way come to understand something of one another's faith in God. Children need parents and other older members for this, and vice versa. In the search within one's own age group God too easily becomes a peer-group God, who is only on our side and often against the others who live in a different 'time'.

☐ Programmes should always serve the missional being of the church, missional awareness and involvement

In a local church with this kind of *raison d'être* this should follow logically. If not, the local church's Youth Ministry is becoming exclusive. Missional involvement with the world (for the sake of whose we are – God's very own) gives an edge to communion with one another and with God. In this dynamic interplay of God,

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1344. Senter (1987b:243); cf. also Part 3, Chapter 14.

one another and the world,[1345] for the sake of the world, the believing child and adolescent grows up as part of the local faith community. When children are small it is almost logical that this involvement in missions takes place as a part of the family, as a part of the local church. Even when children and adolescents later go on some missionary trip, they should experience that they are part of a local church, that is in the first and last place God's evangelist.[1346] Of course, a local church impoverishes itself in the long run when this dimension of the programme is underrated.

□ Programmes should facilitate self-reliant spiritual functioning[1347]

It means at the very least that the youth should be led, not towards isolation, but towards openness; not towards an unquestioning acceptance of what others say is right and wrong, but towards a growing ability to discern. They should be given an opportunity to think creatively together, and to grapple with the question as to how the local church and each person involved in it can make a meaningful difference in society and the country. It can surely cause programmes to be planned and steered with great social sensitivity. Youth programmes in which the youth cannot freely differ and creatively experiment with their contributions have probably been planned by people who still think it possible to think for and to dictate to other people, especially if they are young.

1345. Cf. Nel (2015b:78) and the paragraph on the interwovenness of the ministries earlier.

1346. Cf. Sweazey (1978), Armstrong (1979).

1347. Cf. Firet (1977; 1986:182–187).

■ Oversight

Youth Ministry needs good oversight, not because the youth are not yet part of the local church (and therefore need to be controlled), but because they are a part thereof, and because they have been on the road for a shorter period of time than the other members (with whom they share that road) of the faith community have been.

Depending on the system of government in a certain denomination, oversight over youth ministries will vary according to their different forms. I am not going to attempt to describe these approaches as it would justify a book in the field of church government. The matter to be discussed here is the participation of youth in the oversight of Youth Ministry.

In most books on the subject, even those from the vantage point of the church, the organisation of Youth Ministry is described with no specific references to oversight and supervision. An example of this is the article by Burns[1348] about 'Starting a Youth Ministry from scratch', and the equally valuable article by Scott Benson[1349] about the 'The first six months in a Youth Ministry'. In both articles, many aspects of organising are discussed, but no direct reference to oversight and supervision is made. The church's system of supervision is probably assumed. Benson's[1350] reference to the necessity of keeping contact with the church body confirms this idea. The strategy to be followed ensures accountability. The leadership includes responsible senior members. According to Senter[1351] it is one of the basic statements upon which Youth Ministry rests – namely that this ministry starts to happen when an adult finds a comfortable way

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1348. Burns (1987:271–280).

1349. Benson (1987:281–301).

1350. Benson (1987:289).

1351. Senter (1987a:202).

in which to enter the life of a child or adolescent. Leadership is equipped and should know exactly what is expected of it. In this light, it can be said that Youth Ministry, as far as its leadership is concerned, stands under the supervision of the entire leadership team. This corps of leaders usually includes volunteers from the circle of children and adolescents.

The important fact here is that responsibility and accountability are demonstrated by mutual supervision by the team of leaders. Although it may happen in a certain culture that the youth do not function comfortably in the presence of older members, they should for this reason not be excluded from leadership, oversight or supervision. Youth Ministry is simultaneously a self-reliant ministry and a learning experience. Every young person who participates in leadership, even in a very limited way, is in a process of training. The church is indeed paying the price in terms of a lack of leaders that have gained experience in leadership over many years and since childhood. No local church can afford to proceed with the exclusion of the youth from leadership and control. Even when youth organisations have their own management boards, the youth should not be excluded from the supervising bodies. This does not mean that they are to be chosen to be ruling elders, as in the Presbyterian tradition. The modern expression of streamlined and participatory management is relevant here.[1352] The people in the governing bodies should draw the youth, sincerely and not merely cosmetically, into the supervision and oversight of the local church's Youth Ministry.

∎ Finances

It can probably be stated safely that the budget for Youth Ministry is the most honest barometer for the degree of integration of the Youth Ministry into the local church.[1353] To allocate funds to the

1352. Cf. Callahan (1983:55–64; 2010:123–138).

1353. Cf. remarks made by participants in the Roundtable Discussion, Part 3, Chapter 16.

Youth Ministry is the logical result of a comprehensive and inclusive theological approach to youth and their ministry, this does not mean that the youth are not expected to be responsible for a certain amount of the budget.[1354] Yet their ministry does not depend on how much money they can collect by themselves. As with many other aspects of Youth Ministry the finances for this ministry have to do with the stewardship and its renewal within the whole local church. When the local church reforms, Youth Ministry is being reformed. Part of this reformation is the greater accent on stewardship, including financial stewardship. The effect of this on Youth Ministry should include at least the following:

• Children are taught in their homes and by their parents to serve God even with their possessions. As far back as 1970 it was estimated that teenagers spend 20 billion dollars per year.[1355] This amount has risen to $1.2 trillion in 2012, just for the early adolescents.[1356] Children in some cultural communities receive money in the form of pocket money, many others work part-time. When a culture of stewardship is strong in a home, one could expect, as with other values, that this value system will also be transferred. On the other hand, the cultural example of some parents to give the smallest coin to their children to put into the collection plate at worship services may be responsible for the almost total lack of financial stewardship.
• Older members should develop a vision for the value of Youth Ministry, to invest in it. When Youth Ministry makes a difference in their homes and in the lives of children and adolescents, parents regard it more and more as an 'investment portfolio'.

1354. Cf. Burns (2008:183–191); cf. Roehlkepartian, Naftali and Musegades (2000) on 'engaging youth in giving and serving'.

1355. Cf. Jaeck (1977:80).

1356. DigitasLBi. (n.d.), 'In 2012, a report from Digitas, which has since merged with LBi, estimated that teen *spending power hovered somewhere around $1.2 trillion*. This staggering figure demonstrates just how much influence they have over the brands and products their parents buy.'

- Governing bodies in local churches begin to think big about this ministry as an essential part of the vocation of the local church. It becomes an investment, not in the 'future' of the church, but in the fulfilment of a calling even today. Congregational fulfilment of a call to seek the Kingdom of God makes the youth budget part of the local church's obedient service in the Kingdom.

Local churches that take Youth Ministry seriously encourage youth to think about and draw up their own budget, and then, to participate in a local church's budget meeting. One may even argue that children and adolescents also have the right as members of the local church to know what has become of their parents' offerings. In a local church that believes that 'money follows mission', an effective Youth Ministry also engenders money for the local church's account.

■ Evaluation

Evaluation is part of healthy administration. Examinations are part of schooling and not of Youth Ministry. Using an image derived from cybernetics: It is like the meeting of the captain with his staff, a meeting in which the progress of the ship, that does not belong to them, on route to a destination not determined by them, is discussed and evaluated. Evaluation causes a greater sense of purpose and increased efficacy. It has everything to do with accountability.

The youth themselves should play a leading role in evaluation. In a sense one can only evaluate how 'far one step is', is when you try and go back into the age of the one who has given that step. The first step of an infant is not less important than the last step of the senior world champion in the 100 metres sprint. Each may be excited about the step they themselves have given.

Evaluation means that the youth should nowhere else be as free to make mistakes as among those who have already,

previously, made mistakes themselves. To refer to what Marshall[1357] says: Here they are among people who can help them to interpret life in all its complexity; here one can learn to make sense of what does not make sense, even within the church and so often, for church people too. 'For this to become their world view, their way of making sense, we need to help them learn the "language," develop the "spectacles", or maybe find their way home.'[1358] Evaluation in Youth Ministry only makes sense in a model where there is a significant number of older people who do not think legalistically about ministry and about being a local church.[1359] Regular evaluation is indispensable on every road, also on this one, and is part of our calling.

1357. Marshall (1989:48).

1358. Marshall (1989:48).

1359. Cf. the 'community model' of Youth Ministry, Senter (1987a:243).

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Index

Those who are familiar with the book that Malan Nel authored in the 1990s will recognise that in this book the content has been retained, but that he has made significant revisions and added a wealth of new material. The new material adds depth and dimension to an already substantive text. In addition, these revisions help to assure the ongoing relevance of Malan Nel's work to a new generation of scholars. One of the book's great strengths is how extensively it is undergirded by the author's far-reaching engagement with the relevant literature. In part, this is the fruit of several decades of scholarship. It evidences his ongoing engagement with the most recent literature within the field of Youth Ministry. The result is a book brimming over with citations reflecting the author's place as an active participant in the most central discussions taking place among his international peers within his field. This book also is a bibliographical 'treasure trove' for anyone interested in identifying the most significant historical and contemporary sources within the discipline of Youth Ministry. One of the important gifts that Professor Nel offers his international audience are his reflections upon the South African experience. He provides an informative historical account of the distinctive historical development of Youth Ministry in the South African context. By summarising the insights he gathered from a number of South African denominational leaders, Malan Nel presents us with an intriguing picture of the current realities that churches, families, and youth face within his country.

Prof. Dr Cory Seibel, Sioux Falls Seminary, United States of America

Malan Nel is an internationally recognised scholar and for many years his work on Youth Ministry has been respected as foundational from a South African, sometimes even from an African perspective and unquestionably from a global viewpoint. In this book he extensively updates the strong theoretical basis for his research and demonstrates this originality by means of his use of footnotes and the inclusion of the voices of many of his doctoral students as part of the reflections on his life engaged with and contribution to the scientific discourse on Youth Ministry. This disposition confirms his rich legacy in the field. This book will contribute much to the teaching and research of emerging scholars within the discipline. In future, it will form the standard for any new research with regard to Youth Ministry. The book follows the reputable Practical Theological methodology of asking key questions: What is going on? Why this is going on? What ought to be going on? What should be going on? In this book Malan Nel reorders these questions around the centre of his emphasis on a theological foundation from which sound Youth Ministry practice could develop. This practice is based on his innovated emphasised missional approach.

Dr Shantelle Weber, Stellenbosch University, South Africa