

Mission Possible Ezine
Month ending November 30th, 2010

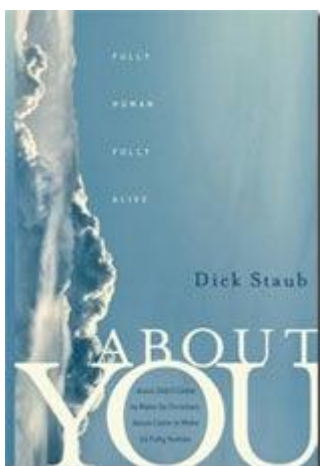
BOOKS



[Re:Mission: Biblical Mission for a Post-Biblical Church](#) by **Andrew Perriman** was published by Paternoster in 2007 in their 'Faith in an Emerging Culture' series. The book builds on the argument of *The Coming of the Son of Man* but broadens the scope of its historical-realist narrative to embrace an understanding of 'mission' that arises out of the summons to Abraham to be the progenitor of a creational microcosm, a world-within-a-world, an authentic humanity. The green-tinged picture of an escalator on the cover alludes to Jesus' suggestive remark to Nathanael about the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man. To Perriman's mind it is an image that captures marvellously the intersection of the Bible's two defining narratives: one about the

vocation of a people to recover the original blessing as God's new creation amid the nations and cultures of the world; the other about the rescue of that people through the suffering and vindication of the Son of man and the community that associates itself with him during a period of eschatological crisis. It is out of that clash of stories that we must fashion a sense of identity and purpose for the post-Christendom era.

Paternoster 2007 [I've only just caught up on this book, which came out in the period between my leaving OC Books and arriving at National Mission.]



[About You: Fully Human, Fully Alive](#) by Dick Staub

Bill Kinnon [writes](#): This isn't a Christian self-help book. It's not about Living Your Best Life Now. This is a God-centred book that takes [Hans Rookmaker's](#) famous quote as a starting point: *Jesus didn't come to make us Christian; Jesus came to make us fully human.*

Staub writes in his introduction: *...I have written this little book to share what I've learned about becoming fully human. I've studied this question academically, completing graduate studies with a concentration in the humanities (philosophy, the arts, religion), because, after all, the humanities are the study of humans and the culture they create, and that is what I was interested in. Everything I know about becoming fully alive and fully human starts with a simple but profoundly important idea: God created humans and God created us in the image of God so we can enjoy a rich intellectual, creative, relational, moral, and spiritual life. You are not the accidental result of a random, purposeless process but, in*

fact, were created by a loving, personal God who had you in mind before the beginning of time. This is an essential and reasonable but embattled truth.

Jossey-Bass 2010



mission-shaped
and rural
growing churches in the countryside

Sally Gaze
Foreword by Graham James

Mission-shaped and Rural: growing churches in the countryside, by Sally Gaze.

This must be a month for catching up on slightly older books. This one has only just come to my attention via a review in the (NZ) Rural Network News. Though the book is English-based in its stories, a New Zealand review on [Amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk) says 'the content of the book is very transferable to the New Zealand context.' Another reviewer on Amazon writes: *The book is very practical, full of case studies and stories of rural initiatives. There is enough to encourage anyone in the countryside that*

change and growth are possible with prayer, faith and hope; plus a fair amount of perseverance. Sally also offers some useful thoughts on how to restructure the church for mission in the countryside.

Published by Church House Publishing 2006

LEADERSHIP

I prefer normally not to reprint entire blog posts from elsewhere, as that seems to be leaning towards copyright invasion. However [this post by Bill Kinnon](#) is so short that in this case I'll make an exception:

Why Aren't Big Name Christian Leaders Decreasing?

John the Baptizer, said this about Jesus in light of John's own "ministry",

He must become greater; I must become less. [[John 3:30 NIV](#)]

What would it be like if the cycle of ministry was for those who rise in prominence to disappear into the worshiping body as Jesus is exalted? **Decreasing while Jesus increases.**

Rather than building ever increasing platforms capable of supporting their ~~egos~~ ministries.

I'm just asking.

Keeping the Sabbath

Vineyard USA puts out a magazine on church planting called **Cutting Edge** that I haven't come across before - [it's available online](#). In volume 14 no 3 (which is undated but by the looks of some of the content came out some time before October this year) the focus is on being bi-vocational, that is, having a job that keeps the food on the table at the same time as you're trying to establish/plant a church.



This may not be something many NZ pastors experience (but I could well be wrong) but the articles on this topic are very interesting. However there's another focus in these articles, particularly the first two, and that's the point that in order to survive two jobs you actually need to keep taking Sabbath rests.

Peter Scazzaro (author of [The Emotionally Healthy Church](#)) discusses emotional health and bi-vocationalism, and has important things to say about giving priority to cultivating your relationship with Jesus, placing your wife and family *before* the church, and keeping your own emotional health healthy by having times of rest and change. He warns people that to practice bi-vocationalism any other way is cultivating peril. He also has some interesting things to say about the idolatry of 'success' that can arise in church planting. There's also an interview with **Marva Dawn**, who's been a great promoter of Sabbath rest for many years. She says: *Pastors often say to me, "I can't keep the Sabbath; I'm much too busy." And I respond, "Then you'll really want to keep the Sabbath, because you're much too busy." Sabbath is a great cure for busyness. To take that day enables us to reorient all of our time. Furthermore, in practicing Sabbath, we rethink how we spend our time so that we use it the best and most wisely.*

She notes how when she was doing her PhD she was expected to read 350 books in seven months, and discovered that it was still healthier to take a Sabbath than try and work through every day of the week in order to keep up. There are three or four other interviews on church planting from various aspects, all of them equally worth reading.

As a manager, Columbus was a failure. As a leader, pretty good.

- * when he left, he didn't know where he was going
- * when he got there, he didn't know where he was
- * when he got back, he couldn't tell them where he had been
- * but he got them there and back three times in seven years

A lousy example of strategic planning, and not necessarily recommended, but Columbus was “operationally” competent.

Bruce Cockburn says, sometimes...

“Those who know don’t have the words to tell / those with the words don’t know too well.”

Perfectionists!

1. Do you miss deadlines because you want to make sure everything is just right?
2. Do you have a hard time stopping when you've reached "good enough" even on projects or tasks that *are not especially important*?
3. Do you *put off or avoid starting projects* because you fear you won't be able to do them well enough to live up to your own expectations?

If you answered 'yes' to one or more of these questions, you may be a perfectionist. If in doubt, ask those around you - family, friends, co-workers - whether they think you're a perfectionist.

If you are a perfectionist, choose one task or project for which "good enough" is good enough (if you can't think of any, ask friends, family or co-workers) and then take it to that level. Force yourself to stop or to hand it in at that point, even if this makes you anxious. Then note whether or not the world ends. If not, do it again, until you become less compulsive about doing everything perfectly.

From Jurgen Wolff's monthly ezine, Nov 2010

[Embracing the upcycle instead of the downcycle](#) [abridged version]



Does a stressful event start a cascade that ends up making even you more stressed? If an authority figure corrects your behaviour, does the intervention lead you to push back and make the behaviour worse?

Does a failure set you on a path to more failure? We can choose to create cycles that move us up or endure cycles that drag us down. If being a *little* behind creates self-pressure that leads to stress and then errors, it's no wonder you frequently end up a *lot* behind. Someone who gets better whenever he fails will always outperform someone who responds to failure by getting worse. This isn't something in your DNA, it's something you can *learn or unlearn*.

The appropriate response is not to try harder, to bear down and grind it out. The response that works is to understand the nature of the cycle and to change it from the start. You must

not fight the cycle, you must transform it into a different cycle altogether. It's a lot of work, but less work than failing.

MISSION

Twixtmas

In New Zealand, the period between Christmas and New Year is usually a time to catch your breath after a long year, and begin to look forward to the holidays you're just beginning. (I generalise, of course, but this is the norm for many people.)

Andy Wood has a different take on this period, which he's calling **Twixtmas**. He sees as a time in which it's possible to do some good, reach out to others, make a bit of a difference in the world.

Check out his ['five days to change the world'](#) page to see what he's on about.

Andrew Jones ([Tall Skinny Kiwi](#)) writes in a [recent blog post](#):

The challenge of missions and how we are responding has radically changed. There is a greater need for storying the gospel, utilizing the new media, recognizing the next generation is doing things differently, understanding world religions, appreciating the holistic nature of the task at hand and providing some holistic metrics for measuring our progress that go beyond bums on a pew or churches in a network.



One of the biggest changes we have experienced is the need for a more streamlined way of doing mission overseas with less wastage - that means a focus on social enterprise, micro-business and a sacrificial lifestyle that is more sustainable and more incarnational among the people.

As you'll note from the second paragraph, he appears to be talking about 'overseas' mission. However the first paragraph in particular is very pertinent to local mission as much as overseas.

[Paul Fromont muses](#).. If the church according to St. Paul is the "new creation"; if Lesslie Newbigin has emphatically said, "the Church is the *hermeneutic of the Gospel* " and as Andrew [Perriman] writes, "The church is the medium of its message", what is the *actual* on-the-ground message that the church in the West largely conveys? Or, perhaps more to the point, what are the messages (pl) the church (and churches) conveys, and to what degree are these both hermeneutically and credibly aligned to the *gospel* and yet also critiqued and challenged by God's "good news" embodied and enacted in Jesus of Nazareth, by means of the filling of the Spirit...? And, for that matter, is it actually possible for the church to get out of the way of the unfolding drama of God's purposes for all of creation?

Context:

William Black, who is an American lecturer teaching at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology , writes as part of a [recent blog post](#), quoting [Joseph Healey](#) [pictured at right], a Maryknoll priest, narrative theologian and expert in African proverbs:



[African] contextual theologizing does not go over well with many in North America in particular (Europeans, he said, seem to do a better job of comprehending the theological scene in Africa). 'They just don't get it,' he said. Many seem to equate their theology with the truth. Contextualization for them means simply translating their right theology into the language of the unreached, or the theologically uneducated. We seem to think if we can transfer our understanding of salvation, and our understanding of discipleship, and our understanding of missions, and our understanding of church into this new context, then we have brought the gospel to these people.

and

We think our inherited systems are the best, even the only theology. But in doing so we miss the point. Theology is not about engaging with ideas and who can build the best scaffolding (assuming that theology even at its best is not the reality). Theology is what God the Son did – it's incarnational. Theology is God becoming accessible. For those human societies that do systems, then theological systems will undoubtedly work really well for them, so long as it is remembered that the system itself is not God (otherwise it becomes an idol). But for the vast majority of the world's societies, where system and Enlightenment structures and organization are not valued and irrelevant, theology must take a different form. The goal of theology, of course, remains the same – to facilitate our knowing God the

Holy Trinity and loving him with all our heart and loving our neighbour. But how the Spirit calls that reality out of us may be very different from context to context.

Anyway, given the condition of Western Christianity, one wonders why anyone would want to export their issues to the rest of the world. But that doesn't seem to be a thought that troubles anybody, except of course the rest of the world.

Reasons to work from [Seth Godin](#) – he says advertising and promotion is mostly focused on the first in the list, whereas many people go to work for one or more of the other seven reasons.

1. For the money
2. To be challenged
3. For the pleasure/calling of doing the work
4. For the impact it makes on the world
5. For the reputation you build in the community
6. To solve interesting problems
7. To be part of a group and to experience the mission
8. To be appreciated

Where is God in the parable of the *Wedding Banquet* [Matthew 22:1-14]? [Richard Passmore](#), in the [blog, Sunday Papers](#), has an intriguingly upside down take on it:



If I see God as with the poor and marginalised he is in the highways and byways. Using this as the start point you don't have the option of seeing the king as God or the son as Jesus and could see the parable as a critique of organized religion or power.

The king is keen to make alliances with the rich farmers and businessmen so invites them to the party to impress them. They are obviously powerful as they have the opportunity and means to kill the servants the king first sent, and the king needs to subdue these people after they killed the servants by the use of force with armies, not just a couple of people.

Then in order to not be seen as a loser, the king needs to have some people come to the party so invites (coerces?) poorer people to attend. Tradition at the time suggests the groom's father provides the right clothes for the party guests, but one person refuses to wear the clothes from the manipulative, politically savvy, violent and coercive monarch. One person refuses to play the game by the rules of the powerful and is cast out into the darkness with the outcasts.

Here we see Jesus as someone not willing to go along with the power plays of the day, someone who stands up for justice, who reads the motives of the powerful and stands outside of those systems. The kingdom is heaven is about putting other people first, standing up for righteousness, speaking out for the voiceless and living in a way that is radically different to established ways of the world.

QUOTES

An embarrassment of riches:

Having a large number of one-liners and quotes to hand I've decided to put them all into this one newsletter – perhaps this will give you time to use them as substitutes for those awful jokes that appear in Christmas crackers:

Good people are good because they've come to wisdom through failure. We get very little wisdom from success, you know. - *William Saroyan*



The most difficult thing I have ever had to do is follow the guidance I prayed for. - *Albert Schweitzer*

"Don't ask yourself what the world needs; ask yourself what makes you come alive. And then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive." - [Howard Thurman](#)

Be miserable. Or motivate yourself. Whatever has to be done, it's always your choice ~
Wayne Dyer

Kick the darkness till it bleeds daylight. - *Bruce Cockburn*

Why waste time learning, when ignorance is instantaneous? (*Calvin & Hobbes*)

I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody -
Bill Cosby

Mimes walk the walk but never talk the talk - *Anon*

A lion leading an army of sheep will be victorious over a sheep leading an army of lions, every time – Anon

Hope is the ability to hear the music of the future, faith is the ability to dance to it today.
D. Muir



THIS CARTOON COMES FROM THE [Naked Pastor's Blog](#)

“Hope is the very dynamic of history. Hope is the engine of change. Hope is the energy of transformation. Hope is the door from one reality to another. Things that seem possible, reasonable, understandable, even logical in hindsight ... often seemed quite impossible, unreasonable, nonsensical, and illogical when we were looking ahead to them. The changes, the possibilities, the opportunities, the surprises that no one or very few would even have imagined become history after they have occurred.

Between impossibility and possibility, there is a door, the door of hope. And the possibility of history's transformation lies through that door ... Spiritual visionaries have often been the first to walk through that door, because in order to walk through it, first you have to see it, and then you have to believe that something lies on the other side.” Jim Wallis, [The Power of Hope](#): a sign of transformation.

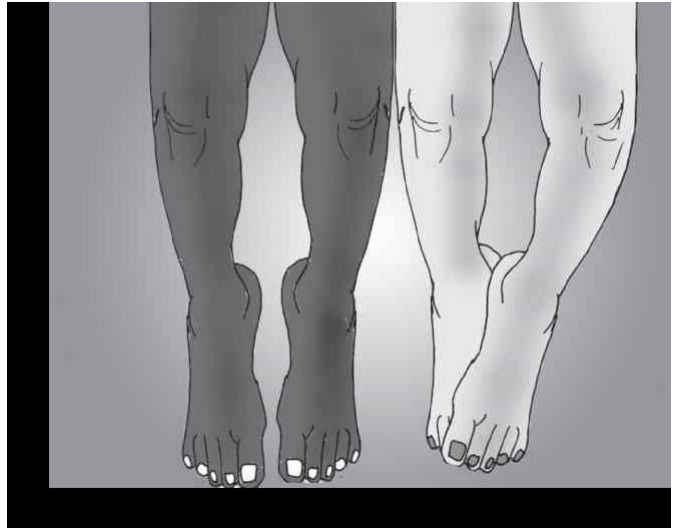
STOP PRESS

The World Council of Churches in partnership with the World Communion of Reformed Churches has just produced a book - [it can downloaded as a pdf](#)- called ***Created in God's Image: from hegemony to partnership.***

The subtitle is: ***A Church Manual on Men as Partners: Promoting Positive Masculinities.***

It's edited by Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth and Philip Vinod Peacock, and a wide range of writers from around the world have contributed to it. The book has a number of

suggestions as to how it might/should be used at the beginning and is laid out in short sections suitable for housegroup study or for other small groups to work on.



I've only had a quick skim through it but it looks to me like something that could usefully be employed in a variety of ways in churches.

Check out the [National Mission Resource Blog](#) - new posts arrive regularly during the working week.

