
“From Every Tribe and Nation”: Multiculturalism in Christian Churches in Suburban Melbourne¹

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This article analyses everyday multiculturalism in Christian churches in suburban Melbourne, showing how migration transforms migrants and host communities. It reflects on how the story of Pentecost provides a framework for migrants and host churches to understand cross-cultural encounters and describes how liturgical habits create a sense of home in a new church setting.

The article is based on ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews at three churches; a multicultural Catholic congregation that worshipped in English, a multicultural Seventh-day Adventist congregation that worshipped in English, and an Arabic Baptist church that worshipped in Arabic and was home to people from a range of countries but mostly Iraq and Egypt. In describing these multicultural churches and the intertwined lives and loves of people from different cultural backgrounds, I consider the *faith*-full way in which my participants think about ethnicity and migration. While not always explicitly theologised, this tendency reflects a deeply-embedded ‘theological disposition’ that results from Christian liturgical formation.

I draw attention to the way in which Derrida’s theory of cosmopolitanism can be understood as another way of talking about the liturgical practice of Pentecost in everyday life. By doing so, I hope to show that both the mobile migrant and the host community that shows hospitality participate in cosmopolitan—or liturgically ‘Pentecostal’—habits.

This research is an attempt at a local Australian ethnography, not one oriented to people of a particular ethnic background. This is a deliberate step away from a tendency in the social sciences to limit studies to a particular ethnic group as a convenient way of limiting scope, but which thereby reinforces the assumption that ethnicity is people’s primary organising principle. While there are many ethnically identifying churches in Australia, there are many multicultural faith communities as well. This article is concerned with how habits are transformed through or held onto despite a cross-cultural encounter and argues that both are evidence of liturgical formation.

Introduction

My research explores the interaction between faith and migration for Christian migrants in suburban Melbourne. This article analyses everyday multiculturalism in Christian churches in suburban Melbourne. It focuses on how migrants recreate a

sense of home in a new church setting. In particular, it explores how they prioritise the values they bring with them and how they open themselves up to new values through the migration process.

I participated in worship at three churches in Preston, a middle ring suburb in the north of Melbourne; a multicultural Catholic congregation that

¹ This article represents research conducted for my PhD thesis at The University of Melbourne: Swann, Natalie (2019) “On the Way Home: Christian Migrants and the Liturgical Self”, available here: <https://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/items/5478022d-69ed-5c5c-bab1-a7d30348bad8>. Similar content was delivered as a presentation at the 2019 Australian Anthropological Conference.

worshipped in English, a multicultural Seventh-day Adventist congregation that worshipped in English, and an Arabic Baptist church that worshipped in Arabic and was home to people from a range of countries but mostly Iraq and Egypt. This project describes these multicultural churches and the intertwined lives and loves of people from different cultural backgrounds. Social science exhibits a tendency to limit studies to a particular ethnic group as a convenient way of limiting scope, which reinforces the assumption that ethnicity is people's primary organising principle. This is confounded by denominational commitment among migrants and the ensuing multicultural congregations this commitment can produce. In contrast, my project is a local Australian ethnography, not one oriented to people of a particular ethnic background.

Overall, my project has explored the ways in which faith and migration journeys are intertwined and seeks to show how the stories migrants tell echo the themes Christians rehearse when they remember, re-enact, and re-tell key biblical narratives. Following the theologian James K. A. Smith (2009, 2013, 2017), I frame this remembering, re-enacting, and re-telling as 'liturgical practice'. This liturgical practice is not limited to the formal wording of the church service but includes the habits of everyday church life and the faithful practices of Christians in their everyday lives. Smith's articulation of liturgical practice owes much to Pierre Bourdieu's (1990) conception of *habitus*, and I have sought to draw the two concepts into conversation as I reflect on the migration stories my participants told me. The liturgical frame expands two facets of *habitus*: first, it is explicitly tied to a sacred text, and second, it is used to decode what people love and value rather than decoding power relations. I hope that this reading of the lives of migrant Christians contributes to re-shaping the way we talk about and ascribe value to the lived experience and emotional expressions of migrants in Australia.

In this article, I want to dwell on one particular liturgical narrative—that of Pentecost—and explore the correspondences with cosmopolitan and multicultural habits in the churches I worked with. I am drawn to the politics of the ontological turn in anthropology (Bialecki 2017) and feel its political potential—its desire to help us really get radical alterity. And yet, I cannot help but feel that in positioning the other as ontologically apart from ourselves, we preclude that which we see actually happening in settler societies like Australia; everyday multicultural community. I would

rather suggest, following Levinas (1994) and Milbank (2006), that we meet the other face-to-face and engage in creative, responsive dialogue. What confronts and challenges me in multicultural Preston is not that there is systematic failure to understand one another (although that may be happening), but rather the curiosity that communication and community are possible despite alterity.

While I am a fellow believer with my research participants, my project was conducted under the supervision of non-believing anthropologists (Prof. Andrew Dawson and A/Prof. Debra McDougal) in a secular university. Many highly educated social scientists in Australia are unfamiliar with Christian Scripture and the narratives it contains and I therefore present my research expecting to need to explain this context to my readers. The voice of my research is designed to mediate between these two systems of thought in the kind of creative, responsive dialogue that I understand to be the only ethical way to encounter difference.

Pentecost and Cosmopolitanism

According to the book of Acts, Jesus appeared to his followers over forty days after his resurrection, before ascending to heaven (Acts 1:1–10). Fifty days after the Jewish Passover, the time when Jesus was crucified, the Jewish people celebrate the Festival of Weeks—also known as Pentecost. About a week after Jesus had ascended, his disciples were gathered together in a house, while Jews from across the diaspora gathered in Jerusalem for the festival. While they were gathered there, the Spirit descended as tongues of fire on these first disciples and empowered them to speak other languages, in which they proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus to the multilingual Jewish population in Jerusalem. The crowd is amazed: "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power" (Acts 2:1–11, NRSV). In the account of Jesus' ascension (after his resurrection) in the book of Luke, Jesus had told his disciples that "repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his [the Messiah's] name to all nations, beginning in

Jerusalem". In this way, the coming of the Spirit with the gift to speak in other languages enables the disciples to take the first step in fulfilling Jesus' parting command to take the gospel to all nations. It creates a vision of and takes the first steps towards a multicultural Christian church.

The contemporary Australian church, however, is incredibly fragmented—along both ethnic and denominational lines. Indeed, ethnic and denominational difference are often intertwined. Gary Bouma describes the way Australia's religious landscape is a product of its migration history:

All non-Aboriginal religious groups have found their way to Australia by migration either by being carried by migrating peoples or by 'migrating' as systems of belief and practice transmitted by means of teachers, publications or missionaries. The shape of Australia's religious profile is primarily a function of its migration history and only secondarily a function of conversion or changing religious identification. (Bouma 1997, 1)

Abe Wade Ata's three-volume study of Religion and Ethnicity in Australia (1988, 1989, 1990) demonstrates the way in which Australia's diverse religious (and especially Christian denominational) landscape reflects its diverse migration history. The ethnic church is discussed in terms of attendance, cultural activities, and (seemingly) inevitable decline. Departure from the ethnic church is often conflated with a loss of ethnic identity, so that migrants who chose to worship in multicultural or mainline Australian churches are viewed as having weaker ethnic identities.

Social science exhibits a tendency to limit studies to a particular ethnic group as a convenient way of limiting scope, which reinforces the assumption that ethnicity is people's primary organising principle. Glick-Schiller et al. suggest that despite the fact that "many worshippers emphasize a community in Christ without an ethnic suffix, scholars persist in categorizing the worshippers by their ethnicity" (Glick-Schiller et al. 2006, 814–15). The priority of ethnicity is confounded by denominational commitment among migrants and the ensuing multicultural congregations this commitment can produce. In my project, I tried to distance myself from this tendency; attempting to produce a local Australian ethnography, not one oriented to people of a particular ethnic background. In the face of the pervasive Australian narrative about ethnic

difference equating to religious difference, remembering, re-telling, and re-enacting the story of Pentecost can support a counter-narrative that recognises unity and difference *within* the local, mainstream Christian church.

Pentecost—like the rest of the liturgical calendar—is not celebrated on a particular day with all the trappings of tradition in all churches. But for those that embrace the liturgical calendar, such as the Lutheran church where I grew up, or the Anglican church where I now worship, the day is one of celebration. Eight weeks after remembering the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday, the church remembers the beginning of the public ministry of the Apostles. Because the first Pentecost is marked by the speaking of different languages, it is also often a day to celebrate the multicultural nature of the church.

Jacques Derrida (2001) has a vision of the cosmopolitan city, in which cities are transformed into places of welcome, and he identifies the Judeo-Christian contribution to this idea of cosmopolitanism. Speaking to *The International Parliament of Writers* in 1996 on the subject of cosmopolitan rights for asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants, Derrida is overtly political in his agenda, arguing for welcome and justice: "For let us not hesitate to declare our ultimate ambition . . . our plea is for what we have decided to call the 'city of refuge'" (2001, 8). He traces a brief genealogy of the concept of cosmopolitanism. Derrida identifies a "considerable gap" between the principles of asylum and hospitality proposed by Enlightenment thinkers such as Kant (cf. Kant 1972) and the implementation of these principles in post-war Europe. For Kant, says Derrida, cosmopolitanism is defined as the right to hospitality. But for Derrida hospitality is not simply one ethic among others, but "hospitality is culture itself." In seeking out reference points for this assertion that ethics is co-extensive with hospitality, Derrida first points to the Hebraic tradition of cities of refuge, second he points to the medieval tradition of the sovereignty of the city, and third, he links the cosmopolitan tradition of Greek Stoicism to Pauline Christianity.

It is Derrida's acknowledgement of the Hebraic and Christian roots of cosmopolitanism which most interests me—the fact that openness to the outsider has long been a theological imperative, and that theology and politics are not easily disentangled. Derrida suggests that the first text in which the "urban right to immunity and hospitality was rigorously and juridically developed" (2001, 17) was the Book of Numbers

(citing Numbers 35:9-32, cf. Chronicles 6:42-52, and Joshua 20:1-9). He doesn't dwell on the detail of this biblical reference, but instead points his readers to the works of Emmanuel Levinas in *The Cities of Refuge* (1994) and Daniel Payot in *Refuge Cities* (1992). Commenting on the contribution of Pauline Christianity, Derrida states:

Pauline Christianity revived, radicalised and literally 'politicised' the primary injunctions of all the Abrahamic religions, since, for example, the 'Opening of the Gates of Israel'—which had, however, specified the restrictive conditions of hospitality so as to ensure the 'safety' or 'security' of the 'strong city'. Saint Paul gives to these appeals or to these dictats their modern names. These are also theologico-political names, since they explicitly designate citizenship or world co-citizenship: 'no longer foreigners nor metic in a foreign land, but fellow-citizens with God's people, members of God's household' (Ephesians II. 19-20). In this sentence, 'foreigners' (*xenoi*) is also translated by guests (*hospites*); and 'metic'—but see also 'immigrants', for '*paroikoi*'—designates as much the neighbour, from a point of view which is important to us here, as the foreigner without political rights in another city or country. (Derrida 2001, 19)

While Derrida sees this radical opening up of the church to all people as having its root in the teaching of Paul, many theologians would suggest it is foreshadowed in the Old Testament and brought to fulfilment by Jesus in the Gospel accounts (e.g., Blomberg, 2007). Indeed, Paul himself argues as much:

[T]he scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you." For this reason, those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed. (Galatians 3:8-9, NRSV)

That is, as early as Genesis 12, God promises Abraham that all the peoples of the world will be blessed through him (Genesis 12:3). Throughout the Gospel accounts, Jesus begins to realise the fulfilment of this promise, drawing to himself the Magi, Samaritans, Greeks, and Romans, among others, and hints that this blessing to the nations was to be fulfilled.

The Gospel of Matthew climactically concludes with the resurrected Jesus commanding his followers:

Then Jesus came to them and said "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20, NRSV)

Surely this passage is implicated in the worst of Christian missionizing. But it also lays the foundation for Paul's commitment to the universality of the Christian message and the unity and equality of all believers. Contemporary theological writer, Daniel Hayes, points to the fact that the ancient world, the one in which Christian scripture was written, was multi-ethnic (Hayes 2003). Israel is described (or at least translated) as an ethnic nation. Despite the experience of severe ethnic barriers, Christian Scripture encourages and predicts that worship of Jesus will lead to profound unity across these ethnic or national divisions, while still acknowledging that difference exists. Hayes writes:

[T]he people of God in the Book of Revelation are portrayed as being from all the different peoples of the earth. They are multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual . . . God's intention for his people is to be multi-ethnic and multicultural, but yet united in their fellowship and their worship of him. (Hayes 2003, 199)

Despite the fact that cosmopolitanism can be argued for from Scripture and via Derrida's analysis, the reality of church on the ground in Australia is that it is denominationally and ethnically highly fragmented. Yet, the stories in this article show how movement can help people to cross denominational and ethnic boundaries. Sometimes, this is an incidental function of movement, sometimes it is the result of deliberate missional movement. Following Derrida, it seeks to ask how both the Australian-born and the overseas born "recreate, through work and creative activity, a living and durable network in new places and occasionally in a new language" (2001, 12). What I am suggesting here is that cosmopolitanism is simply another way to talk about the liturgical practice of

Pentecost in everyday life. I wish to draw the two concepts into parallel.

Cosmopolitan Habits

According to Datta, “cosmopolitanism in its most fundamental sense implies openness to difference,” and says, “It is a regular feature of the literature that those people who move—migrants, tourists, pilgrims, global elites—are those who ‘become cosmopolitan’, allowing their identities and practices to transform, seeing themselves as less fixed, more fluid. Literally, they become ‘citizens of the world’; *kosmopolites*” (2009, 353). This sense of cosmopolitanism was certainly apparent in the people I worked with in churches. Two people I met and spoke with in the Catholic church demonstrate this.

In Helena’s story, migration to different countries forced her to find Christian community across ethnic and denominational boundaries.

Story 1: Helena

Helena was born in India. She grew up in a wealthy family with a Protestant mother and Catholic father and went to Catholic church every day. Every day at home they would have more ‘Protestant’ devotions—reading the Bible, singing songs, and praying as a family. So, even as a child, her experience had a kind of diversity. She was a very ‘good girl’ and had a reputation among her friends for being powerful in prayer. If someone asked her to pray, she would immediately kneel down, cover her hair with a scarf and pray. She and her family were often the only people at morning prayer with the Jesuit novices at the local Catholic college. Her mother trained the children to give thanks in the morning and to say prayers before bed. If she or her siblings would make a mistake, her mother would say, “Ask God to forgive what you did,” and then they would have to kneel down and ask her for forgiveness as well. She would respond, “I forgive you, did you tell God?” Then she would say, “Don’t repeat this mistake again.”

When Helena finished high school, she left home for a residential nursing hostel to train to be a nurse. Helena journeyed from India through Malaysia and Brunei, and attended multiple denominations, finding new ways to express her faith through the habits of different faith communities. This was not always comfortable—she

found herself challenged by new modes of worship in a Pentecostal community in Brunei.

While on an overseas placement in Malaysia, a relative of hers took her to a Church of Christ, but the distance was too great to attend there regularly, so she worshipped at other closer Catholic and Anglican churches. She joined a Christian fellowship and started “doing all the things,” but she really loved her involvement with the kids in the church—teaching them songs and looking after them. There wasn’t a priest in this community, “they take turns to pray and worship the Lord,” and they cooked and ate together like a family.

Helena was counselled not to go to Brunei because it is a strict Muslim country, but the pay on offer was so generous that she could not turn down the job she was offered there. As soon as she landed in Brunei, she was shocked by the way women dressed, with everything covered, even their faces. There was no church, just a big mosque. Then, one day she met a woman who worked in the laboratory at work. She said she was a Christian and invited Helena over for dinner. Helena was a bit cautious and took a friend who was Muslim along with her. When they arrived, they saw a lot of poor people coming to the house, worshipping in a Pentecostal style. She did not really like Pentecostals because her experience was that they were very judgmental, condemning people to hell for their sin. For Helena, no-one but God has the right to judge because only God knows your heart. So, she told me, she was scared because she thought they “let God go to their mind,” and because she was scared they would forcibly baptize her, that “one day they will just put me in the water like that.” Still, although she didn’t find everything they did persuasive, eventually she was baptized. Now she happily calls herself born again. Helena speaks in tongues and finds Pentecostal habits of prayer particularly powerful. She prays every morning and night and as she talks you get the sense that prayer is never far from her lips. During the course of our interview, she shared many of the kinds of things she would pray in an ex tempore style. She explained prayer like this:

First, the most basic thing is that you need to clean yourself of your sins. You need to remember all the things you have done and say “I’m sorry God, forgive me.” After that, you go on to praise God. She says you “clean yourself, and [offer] thanksgiving, and praise, then you submit.” Having done these

things “you forget everything” because “you are purified.” This has been very important to Helena and she says it has helped her in many ways. As an example of this prayer and how she prays it, she offers “I am the worst sinner, God, that’s why you chose me to be here and thanks for your love. I am a very bad sinner, but you cleansed me, to come to this level, and you made me.”

Helena says that her father told her that wherever you go you should learn the good things. She laughs, “I took many good things from them—I stole things from that Pentecost church!”

While Helena was living in Brunei, she visited Australia four times. In Melbourne, she visited another local church, but found she was much more comfortable at Sacred Heart because she could pray and praise God the way she wanted to here.

Helena moved to Australia and was married. She says when she was first married, she worshipped her husband more than she worshipped God. But her husband treated her poorly. She thought he was a believer, but after they were married she struggled to get him to come to church with her. He lost tens of thousands of dollars gambling. She prayed for him all the time—even praying he might win, though she knew in her heart it was wrong. She says she has learned and changed a lot, and she praises God and thanks him in prayer “for what I am today.” She discovered he had a girlfriend and asked him to leave. He took everything, including her car. There was nothing and no-one left, but she says, “who was with me? God was with me.” Sometimes, she prays in the middle of the night.

There is a verse that is special to her, which she quotes from memory thinking it might be Isaiah 15:6, “For a small moment, I have forsaken you, I hid my face from thee, but with my loving kindness and with all my mercies I am with you.’ Even last night I shared one of the same verses with one of my girlfriends. But I told God, ‘Lord, you just mentioned there in the Bible a very small moment you hid, it’s not a small moment to me! It’s a very big thing! Because for God, things are not, for us it is different, isn’t it? That’s what’s in the Old Testament, years and things are nothing to God. Bible says for a ‘small moment’—no more ‘small moment!’”

I think the quote is more likely from Isaiah 54:7-8, “For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from

you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer” (Isaiah 54:7-8, NRSV).

Helena holds onto this promise, even though it does not feel like she has only been forsaken for a moment. She wants the moment to end. She waits in hope for everlasting love and compassion.

Over time, Helena’s own Roman Catholic worship practice has been transformed through this exposure to difference as experienced through the greatest difficulties of her life. She adopted the Pentecostal practice of *ex tempore* prayer to bring her concerns to God. She still says the Rosary, but she treasures this new way of speaking to and with God. She is not so romantic as to suppose each of these communities is just like the other—she is alert to their particularities, their strengths and weaknesses. But she has also discovered the church is something bigger than she imagined. She says it is really only by chance that she is again worshipping at a Catholic church. Denomination has been relativised for her; what matters is the gathering of God’s people.

In a similar way, Sione’s story illustrates the way in which movement can break down strong commitments to denominational loyalty.

Story 2: Sione

While raised in a strongly Catholic family and community in Tonga, Sione’s friendships with Tongans from the Uniting Church and other denominations here in Melbourne have shaped him into an advocate for ecumenical partnership. Sione can see a linearity between his upbringing in Tonga and his openness to Christians of other traditions. But it seems from the full context of his experience in Australia—the support he received from friends in the Uniting church, the opportunities he had to visit Uniting churches without familial constraint—that this openness was facilitated by his migration experience as much as it was by his pre-existing theological schema.

Sione was brought up in a strong Catholic household, even thinking as a young man about joining the brotherhood. He studied teaching at university in Tonga and taught high school geography and economics. In 1990, he won a

scholarship from the Australian Government to come and further his studies at Deakin University. He undertook a Bachelor of Business in Personnel Management and Human Resources, from which he graduated in 1994. The culture shock for Sione, particularly with regards to modes of teaching and learning, was powerful. As a teacher, back in Tonga, “the students rely on you as the teacher to prepare all the materials, all the readings and write down the notes on the board and everyone's copying the notes from there. That's how they do this.”

But in Australia, as a student he was responsible for a far more active role in learning in classes. “It's so different,” he tells me, slowly shaking his head. Together with the challenge of studying in his second language, English, this made him ask some hard questions and pushed him to some intense study practices, even putting a spanner under his mattress so he wouldn't sleep comfortably and would wake to study more readily.

For Sione the support of the Tongan community in Melbourne was crucial to making it through these challenges. There was one particular man, an uncle, who held him accountable for his studies. This man, Sione tells me, was very supportive of students. Sione's habit was to study from Sunday afternoons to Friday nights, but Saturday was a break for him from his studies. On Saturdays, he would drink kava² with his friends, Sione commented, though his uncle would check in on him asking ‘Have you done your homework?’ If Sione said he would only be halfway finished, his uncle would organise for somebody to take him back to University to finish his study. He laughs remembering his younger self. Looking back, he reflects, “even though I want to socialise in that time . . . I came here to fulfil [a] purpose, my studies, not to drink the kava every night.” He can see that by helping him focus on his study, his uncle was actually supporting him.

In retrospect, Sione appreciates this external discipline as a blessing, a support. But it was not only Tongans of Catholic background from whom he found support, but of all backgrounds. He specifically mentions friends from the Uniting

church, some of whom trained for ministry and now serve as pastors in local churches here in Melbourne. The friendship across denominational boundaries that Sione has experienced in Melbourne, has prompted his involvement in organising Ecumenical Tongan Services here.

Here is how he describes his ecumenical outlook: “My understanding is that there is one God and it doesn't matter how different . . . they worship and the way we are. We mean the one thing and it makes me comfortable to be with them [friends from the Uniting church]. We talk. Because most of the time at the kava party the men gather together, like sharing jokes and maybe political talk about political issues. But most of the talk is spiritual sharing which makes a balance of why you want to be there. And for me, when I was involved in the sharing, even those people [who] are already ordained as a minister and still studying the Bible—I don't feel uncomfortable when I share my belief with them. Because I believe that there's only one God we have, we share. . . . I said regardless of our differences we need to come together and share what we stand together, that there's only one God. So about nearly 10 years now I became the secretary for the Tongan Ecumenical Services here in Melbourne. Then I tried to foster that idea amongst the Christian community here and [in] the Tongan [community]; and some Anglican[s] too, the Uniting, the Methodist and the Catholic. And there's a small minority that are called the Tongan Church . . . I became involved there . . . when I came here the Catholic community was never involved there. Because I can feel we still have a chance of becoming—mixing with other denominations. I have managed to break that ice.”

Early in his time in Australia, Sione would worship at both the Catholic church and with his student friends in Uniting church congregations. He says some people were suspicious of that, but in his mind: “My belief, the faith that I've brought up from the beginning back home will never get out from me ever. Wherever I go, wherever I mix I believe that God's people [can be known because they share and do good things] . . . I carry around . . . what Jesus

² According to Tecun, “the pounded Kava root today is infused with water before drinking and can be considered a soporific, although the effects depend on how much is infused with the water and the type of Kava used as well.” While “chiefly Kava rituals are performances that mediate the hierarchical power relations,” “Kava Tonga manifests itself in various forms dependent on the type of event, purpose for gathering, rank of attendees, and frequency of getting together, being consumed in each of these settings predominantly, but not exclusively by men” (2017, 54).

said. Wherever you go it doesn't matter . . . if you are Catholic, it doesn't matter whether you're Uniting; whatever congregation you are, you are people of God. You have been loved first by God, and that love should be to all of you, and then you share it with your brothers and sisters in your journey." This has been part of his faith from the very beginning of his life.

We continue to talk about other things, about the ways in which Tongan culture is lost in younger generations, about Sione's struggle to decide about whether to stay in Australia or return home to Tonga, and his training to become the first Tongan deacon in the Catholic church in Australia. We finish our conversation with a realisation that just a few months earlier we had worshipped together at the Anglican cathedral, where we were both visiting to support friends being ordained in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne. I offhandedly remark that it is a small world. "It is", says Sione, "The good thing is both churches are coming together, a lot of dialogue, the Anglican and the Catholic churches, and then we follow the same program for the deaconate, it's really good."

The migration experience has not made either Helena or Sione a-cultural or transcultural bohemians—they both retain strong connections to their cultures of origin. But movement has facilitated—perhaps even necessitated—an openness to other ways of practicing the Christian faith. Both Helena and Sione have moved for work, and moved for relatively significant periods of time. Neither of them predicted or foresaw the way the process of movement would change their practice. Being mobile means that each of these migrants has experienced difference and discovered fraternity despite it. It has made them more flexible in their practice and in their openness to others and their practices. In each of these stories—and others detailed in my thesis—the participants reflect on the fact that the lessons they have learned through being mobile are all part of God's plan for them.

Reciprocal Hospitality

We have seen the way in which the mobile subject is transformed, but for Kant and Derrida,

cosmopolitanism is less about the transformation of the self as it is about the openness required to offer hospitality. I am, therefore, a little uncomfortable with the way dwelling on mobile 'cosmopolitans' shifts the focus from the other to the self. It seems to undermine the heart of hospitality; the right for the visitor to be treated as herself or himself—"this right to present themselves to society" (Kant 1972, 137-138). And, in many cases, surely this makes the cosmopolitan the visitor, rather than the host. But Derrida considers the act of hospitality on the part of the host crucial to cosmopolitanism (Derrida 2001). And this affects how we understand these three churches and the people who worship in multicultural communities as cosmopolitans. Indeed, Derrida questions who the subject of hospitality is, employing in other works (e.g. Derrida 1999) the same term for she who gives hospitality as he who receives it (Anidjar 2002). A one-sided formulation of hospitality flowing from host-to-guest neglects those moments in which the foreigner/guest serves and edifies the host.

While those who have migrated have often had experiences that have opened up their identity or practice, this reciprocal sense of cosmopolitanism as hospitality allows us to see the ways in which those who are raised locally actively welcome the stranger in all their particularity. I saw this form of cosmopolitan welcome in the churches I worked with in the following four ways: symbolic representations of diversity, in the content of worship services, through the running of events to celebrate diversity, and through deliberate strategies of inclusion.

For example, in their worship services, Preston Seventh Day Adventist dwells for significant amounts of time on church mission and their desire to connect across cultures. The congregation supports long term mission financially and encourages its members to experience short-term mission themselves overseas. Every week at Preston Church as part of the Sabbath School, a video is shown of the week's mission focus. These videos are produced centrally by The Office of Adventist Mission at the Seventh-day Adventist Church's General Conference World Headquarters. According to the official Adventist website through which these videos are made available, the purpose of these videos is to "share stories that will show what mission offerings have accomplished, to thank

members for their support, and to report on what still needs to be done.”³

The videos are extremely well-produced and, in keeping with their production by a US communications team, almost always narrated with a North American accent. While they seek to foster a sense of global partnership, there are constant echoes of the American origins (and ongoing American administration) of the denomination. Music is used to evoke a sense of place (e.g. the use of kettle drums when introducing African projects, or bamboo flutes for Chinese projects) and the videos provide basic education about different places (geographical location, landscape, etc.) as well as information about Adventist Mission in that location.

Following the screening of one of these videos, a collection is taken for global mission. The church’s performance at these ‘13th Sabbath Offerings’⁴ is reported weekly in the notice sheet. Members of the congregation went overseas on mission trips twice during my stay at Preston church. One group was the youth group, who went on a short-term mission to the Pacific, and the other was a pair of twins, who travelled to Cambodia on a medical mission trip to celebrate their 30th birthday.

Diversity is also celebrated at Preston Seventh-day Adventist church through the annual International Night. According to the chair of the social committee, this is the highlight of the church social calendar. Some of the social activities are off-site (e.g., picnics, beach trips), but the International Night is held in the upstairs hall on a Saturday/Sabbath evening. People come representing their country of origin (either where they were born, or where they identify as being from by ancestry) in national dress—even if they don’t really have a ‘national dress’. When I was first invited to the event by Juliette, who was born in Mauritius, she told me that in previous years she had variously dressed in a sarong, a borrowed sari, or a specially purchased dance costume. She doesn’t feel there is a particular Mauritian outfit she can or should wear, but she tries with her costume to evoke something of her homeland.

The Adventist church actively, deliberately incorporates newcomers. Tabitha, a postgraduate

student from Botswana is amazed by the freedom she has had to be involved in church leadership, she says:

I find myself being allowed to do more at Preston Church compared to back home. Back home there’s a lot of bureaucracy . . . it’s so hard to do something if they don’t really know you. So, that’s what I’ve kind of been struggling with back home. I’ve wanted to be more active in church but it hasn’t been that easy. In that, because I lived in Francistown and then I went to live in a capital city which is Gaborone so a lot of people, they didn’t know me, didn’t know where I was coming from so, it’s very hard for them to actually allow you to take part in church activities. Whereas, at Preston if you’re willing, they’ll just give you a chance to do that. So that’s what I absolutely love about them.

When I asked a locally born elder about this, she told me involving newcomers in church leadership is a deliberate strategy to help people feel connected and meaningful. It is an act of hospitality.

During my time with the Arabic Baptist church, I attended a rally hosted by the combined Arabic churches of Melbourne. There was a visiting musical performer and speaker from Egypt. The height of the preacher’s message was that this audience needed to focus their attention on Melbourne. He told them that when they get to judgement, they are going to be held accountable for Melbourne. They will be answerable for Melbourne. They need to serve Melbourne. The church is universal—and this preacher suggested the outworking of this is not that these Arab Christians need to continue to seek the good of the church in the Arab world, but rather they are, in a way, free to serve God in the place He has put them. These Christians are responsible for the particular place they are in.

Joel Robbins (2006) sees that theology has something valuable that anthropology seems to have lost but may yet regain: the ability to make claims about what kind of life we ought to strive for. Hope and a vision of the good life are things that many anthropologists yearn to advocate for based on their encounters with difference. Robbins is not himself a Christian, and he thinks it may be possible for

³ <http://www.adventistmission.org/faq>. A complete archive of videos is available online: <http://www.adventistmission.org/amdvd-archive>

⁴ The ‘13th Sabbath’ refers to an annual quarter (13 weeks)

anthropologists to achieve this if we “recommit ourselves to finding real otherness in the world” (2006, 292). As I have argued elsewhere (Swann 2018), while finding his conclusion that we can simply do better through encountering difference unpersuasive, I do think this provocation can help Christians see the beauty of encountering difference in two ways demonstrated in the stories above:

First, it might help Christians to practice a radical openness to migrants who arrive in Australia already knowing the love of Jesus. It might surprise you to learn that 42% of migrants to Australia from the Middle East and North Africa, 49% of migrants from South East Asia, and 81% of migrants from Southern and Eastern Europe identified themselves as Christians on the 2016 Census (ABS 2016). There is no reason to believe that they are any more nominal than the 58% of Australian-born persons who ticked the same box. Yet, I suspect that sometimes the (mainstream Australian) church is inclined to think of them (even the Christian ones!) as a “mission-field” rather than as partners. They are considered in need of teaching and training in order that they become more like the Australian church, rather than as brothers and sisters whose witness and teaching may transform the Australian church into a more Christ-like body.

Second, it might help Australian Christians to practice seeing themselves as ‘the other’, especially when they travel to other countries. I think that if we fall into the trap of thinking that there is a white Australian ‘we’ who host migrants, we fail to prepare the approximately 30,000 Australians who leave Australia each year to spend more than twelve months overseas (ABS 2018). People going into missionary service are (hopefully) trained in how to be guests in another country but vast numbers more Australians, especially young Australians will travel for substantial periods abroad. How could the church train them so that their Christian faith not only survives that journey, but is positively transformed? How could the church prepare them to be “good” migrants? (Swann 2018, np)

Conclusion

The stories and vignettes presented in this article reflect the ways in which churchgoers navigate the tension of being united in spite of cultural difference.

The migration journey has, for some migrants, opened them up to new modes of worship practice, or produced an openness to other faith traditions typical of the mobile cosmopolitan. But openness is not only demonstrated on the part of the mobile subject, there are also attempts made by the host churches to provide hospitality. This hospitality is shown through displaying material objects, running events, and in everyday forms of speech and song in worship services.

The cosmopolitan migrant, like the Christian, is stuck in a space of ongoing liminality. Migration is typically characterized by a feeling of disconnection, of engagement in “multiple cultural worlds that are dynamically intertwined” (Coleman and Collins 2006, 5). Migration is not like ritual experiences of liminality—there is rarely a promise of a future reconciliation, no easy transition to a new and clearly defined role in the social structure. But, while there are periods of discomfort in the stories presented in this paper, these participants do not continually live in a state of anxiety. Instead, even when Helena and Sione feel lost—Helena in a Muslim country, or Sione studying in another language—they find community. They creatively respond to difference, being stretched and shaped through the encounter. They experience, perhaps, what Rapport and Dawson call “being at home in movement” (1998, 27). At the same time, cosmopolitan host communities open themselves up to difference and the possibility of transformation through the encounters that echo the experience of the early church in the story of Pentecost.

Theologians such as James KA Smith (2009, 2013, 2017) and Michael Banner (2014) have been advocating for how the liturgy *ought* to shape the formation of the person. Rather, this project provides thick ethnographic data exploring *how* liturgy plays out in the life of believers. The stories shared show why different liturgical traditions remain important in the lives of believers when they relocate from one country to another. I do not seek to argue for one perfect expression of a liturgy of Pentecost that will best shape the Christian. Rather, I seek to demonstrate how Scriptural narratives like that of Pentecost are turned into a range of habits which all point back to the same biblical stories. The ways Christians in different churches remind themselves of and re-enact these stories are different, but the stories remain the same. These narratives therefore create continuities between communities even as preferences for different habits create fragmentation. Our commitment to certain habits—particular temporalities and spatialities—affects

our feeling of ‘at home’-ness in different churches. Migrants both learn new habits and experience their faith in new ways, and seek to recreate habits that help them to live out a faithful life oriented to God and the good.

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