

~~more at a general framework, which is helpful, though often his theory is simply a summary of trends. Further, since “the major ethnographic elements of the study took place in early January and late June” (of 2001 and 2002), we surmise that Clark spent much less time inside a school than Hersch did.~~

~~In a final appendix he defends his research methods as a “participant-observer.” To protect confidentiality, “not one story or narrative presented is recorded precisely as fact,” and to avoid being intrusive not one thing was recorded or written down until he got home at night. With that caveat I will relate this quotation from a high school student, for it epitomizes the hurt of which the book speaks:~~

~~“My parents divorced when I was seven years old. I live in two houses, switching every two days. My parents get mad at me when I need to go to the other house because I forgot something. I get so angry because no one ever asked me if I wanted to live in two houses. No one ever asked me if it was okay with me having to keep track of which house my schoolbooks are at. No one ever asked me if I wanted to split my life in two!”~~

~~Clark listens carefully to such voices and helps adults to hear them more wisely.~~

~~**Russell Haitch, Bethany Theological Seminary, USA**~~

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~~**Practicing Passionate Theology!**~~

~~A conversational review of Kenda Creasey-Dean (2004) Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church (Grand Rapids: Michigan)~~

~~Pete Ward and Kenda Creasy-Dean~~

~~The aim of this review is to provide a thorough assessment of the text in question, much as the other reviews in this section fulfil, but with opportunity to probe a response from the author in critical areas of interest or contestation (ed).~~

Review by Pete Ward

Practicing Passion is quite simply the most important book written on youth ministry in the last twenty years. Dean has produced a complex, nuanced, and above all coherent, theology of the Church and young people. This means that she is the first of us on the block with a weighty and serious attempt to locate youth ministry within the wider theological and ecclesial debates. For this reason alone she deserves respect and very few things will be written about a theology of youth over the next few years which do not take account of her work.

The theoretical basis for Practicing Passion emerges from four key themes; identity, passion, practices and union with Christ. These themes are woven throughout the book into a powerful argument for the renewal of the Church's work with young people.

Identity

Drawing heavily upon the work of the developmental psychologist Erik Erikson, Dean presents young people as in the process of seeking identity resolution. This is the particular task of young people.

‘Without a coherent identity adolescents feel constantly at risk of disintegrating, of becoming non-existent – literally being a nobody. They intuit that this disparate self is “Not Right!”’ (p16)

The ‘postmodern young person’, says Dean represents a fragmented, or drawing upon Elkind, a ‘patchwork self.’ (p61, p62) Instead of integrating the self into a coherent sustainable identity and moving towards ‘maturity,’ adolescence is extended and young people are no longer required to ‘pull themselves together.’ Yet many fail to make it and they ‘fall apart.’ (p61) Adolescent development is therefore problematised by Dean, with the result that a particular take on the psychology of youth forms the starting point for her theology of salvation.

The central dilemma of adolescence, identity resolution, she says, depends upon the identification with a self-giving other. In the absence of such figures young people are left to fixate on the false images of contemporary culture. In contrast she argues that the Christian vision of identity is that it is located in Christ. (p135) Following Moltmann, Christian identity is understood as an

'identification with the crucified Christ.' (p16) This identification finds its origins in God's initiative since it is God's identification with us in the Incarnation which has transformed the human situation.

'This divine-human identification is the work of salvation, in which humanity is "justified" or made right, re-centred by Jesus who restores us through acts of witness that proclaim his life, death and resurrection until he comes again.' (p16)

Salvation is presented in relation to notions of identity resolution. Thus justification becomes re-centring and sin or the human disorder becomes identity fragmentation and evil the temptation of contemporary culture. This psycho-theological language continues in relation to the doctrine of God. Dean uses Trinitarian notions of *perichoresis* or mutual indwelling to develop the idea of identity resolution. The different persons of the Trinity are held in their unity through passionate relation. From here they 'ecstatically' reach out to humanity. Viewed through the, '*perichoretic* lens, she says, the adolescents "plural selves" cohere around the cross."

Passion

Practicing Passion makes a direct link between the passion of young people and the passion of Christ. Passion is seen as self-giving love and this inevitably relates suffering. (p4)

'Love always involves suffering on behalf of the beloved, desire longs for what lies painfully out of reach.' (p4)

Passion reveals our deep desire for the other and the human inclination to 'construct a self in relation to the other.' (p55ff) Passion in this sense, says Dean is evident in the lives of young people in some abundance (p56). It is also to be seen in the self-giving of God in the suffering Christ endures on the cross. Yet the mainstream American Church seems to have turned its back on passion as the key to making the link between young people and the faith. (p4) In the place of the sanitised faith of the Church we should reverse this trend and seek out a way to connect the passion of God with young people who are seeking a resolution of their fragmenting identity.

'The suffering passion of Christ inspires a life of passion for Christ, by which the disordered passions (or desires or appetites) of being human become realigned with holy passion (a self giving love) of God.' (p20)

The God-given self lies beneath a 'humanly constructed' ego. When we 'die to self' we die to this 'grasping ego' and we are able to 'give ourselves over' to the love of God, which is made evident to us in the suffering of Christ. (p20) Young people are reaching out for love, but they are surrounded by love which disappoints and lets them down. When the young person reaches out for the love which is beyond all loves then, 'passion unites lesser commitments of the self and weaves the shards of identity into something approaching an integrated whole.' (p21)

Practice

Practices are acts of witness. (p21) They are embodied belief. (p25) Practices include prayer and preaching and Christian service but they find their culmination in the worship of the Church and in particular in the Eucharist. (p21, p139) Practices in this sense can be seen as a living expression of the Christian faith held in the life of the Church. The historic practices of the Church are theological in that they speak of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. As they do this they set down patterns for relationship with God (p152).

'In practices that imitate the Passion of Christ, God incorporates youth into Jesus' own Passion; his desires become their desires and his story becomes their story.' (p51)

The practices of the Church therefore, as they speak of the passion of Christ, join young people to God. This is transformative of ego and of identity. (p63) These practices are located in the body of Christ, his Church. As such the Church also acts in a transformative way, enveloping the young person thus Dean presents practice as taking place in the context of being encircled and surrounded by Christ's body (p135). The practices of the Church however only provide a framework for belief. They should not be seen as offering the substance of faith. Yet the paradox is that Christ chooses to indwell these human actions and meets us through them. (p150)

Union with Christ

The life of faith is centred on the practices of faith. Youth ministry as a result must develop a sustained engagement with these historic practices. Through the practices young people first learn to imitate Christ. They then move on to a deeper intrinsic identification with Christ. Finally they move towards 'Union with Christ.' (p163) This notion of being joined or Union with Christ gives mystical energy to Dean's theological vision.

Critical of the WWJD generation she speaks not of imitation but of participation in Christ and Union with him. (p47) Salvation is not a decision for Christ it is something which takes place in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and in our being joined to him. (p44) In this way his passion is imprinted on our passion and our identity is remade in relation to his. (p20) Passion is spoken of as incorporation into the life of God. (p51) This union with Christ is embodied in the enveloping of the life of the Church. So Dean's treatment of Christian practice effectively links the life of the Church to ideas of Union with Christ and provides a way of firmly located youth ministry in the body – the Church. (p135)

Reading *Practicing Passion* it is apparent that alongside these four key themes Dean has also constructed three main enemies or targets for her theology. The first of the enemies, ironically perhaps is the Church itself; to be exact the mainstream Liberal Protestant Churches. Located at Princeton Seminary these Churches must be Dean's main audience in her daily work and she is nothing if not critical. They have tamed the passion of young people (p4). At the enlightenment Liberal Churches took a 'wrong turn', she argues, and. As a result they have become very inhospitable to the passionate faith of young people (p8). The second enemy is youth ministry. Dean is very critical of the programme and games tradition of ministry which has held sway in the US for the last twenty or thirty years. She reserves a particular vitriol for games which ridicule and humiliate young people. High-energy events and cool leaders may have their place but they can also serve to dislocate young people from the ongoing life of the Church. (p168) The vision of a serious and holy practice is set alongside these examples as a more authentic and a more ecclesial approach to work with young people. (p168) Yet the real enemy in *Practicing Passion* is contemporary culture.

Throughout the book Dean is equally deeply critical of the effect that contemporary media and popular culture have upon young people. As a parent she can already see the 'greedy teeth marks' of consumer culture in the life of her son Brendon (pxii). These are the, 'other Gods' who are threatening and circling our young people. Consumer culture threatens to numb young people into a 'lobotomised silence.' (p6) The global culture closes young people down from their natural search for ecstasy and spirituality. (p110)

'Today's media drenched popular culture tutors postmodern youth in a theology of passion not derived from the Church but from the doctrines of the market place.' (p127)

The culture of image and rhythm encourages a sensual spirituality and this spirituality sells. (p127) These, according to Dean, are the false gods who join sexuality and spirituality in a media soaked mix.

Questions for Dean

Practicing Passion is an accomplished theology where contemporary themes are woven together with a healthy regard for the traditions of a historic faith yet it leaves me a little uneasy. So I have three questions I want to put to Dean.

Question One: Theology and Psychology

Practicing Passion is theologically sophisticated and above all robust. The reliance on notions of participation and Union with Christ sets Dean's work firmly within a long line of Reformed and Patristic thought in these areas. Similarly the location of a sense of what it means to be human within Trinitarian theology and the concept of perichoresis accords with much contemporary thought in this field. Yet throughout this theological foundation there runs a stream which emerges from a particular view of adolescent psychology. I am not a psychologist yet I suspect that fragmentation and postmodern notions of identity need not necessarily be interpreted with such apocalyptic doom. For instance the notion of the reflexive self might offer a place for a conscious, knowing social construction of identity. If this is the case I might prefer to speak of the Holy Spirit working with the individual as they construct their 'knowing self.' If the idea of practice holds

together the idea of agency with divine activity the same might be true of the postmodern self.

This links to the issues which are raised by the use of psychology within a soteriology. When the work of Christ is linked so closely to notions of identity we clearly have a vivid and useful theology, yet at the same time such a move is questionable and is surely something of a Trojan horse. When theological terms such as justification and sin and salvation are re-expressed in psychological terms they are inevitably altered and in my view limited somewhat. How does she defend this move?

Question Two: The Evil in Contemporary Society

Clearly her treatment of contemporary culture is vulnerable to the accusation of dualism. What I mean by dualism here is that in treating 'out there' as evil and 'in here' as sacred it limits the work of God in culture and in the world. The discussion of contemporary media, communications technology and other aspects of the postmodern are dismissive to say the least. To treat contemporary culture as a place filled with false gods who are out to destroy young people is most unhelpful, in my view, not least because we all have to live our life in, with, and through this contemporary media world. Retreat is not an option only faithfulness within a consumer culture – if we are told this is intrinsically evil then our only option is retreat into the religious sanctuary. Surely this was not the intended message of the book?

I suspect that we are closer to the truth when we look at the many occasions where Dean draws upon contemporary culture, especially film to illustrate her work. In which case, she clearly can see something of God and something of worth in aspects of contemporary culture! If this is the case why junk in such vivid terms this same world? I think on one level this is a rhetorical device, but on another level I think 'resistance' to culture, Hollywood, the postmodern etc has become a default setting for many Christian commentators. What I mean by this is that without thinking too deeply we locate ourselves and what we are for in relation to this 'bad.' The more 'bad' this other can be made out to be the better our 'good' can seem. The more powerful the 'bad' the more our solution is needed. So is Dean serious in these attacks on contemporary media?

Question Three: Mission

Here we come to what I feel is the most important issue arising from Dean's book. When we turn our backs on contemporary culture we miss the contextualising imperative, which I believe, is essential for contemporary youth ministry and for the wider issues related to ecclesiology. What I mean by this is that it is my firm believe that we need to seek out the ways that God is already at work in the lives of young people, particularly young people who are outside of the life of the Church and we should pay particular attention to the culture they inhabit, make use of and create. When we see the movement of the Spirit among these young people we follow and with them we build Church. If contemporary culture is inhabited by false child eating gods then all we can do is rescue young people out of this danger. Combine this implication with the advocacy of Church based practices then despite all that is admirable about Practicing Passion it does appear to be an argument for a kind of stasis.

Maybe I am being unfair, because Dean does argue against much that is wrong in the present day Church, but it is what she does not say that leaves me uneasy. Particularly what she does not say in terms of new forms of worship, new patterns of Church life, and the way that culture brings about an imperative for change and so on. The reason I ask this is not one of fashion in youth ministry terms it is because of mission. My feeling is that change in the Church is demanded by a new missiological context. Dean however hardly touches upon these mission and culture issues – why not? This silence is also odd in a sense because the notion of the historic practices of the faith and the importance of tradition has actually been at the heart of much of the discussion within emerging Church circles and also within the Charismatic Church, at least in the UK. So my final question is why did Dean fail to articulate a more radical ecclesiology and identify with the emerging movement in the US?

Reply – Kenda Creasy-Dean

For the most part, Pete Ward's concerns about Practicing Passion are concerns I share. He is a generous critic, and he gets to the heart of things swiftly and without apology. Ward notes that, while arguing that the church must reclaim a theology of passion if we hope to lay claim to young people, I have constructed

three “enemies or targets” to criticize. I suppose I have, although I did not intend to make them enemies. In fact, I am very much one of my “enemies,” if Ward is right.

Mainstream “liberal” Protestantism

For example, Ward notes that my first target is the mainline Protestant church. (I use the designation “mainline” or “mainstream” instead of Ward’s term “liberal” since, in the U.S., the terms “liberal” and “conservative” have largely lost their descriptive power for churches. Mainstream Protestant churches in the U.S. share similar cultural histories and social habits—they are mainstream in the sense that they were once the dominant religious form in the U.S., wielding substantial social power—but their theological orientations are more diverse than the term “liberal” implies.)

Although it is tempting to blame the Enlightenment for the various theological “wrong turns” that led to our passionless present, deep down most of us—even at our most “postmodern”—want to hang onto a many of the Enlightenment’s philosophical gains for the church. The discipline of critical thinking, the value of individual human beings, the radical emphasis on human experience all gained legitimacy during the Enlightenment. Of course, modern rationality had its effect on the way the church dealt with passion; but in terms of losing its significance in theology, it would be more accurate to blame those strands of twentieth century theology that converted the church (and I’ll stick to the mainline Protestant church, since this is what I know best, and it’s not prudent to generalize) into a therapeutic organization, and reduced salvation to “meeting needs”—this week, with the proper sermon, next week, with the proper breakfast cereal—which, as far as I can tell, have little to do with the suffering love of God on the cross of Jesus Christ.

This is why, as an active member of the United Methodist clergy, I see myself in the throes of a family squabble, not an all-out attack. I am not interested in naming enemies, but I am very interested in naming the elephant in the room—namely, our rampant denial of our own Christology—instead of dodging it to keep the Protestant mainstream affably benign. In fact, ministry is messy, theology all

the more so, and mainline Protestants, starting with Methodists, have substantial resources for robust youth ministry, beginning with the necessary foundations for a theology of passion. John Wesley was nothing if not an apostle of passion, and his ministry began while he was a student, with other students. That being said, like other mainstream Protestant denominations in the U.S., Methodists are still coming to terms with our loss of moral and social sway in the culture, not to mention our loss of young people in the pews. So while I am deeply indebted and devoted to my mainstream Protestant tradition, I also believe many of our wounds are self-inflicted, and love requires honesty.

Youth ministry

I am also one of my own enemies if Ward is correct that my second target is youth ministry itself. I had intended my tone to be more of confession than vitriol, since obviously I am involved in youth ministry and I continually have to repent of doing it badly. The enemy I intended to target was bad youth ministry, not youth ministry as a field. Thin ministry, weak ministry, culturally-accommodated ministry, dislocated ministry, reductionistic ministry, uncontextualized ministry—any of those ministries I will happily disown, but of course I don’t think youth ministry is inherently any of these things.

It is true that, in the U.S., the term “youth ministry” is sometimes associated with these ridiculous forms of ministry to the extent that many devoted Christian leaders try to distance themselves from it. Seminarians and pastors often do not want to “lower” themselves to youth ministry—which may have something to do with the low status youth-serving professions hold generally in the U.S., but it also is the result of youth ministry’s long history of substituting educational programs, therapy sessions, social services, entertainment or childcare for ministry. Anyone who can tell the difference knows that, when we make such substitutions, we have abandoned our posts as spiritual guides and offered substandard facsimiles of what others in our society do better. For the most part, bad youth ministry includes any or all of these things cloaked in a Bible verse, which has about as much of a chance transforming lives as a man in a bat suit. Good youth ministry is simply good ministry, with a particular flock that happens to include a lot of lambs. The sooner we stop distinguishing between the two, the better.

Contemporary media and popular culture.

Finally, I am my own enemy if, as Ward believes, I have vilified contemporary media and popular culture. While I would like to think that Ward and I end up in a similar place on the subject of human culture, we approach the subject from different angles. I am less of an immanentist than Ward; while I am quite confident that God uses material culture to mediate divine revelation, I am far less confident that culture possesses an incarnational quality apart from this revelation, typically mediated through human relationships rather than through purchased goods.

So, Ward is accurate to note a certain two-headedness in my thinking about the passion of faith and the passions of culture. On the one hand, there are cultural forces (starting with bone-deep individualism and a market economy) that absolutely undermine an ethos of self-giving love, or passion (as I have defined it), which God calls Christians to enact and embody in our world. Left unchecked and unnoticed, such forces spirit our teenagers away on wings that are anything but holy. To avoid naming and qualifying them all, I often simply resorted to the terms “culture,” “consumer culture,” or “media culture”—which all fail to nuance the argument. Still, there is also an undeniable “otherness” of God that cannot be denied; we are called to be a people “set apart,” holy, in the world but not of the world.

I see this as more than a Greek dualism that crept into Scripture; in Jesus Christ, God is up to something entirely new, utterly different, than what we can conceive apart from Christ. So it is no surprise that a habitus of sacrificial love—which is the sanctified upshot of a theology of passion—would run completely counter to the self-actualization mantra of Western, consumerist ideologies. Because our fundamental personhood is always given by Christ, the psychological danger of “losing oneself” in Christian service is never an issue—as long as the service is authentically grounded in the self-giving love of God (i.e., the life, death, and resurrection of Christ), and not in a human impulse to be noticed or needed.

On the other hand, since I very much enjoy pop culture (and I am immersed in it as a scholar, a pastor, and a parent), I had hoped my use of cultural references would operationalize two theological assumptions that inform my

teaching. My first assumption is that God gives us permission “baptize” images and artefacts from the indigenous culture if it will help us better communicate the story of God. As I understand it, this was Jesus’ strategy with the parables (which he told while skewering the dominant religious culture of Jerusalem), Paul’s strategy at the Areopagus (where he claimed the “unknown god” for Christ), Augustine’s strategy in *On Christian Doctrine* (where he urged preachers to cheerfully “plunder from the Egyptians”—i.e., take from pagan culture—culturally relevant images that might be useful for preaching the gospel). As a teacher, my hope is that by employing cultural artefacts and casting my argument in contemporary terms, I will demonstrate how youth ministers may acknowledge cultural context without being captured by it.

The other assumption I want to convey however, is more important to me, and that is the assumption that God works through material culture in all forms. Indeed, God seems biased toward this form of self-disclosure. The concrete nature of adolescent thinking (despite their newly acquired formal operational skills) makes God’s self-disclosure in material contexts extremely powerful for youth ministry. Christ’s body and blood are revealed in bread and wine; the resurrection is embodied in the ritual of the baptismal waters. The church has always assumed that, under the proper circumstances, humanly crafted artefacts can faithfully communicate God’s presence, and therefore used oil, food, ashes, architecture, song, dance, paintings, pottery, fire, flowers, and so on to confess and proclaim the gospel. While I am not an immanentist—I believe God exists apart from creation, and that the Creator and the created are distinct for reasons of relationship—I do believe that everything God creates bears something of the divine image, and God is free to use that creation for whatever purpose God has in mind.

The word culture—which we usually take to mean all socially-transmitted products of human work and thought—comes from the Latin word for “tilling the land.” This suggests that, at root, culture represents a human effort to cooperate with God for the purpose of growing things: well-prepared soil makes it more likely that sun and water will reach the seed, which is divinely appointed to grow under decent conditions. Apart from a catechized imagination, “finding Christ in culture” is quite unlikely; God’s chosen community for revelation is the church. At the same time, the purpose of catechesis is to form faithful imaginations to notice

God's imprint in culture, all of culture, including film, digital communication, forces like individualism and consumerism, and even the global economy. Just because these "products of human work and thought" can be co-opted by sin does not mean God is absent from them. But eyes of faith are just that: eyes that can see, in spite of sin, the imago Dei in the world.

Lives of self-giving love inevitably challenge cultural forces that have been co-opted by ambition, selfishness, and greed—which conspire to quash the sacrificial impulse that would un-mask their sinfulness.

The Questions

Having identified these targets of the text, Ward leaves three questions about the basic assumptions behind *Practicing Passion*:

Question One: Theology and Psychology.

First, Ward cautions against baptizing a certain view of identity formation, namely one that deifies the idea of an integrated core to the self (and, conversely, assumes that fragmentation and postmodern identities, such as the plural self, are undesirable). As Ward notes, to say that identity formation leads to a psychologized form of salvation is a reductionist's soteriology. I agree, which is one reason I rely heavily on the theology of Jurgen Moltmann, who offers the most sweeping interpretation of the divine passion that I have found. Beneath my discussion of ego development lies another theologian—practical theologian James E. Loder (*The Logic of the Spirit* [Jossey-Bass, 1998]), whose nuanced view of ego development took into account the nothingness ("the Void") that lies between the God-given self and the humanly-constructed ego. Loder's view of the relationship between psychology and theology in ego construction is significant in that it posits a role for sin and redemption, which developmental theory lacks. While I want to draw as many connections between the gospel and human science as possible—any decent practical theological method requires this—my intent is to show, not that that youth ministry should reduce its understanding of humanity to psychological categories, but that human sciences often implicitly, usually accidentally, reveal a theological dimension of human existence.

And what about postmodern theories of identity formation? I suppose the honest thing to say is that I simply have not yet found one that seems to adequately explain the postmodern teenagers who hang out in my kitchen. The need for an integrated core to one's being—which seems to me is a theological, more than a psychological, phenomenon—remains compelling to me, based on Scripture as well as psychology (we are baptized into one body [I Cor. 12:13]; we are called to identify with the one Christ [Rom. 6:2]; the Godhead is Three in One, etc.). The point is not that unity trumps plurality, but that God encompasses both, meaning that human beings created in God's image have the capacity for unity in diversity—as long as our diversity clings to the crucified Christ, who makes us one.

Clearly, teenagers have to come to terms with the fractured nature of postmodern experience, but multiplicity without a "core story" is random chaos: atoms without a nucleus, particles without an orbit, experiences without meaning, faith without significance. Is there a "postmodern" way to address this? Probably. But postmodern or not, an anchorless self is a promiscuous self, a self that mimics rather than identifies, and therefore cannot "own," integrate, or even articulate one's selfhood. A self defined by its location at the foot of the cross, on the other hand, has a place to come home to, regardless of the number of forays made into the shifting geography of postmodern culture.

Question Two: The Evil in Contemporary Society

Ward's second question underscores a dualism that he believes can be read into *Practicing Passion's* "dismissive" view of culture. Ward finds it possible to read *Practicing Passion* and conclude that "out there" is evil and "in here" (in the church) is sacred, which limits the work of God in culture and in the world. This was not at all the impression I wanted to leave, as I have already noted, so let me repent of the rhetoric that leaves it. Every argument has its ghosts, however, and readers usually can find them. One of the ghosts haunting my discussion of culture is my frank fear that the sinful ideologies that have co-opted much of human culture have also co-opted the church—which means that the church actually helps co-opted culture convert youth to these corrupting ideologies, primarily by doing nothing to challenge them.

To cite one example: While consumerism shamelessly converts young people into buyers (have you noticed the number of toys and computer games predicated on shopping as a social practice?), the congregation where I worship is positively allergic to the language of conversion, preferring far more passive modes of socialization. The problem, of course, is that socialization alone lacks the radical disjuncture of Christ's in breaking into the world. It gives teenagers the impression that they can be good consumers (people defined by self-fulfilment) and good Christians (people who practice self-giving love) simultaneously. While I am glad to leave the business of converting young people to Jesus, Christians are not called to quietism either. Faith in Jesus Christ does not mean leaving all the work to Him. The promise I make every time we baptize a child is to hold up my end of the bargain. For I am called to till the soil, to cooperate with God in the ways that make it more likely that sun and water will reach this young person, whom God has divinely appointed to grow.

A Question for Pete Ward: Mission and Youth Ministry

It is the third question Ward raises about Practicing Passion that leads me to ask a question in return. Both Ward and I see the question of mission as the most important issue arising from my book—and, I should add, from his books as well. And it is here that I differ most from Ward.

In my view, ministry and mission are very much the same thing; mission is the purpose of ministry, the purpose of the Church, and it is not some optional task or model of ministry designed to help us move outside our own ranks. If mission means, literally, “the act of sending,” then ministry—which comes from a Latin word for “serving”—is in the service of mission. What is absent from these etymologies is the sense that either mission or ministry functions to bring people “in” to the church; rather, the focus is on going out, making disciples, being sent from the church. In this view, the church represents a compass point, an origin, a home base for God's work in the world, not a fence for dividing those who are “in” from those who are “out.” To conceive of mission as bringing people from the “outside in” reinforces the “sacred is in here, profane is out there” stereotype (which Ward himself says he wants to eliminate). It also risks focusing on justification at the expense of sanctification—or, practically speaking, making young people “targets” of mission instead of participants in it.

But God's mission is much, much larger than this. The mission of God is the Passion of Christ, which accomplished the salvation of the world—and whenever we practice passion, we participate in that mission. The rescue, in other words, has already been accomplished by God. Our job is not to save teenagers from child-eating gods but to expose these gods as frauds, to laugh at their pretence, to unmask the feeble power of self-fulfilment with a single life-changing act of self-giving love.

That's why the last section of Practicing Passion describes every practice of the church, from worship to witness, as a missional practice: it is sacramental in that it is a means of grace, an act of witness to the Passion of Christ, an activity that re-members (puts together again, or anamnesis, brings to mind again) the self-giving love of Christ, and enacts it once again for the church and for the world. This is our *raison d'être*. Missionaries are people “sent” by God across boundaries as witnesses to Christ. Fundamentally, the imitation of Christ means identifying with (taking part in) the mission of God. The early church viewed Jesus Christ as the archetypal missionary—the One sent by God across every boundary imaginable, life and death, space and time, to bring God's salvation into the world. In other words, mission is more than geography. Mission is ecclesiology; it is why we do what we do, and why we are who we are. So, in principle, I cheer Ward when he says:

“It is my firm belief that we need to seek out the ways that God is already at work in the lives of young people, particularly young people who are outside of the life of the Church, and we should pay particular attention to the culture they inhabit, make use of, and create. When we see the movement of the Spirit among these young people we follow, and with them we build Church”

Yet do these words also imply that God is particularly at work in the lives of young people outside the life of the Church? Certainly God is at work in every young person, though I tend to believe that young people who are part of the church have an equally prophetic voice with those who are not part of it. In fact, my Methodist formation assumes that God works preveniently in all people, young, old, in the church, beyond the church, which makes the geography of mission (inside-out, outside-in) somewhat hard to pinpoint. Just because God can

be heard at the mall does not mean God is mute in the church—and vice versa--no matter how dysfunctional the church, and no matter how raucous the mall, may be.

The issue is not whether God is present in human experience—God is always present—but whether we have cleaned the wax out of our ears, the spots off our lenses, the distractions from our lives sufficiently to perceive God’s presence. The mall does not sell the kind of practices that afford holy perception. This is the work of the Christian community, which for two thousand years has been the world’s witness to God’s passion, shaping people into disciples with very low-tech methods called Christian practices-- human activities that imitate Christ, bear witness to God’s life and death on the cross, and form us into people who carry divine grace into the world. No one would recognize God at the mall, or anywhere else, if it weren’t for catechized imaginations who know the voice of the holy when they hear it.

So for me, the essence of mission—and the purpose of ministry—is to help open young people’s eyes to what Christ is already up to in their lives, immersing them in practices that remove obstacles from their paths, reduce the static in their airwaves, clear away the specks in their vision, so that they can recognize Christ on the loose, and so they will allow themselves to be combustible before God’s holy fire. Are we removing obstacles so that the Holy Spirit may rush, unimpeded, into the youth and the church that loves them--or are we throwing logs in their path? The historic practices of the Christian community allow anything but stasis, which Ward rightfully fears. Practices are blades of grass, endlessly lithe, rooted but flexible enough to bend according to the dictates of time and place, which is why communion in the Divine Liturgy and communion around a campfire at a Presbyterian retreat centre are still recognizable as the Eucharist, despite two thousand years of adaptation and innovation. The miracle of Christian practices is that, after all this time, we still recognize them, for they still proclaim the story of God; they still enact the Passion of Christ.

So let me reassure Ward that the historic practices of the Christian community are precisely the vehicles that can take youth ministry into the “new missiological context” that both he and I want to address. Practices do not

foreclose on new patterns of church life; they invite it. Ministry facilitates sacred encounters, and whether those sacred encounters are made possible by ramping up the passion of traditional liturgies, returning to the “grass roots” practices of the early church, or engaging young adults in the postmodern “production” (rather than consumption) of worship really does not matter. Ministry never reduces to a matter of style. Young people, frankly, do not care how they meet God; but they do care that they meet God, and that the God they meet knows and loves them authentically. Christian practices, variously expressed, are the embodied encounter with the God who loves them enough to die for them. They are the church’s expressions of the self-giving love of Christ that till the soil, and nudge us in the direction of a passionate faith. My question to Pete Ward is: what could possibly be more missional than that?

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~~***Teaching That Makes a Difference: How to teach for holistic growth,***
by Dan Lambert, Grand Rapids (MI): Youth Specialties (Academic), 2004, 223 pp.
Hardcover~~

~~I am assuming that this book is aimed squarely at the US youth ministry market, so it is with some nervousness that I offer this review as an outsider. However, despite being based in the UK, in recent years I have avidly snapped up any title offered by the Youth Specialties Academic imprint. Mainly out of a sheer desperation for quality material offering critical and thoughtful assessment of youth ministry. However, this book would not have satisfied this hunger for me personally, but it does maintain the quality and thoughtfulness of other titles in this range. Its self disclosed target audience is the practitioner, and the volunteer youth minister especially (p 9) *teaching*. In view of this I think Lambert has made a valiant effort to provide an ‘academic’ view of pedagogic practice for youth ministry accessible to non-academic practitioners. This is no small undertaking as~~