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**A commentary on *Building a Discipling Culture* [BADC] by Mike Breen and the 3DM Team (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of 2011), Pawleys Island, SC, USA**

**by  
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## ABSTRACT

In *Building a Discipling Culture* [hereinafter BADC] Mike Breen, a Church of England priest of long and varied ministry experience, identifies what he considers to be the main problem underlying the malaise of the Christian church in the West: its inability to reach people who don't know Jesus. He observes that "making disciples" was the last commandment of Jesus (Mt. 28:19-20), and therefore of supreme importance. Also, it is an individual obligation on all disciples and one cannot be a disciple of Jesus unless one is engaged in discipling: "making disciples" is the only thing Jesus cares about and the only number He is counting.

Breen's solution, the subject of BADC and promoted by his organisation '3 Dimension Ministries' [3DM], is to introduce within churches a "culture of discipling" which inculcates into church thinking and action the acceptance of "making disciples" as the supreme task of all church members and the only one that Jesus would recognise. The cultural shift proposed is to be effected by the adoption of a complex structure of:

- # a new discipling 'language' (LifeShapes) – necessary because, Breen maintains, "language creates culture". The LifeShapes are geometric shapes (circle, triangle, square, etc.) used as headings to blocks of teaching. The Circle LifeShape teaches a highly structured method of discerning what God is saying to individual Huddle members (see below) and what their responses should be;

- # the formation of small groups (Huddles) to be taught the LifeShapes. Huddle members are to be carefully selected and invited to participate, and each member is expected to form their own Huddle in due course thus spreading the new culture; and

- # the acceptance of the concepts of covenant and kingdom as forming the underlying theology of LifeShapes. Together, Breen advises, they form the simplest framework of biblical interpretation and that the LifeShapes flow out of their principles.

Two pervasive problems in BADC are the lack of explicit definitions of key concepts (inc. 'discipling') and the misuse, or poor exegesis, of scripture. Other problems are statements that are not based on scripture or rational argument. The arguments advanced to support the view that 'language creates culture' do not stand up to scrutiny, and thus the rationale for the 'language' of LifeShapes, which "lays the foundation for everything else [in the proposed discipling strategy]" collapses.

A key misunderstanding, and one that drives BADC's discipling strategy, is the view that all church members should be involved in "making disciples" as Breen understands that activity i.e. in personal evangelism. Biblical teaching, by contrast, presents each church as a community of believers who have complementary gifts and ministries, so, in the context of "making disciples", some will carry out this task in overt evangelism and others in less obvious but nonetheless vital ways.

Breen is asking churches to accept a different 'language' to that adopted by the biblical authors with the aim of introducing a new 'discipling' culture to replace that already inherent within scripture. Further, Breen introduces various 'lenses' or interpretative

grids of his own construction through which, he asserts, Christians should read scripture, but which can also limit and distort:

- # Jesus' teaching is to be understood as either 'invitation' or 'challenge';
- # the underlying theology of scripture is to be seen as either covenant-related, defining and describing relationships, or kingdom-related, defining and describing responsibilities; and
- # the LifeShapes incorporate Jesus' "foundational teaching and principles from his life", help establish the world view of Jesus, and give people a lens through which to see the world as Jesus did.

### *The LifeShapes*

Some of the teaching within the LifeShapes is of interest and potentially helpful but they don't constitute a comprehensive programme of instruction in discipling or in anything else. The selection of topics seems to be random, and their connection to Jesus' teaching is often obscure. The gospel message, while alluded to on occasion, is absent – there is no cross or resurrection among the shapes. They don't set out what readers are led to believe would be included e.g. Jesus' foundational teaching and His world view. Breen's doctrine of salvation is opaque.

### *Huddles*

Entry to Huddles is closely controlled, and comments about the process not allowed. Members will be open to leader direction and 'group think'. The 'Circle' process of listening to God and determining what huddle members' responses should be is, within the Huddle, likely to lead to the same pressures.

The Huddle process is likely to divide a congregation between those thought suitable for inclusion (and unlikely to raise serious questions about the process) and those not considered suitable.

### *Underlying theology*

Interpreting scripture through the interpretive grids of covenant/kingdom and invitation/challenge is likely to severely limit and distort our understanding of biblical texts. More importantly this process takes readers away from our understanding of scripture as the **story** of God's work to restore a fallen creation using Israel as His agent in this process. The bible is essentially history and not a series of abstract concepts such as relationships, responsibilities, invitation and challenge.

### *Conclusion*

BADC is a sincere attempt at addressing the serious problem of the churches' failure to bring in new members. Most ministers don't have time to develop their own discipling strategy (assuming they consider one is necessary – a different question altogether) and will tend to welcome what 3DM offers with its supporting materials, training and mentoring. They will assume that 3DM has done their thinking for them and will rely on the quality of the 3DM work, making it all the more remarkable and disappointing that much of it is really just a collection of opinions without significant biblical anchoring.

## COMMENTARY

### **Introduction**

Mike Breen and his 3DM colleagues have produced a book about a very important subject: how to make disciples.

The book, *Building a Discipling Culture* [BADC], is divided into 3 main parts:

1. Understanding Discipleship;
2. LifeShapes: Our Discipling Language; and
3. Using Huddles to Disciple People.

I have followed this structure in setting out my summaries and comments. I have added a final part: "4. Overview and Conclusion". Page references are to BADC except where indicated otherwise.

BADC is highly discursive and at times I found it very difficult to follow the argument of the book and to see the connections between the various elements. The same concepts appear under several headings and it is often difficult to be clear about their intended meanings, which, in any case, seem to vary. Complications for any reader of BADC are increased by the difficulty in finding – and often not finding – the connection between various statements and the scriptural texts employed to support them. The lack of explicit definitions of key concepts such as 'disciple', 'making disciples', 'discipleship' and 'discipling' often requires their meanings to be inferred which can be a difficult task with significant risk of misinterpretation.

Nevertheless, BADC has to be taken seriously – hence the length of this commentary – and read very carefully as 3DM has been introduced into many churches and other churches are considering doing likewise. Any church or Christian community considering using 3DM should read BADC very carefully as, in the authors' words, it is the "foundational text for the language of LifeShapes" (p.183) and "this language lays the foundation for everything else" (p.176).

Christian communities facing falling rolls, declining revenues and church closures are, in BADC, offered a way out of these problems and the exciting prospect of being part of "a missional wave the likes of which we have never seen" (p.12). Churches in difficulties may feel that they 'have got to do something' and consider that 3DM might be the elusive 'something'. However, I suspect that many church leaders who have adopted the 3DM approach to discipleship have not in fact read BADC as carefully as perhaps they should have done and will be disappointed.

## Part 1. Understanding Discipleship

### 1.a Summary

#### 1.a.i *The key question*

In BADC Breen<sup>1</sup> seeks to answer the key question "How do we make disciples?" – the answer to which is "everything" (p.10). Finding the answer to this is vital because it addresses other questions such as "How do we reach people who don't know Jesus?".

#### 1.a.ii *The definitions of 'disciple' and 'discipling'*

Breen doesn't explicitly define "disciple" and related words and I am cautious about providing definitions for him. But any commentary on BADC has to make assumptions about what he does mean by these key concepts so that an assessment can be made as to whether the outcomes sought are likely to be achieved by the instruments he advocates.

Certainly a disciple is for Breen a lifelong learner: he devotes the whole of chapter 3 on what it means to be a learner. Training in discipleship involves "becoming *lifelong learners of Jesus*" (p.21, emphasis in original). Breen relies here on the fact that the literal meaning of the Greek word in the NT, translated 'disciple', *mathetes*, is 'learner'. He provides several pages on the various types of learning (classroom, apprenticeship and immersion), which he considers apply to Christian discipling (pp. 21-35). However, learning is overtime to lead to *doing* and *becoming*: "we can learn the ways of Jesus, doing the things he did while becoming the same type of person" (p.21).

Being like Jesus involves 'making disciples' because that is one of the activities that Jesus undertook. So a disciple is, among other things, a discipler: "You can't be a disciple if you aren't willing to invest in and disciple others. That's simply the call of the Great Commission (p.39)".

Breen puts much weight on Jesus' commandment to his disciples in Mt. 28:19-20 to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ... teaching them ... ." (e.g. p.12-13). In v.19 Matthew's Jesus is, as I understand the passage, talking about evangelism including in as yet unreached lands, apologetics, conversion and the baptism of new converts. On conversion, confirmed and witnessed in baptism, the person becomes a disciple and, in accepting the kingship of Jesus, enters into His Kingdom. The "teaching them ... " in v.20 must refer to discipling those who have become disciples through conversion, that is developing disciples into faithful, obedient followers of Jesus by teaching them to obey all His commandments – and those commandments cover many aspects of Christian living. Thus the scope of the 'Great Commission' to 'make disciples' is, as I understand it, very broad covering everything from pre-evangelism to on-going teaching and nurturing the converted in the Christian life.

Breen is insistent that 'making disciples' doesn't occur in the usual church setting (pp.10-13). Church leaders he contends are well taught in the traditional activities such as preaching sermons and assimilating newcomers, but haven't adjusted to the new situation of declining numbers and a "crumbling" Christendom. What is lacking is training in "making disciples" (p.12). He emphasises his view that "[e]ffective discipleship builds the church, not the other way around" (p.11).

Much of BADC purports to be about how to train people in 'making disciples' as a deliberate and intentional pursuit by use of LifeShapes and Huddles (see Parts 2 and 3). The aim is that disciples will continue Jesus' work on earth after his death and not just become consumers of clerical and other services – not people who, for example, just turn up to various church activities, give money and occasionally feed poor people (p.11).

Jesus disciplined His followers by an "appropriate mix of 'invitation' and 'challenge' in the way he related to them" (pp. 15-20; 175).

### *1.a.iii 'Making disciples' as the only church activity that Jesus cares about*

Breen says that "disciples are the **only** thing that Jesus cares about, and it's the **only** number that Jesus is counting" (p.11, emphases added; p.196). Jesus doesn't care about "our attendance or budget or buildings. He wants to know if we are 'making disciples' " (p.12). "Our job, our **only** job and the last instructions [Jesus] gave us, was to make disciples. And out of this we will get the church. Out of this, the future will emerge, and out of this there will be a missional wave the likes of which we have never seen" (p.12, emphasis added). For this to happen, he says, we need a discipling language [LifeShapes – see Part 2] and a discipling vehicle [Huddles – see Part 3]. "Put simply, building a culture of discipleship is the only way you will produce the kind of community that Jesus and the New Testament writers would recognize as church" (p.20).

Breen draws a sharp distinction between 'building the church' and 'making disciples': the former, he says, is God's job while the latter is our job ("our **only** job" p.12, emphasis added). In support of this distinction he notes that "in all of the Gospels [Jesus] mentions the church only two times" p.12).

## **1 b Comments**

### *1.b.i The need for change*

An underlying assumption in BADC is that all is not well in Christian churches because much of our energy is wrongly directed and doesn't face the challenges set by a "crumbling" Christendom (p.11). In particular we spend, train, preach etc. etc. as if we still live in an age long-past, and don't attend to the urgent need to 'make disciples' – the key task that BADC sets out to address. Thus BADC draws a disparaging comparison between the present 'church' and a Christian community committed to making disciples. To some extent I agree with Breen's comparison; my difficulty lies in the way in which Breen addresses the issues that arise and the solution he offers.



Before embarking on any major new programme, and taking into account the investment and diversion of time, energy and finance involved, it's usually thought wise to address fundamental questions<sup>2</sup> about aims and objectives and the means with which to achieve them. In the current context, and accepting that all is not well in much of the 'western' church, questions that should, in my view, be considered before adopting any major new 'discipling' initiative include:

# What is the place of discipleship, 'making disciples' and discipling within the overall mission of the church? All of these terms need careful definition.

# Where do conversion and evangelism fit into these activities? When, where, by whom and how should evangelism be carried out?

# How do the gifts and ministries listed in the epistles fit into these activities?

# What does the teaching given to the early Christian communities by the apostles described in the Book of Acts and in the epistles say about these questions?

# When addressing these questions what consideration should be given to the external cultural and religious environment in which Christian churches find themselves today?

I see no evidence in BADC that its authors have been through such an exercise – at least not in any depth.<sup>3</sup> Breen draws from his considerable experience as a minister, pastor and teacher and, of course, this needs to be respected. However, we have no analysis in BADC of the results of the introduction of the 3DM strategy to draw from, and I have not come across any reference to such an analysis. Breen tells us that he and his colleagues have learned to disciple people over the past twenty-five to thirty years (p.12): if there has been no independent review of the results it is, I suggest, time that it be undertaken.

*1.b.ii Disciples, discipling, discipleship, and a discipleship culture as essential to recognition as 'church' (1.a.ii)*

Breen argues from the Great Commission that 'making disciples' is "our only job" (p.12), yet he doesn't say clearly and succinctly what he means by these and related words and how his meaning can be derived from the relevant scripture (Mt. 28:19-20). As I understand him, Breen sees 'making disciples' as evangelism (a Mt.28:19 activity), and not teaching and nurturing existing disciples (a Mt:28:20 activity).

In 1.a.ii above I argued from Mt.28:19-20 that the scope of the 'Great Commission' to 'make disciples' is very broad covering everything from pre-evangelism, through conversion and baptism, to on-going teaching and nurturing in the Christian life. Breen, however, would not, it seems, agree with this interpretation – one that, I think, would be widely accepted by orthodox Christians. His view, as I understand it, is that there is a vital distinction between becoming converted and becoming a disciple: to become the former doesn't necessarily imply becoming the latter. The convert only becomes a disciple, if ever, when he or she undertakes the work of 'making disciples' understood as evangelism.

Breen conflates 'making disciples' and 'discipleship' (see p.11) which suggests that, for him, the only activity involved in discipleship is 'making disciples'. Further, Breen states that 'making disciples' is our **only** job (p.12 emphasis added). However, as already noted, 'learning' is also presented as a significant part of being a disciple. Disciples are also to **do** the things Jesus did,

though quite which of Jesus' activities he thinks disciples should also do is unclear. It seems that 'discipleship' can mean all sorts of things, and not always the same thing.

I am puzzled by Breen's sharp distinction between 'building the church' (God's job) and 'making disciples' (our only job) (p. 12 and 1.a.iii). This seems to me to be unhelpful: are not both God and His people involved in various ways in both activities? Surely Peter, for one, was to be involved in church building? However, if, as Breen asserts, 'making disciples' is our **only** job and building disciples and building the church are separate activities then 'building the church' cannot be ours as well. He supports this argument by pointing out the infrequency of the word translated as 'church' in the gospels. However, the church was a post-resurrection phenomenon and for this reason it is unsurprising that it is not mentioned more in the gospels, which end with the resurrection and Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. It's a different story in the post-resurrection literature: Acts, the epistles and Revelation. And going only on word-frequency in the NT there would be just as much argument for downplaying 'making disciples' as there is for 'church'. The Greek verb translated 'making disciples' in Mt.28:19 is a "peculiar" transitive use of *mathetuo*, which only appears elsewhere twice in the gospels and then only in Matthew (Mt. 13:52 and 27:57), and in the rest of the NT only once (Acts 14:21) (Rengstorf, *mathetuo*, TDNT, Vol.IV, p.461).

There is another problem with Breen's distinction between what happens in church and what happens outside it. Breen says, as I understand him, that 'making disciples' happens mostly outside the church, and he takes a somewhat negative view of existing church ministry. But, as Peoples has pointed out, this is not consistent with the notion of a disciple being a lifelong learner: "you don't *make* a lifelong learner via evangelism. You do that via the ongoing ministry of the church (both inside and outside its walls)" (Peoples 2017). Further, Breen argues (wrongly in my view – see *Who are to 'make disciples'?* below) that every disciple has one of the gifts which Paul writes about in Eph. 4, yet these gifts are to be exercised "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12) i.e. for the local Christian community and exercised within, or under the auspices of, that community. Exercising these ministries (other than that of evangelism) is not consistent with the notion of a disciple having only one job, that of 'making disciples' which is understood as mostly undertaken outside the church leaving building the church as God's job.

Breen is more than usually inconsistent and confusing (I am certainly confused!) in his answers to questions about who are disciples, what they should do, where they should practice discipleship (in the church or outside it), and the distinction he makes between God's job and our job. If he does in fact agree that 'making disciples' covers everything from evangelism and ongoing development in the Christian life, then it would be difficult to discern at what point he departs from regular Christian teaching.

#### *Who are to 'make disciples'?*

In emphasising 'making disciples' (and, I would think, also 'trying to make disciples') as the essential prerequisite activity for someone to be acknowledged as a disciple, Breen appears to assume that the commission to 'make disciples' is addressed to each disciple individually and not to the whole community to which each disciple belongs and to which each contributes in various ways. A disciple is therefore characterized by his or her disciple-making activity and not by, or not only by, his or her devotion and commitment to Jesus. This begs several questions that are discussed below.

I think it clear that in the Great Commission (Mt.28:19-20) Matthew's Jesus was addressing both His earthly disciples (the eleven, i.e. the original twelve less Judas Iscariot) and Matthew's readers – and hence those, like us, who hear or read Matthew's gospel. But this still leaves open the question whether the commandment to 'make disciples' applies to all members of a Christian community individually and equally or to each Christian community as a whole. The emphasis, especially in the Pauline epistles, on the multiplicity and variety of gifts and ministries and on building up the whole body of Christ strongly suggests all members should be involved in discipling within the ministry of the whole community. Some disciples will have the necessary gifts and ministries for overt evangelism; others may find their true ministry in 'more backroom', supportive, but also vital, roles. But all disciples should, as I understand Matthew's Jesus, display a character that draws people to Jesus (see Mt. 5:13-16, and discussion on character at 2.b.vii) and which might be called 'pre-evangelism'. So, as I understand the scriptures, the Christian community must, *as a whole*, obey the Great Commission using the various gifts of individual members.

With regard to the list of gifts in Ephesians chapter 4, Breen (pp.116-117) says that every disciple has one of the five gifts mentioned: apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher, and he provides a questionnaire to help individuals discover which of these five gifts they have (BADC's Appendix 2 at pp.227-235). In quoting from the relevant section of Eph.4, Breen runs "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift " (v.7) into "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets ... ." (v.11) and indicating the omitted verses 8, 9 and 10 with dots. This unfortunately gives the wrong impression that the grace given to each was one of the gifts (apostles, prophets etc.). But this is not what Paul says. As Peoples has pointed out, "... what Christ gives, in verse 11, is not gifts in the sense of special abilities. Rather, what he gives is apostles and prophets etc. *themselves*, and he gives those people to the 'saints', the wider group making up the church" (Peoples 2017).

Thus many of us will have none of the Eph.4 gifts but, drawing on Rom.12 and 1 Cor. 12, there are other gifts and ministries we can use to the glory of God and for the "equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ ... " (Eph. 4:12). I am unclear how Breen relates his emphasis on all disciples being involved in overt evangelism and his understanding that the gift of evangelism isn't given to all. In any case surely the important points are that these gifts and ministries are gifts to the whole church, that we don't all have the same gifts, and we therefore need to work together in the task of building up the body of Christ. As Hays (p.63-64) observes:

*Ephesians 4:1-5:20 presents a visionary description of the character of the reconciled community. The diverse gifts in the church have as their common purpose "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and ... to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ (4:12-13). Thus, as in I Corinthians 12, ministry is conceived as the work of the entire community, not of a specially designated class of spiritually gifted persons. The interplay of gifts in the church is designed to bring the community as a whole to full maturity, so that the church might ultimately stand unambiguously as "the body of Christ", the complete embodiment of Christ in the world.*

The issue then arises whether the development of Huddles (see Part 3) will build-up an exclusive 'in' group, speaking a special 'in' language (i.e. LifeShapes; see 2.a.i and 2.b.i), from which the 'unhuddled' will feel excluded, rather than building-up the whole community. I fear it might.

At one point in BADC, Breen argues that the church has "made converts without making disciples fully trained and equipped in all Jesus taught" (p.153). The statement is ambiguous, but if he means that the church has lacked teaching and training for 'life after conversion' then I would agree; it is a very fair and important observation.

### *Discipling*

If for Breen 'discipling' means the same as 'making disciples' then it would seem that, as Schooley (2016) has suggested, the content of 'discipling' can be inferred from the discipling strategy he advocates (i.e. the use of LifeShapes and Huddles which are discussed in Parts 2 and 3). However, that strategy consists mostly of guiding people into a certain method of decision making and acting [*kairos* events and the circle LifeShape – see 2.a.ii and 2.b.iv]. It has little to do with conversion of the heart<sup>4</sup> and mind in any traditional sense. In fact it is not clear to me where conversion fits within Breen's thinking. Perhaps for him 'conversion' is the decision to become a disciple and to start imitating and following Jesus. This would be fine as far as it goes except that, as discussed below, Breen's understanding of what constitutes 'following and imitating' Jesus is narrow and unusual.

### *Discipleship*

Discipleship is, as I understand the term, the practice of being a disciple. In his description of discipleship Breen says that disciples are to be more than "learners" of Jesus (see 1.b.iii below). Jesus' disciples were not just to be followers of their master, they are to do **all** the things He did (p.29, emphasis added; p.196). Clearly Breen has in mind copying Jesus' actions as a Rabbi's disciples might seek to copy their master. He must surely recognize that Jesus' disciples could not do what Jesus did as Messiah, activities that were unique to His ministry.

But it is not clear to me from BADC to what extent and in what ways Breen wants disciples to not only **do** all the things Jesus did (p.29) but also to "**become** more and more like Jesus" (p.173) and "the same type of person" (p.21, emphases added). He writes about the Rabbinic model in which a Rabbi's disciples follow their teacher around, not only learning from his words but also seeking to imitate his actions in routine matters of every day life. The emphasis here is on outward action – not inner change. Breen appears to think that the same process was going on between Jesus and His disciples. For example: "... Jesus was constantly teaching and showing his disciples how he lived, very clearly a high level of apprenticing was going on" (p.31). While some such imitation might well have been going on, it doesn't describe the essence of the gospels' description of the Jesus/disciple relationship. Unlike the Rabbi with his disciples, Jesus sought inner, life-time commitment to, and faith in, Him. Jesus sought changes in the inner-person, not imitation of His everyday activities (see also 1.b.iii and 2.b.vii). Jesus didn't tell a would-be disciple to imitate Him but to take up his cross and follow Him" (Mt. 16:24; in fact quoted by Breen at p.17 who nevertheless tells us that Jesus told His disciples to "do what I do" p.32).

### *A 'discipleship culture' as essential to recognition as church*

As noted (1.a.iii), Breen says that only by building a 'culture of discipleship' can we produce the kind of Christian community that Jesus and the New Testament writers would recognise as church (p.20). I agree: Christians are disciples of Jesus and our Christian communities should encourage and promote by all means possible the faithful, obedient following of Jesus using

such gifts and ministries that each member possesses to build up the local manifestation of the Body of Christ – and all this should be reflected in the 'culture' of the community. But I suspect Breen has a much more specific criterion in mind: that a 'culture of discipleship' requires each and every member of a Christian community to be involved in overt evangelism. And, assuming I have understood Breen correctly, I would at this point have to disagree for reasons already advanced. I also wonder whether any of the early Christian communities of which we have some knowledge would pass Breen's 'culture of discipleship' test for recognition as a 'church'. As is pointed out later (1.b.v), nowhere in the epistles and Acts is there any reference to the responsibility of all individual members of Christian communities to undertake overt evangelism. Nor, as Schooley (2017) has also pointed out, is there any reference to any of the believers (including the Apostles!) creating groups of disciples, like Jesus did, and training them to do the same. Surely, Schooley asks, if this is the main point of discipleship, wouldn't that be the very model displayed.

However, the lack of specific reference to individual witness to Jesus doesn't mean it didn't take place. The practices and behaviours of the early church (Acts 2:42-47) would have led to curiosity among non-church members and no doubt they asked church members to explain their new way of life. The answers given must have been persuasive as "The lord was adding to their numbers day by day". Peter's instruction about always being ready "to give an account for the hope that is within you" wasn't, as I read the passage, presented as totally new teaching (1 Pet. 3:15).

Breen notes that many churches today haven't adjusted their training of church leaders to the present situation of declining numbers and a "crumbling Christendom" (p.11 and 1.a.ii). I suspect there is significant truth in this observation. But he does seem to stretch this point when, first, he declares, that Jesus only cares about the number of disciples being made and, secondly, implies that disciple making and training in discipleship don't go on in the usual church activities. On the first point, surely Jesus is concerned about *qualitative* aspects of our Christian lives and worship and not just with the number of disciples being made. The sincerity of our worship, the obedience of our faith, and the character of our lives (see discussion at 2.b.vii) are surely also matters of great importance and of concern to God. On the second point, I think it is probably true that the regular Sunday service is not the best, perhaps not even a particularly good, place for overt evangelism. But surely Breen would agree that the regular coming together of the members of the local body of Christ for communal prayer, worship, partaking in the sacraments of Holy Communion, and for encouragement and exhortation in sermons is essential and can properly be viewed as opportunities for discipling and the practice of discipleship. And surely he would also agree that the welcome and hospitality given to enquirers can be rightly seen as pre-evangelism.

However, the fact (as I see it) that Breen hasn't come up with a good solution doesn't mean the problem he addresses doesn't exist. We *are* in the midst of a 'crumbling Christendom' and churches in the West do need to think very carefully about the reasons for this and consider how best to respond (see 1.b.i). Some reasons will be external including post-modernism with its rejection of metanarratives (such as the whole biblical story), and suspicion of claims of objective truth. But some will be internal such as the churches giving in to the culture of the age and becoming 'chaplains' to it (see Os Guinness quotes at 1.b.iv) and the widespread loss of faith in the reliability and authority of scripture. I suspect we do need to give much more attention to how well individual church members are prepared to explain their faith to others (1. Pet. 3:15) and how well we disciple each other and how we make new disciples.

Rather than applying a 'culture of discipleship' test for recognition as a church we might more profitably reflect on some broader and no less 'uncomfortable' tests that arise from Mt. 5 and Richard Hays' observations on them (2.b.vii):

*# Are we, or do we strive to be, a model community living in obedience to His word: the salt of the earth, the light of the world, a city set on a hill?*

*# Do we seek to model obedience to the extent that our "light so shines before others that they may see our good works and give glory to our father in heaven"?*

*# Are we, or do we strive to be, a demonstration plot in which God's will is exhibited, so that we will be a compelling example of the kingdom that Jesus proclaimed?*

### **1.b.iii A disciple – a 'learner' or 'one who is taught'? (1.a.ii)**

Breen understands a disciple to be a 'learner' (pp.21, 193) because the Greek word *mathetes*, the most common word used to describe those with whom Jesus associated, does indeed mean 'learner'. But etymology is not always a good indicator of the meaning of a word in a particular context, and *mathetes* is an example of a change of meaning with change of context. In the NT, in spite of its connection with Hellenistic Judaism, *mathetes*

*is given a completely new character through its association with Jesus; and*

*In the NT [mathetes] is used to indicate total attachment to someone in discipleship. The secular Gk. usage of the word in the sense of apprenticeship, pupil or student is not found. (Dietrich Muller, DNTT, Vol. 1, pp.486-7)*

In fact *manthanwn* (learning) only occurs 25 times in the whole of the NT, and only 3 times or less in each of the four gospels. "Obviously the term is only weakly related to the true concern of the gospels" (Rengstorf, TDNT, Vol.IV, p.406).

Karl H. Rengstorf (TDNT, Vol. IV, p.406) summarises his findings and investigation into the NT usage of *manthano* and its cognates as follows:

*" ... akoloutheiv [to follow] rather than manthanein [to learn] is the true mark of the mathetes [disciple]. This is what corresponds to the preaching of Jesus. His concern is not to impart information, nor to deepen an existing attitude, but to awaken unconditional commitment to Himself. That the mathetes [disciple], as akolouthwn [following], is also manthanwn [learning] is self-evident (cf. simply Mt.11.29). But manthanein [to learn] ... is not what makes him a mathetes [disciple]. In Jn. Jesus Himself makes the situation very clear when in 8:31 He says to the Jews who come to faith in Him: "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine."*

Hays (p. 96), puts the situation succinctly: "... when Jesus is conceived as a teacher, the church is seen primarily as a community of *those who are taught* – which is, of course, the meaning of the word 'disciple' " (emphasis added). The church is to be, amongst other things, a scripture-hearing, scripture-reading and scripture-teaching community. Breen's application of secular Greek usages of *mathetes* such as 'apprenticeship' etc. to the NT usage is inappropriate. As regards Jesus' relationship with his 12 disciples, the primary focus was on His person: their

relationship was unique. Jesus called them into discipleship, His challenge to them was "follow me", and in this it was always Jesus who took the initiative. In crucial ways this was different to the relationship between a Rabbi and his disciples, which Breen seems to consider to have been the same as between Jesus and His disciples (see also at 1.b.ii – *Discipleship*).

The NT emphasis on faith in the person of Jesus is vital. To follow Jesus is not just to learn His teachings and follow His example of daily living (as in the Rabbinic model): it is putting one's faith in Him in life-long commitment.

#### ***1.b.iv The importance of apologetics***

Reaching people who don't know Jesus requires identifying and addressing the reasons why people have not heard about Jesus or, if they have, the reasons for rejecting Him. There always have been reasons for rejecting Christian faith. In the C19th "it was dismissed by Marx, challenged by Darwin, denounced by Nietzsche, and explained away by Freud" (Douthat, p.277). We could add biblical criticism undermining the credibility of the biblical witness and ongoing scientific discoveries some of which appear to diminish the need for a creator.<sup>5</sup> And there have always been other options: in the C1st Roman Empire it was mainly various forms of Gnosticism and Emperor worship. Today we also have atheism being vigorously advanced by Professor Dawkins and others.

According to *Times* columnist Matt Ridley, the fastest growing belief system in the world is 'non-belief' as people slide into secularism and materialism. "No religion grew nearly as fast [as 'non-belief'] over the past century. Whereas virtually nobody identified as a non-believer in 1900, today roughly 15 per cent do, and that number does not include [nominal believers]" (Ridley). According to the 2013 New Zealand census, "[t]he number and proportion of people indicating that they had no religion increased between 2006 (34.6 per cent) and 2013 (41.9 per cent)<sup>6</sup>. How do we address non-belief? How do we convince people in a country of relative prosperity, of all sorts of government-provided safety-nets for the unfortunate, and at a time of exciting scientific discoveries that uncover secrets of the universe at both the cosmic and sub-atomic levels, and of medical advances that extend life and reduce suffering, that there is a God who created all, who loves us and wants us to follow Him? But the problem is not only indifference it is, according to Os Guinness<sup>7</sup>, also hostility and the churches' reactions to it:

*... Almost all our witnessing and Christian communication assumes that people are open to what we have to say, or at least are interested, if not in need of what we are saying. Yet most people quite simply are not open, not interested and not needy, and in much of the advanced modern world fewer people are open today than even a generation ago. Indeed many are more hostile, and their hostility is greater than the Western church has faced for centuries.*

Guinness goes on to argue that the reaction of many in the Church of England to this hostility has either been to withdraw into:

*... introspective silos or adapt by conforming to the secular culture. Plenty are being persuaded to change their understanding of the Scriptures, or at the very least remain quiet on issues of morality, because they want to be able to tell people about Jesus. But in so doing they have become chaplains to the secular culture; gathering in beautiful buildings to bless those things which our culture blesses and to condemn those things that*

*our culture despises, in the hope that people will somehow find Jesus through the experience.*

In response to this situation, Guinness argues that:

*Our urgent need today is to reunite evangelism and apologetics, to make sure that our best arguments are directed towards winning people and not just winning arguments, and to seek to do all this in a manner that is true to the gospel itself.*

Apologetic work to address some issues may require an expert who can engage confidently with the subject and answer questions with authority. However, young people are going to encounter arguments at an early age from their teachers and peers to the effect that it is irrational and stupid to believe in a God. Christians need to be prepared to answer such accusations. We are all to be prepared to "make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15). Such preparation would seem to be an essential component of 'discipling' if Christians, and perhaps especially younger ones, are not to lose their faith and if their witness is not to be undermined by failure to counter the usual objections and dismissals.

#### *1.b.v Jesus's other commandments*

I find it difficult to believe that Breen really thinks that 'making disciples' is the only activity that Jesus cares about (p.11) and that it is our only job (p.12); I doubt he has really thought through the implications of these statements. However they do raise the issue of how we should regard Jesus's other commandments. Jesus's final instruction to 'make disciples' doesn't annul all His previous instructions including, for example, to "let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your father who is in heaven" (Mt. 5:16). On the contrary: His disciples are to teach **all** Jesus' commandments and require obedience of them (Mt. 28:20) – no order of priority or of importance is given. Reading Matthew's gospel as a whole, "we see that what Jesus has commanded includes preeminently the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount" (Hays, pp.322-323). I didn't note much about the importance of biblical teaching in BADC, and I doubt whether the Huddle mechanism sufficiently provides for it. Nor do I think all these other commandments can be subsumed under Breen's narrow view of what is involved in "making disciples" (see discussion in 1.b.ii).

Breen infers (pp.12,173,196) that, because it was the last commandment of Jesus recorded in Matthew's gospel, 'making disciples' (Mt.28:19-20) was the most important. We know that Matthew arranged the material available to him so that what we call the Great Commission was given prominence by being placed at the end of his gospel. But we will never know whether or not it was Jesus' last actual command. In any case, it is not self-evident that 'last' in chronology should be 'first' in importance.

We are, for example, also to "Tend [Jesus'] sheep" (Jn. 21:15-17), which was Jesus' post-resurrection command to Peter and His last command as recorded by John. It is not clear why Breen considers this commandment to be less important than the last commandment recorded by Matthew. "Tending my sheep", as I understand it, refers to looking after Jesus' followers many of whom would have been devastated and totally bewildered by His death. So I don't understand it to be subsumed under the "make disciples" commandment.



From what we know from the Epistles and Acts, priorities in the life of the first Christian communities were far more concerned with 'feeding the sheep' type activities (e.g. teaching, exhortation, addressing disciplinary problems, sorting out theological and Jew/gentile issues, and giving pastoral advice and encouragement) than 'making disciples'. In fact, as Schooley (2012, p.22) points out, nowhere in the epistles is there "... a single word of encouragement, instruction, or admonishment regarding the responsibility of individual believers to evangelize". It seems that overt evangelism was left to those individuals (e.g. Peter, Paul, and Philip) who had a special calling and gift for this work. Other community members were to support such missionary endeavours with finance and prayer. All should lead non-Christians to the worship of God by letting their character and behaviour so shine as to bring people to belief in, and the worship of, God (see also on 'character' at 2.b.vii).

### ***1.b.vi The Jesus model for discipling: invitation and challenge***

Breen asks how Jesus turned a group of men into the sort of people He wanted for the furtherance of His mission on earth after His death. His answer is, basically, that Jesus used both *invitation* and *challenge*; and he refers to Monty Roberts, a well-known 'horse-whisperer', as a good example of a trainer who uses both invitation and challenge to great effect – but, of course, on horses not humans (pp.15-20,175).

Certainly, Jesus challenged the religious leaders of His day on many issues including the identity of the people of God and the 'boundary markers' such as circumcision and the food laws that enforced Jewish exclusivity. But Breen seeks to force dominical teaching into his two predetermined categories of 'invitation' and 'challenge'. The process ignores the contexts of Jesus' sayings and can miss important issues.

Consider, for example, Breen's treatment of Jesus's response to Peter's refusal to accept that Jesus had to go to Jerusalem where He would be killed (Mt. 16:23). Jesus said:

*Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests but man's.*

BADC (p.17) simply gives this as an example of a "challenge". In fact it is quite clearly a very severe admonishment, a rebuke, a reprimand. So what was going on in the text? I suggest that every fibre in Jesus' body was calling out to Him to avoid the ghastly, long, agonising and humiliating death by crucifixion that He clearly anticipated. And Satan would, we can assume, have been telling Him that He didn't have to die, that His work on earth hadn't been completed, that He should continue His teaching but in a low-key way, lay off the miracles for a while, avoid Jerusalem and stick to the back blocks of Galilee, say a few nice things about the religious leaders in Jerusalem, and such like. And then Peter comes blundering in reinforcing Satan's arguments. No wonder Jesus responds as He did: Peter was acting treacherously and had in effect joined forces with the enemy, Satan. Indeed, in His response, Jesus identified Peter with Satan. Jesus was telling Peter to get out of His way! If anyone was being challenged, it was Jesus – challenged by Satan to resist His father's wishes, and Peter, by reinforcing Satan's challenge, was doing the same.

And consider Breen's use of Matthew 16:17-18 which he cites as an example of invitation:

*Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my father in Heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will*

*build my church, and the gates of hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven.*

Here Jesus tells Peter what is to happen and what his part is to be. According to Matthew, Peter was not 'invited', he was 'told'! It is also an affirmation and an expression of confidence in Peter as one on whom Jesus will build a community of followers after his death. But, an important teaching is that Jesus will leave behind a community, and not a lot of individual followers. Moreover, and putting Mt. 28:19-20 along side it, the church will be a disciplined organisation solidly based on Jesus' teaching and committed to knowing and obeying all Jesus' commandments. It is relevant that the only other reference to the word translated as church, *ekklesia*, in Matthew's gospel is in Mt. 18:17, which records Jesus' instruction that unrepentant offenders should be disciplined by the church.<sup>8</sup> None of this is encompassed by 'challenge' or 'invitation' however loosely defined, and important teaching is simply overlooked.

And Jesus used other ways of preparing His disciples to further His mission after He was no longer with them. Principally He used teaching, especially in parables (Mt. 13:3), but of this we read little in BADC. And other 'labels' we could apply to Jesus' teaching include prophecy, references (often echoes and allusions) to the Hebrew scriptures, warnings, eschatology, expressions of love and friendship, and various genres such as narrative, discourse, parables, metaphors, allegories, and demonstrations of His love, glory and power in miracles. In BADC this rich tapestry of methods in Jesus' discipling is reduced to two loosely-defined strands: I see no advantage in this approach – only loss. Moreover, as Schooley (2016) points out, both of Breen's categories involve imperatives – he restricts Jesus' teaching to what we should do. Much of Jesus' teaching was indicative in nature – truths about God, Himself, salvation, righteousness, the Kingdom etc. – knowledge aimed at bringing about inner change.

### ***1.b.vii Discipleship and mission***

Breen says that "If you know how to disciple people well, you will always get mission" (p.12). It would seem that the type of mission he has in mind here is that of individuals or small groups talking of Jesus to those (also individuals or small groups) who seem to be open to hearing and receiving the gospel ('persons of peace' – see at 2.a.iv and 2.b.vi). I may have misunderstood his use of "mission" here but suggest he overlooks other types of mission. I came to faith in response to a 'missional' activity – an evangelistic sermon – and I thank God for that. I know of others who responded to the call to faith in sermons and the evangelistic efforts of Billy Graham, John Stott and many others. The Alpha programme is, surely, a missional activity that has brought many to faith in Jesus.

Probably Breen wants to get his readers away from the notion that mission is only conducted by special people in special events. I would agree with this. The problem as I see it comes if attempts are made to limit what is accepted as mission, to put pressure on *all* people to overtly evangelise, whether gifted in this ministry or not, and telling them that they are not disciples if they don't.

There will be many who, even if well disciplined, are unable to engage in apologetics (see earlier at 1.b.iv), which can require an expert in the relevant field. I also suspect some basic biblical exegesis may be beyond the ability of many regular church attendees. This in itself is not surprising: we are all different with different abilities and interests. Some may 'disciple' others by the witness of their faith in everyday life, by use of artistic gifts, or by their character (see 2.b.vii), rather than by words.<sup>9</sup> But it also brings to the fore another problem for today's church

– the lack of church-based biblical training for adults and, I suspect, often for teenagers as well. Jesus' last command as recorded by Matthew was that his disciples should teach the disciples they make "to observe all that I commanded you ...". Jesus clearly saw that teaching his commandments and requiring obedience of them were integral parts of disciple making. I don't think BADC has given this instruction the importance it deserves.

In my view BADC lacks attention to bible teaching about Jesus, although it is expected that in Huddles (see Part 3 below) members "will become more and more like Jesus" (p.173). The difficulty with this expectation is that teaching within the LifeShapes doesn't cover even what might be considered the basic teachings of Jesus. The emphasis in BADC is learning what Jesus does as teacher and leader as in the Rabbinic model of apprenticeship (pp.23, 29), not on His being and someone with a divine mission. Yet Jesus is the object of our devotion and also the inspiration to serve Him. The more we learn about Jesus' mission and achievements the more inspired we will be to serve Him.

## **Part 2. Lifeshapes – the discipling language**

### **2a Summary**

#### ***2.a.i The need for a 'discipling language' (2.b.i)***

Breen argues that developing a discipling culture requires a discipling language since "Sociologists say that language creates culture" (p.47; see also pp.41,186). The discipling language takes the form of eight geometric shapes (circles, triangles, squares etc.), called 'LifeShapes' and accompanying discussion, which should become widely used within the church community (p.49).

Breen also argues that these geometric symbols fit with the image-based culture into which we have entered over the past hundred years as a consequence of which:

*... we store large amounts of information, stories and data by attaching them to images. Our brains are literally wired differently than they were a hundred years ago. Our memories are stored and encoded in ways that they weren't in either the oral or written cultures. ... Because of this, the idea of attaching the teachings of Jesus and Scripture to a few basic images is perfectly in line with how our brains are already hardwired (pp.50,51).*

These LifeShapes are presented in BADC as crucial to the process of creating a discipling culture and for spiritual formation (p.180). The 'language' of LifeShapes "lays the foundation of everything else. The LifeShapes should become Huddle members' "everyday language" and their lives should "look like the shapes have been incarnated" (p.186).

Breen tells us that:

1) "[E]ach shape represent[s] a foundational teaching of Jesus or principle from his life ... ." (p.49);

- 2) The language of LifeShapes "helps establish the biblical world view of Jesus and gives people a lens to see the world in the way that Jesus did" (p.176).
- 3) "... all the LifeShapes are built on the principles of Covenant and Kingdom and flow out of them." (p.186); and
- 4) "*Building a Discipleship Culture* [i.e. BADC] is the foundational text for the language of LifeShapes ... " (p.183).

### **2.a.ii The Circle LifeShape and Kairos moments (pp.55-66; 2.b.iv )**

The Circle LifeShape is presented as foundational (pp.51,180) as it is the way in which we each seek answers to the questions "What is God saying to me and what am I going to do about it?" (pp.51,181,188). The assumption here is that "God is always speaking [to us]. We are always responding" (p.193).

We recognise when God is speaking to us and the need to understand what He is saying when we experience a *kairos* moment (p.58). Such events may be positive (e.g. a promotion at work) or negative (e.g. being laid off), big (e.g. a wedding) or small (e.g. a date with one's spouse). We recognize these moments by the impact they leave – maybe "anxiety or fear". They are opportunities for growth, and once we encounter such a moment we must seek to learn from it by reflecting on our reactions and feelings and the reasons for those reactions and feelings (p.56). This process may become circular as we "dig" (p.187), "mine out" (pp.192-193), "step into" (p.198), and "process" (p.185) the moment seeking deeper and deeper meanings and discovering more and more of what God is saying to us. It is important to involve at least one other person in the process to ensure accountability. And sharing *kairos* moments and exploring their meanings are an important part of Huddle meetings (see Part 3). Huddle members may be asked to bring a positive *kairos* moment to their next meeting (p.203). The leader may assist Huddle members by "creating a *kairos* for them" (p.192).

### **2.a.iii The seven other LifeShapes**

In addition to "The circle – continuous breakthrough" (see above at 2.a.ii and also 2.b.iv) there are seven other LifeShapes making a total of eight:

- The circle – continuous breakthrough
- The triangle – deeper relationships
- The semi-circle – rhythm of life
- The square – multiplying life
- The hexagon -- definitive prayer
- The heptagon-- spiritual health
- The pentagon – personal calling
- The octagon – relational mission

The Octagon is of particular importance as it deals with Persons of Peace, which is for Breen a very important concept and is discussed below and in 2.b.vi. Discussion on the other LifeShapes would cover a lot of ground, and in the comments in 2.b.iv and 2.b.v I only draw attention to a few statements of particular interest.

### **2.a.iv The Octagon – Persons of Peace (2.b.vi)**

Breen draws the concept of Persons of Peace from Luke ch. 10 in which Luke writes about the commissioning by Jesus of seventy<sup>10</sup> disciples for an evangelistic mission and Jesus' instructions about how to react to welcome and rejection. The mission was urgent: the disciples were not to take much with them, and not to engage in long greetings along the way. They were to seek food and accommodation from residents in the towns and villages, and once received into a house they were to stay there until their mission was completed and not seek to move from house to house. When they approach a house seeking food and accommodation they should pronounce "Peace be to this house". If a 'person of peace' is there, peace will be accepted otherwise it will be rejected.

For Breen this 'Person of Peace' concept is important and especially in the Octagon LifeShape (pp.153-163) in which finding Persons of Peace (and not "a simple and clear articulation [of the gospel]" promised at p.53) is the "one key message" (p.154). Breen explains the Lukan concept thus:

*... a Person of Peace is one who is prepared to hear the message of the kingdom and the King. He is ready to receive what God will give you to say at that moment. ... [We should pray] 'Lord bring into my path a Person of Peace, and give me the grace to speak your words to this person.' One who is not a Person of Peace will not receive what you have to say. [Preparing someone to become a Person of Peace] is the job of the Holy Spirit. ... Our job is to have our spiritual eyes open, looking for a Person of Peace to cross our paths (p.155).*

Breen provides two examples of people whom he describes as Persons of Peace: Lydia, the dealer in purple cloth, and Paul and Silas' jailer – both mentioned in Acts ch. 16. They are given as examples of Paul looking out for Persons of Peace and recognizing them as such when he comes across them.

Drawing from Jesus' instructions in Mt. 10 and Luke 10, Breen advises that disciples can recognize Persons of Peace by the following behaviours:

- # they welcome you (Mt. 10:14);
- # they listen to you (Lk. 10:16); and
- # they serve or support you (Mt. 10:10) (p. 159)

From this understanding of the Person of Peace concept, Breen develops five "things to keep in mind" (p.157-158) when looking for a Person of Peace and seven other principles in the Octagon (the Person of Peace being the first one – so eight principles in all) "aiming to build and equip our people for this mission [to the world]" (p.159-163).

The concept of 'Persons of Peace' also comes into use when identifying suitable people to invite into a Huddle (see Part 3): "God will often surprise you [a Huddle leader] with who he brings into the Huddle and who doesn't end up being part of it. Look for the People of Peace whom God has prepared for your Huddle" (p183).

### **2.a.v Theological basis – Covenant and Kingdom (2.b.viii)**

In the concepts of Covenant and Kingdom, Breen offers "the simplest framework of interpretation that we can use as we read the Bible for ourselves" (Breen 2010, p.xiii). He claims to have: "discerned a pattern" ... – the 'double helix' of spiritual DNA [Covenant and Kingdom, or relationship and responsibility] running through the Bible"; "[to] have seen the warp and weft of the richly woven [biblical] fabric"; and "to have discovered the guiding coordinates – the latitude and longitude – that orient the journey [through the bible]" (Breen 2010, p.xii).

By covenant he means:

*... the way in which the Bible describes and defines relationship; first our relationship with God and then our relationship with everyone else* (Breen 2010, p.xv);

and by Kingdom he means:

*... the way in which the Bible describes and defines responsibility: first, our responsibility to represent God to the people we know and then to everyone else* (Breen 2010, p.xvi).

#### *Covenant*

Breen doesn't examine the concept of covenant in the OT in any depth but puts a lot of emphasis upon it and sees great significance in it: "Covenant is an underlying principle in Scripture" (p.76). "God has a covenant, or contract, with us" (p.76). He describes God's relationship with Abraham and Sarah as a partnership (Breen, 2010, p.29). Covenant means for him "becoming one" and "a relationship of oneness" (Breen, 2010, pp.5, 21, 26, 31). When Abram made a covenant with YHWH, "the greater and stronger partner (the Lord) had conferred upon the lesser and weaker partners (Abram and Sarai) the right to become equal partners with him" (Breen, 2010, p.27). The people through and with whom God worked are described as His Covenant partners" (Breen, 2010, p.xvi). Jesus shared "his covenant identity with Peter as a partner with God" (p.17). "[Jesus] invited people into a covenantal relationship with him, and they had access to everything" (p.175). "A gifted disciple is someone who invites people into a covenantal relationship with him or her" (p.18).

#### *The renaming of Abram and Sarai*

According to Breen the notion of covenantal shared identity between God and His people arises in the renaming of Abram and Sarai as Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 17:1-5): "A new identity called for a new name" (Breen 2010, p.29). In renaming them Abraham and Sarah, "the Lord did something extraordinary. ... God took letters [the two 'Hs'] from his name – 'YHWH' – and gave one to each". "God shows his amazing commitment to his Covenant partners in the gift of the letters of his name" (Breen, 2010, p.29). Breen notes that some Rabbinical teachers taught that " 'And I will make your name great' (Gen 12:2) means, 'I will add the letter He to your name', thus reinforcing the idea of a shared identity in the Covenant that God was making" (side note on Breen 2010, p.29).

## *Kingdom*

There is relatively little discussion in BADC about the Kingdom, although Breen considers that it forms one of the foundational principles underlying the LifeShapes and "Every thing that Jesus teaches, every story he gives and every action he makes is wrapped up in the language of the Kingdom of God" (p.176). The Kingdom is mentioned in the context of the Circle LifeShape where Breen says that the "correct response [to kairos events] – repent and believe – leads us more fully into the kingdom" (p.65).

For some further discussion on covenant and kingdom, see the Annex.

## **2b Comments**

### ***2.b.i Why a special 'discipling' language (2.a.i)***

Breen offers two arguments for the introduction of a new symbol-based 'language':

a) an argument based on sociologist research, or more particularly on socio-linguistic research, as very briefly summarized in an introductory textbook on sociology. "Sociologists say that language creates culture" (p.47; see also pp.41, 186) and if we are to introduce a new 'discipling' culture into our Christian communities we need, Breen claims, a new language to bring this about; and

b) an argument presumably based on the findings of neuroscience, or more particularly on brain research, but no references to Breen's scientific sources are supplied. A symbol-based 'language' (such as LifeShapes built on geometric shapes) suits, Breen claims, the image-based culture into which we have entered over the last 100 or so years and the resultant changes in the hardwiring of the human brain.

a) The sociologists who "say that language creates culture" are, presumably, the three authors of the book (Brinkerhoff *et al.*) cited at footnote 7 on p.47. The citation lacks a year of publication, edition number (the book is now in its 9<sup>th</sup> edition), and page references. However, it could reasonably be inferred from Breen's citation that these three authors have reported that the understanding that 'language creates culture' is the view of the majority of academic sociologists. However, this inference is uncertain.

I have consulted the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of 2005<sup>11</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of 2014 of the same book (probably neither was the edition Breen used<sup>12</sup>). The authors have relatively little to say on language and culture – only about two and a half pages in over 400. Below are my very brief summaries, using a selection of quotes from pages 35-37 of the 9<sup>th</sup> edition, of what the authors write under the heading *The Carriers of Culture* and subheading *Language*:

\* "The essence of culture is the sharing of meanings among members of a society. The chief mechanism for this sharing is a common language. Language is the ability to communicate in symbols" [speaking, writing or hand signs]. The 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> editions are, essentially, identical with only some minor changes in wording.

\* "Language is the carrier of culture; it embodies the values and meanings of a society as well as rituals, ceremonies, stories and prayers. Until you share the language of a culture, you cannot fully participate in it." The 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> editions are, essentially, identical.

\* "A common language is often the most obvious outward sign that people share a common culture." The 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> editions are identical.

\* "According to a minority of linguists ["some linguists" in the 6<sup>th</sup> edition and in BADC p.47], languages not only symbolize our culture but also help to create a framework in which culture develops. [This] hypothesis ... argues that the grammar, structure, and concepts embodied in a language influence how speakers of a given language think ["see reality" in the 6<sup>th</sup> edition and in BADC p.47. Hopi grammar is given as an example of this "hypothesis" in the 6<sup>th</sup> edition and in BADC p.47 but is omitted from the 9<sup>th</sup> edition] ... . This theory [i.e. the "hypothesis"<sup>13</sup>] has come under considerable [the 6<sup>th</sup> edition omits 'considerable'] attack in recent years [there is no mention of this 'attack' in BADC]. Most linguists now believe that although differences among languages can influence thought in small ways ..., the universal qualities of language and human thought overshadow those differences."

I have no education or training in sociology or sociolinguistics so the following observations and conclusion must be viewed with suitable caution. First, there is nothing in the 6<sup>th</sup> or in the latest (9<sup>th</sup>) edition of Brinkerhoff *et al.* to support Breen's claim (p. 47) that sociologists say that language *creates* culture. Secondly, the view that languages help to create a framework in which culture develops is a minority one. Thirdly, the hypothesis that the grammar, structure, and concepts embodied in a language influence how its speakers think (or 'see reality') has come under "considerable attack in recent years". This recent "attack" may have been the reason why the example of Hopi grammar in BADC (p.47) has been omitted from the latest, the 9<sup>th</sup>, edition of Brinkerhoff *et al.* From these observations I conclude that the theoretical basis in socio-linguistics (the study of the relationship between language and society) for the development of LifeShapes as a means of creating a new culture is, in the light of current academic thinking as reported in *Essentials of Sociology*, extremely weak. I should also note that some views in this area of sociolinguistics are contested and the majority view on some aspects may change.

Breen also introduces an argument for "language creates culture" from everyday examples. But the first example he gives says the opposite – it says culture creates language or, more accurately, limits and defines the choice of words, expressions and behaviours to be used. The example given is of a corporate body that "because [it] want[s] a polite, courteous, busy, productive ... culture, [it] develop[s] a language around that" (p.47-48). Here the language is not creating culture – it aims to spread the adoption of an existing culture. Another and very current example of the use of language to propagate a desired culture is the purging of negative words about certain human relationships or conditions previously regarded as unnatural or shameful in some way so as to bring about a culture of acceptance. Here again a group already embracing the desired culture uses language to encourage a wider group to do so as well (Peoples 2017).

Another everyday example, which is not discussed, arises from acquiring languages other than one's mother tongue. Certainly language is an important element in accessing other cultures, but if it is assumed that culture is a function of language then acquiring another language would have very powerful cultural effects. If I learn one or more languages other than my mother tongue do I become a cultural hybrid? I can certainly enter into the culture of the other language groups much more easily, but surely my 'home' culture remains in tack. And if by lack of use I forget an acquired language does my 'hybrid' culture revert to what it was before?



All this seems to me to be somewhat fanciful though it follows logically from the 'language creates culture' assumption.

b) The argument that we live in an image-based society and no longer a text-based one (pp.47-51) with consequent implications for methods of presenting information is based on a few paragraphs on pp. 50-51. It seems to run like this:

# the hardwiring of the human brain changes according to the methods by which information is presented and received (oral, writing, images etc.). This is a key point but no authority in the relevant science is quoted;

# in Jesus' time, information was mostly oral; the hardwiring of peoples' brains adjusted to that situation, and they developed a considerable capacity to hear and remember information;

# the oral culture was replaced by a written culture leading to a change in the wiring of the human brain which enabled people to read and remember a large amount of information by reading it; and

# over the last hundred years, the oral culture has given way to an image-based culture and we store in our brains large amounts of information, stories and data by attaching them to images. Again, the hardwiring of our brains has adjusted to this new situation and "Our memories are stored and encoded in ways they weren't in either of the oral or written cultures".

The implication of the above observations in the present context is that "the idea of attaching the teachings of Jesus and Scripture to a few basic images [i.e. LifeShapes] is perfectly in line with how our brains are already hardwired (p.51)".

As with sociolinguistics, I have no familiarity with the relevant science, which is a relatively new one, so here also my observations and comments need to be read with suitable caution. Brain research does indicate that parts of the brain are remarkably responsive to different stimuli. Brain researcher John Medina<sup>14</sup> writes: "The brain acts like a muscle. The more activity you do, the larger and more complex it can become"<sup>15</sup>. And it may also be the case that the brain, or rather the connections within the brain, adjust to the type of information received. However, I have difficulty in accepting the claim in BADC (p.51) that we now live in an image-based culture, and no longer in a written one. Presumably by 'images' he is referring to the icons on computers and handheld devices like smartphones that help users navigate the devices' features. But are they any different in function to the contents page at the front of a book or the subject index and the bibliography at the back? 3DM's geometric shapes, like most of the icons on a computer, usually guide us to text i.e. to writing (also, of course, to music and photos) and they hardly merit the description of 'language'. LifeShapes seem to be just a different way of labeling written material. If, as I suspect, sociolinguists would not regard LifeShapes as a language for their research purposes then appeals to the results of that research to support LifeShapes are misplaced.

For much of Christendom the church used images to project information or to tell stories (e.g. an event in the life of Jesus, an apostle or a saint), not to guide people to where information could be found. Stained-glass windows, paintings, icons, statuary were used at least partly because very few people could read and manuscripts were very expensive. Arguably, as suggested by Schooley (2016), societies were then more image-based than they are now.

Finally, whether our capacity to remember is any less than it was in previous eras is a question on which reference to the work of memory researchers would have been helpful. Maybe the capacity is the same but we don't exercise that capacity in the same way, to the same extent or for the same purposes – we now have recording devices, maps and books – but people still have a considerable capacity to remember and many people exercise it – think, for example, of actors and professional musicians. Many people learn two or more languages – an undertaking that involves memorising a vast new vocabulary and new grammatical and syntactical rules. Moreover anyone purporting to be an expert in any academic or technical area needs to know a considerable amount of material from which to develop hypotheses, to draw conclusions, to make comparisons, and to synthesise, analyse, and so on. For this sort of work word-for-word memory is usually not required, and ready access to books and the internet certainly can help enormously. But for significant success in any of these endeavours a good memory is still very important.

To conclude: the arguments advanced in BADC from sociolinguistics, neuroscience and everyday examples for introducing a new discipling language in order to facilitate the development of a discipling culture are, at best, uncertain. As this 'language' is advanced in BADC as laying "the foundation for everything else" (p.176), this conclusion has significant implications for the credibility of 3DM. Moreover, as pointed out above, LifeShapes don't really constitute a 'language' at all!

### **2.b.ii *The place of scripture in BADC***

I appreciate that Breen doesn't want to end up with a multi-volume work replete with numerous footnotes and an extensive bibliography. But as he enters into some deep theological and biblical issues – not only ministry and pastoral ones – he should have worked out a method that combined brevity and simplicity of presentation while undergirding his work with references to theological works of relevant authorities. I didn't note any references to works by well-known biblical and systematic scholars in BADC.

Breen's attitude to scripture is, in fact, not at all clear. He identifies himself as an "orthodox Christian leader" (p.9), which suggests that he has a high regard for the authority of scripture; and he says theology and doctrine are "incredibly important" (p.32). He believes that "in-depth" Bible study is important and should be part of every Christian's experience (Breen, 2010, p.xiii). However, he regards the bible as "essentially a simple book" (Breen, 2010, p.ix) and biblical scholars as often making scriptures inaccessible without expert mediation:

*You will need to trust in the Holy Spirit – the author of the Word – and other believers with whom you can seek to understand the scriptures. But be confident! You do not need a 'mediator' or an 'expert' – the Holy Spirit working through the people of God is enough.* (Breen, 2010, p.247).

It is perhaps this view about the essential accessibility of scripture to the 'non-expert' that allows him to make astonishingly bold claims about his own ability to understand the deeper meanings of scripture (i.e. its 'DNA' – see 2.a.v and 2.b.viii – claims for which he provides neither carefully developed argument nor any reference to scholarly support).

In talking about the bible as a "simple book" Breen is, I think, addressing Christians who view the book with apprehension as too difficult and who therefore don't attempt to read and understand it. Certainly there is much that is difficult even for the experts as witness the degree

of scholarly disagreement about the meaning of various passages. However, it is also the case that most Christians can through careful reading, prayer and discussion with others digest a lot of scriptural truth, especially since the aid of experts is already given in the English translations we use. To this extent I agree with Breen. However, to imply as Breen seems to do that the whole of scripture is "simple" is unhelpful. The bible is a compilation of 66 books (including letters) incorporating material developed over perhaps 1000 years or more in several languages, in different genres, by many authors, editors and redactors and describing it as "simple" can lead Christians astray by, for example, encouraging a literalistic interpretation of scripture where such an interpretation was not intended by the author(s).

If we are to listen to, and be taught by, God's word in any depth we often need the assistance of theologians. Some theologians have led us astray and some continue to do so, but that doesn't mean we should reject the contributions of all theologians – it means we should listen carefully and be discerning. A positive view of the contribution of theologians, as well as a warning against bad theology, comes from Packer who wrote:

*... putting it in homely language, theologians are in fact the church's water engineers, plumbers, and sewage specialists, whose job is to ensure that pure truth, fully fit to drink, is constantly supplied, and that nothing which threatens spiritual life gets absorbed unwillingly. Intellectual garbage keeps fouling the springs of the church's life, and no one who swallows its poison is likely to stay healthy. (J I Packer, p.129)*

In spite of the bible's alleged simplicity, Breen says that we need another "language" if we are to understand the bible's teaching on discipling. Arguably this makes the "simple" bible complex by inserting a discipling "language" (i.e. LifeShapes) between the biblical text and the bible reader, and various 'lenses' through which we should view Jesus' teaching ("invitation" and "challenge"), Jesus' foundational teaching and principles arising therefrom (LifeShapes), and the theology of the bible ("Kingdom" and "Covenant"). It is, of course, true, as post-modernism has taught us, that all of us have subjective 'lenses' through which we view the world around us, including the religious world. The important lesson for us is, as I see it, to be conscious of those lenses and to seek biblical ones.

Breen's view on the easy accessibility of scripture by all believers may explain his apparent very limited resort to the advice of professional biblical scholars in writing BADC. But it doesn't explain why we should pay attention to his own views – he understands 'covenant' in the OT one way while I look to experts in OT theology whose research has led to a very different understanding. Who is right, and how can we judge? And this surely opens up for him a serious dilemma; how do we determine the truth and by what benchmark do we judge? If the matter is left to individual discernment without expert 'mediation' as Breen appears to suggest, we will have, potentially, as many views on all sorts of biblical questions as there are bible readers!

Breen's advice leads us to the hermeneutic of that early post-modernist Humpty-Dumpty who told Alice that:

*When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.*  
(Dodgson, p. 237)

For the bible reader it means that the text loses its own voice, and authority moves from it to the reader. As Humpty-Dumpty might also have said, there are no longer any biblical texts,

only interpretations. In practice, within the Huddle system, this view of the accessibility of scripture is likely to give undue authority to Huddle leaders and to the whole 3DM system: those wanting to raise difficult questions ["skeptical" and "cynical" as Breen describes them p.184] will be unwelcome.

### ***2.b.iii Language and Culture – LifeShapes***

In 2.b.i I examined the reasons given for thinking that a special language was needed and came to the conclusion that the reasons didn't stand up to serious scrutiny.

*Why do LifeShapes constitute a better 'discipling' language than what we find in the bible?*

Even if it were accepted that language does influence culture in some way, Breen would need to tell us why his language of LifeShapes, a "powerful discipling language" (p.176), is better than the one the bible already employs. The bible's own 'language' is mostly in narrative form in which the writers tell the long story of God and humankind: creation and fall; the stories of Israel, Abraham, Moses, David and many others; and finally of Jesus, the representative Israelite, sent by God to 'undo the sin of Adam' and put the world back on the path of righteousness. But there is also poetry, proverbs, wise sayings, parables, prophecies and much else. Within its creation-to-new-creation 'metanarrative', the bible has its own 'discipling language' employing concepts of, for example, sin, righteousness, justification, redemption, grace, faith, and, yes, covenant and kingdom. Breen presumably sees his own 'discipling language' as creating a new culture ('language creates culture') and one that is necessarily foreign to that of the bible. This is an astonishing presumption and one that most orthodox Christians must surely utterly reject.

Breen doesn't tell us how learning and "incarnating" his new 'language' will make disciples more faithful and more obedient followers of Jesus and more effective evangelists and disciplers than the language of the bible can already do. He provides no assistance to help us identify within each of the LifeShapes Jesus' 'foundational teaching' and 'principles' arising therefrom.

*LifeShapes establish Jesus' worldview*

Breen's claim that his 'language' of LifeShapes helps establish the world view of Jesus and gives people a lens through which to see the world as Jesus did (p.176) is an assertion for which I cannot find any support in BADC. Breen hasn't explicitly examined in BADC Jesus' worldview, which arose within C1st Palestinian Judaism, Roman political and military domination, and Roman-Greek culture, and was shaped by His deep understanding of Israel's long history and the Hebrew scriptures and by His realisation of His own role in bringing that long history to a climax.

*Jesus and LifeShapes*

Jesus required no special language in which to disciple His followers. He spoke in Aramaic, his mother tongue. His followers wrote their gospels, the account of the missions of the early apostles (Acts), Revelation, and their letters in C1st Greek, which was the second or third language of many in the ancient Near East for whom Greek was not their mother tongue. Neither Jesus nor his immediate followers saw any need for a special discipling language. We

are told in BADC that "we can learn the ways of Jesus, doing the things he did while becoming the same type of person (p.21)". We are also told that Jesus was "the most brilliant teacher of all time" (p.76). Yet, for no apparent reason, we are implicitly told not to follow Jesus as regards the language to be used in discipling.

*LifeShapes as human constructs with human decisions about content*

LifeShapes are human constructs involving numerous decisions about content made by Breen. The process has involved identifying a number of themes, including some and rejecting many others, drawing conclusions and choosing biblical texts aimed at supporting those conclusions. Moreover, we are encouraged to "incarnate" this new language. Incarnating (by which I assume Breen means absorbing it into our thought patterns and conversations and living out its principles – whatever they are – in everyday life) inevitably means learning man-selected scriptural texts, viewed through man-made lenses, and taught via a man-designed structure and all this will, even with the best of intentions, limit and distort.

What the LifeShapes exclude is also of concern. At a first glance several items on the list of the LifeShapes and of their contents (see list at 2.a.iii) could fit more easily on the contents sheet of a self-improvement manual than on one for a book explicitly dealing with Christian discipling. And it is hard to see how they could encapsulate the foundational teaching of Jesus or His biblical world view. The gospel message, while alluded to, is absent. Our lives as Christians are to be cruciform, yet there is no cross among the shapes. The cost of discipleship is only briefly mentioned (p.17). Astonishingly, there is no discussion of the sort of persons Christian disciples should become and what Christian communities should look like to the rest of the world (see on Christian character at 2.b.vii; also 1.b.ii). We are to become like Jesus but what does that mean? While it can be argued that BADC is for the already converted Christian who knows the gospel, it is also the case that if we are to be true to our vocation as disciples of Jesus we need to know about Jesus' life, mission, teaching and achievements. Breen insists that disciples should be lifelong 'learners' of Jesus (p.21; 1.b.iii) but doesn't stress bible study and tells us little about the purpose of Jesus' mission and the content of His teaching. BADC tells us about many of Jesus' attributes e.g. that he was the "most brilliant leader of all time" (p.76), the best leader and teacher ever (pp.100, 153), the "ultimate horse-whisperer when it come to discipleship" (p.16), the wisest man that ever lived (p.153), that he "understood invitation and challenge" (p.175), that He prayed regularly (p.68), and so on. But what is lacking is any discussion of Jesus' self understanding about His mission in the context of Israel's long history and the prophetic references in the Hebrew bible to the return of the Israel's King, what he achieved by His death and resurrection, the messianic battle with the forces of evil, the end of exile, the offer of forgiveness, the renewal of the people of God, and much else.

Instead we are presented, as Peoples (2017) points out, with:

*... a number of buzzwords that are already alive and well in the contemporary church, placed front and centre of the LifeShapes and now, by some sort of reverse-engineering, called the foundational teachings of Jesus. Similarly ... how can we possibly offer eight foundational teachings of Jesus without some serious discussion about character? What sort of people should we work on being, if we are going to be disciples? If we are going to make disciples, what sort of people are we making them into, or helping them become? Surely this is the stuff of discipleship, and Jesus had much to say about it.*

*The power of the gospel story to transform lives*

However, LifeShapes are seen as providing "handles for [peoples'] own lives" and are to be "portals" with "an endless number of Scripture passages, stories or practices attached" with the aim that people will "actually embody and incarnate the shape and scripture teaching ... ." and be able to "multiply that into someone else's life" (p.53). Breen seems to lack confidence in the scripture writers' own methods, and considers that he can do a better job with LifeShapes, that is with the geometric forms, his own selections of topics and scriptures, and his own accompanying discussions. However, it is far from clear that LifeShapes and all that may be attached to them via those "portals" provide a better way of allowing the gospel to exercise its power in transforming lives than the way the scriptures already provide. It seems likely that the effect will be to force the passages chosen into some principle, category or abstraction (e.g. invitation, challenge, responsibility and relationships) conveyed by the LifeShapes, thus flattening out the Bible's rich diversity of language and methods, diminishing its narrative structure, and distorting its message.

Wright (2005, pp.48-49) notes that the earliest Christian traditions embody what Paul called "the word", "the word of truth", or simply "the gospel". This "word" lay "at the heart of the church's mission and life". This "word" was the story of Jesus told as the climax of the story of God and Israel. Wright goes on:

*Paul expressed what the apostles all discovered: that this retelling of the ancient story, climaxing now in Jesus carried power – power to change minds, hearts and lives. "The gospel is God's **power** to salvation" (Rom. 1:16; compare 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 2:13). ... The apostles and evangelists believed that the power thus released was God's own power, at work through the freshly outpoured Spirit, calling into being the new covenant people, the restored Israel-for-the-world. The "word" was not just **information** about the Kingdom and its effects, important though that was and is. It was the way God's Kingdom, accomplished in Jesus, was making its way in the world (referred to in this fashion frequently in Acts – e.g., 6:7). The Kingdom, we remind ourselves, was always about the creator God acting sovereignly to put the world to rights, judging evil and bringing forgiveness and new life. This was what the "word" accomplished in those who heard it in faith and obedience. (Emphases in original.)*

In a short article on preaching, and drawing on Bonhoeffer's Christology, McGarry has said much the same:

*... Jesus Christ, the Word of God, is neither an idea nor a moral teaching. Rather he is a present Word that does something to me and for me. When spoken God's Word encounters us, summons us and creates a new situation that makes us responsible as hearers of that word. (McGarry, 2017)*

Breen doesn't say why his own retelling is better than the NT's own "retelling" of that 'ancient story' which was largely written by participants in the 'Jesus part' of the story and others who knew people who had participated in it. Nor does he explain how his retelling carries the same power as that told by the early apostles and evangelists. His argument seems to rest on his claim that 'making disciples' needs its own special image-based 'language' and, implicitly, that the scriptures need help (specifically his help) in presenting the gospel message. In contrast with the Bible's emphasis on 'story' (as referred to in Wright's passage quoted above) which captures the imagination and tells us C21th Christians where we fit into that story, Breen

emphases concepts. This perhaps explains why Breen has little place for the OT in his 'retelling'. His story is mostly a 'new' message, not the meta-narrative of the 'Old-plus-New-Testaments' or of 'creation-to-new-creation', and what it tells the reader is only a partial glimpse of the 'last' chapter which, without the earlier ones, is largely incoherent.

#### **2.b.iv *The Circle LifeShape and Kairos moments (2.a.ii)***

A key idea in Breen's presentation of the 'Circle' LifeShape is that "God is always speaking. We are always responding" (p.193), and by focusing on '*kairos*' moments we can discern his message to us. Thus what might appear to be an everyday event explicable in terms of natural causes may in reality be God talking to us and, by dint of "digging", "processing", "stepping into", "mining out" and discussion with others, we can discern what God is saying.

I cannot think of any example in scripture that is close to what Breen describes as the 'circle' treatment of *kairos* moments. The biblical examples that Breen provides [pp. 55 (the epigraph) and 66] are unconvincing. The examples taken from the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6 and pp.63-66) require a particularly large 'stretch' of scripture in order to make them fit a preconceived concept.

The Scripture tells us that when God spoke to an individual He did so very explicitly, sometimes directly and at other times through a vision, dream or an angel. There was little if anything left to "mine" etc. The typical command to prophets as recorded in the OT left no doubt as to what God required usually following a formula such as "Arise and go to ..." or "The word of the Lord came to ... saying ...". In the OT very few such occasions have been recorded and none that I can think of relate to everyday events. Also explicit were God's instructions to individuals recorded in the NT, as, for example, to Paul and Ananias after Saul/Paul's conversion (Acts 9:4-6; 9:10-16) and God's direction to Philip (Acts 8:26-29).

I do not know whether Breen would classify hearing God through processing *kairos* moments as miracles, but if so I suggest it important to listen to the wise caution of eminent scientist and Christian, Francis Collins:<sup>16</sup>

*It is crucial that a healthy scepticism be applied when interpreting potentially miraculous events, lest the integrity and rationality of the religious perspective be brought into question. The only thing that will kill the possibility of miracles more quickly than a committed materialism is the claiming of miracle status for everyday events for which natural explanations are readily at hand.* (Collins pp.51-52 quoted by Lennox p.83)

I also question whether God is "always speaking" to us as Breen avers (p.193). Christian mystics and others write of the silence of God and the 'dark night of the soul' – the feeling of spiritual emptiness or of being abandoned by God as part of the process of growing closer to God. Mother Teresa of Kolkata wrote: "I am told that God lives in me and yet the reality of darkness and coldness and emptiness is so great that nothing touches my soul"<sup>17</sup>. 3DM teaching on this matter is likely to avoid some of the hard realities of Christian discipleship, raise unbiblical expectations, and lead to feelings of disappointment, guilt and loss of faith.

It may, however, be that Breen when talking of *kairos* moments is thinking of Divine Providence, which includes God's interventions in the world to guide, direct and assist His people. Certainly God is 'imminent' (not just transcendent), in that He is close to us and wants to be involved in our lives. We are to cast all our anxiety upon Him (1 Pet. 5:7) and I have no

doubt that He can 'speak' to us in various ways including through every day events. In discussion with others we can reduce the risk of independent error.

There are, however, potential dangers in seeking God's messages to us through the *Kairos* and Huddle process: those of false imagining (i.e. hearing what we want to hear), peer pressure, and leader direction. Members of Huddles will want to 'hear' God if expected to do so and especially if other members of the groups seem to be 'hearing' God's messages to them. The leader will want to encourage the process, perhaps by 'finding' God's message for members who are having difficulty hearing God. I don't know what Breen means by "creating" a *kairos* for members of the Huddle (p.192).

Two other problems occur to me. One is the temptation to see a Divine message in virtually any event that causes us some sort of emotional impact, however slight: we could easily spend much time seeking such messages when none were sent. The second problem with the *Kairos* process is that through it God is, as it appears to me, being *summoned* to speak to us and His message is to be accessed through a complex formula of action involving six steps under two parts: under 'repent'; observe, repent and discuss; and under 'believe'; plan, account and act (p.59). Formulating a plan and then being accountable to the Huddle for its execution adds to the potential for 'group think' and leader direction.

### **2.b.v The other 7 LifeShapes**

I had difficulty in ascertaining how each of the LifeShapes represents a foundational teaching of Jesus or a principle from His life (p.49) and whether they all have, as claimed, a basis in the principles of Covenant and Kingdom (p.186). As noted below (2.b.viii and the Annex), I think Breen is seriously mistaken about the meaning of divine/human covenants in the OT, and I am unclear about what he considers to be Covenant principles and those of the Kingdom.

Most of the biblical examples Breen quotes have only tenuous links with the LifeShapes they are meant to illustrate. For example, there is an interesting discussion about organisational leadership in the Square LifeShape, but I have difficulty in following the lessons Breen derives from Jesus' "lifestyle as a leader" (p.100) and their application in very different circumstances. So often, it seems to me, that in BADC the requirements of the structure being advocated came first and biblical texts were 'interpreted' to fit as best they can, which in many cases, is not very well.

I am uncertain how the LifeShapes contribute to the process of discipling anymore than the exegesis of relevant scriptural texts would do.

In his discussion of the triangle LifeShape Breen says: "[God] enjoys the same things you enjoy, he wants to be part of your life – he really does." (p.76). I am quite sure there are things in my life of which God does not approve and from which God would want me to desist. Most of us would, surely, say the same.

As each LifeShape is meant to represent, inter alia, "a foundational teaching of Jesus" I would expect to find among them Jesus' key messages such as: election, redemption, adoption as God's children through Christ, and the Holy Spirit as sign and seal of the promised inheritance.<sup>18</sup> But little of such material is to be found. Breen says that from the Octagon people will "[l]earn what the gospel is and a simple and clear articulation of it that can be



shared with People of Peace." (p.53). But the gospel is not included there! The Octagon "has one key message: find the person of Peace" (p.154; discussed below at 2.b.vi).

I am mystified by LifeShapes. They don't seem to add much theology to what most believers can be expected to know; rather they pose problems of questionable theology and dubious exegesis. The subjects covered seem to have been chosen at random: they don't constitute a comprehensive, well-constructed and presented, biblically-based programme for training in discipling. Why have they been included? I can see that the geometric forms can be an aide to memory – but aides to remember what exactly? It's hard to say. Some of the material is of interest and helpful, but I found nothing particularly new or spiritually profound. I have several books in my small home theological library that would provide better and sounder material. And there is little in the discussions about the LifeShapes that relate directly to training in evangelism, apologetics or discipling. And they don't get to grips with what Jesus was all about: Why did He do and say the things recorded in the gospels? What were His intentions and achievements? Why did He die? What happened at His resurrection and what are the implications of it for us?

Perhaps the methodology of LifeShapes and Huddles is more important than their substance. Perhaps their main purpose is to train people to follow a pattern of behaviour and imbibe a particular approach to evangelism drawing on God's word 'heard' through 'processing' *kairos* events. Perhaps they are designed to change people's focus from whatever it is on now to one on 'making disciples' as this is understood within BADC, and this is to be achieved by the organisational and disciplinary structure of Huddles (see Part 3 below) and the adoption of a particular, in my view a narrow, way of thinking about who are disciples and what 'making disciples' involves.

### ***2.b.vi Persons of Peace (see 2.a.iv)***

For Breen, a Person of Peace is someone whom God has prepared to receive the gospel, and the task of disciples is to recognise such persons when they come across them and to speak the message of the gospel to them.

The concept of the Person of Peace is drawn from Luke ch. 10 with examples from Acts ch.16. The background of the story is the urgent need to spread the gospel, and the 70 evangelists were to avoid anything that might delay them.

The Greek expression translated as 'person of peace' is a Hebraism meaning "one inclined to peace" (Plummer, p.18). "Peace be to this house" is a customary oriental salutation. But clearly more is implied than pronouncing the usual greetings. In the NT 'peace' has a range of meanings but in the current context it probably includes the content and goal of all Christian preaching, and in particular the coming of the Kingdom that Jesus came to inaugurate and of which the miracles are demonstrations (Lk. 10: 9 &17-20). Those who reject the message of the Kingdom will not benefit from the peace that it brings.

Tom Wright understands the 'peace' offered in very concrete terms and in the situation of the occupation of C1st Palestine by Roman soldiers and with militant Jewish groups agitating for violent action against these pagan occupiers:

*... this [Mt. 10:14-15; Lk. 10:11-12] was not a prediction of a non-spacio-temporal 'last judgment'. It was a straightforward warning of what would happen if this or that*

*Galilean village refused the way of peace which Jesus had come to bring. ... The horrifying thing was that Jesus was using, as models for the coming judgment on villages within Israel, images of judgment taken straight from the Old Testament, where they had to do with the divine judgment **on the pagan nations** (Tyre, Sidon, Sodom ...). Jesus had offered these Galilean towns the way of peace. By following him, they would find the god-given golden thread to guide them through the dark labyrinth of current political aspirations and machinations, and on to vindication as the true people of the creator and covenant god. If they refused, they were choosing the way that led, inevitably, to confrontation with Rome, and so to unavoidable ruin. (Wright, 1996, pp. 329-330; emphasis in original)*

'Peace' here follows the acceptance of Jesus' message that Rome was not Israel's true enemy — her true enemy was the Satanic powers that had taken hold within Israel herself and which Jesus had come to defeat. Mistaking the enemy will only lead to catastrophic violence, death and destruction by Roman soldiers.

As I understand it, Breen's 'Persons of Peace' strategy is mainly about evangelism. His concern that evangelists should be alert to opportunities to evangelise is very sensible. However, I have difficulty in drawing from Luke 10 and Acts 16 the generalised concept of a Person of Peace that Breen derives from these passages. Nowhere in Luke 10 is there any suggestion that God had prepared certain people to hear the gospel and had drawn them to the attention of the evangelists. It is not stated that the households who welcomed the evangelists were to be the objects of evangelisation, though some could well have been. The evangelist were to expect rejection as well as welcome.

Nor do the examples of Lydia and the jailer in Acts 16 fit Breen's definition of a 'Person of Peace'. Lydia was one of a group of women listening to Paul. She identified herself to Paul and there is no suggestion in Acts 16 that God had prepared her to receive the gospel and had pointed her out to Paul as a potential convert. And the jailer responded in a crisis to Paul and Silas' loving concern for his safety – their 'light' (or character – see 2.b.vii below) pointed the jailer to the God they worshipped. Also, in the jailor's case, there is no suggestion in Acts 16 that God had prepared him to receive the gospel or that Paul and Silas had identified him as a potential convert. Both Lydia and the jailor became converts first and only after conversion provided support.

The three characteristic behaviours of Persons of Peace (p.159 and 2.a.iv) are drawn from an evangelistic expedition in C1st rural Palestine during which the itinerant evangelists required practical help from local people in the form of food and accommodation. The 'person of peace' in Luke 10 is someone who provides the practical support required – not a potential convert. Today's circumstances in the western church are totally different and, apart from 'listening', Breen's characteristics of Persons of Peace (p.159 and 2.a.iv) simply don't apply. If they are to be used in deciding whom to invite into a Huddle (p.183), then invitations will be few indeed!

Breen's point that we should take the gospel to people who are open rather than to people who persist in hostility is valid, but his point, as Schooley has observed, would be better grounded in Jesus' admonition not to throw pearls before swine (Mt. 7:6) (Schooley 2017).

### 2.b.vii *Christian character*

As noted previously (2.b.iii) the lack of any serious discussion on Christian character in BADC is an extraordinary omission in a text that purports to be about Christian discipling. The issue is only mentioned in BADC in a series of 'character' questions considered relevant to the 'triangle' LifeShape (pp. 221-223). However, most of the questions have little or no connection to any biblical texts.

At least Breen has raised this vital issue, which has all but disappeared from church discourse, perhaps out of concern not to be thought judgmental. Hunter explains the reason for the decline thus:

*Character is formed in relation to moral convictions and is manifested in the capacity to abide by those convictions even in, especially in, the face of temptation. This being so the demise of character begins with the destruction of belief systems that made those convictions sacred and inviolable within us. (Hunter p. xiii)*

With the decline of Christianity in much of the West, we are left only with values, which are self-chosen, mere preferences, and highly flexible – devoid of any convictions considered to be binding upon us. Hunter summarises the present situation thus:

*We want character but without unyielding conviction: we want strong morality but without the emotional burden of guilt or shame; we want virtue but without particular moral justifications that invariably offend; we want good without having to name evil; we want decency without the authority to insist upon it; we want moral community without any limitation to personal freedom. In short, we want what we cannot possibly have on the terms that we want it. (Hunter p.xiii-xv)*

So where do we look for Christian character? What are the convictions out of which such character can grow and flourish? In the NT the source is principally the Sermon on the Mount – a collection of ethical material of immense importance for our spiritual lives. Biblical scholar Warren Meeks has observed that in this material:

*[We] have here no system of commandments. The rules are exemplary not comprehensive, pointers to the kind of life expected in the community, but not a map of acceptable behavior. Still less does Matthew's Jesus state philosophical principles from which guidelines for behavior could be rationally derived. We are left with the puzzle that while Jesus plays the role of conventional sage in Matthew, his teachings recorded here do not add up to an ethical system. It is not in such a program of teaching, apparently, that Matthew understands the will of God to be discovered. (Meeks, p.140 quoted in Hays, p.98)*

Hays notes that "Matthew has marshaled the traditions at his disposal in a way that highlights Jesus' role as the authoritative teacher of the people of God" (Hays p.94). He goes on to develop Meeks' observations with the following comments and conclusions about Christian character at the individual level:

*Matthew's rigorous summons to moral perfection cannot be rightly understood as a call to obey a comprehensive system of rules. Despite his emphasis on the church's*

*commission to teach obedience to Jesus' commandments, Matthew sees such teaching as instrumental to a deeper goal: the transformation of character and of the heart. ...*

*While rules and commandments provide an orderly structure for the moral life, Matthew also thinks of actions as growing organically out of character. ... Speech and action are the outward manifestations of what is in the heart. ... Action flows from character, but character is not so much a matter of innate disposition as of training in the ways of righteousness. Those who respond to Jesus' preaching and submit to his instruction will find themselves formed in a new way so their actions will, as it were, 'naturally' be wise and righteous. (Hays, pp. 98-99)*

On Christian character at the community level, Hays writes:

*The community of Jesus' followers is to be a model community living in obedience to God: the salt of the earth, the light of the world, a city set on a hill (Mt.5:13-16). This task of modeling obedience is an integral part of the community's mission: "[L]et your light so shine before others, so they may see your good works and give glory to your father in heaven" (Mt. 5:16). The church is a demonstration plot in which God's will can be exhibited. For that reason, the righteousness of Jesus' disciples must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees; otherwise, the church will not be a compelling paradigm of the kingdom that Jesus proclaimed. (Hays, p.97; see also 1.b.ii – Who are to 'make disciples' where Hays is quoted on gifts to be used to build up the whole community.)*

Character is thus a most important element in the spiritual development of an individual and of the Christian community and therefore also of discipling and evangelism. Yet it finds no significant place in BADC. It might be contended that life in Huddles and working through *Kairos* circles will help members develop Godly character. This contention is problematic, but even if accepted it would still need to be explained why this process is judged to be better than learning directly from scripture.

### **2.b.viii Theology – Covenant and Kingdom (Annex) and the renaming of Abram and Sarai (2.a.v)**

#### *Covenant and kingdom*

For the 'theological foundations' of covenant and kingdom, Breen draws on his long experience as a bible reader and expositor in a variety of ministry situations. He has concluded that the themes of Covenant and Kingdom together form a framework for interpretation and can be viewed as two threads that run through all of scripture. He offers "a" perspective from "an" everyday vantage point. However, he doesn't suggest his discovery is only for his own personal use as he assures us that "From the first page to the last, we [his readers] will discover that the bible is riven through with the 'double helix' of Covenant and Kingdom" (Breen, 2010, p.xv). An unsupported assertion such as this, arising out of personal experience, might be of interest in a spiritual biography but it doesn't constitute theology. Much more is required if he is to convince others of the soundness and usefulness of these concepts in understanding scripture, and why they equal or better the depth, variety and richness of the biblical message rather than distort or diminish that message.<sup>19</sup>

Breen is stepping into deep theological water into which many OT scholars have waded without finding agreement as to whether there is in fact a 'core' or 'centre' within the OT and, if such a core or centre can be found, of what it might consist. One problem that confronts any such endeavour is the sheer variety of material in the books and blocks of writings in the OT that were composed over many centuries by many different authors, editors and redactors. Any OT theology that is likely to command respect must recognize the differences as well as the similarities between the books or blocks of writings. OT scholar Gerhard Hasel cautions that:

*[it is] crucial for the whole enterprise of OT theology that no systematic scheme, pattern of thought, or extrapolated abstraction is superimposed upon the biblical materials. Since no single theme, scheme, or motif is sufficiently comprehensive to include within it all varieties of OT viewpoints, one must refrain from using a particular concept, formula, basic idea, etc., as the center of the OT whereby a systematization of the manifold and variegated OT testimonies is achieved (Hasel, p.139).*

As I understand him, Breen is attempting exactly what Hasel warns against – imposing abstractions over the whole of the OT. And the problems are increased when the NT is included. One way of avoiding the problem Hasel presents is to define the themes, abstractions, schemes, motifs or whatever so widely that they can be applied to most, if not all, the biblical material. But the problem then is that the theme (or whatever) becomes so vague as to be meaningless and thus doesn't assist in the task of understanding scripture. In defining his twin concepts in terms of still more abstractions (covenant/relationships and kingdom/responsibilities – see 2.a.v) Breen seems to be building abstractions upon abstractions. This process is likely to end up not only as somewhat meaningless, but carries the serious danger of diverting attention from a deep engagement with biblical texts that can change lives, hearts and minds. In fact, as explained in the Annex, Breen is seriously mistaken in his understanding of covenant in the OT context. Further, I can find no relationship between Breen's definitions of covenant and kingdom (see 2.a.v) with their biblical meanings and historical contexts, which are very briefly summarized in the Annex to this commentary.

Of course, covenant and kingdom are important themes in scripture. However the key question is whether, as Breen asserts, these two themes constitute a biblically sound way of viewing the whole or even most of scripture. Why did he choose as lenses through which to view scripture these two concepts and not, say, sin and grace, or exile and restoration, or death and resurrection, or creation and new creation, or ...? We are not told.

But there are much more important problems than simply the wrong type of lens. One is that addressing biblical texts through these lenses, or any other lens or set of lenses, prejudices our understanding of their meanings in the contexts in which they appear. But perhaps more importantly, Breen is diverting attention away from recognition of the bible as **story** and not a set of abstract concepts such as relationship and responsibility. Our faith rests on solid historical events in which the creator God acts through history to restore a fallen creation and uses a particular people, Israel, as His agent in this task. God's covenant with Abraham and His election of Israel are parts of that plan to undo the sin of Adam, to defeat evil powers, and to restore His creation. Time and time again Israel fails to keep to the law, to avoid sin and to be a light to the gentiles. One failure is her desire to be like other nations and have a king. After many generations of faithless, idolatrous kings (there were very few exceptions) Israel finally faces the inevitable consequences: the northern Kingdom is absorbed into the kingdom of Assyria and the southern kingdom endures destruction by Babylon and exile. The renewal of

the covenant comes through the suffering of Jesus, the representative Israelite, who does what Israel was always meant to do but didn't.

*The renaming of Abram and Sarai (2.a.v)*

As noted (2.a.v), Breen puts much emphasis on the shared 'identity' between God and His people. He understands that in renaming Abram and Sarai as Abraham and Sarah God took the two 'Hs' taken from his name (YHWH) and gave them one each. He understands this action to have been a consequence of their new covenantal identity: "A new identity called for a new name" (Breen, 2010, p.29).

I have found no academic support in the literature for Breen's understanding of this method of 'renaming' or that it was a consequence of shared identity. Nor do I know of any support for the consequence, unacknowledged and probably unforeseen by Breen, that in taking and giving away letters from His own name God was renaming Himself as 'YW'. I sought advice from two academics with expertise in the relevant field. Some suggestions supportive of Breen may, however, have arisen within Rabbinic speculation. Dr. Instone-Brewer of Tyndale House, Cambridge, a specialist in Rabbinic studies, advised me that he isn't aware of the tradition of Rabbi Abbahu cited by Breen but "that doesn't mean it doesn't exist somewhere". He did, however, doubt the relevance of such late material (early AD300s) for interpreting the bible. Dr. Philip Church, Honorary Research Fellow of Laidlaw College, advised me that while Rabbinic exegesis is fascinating, it often came to strange conclusions through adopting methods that many would think invalid.

The change of names comes in Genesis ch. 17 where Abram, meaning 'exalted father', is renamed Abraham meaning 'father of many nations' and the reason given is that God will make him "the father of a multitude of nations" (Gen. 17:5; NASB). Sarai is renamed Sarah, and both names are variants of a word that sounds like 'princess'. Her new name seems to be related to her future as "a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her" (Gen. 17:16; NASB). Dr. Church concludes that "I would want to say that the new names have something to do with the descendants of Abraham and Sarah rather than the significance of the spelling".

Provan suggests that the renaming may have been made to stress the fresh start that Abraham and Sarah were to make after the false start described in Ch. 16 (the Hagar and Ishmael story):

*The name 'Abraham' is apparently thought to carry the connotation of 'multitude' in Genesis 17:5 in a way that Abram does not (it means 'exalted father'). We do not know, however, of a Hebrew word raham with that meaning in biblical Hebrew. 'Sarah' is simply a different pronunciation of 'Sarai'; both words mean 'princess'. Perhaps it is the fact of the change in each case that matters more than the meaning of each name: these are the people to whom the promise of Genesis 17 is given, and with whom God's covenant is confirmed, and they are called to make a fresh start after the false fulfillment of the promise in Genesis 16. (Provan 2015, p.131)*

Perhaps we can never be totally sure of God's purpose in changing the names of Abram and Sarah. However, if the name 'Abraham' does indeed carry the connotation of 'multitude' then the straightforward interpretation that the new name reflects his future status as 'father of many' seems very credible. Sarah's name change perhaps also reflects her future status as "a mother of nations" and because "kings of peoples shall come from her" (Gen 17:16; NASB). I cannot

see that Breen's speculation (for that is what it is) about the spelling of names is necessary or helpful.

### ***2.b.ix The doctrine of salvation***

Nowhere in BADC is the doctrine of salvation explicitly stated. Breen does refer to "... what Jesus did for us on the cross" but doesn't tell us what it was that Jesus did and what the consequences were and are (p.86). As already noted (2.b.iii), Breen tells us a lot about the attributes of Jesus (His intelligence, leadership, teaching ability etc. etc.), but the absence of material on what Jesus *did* is worrying. We can't know the *person* of Christ without *first* knowing the *work* of Christ. Of course, we are confronted here as elsewhere with the problem of space: BADC is not meant to be, and cannot be, a multi-volume theological tome. Yet Breen can find a page and a half (pp. 15-16) on what Monty Roberts does! We seek to persuade people to follow Jesus because of what He has *done* and offers to *do* for us – not primarily because of His extraordinary attributes.

Salvation was not considered suitable for inclusion among the LifeShapes each of which is intended to represent "a foundational teaching of Jesus or principle from his life (p.49)". So we have to look else where for clues about Breen's understanding of this all-important doctrine, which surely should play an important part in outreach. I noted some clues and these follow:

"Becoming one". I noted Breen's assertion that "Covenant means becoming one" at 2.a.v and 2.b.viii, (see Breen 2010 at pp. 5,21,26, 27 and 31), and I don't know what he means by this. He provides no citations to works that might elaborate. The words have a 'feel good' character but unfortunately they can also lead people astray, for example to belief in some form of deification. We are to be 'people of God', while recognizing that we are finite creatures and fundamentally different from the one creator God. In some limited respects we can and should aspire to be like God through loving obedience to His commandments and in reflection of His glory – but this is not, I think, what Breen is saying.

Entering into the Kingdom. Breen writes as if one can be only partially in the Kingdom: repentance and belief "lead(s) us more fully into the Kingdom" (p.65). I don't think this is at all helpful and is likely to confuse. My understanding is that one is either in the kingdom and therefore a Christian or one is not, and that being partly 'in' and partly 'out' doesn't make sense in any orthodox understanding of salvation. Probably what Breen means is that those who are *already disciples* will by repentance and belief become better, more faithful, disciples; but he doesn't say that. Here again there is lack of clarity in BADC about what 'making disciples' actually means: is it primarily about evangelism or is it something else.

"Disciples disciple." Breen insists that "disciples make disciples". This expectation arises from Jesus' "non-negotiable" last words [i.e. Mt. 28:19-20] that "disciples make disciples" (p.173) and "Every disciple disciples. You can't be a disciple if you aren't willing to invest in and disciple others. That's simply the call of the Great Commission" (p.39). This raises serious questions: for example, can small children and the mentally or physically incapacitated become disciples? Crucially, when does one become a Christian and can thereby claim the merits of Jesus' sacrifice – at conversion or when one starts to disciple others as Breen understands that activity? Breen seems to be saying the latter, which sounds very much like salvation by works (i.e. by making, or trying to make, disciples) and not by faith. But, again, he is not clear.

Making converts without making disciples . . . . Breen writes:

*... we've made converts without making disciples fully trained and equipped in all Jesus taught. As the Church, we are all to participate in God's command to go and make disciples according to the model that Jesus has given us (p.153).*

These two statements are ambiguous: (i) are converts also disciples but not necessarily "fully trained" ones or do they only become disciples when they start to disciple others?, and (ii) does the 'model' refer to the desired attributes of a disciple or to Jesus' method of making disciples?

However, these statements tend to reinforce my understanding that for Breen converts aren't necessarily disciples and only become disciples when "making disciples" as Breen understands that activity (see 1.b.ii). But the question as to when someone becomes a Christian remains unclear. In fact I am uncertain whether 'conversion' fits into Breen's *ordo salutis* and, if it does, where it is to be found.

Conclusion. It may be that Breen does accept the atoning work of Jesus on the cross and that for him salvation is by faith alone. Perhaps Breen would say that salvation *is* by faith but that the genuineness of faith is proved by the work of discipling (cf. Js. 2:14-17): but he doesn't say this in BADC, so uncertainty about his doctrine of salvation remains. The above obscurities and ambiguities cloud what should be, surely, a fundamental topic in any "foundational text" about discipling (pp.176, 183).

### **Part 3. Using Huddles to Disciple People (pp.171- 223 )**

#### **3a Summary**

Huddles constitute the mechanism for discipling present and future leaders in mission and discipleship (p.171). They employ the 'language' of the LifeShapes in carrying this out. This language, as already noted, "lays the foundation of everything else" (p.176). Breen considers the 12 apostles to have been Jesus' first 'huddle' (p.69), though he doesn't suggest that Jesus, who was "the most brilliant teacher of all time" (p.76), employed a special language when teaching them.

Each Huddle is a small group of 4 to 10 people, invited by the leader, members of which commit to meeting once a week or fortnight, for a season (between 6 months and a year is suggested). The choice of Huddle members should be made after much prayer. The leader must either have been in a Huddle previously or, if the first in the church to lead a Huddle, have been taught and mentored from outside the church community. 3DM offers "coaching Huddles" (p.167).

Huddle leaders are seen as the primary disciplers, not as facilitators. They are to share their lives as something worth imitating. They invite members to imitate the parts of their lives that look like the life and ministry of Jesus. Their job is to see the LifeShapes incarnate themselves into the people they are discipling (p.186).



A very high level of commitment is required from the members of a Huddle, and membership should be understood as a privilege and not a right. Members shouldn't miss a meeting unless absence is absolutely unavoidable. Members should be discouraged from "interject[ing] with their own thoughts or opinions" until "they know the language [of LifeShapes] and their lives show it" (p.187).

Huddles don't grow by additions to existing membership. Huddles only grow when existing members start their own Huddles, and all those joining a Huddle are told that they are expected to start a Huddle of their own one day (p.173). This expectation arises from Jesus' "non-negotiable" last words [i.e. Mt. 28:19-20] that "disciples make disciples" (p.173). Thus Huddles are intended to be self-replicating.

Every time a Huddle meets, members should answer the two questions (already discussed under the Circle LifeShape and Kairos moments – see 2.a.ii and 2.b.iv):

What is God saying to me? And  
What am I going to do about it?

Since "Every disciple is missional" (p.178), Huddles are "missional" and this involves "learning boldness" (p.178).

### **3b Comment**

I can see the importance of avoiding controversy once a Huddle has started. But this presupposes that those who have accepted an invitation to join a Huddle have a very clear idea about what is involved and what is expected of them. I am not sure that this can be assumed. Allowing members to express their own thoughts and opinions only when they know the LifeShapes and "their lives show it" seems to me to be far too late in the process. Potential members, or at least some of them, will want clear demonstration that what is involved is solidly based on scripture.

The approach to Huddle leadership accords with Breen's view on leadership required when setting out in a new direction and expressed in "A square model of leadership":

*Yet when we start on a new trail, we need a strong confident leader to show us the way. There will be time for consensus, for gathering and listening to opinions from those who follow you, but that time is not at the beginning. ... It is imperative to recognize what the beginning of leadership requires. Jesus revealed this in his character and his style of leadership. Are we better leaders than he? Resist the urge to endlessly explain what you are doing or to get feedback from those following. Lay out your plan and stick with it. If people want to follow you, they will. If not, they can get on board somewhere else.*  
(p.103)

It seems that members can only express their own opinions once they are fully 'on board'. Fundamental criticism that might challenge the leader's teaching or the process is never to be allowed – only "opinions from those who follow you" (p.103) i.e. only from those already 'on board' and therefore in basic agreement. That some members of the community might be in a position to offer healthy scepticism, as promoted by Francis Collins in another context (see 2.b.iv) does not appear to be envisaged.

The selection of Huddle members is obviously critical. Those thought likely to raise problems with the teaching or the process will not be invited. If behaviours attributed to Persons of Peace (p.159 and 2.a.iv) are applied as recommended (p.183), the number of potential Huddle members will be further reduced. Also, they have to be actual or potential leaders and be willing to commit to regular weekly or fortnightly meetings for up to a year and be prepared to make the necessary preparations for each meeting. In due course, as a leader they will be expected to be involved in mentoring of Huddle members and to lead any missions that the Huddle undertakes.

Leaders will need to be convinced of the worth of the process and that at least part of their lives are worth imitating. In practice leaders will be drawn from an existing Huddle led by someone previously 'Huddled' so they will have had an opportunity as a member to evaluate the commitment required of leadership and their suitability and availability to undertake it. In the usual, relatively small, suburban church those who might be considered suitable for Huddle leadership are likely to be few. It is also likely that they will already be committed in the leadership of other areas of parish life. So, at least initially, taking up Huddle leadership will probably mean a loss of leadership and involvement elsewhere in the parish. It might also mean withdrawal from involvement in secular activities (e.g. in social, cultural, political and sporting societies) in which Christian participation should be encouraged and supported.

The problem of leadership of Huddles seems to me to be severe if Huddles are to be self-replicating. The first Huddle members are likely to be drawn from the natural leaders within the congregation. But after them who are to lead the Huddles? Breen has, I suspect, thought of this problem and found what is for him a satisfactory answer: "... Jesus calls us *all* to be leaders. The commission to go and make disciples is a call for leaders – you are leading when you are making a disciple" (p.100, emphasis added, see also p.180). My understanding is that we are all different, we are meant to be different and, within a Christian community, we should rejoice in our differences including differences in leadership ability. The diversity is to be welcomed because by working together we can complement each other and thus build up the body of Christ in our communities.

A key question, and one I raised at the start of this commentary (1.a.ii), is whether the outcome sought from the 3DM process (e.g. the "missional wave" of p.12) is likely to be achieved by the instruments (essentially LifeShapes and Huddles) advocated. What change will going through the Huddle process make in a Huddle member over, say, a year? I cannot draw on significant participation in a Huddle – and what happens in one will vary with leadership style and the leader's understanding of BADC, 3DM's directions, and their minister's direction and guidance. But going on BADC alone, I suggest the following outcome for Huddle members:

- i they will be persuaded they are being trained to undertake the only task that Jesus cares about (p.11);
- ii. they will be more 'bold' and confident in approaching people about Jesus;
- iii. they will spend much time trying to hear God's voice in the ordinary circumstances of life (*kairos* moments) by going through a complex formulaic process and be open to false imagining, peer pressure and leader suggestions;
- iv. they will be trained in an unhelpful exegetical methodology and acquire some dubious biblical theology;

v. they will be trained to accept 3DM's strategy, language and processes without comment or criticism; and

vi. they will learn little about the purpose of Jesus' ministry and mission, the gospel, Jesus' commandments and the importance of obeying them, and the development of Christian character and behaviour.

Breen doesn't discuss what the likely outcome for the church community that adopts his discipling strategy would be. However, I think we can safely assume that the life of the community would be largely centered around discipling according to the strategy advanced in BADC, that is by the language of LifeShapes and the mechanism of Huddles. This would involve ongoing monitoring and mentoring of Huddle leaders to ensure that Huddles keep to the prescribed path. A hierarchy would probably develop to ensure accountability to church leadership and, perhaps, there might be some mentoring and monitoring by the 3DM organisation.

Finally, there is the question of the likely outcome for those who have not or will not be 'huddled' because of unsuitability (e.g. lack of leadership qualities – notwithstanding Breen's assertion about all disciplers being leaders (pp.100,180), or scepticism about Breen's claims of a biblical basis for much of the teaching) and therefore will never be invited to join one or, who have for good personal or other reasons declined an invitation to do so. Members of Huddles are to be actual or potential leaders and that excludes the majority in any congregation. Those who are not 'huddled' for whatever reason may be viewed by the church hierarchy as peripheral to church life because they will be seen as not engaged in the only (and narrowly defined) activity that "Jesus cares about" (p.11). Will they move to another church, or stay feeling rejected and unwanted? The congregation may no longer be seen as a 'mixed bag' of 'saints and sinners', enquirers, the fully committed and those hanging on to faith by their fingertips, etc. etc. but as an elite group of actual and potential disciplers in the 3DM mold into which others don't fit. I suspect that instead of the "missional wave" expected (p.12), there may be a decline in church attendance as the 'non-huddlers' take Breen's advice and "get on board somewhere else" (p.103).

#### **Part 4. Overview and Conclusion**

BADC is an important book. Its authors claim importance for it by describing it as the foundational text for the language of LifeShapes, which forms the foundation for everything else. Also of course it is important because many churches have embraced 3DM and others are thinking of doing so. It is unfortunate then that it is also a very difficult book – not because it uses difficult words (it doesn't) but because of the convoluted way in which it is constructed and the lack of succinctness.

The aim of 3DM is to change the culture of churches to one of 'discipling'. Since it is claimed (wrongly in my view) that "language creates culture", this aim, it is argued, can be achieved by propagating the new 'language' of LifeShapes by the mechanism of Huddles. This does of course immediately raise a very serious question: 'Are we at liberty to change scripture's own language and thereby to change its culture'? I know of no such authority: to do seem so would seem to venture well beyond the bounds of orthodox Christianity. The usual hermeneutical disciplines seem not to apply, and no clear interpretive process is advanced to take their place.

So often it seems to me scripture is interpreted in such a way that it fits the purposes of a pre-conceived structure.

The constant attempt to shore up elements of the 3DM edifice with ill-fitting biblical texts must be a serious concern for ministers conscious of their heavy responsibility to avoid causing believers to stumble (Js. 3:1; Mt. 18:6). Also claims are made which are not substantiated by solid biblical support, scientific research or well-reasoned argument. Interpretative grids or lenses that have no secure biblical basis are introduced: Jesus' teaching is to be understood as either 'invitation or challenge'; the underlying theology of scripture is to be seen as either covenant- or kingdom-related; and Jesus' "foundational teaching and principles from his life" and his biblical world view are to be found in the LifeShapes. In the process the gospel itself is somehow squeezed out; it doesn't appear in any of the LifeShapes so presumably it is not seen as a foundational teaching of Jesus.

However, at the heart of 3DM is the very commendable desire to promote obedience to the Great Commission to "make disciples of all nations, teaching them ..." (Mt.28:19-20). Breen thinks that all disciples should undertake this activity as being a "non-negotiable" obligation and because "Every disciple disciples", and I agree. Yet even here there is a basic problem. My understanding of the commission is that its coverage is extensive – from pre-evangelism to advanced Christian education and I doubt whether Breen would agree with this. He appears to think that every disciple should be directly involved in overt personal evangelism. However, in the Great Commission, Matthew's Jesus was, as I understand the text, addressing church communities, and individual Christians as part of those communities, and it is the community as a whole that 'makes disciples' with each member playing one or more of a range of roles within that wide-ranging activity – some in overt evangelism, some supporting evangelism through prayer and finance, and others in different roles – according to the gifts and ministries each is given. Our teaching on 'discipleship' needs to be broad enough to encompass the whole body of Christ in our church communities. And if it doesn't there will inevitably be division and hurt, and the loss of the contributions of church members who aren't invited to join a Huddle or don't accept an invitation to do so.

It will be clear from my frequent use in this commentary of cautionary words such as "if I understand Breen correctly, then ..." and 'Breen appears to think ...' that I have been constantly troubled by Breen's lack of succinctness, his lack of clear definitions of key concepts, his willingness to describe concepts in different but not always consistent ways, and his meandering, convoluted presentation. His vagueness contrasts sharply with the confident manner in which he asserts his opinions, which is all the more remarkable because he provides little evidence that he has sought authoritative support for those opinion from scholarly works, including from the usual commentaries and reference books to be found, I suspect, in most ministers' personal libraries.

Clearly from what I have written above, I cannot support the adoption of the BADC discipling strategy. It's teaching is dubious both in the type of exegesis of scripture it adopts and in the actual interpretations it makes. Seeking to change the language and thereby also the culture of scripture, and the introduction of various grids or lenses through which scripture should be read would seem to be in danger of falling within the rubric of "erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word" which C of E deacons promise at their admission to the priesthood "to banish and drive away"<sup>20</sup>.

The introduction of the BADC discipling strategy may lead to some initial success, but overtime I suspect those underlying flaws will eat away at its efficacy and the life of any Christian community that adopts it: comments on blog sites<sup>21</sup>, though usually lacking in detail and which need to be read with caution, suggest that this has in fact been happening.

To finish on a positive note: Breen and his colleagues have raised an important subject with a very sincere desire to address what they see as the main weakness in many 'western' churches – their failure to 'make disciples'. BADC has forced me to think about it and I hope it will have the same effect on others especially church leaders. Some of his points are well made, for example the lack of discipling post conversion. I hope that BADC will encourage others to go back to scripture and ask of it some of those fundamental questions that in BADC were overlooked or insufficiently examined. Out of that engagement other approaches to 'discipling' might emerge that, if soundly based on scripture, have better chances of bearing fruit over the long-term.

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### **Acknowledgments**

I am grateful to Sid Durbin, Glenn Peoples, Keith Schooley and Simon Smelt for many helpful comments on various drafts of this commentary. Needless to say inclusion of their names here does not imply their agreement with what I have written. Responsibility for errors, misunderstandings and infelicities is mine alone.

Michael D R Irwin

4 December 2017

## Annex on Covenant and Kingdom

### Covenant

In the Ancient Near East a covenant may be between humans or between God and humans. The former were used between individuals, nations, city-states, or between a suzerain lord and his vassals. In these covenants descriptive words used by Breen such as contract, agreement and partnership might have been appropriate: they imply discussion, negotiation and agreement prior to making the covenant and mutuality between the parties.

The early Hebrews used what had become a set form in the Ancient Near East in a unique way:

*... to express the relation between a people and its sovereign God, their real Great King, something that was far beyond any merely political relationship between human rulers and other states" (Kitchen p.102).*

In the divine/human covenants that we find in the OT there was no prior discussion, negotiation and agreement. As noted by OT scholar W J Dumbrell:

*... in the case of Old Testament divine/human covenants there is no element of mutuality. Divine covenants are imposed upon the recipients as the 'my' of 'my covenant' [in Genesis 6:18] suggests. (Dumbrell p. 152)*

There were some examples of the recipients of divine covenants questioning God's intentions. For example, Abram protested to God that he and Sarai could not at their ages produce a physical descendant (Gen. 15:2). But this doesn't change the fact that in divine/human covenants in the OT, it was God who initiated, devised and imposed them. Such covenants didn't create "partners", whether equal" or otherwise in the sense that we understand 'partnerships' today which normally are formed after discussion, negotiation and mutual agreement. OT covenants did provide that both parties would abide by its terms and in this limited sense some form of 'partnership' may have been envisaged.

I can find no support for Breen's understanding that Abram and Sarai became "equal" partners with God nor, for that matter, that equality between creator and creature could be properly inferred from *any* biblical text. I doubt the appropriateness of talk about "sharing" covenantal relationships or "inviting" people into one: it is God alone who determines the parties to His covenants.

Peoples adds:

"... Breen alleges that when God made a covenant with Abraham and Sarah, he made them equal partners with him.

"This is Breen's bare assertion, for which he finds no support in Scripture. On the contrary, the account of this covenant in Genesis presents it as unilateral action on God's part. Consultation of virtually *any* scholarly treatment of God's covenant with Abraham makes this clear. For example:

*A few words about covenant may be helpful at this point [Gen. ch. 15]. The covenant in this text bears close similarities to the covenants with*

*Noah (9:10-17; ... ) and David (2 Sam. 23:5; 7:8-17) in terms of stability, eternity and unconditionality. In all these cases, God establishes the covenant with one who has faith (Gen.15:6). In this context, covenant means a promise under oath, solemnly sworn, not an agreement or contract, and the making (literally, "cutting") has reference to the rite with cut animals. The covenant is unilateral, declared and sworn by God at God's own initiative. [Terence E. Fretheim, *Abraham: Trials of Family and Faith* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 38.]*

or:

*[W]hen Abraham also asks for assurance that he would obtain land [Gen. 15:8], God performs a covenant ceremony that normally entailed both parties passing between the halves of slain animals to signal the contractors' fate if they failed to honor their agreement (cf. Jer. 34:17-20). Notably, in the theophany that is at the heart of the ceremony God alone passes through the parts (as a smoking fire pot and flaming torch), making clear the unilateral nature of the covenant God initiated with Abraham in Genesis 12 and confirmed in this episode. [Robert Kugler, Patrick Hartin, *An Introduction to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 59.]*

"Breen's talk of people becoming equal partners with God sounds nice and empowering but is categorically incorrect from a biblical standpoint." (Peoples 2017)

An article in Kittel starts a discussion on the etymology of the Hebrew term for covenant with the following:

*Attempts to derive the meaning of the term from etymology have not led to any very clear or certain conclusions. [Johannes Behm in TDNT Vol. II, p. 107]*

Further, Breen hasn't told us what he understands by 'becoming one' (see also 2.b.ix).

God's covenant with mankind "narrows down as we move along the Old Testament story ... " (Provan, p.294). God's intention was always that mankind should bring blessing to the whole of creation. But sin enters and, after the events recorded in the early chapters of Genesis, we find God guiding humanity back to a righteous path in accordance with His wider plans. God makes a covenant with all mankind (the Noahic covenant); then with one people (the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants), and then with a Royal house (the Davidic covenant). This last covenant looks beyond David and his, as yet unborn, son Solomon to David's house, kingdom and throne, which will be established forever. This everlasting Davidic kingship is widely understood by the OT writers, especially in several of the psalms and prophetic writings, as the basis for hope that their God would eventually save Israel from their pagan enemies and end their exile.

In the NT the new covenant centres on one man, Jesus. The covenant has moved from all humanity, to one nation, to one royal dynasty and, finally, to a single individual. He is understood by the gospel writers to be the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant (Lk. 1:32-33),

and to be the messiah and Israel's true king. The superiority of the new covenant over the old, Mosaic, covenant is well discussed in the epistle to the Hebrews.

Much more could be said about 'covenant' in both the OT and NT but, as indicated above, I can see no clear connection between Breen's understanding of covenant (our relationship with God and with everyone else, see Breen, 2010, p.xv, and 2.a.v) and the biblical material.

### **Kingdom<sup>22</sup>**

Breen omits any reference in BADC to the long story line within which human kings were introduced to Israel and without which we cannot properly understand its meaning and purpose. Problems arise when we reduce biblical history into various ideas and concepts such as 'responsibility'.

The story of human kingship is a long one, and it can only be very briefly summarized here. Its start is recorded in the Book of Samuel in which we find God actively pursuing His intentions within the people He has called to assist Him and which had fallen into wickedness and dysfunction (Provan, p.290). From the Book of Samuel it is clear that God had been understood to be Israel's king. But then the people demanded a king to lead them 'such as other nations have' (1 Sam. 8:5). Against Samuel's warnings a king, Saul, is appointed. And contrary to God's requirements of a king (Deut. 17:14-20), Saul becomes what the people required – the divine god-king of the despotic city-state.

Eventually the kingship of Israel passes to David who is God's choice – not, as with Saul, the people's choice. God made a covenant with David and promised him an everlasting royal house and kingdom. David's makes a promising start but ultimately fails. Kingship passes to David's son Solomon who, like his father, starts well but becomes a despotic ruler and unfaithful to Israel's God. After Solomon's death the kingdom divided into two: the northern part which retained the name 'Israel' and the southern part which adopted the name 'Judah'. The story of the Kings of Israel and Judah as recounted in the two books of Kings is, with very few exceptions (e.g. Hezekiah and Josiah), a sad one of idolatry and corruption. Kingship in Israel ends in 722 BC with conquest by Assyria and absorption into its empire; and in Judah it ends in the early 6th with conquest by Babylon and deportations of many of its citizens. But in spite of Israel's infidelities and calamities there was still hope – hope in the promise of an everlasting Davidic king who will rescue Israel, free her from her pagan oppressors, and bring about an everlasting Kingdom in which Israel's God reigns.

The NT picks up many of the OT notions of God's Kingdom. The dominant idea is of rule, reign or dominion. Throughout the synoptic gospels, Jesus' mission is repeatedly understood as the fulfillment of OT promises. However, whereas in the OT the enemies of God's Kingdom are seen as hostile evil nations, in the NT the enemies are seen as spiritual powers of evil, Satanic forces. Whereas kingdom in the OT focuses on the people and land of one nation, Israel, in the NT the focus widens to cover all nations and the whole world.

In the NT we are lead to understand that the Kingdom of God is both present and yet to come. "God *is* king, but he must also *become* King" (Ladd. p.63, emphases in original). In Mt.12:29 Jesus declares that He has invaded the kingdom of Satan and 'bound', or curbed, its power. But in the age to come, God's Kingdom will be manifest in the destruction of Satan. "The whole mission of Jesus, including his words, deeds, death, and resurrection, constituted an initial



defeat of satanic power that makes the final outcome and triumph of God's Kingdom certain" (Ladd, p.66).

That the Kingdom of God is present, and not only future, is seen in the NT as evidenced by the works of Jesus. When asked when the Kingdom of God is coming, Jesus answered, "The Kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Lk. 17:20-21). The Kingdom of God was, in the person of Jesus, in the process of realization through the power of the 'Word' and of the Spirit (see also Wright's observations in 2.b.iii – *The power of the gospel story to transform lives*).

Much more could be said about Jesus' 'kingdom' teaching, but, as in the case of 'covenant', I can see little connection between the biblical material and Breen's understanding of kingdom ("... the way in which the Bible describes and defines responsibility: first, our responsibility to represent God to the people we know and then to everyone else" (Breen 2010, p.xvi).

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> The authors include the "3DM team". Team members are unnamed so for convenience I just refer to Mike Breen as the author.

<sup>2</sup> Keith Schooley in his book "What's Wrong with Outreach" (see bibliography) addresses several such basic questions drawing on relevant scripture.

<sup>3</sup> Breen *et al.* refer to a study they commissioned to advise on what questions united orthodox Christian leaders and what things kept them "awake at night" (p.9). This is fine as far as it goes (though I haven't seen the study), but it doesn't appear to address the broader questions I raise.

<sup>4</sup> A passing reference to the importance of committing one's heart to God is made at p.162 within a discussion of the Octagon LifeShape.

<sup>5</sup> Some recent scientific discoveries do, however, seem to confirm the biblical story of creation (the "Big Bang" affirms that the universe had a beginning). The fundamental constants of nature seem to be very finely tuned so as to make our existence possible, suggestive of an intelligence at work in creation. Recent biological research raises the question whether the extraordinary diversity and complexity of living organisms (e.g. DNA) could have developed by Darwinian evolution in the time cosmology makes available for this to happen or even whether Darwinian evolution alone could have achieved such complexity. However, scientific discoveries continue to be made and what is accepted today might not be accepted tomorrow.

<sup>6</sup> As reported by Bess Manson, in "Something to Believe in", "your weekend", *The Dominion Post*, 15 April 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Quotes were taken from an article in *Evangelicals Now* (<http://www.e-n.org.uk/2017/10/uk-news/anglican-update/>). The author of the article cites Guinness' book *Holy Fools*, but s/he may have meant to cite Guinness' book *Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion*, published 2015.

<sup>8</sup> These observations draw on Hays at pp. 96-104, which is a valuable discussion in the context on 'Training for the Kingdom'.

<sup>9</sup> St. Francis of Assisi is often credited as saying, "Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary." But this attribution is uncertain. However, a reliable attribution of a similar saying comes from Chapter XVII of his Rule of 1221 in which Francis told the friars not to preach without proper authority but all Friars should preach by their deeds.

<sup>10</sup> Some sources say 72 were commissioned.

<sup>11</sup> A year of publication is not included in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> editions, so I have used the year of copyright as a substitute.

<sup>12</sup> Going on dates of copyright, the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of 2014 could not have been available when the second edition of BADC (2011) was produced. The authorship of the 6<sup>th</sup> edition is different to that of BADC, so it seems probable that Breen drew from the 7<sup>th</sup> or the 8<sup>th</sup> edition.

<sup>13</sup> The "hypothesis" becomes a "theory" a few lines later. The reason escapes me.

<sup>14</sup> John Medina, 2008, *Brain Rules*, Pear Press, pp.58, 61, 62. Quoted in N T Wright, 2010, *After You Believe*, HarperCollins, New York, pp.37-43.

<sup>15</sup> An article in *The Times* (of London), which was reprinted in Wellington's *Dominion Post* of 10 March 1917, reports on recent research by neuroscientists into whether the human brain differs according to memory ability. The research result,

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as I (a total layman in the relevant science) understand it, is that in "structural terms" there is no difference in the brains of "super-rememberers" and those of normal people. However, a difference was found between these two groups in the way connections in the brain were organised suggesting a difference in the way information was logged and retrieved. The article didn't directly address the Breen's claim that human brains are "literally wired differently than they were a hundred years ago" but the finding of no "structural" (is this the same as Breen's term "hardwiring"?) change between the very good and ordinary rememberers may be significant.

<sup>16</sup> When quoted by Lennox, Collins was the Director of the National Institute of Health and former Director of the Human Genome Project.

<sup>17</sup> Letter of 1957 quoted by Emily Stimpson Chapman in OSV Newsweekly (<https://www.osv.com/OSVNewsweekly/Article/TabId/535/ArtMID/13567/ArticleID/17512/Understanding-the-‘dark-night-of-the-soul’-.aspx>.)

<sup>18</sup> I have taken these Pauline theological motifs from Ephesians 1:3-14 as summarized by Hays p.62.

<sup>19</sup> I note that I haven't read Breen's *Covenant and Kingdom* (Breen, 2010) in any depth.

<sup>20</sup> This quote is taken from the Church of England's *The Book of Common Prayer* which is undated but purchased in the 1950s. It may be that the promise required of deacons has subsequently been removed or changed.

<sup>21</sup> There are over 400 contributions about 3DM on Keith Schooley's web site. Most contributors have been very negative about 3DM. However, it is impossible to say how many 3DM churches are the subject of these criticisms as some churches will have caused contributions from several church members. Also it maybe that those who have had unhappy experiences of 3DM are more likely to contribute to such websites than those who have had positive experiences; so the contributions can't be claimed as representative of all 3DM churches. Further, it may be that in some cases the introduction of 3DM brought to the surface pre-existing problems that were then wrongly blamed on 3DM. However, it does appear that a significant number of church members have been hurt by their experiences of 3DM.

<sup>22</sup> In this section I have drawn from Provan, 2014, at pp.290-295.