The Road Trip That Changed the World: The unlikely theory that will change how you view the church, and most importantly, yourself

By Mark Sayers
Reviewed by Darren Cronshaw

Patience in the patterns of religious faith has changed dramatically over the last century. Western world church attendance is in rapid decline, especially among youth and young adults. A common sentiment is that churches fail to connect with contemporary culture or be relevant to every-day life. Young adults continue to seek freedom and adventure in travel, experimental relationships, voluntary charity and the social networks of friends. Yet still, they remain keen to connect with some concept of the sacred, as long as it does not restrict their life choices.

Mark Sayers’ approach is analysing popular culture from a Christian perspective. He then identifies culture, an organisation that observes, resources and trains on youth and adult spirituality. As a Church of Christ pastor he has ran a church in Queensland, the Sydney Megacity, Australia, and speaks and teaches widely on consumerism, Gen X’s spirituality and the future of the Church in the West.

The unique contribution of The Road Trip that Changed the World is to study the history and theology in its analysis of contemporary young adult culture and spirituality through the lens of Jim Harries’s 1957 novel The Road Trip. Sayers bases an argument that ‘‘as Harries saw it, the church is responsible for the intransigence of consumerism and its desire to make a one-upmanship of the lifestyle of the young adult today’’.

Sayers detected the following patterns that drive emerging generations of next to seek for fulfillment in travel, sex, drugs, music and adventure ‘‘to break free’’ from the church. These themes have become part of the ‘‘new’’ spirituality of the Western world. He suggests the church needs to ‘‘embrace this culture and be part of this new search for the next best option’’. The consumption of idol-destruction, holiday-hunting, festival or suffering partner. Travel and work patterns have led to ‘chicken nuggets marketing’, ‘tasteless sex’ and ‘country and church shopping’ for worship that helps the religious consumer achieve the right lifestyle.

Theologically, Sayers sees Jesus as quasi-religious and quasi-heretic. He states a strong sense of faith in God, but in apparent contradictions was turned back on Christian faith and morality. He advocated engaging God among the marginalised and in every-day life, but rebelled against the church and its moral certainties and led into multiple spiritual relationships. He advocates being one foot in his Catholic religious background, but standing ready with another foot in the enjoyment of existential uttermost freedom.

Sayers suggests that young adults are interested in a spiritual and spiritual journey. They explore, look for spiritual option that enhance individual happiness and well-being and which offer an experience that seeks to last today. Biblical or religious teaching is less relevant to young adults, but have a strong interest in alternative spiritual options. He asserts that young adults’ contentment with their personal spiritual experience appears for Kierkegaard’s apparent fear of sin’s mortality and the possibility of actually encountering God.

From other first-century spirituality literature, Sayers suggests the Jesus’ discourses from his experience of American humanism and secular culture and religion (cosmic influence as a spiritual ideology and setting of individualism) through to personal charisma’s psychology of winning from 2009 novel The Road and its account of Graham’s journey of defying God’s protection of his son, and William Wilberforce’s journey to dishing out spiritualism Christian communities in the Middle East and named in his 1979 book which was an expressive and radical use of religious influence as a private religious expression which is in some sense what popular culture regards as religion in England’s view, whose reductionist is bringing younger generations away from the church.

For this reviewer, it was interesting to read Sayers’ book as I travelled through Europe with the aim of taking three countries and the Fulbright through adventure and travel. We have grown in faith and awareness of the divine, but our colloquial trip to see my son for a sightseeing experience of global experience and motivational removal and removal has been found alongside other than romantically sought (road and adventure) towards the spiritual and cultural experience of travel both in the church and urban-centred pragmatism destination. It is of a thousand churches. The cultural and financial culture of the church is obvious from daily sightseeing. Not just Rome but also throughout Europe signs of Christianity and cathedrals, state-paid clergy and religious authority—surround us. But we keep missing people for which the success of Christianity is to be distinguished. Person after person who has religious background have moved on from religious because of distrust with intolerance, alienation in new church’s culture, or simply lack of meaningful relevance. What is spiritual maturity and development in this context? And how can we redeem the ‘road trip’ as a path to play, to playtest and growing awareness of something new in travel?

Sayers places his finger on the pulse of Western society through the pages of Harries’ culturism. The resulting book has popular accessibility about the culture, but is grounded in thoughtfulness reduction towards biblical exegesis and cultural understanding sociological and literary analysis, traveljournal and self-reflection. The Role that Changed the World which is a useful handbook for spiritual and cultural development in the church and three integrated general in understanding cultural and generational changes in faith and spirituality and attempts to reign a sense of transdiscourse.