# Beyond McDonaldization (a mission catalyst tool)

By Darren Cronshaw

Let’s think imaginatively about how reach different sorts of people that our churches are currently not engaging with. John Drane argues that churches struggle to be credible with many spiritual seekers because they are stereotyped structures, offering unimaginative pre-packaged worship to a dwindling minority of consumers.[[1]](#footnote-1) George Ritzer's McDonaldization thesis states that fast food principles (identifying efficient ways to achieve certain ends) are dominating other spheres of society. Drane applies this to the church and questions how guilty we are of lack of imagination. He says let's not be pigeon-holed and do everything the same, expecting one size to fit all. It is appropriate to be holy dissatisfied with monotonous uncreative approaches to church and to be dissatisfied with how churches are not connecting with different groups of people. How can we reach not just corporate achievers, traditionalists and nominal Christians, but also the desperate poor, the spiritual searchers, the secularists, the apathetic, and the hedonists who are asleep Sunday morning after partying all night? Drane calls churches to rediscover their creativity and flexibility and offer spirituality with substance (rather than the equivalent of fast food) to post-modern seekers.

Churches are often okay at reaching middle-classed professional people and people with traditional experience of church. They also often have programs for the poor and have ‘seeker services’ for people who might be nominally Christian and interested in finding out more. But what about the rest of society? Drane identifies people in terms of how they are dealing with life and its apparent meaninglessness. He says different people seek meaning in different ways, and we may need different approaches to church for different people. Consider which of these groups of people your church is reaching (put a tick next to them), and which we are not (put a cross):

1. The desperate poor (who lack resources and struggle to survive) . .
2. The hedonists and party-goers (who are our partying late Saturday

night and so not awake Sunday mornings when we are in church) . .

1. The traditionalists (who live and work hard for family and community) . .
2. The spiritual searchers (looking for self-fulfillment and ignoring

the church with its religiousness, patriarchy and lack of ‘spirituality’) . .

1. The corporate achievers (lonely and very ‘McDonaldized’ and

busy on committees) . .

1. The secularists (who still expect science and reason to remove

spirituality and religion) . .

1. The apathetic (who might think of themselves as spiritual, but

when they are in church are often nominal in their commitment).[[2]](#footnote-2) . .

If there are different groups like this in our communities, should we expect the people to change and come to our churches, or could our churches change in order to better relate to them? In a world where so much is McDonaldized, packaged up, and fed to consumers in bite-sized easy pieces, we need new imaginative expressions of mission. How could we change?

1. John Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church: Spirituality, Creativity and the Future of the Church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000).; previously reviewed in Darren Cronshaw, "Emerging Missional Church Introductory Reading Guide," *Zadok Papers* vol. S143 (Summer 2005): 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Drane, *McDonaldization of the Church*, 60-78. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)