Contextualization in the context of mainstream ‘rock’ music listeners

By Clifton Maberly

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One of the difficulties of teaching a theology of contextualization is that the best textbooks on the topic often illustrate the application of the theology with inaccessible case studies. For example, one of the best early texts on the subject was David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen’s *Contextualization: meanings, methods, and models*. After a great introduction to the historical background of contextualization, and a survey of contemporary understandings of and approaches to contextualization from an evangelical perspective, they say,

Many of our readers may be thinking, “Well and good; but exactly how would the authors go about contextualization? What methods do they espouse? What do authentic, effective contextualized products look like?” (1989:197)

Then we are treated to a 1952 catechism for Indonesian tribals, an evangelistic tract for Chinese people, a contextualization of justification for twentieth century India, a sample of a contextualized debate for Muslims, and a contextualized sermon for nominal Christians in Central and Northern Europe.

While teaching on a theology of contextualization I have seen paradigm shifts in my students (“light dawns on erstwhile stygian darkness,” as one of my secondary school teachers used to exclaim when we got the point). But often the inaccessible examples reduced the impact to a whimper. The “authentic, effective contextualized products”

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were often an anticlimax. We need more walk-through case studies of recent contextualization.

Contextualization is not an arcane and erudite skill. You just have to do your best to fit the context of your intended listeners.

Last year, after returning from thirty years in Asia to take up local church ministry in rural Australia, one of the big events of my new parish rolled up and over me. My new parish, Toowoomba, hosts Australia’s largest Christian music festival, the Australian Gospel Music Festival (AGMF). The AGMF offers a celebration of faith, friendship, and music for nearly 40,000 people, with music ranging from Scar to Psalms, Jazz to Metal. Last year’s acts included international names such as Sonicflood, Delirious, Brooke Fraser, and Lads. It included Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) legends David Meece, Chuck Girard, and the Grammy Award winners, Petra. It hosted most of the Australian CCM bands, such as Reuben Morgan, Nathan Tasker, United, Planetshakers Band, Sons of Korah, Alabaster Box, Soulframe, and Roma Waterman. The musicians perform for three days on the festival’s twelve stages and grassy amphitheatres right in the middle of beautiful Toowoomba.

I sat back and watched as our two Adventist churches in Toowoomba threw themselves into adding their witness to the festival. They set up a health tent with the logo “This is Your Life,” doing a free health evaluation and a computer calculated life expectancy prediction on passers-by. They did a great job, and probably nudged many people towards commitments in health, but I was disturbed that we needed to pull out health at a music festival. The context was music. That’s the starting point for contextualization.

While I was still teaching missiology at Sahmyook University in Korea, I had started thinking about how I could develop an appropriate approach for the secular Australia I was returning to. I realized I would be hopelessly out of touch with some of the greatest passions of Australians (I just hadn’t been there recently enough to be passionate about the State of Origin rugby league). So I decided I ought to begin...
with an area I had kept track of over the years: global popular culture. Something Australians have in common with the rest of the world is their exposure to the primary value-creating media of global popular culture: music, movies, and computer games. With that in mind I began trying to catch up, not across a national gap, but across a generational one. Teaching in Korea had let the world pass me by again. Keeping up to the minute with popular culture takes a lot of effort. “Popular” is ephemeral, nothing remains popular for long. However I suspected that popular culture could be that useful forum I needed to explore spiritual issues. After all, all elements of culture are a microcosm of the whole.

I determined that next year I would try to talk music at the music festival.

I was kept busy for the rest of the first year back readjusting to Australia (that is another contextual story) so it wasn’t until I was on the way back from a cross-cultural mission project to Siberia (another contextual story) that I started reading the materials I had gathered on contemporary mainstream popular music. I read along and tested the materials out on the younger members of the mission team. Besides exploring how I could use popular music as a context for religious dialogue, I was thinking through a witnessing niche for the upcoming festival.

The festival presented a challenge to me. I am not a musician. The year before our two youth pastor volunteers had worked up a band that was up to festival standards, but that didn’t mean there was a role there for me, not even as the manager they didn’t need. So I decided to offer my services as a cultural and spiritual interpreter of music. That was better suited to who I am, for a missiologist is a cultural interpreter. I decided to try to engage people on spiritual issues in the context of popular music.

There was to be a large exhibition pavilion, where hundreds of booths would promote and sell contemporary Christian music and contemporary Christian clothing, as well promote a few special mission opportunities. That would have to be my venue.

How do you catch the attention of some of the 40,000 people streaming though an exhibition hall on their way to a concert of their favorite artists, stopping only to buy music or clothing linking them with their bands? How could I stop shoppers in their tracks? It would be easier if I was already a well known speaker. But I was an unknown, graying man. I just wanted a chance to minister to music-focused people, and find out whether this idea of spiritual dialogue on the common ground of music was a viable platform.

So I still had the problem of stopping music-lovers in their tracks as they drifted through the exhibition hall on their way to an-
other concert to hear another band. How could I get people to slow down long enough to talk to?

I decided to set up a booth inviting passers-by to consider the spiritual journeys of mainstream popular artists as an enhancement to their non-CCM listening, and as a platform for dialogue about faith with those outside the stream of contemporary Christian music. I thought that promotion on ‘non-Christian’ music at a gospel festival would have an edge that might catch some interest. Contextualized communication needs an edge. If you contextualize too well you will dissolve into the context. Communication needs to surprise within the context.

I chose the logo “Rocks Cry Out” (see photo) days before I came across the book The rock cries out by Steve Stockman. I added his subtitle to the banner: “Discovering eternal truth in unlikely music.” The Christian rationale behind the logo was just as Jesus told the national leaders that if believers were forbidden to shout their praises that the stones would cry out. Similarly, if contemporary Christian music (shouted praises) was not communicating with the unreached and unchurched, that God would ensure they heard by other means. That, in fact, is already happening as mainstream rock artists cry out the gospel in ways more effective than many in-house Christian musicians.

An Aside on Rock Music

Maybe a footnote on rock music is necessary for those Christian leaders who have focused on the dangers of popular music. I am not getting into that debate. I am exploring witnessing within a particular context: the context of listeners of popular music. If you don’t listen to popular music I am not advocating listening to it. If you aren’t familiar with the 70 bands listed below, this is not your context. We have to know which contexts we are qualified to have opinions on. I am aware of the raging Christian debate on rock music: there are hundreds of books and nearly 400,000 websites that address the issue. I am not going there.

Neither is Christian Rock the context we are exploring here. That is also another heated in-house debate. Take this as a sample from Dial-the-Truth Ministries:

Mainstream rock artists cry out the gospel in ways more effective than many in-house Christian musicians.
Q: Isn’t it better for young people to listen to Christian rock than Secular rock?

A: NO. It’s “better” that Christians do NOT listen to rock music, but good Christian music.

That is an entirely different subject. The context we are exploring here is the context of listeners of contemporary (2000-2005) mainstream popular music (here loosely called ‘rock’). The category ‘rock’ slides easily off the tongues of its detractors, but it is a huge field of music. ‘Rock’ includes classic rock, blues, art/progressive rock, various kinds of metal (heavy, thrash, power, death, doom, progressive, angry, nu), gothic, industrial, punk, rap, alternative, lounge, and others. I am not entering any discussion or debate about the relative merits or demerits of each of these streams. All that matters to me is that there are some people who listen to each of these genres. All of those fan groups are worthy contexts for witnessing.

It is true that some Christians reject all rock music. “To rock or not to rock” is not the critical question. How faith in God is expressed and the character of God revealed through particular music to its dedicated listeners is the more important question. Defining rock as “music designed not to be heard, but to be felt, to be drowned in” (Bacchiocchi, 2000:15) carries an implication that feelings are unworthy of spirituality. Where did that come from?

Music is listened to on its own plane. Different music affects different listeners differently. As I have said, I am not a musician, so aspects of music will escape me, but together with hundreds of millions of other listeners of
the mainstream popular music accessible in my culture, I know when music elevates me, and I know what delights me with under-the-brow delight. Criticisms of music that begin and end with "biblical principles of music" are bound to miss the point. The Bible is not a standard on culture, or science, or music. It is a testimony to revelations regarding the character of God.

It disturbs me that self-styled adjudicators of the spirituality of music (under the rubric of biblical principles of music) ignore whole other worlds of music. What do their ‘biblical principles of music’ say to the music of the Aari; the Aariya; the Aasáx; the Abadi; the Abaga; the Abai Sungai; the Abanyom; the Abar; the Adang; the Adangbe; the Adap; the Adele; the Adhola; the Adi; the Adi Galo; the Adiukrou; the Adonara; the Aduge; the Adyghe; the Adynyamathantha; the Adzera; the Aekyom; the Aer; the Afade; the Afar; the Afitti; the Afrikaans; the Agarabi; the Agariya; the Agatu; the Agavotaguerra; the Aghem; the Aghu; the Aghul; the Agi; the Agob; the Agoi; the Agta; the Aguano; the Aguaran; the Aguna; the Agutaynen; the Agwagwune; the Ähän; the Ahanta; the Ahe; the Aheu; the Ahirani; the Ahom; the Ahtena; the Ai-Cham; the Aigon; the Aiklep; the Aiku; the Aimaq; the Aimele; the Aimol; the Ainbai; the Ainu; the Aione; the Airoran; the Aiton; the Aizi; the Aja; the Ajawa; the Ajìë; the Ajyininka

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Abau; the Abaza; the Abé; the Abidji; the Abinomn; the Abipon; the Abishira; the Abkhaz; the Abnaki; the Abom; the Abon; the Abron; the Abu; the Abua; the Abui; the Abun; the Abung; the Abure; the Abureni; the Ache; the Achagua; the Achang; the Achè; the Acheron; the Achi’; the Acholi; the Achterhoeks; the Achuar-Shiwiar; the Achumawi; the Acipa; the Acroà; the Adabe; Apurucayali; the Ak; the Aka; the Aka-Bea; the Aka-Bo; the Aka-Cari; the Aka-Jeru; the Aka-Kede; the Aka-Kol; the Aka-Kora; the Akan; the Akar-Bale; the Akaselem; the Akateko; the Akawaíao; the Ake; the Akebu; the Akei; the Akha; the Akhvakh; the Aklanon; the Akon; the Akot; the Akose; the Ako; the Akpa; the Akpes; the Akposo; the Akrukay; the Akuku; the Akurio; the Aku;

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the Akwa; the Alaba; the Alabama; the Alago; the Alagwa; the Alak; the Alamblak; the Alangan; the Alatil; the Alawa; the Albanian; the Alege; the Alekano; the Alemannisch; and the Aleut?

*And that is just the peoples beginning with “A”* (selected from the Summer Institute of Linguistics Ethnologue). Actually, it is just a list of a third of the peoples whose language begins with “A,” and then there are 7,000 other main language groups. Within each ethno-linguistic musical tradition there is a range of musical genre. What were those “biblical principles of music” again? Is this over-kill? I’m sorry. It’s just that I get angry at facile critiques of other people’s music.

Over the last thirty years I have been exposed on a personal level to at least twenty-three different musical traditions. The differences defy easy categorization. Many of these music forms, and some of the lyrics (in languages I understand or in translation), now touch and feed my soul. Yes, there is always some music that is evil, but there is usually some that is inspiring, besides much that is mediocre. There is a principle that is at least universal: there exists cold, hot, and lukewarm. It is usually the lukewarm that is not worthy of attention.

As a missiologist and a pastor I am not interested in a set of criteria set up to pre-judge a genre of music. Music is as music does. And if you want to evaluate the spirituality of music you will need to know the musicians, know where they are on their spiritual journey, and what they are trying to express or accomplish through their music. Any critique of a musical genre that does not have a personal sympathetic acquaintance with the music and musicians being critiqued is not worth reading, especially if it damns a whole genre *holus bolus*. Music is a creative artifact of real people. As a contextual missiologist I am interested in people’s experience of their own culture, and in looking at how that can be common ground for a dialogue on spirituality. I will take seriously any creative and expressive cultural artifact that will give me the opportunity to share what I have seen and heard.

People of faith have invaded all genres of mainstream rock ‘n roll and are getting a hearing in places traditional evangelists are never heard.

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From its inception, Christian critics have assailed rock music as the devil’s music. As with most polemic treatments, often the range within genres is blurred by the polemic taken. Some “rock” music is definitely evil in intent and effect. (That characteristic is not limited to rock music, or even only to music.) However something unexpected has happened recently that makes the task of contextualizing easier. People of faith have invaded all genres of mainstream rock and roll and are getting a hearing in places traditional evangelists are never heard. Some of these Christians who have become popular artists clearly understand their missionary role in their context. Scott Stapp, formerly of Creed has said, “I think there’s a message in there that needs to get out and that God wanted to get out.”

Glimpses of God in Rock

In their on-going series “Glimpses of God,” *Christianity Today*’s Russ Breimeier and Andy Argyrakis (2003) have said:

What we are calling attention to is the increased interest in spiritual subject matter in today’s popular music outside the Christian subculture. Despite the rise in explicit content within popular music in recent years, there has also been a rise in spiritual soul searching, with artists expressing a longing for something much deeper than the infamous sex, drugs, and rock ‘n roll.

The series highlights mainstream artists noteworthy for Christians. They continue:

Within our chosen context are artists who have set up disguised Christian images hoping unbelievers will trip over them and ask about this god unknown to them, prompting them to open doors long shut, to open again to evaluate our God, our Jesus Christ.

Some of these artists do indeed come from a Christian background, offering glimpses of their faith through their craft. Others still don’t know Christ, but they certainly know of him—enough to communicate spiritual longing with an honesty that is refreshing.

We decided our niche at the festival would be the only ones promoting mainstream music at the gospel music festival; to feature music that was definitely not contemporary Christian music.
At the heart of the booth was our list of well-known mainstream (non CCM) artists who sing about spiritual issues. We featured posters of artists not usually featured at the gospel music festival, and we showed MTV-like video clips of those artists performing.

It worked. People rushing by caught a glimpse of our posters of Creed, Audioslave, Destiny’s Child, U2, Bob Dylan, Bob Marley, and especially Kurt Cobain and stopped in their tracks. They then noticed we were showing music video clips of U2 or Ben Harper, and wondered how we got in there. By then they had seen our list of serious mainstream artists who sing about spiritual issues (see insert). They stepped over to read through the list. We had compiled a list of the major serious popular artists. We had differentiated between those who were self-declared Christians and those who merely sang about spiritual issues, negatively as well as positively. Some of the artists on the list caught their attention (“Why do you have Marilyn Manson on the list?”)

We told them what we were doing and encouraged people to find out about the spiritual journeys of the popular artists they listened to, or wished their children didn’t listen to, so that they could have informed opinions about the most listened to artists out there.

We had compiled relevant interview or review material on most of the artists on our list as handouts to start people off on their search for the real people behind the performers. We promoted a number of recent books that help in this exploration, in this ministry (see Resources).

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**This was the list of artists we featured. Those in bold are self-declared Christians, the rest give glimpses of God:**

A Ministry in Its Own Right

We expect that this could be a ministry in its own right, to use knowledge of the spiritual journeys of popular artists and the story behind their popular songs as the ground for discussion about spiritual issues. We know that there are people out there who couldn’t care less about history or prophesy, or even health, but they do care about popular culture, music, movies, and computer games. And these arenas are not trivial; if they didn’t deal seriously with life they would not be globally successful.

Knowing the story behind the story can be a ministry. At the same time it can also enhance your own listening and your own spiritual experience. And that is important for practitioners of popular cultural ministry. If you are listening just to get polemic dirt, or to wean people away from the media they are using, this will not be your ministry. You must be able to say sincerely, “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious” (Acts 17:22 NIV). Paul had walked around and looked carefully at the Athenian’s objects of worship until he was able to be positive about some things in their context. His main starting point was an altar to “an unknown god.” In this contextual mission we have great advantages Paul never had. Within our chosen context are artists who have set up disguised Christian images hoping unbelievers will trip over them and ask about this god unknown to them, prompting them to open doors long shut, to open again to evaluate our God, our Jesus Christ. In this ministry we wanted to tap into the ministry of believers within the industry.

Who could be more “rock” than Alice Cooper? Many people who stopped by our booth didn’t know that Alice Cooper had become a Christian in the 1990s. But he had, and he is out there crying out on our side.

In a Hard Music Magazine interview, Alice Cooper said (2002):

I am not necessarily praise rock. I’m not Christian praise music. I think that I go to a different place. And I think that Christianity needs to go much more into the secular arts. I think that we need to be heard not just by Christians. I mean, it’s nice . . . bands like Creed, P.O.D. There are some bands out there that are saying some pretty good things. And then there are a lot of really good praise rock bands. I’ve just never felt . . . I do that in church. I do that in prayer. I do that, but I think that my message is more of a warning. I don’t mind being the prophet of doom. I think that that’s more fitted for what Alice is. I feel that, if God is going to use Alice Cooper, it’s going to be more on a level of a warning. It’s not going to be on a level of “Isn’t everything great? Isn’t everything good? Aren’t we all wonderful?” Alice is going to be more like, “Be careful! Satan is not a myth. Don’t sit around pretending like Satan is just a joke.” Because I have a lot of friends that do believe that. I think my job is to warn about Satan.
So much for those who see all rock as an instrument of the devil. We had wanted people to stop and talk about faith in relation to mainstream popular music. They did. The exhibit really pulled the people in. It was by far one of the most visited sites among those with serious spiritual messages. People crowded the booth, with sometimes more than fifteen listening at once. Many were the least-Christian of the visitors to the festival. We must have talked to most of ‘Goths’ that came by (stainless-steel studded black leather clothes, black hair and nails, all body parts pierced and brown lipstick). They stopped to talk to this old grey-haired man about their music. Many of them dragged their friends to come and talk more. Parents who were distressed at what their children were listening to came to talk about it. Recent converts came to talk about what they should do with the music that once supplemented their addictions. Those who had been wondering how to reach the unreached stopped to collect materials. Because of our preparation we were ready to talk with most of our visitors about their favorite artists (some of the 80 artists and bands on our list). Our preparation gave us great flexibility to talk with the range of people that stopped by.

**Like a Charm**

Over the two and a half day period nearly 700 people stopped by to talk seriously about spiritual issues through the medium of music cultural interpretations. The topic was a draw beyond my expectations. People took the time to select and take away over 4,300 of our 45 different handouts. They selected and collected them enthusiastically and gratefully. I am sure the handouts will be read and passed around. We didn’t sell that many books, but then I have never been good at selling anything except ideas. And we identified a number of people who will join us in exploring this medium for evangelism. That was one of the other objects of the exhibition: to locate colleagues to take this idea further.
Here’s an email response from one of the “practitioners” we met:

I don’t know if you remember me or not but I chatted to you at AGMF on the Saturday afternoon. I absolutely love what you’re doing, especially since you are coming at it from a beginner’s angle. Well done on all your work so far . . . I am a Youth Minister in the Anglican Church and use pop culture to re-tell the gospel all the time. I’m currently teaching my Youth Group about the Fruits of the Spirit by using episodes of the Simpsons, Seinfeld, and Frasier, and songs by U2.

Which seems a good place to finish this walk-through introduction.

I am proud to be called a beginner in the cultural interpretation of contemporary popular music by someone who is thirty-five years younger than me. It was great to find dedicated Christian young people who were miles ahead of where I was; they were working with insight from within their own context. What was most gratifying was these “natives” absolutely loved what we were doing. How did we get it that right? Quite simply by following contextualization theory.

The context was contemporary music; our surprising edge was mainstream, non-‘contemporary Christian music’ music. We stood on the shoulders of others contextualizing in the field: the Christian artists within the industry. We put aside all of ‘our’ in-house issues. We let the listeners define the common ground. And within their real context we focused on spiritual journeys. We looked for glimpses of God there. Those glimpses of God were our starting point.

**Going It Alone**

You will have noticed that this has been a very personal account, all about what I thought and what I did. That is a weakness at this stage. The problem was that the festival rushed up on me too quickly to get a team on board. Neither did I have time to process the whole thing through my local church. There was risk involved. So I decided to take the risk myself.

I alerted my church to the experiment. Two weeks before I preached a sermon from two U2 songs. Most had never heard of U2, let alone listened to them. The ones that had were touched
by the message, and the others generously let their pastor go out on a limb. I got bold enough to preach from Kasey Chambers at my second more conservative church, and that went over like a lead balloon. But hey, I was on a roll (get it?). My congregations knew what I was up to, and they didn’t stop me.

In the end I did get a few of the youth to help me draw in the crowd, and they were great, but not very informed. A visiting older brother came by, spread the word to those in the health booth that I was into dangerous stuff, and got one of the mothers angry that I was involving her daughter in such satanic stuff “she is only fifteen, for goodness sake.” That was a battle I didn’t need, but we worked through that over the next couple of weeks. I will need to get a team together to work up the next exhibit. There needs to be a welcoming group in the church that owns the approach and is able to continue the dialogue on that common ground.

We still have a way to go to develop this contextual ministry into a method of leading unbelievers to commitment, into a life-changing public evangelism. None of those ‘practitioners’ I met at the festival are using this approach in public. They are using it within the community of marginally-churched. None are using it to reach out to exclusively ‘mainstream’ listeners. However, I believe this foray into the context of mainstream ‘rock’ listeners has revealed its potential. This test at the Australian Gospel Music Festival exceeded my expectations as a common ground for talking about issues of faith and the end of time. It has given me confidence and enthusiasm to continue developing this approach, to continue contextualizing.

And in the meantime I have enriched my popular music listening. I have discovered a whole range of unexpected colleagues. Later this year I will stop by Dublin on my way back from teaching contextualization at Andrews University to see if I can get a glimpse of Bono, or at least get U2 in context . . . But that is another story.

**The Next Round**

All fired up with the success of the contextual music experiment, I looked ahead for the next opportunity. The next public event in our town here was to be the Toowoomba Seniors Expo 2005, with the logo “Live it up; don’t give it up.”

I didn’t see how we could use any of our Australian Gospel Music Festival materials at that event. But 10,000 were expected to come through the expo. How could we pass up the opportunity to reach out to them?

In an expo fostering an optimistic lifestyle for the elderly, we could expect to meet thousands of people who were genuinely interested in products to improve their lives. From their market research, the conveners expected
that 59% of all visitors would intend to make purchases at the event; 34% would be looking for new products and services; 62% of those intending to attend said that information is the major reason they attend such events. Why not be there with a spiritual product, new to the visitors, and information-based? If we get it right, why wouldn’t they pick up our product?

We went ahead and booked two booths. I had more helpers this time. It was appropriate to have information about health for people in this age cohort—we produced our own brochures, couched in the language of the expo, and touted as locally prepared by local people just for this event. It was appropriate to promote Christian satellite television, with around-Australia-across-the-desert accessibility for the mobile home tourers (throw in 3ABN and Hope Channel for long term exposure). Our satellite access price was good, and we have people who set this up as a missionary outreach. So there was a team ready to go. That left me free to do my contextual thing.

Seniors were being encouraged to “Live it up; don’t give it up” so why not put a word in for God. I had given a couple of successful seminars on “How to get on with your miserable life” (lessons from the book of Ecclesiastes) to people in this cohort. So I began thinking around “an ideal time to remember your creator,” or “at last you have the time to be spiritual.” I encouraged the health members of the team to think about “It’s never been more important to care for your health” or “Easy health for seniors.”

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use their retirement to recover the faith of their youth, a faith crowded out during their working years.

I prepared three attractive brochures dealing with aspects of the spiritual opportunities of their senior years and printed them by the thousand. I was careful not to be denominational, or too doctrinal, and I thought I had another winner. I even dressed up in a suit to give dignity to my conversations on sunset spirituality. And that might have been where it began to unravel.

I noticed that people read the logo and steered their way in other directions. At last I cornered one couple who made a particularly sharp u-turn in front of the booth. I asked their backs why they were avoiding the exhibit. It was the lady who responded. She waved her hand at me without meeting my eyes, the way people do to aggressive salespeople they don’t want to get tangled with, and said, “We aren’t thinking about that yet.” “Thinking about what?” I asked. “About meeting our maker . . .” she called back over her retreating shoulder. “Remember your creator” had become “meet your maker” and the piped music and beautiful photos, and the dark suited professional had signaled a funeral home promoting its services.

Over the next couple of days it became obvious that I had missed the mark entirely. Apart from the funeral issue (a change of clothes changed that) it became clear that this generation of Australians was not comfortable talking about spiritual things in public. I should have known that. I was reminded that this generation did not discuss their inner feelings at all, let alone to a stranger at an expo. For them religion was an identity rather than an experience. If I wanted to talk about religion, then the important question was, what church was I promoting. They weren’t interested anyway because they already had their own religion (read “denomination”), and they certainly weren’t interested in being evangelized by Seventh-day Adventists, and especially in such a public place (what would their friends think?)!

I had put all that effort into a lemon. Seniors did not want to talk about remembering their creator at a seniors’ expo. We did have some good talks to some, mainly other exhibitors. But then they were my generation, a generation more willing and able to talk about spiritual things.

The conveners didn’t do much better. Only 2,000 came to the expo, and most didn’t buy anything. Apparently Aussie seniors don’t want to talk about ‘living it up’ in public either. Or maybe they didn’t want to go so public with being seniors or admitting they have considered ‘giving it up.’ Or were there other mitigating factors? The jury is still out.

Doing contextualization is not that easy after all.
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