Study Leave Report
May 1-4th 2012
Pilgrimage and Festival
Supervisor: Rev Dr Kevin Ward

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1. What is Pilgrimage?

What follows is the fruit of 5 day's labour sitting in an office in Dunedin. I did do some preparatory reading beforehand, but the depth of this report is limited by the time available. Thanks to my supervisor Rev Dr Kevin Ward for his oversight, readings and insightful comments.

1. A) Pilgrims in a foreign land: a New Testament Exegesis.

My study leave project was to look at the concepts of Pilgrimage (and to a lesser extent Festival) within the context of NZ society as a whole, but particularly within the context of the Christian Church in NZ. Accordingly, I need to start with an understanding of what pilgrimage is, but particularly what it is in relation to the Christian tradition.

This might be a rather boring way to begin, but the Word of God is the supreme authority in matters of faith in the PCANZ, so therefore I need to start with occurrences of the words pilgrim or pilgrimage in the Bible. Although the Jewish faith of old had a strong concept of pilgrimage, Old Testament law is interpreted by Christians in the light of the Christ event. Accordingly, my starting place is with the New Testament.

The practice of pilgrimage occurs in most World Religions and pre-dates the emergence of Christianity – as many commentators note, "it seems to be a universal urge."[1] Interestingly, pilgrimage does not seem to have been a significant Christian practice in the Early Church (as discussed below) until the time of Constantine and the rise of Christendom. This could well be because the Bible gives no theological mandate for Christians to embark on such an activity.

The word 'pilgrim' was however present in the English Bible from its first translation by John Wycliffe, up until the Revised Version of 1881,[2] when it was replaced by other words. It was located in only two verses, both in the New Testament – Heb 11:13, and 1 Peter 2:11 – with Hebrews being the more influential text.

Heb 11:13-14 in the AV reads,

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

Modern translators have obviously found using the word 'pilgrim' here problematic in presenting the original meaning of this passage and so the NIV reads "And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth" while the NRSV reads 'They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth."

Similarly, the AV renders 1 Pet 2:11 thus, "11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." The NIV

[1] Edwards, Philip, *Pilgrimage and Literary Tradition* (London: Cambridge uni Press, 2005), p.5
[2] Ibid p.6

is consistent in again substituting 'pilgrim' for 'alien,' while the NRSV reads "aliens and exiles."

Why then has the word 'pilgrim' been judged problematic and dropped by modern translators?

1. B) *Peregrini*: Semantics and scripture.

The Greek original of Heb 13 says "*xenoi kai parepidemoi*" – "*xenoi*" being "stranger and the root of our word xenophobia. Latin, which has been the more influential language in the development of Western Christianity, has no word for one who visits sacred places and translated the text with "*peregrini et hospites.*" (*Peregrini* and *parepidemoi* also appear in 1 Pet)

Hospites has strong connections with the concept of pilgrimage as in the Knights of St John Hospitaller who were established to protect and tend pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land, and as in the 'hospitals' in which pilgrims on the Camino to Santiago still stay (some of which also function as hospitals in the common English sense of the word).

Peregrini however is the word translated as 'pilgrim' and which has had a strong influence over Western Christian culture. "*Perigirinus* meant a wanderer, a traveller from foreign parts, an alien; and it is in these senses that it is used in the Epistle to the Hebrews to translate the Greek."[3]

So, 'pilgrim' in the New Testament refers more to the human situation than to an act. We are citizens of heaven, strangers and aliens on earth, wandering and journeying through life. We are citizens not of this world, but of the world to come. Both Hebrews and 1 Peter present believers as spiritual pilgrims, bound for God's coming Kingdom and union with Christ.

This however is not the common meaning of the word today, why did it change?

1. C) Pilgrimage in Old Testament Judaism and its relation to Christ.

As mentioned above, pilgrimage as an act predates Christianity and was a well established tradition in Judaism.

Judaism is founded on acts of pilgrimage (whereas the word 'pilgrim' only occurs in the New Testament, 'pilgrimage' occurs several times in the Old Testament): Abraham followed the call of God to leave his home and travel as a stranger to a land he did not know; the Exodus was a pilgrimage from slavery in Egypt and into freedom in the Promised Land.

Pilgrimage was also built into Jewish religious practice. Jews living away from Jerusalem were expected to return to the temple at regular intervals for festivals, and one theory holds that the Psalms of Ascent were a 'pilgrim hymnal' to be sung by pilgrims en route to Jerusalem.[4]

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[3] Ibid, p.6

[4] Bartholomew, C. & Hughes, F. (eds) *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p.xii.

Jerusalem in particular, and the Holy Land in general, were the geographic focus of the Jewish understanding of pilgrimage.

The term "pilgrimage" however does not appear in the New Testament, what does this mean? Does the theology behind Old Testament pilgrimage still stand in Christianity, or has it been reframed by the coming of Christ?

In answering this question I stand with bishop NT Wright. In his book *The way of the Lord: Christian Pilgrimage Today*, he talks of a profound and unexpected encounter he had with Christ in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. It seems that he went there to worship, though not intentionally as a 'pilgrim' being sceptical of this practice. However, the combination of place, prayer and pain drew him intensely into the presence of the risen Jesus for three hours.

So, on the one hand he has experienced for himself the power of pilgrimage and place, but theologically he is cautious. He writes,

"The New Testament refuses to countenance any geographical focus to Christian worship and living… there is no such thing in the New Testament as a Holy Land… Jesus' death outside the (then) city walls seems to have brought the Land's holy status to an end. The Father now seeks worshippers from all the world, who will worship him in spirit and in truth… the world as a whole and all the countries in it are now to be regarded as holy."[5]

From 'Holy Land' to 'Holy World.' Yes, "come and see the place," but remember, "he is not here, he is risen!" Our faith has a global focus and an eternal focus, it does not have a specific geographic focus. Old Testament calls for pilgrimage are superseded by the coming of Christ and our hope of the coming Kingdom. Pilgrimage is not forbidden but it is also not mandated for believers, and any Christian pilgrimage would be very different in theological intent than the Jewish pilgrimages of old.[6]

1. D) The evolution of word and practice.

So, pilgrimage is not mandated, but it is also not forbidden.

As quoted above, academics and those who have studied this topic are coming to the conclusion that the act of pilgrimage seems to be a universal human urge. Add to that the historical foundation of Christianity and some form of pilgrimage must have been inevitable at some point.

Christianity asserts itself as an historic religion. The stuff in the bible happened! It happened at a specific place and at a specific time. To be able to understand and interpret the New Testament properly we need to know the context. Context includes language, culture and religion, but it also includes geography.

St Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, is the most famous (and perhaps the first?) of the early pilgrims. She was commissioned by her son to find Judeo-Christian

[5] Wright, NT *The way of the Lord: Christian Pilgrimage Today* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999), p.7.
[6] Ibid.

relics, and her visit to Jerusalem 326-328 literally put it back on the map. Jerusalem was transformed from a small impoverished village into a city of shrines, churches, 'hospitals' and monasteries. It was soon even granted its own Patriarch with accompanying authority within the Church, after not having been considered when the first Patriarchs of Rome, Antioch and Alexandria were established.

Christian pilgrims have been visiting Israel/Palestine ever since, and pilgrimages rapidly multiplied to a myriad of other sites.

Another force for change in our understanding of pilgrimage is the nature of the word itself.

The authors of Hebrews and 1 Peter took a physical word referring to a physical act, and turned it into a metaphor. "The journey of the soul towards union with Christ is the reality, and the physical journey to a shrine may be seen as a metaphor – a miniature version of that longer, more complex journey which every soul must choose to undertake."[7]

A physical journey is however much more concrete and easy to keep in mind than a theological, spiritual journey – regardless how more real you're told that the spiritual journey actually is (and especially if the spiritual journey can only be described to you in the words of a physical journey!). And so, the physical journey came to dominate art and thought in Europe, despite irate writings by theologians like St Gregory of Nyssa, St Augustine, and St Anselm.

The Celts developed an interesting and unique understanding of pilgrims – calling them the 'green martyrs.' They would set off as prompted by the Spirit with no goal or destination in mind, living as hermits or missionaries, establishing communities and staying for a time before moving elsewhere, never expecting to return home.[8]

Edwards also recounts the writings of Dante on the meaning of this word *peregrini* in 1292. In *La Vita Nuova* he reflects on seeing a group of pilgrims come through Florence on their way to Rome. He only deigns to call the pilgrims (*peregrine*) in the broad sense of the term, wanting to retain that label only for those trekking to Santiago de Compostella – "for St James, dying far away from his own homeland, was truly an alien and an exile."[9] Edwards notes about this: "it would seem that Dante is on the point of giving up the struggle to preserve the Latin *peregrinus* from the invading sense of pilgrim as shrine-visitor, but at least wants to preserve it for that kind of pilgrim for whom it has some propriety."[10]

And so a battle waged between the physical and spiritual/theological understandings of what is a pilgrim (*peregrinus*), with the physical sense of the word dominating popular imagination for most of Western Christian history.

1. E) The role of pilgrimage and place in facilitating worship.

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[7] Edwards p.9.
[8] Dunn, Andrew *Refresh Summer 2004-05, Vol 4, Number 2: Pilgrimage*, p. 3
[9] Edwards, p. 21
[10] Ibid, p.21

The lack of a geographic focus, and the absence of shrines and holy places from earliest Christianity can seem quite contrary to human nature.

In 1996 G Rodman did a study on whether hard-core Elvis fans in the US are turning their devotion in the direction of becoming a religion. Apparently, speaking of Elvis as God and his devotees as worshippers is a running joke in North America, but Rodman does claim to have found some basis for viewing the behaviour of Elvis fans in this way.

The core element that he holds forth as the differentiating factor in the behaviour of Elvis fans and fans of other musicians and sports teams, is that of place.

Sci-Fi fans meet online or intermittently in hotel convention rooms for Expos, but have no dedicated geographic location to gather and express their love of Star Trek or Star Wars. Likewise, fans of bands meet online or at concerts, but have no physical locale devoted to their heroes. Sports teams in contrast do have home stadiums, but half the time their teams play away, and during the week those stadiums are used by other teams, other codes, concerts, even market days. They can't gather as they wish and when they like.

Elvis fans however have two centres: Gracelands and the Birthplace, both in Memphis. 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, those places are exclusively set apart for the adoration and appreciation of Elvis. "Perhaps the most crucial contribution that Gracelands has made to Elvis' stardom is its role as a physical site where an international community of Elvis fans can congregate and actually come to have a sense of themselves as a community."[11]

He asserts that Elvis fans are no more obsessive or fanatical than other fan groups, however, a dedicated pilgrimage site makes them unique in several ways…

i) They have a stronger sense of community which helps strengthen their enthusiasm over the long haul;

ii) Graceland serves to normalise their devotion (they meet many others just like them), encouraging and emboldening their fanatical behaviour whereas other fans might be embarrassed about their obsessive quirks;

iii) this all then helps perpetuate the following by bringing others into the fold – they are entering a known, defined community with high morale and accepted behaviours.

One can understand the desire to visit the places where Jesus (or inspiring Christian 'saints') lived, walked, and died. I feel this desire myself and yearn to visit Jerusalem one day. What this study of Elvis fans does however, is to suggest at the power that devoted religious sites have in strengthening, normalising, and binding a faith community together.

Why then, for the first 350 years, did Christians not embark on pilgrimages? Yes, the bones of dead saints such as Polycarp were kept by the churches they once lead, but when early Christian writers speak of going to Palestine, they went to preach or to visit the local church communities. The focus was on people, not on place.

The fact that they sustained their sense of identity and mission efforts (to the extent of converting the Roman Empire!) without any physical geographic centre surprises and impresses me. Yes, this situation didn't last, but how did they sustain that for so long? A good topic for more study leave…

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[11] Rodman, G.B. *Elvis after Elvis: The Posthumous Career of a Living Legend* (Routledge: London, 1996), p. 117.

1. F) A brief history of Pilgrimage in the European/Mediterranean context: from pre-Christian times to the present.

When understanding pilgrimage in terms of the physical journey to a sacred place, it has a long and rich history – a history that brings out another distinctive feature that defines the act. That is intentionality.

One doesn't just wake up in the morning and decide to go on a pilgrimage that day. Pilgrimage starts with a calling; then progresses through a significant period of preparation, before embarking on the journey itself.

In terms of journeying to a specific place (rather than the goal-less Celtic *peregrinatio*), there has been an interesting shift in focus for pilgrims. For most of history, the focus has seemed to be on the destination – going to a shrine for the purpose of worship or to offer sacrifice. Some Psalms of Ascent reveal the joy of the pilgrim when the temple, their objective, finally comes into view for the first time, shining white atop mount Zion. The joy of the pilgrim coming to the end of their road.

Coleman and Eade speak of "the relative decline in penitential discourse within pilgrimage since the medieval period in Europe, and the increased emphasis on transformations in the self – a shift that perhaps prompts more emphasis on the experience of the journey itself than on the destination."[12] Hence, people with no Christian orientation can walk the Camino to Santiago, because arriving to worship at the tomb of St James is not a central motivation for their pilgrimage. This can also result in the arrival point being time of grief and anti-climax to modern pilgrims, rather than the source of unrestrained, and even violent or chaotic joy that it was to earlier humans.[13]

Among modern Christian pilgrims, this shift of focus from the destination to the personal formation of the journey, would seem to give more scope for a recovery of an understanding that the literal journey is a metaphor and aide for the greater, 'more real' spiritual/theological journey into union with Christ. They go not primarily to visit the shrine but to connect with God on the way.

As mentioned, pilgrimage pre-dates Christianity in the region of Europe and the Mediterranean.[14] The Jewish faith mandating pilgrimage, as did other surrounding cultures.

Greeks would travel great distances to the oracle at Delphi or the healing shrines at Epidaurus, as well as a myriad of other temples built on holy sites. This pattern was the same in many places such as Italy and Egypt. Pious pilgrims would show their devotion by travelling to a shrine to honour a god, undergoing specific rituals and observances both en route and on arrival.

Greek culture also shows a widening of the practice somewhat to include travelling to witness religiously inspired games (such as the Olympic games), and pan-Hellenic festivals such as the 4-yearly great festival of Zeus – a time to worship, party, witness

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[12] Coleman, S. & Eade, J. *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 10

[13] The Prayer of La Faba, inscribed on a chapel wall on the Camino to Santiago is a powerful presentation of the inner change a pilgrimage is expected to make in an individual.

[14] I didn't have time to read up on ancient pilgrimage practices in India, China or South America.

athletic prowess, and to reinforce a wider Greek identity and community. Interestingly, the Greeks also had a type of allegorical understanding of pilgrimage: the voyage of Odysseus came to have an allegorical interpretation as representing the "inner spiritual journey to one's authentic home."[15] This has shades of the Christian theological/scriptural understanding of pilgrimage.

As noted, an initial a mark of difference for Christianity was its lack of a geographic focus, and the corresponding absence of pilgrimage to holy sites. God was after all God of the whole earth and could be worshipped anywhere, and the initial theological emphasis was to view all of life as a personal spiritual pilgrimage toward union with our Creator.

However, a Christian tradition of physical pilgrimage began in the 4th Century, and rapidly flourished. Shrines, reliquaries, healing centres and holy places associated with miracles or the lives of the saints emerged throughout the Christian world. This popularity of pilgrimages began to decline however with the Protestant Reformation and the advent of Modernity.

The Reformers reacted strongly to the abuses and the moral license they saw attached to pilgrimage in their day. As we have seen, pilgrimage is not mandated for Christians in scripture, and so they were very cautious and critical of this practice (though Luther for one could see a place for it if grounded in pure and theologically sound motives).[16] Protestants generally therefore inherited a distaste for this practice, if not an outright repudiation. In contrast they tried to once again shift the understanding of believers back to the Biblical model of pilgrims being on an inner, spiritual journey. Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress is the classic text in this tradition, and has strongly shaped English speaking culture. In a Kiwi context, it was even the first book translated into Maori after the Bible.

As noted above, this situation is however changing with more believers coming to consider the practice of physical pilgrimage as a valuable aid on the journey of inner pilgrimage.

In our era of history, physical pilgrimage is on the rise again both for Christians and others - even as mainline church attendance declines. Two examples: there are over 6,000 pilgrimage sites in Europe and as a new millennium dawned they were attracting 60-70 million religiously motivated visitors a year; in 1985 2,490 'official' pilgrims visited the tomb of St James in Santiago, in 2001 it had grown to 61,420.

Notably, evangelical Protestants have embraced pilgrimage, though without the label (and with more of a traditional focus on destination rather than journey?). Many of us will remember the 'Toronto Blessing' and the thousands of charismatically inclined church leaders who made pilgrimage to the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship in the 1990s. Jerusalem however and the Holy Land are again the main focus of evangelical

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[15] Coleman & Elsner *Piety and Identity: Sacred Travel in the Classical World* (Massachusetts: Harvard Uni Press, 1995), p.10.

[16] Tomlin, G. *Protestants and Pilgrimage* in Bartholomew, C. & Hughes, F. (eds) *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p.111.

pilgrimage – visits there are dependant on the political situation, but in 2000 visitors had doubled in 8 years to 4 million.[17]
Across the board, pilgrimage is in the ascendancy.

Summary: What is Pilgrimage?

I feel the need to pause and summarise…

- Pilgrimage is an intentional journey, springing from an inner yearning or sense of call.
- Pilgrimage based on religious motives was known and practiced throughout Europe and the Mediterranean (and beyond) well before the advent of Christ.

- In the Bible, the word "pilgrimage" occurs only in the Old Testament and is mandated for Jews.
- Judaism is founded on stories of physical pilgrimage, as called by Yahweh, to the Holy Land.
- All Jews were called to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem on a regular basis, and the imagery of this journey inhabits many of the Psalms.

- For both pagans and Jews, the emphasis in pilgrimage was on the arrival, a time of joy and celebration.
- Since the Middle Ages however, this emphasis has shifted to the journey and the process of inner change.
- Thus, people can and now do go on a pilgrimage regardless if the end point is of religious importance to them.

- The coming of Christ has reframed the Old Testament call to engage in pilgrimage. It is not forbidden, but it is no longer mandated – yes, come and see the place, but remember, he isn't here, he is risen!
- The New Testament has no concept of a Holy Land, but rather of a Holy World.
- There is no geographic centre to our faith, God can be found anywhere and primarily in our hearts. We do not need to travel to a remote shrine to find God.
- The word 'pilgrim' does appear in the New Testament, but it is given a new meaning. The language of a physical and literal journey is applied to a theological and spiritual journey - we are citizens of heaven, strangers and aliens on earth, wandering and journeying through life seeking union with Christ.
- The New Testament asserts that the spiritual journey is the real journey, and that any physical pilgrimage we might take is merely a metaphor for the true inner journey.
- However, the physical meaning is easier to comprehend and act upon than the spiritual meaning, and so a physical interpretation of pilgrimage dominated in the minds of the faithful masses (despite the best efforts of theologians to counter this).

[17] Bartholomew, C. & Hughes, F. (eds) *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p.xiii.

- Having a dedicated place of pilgrimage and devotion for a group seems to have a powerful effect on the human psyche. It can create a sense of community, a boldness in acting out ones devotional fervour, and it helps normalise identity.
- Presumably for these reasons, although initially there was no real tradition of Christian pilgrimage, by the 4th Century Christian pilgrimage was beginning to flourish – with the Holy Land as the highest goal.

- The Reformation and the advent of Modernity sent the popularity of pilgrimage into decline.
- With their Bible-centred approach to faith, the reformers were highly cautious of physical pilgrimage, and Protestants have a history of denigrating this practice while trying to promote the Biblical understanding of the spiritual/theological pilgrimage.
- However, with the advent of post-modernity and the decline of institutional religion, the popularity of physical pilgrimage has again soared over the last 20 years.
- In practice, conservative Protestants have also embraced physical pilgrimage in a significant way, though without usually naming it as such.

2. A brief exploration of the theory of pilgrimage.

When the social sciences were emerging, pilgrimage was in decline. It was a low-level fringe activity, outside the main structures of society. Therefore, "anthropologists have tended to neglect pilgrimages because they were, by definition, exceptional practices, irregular journeys outside habitual social realms."[18]
Now however that pilgrimage as a practice is again in the ascendancy, it is becoming a very popular field of study. How though to get a handle on it?

The terms "liminality" or "liminal space" get bandied about a lot these days, largely because students of the social sciences find this a very powerful analytical concept in our age of change and uncertain futures. It was first coined by the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in 1909, and was later re-discovered and expanded by Victor Turner in the late 60's.
Wikipedia quotes Agnes Horvath, Bjørn Thomassen, and Harald Wydra in describing liminality – "the term is used to 'refer to in-between situations and conditions that are characterized by the dislocation of established structures, the reversal of hierarchies, and uncertainty regarding the continuity of tradition and future outcomes.'"[19] Entering a liminal space creates a state termed 'Communitas' where participants in a liminal ritual bond across social or racial boundaries that would usually serve to keep them apart.
Significantly, Wikipedia quotes Turner's work on pilgrimage as the classic example of how Communitas forms:

"For example, during a pilgrimage, members of an upper class and members of a lower class might mix and converse as equals, when in normal life they would rarely converse at all or their conversation might be limited to giving or receiving orders... a

[18] Coleman & Eade p.3
[19] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liminality accessed May 3 2012

full-scale "Communitas" of equal beings' may be of longer or short-lived duration. According to Turner, this sense of Communitas is created as the pilgrims "distance themselves from mundane structures and their social identities, leading to a homogenization of status."[20]
Malcolm X's life-changing pilgrimage to Mecca would be a famous example of the power of Communitas in action.

Turner's analysis of (dominantly Christian) pilgrimage through the lens of liminal space and the formation of Communitas, has become the starting point in academic analysis, though it is now being increasingly critiqued. Turner saw Christians pilgrimage as a spontaneous, voluntary, even anarchical act. It was a popular movement and so removed from the control of 'clerics,' it transcended geographic, linguistic, and political boundaries. It truly removed the participant from their mundane, every day lives and placed them in the context of new traditions, new social structures, possibly a new country, and a whole raft of new future possibilities.
"Interestingly, the Turners hint at a distinction between 'the pilgrim's new found freedom from mundane or profane structures' during the journey itself, and the increasingly circumscribed experience of the traveller approaching a sacred destination and therefore becoming subject to religious buildings, pictorial imagery, and so on"[21] - a good illustration of the profound difference between emphasising either the arrival or the journey of the pilgrim.

Rival views to Turner are the 'structuralist/Durkheimian/Marxist' views which see the shrines that pilgrims trek to as being "a crucial media for disseminating religious orthodoxy among the unlettered masses."[22] They see pilgrimage as strengthening the status quo and possibly legitimizing inequalities in wider society.

Going on a pilgrimage is obviously a powerful and life changing experience, one that more and more people are feeling called to embark upon as institutional religion loses a place of power and of shaping cultural meaning in our post-modern world.[23]
Scholars however seem to be moving away from the simplistic dichotomy that either pilgrimage reinforces social structures, or it breaks down those structures. Life is a lot greyer than that, and the motivations for and role of pilgrimage in particular seem to be quite nebulous and even mystical – varying greatly from one individual to the next.

Some thoughts though:

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[20] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liminality accessed May 3 2012; referencing Turner, Victor and Edith. *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives.* Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1978.
[21] Coleman & Eade p.2
[22] Eade, J. & Sallnow, J. (eds)*Contesting the Sacred:the anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (Routledge: London, 1990), p.4
[23] It would be very interesting to know what percentage of the 60,000+ pilgrims a year walking their way to Santiago would be involved in institutional forms of religion. It would also be interesting to have a good analysis of the differences between pilgrims from our secular Western context, and those from cultures or points in history that were more tightly bound together by a common religious world view)

- In terms of Communitas, talking with and reading about the experiences of those who have been on Christian, Jewish or Islamic pilgrimage, Turner's theory of the creation of egalitarian community does have strong resonance.
- In terms of pilgrimage creating a 'liminal space,' logic seems to demand that it would do so. It is after all directly taking an individual away from their home, family, work, community, country(?) and daily routines. A pilgrim on the road is in a profound 'in-between' situation.
- Does however the theory of liminality allow for these liminal spaces to reinforce orthodoxy? Jewish pilgrimage to the temple must have reinforced the status quo, cementing a central Jewish identity, and binding Jews no matter how dispersed, to the hierarchical religious caste based in the temple.

I know little about the haj, but could Mecca's location on the Arabian peninsular help cement the centrality of Arabic language and culture in that faith?

Certainly, when one thinks of the pilgrimage of a pre-Reformation Luther to Rome (again the hierarchical centre of the Western Church), pilgrimages such as his were designed to reinforce orthodoxy and bolster unswerving loyalty to the Institution. Of course though, in his case it had the opposite effect.

- In contrast to the above examples, the myriad of pilgrimages to small or popular shrines in obscure locations, with more tenuous links to the institutional hierarchy; as well as Turner's comment about how pilgrimage frees one for a time from the oversight of the clergy to walk and think as one will, must contribute a significantly subversive side.
- On top of this, it would be a struggle to see our modern manifestation of more individualistic and at times quite secular pilgrimage, as reinforcing orthodoxy. Especially as pilgrimage usually requires high income in our Western context, and a correspondingly high level of education.

Examples…

My former East German host parents went to Rome initially as tourists, but they returned as pilgrims. My Atheist, communist, ex-Major host father joined the crowds to witness a Papal audience in St Peter's square, and had a profound and totally unexpected spiritual experience. He came home radiant, a changed man, possibly now a man of "faith." But did he start going to church? No way!

Similarly, how many of those who walk to Santiago become devout orthodox Catholics as a result? Very few I would imagine. People take pilgrimage on their own terms in our postmodern age, and assimilate the changes this experience works within them in very individual ways.

Conclusion.

More current scholars assert that Turner's theory does not always fit, especially in non-Christian, non-European/Mediterranean settings. Despite that, if one holds the tension between pilgrimage having the potential to both reinforce and subvert orthodoxy, this understanding of pilgrimage as creating liminal space and Communitas makes sense to me as a person of faith. Further, in our modern secular western context, I would argue that Turner's analysis is becoming more and more valid than it perhaps was in the past, or perhaps is now in more traditional and religiously coherent societies.

3. Pilgrimage (& Festival) in contemporary secular Kiwi society

My sphere of interest is broader than just pilgrimage, it also covers Festival. The two are often linked together – Greeks would make pilgrimage to the Pan-Hellenic festivals; and as we see in the life of Jesus, Jews would time their pilgrimage to Jerusalem to coincide with a festival like Passover.
Festival is however an easier concept to define and understand, and so I haven't included it until now.

3. A) References in Popular culture

Two weeks before I came on study leave I was channel surfing, and came across the new US show Terra Nova. The basic plot line seems to be that humans have polluted earth, but have somehow found a way to travel to a young earth in a different time-stream, in the age of the dinosaurs. What struck me was that these migrants back in time are know as Pilgrims, and that particular episode was set to the back-drop of a community-wide celebration of a harvest festival.

Pilgrims and festivals.
Festivals have always been with us, and retain their popularity. The various Mardi Gras around the world have a certain allure in popular culture; the Cuba St carnival in Wellington was extremely popular; and even my suburb of Island Bay has its own Festival. A few years ago this Island Bay Festival was at a low ebb, but people wanted it to succeed, they wanted a Festival to go to, and so recent efforts to revive it have been rewarded by a significant influx of visitors – 15-20,000 this year in a community of around 6,000 residents.

The Pilgrim Fathers have a strong place in the American national psyche, keeping the word alive there even while the concept of pilgrimage dropped below the radar in other Western countries. As pilgrims, those 'Fathers' were possibly more in the mould of the Celtic Green Martyrs, travelling as called by the Spirit with no fixed goal, and definitely not journeying to some distant shrine.
The pilgrims of Terra Nova are of this ilk (as I imagine would most pop culture references to 'pilgrims' emerging from the USA) – pilgrim-immigrants, exiles, seeking a new home. There are shades of the Biblical understanding of the word here, and the show definitely presents theirs as a sacred quest with mythical/spiritual qualities. Theirs is a journey of regeneration and renewal, of hardship and struggle, hope and redemption, with the goal of making something better – they are there to build an ideal society, a new heaven on a new earth.

I also visited a book shop last week and was fascinated to see visibly displayed a large coffee-table book simply titled *Pilgrimage*. In keeping with the secular nature of our society, it was the photo-diary of some celebrity as she visited and recorded sites that

were holy to her because of their connection with the lives of diverse authors – her pantheon of literary saints.
It would be hard to capture the process of the journey in still life photography, and so, interestingly, the emphasis the book presented was one of destination and arrival.

I am also eagerly awaiting the release of the film *The Way* starring Martin Sheen. In this he acts the role of a father making pilgrimage to Santiago in honour of his dead son, experiencing the transformative power of liminal space and Communitas on the way.
If one begins to look, pilgrimages and festivals are going on all around us. They seem to resonate with people in this age.

3. B) Tourism as/vs Pilgrimage? What's the difference?

Tourism has been suggested as a manifestation of pilgrimage in our secular age, but generally, works on pilgrimage seem to try and differentiate the two. This is a hard task, surely there must be a continuum here?
Yes, 60,000+ 'official' pilgrims trek to Santiago each year, abiding by the ancient traditions and being credited by the Church for their pilgrimage. However, tens of thousands also visit Santiago as tourists, visiting the cathedral and the tomb of St James on their trip. I applaud the Catholic Church for maintaining standards – to be an official pilgrim one must cover at least the last 100km, one must do it either on foot or by bicycle, and one must obtain the appropriate documentation on the way.
But for those designated as 'tourists,' were they not drawn to that corner to Spain because of its aura and mystical significance as the end point of such a major pilgrimage route? Could not by-passing the journey but driving or flying to the end point to be present at this holy destination also be considered a type of pilgrimage?

"Journeying on foot or by bicycle is valued far above car driving. Not only is walking a form of self-sacrifice involving endurance and austerity, it also allows 'pilgrims' to discover a sense of contact with the past."[24]
A few summers past, my wife and I drove and ferried a not insignificant distance to the north side of the Hokianga harbour, seeking to find a narrow metal driveway, winding down from the pot-holed and equally metal main road, to a small but beautiful Catholic church surrounded by roses. It took us hours! Why did we go? Because this is the new resting place of Bishop Pompalier – a colourful character in our nation's past and the first Catholic Bishop of Aotearoa.
It's in the middle of nowhere, there were no footpaths or walking tracks, and so we drove. We had read about him and so went to witness and pay our respects, and then we came back. Was this not a pilgrimage?

Contrastingly, on my OE I ended up in Liverpool for a day. While there I visited some of the places made famous for their association with the Beatles. My supervisor however went to Liverpool on his OE; but went with intent, he stayed a good amount of time, he had longed to visit for years, he went primarily because of the city's association with the

[24] Coleman & Eade p.11.

Beatles, he had researched and he visited all the sites, deeply observing and soaking them in. I was a tourist, he was a pilgrim.

Differentiating between pilgrims and tourists isn't totally clear-cut. It is a continuum, they do overlap – but still, there is a difference.

I found that Rodman came out with the best distinctions between tourists and pilgrims in his study on Elvis fans.[25]

1) Pilgrims come to soak themselves in a place, to linger and go deeper in their surroundings than does a tourist – hence the preference for modes of travel that expose the pilgrim to the elements; the smell, taste and feel of a place.

2) Pilgrimages are not usually spontaneous or spur-of-the-moment, but are birthed out of an inner call or yearning. Pilgrims will research and prepare themselves to arrive at their destination in a 'worshipful' mood. They may even bring a 'votive offering' to leave behind as an act of love and connection with that place.

3) Tourists organise their travel around seeing as many of the sites on offer in an area, while a pilgrim focuses their travel on a single sacred destination (while allowing for trips to secondary holy places). So, a tourist to Memphis might also visit the Civil Rights museum, while a true Elvis pilgrim only goes to sites associated with Elvis. A tourist might visit some Beatles sites in Liverpool, a pilgrim sees them all!

4) Tourists will most probably arrange their trip around externally imposed holidays. The pilgrim will try and time their pilgrimage to coincide with certain festivals or holy days (e.g. visiting Gallipoli on ANZAC Day).

3. C) ANZAC Day, a secular/religious festival.

Kevin Ward writes that as a nation we have a "need to rediscover ourselves, to acknowledge who we are in this part of the world… and for a festival to celebrate what that is. New Zealanders are desperately short of festivals. Like every human society, we crave occasions that mark and define us in some way."[26]

In his article he goes on to write off Christmas and Easter as contenders because they are northern hemisphere imports that don't make sense with our inverted seasons (and because of their over-loaded consumer nature). An attempt was made to appropriate Waitangi Day as our national festival by re-naming it New Zealand Day, but, "festivals need heroes, and Waitangi Day mostly throws up villains."[27]

Kevin suggests that sports events like the Bledisloe Cup or the Super 15 are becoming increasingly ritualised in an attempt to meet our cravings, but they just don't go deep enough. "Festivals need two things to work: a symbolic hero… and a powerful sense of relevance to the lives of ordinary people."[28] Sacrifice is a powerful and perennially relevant theme, and ANZAC Day brings with it no shortage of blood and sacrifice.

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[25] The following points summarized from Rodman, pp. 117-119

[26] Ward, K. *The Question Hanging over ANZAC Day: What's Going On?* In Anglican Taonga, Spring 2005, no. 19, p.12

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

And so ANZAC Day services grow and grow, year after year. The old remain present, though in dwindling numbers, so the growth is with the young – 20 and 30 year olds, and their children. They crave significance, they crave meaning, they crave substance, they crave values to hold and role models to honour. Where else can they find them in our cynical and materialistic society?

Looking abroad, from an Australian perspective Brad West has done a good study on the phenomenon of youthful backpackers making pilgrimage to Gallipoli for ANZAC Day celebrations. This began significantly in the 1990s, and in the year 2000 between 10-15,000 were present there on ANZAC Day, making Gallipoli the most visited of all European war cemeteries despite being off the usual tourist routes.[29]

In the title of his work, West refers to this practice as 'civil religious pilgrimage,' and is being engaged in by a generation with very little exposure to institutional religion or traditional national rituals. In this manifestation of pilgrimage, the emphasis would very much be on destination and not journey. This does not however mean that there is no inner transformation, West records a significant shift in the thinking of those able to be present. Yes, there is a burst of nationalist feeling and a deep appreciation and veneration for the dead of their own nation. But, standing on Turkish soil and being exposed to the Turkish side of the story also brings them to sympathise those whom their compatriots came there to kill.

"Drawing on a variety of data, including field interviews and participant observation, it is argued that from their tour of the battlefields Australian backpackers attain a renewed sense of nationalism while simultaneously accepting and gaining empathy for the Turkish perspective on the campaign. Central to this cosmopolitan nationalist sentiment is the dynamics of pilgrimage."[30] West seems to be arguing that it is the 'holy' nature of these visits as a pilgrimage (rather than tourism) that enables this inner transformation and growth.

3. D) Is there a hunger for Pilgrimage (& Festival) in secular society?

After this analysis of ANZAC Day at home and abroad, in NZ society and Australian society, as both festival and pilgrimage, I think I am ready to now ask… Is there a hunger for pilgrimage and festival in our modern secular society? And the answer I unsurprisingly come to is yes!

Could an analysis of sport in general and the Rugby World Cup in particular help back this up?

3. E) Sport as Religion?

Rodman begins his study on Elvis fans with this statement.

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[29] West, B. *Independent Travel and Civil Religious Pilgrimage: Backpackers and the Gallipoli Battlefields* in *Down the Road: exploring backpackers and independent travel* (Australia: API Press, 2005), p.11

[30] Ibid. p.9

"Unlike our parents (and our parent's parents, and their parents before them, and so on), those of us who belong to 'Generation X (to use Copeland's (1991) label of choice for the post-baby-boom crowd) have grown up in a society where organised and institutional religion no longer plays the dominant role it did."[31]

So, those alive today roughly under the age of 45 (my generation), are the first generation in history to grow up in a world that is not shaped by institutional religion.[32] Does that mean this generation is not religious, that we are without spiritual or ritual impulses? Not at all. Social scientist after social scientist will strongly assert that to be human is to have religious impulses, spiritual yearnings, cravings for ritual and worship.

In this context, Rodman goes on to quote Copeland again, before suggesting one answer to the question posed.

"'…and yet into what cracks do these impulses flow in a world without religion?' One possible answer to this question would be that those religious impulses often lead people to invest themselves in mass media, particularly in the form of the idolatrous worship of stars."[33]

Elvis doesn't have the same resonance in NZ as in America, but what about sport?

Surprisingly it was the *Economist* magazine that mainstreamed the idea of sport taking over the function of religion in modern secular societies. It suggested that if Marx had visited the contemporary West rather than Victorian England, then he would have denounced sport and our mass entertainment culture as the opiate of the masses rather than religion – "providing relief from the misery of their real lives through a vicarious form of participation and an often delayed form of gratification."[34]

What though is a "religion?"

Our English word 'religion' comes from the Latin *religare* which means "to bind:" a fascinating association of meanings in our postmodern world.

This introduces for me two aspects to religion (aspects which will inevitably over-lap)…

1) First is the more individual(?) role. The aspect of inner piety and transformation, of personal connection between a believer and their Maker, the spiritual/theological pilgrimage of the soul wandering through life seeking union with God.

2) The second aspect then is the more public(?). Providing social cohesion, unity, a sense of community and identity within a larger body of people – basically *religare*, a 'binding together.'

Which then is more significant in defining something as a 'religion?' The inner transformation and spiritual aspect? Or the functional external aspect of binding a society together in meaning and identity?

As a minster, my focus is on the inner transformation of my congregation that comes from a living relationship with the Divine (and which results in practical outworkings and

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[31] Rodman, p.111

[32] What, one wonders, about the former communist block? They were avowedly atheist, but those societies were still strongly bound together by a ritualized and institutionalized dogma, at times brutally enforced by a pseudo-priestly caste.

[33] Ibid. p.111

[34] Ward, K. unpublished, chapter 9, p.78.

a living together as a community). But, in what I'll term "religious societies" as opposed to NZ as a fundamentally secular society, would everyone have pursued and hungered after the inner transformation offered by their religion? Probably not!

Yes, religion bound these societies together. Virtually everyone would have participated in the same rituals, observed the same holy days, and engaged in the same rites of passage etc. There would have been a strong sense of community and identity, and a common 'language.' Also, virtually everyone would have shared the same world view, a similar system of ethics, and the same fundamental understanding of how the world worked and their place in it.

The social role of religion as a binding force would have been very strong - but that doesn't mean everyone took the personal implications of this faith as seriously as others. Many would have participated in the social and civic practices of their religion without letting it penetrate their being or change their private behaviours to any great degree.

Could this be why devout Christians tend to be loath to describe themselves as 'religious?' Preferring to label themselves as "spiritual," "disciples," or just "Christians?" I would argue that the word 'religion' is losing a sense of an inner aspect, and as a word emphasises more the external, the social, and the ritual.

Hence one might consider it valid to define a 'religion' by its social function of binding together a community.

i) However, does sport have an inner, transformative aspect that could see it labelled as a religion?

Sports do aspire to promote and encourage a positive code of morality, and all codes have their headlines when players are singled out for inappropriate conduct. Sport does strive to produce role-models for the young of our nation, and the media will help champion this.

Recently the Breakers won the ABL for the second time in a row, a remarkable achievement for a team that was not performing to a high standard not that long ago. I was watching Campbell Live prior to the match where there was a lot of talk about the positive family atmosphere of the team, of the inner transformation basketball has made in the lives of several of their players and how they always visit programmes for at risk youths on tour, and even of how the new team owners now base the Breakers on the Christian values of love and family.

Another example of an inner transformative aspect to sport, and how promoting positive 'clean' values off-field can have an impact on-field was the respective performances vs. expectations of the English and Welsh teams in the 2012 World Cup.

I will need to look further into this, but I am unconvinced. In comparison to God-focused forms of religion, sport does not substantially offer either the call or the framework to engage in this inner pilgrimage of the soul and process of personal transformation. Those who find redemption in the NZ sporting context tend to do so in conjunction with faith.

ii) I would say however that in terms of providing social cohesion, without a doubt, sport functionally fills the role of NZ's state religion.

Sport creates community, identity, self-understanding, saints, relics, hallowed ground, houses of worship, exaltation, adoration, sacred texts with codes of law, high councils that interpret those laws, a common language, a code of ethics, fanatics (the word "fan" deriving from the Latin word for "temple"), shared dreams, myths and legends, dogma, chants, and even courts of discipline and processes for excommunication. "Certainly for many individuals, who participate either as players or fans, sport provides a centre of meaning and identity. So if this is true for many individually, then it could be argued that from a functionalist perspective the symbolic place of sport in societies like New Zealand, is not dissimilar to that occupied by religion in the past."[35]

Of course sport as a religion is fundamentally hollow for the masses.
The billion dollar sporting industry encourages us to spend money and take pleasure in the achievements of others (our team), rather than calling us to exert ourselves; it does not seek to connect us with the Divine (though watching sports games has been known to drive some to prayer); and therefore on its own provides a pretty anaemic and 2-dimensional spiritual/theological pilgrimage of the soul.

In relation to this, I again quote Kevin Ward.

"I would fall short though of suggesting rugby or any sport is in fact a religion, as while it fulfils some of the functions of religion in shaping and engaging the world, providing meaning, identity, community and transcendence, there are other necessary functions such as explaining where we came from; where we are going to; how to behave; how to deal with pain and suffering it cannot provide. Perhaps by being a substitute or surrogate for the real thing it dulls people from facing those realities also."[36]

So, sport functions socially as a religion, but in content still falls short of being defined as such. Does however sport help cater for humanity's craving for physical pilgrimage and festival?

3. F) The Rugby World Cup – pilgrimage and festival.

The recent rugby world cup has been touted as a classic example of large-scale pilgrimage and festival in sport. The games of classical Greece have already been noted as a form of religious pilgrimage and festival, so this would not be a new phenomenon.
There was a significant usage of Christian language and imagery while the world cup was on, as noted by Professor Peter Lineham, such as the Cloud, Rugby Heaven, and references to prayer in newspaper headlines. He also interpreted the opening ceremony in terms of Jonah Lomu representing the Saviour figure, and the young boy being the seeker of salvation.[37]

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[35] Ibid. p.79
[36] Ward, K *Rugby as Religion* unpublished paper
[37] http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/about-massey/news/article.cfm?mnarticle_uuid=F7A79FDB-E0AC-2F3F-5E16-17D74A87E6EE accessed May 2012

Anecdotally, many of those who could and did afford to go to a match, were not actually committed rugby fans. Many of them were ordinary Kiwis just wanting to be part of the occasion. The World Cup Fan Trail was also a fascinating side of the tournament in Auckland. It proved astoundingly popular, over 100,000 people walked from the waterfront to Eden Park over the six weeks, and at least another 20,000 trekked the distance on the night of the final. By all accounts the atmosphere was amazing, with a truly 'transcendent' aspect to it.

There was a strong desire to walk, to immerse oneself bodily in the experience, to engage the senses and truly interact with the sense of place and occasion, to be with others, to wear one's colours, to celebrate and feel the emotion of the moment.

Was this a small-scale act of traditional pilgrimage within a wider sporting version of an ancient religious practice?

Kevin Ward once more…

"it became most clear in the rugby world cup [in Australia 2003], especially in the huge band of pilgrims following the English team. While the followers of all teams turned up at games and in the streets dressed and painted in the appropriate religious garb, those of England festooned with red crosses on white shirts made the religious function abundantly clear. Clearly it provided meaning in life for these followers who must have sacrificed much for their pilgrimage in search of the Holy Grail. The sense of transcendence and experience of ecstasy gained form participation in the events both at and around the grounds, let alone the worship of the demi gods when they returned home to London. And finally the sense of identity and belonging provided through such a self identified community, as they shared stories, food and drink with fellow pilgrims. All of these are functions previously provided by religious pilgrimages and religion in general."[38]

4. Application?

Clearly humans are religious-oriented beings, with a hunger for pilgrimage, festival and ritual. With the role of religion in binding western societies together breaking down in recent decades, generation X and those following have looked elsewhere to have those needs met. In secular NZ, sport and Anzac Day are two places to which the young have looked. What are the implications for the Christian Church?

All over the country Christmas Eve services are noticeably growing in popularity, but not so much Easter – why? Also, we have noted that these Christian festivals have not been adopted by the majority of the country because of their northern hemisphere imagery and their crass commercialisation.

Where to from here?

Churches exist to encourage the spiritual/theological pilgrimage of the soul toward union with God – both for our members and for those living in our communities. There is a growing hunger for physical pilgrimage and festival, and they can be used to aid in the spiritual journey.

[38] Ward, K. unpublished, chapter 9, p.81.

As I see it, we have the task of resourcing our members for the spiritual pilgrimage, but of also being available to those around us who do not come on a Sunday morning but have religious cravings nonetheless.

In terms of utilising pilgrimage and festival as aids in the journey, we can seek to re-appropriate our ancient holy days and holy places in more relevant forms, or we can give birth to new ones that connect with contemporary Kiwi culture.

In my own faith community we make a big deal of Good Friday and the week leading up to Christmas. We also celebrate Lent and Advent, and offer a community festival for Halloween. We are looking at having a semi-regular pet blessing, we're discussing dusting off the old Harvest Festival celebration, and this year we plan to run a community Matariki Mid-winter Christmas service/party for the kids. We have also developed traditions around marking the church's anniversary, we baptise or dedicate the children of both members and non-members, and the ministers of Island Bay run the local ANZAC Day service.

On top of this our congregation holds a 2 yearly retreat, and for the last two have made a pilgrimage of sorts up the Whanganui river to Hiruharama (Jerusalem), first in honour of the 'saint' James K Baxter, and next (the nearly official saint) Mother Aubert.

Do these give those who come a sense of community and identity? Do they provide a richness of ritual and a sense of rhythm and engagement with life? Do they resource those who participate in the ultimate goal of our spiritual/theological pilgrimage of the soul towards union with God?

More study leave beckons…