God, the Devil and You: A Systemic Functional Linguistic Analysis of the Language of Hillsong

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> Ideology may not be divorced from the material reality of the sign (i.e., by locating it in the "consciousness" or other vague and elusive regions).[1]

> Without signs there is no ideology.[2]

The Language of Religion

The disciplines of theology and philosophy have invested considerable time into the exploration of the language of religion. Of principal interest has been the epistemological status of propositions representing the transcendental 'reality' of God.[3] This concern can be seen in the work of the Greek philosophers, Augustine, Aquinas and Wittgenstein as well as in logical positivism, hermeneutics and narrative theology.[4] Scholars have also investigated the supposedly distinct role within religious language of reference,[5] and metaphor,[6] and have examined aspects of the language and generic structure of sermons.[7]

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[1] V. N. Vološinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986 [1929]), p. 21.
[2] Vološinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 9.
[3] William P. Alston, 'Religious language', in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*, ed. William J. Wainwright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 222-225; Peter Donovan, *Religious Language* (London: Sheldon Press, 1976), pp. 6-24.
[4] Dan R. Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol, and Story* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1996), pp. 6-13.
[5] James F. Harris, 'The Causal Theory of Reference and Religious Language', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1991), pp. 75-86.

However, within this work, there is a relative lack of truly systematic linguistic analysis and description. Indeed, despite his own work in the field,[8] Crystal has noted that, "there are next to no examples of the application of linguistic analytic frameworks to specific areas of religious language",[9] resulting in understandings that are "ambiguous, out-of-date, naïve and curiously selective."[10] This critique was presented over three decades ago, yet it remains pertinent. Often, claims about linguistic instantiations of beliefs are supported by unanalysed direct quotations, which are intended to act as incontrovertible evidence of conclusions. While many of these conclusions can be valid, they are most likely to elucidate the surface features of religious language but to neglect the underlying messages that construct and convey ideology to those for whom religious discourse is a primary source of meaning and ethical instruction.

In this article, through analysis of an excerpt from a sermon given by the senior pastor of the Hillsong megachurch, Brian Houston, I will demonstrate the efficacy of an approach to the examination of religious language and ideology based on Systemic Function Linguistics (henceforth SFL). I will show how two complementary linguistic analyses can reveal some of the ways in which language is used to construct an ideological model that foregrounds contemporary consumer-capitalist notions of the individual [11] while retaining traditional Christian conceptions of all-

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[6] Victoria S. Harrison, 'Metaphor, Religious Language and Religious Experience', *Sophia: International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 46, no. 2 (2007), pp. 127-145; Janet M. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 1ff.

[7] Aleksandra Bizjak Končar, 'Contemporary Sermons: From Grammatical Annotation to Rhetorical Design', in *Systemic Functional Linguistics in Use: Odense Working Papers in Language and Communication*, vol. 29 (2008), pp. 503-521; Cheryl Wharry, 'Amen and Hallelujah Preaching: Discourse Functions in African American Sermons', *Language in Society*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2003), pp. 203-225.

[8] David Crystal, 'A Liturgical Language in a Linguistic Perspective', *New Blackfriars*, vol. 46, no. 534 (1964), pp. 148-156; David Crystal, 'Nonsegmental Phonology in Religious Modalities', in *Language in Religious Practice*, ed. W. Samarin (Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1976), pp. 17-25; David Crystal, 'Liturgical Language in a Sociolinguistic Perspective', in *Language and the Worship of the Church*, eds J. David and R. Jasper (New York: St Martin's Press, 1990), pp. 120-146.

[9] David Crystal, 'Generating Theological Language', in *Theolinguistics*, ed. Jean-Pierre van Noppen (Brussels: Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 1981), p. 266.

[10] Crystal, 'Generating Theological Language', p. 267.

[11] For the purposes of this article, the individual is conceived of as a person whose needs and wants are represented as unique and separate from those around them.

powerful deities. These findings are a significant addition to the increasing body of academic work examining Hillsong as they reveal how the church's ideology combines contemporary, subjectivised culture with Christianity's supernatural metanarrative. The implications of this ostensible unification of the modern and traditional are ambiguous, however. Thus, I conclude the article with three propositions as to the nature of Hillsong's ideology: that it is purely consumer-capitalist and is implicated in attempts to subjugate its adherents; that it is conventionally Pentecostal and has gained popularity through a serendipitous overlap of contemporary and traditional concerns; that it manifests the ongoing struggle for hegemony between contemporary Christianity and consumer capitalism.

Christianity and the Rise of the Individual

Despite the assertion that much scholarship on religious language has overlooked the use of analyses founded on linguistics, the work of Heather represents a significant exception.[12] Heather uses an SFL-derived discourse analysis to examine a range of texts produced by contemporary Christian churches. Within these texts, multifaceted and often conflicting notions of individual identity are identified, with the traditional dichotomy being between the 'church-self', which has a high level of commitment to church activities, and the 'domestic-self', which prioritises family commitments and biological ties.[13] However, due the pervasiveness of consumer capitalism, an increasingly common representation of the individual is that of the 'self-steering self'. This is a conception of the individual as 'the one-who-chooses' and it has become so entrenched in the discourses of Western society that it is salient in the construction of the contemporary Christian as a 'worshipper-consumer'.[14]

One of the main linguistic realisations of the self-steering self/worshipper-consumer is through the process of 'synthetic personalisation', "the simulation in institutional settings of the person-to-person communication of ordinary conversation… a case of the

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[12] Noel Heather, *Religious Language and Critical Discourse Analysis: Ideology and Identity in Christian Discourse Today* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000).
[13] Heather, *Religious Language and Critical Discourse Analysis*, p. 43.
[14] Heather, *Religious Language and Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 47-51.

manipulation of interpersonal meaning for strategic, instrumental effect."[15] Thus, the use of personal pronouns such as 'you', 'we', and 'us' can be ideologically motivated. This is exemplified in the use of second-person pronouns in the titles of articles in Christian magazines, such as 'Jesus and You Every Day', 'God, the Bible and you', and 'Your child and you',[16] as well as in the common Christian/religious/spiritual metaphor of a journey, commonly expressed as 'your journey',[17] which foreground the supposed uniqueness of the individual's experience of life, God and faith.[18]

From outside the field of linguistics, Heelas and Woodhead's socio-cultural analyses of contemporary religion lend support to these findings. They suggest that 'the subjective turn', a fundamental shift in the ideals of the West towards a morality based on the needs of the individual, "has become the defining cultural development of modern western culture."[19] This is seen as creating a conflict between two opposing doctrinal principles: 'life-as' in which "conformity to external authority" is paramount; and 'subjective-life' in which "authentic connection with the inner depths of one's unique life-in-relation" is the central tenet.[20] Most established religions, which Heelas and Woodhead term the 'congregational domain', epitomise 'life-as'.[21] Thus, the authors argue that the subjective turn is the major cause of diminishing religious adherence in the West.[22]

However, one group of Christian churches are not in decline. In fact, they not only remain strong, they are growing. Heelas and Woodhead term these churches 'congregations of experiential difference' and see their success as resulting from the space they create for contemporary notions of the individual within the traditional Christian doctrine that they espouse.[23]

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[15] Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education, 2010), p. 99.
[16] Heather, *Religious Language and Critical Discourse Analysis*, p. 49.
[17] Heather, *Religious Language and Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 108-110.
[18] For an insightful examination of the journey metaphor, see Renee D. Lockwood, 'Pilgrimages to the Self: Exploring the Topography of Western Consumer Spirituality through 'the Journey'', *Literature and Aesthetics*, vol. 22, no. 1 (2012), pp. 108-130.
[19] Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 5.
[20] Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, p. 5.
[21] Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, p. 8.
[22] Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, pp. 2-10.
[23] Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, pp. 17-23.

> The 'trick' which such congregations play is to offer subjective enhancement and cultivation in terms that can make sense to a subjectivized culture, but to insist that this comes not through reliance on one's inner resources but through submission to the higher authority of God, Christ, the Bible and congregational instruction.[24]

Hillsong

Hillsong, one of the most successful, influential and controversial churches in Australia, is possibly the archetypal congregation of experiential difference. The church was founded in 1983 in an outer suburb of Sydney, Baulkham Hills, by Brian Houston and his wife, Bobbie. Since that time, it has grown into a true megachurch with a reported 30,000 people attending services around Australia and another 20,000 forming congregations in ten other countries around the world including the UK, USA, South Africa, Ukraine and Spain.[25] This success has been widely attributed to Hillsong's embracing of consumer capitalism and its accentuation of the individual.

The consumer-capitalist nature of Hillsong has been identified in the emphasis it places on growth. This has led to it being categorised as a 'growth church' with its continual reference to, and preoccupation with, its increasing size being seen as indicative of an ideological alignment with growth-focused capitalism.[26] Naturally, this growth has required labour to facilitate it. It has been suggested that the congregation act as the church's workers, creating the spectacle and the affective atmosphere of a Hillsong service, both of which attract 'seekers' and facilitate their conversion. Payment for this labour occurs in the form of an increase in the congregation's number.[27] This is interpreted as a corporeal expression of

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[24] Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, p. 19.

[25] John Connell, 'Hillsong: A Megachurch in the Sydney Suburbs', *Australian Geographer*, vol. 36, no. 3 (2005), pp. 319-321; Nick O'Malley, 'The Rise and Rise of Hillsong', *The Age* (8 September, 2013), at http://www.theage.com.au/national/the-rise-and-rise-of-hillsong-20130907-2tbzx.html. Accessed 10/2/2014. See also Sarah Pulliam Bailey, 'Australia's Hillsong Church Has Astonishingly Powerful Global Influence', *Huffington Post* (13 November, 2013), at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/05/australia-hillsong-church-influence_n_4214660.html. Accessed 10/2/2014.

[26] Marion Maddox, ''In the Goofy Parking Lot': Growth Churches as a Novel Form for Late Capitalism,' *Social Compass*, vol. 59, no. 2 (2012), pp. 153-155.

[27] Matthew Wade and Maria Hynes, 'Worshipping Bodies: Affective Labour in the Hillsong Church', *Geographical Research*, vol. 51, no. 2 (2013), pp. 176-177.

God's blessing and a symbol of its omnipotence,[28] which further motivates the congregation and perpetuates the growth cycle.

The church's active endorsement of commercialism has also made it an immensely successful enterprise in its own right. The main Sydney branches of Hillsong include cafes and hot dog stands, as well as shops selling T-shirts, CDs, books and DVDs.[29] Moreover, through its music, Hillsong has become an integral part of the Christian-music subculture, producing songs which are thought to make up thirteen percent of all those sung in US churches.[30] (For each song, a 12-month Church Reproduction Licence must be purchased.)[31] The Hillsong Music record label has sold millions of records around the world and produced Christian rock celebrities, such as Darlene Zschech. By offering slickly marketed, overtly Christian consumer choices, Hillsong has created a paradoxical space in which Christians can reject the sinful elements of popular culture while embracing its consumerism, and developed into a lifestyle brand in which consumerism and religiosity are unified.[32]

This consumerism has been found to be not only a lifestyle choice, but a religious duty. Hillsong espouses an often-controversial prosperity gospel in which God's blessings manifest financially. By emphasising these ostensibly divine financial gifts through a lifestyle of conspicuous consumption, Church members aim to act as an inducement for success-seeking, money-oriented non-believers to investigate Christianity.[33] Being a Christian who is judged by consumer-capitalist standards to be successful is thus an act of proselytisation in its own right.

It has also been suggested that the Pentecostal branch of Christianity, to which Hillsong belongs, perfectly aligns the ideology of the church with that of consumer capitalism. Pentecostalism's emphasis on the

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[28] Robbie B. H. Goh, 'Hillsong and 'Megachurch' Practice: Semiotics, Spatial Logic and the Embodiment of Contemporary Evangelical Protestantism', *Material Religion*, vol. 4, no. 3 (2008), pp. 295-297.
[29] Connell, 'Hillsong', p. 325.
[30] O'Malley, 'The Rise and Rise of Hillsong', par. 15.
[31] Hillsong Music, 'Licence Types', *Hillsong Music* at
https://distribution.hillsong.com/publishing/types. Accessed 24/10/14.
[32] Elisha H. McIntyre, 'Brand of Choice: Why Hillsong Music is Winning Sales and Souls', *Australian Religion Studies Review*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2007), pp. 184-188.
[33] Marion Maddox, 'Prosper, Consume and Be Saved', *Critical Research on Religion*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2013), pp. 110-111; Wade and Hynes, 'Worshipping Bodies', p. 177.

individual's unique relationship with God through the Holy Spirit creates space for a set of virtues, "initiative, aspiration, self-belief and self-motivation",[34] which are prized in consumer-capitalist societies. With this in mind, the church may represent "a 'privatization' of religion to a more individual and personal sphere"[35] with the individual's feelings towards God and life being central Hillsong themes. Thus, the worship music is built around lyrics that consistently emphasise the individual's experience of, and relationship with, God.[36] Even scripture is adapted for this purpose. For example, the verse "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid" (Matthew 5:14) was seen on the giant screens at one Hillsong service in the paraphrased form "Now that I've put you on a hilltop."[37] This instrumental adaptation is an archetypal use of synthetic personalisation which references both the Hillsong church's geographical identity and, through replacing third person reference with the first person *I* and the second person *you*, creates a sense of God's personal communication with the individuals present.

It is this identification of the Hillsong ideology with the consumer-capitalist individual and its linguistic expression that this article will explore. However, before looking closely at an example of Houston's preaching, it is necessary to further introduce the analytical framework that has been used to give insight into the way ideology is constructed and transmitted through language, SFL.

Language, Ideology and Systemic Functional Linguistics
Following Vološinov, who argues that the very existence of ideology is dependent upon its semiotic expression,[38] SFL conceptualises language as a tool for the construction and transmission of personal and social models of experience and belief.[39] A complementary view within the theory is that language enables speakers to comprehend their surroundings, and since it is

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[34] Maddox, 'Prosper, Consume and Be Saved', p. 109.
[35] Connell, 'Hillsong', p. 316.
[36] McIntyre, 'Brand of Choice', p. 184.
[37] Goh, 'Hillsong and 'Megachurch' Practice', p. 295.
[38] Vološinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, pp. 9-24.
[39] Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday and Christian Matthiessen, *Construing Experience through Meaning* (London: Continuum, 1999), pp. 1-3.

a social phenomenon, to share their understandings with others.[40] With this notional foundation, SFL has been developed and deployed as an instrument for the analysis and subsequent exegesis of texts.[41] Through analysis of the grammar and vocabulary of a text, its lexico-grammar, SFL provides insight into the way in which speakers represent experience – how they understand the world around them and, importantly, how they want others to understand that world.

Within SFL, the grammar of a language is modelled as performing three simultaneous 'metafunctions', which determine the grammatical structure of clauses.[42] These metafunctions are the 'textual', in which the clause is seen as "a message, a quantum of information",[43] the 'interpersonal,' in which the clause is seen as an exchange, "a transaction between speaker and listener",[44] and the 'ideational,' in which the clause is seen as "a representation of some process in ongoing human experience."[45] Within the ideational resources of language is the system of 'transitivity'. Through this system, English speakers represent the world as "actions and events, mental processes and relations"[46] thereby creating a model of experience through which they organise and make sense of reality.

The analytical tools of SFL have been identified as particularly well-suited to the task of uncovering ideology. As Thompson notes, "an analysis of transitivity choices in a text or set of texts, using Halliday's model of transitivity... is one of the most effective ways of exploring the ideological assumptions that inform and are constructed by the texts."[47] In the same article, Thompson outlines some post-analysis procedures which can reveal significant textual patterns and, therefore, the ideologies which

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[40] Michael Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (London: Arnold, 1994), p. xiii.

[41] 'The term 'text' refers to any instance of language, in any medium, that makes sense to someone who knows the language.' See Michael Halliday and Christian Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (London: Hodder Education, 2004), p. 3.

[42] Halliday and Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, pp. 29-31.

[43] Halliday and Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, p. 58.

[44] Halliday and Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, p. 59.

[45] Halliday and Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, p. 59.

[46] Halliday and Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, p. 11.

[47] Geoff Thompson, 'From Process to Pattern: Methodological Considerations in Analysing Transitivity in Text', in *From Language to Multimodality: New Developments in the Study of Ideational Meaning*, eds Carys Jones and Eija Ventola (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2008), p. 17.

motivate these patterns. The first of these steps is the identification of salient entities.

Analysis 1: Entities

In order to demonstrate how an SFL-based linguistic analysis can contribute to socio-cultural studies of religion as well as to add to the body of academic research into Hillsong, this article presents an analysis of part of a sermon given by the senior pastor of the Hillsong church, Brian Houston. It is entitled Effective Prayer[48] and was sourced from the video hosting website, YouTube. The video is 3 minutes and 27 seconds long and is an excerpt from a text of unknown length (sermons at Hillsong usually last 35 minutes[49]). It was uploaded on the 19th of April 2010 and according the information provided with the video, the sermon was given on the 28th of March 2010.

The video was downloaded using streaming media capture software and then transcribed. The text was subsequently broken down into clauses for further examination. (See Appendix for the full text and clause identification.) Analysis followed, as closely as possible, Halliday and Matthiessen's description of English lexico-grammar.[50] Reference was also made to accounts of SFL by Halliday,[51] Martin, Matthiessen and Painter,[52] and Thompson.[53]

For the first analysis, the text of Effective Prayer was examined to determine salient entities. These entities were identified by looking for recurring nouns and pronouns which refer to them. For example, following Fairclough and Heather in analysing second-person pronouns (*you*, *your*, *yourself*, etc.) as instantiating reference to the individual via synthetic personalisation,[54] **you** *don't have to be a spiritual giant*, **your prayers** *are*

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[48] Brian Houston, *Effective Prayer* (2010), at
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zc9mF4O28kE. Accessed 10/3/2011.
[49] Connell, 'Hillsong', p. 322.
[50] Halliday and Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*; Halliday and Matthiessen, *Construing Experience through Meaning*.
[51] Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*.
[52] James R. Martin, Christian Matthiessen and Claire Painter, *Deploying Functional Grammar* (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2010).
[53] Geoff Thompson, *Introducing Functional Grammar* (London: Arnold, 2004).
[54] Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 98-99; Heather, *Religious Language and Critical Discourse Analysis*, p. 49.

valuable and *Is it like working **yourself** up into a sweat?* were counted as instances of reference to the individual. Implicit references in imperative and non-finite clauses, such as *(**you**) Believe me*, and *if **you** wanna // (**you**) pray effectively*[55], were also counted.

In addition, clauses containing pronouns referring back to an entity were also coded as denoting that entity. For instance, in the following pairs of clauses *it* and *he* refer back to *fervent prayer* and *God*, respectively, and so were also counted as instances of reference to those entities.

> *What's **fervent prayer**? // Is **it** like [[working yourself up into a sweat]]?*[56]
> ***God**'s gonna answer someone else's prayer // before **he**'s gonna answer yours*

Once entities were identified, the percentage of clauses within the text referring to them was calculated. For the purposes of this study, an entity was considered salient if it was referred to in more than 25% of the text's clauses. For each entity, a clause was counted once regardless of how many referring lexical items it contained. Thus, despite having two words referring to the individual, the clause *Don't **you** dare belittle **your** own prayer* was counted as one instance of reference to the individual and one instance of reference to prayer.

Salient Entities

Table 1 shows the percentage of clauses within Effective Prayer containing at least one grammatical element referring to a salient entity.

Table1: Clauses containing reference to salient entities within Effective Prayer

Salient entity	The individual	Deities	Prayer(s)
% of clauses	76%	33%	33%

It is clear that as the majority of the text's clauses contain noun groups which refer to it in some way, the individual is the most prominent entity within Effective Prayer. Examples include:

> *and if **you** wanna pray effectively*
> *when did **you** last get indignant about the enemy [[trying to rob **your** health and rob **you** from **the purpose of God on your life**]]*

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[55] A double slash (//) represents the end of a clause.
[56] Double square brackets ([[ ]]) represent a clause which is 'embedded' in another clause. See below for a more detailed explanation of this process.

> ***your prayers*** *are answered*

That Houston represents his audience as being directly involved in the field of his sermon is not unexpected. For the successful creation and maintenance of a religious community, the lexico-grammatical construction and maintenance of 'solidarity' between a preacher and their congregation is vital. [57] Those attending Hillsong are, therefore, likely to expect Houston's message to be directly aimed at and relevant to them. One of the most effective ways in which this can be achieved is through direct pronominal reference.

However, these findings also point to an ideological motivation behind this prominence of the individual. The saturation of Effective Prayer with second-person pronouns is evidence of the foregrounding of the individual within certain contemporary Christian churches.[58] Furthermore, the identification of Hillsong as a church whose theology is inextricably bound to consumer-capitalist notions of the individual[59] would seem to be accurate with the prominence of the individual constructing and reflecting its central ideological role.

A third of clauses within Effective Prayer contain reference to deities. Some examples are:

> *and if you pray in* ***the name of Jesus*** *according to* ***the will of God***
> *when did you last get indignant about [[**the Devil** ripping people off]]*
> *you are* ***the righteousness of God in Christ***

Since the creation of communal solidarity within a religious context is likely to be highly dependant upon reference to and reverence for specific deities, referring to God, Jesus and the Devil should be important within the context of a Christian sermon. However, the relative paucity of reference to these deities when compared with reference to the individual reveals a comparative backgrounding of these entities. Thus, Houston's construction of what is necessary to pray effectively diminishes the role of deities suggesting perhaps that the ideological reverence consumer capitalism has for the individual is not only evident in the ideology of Hillsong, but is even more significant than the reverence it has for deities.

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[57] James R. Martin and David Rose, *Working with Discourse: Meaning Beyond the Clause* (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 303.
[58] Heather, *Religious Language and Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 47-51; Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, pp. 9-11.
[59] Maddox, 'Prosper, Consume and Be Saved', p. 109; Wade and Hynes, 'Worshipping Bodies', p. 176.

Within the text, the abstract entity prayer is also referred to in a third of clauses. (This analysis does not take into account the verbs *pray* and *answer*, four instances of both, which also play the same role.) Examples of such clauses include:

> *that's* **effective prayer**
> *what's* **fervent prayer**
> *God answers* **the prayers of the righteous**

It is, of course, expected that prayer as an entity will be part of Houston's construction of the text's theme. However, although the text begins with discussion of prayer in general, as it develops, reference changes from generic to specific[60] and increased emphasis is placed on the prayers of the individual, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Manner of reference to prayer

Clause no.	Clause text	Reference
1	sometimes **the most effective prayers, they**'re not that eloquent	generic (x2)
2 and 3	you wanna // hear [[what **they** sound like]]	generic
6	that's **effective prayer**	generic
21	you have **effective prayer**	generic
23	what's **fervent prayer**?	generic
25	is **it** like [[working yourself up into a sweat]]	generic
26	you know [[what **it** is]]	generic
42	and that's [[where straight away we can belittle ourselves and think **our prayer**'s not as good as **anybody else's** cos we know ourselves better than anyone]]	specific (x2)
49	God answers **the prayers of the righteous**	generic
55	in other words, **your prayers** are powerful.	specific
56	**your prayers** are answered	specific
57	**your prayers** are valuable	specific
58	don't you dare belittle **your own prayer**	specific
59 and 60	don't you dare think // that God's gonna answer **someone else's prayer**	specific
61	before he's gonna answer **yours**	specific
62 and 63	don't you dare believe // that somehow **your prayer**'s not as valuable as **mine**	specific (x2)
72	and that means [[**your prayer** is not based on your wrongs and your weakness and your failings and your inabilities and your	specific (x2)

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[60] James R. Martin, *English Text: System and Structure* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1992), pp. 102-105.

| | incapacity but **they**'re based on the lord and saviour Jesus Christ [[whose name is… | |

This highlights the fact that Effective Prayer is not concerned with prayer as an "experiential class",[61] but with specific manifestations of it. Of the twelve instances of specific reference to prayer, six noun groups contain the possessive pronoun *your*, one group, *they*, refers back to *your prayer*, and one group, *yours*, is a lexical fusion of *your* and *one*.[62] Thus, it is the prayers of the individual that are made prominent in the text.

To summarise, this quantitative analysis of reference to entities within Effective Prayer has revealed that Houston saturates the text with second-person pronouns and so, through the process of synthetic personalization, gives prominence to the individual. Hence, Effective Prayer is 'about' the individual and its prayers. This seems to construct an ideology that foregrounds the individual at the expense of deities and if solidarity is to be maintained, positions the Hillsong congregation as accepting this view.

However, it is unrealistic to make conclusions about the nature of ideology based upon one relatively simple linguistic analysis. Simply because the individual has been found to be prominent, it does not necessarily follow that the individual is being ascribed freedom or power. In fact, despite identifying Hillsong as a vehicle for the reestablishment of individual agency in socially desolate suburban environments, Connell suggests the church is able to "accept and exploit the practical advantages of modernity without subscribing to such modernist values as individual autonomy, relativism, liberalism and pluralism."[63] Similarly, as mentioned above, Heelas and Woodhead define congregations of experiential difference as churches that embrace both the subjective turn and traditional biblical conceptions of submission to God.[64] Furthermore, Maddox has noted that while flamboyant consumerism is, especially for females, seen as a religious duty, notions of 'consumer sovereignty' and individual power are noticeably absent from Hillsong's teachings.[65] Therefore, to explore more deeply the ideology of Hillsong as expressed in Effective Prayer, this

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[61] Martin, *English Text*, p. 103.
[62] Halliday and Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, p. 569.
[63] Connell, 'Hillsong', p. 330.
[64] Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, p. 19.
[65] Maddox, 'Prosper, Consume and Be Saved', pp. 109-113.

article will now look at the way Houston uses language to represent the individual and deities as possessing contrasting degrees of effectuality.

The Linguistic Construction of Dynamism
Within SFL's conception of the lexico-grammar and functions of language, it is through the system of transitivity that speakers construct a linguistic model of experience. To create this model, the transitivity system uses three grammatical elements: (1) 'Processes', prototypically realised by verb groups, which represent the doings and happenings of life; (2) 'Participants', prototypically realised as noun groups, which represent the entities involved in life's doings and happenings; (3) 'Circumstances', prototypically realised as prepositional phrases and adverbs, which represent ancillary elements such as locations, times and causes, which are peripheral to the doings and happenings but central to the modelling of experience.[66] For example, the clause *yesterday, she gave flowers to Anne* can be analysed as follows:

Example 1: Transitivity analysis of the clause

yesterday	she	gave	Flowers	to Anne
Circumstance	Participant	Process	Participant	Participant

Each of these elements is subcategorised depending upon the nature of the experience that they represent and their grammatical behaviour. For example, the transitivity system breaks up the happenings of experience in distinct 'process types' which represent inner and outer experience and states of being. For English, these process types are material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioural and existential (see Figure 1 below).

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[66] Halliday and Matthiessen, *Construing Experience through Meaning*, pp. 50-66.
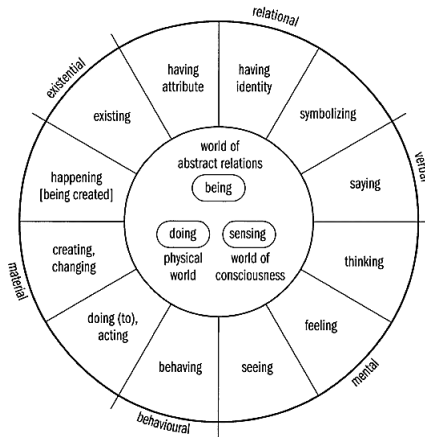
Figure 1: The six process types of English and the domains of experience they semiotically construct[67]

Involved in each of these distinct process types are semantically distinct participants,[68] some of which are closely bound to and involved in the enactment of the process, nuclear participants, and others which are although semantically and grammatically significant, less directly involved in the process's occurrence, non-nuclear participants. Another representation of the example clause *yesterday, she gave flowers to Anne* is, therefore:
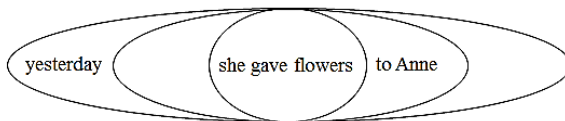

Figure 2: Nuclear representation of the clause

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[67] Halliday and Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, p. 172.
[68] The term participant has a specific linguistic sense. It refers to a grammatical unit functioning as, in traditional grammar terminology, the subject, object or complement of a verb.

Thus, "[e]ach process type provides its own model or schema for construing a particular domain of experience." [69] (See Table 3 for a complete list of process types and participants in English.)[70]

Table 3: Process types and their participants[71]

Process Type	Nuclear Participants	Example (nuclear participants in bold)	Additional Non-nuclear Participants
material	Actor, Goal	**she** made **the coffee**	Initiator, Recipient, Client, Scope, Attribute
mental	Senser, Phenomenon	**she** saw **the car**	Inducer
relational: attributive	Carrier, Attribute	**Maggie** was **strong**	Attributor, Beneficiary
relational: identifying	Token, Value	**Maggie** was **our leader**	Assigner
behavioural	Behaver	**she** laughed	Behaviour, Scope
verbal	Sayer	**she** replied	Receiver, Verbiage
existential	Existent	there was **a beautiful princess**	

The reason why this is important for the present study is that clause participants can be represented as having differing degrees of power depending upon the type of process that they are involved in and the role they play in that process.[72] By way of example, a canonical expression of the power of a deity can be found in Genesis 1:27, *so God created man in his own image*, in which *God* as the Actor in a material Process uses its power to create the Goal, *man*. *God* is, therefore, represented as powerful, while *man* is subject to that power.

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[69] Halliday and Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, p. 170.

[70] It is not necessary to completely understand SFL to follow the arguments of this article. It may help to think of different verbs, to put it analogously, painting different pictures of events and the characters in those pictures, the participants, being painted either in the foreground or background

[71] Adapted from Martin, Matthiessen and Painter, *Deploying Functional Grammar*, p. 101.

[72] Halliday and Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, pp. 282-283.

Example 2: from Genesis 1:27[73]

so	God	created	man	in his own image
	Actor	Process: material	**Goal**	Circumstance

Hasan develops this idea through the 'cline of dynamism' (see Figure 3). This is an analytical tool explicitly designed to reveal the power with which grammatical participants in a clause are endowed.[74]
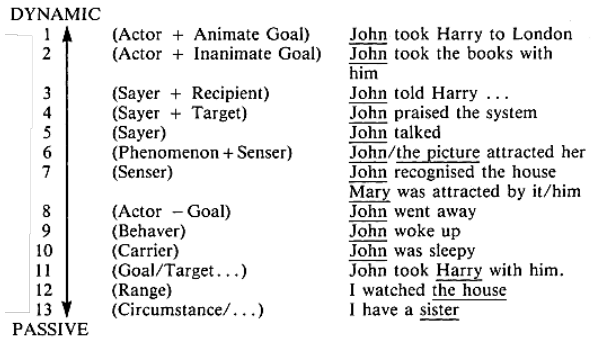

Figure 3: The cline of dynamism[75]

The cline shows how the linguistic construction of a participant's power is dependent upon the nature of the clause that it is a part of. Thus, the verb and grammatical roles played by any co-participants in the clause both affect the degree of dynamism[76] a participant is represented as displaying. For example, in Genesis 1:4, *And God saw the light*, God is represented as a Senser in a mental Process and so is ascribed a lower degree of dynamism than in Genesis 1:27 in which it is an Actor in a clause configuration with an animate Goal.[77]

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[73] Shaded cells in example analysis tables indicate that the word or group above plays no role in the transitivity system.

[74] Ruqaiya Hasan, *Linguistics, Language and Verbal Art* (Melbourne: Deakin University, 1985), pp. 45-49.

[75] Hasan, *Linguistics, Language and Verbal Art*, p. 46.

[76] Dynamism is defined as 'the quality of being able to affect the world around us and of bringing change into the surrounding environment.' Hasan, *Linguistics, Language and Verbal Art*, p. 45.

[77] The participant role Actor is the canonical subject of a verb – 'the one doing the material deed.' The Senser is a participant involved in the 'conscious processing' of cognition,

Example 3: from Genesis 1:4

	God	saw	the light
	Senser	Process: mental	Phenomenon

The version of cline of dynamism used in this article is based upon an adaptation by Thompson,[78] but with some further modifications that exploit a number of the semantic insights found in Hasan's original.

Hasan notes that the classification 'dynamic' can be situated at "one endpoint of a continuum, the other endpoint of which is 'passive'" and also that "a pair of adjacent points on the continuum are not likely to be easily distinguished."[79] Thompson's cline, therefore, groups participant roles that exhibit a similar degree of dynamism into bands. To more easily analyse the comparative dynamism of participants, a numerical weighting is allocated to each band. After the full analysis of a text, addition of these scores can reveal the degree of dynamism which participants are represented as possessing.[80]

The modified the cline of dynamism used in this article is presented in Table 4. Only those participant roles present in Effective Prayer are included.

Table 4: The cline of dynamism used within this article

Band	Role	Weight	Example
1	Attributer Inducer	+4	He has made you righteous. (the enemy) getting them tempted by the ways of the world
2	Actor (+ animate Goal)	+3	the Devil ripping people off
3	Actor (+ inanimate Goal)	+2	the enemy trying to rob your health
4	Actor (- Goal) Actor (+ Scope) Behaver Sayer Senser	+1	You can walk in here in condemnation. who (Jesus)… endured the cross. Don't you dare belittle your own prayer. You pray you know [[who the righteous are]]?

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perception, desideration and emotion. Martin, Matthiessen and Painter, *Deploying Functional Grammar*, pp. 102-104.
[78] Thompson, 'From Process to Pattern', pp. 25-30.
[79] Hasan, *Linguistics, Language and Verbal Art*, p. 46.
[80] Thompson, 'From Process to Pattern', pp. 26-29.

	Carrier: Possessor		you have effective prayer
5	Token Carrier Attribute	0	you're the righteous. You are made righteous in Christ. to God be the glory
6	Recipient	-1	you've been given the miracle of righteousness
7	Goal	-2	(the enemy) rob you from the purpose of God on your life

Considering the two examples from Genesis again, in Genesis 1:4 *God*, in the transitivity role Senser, would be assigned a dynamism score of +1. In Genesis 1:27, *God* would be assigned a score of +3 since it is an Actor in a clause containing an animate Goal, and the Goal, *man*, would be given a score of -2.

Analysis 2: Dynamism
Following a full transitivity analysis, clauses in which the individual and deities appear as the main noun in a participant noun group were identified. In order to fully investigate the way in which these entities are represented, both main clauses and embedded clauses were analysed. An embedded clause is one that appears within another, prototypically smaller, grammatical unit.[81] For example, in the clause *When did you last get indignant about [[the Devil ripping people off]]?*, the clause *the Devil ripping people off* is embedded into a Circumstance, and is grammatically subordinate to, the main clause. This is easily demonstrated by replacing the embedded clause with a pronoun: *When did you last get indignant about **that**?* Semantically, however, the embedded clause is essential to the construction of *the Devil* as a being that can affect the real world and in this case, negatively affect humans. The full analysis of this clause is, therefore:

Example 4: Clauses 30 and 31

When (+ last)	did	you	Get	indignant	about [[the Devil ripping people off]]?
Circumstance		Carrier		Attribute	Circumstance
	Process: relational				
the Devil	ripping	people	Off		
Actor		Goal			
	Process: material				

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[81] Halliday and Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, pp. 426-441.

Only clauses containing nouns and pronouns functioning as the main noun in a participant group are included in the analysis. Thus, although *your prayers* in the clause **your prayers** *are valuable* helps to give the individual prominence, it does not directly represent the individual as being involved in a Process, and so is not considered important for the linguistic construction of dynamism.

Once analysed, a clause was assigned to a band on the cline of dynamism depending upon the functional role played by the noun group under scrutiny. For example, the clause **you** *don't have to be a spiritual giant* was identified as referring to the individual through the pronoun *you*. This pronoun functions as Carrier in a relational Process and so the clause was assigned to band 5. The total number of clauses assigned to each band was then recorded.

Finally, a dynamism score was calculated for both the individual and deities. This was done in two ways. A 'raw' score was assigned to each entity by simply adding up the weightings given to each referring noun group. A 'proportional' score was also calculated to account for the differing frequency with which the two entities are referred to. For this, the number of clauses assigned to each band was expressed as a percentage of the total number of clauses being analysed. The number representing the percentage of clauses in each band was then multiplied by the band weighting. For example, within Effective Prayer, a total of fifteen clauses contain a participant noun group referring to a deity. Four of these clauses contain a deity acting upon an animate Goal and so were assigned to band 2. Thus, 27 percent (($4 \div 15$)x100) of the clauses in Effective Prayer referring to a deity were classified as belonging to this band. 27 was then multiplied by the band weighting +3 giving a score of 81. The scores given to each band were then added together to give the proportional dynamism score.

The Dynamism of the Individual and Deities

Table 5: Dynamism scores for deities

Band	Weighting	Raw		Proportional	
		no.	Score	%	Score
1	+4	2	8	13	52
2	+3	4	12	27	81

3	+2	1	2	7	14
4	+1	5	5	33	33
5	0	3	0	20	0
6	-1	0	0	0	0
7	-2	0	0	0	0
	Total	**15**	**27**	100	**180**

Table 6: Dynamism scores for the individual

		Raw		Proportional	
Band	**Weighting**	**no.**	**Score**	**%**	**Score**
1	+4	0	0	0	0
2	+3	1	3	3	9
3	+2	0	0	0	0
4	+1	21	21	58	58
5	0	10	0	28	0
6	-1	1	-1	3	-3
7	-2	3	-6	8	-16
	Total	36	**17**	100	**48**

As shown in Tables 5 and 6, analysis of Effective Prayer using the cline of dynamism reveals that despite the individual being the most salient entity, it is the canonical deities of Christianity which are represented as most able to impact the world and those within it. In fact, the raw score of 27 for deities is 1.58 times higher than that of the individual, 17. Further, the difference in the proportional scores is even greater with that given to deities, 180, being 3.75 times greater than the individual's score of 48. Thus, Houston's linguistic construction of the dynamism of the individual and deities points to a traditionally Christian conception of the difference between subordinate humanity and omnipotent deities. These deities are characterised as affecting the world in just under half of the clauses in which they function as a participant (a total of 47 percent of clauses referring to deities are assigned to bands 1, 2 and 3), while the individual rarely appears in these dynamic roles (just 3 percent of clauses referring to the individual are assigned to band 2). Furthermore, deities never appear in

a passive role (bands 6 and 7), but the individual is represented as an affected entity in 11 percent of the clauses in which it is referred to.

Houston constructs a model of experience in which deities are potent agents of causation. Both God and the Devil are assigned the most dynamic "executive role"[82] of Inducer and Attributor, through which causation is added into the transitivity of the clause.[83] In Example 5, *the enemy* causes *them* (referring back to *your children*) to sense. It brings about the mental Process, *tempted*, and this directly affects a human Senser.

Example 5: Clause 39

(the enemy)	getting	them	tempted	by the ways of the world
Inducer	Process: mental: causative	Senser	Process: mental	Circumstance

God is similarly represented. In Example 6, the individual, *you*, is classified as *righteous*. As Attributor in this clause, God, *he*, is represented as the cause of this classification. *You* is a member of the class of things which can be classified as *righteous* because of the actions of a powerful deity.

Example 6: Clause 65

he (God)	has made	You	righteous
Attributor	Process: relational: causative	Carrier	Attribute

Deities are also shown as able to directly affect animate Goals, as shown in Examples 7 and 8 in which the Devil cheats and steals while God aids:

Example 7: Clause 31

the Devil	ripping	people	off
Actor		**animate Goal**	
	Process: material		

Example 8: Clause 5

God	(you)	help	me	God
	Actor	Process: material	**animate Goal**	

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[82] Halliday and Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, p. 299.
[83] Halliday and Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, pp. 299-301.

Thus, the transitivity roles allocated to deities in these clauses bestow power and an ability to affect humanity. People are made to sense, ascribed attributes and directly impacted. This representation of deities suggests a canonical ideological construction of the Christian universe dominated by transcendent higher powers.

The individual, in contrast, is relatively ineffectual. There is only one instance of a clause in which it plays a truly dynamic participant role. Within this band 2 clause, the individual acts upon an animate Goal. However, since the Goal is the individual itself, its effectuality is essentially negated:

Example 9: Clause 25

(you)	working	**yourself**	up	into a sweat
Actor		**animate Goal**		Circumstance
	Process: Material			

Moreover, Effective Prayer's individual is subject to the actions of a compassionate God and its malevolent adversary.

Example 10: Clause 5

God!	(you)	help	**me**	God!
	Actor	Process: material	**Goal**	

Example 11: Clause 36

(the enemy)	rob	**you**	from the purpose of God in your life
Actor	Process: material	**Goal**	Circumstance

In comparison to deities then, this is an incommensurate representation of dynamism in which the individual neither affects its surrounding environment nor other entities, but is itself directly impacted by the actions of deities.

A key clause in Effective Prayer is *God answers the prayers of the righteous*.

Example 12: Clause 49

God	answers	the prayers of the righteous
Sayer	Process: verbal	Verbiage

Effective prayers are presumably those that are answered, and this clause specifies the type of prayers, *the prayers of the righteous*, which will

receive a response. Following this, the individual is identified as *the righteous*, represented as the Recipient of *the miracle of righteousness, the gift of righteousness* and also classified as being *righteous*.

Example 13: Clause 52

you	(a)re	the righteous
Token	Process: relational: identifying	Value

Example 14: Clause 64

you	(ha)ve been given	the miracle of righteousness, the gift of righteousness
Recipient	Process: material	Goal

Example 15: Clause 65

he (God)	has made	you	righteous
Attributor	Process: relational: causative	**Carrier**	Attribute

Crucially, as Examples 14 and 15 show, it is thanks to God that the individual is in the position of being eligible to have prayers answered. Righteousness is a thing that God can give and also a quality it can bestow. Thus, as already mentioned, while the individual, as Carrier in Example 15, is dynamically neutral, God, as Attributor, is at its most powerful. Moreover, although the clause shown in Example 14 lacks an explicit Actor, it is clear from the co-text that *God* is the ellipsed participant, and so the individual, in the passive role of Recipient, is again dependent upon a benevolent deity.

The majority of the clauses referring to both the individual and to deities are assigned to bands 4 and 5 (86 percent for the individual and 53 percent for deities). Although band 5 is, in terms of the cline of dynamism, neutral and band 4 clauses contain only marginally effectual transitivity roles, closer examination of these clauses reveals that they also reinforce the power asymmetry.

The roles Sayer and Behaver (see Examples 16 and 17) are situated in the middle of the dynamism cline (band 4). However, despite a distinction not being made within the cline, within the context of religious discourse, the entity praying is clearly less powerful than the entity

answering.[84] Thus, while praying connotes a limited degree of power (the individual acts but does not directly affect their surrounding environment), the ability to answer prayers can be seen as a direct demonstration of the God's effectuality.

Example 16: Clause 7

I	call on	the name of Jesus
Behaver	Process: behavioural	Verbiage

Example 17: Clause 17

and if	**you**	pray	in the name of Jesus	according to the will of God
	Sayer	Process: verbal	Circumstance: angle	Circumstance

In addition, as Examples 16 and 17 also show, the individual is not free to pray as it desires, but must use specific words, *the name of Jesus*, which will act as the source of a prayer's power as long as that prayer is judged to be *according to the will of God*.

Finally, the imperative clause *believe me*, which appears twice in text, directly places the members of the congregation in a position which is subordinate to that of the preacher, Houston.

Example 18: Clauses 12 and 20

(you)	Believe	me
Senser	Process: mental	Phenomenon

The mental process here represents a semiotic construction of the individual's need for knowledge. However, it is not knowledge in general that Houston is conveying, but explicitly religious knowledge, as shown in Example 19:

Example 19: Clause 50

and	you	Know	[[who the righteous are]]
	Senser	Process: mental: cognition	**Phenomenon**

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[84] For other fields of experience, answering does not necessarily imply a greater degree of power than asking. Also, differentiation between individual verbs would make the cline unworkable, so no field specific distinction has been made and both asking and answering are assigned to the same band.

In fact, Houston emphasises the fact that the individual is constrained by requisite religious knowledge in a complex of band 4 clauses:

> *You just need // to know the authority [[you have behind the name of Jesus]]*

Example 20: Clauses 14- 16

you	just need		
Senser	Process: mental		
(you)	to know	the authority [[you have behind the name of Jesus]]	
Senser	Process: mental	Phenomenon	
you	Have	(the authority)	behind the name of Jesus
Carrier: possessor	Process: possessive	Attribute: possessed	Circumstance

Therefore, while the participant role Senser can be said to construe a certain degree of dynamism (a weighting of +1), this power is contingent upon both Houston's teaching and religious knowledge.

In summary, analysis of the linguistic representations of the individual and deities within Effective Prayer using the cline of dynamism reveals a picture of powerful deities, subject humanity and the traditional ideology of religion. While God and the Devil can directly affect the world, the individual is wholly reliant upon the former. God is the source of the individual's *righteousness* and provides answers to prayers. Moreover, the individual must possess religious knowledge, and lacks any significant degree of power.

Ideology and the Language of Hillsong: Three Propositions

The results presented in this article, showing the ideational prominence of the individual within Effective Prayer and a disparity in the represented degrees of effectuality of the individual and deities, demand interpretation. However, since the construction and replication of ideology through the semiosis of language is an immensely complex phenomenon, it is not possible to make categorical conclusions about the nature of Hillsong's ideology solely through two analyses of one three-and-a-half-minute excerpt from one sermon. Bearing this in mind, in this section I present three contrasting propositions regarding the ideological nature of Hillsong: that it reinforces the consumer-capitalist status quo; that it represents a traditionally Pentecostal interpretation of the relationship between God and

the individual; that it manifests a hegemonic struggle between capitalism and Christianity.

Horkheimer and Adorno suggest that despite vociferously promoting individualism, consumer capitalism relies on the normative power relationship of the elite and the subjugated,[85] and that despite knowing that freedom and success are effectively illusory, people willingly embrace the ideology that suppresses them.[86] From this perspective, the ideology of Hillsong is complicit with the dominant ideology of consumer capitalism. Effective Prayer is about the individual, but it is an individual without power who is at the heart of the text. Moreover, given that the church structure is hierarchical and its power relations identical to corporations,[87] that Houston is in an exceedingly powerful position (often referred to as the 'big eagle'),[88] and that the church exerts considerable political influence,[89] the Hillsong elite and the consumer-capitalist economic elite are indistinguishable. They have the same goals of portraying a patina of concern for the individual. Yet through the prosperity gospel and promotion of conspicuous consumption,[90] the Hillsong elite is in reality promoting and reinforcing the power relations of the consumer-capitalist status quo. Therefore, this analysis of Effective Prayer exposes one of the ways in which members of Hillsong may be inculcated to accept a limited degree of power in their lives and a role in which they are subject to both supernatural and corporeal power.

The second possible explanation for the results of this study is simply that the prevailing socio-economic conditions have created a society to which the traditional theology of Pentecostal churches such as Hillsong is perfectly suited. This hypothesis presents a reversal of Weber's conception of the expansion of capitalism as being inextricably tied to the reformation and the theology of Protestant denominations such as the

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[85] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 124-126.
[86] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 106.
[87] Connell, 'Hillsong', p. 326; Maddox, 'In the Goofy Parking Lot', pp. 152-155.
[88] O'Malley, 'The Rise and Rise of Hillsong', par. 19.
[89] Maddox, 'In the Goofy Parking Lot', pp. 108-109; Colin Symes and Kalervo N. Gulson, 'Faith in Education: The Politics of State Funding and the "New" Christian Schooling in Australia', *Education Policy*, vol. 22, no. 2 (2007), pp. 239-241.
[90] Maddox, 'Prosper, Consume and Be Saved', pp. 153-155.

Calvinists, Quakers and Mennonites.[91] Since Pentecostalism has always been a religious movement which foregrounds the individual and its relationship with God but retains biblical notions of subject humanity, its ideology aligns easily with that of the dominant socio-economic paradigm of consumer capitalism. Effective Prayer could, therefore, be viewed as an archetypal linguistic instantiation of these analogous ideologies.

Moreover, although not referring solely to Pentecostal megachurches, within Heelas and Woodhead's typology of contemporary churches, the 'congregation of experiential difference' is the most successful post-subjective-turn church in the West as it allows for and encourages the "subjective experience of God",[92] but continues to assert that "submission to the higher authority of God, Christ, the Bible and congregational instruction"[93] must be the foundation upon which religious life is built. The results of this study highlight the way in which Hillsong fits perfectly into this paradigm. Yet Pentecostalism always has. Thus, Hillsong's success could simply be a case of it being in the right place at the right time.

The final hypothesis that I would like to propose is that the contrast between the salience of the individual as an entity and its comparative lack of efficacy when compared to Christian deities may well epitomise ideological struggle. In this view, the ideology of Effective Prayer represents neither a symbiosis of Hillsong's ideology and that of consumer capitalism, nor a fortuitous yet coincidental parallelism between the tenets of the two. The contrasting prominence of the individual and the dynamism of deities is perhaps a linguistic instantiation of the unresolved hegemonic struggle between contemporary Christianity and consumer capitalism. In Gramsci's conception of hegemony, a society's dominant ideology is not static.[94] There is a continual battle between discourses, a vying for power and dominance between ideologies that benefit some and marginalise others. Interpreting a text as an instantiation of its underlying ideology,

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[91] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Routledge, 1930), p. 10.
[92] Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, p. 23.
[93] Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, p. 19.
[94] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, eds and trans Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: ElecBook, 1999 [1971]), p. 427, at http://www.walkingbutterfly.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/gramsci-prison-notebooks-vol1.pdf. Accessed 15/10/2014.

therefore, also allows for the conception of discourse as the medium through which this struggle for dominance is enacted. [95] From this perspective then, the conflicting ideational constructions of the individual and deities within Effective Prayer suggest a struggle for hegemony between the traditional belief systems of Christianity and those of the consumer-capitalist society in which Hillsong is situated.

Conclusion

This article had two complementary aims: to demonstrate the efficacy of linguistic analyses based on SFL for revealing ideology and to elucidate the ideology of Hillsong as constructed by Houston in Effective Prayer. The initial analysis revealed that the individual is the most salient entity within the text. By contrast, deities are comparatively marginalised. This result is perhaps obvious and might be apparent without the application of a linguistic analysis. Indeed, almost all scholarship on Hillsong highlights the prominent role of the individual within the church's worship, music and theology.[96] However, examination of the effectuality of the individual and deities within Effective Prayer indicated that conceptions of the power of God and the Devil as understood for around two millennia by followers of Christianity remain unchallenged. The individual is relatively powerless in comparison. This second analysis required a more complex understanding of the grammar of English and revealed results which are not immediately evident but which have profound ideological significance. Thus, I hope that this study has demonstrated the benefits of an SFL-based, analytical approach to the study of the language of religion and will encourage future interdisciplinary approaches to the exegesis of religious texts and the exploration of religious ideology.

Nevertheless, I do not claim to have offered a comprehensive account of the ideology of Hillsong, or even of the text, Effective Prayer. Indeed, further analysis of, for example, the structuring of clauses and the text as a whole, the textual metafunction, would reveal how information in the text is structured to foreground some pieces of information and

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[95] Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 61-67.
[96] For example Connell, 'Hillsong', p. 322; Goh, 'Hillsong and 'Megachurch' Practice', pp. 291-293; McIntyre, 'Brand of Choice', pp. 176-184.

background others. [97] Analysis of Houston's dialogic construction of Effective Prayer, the interpersonal metafunction, would show whether he positions the Hillsong congregation as being either involved in the 'conversation' of the text or simply as passive recipients of information and instruction.

What is clear from the findings presented in this article, however, is that Hillsong appears to be a prototypical congregation of experiential difference – subjectivising religious experience while retaining biblical conceptions of deific omnipotence. The ideological ramifications of this and the nature of the relationship between the ideology of consumer capitalism and that of Hillsong are more ambiguous, however. Thus, I proposed three interpretations of the results: that Hillsong's ideology as constructed in Effective Prayer represents consumer-capitalist orthodoxy, traditional Pentecostalism or hegemonic struggle. It is hoped that these hypotheses provide stimulus for future interdisciplinary examination of the interrelation between linguistic instantiations of the ideology of Hillsong and the church's praxis.

Appendix
Notes on transcription:
1) Punctuation and paragraphing added by the author and intended to facilitate reading.
2) Superscript numbering ([1]) identifies clauses referred to in the article.
3) Double slashes (//) represent clause breaks.
4) Double square brackets ([[ ]]) represent embedded clauses.
5) Unfinished clauses and groups marked with ellipsis (…).
6) Phonologically reduced forms written to reflect pronunciation e.g. *cos* – because, *wanna* – want to.

Effective Prayer
[1]Sometimes the most effective prayers, they're not that eloquent. // [2]You wanna // [3]hear [[[4]what they sound like]]? // "[5]God! Help me God!" //

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[97] By way of example, reference to deities appears in grammatical constituents the end of just under a quarter of all the clauses in Effective Prayer. This position allows for textual prominence. In the flow of the clause as message, elements at the end of clauses are presented by speakers as new, and thus significant, information. See Halliday and Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, pp. 87-92.

⁶That's effective prayer. // "⁷I call on the name of Jesus // ⁸because that's the name [[⁹that's above every other name."]] // ¹⁰And if you wanna // ¹¹pray effectively, // ¹²believe me, // ¹³you don't have to be a spiritual giant. // ¹⁴You just need // ¹⁵to know the authority [[¹⁶you have behind the name of Jesus.]] // ¹⁷And if you pray in the name of Jesus according to the will of God, // ¹⁸and you pray // ¹⁹to God be the glory, // ²⁰believe me, // ²¹you have effective prayer. // The effective… ²²Number four fervent. //

²³What's fervent prayer? // ²⁴Is it like [[²⁵working yourself up into a sweat]]? // "Oh God, oh God, oh God, oh God, oh God." No... ²⁶You know [[²⁷what it is]]? // ²⁸Indignation. Indignation, that's [[²⁹what the word means]]. // ³⁰When did you last get indignant about [[³¹the Devil ripping people off]]? // ³²When did you last get indignant about the plight of people [[³³who are caught in sin]]? // ³⁴When did you last get indignant about [[³⁵the enemy trying to rob your health // ³⁶and rob you from the purpose of God on your life]]? // ³⁷When did you last get indignant about [[³⁸the enemy trying to rob your children // ³⁹and getting them tempted by the ways of the world]]? // ⁴⁰When people get indignant // ⁴¹then they pray fervently // and effective, fervent prayer of righteous people. Righteous people…

⁴²And that's [[⁴³where straight away we can belittle ourselves // ⁴⁴and think // ⁴⁵our prayer's not as good as anybody else's // ⁴⁶cos we know ourselves better than anyone]]. // ⁴⁷You can walk in here in condemnation. // ⁴⁸Here's the amazing thing about it. // ⁴⁹God answers the prayers of the righteous. // ⁵⁰And you know [[⁵¹who the righteous are]]? // ⁵²You're the righteous. // ⁵³You are made righteous in Christ. // ⁵⁴You are the righteousness of God in Christ. // ⁵⁵In other words, your prayers are powerful. // ⁵⁶Your prayers are answered. // ⁵⁷Your prayers are valuable. // ⁵⁸Don't you dare belittle your own prayer. // ⁵⁹Don't you dare think [[⁶⁰that God's gonna answer someone else's prayer // ⁶¹before he's gonna answer yours]]. // ⁶²Don't you dare believe [[⁶³that somehow your prayer's not as valuable as mine]]. // The effective, fervent prayer of righteous people…

⁶⁴And you've been given the miracle of righteousness, the gift of righteousness. // ⁶⁵He has made you righteous. // ⁶⁶You are the righteousness of God in Christ. // ⁶⁷And anyone [[⁶⁸who calls on the name of Jesus,]] anyone [[⁶⁹who will come humbly before the lord // ⁷⁰and open their life to him,]] that is a person [[⁷¹who can know the righteousness of Christ]]. // ⁷²And that means [[⁷³your prayer is not based on your wrongs and your weakness and your failings and your inabilities and your incapacity]] // ⁷⁴but they're based on the lord and saviour Jesus Christ

[[[75]whose name is above every other name, // [76]who's the author and the finisher of your faith // [77]who for the joy that set before him endured the cross // [78]and despised the shame // [79]so that you could have the life of Christ [[[80]living in your veins]] //[81]and fulfil the purpose of God in your life in Jesus]]. //