This is my Desire: a Semiotic Perspective on Conversion in an Evangelical Seeker Church and a Pentecostal Church in the Netherlands

In the Dutch late modern society, the presence of thriving new evangelical churches is remarkable against the backdrop of the decline of “traditional”, mainstream churches. This book examines the experiences of newcomers to contemporary evangelicalism through the lens of an evangelical seeker church and a neo-Pentecostal church. While both churches share an emphasis on conversion, there are substantial differences in their understanding of the Holy Spirit. By comparing the conversion experiences of newcomers with strategies of conversion employed by each church, this book sheds new light on profound differences found within Dutch evangelicalism. Drawing upon theories of the body, this qualitative study departs from the notion that religion is limited to the mind and beliefs; conversely, it offers a semiotic approach stressing the importance of affects, emotions and desires. This book also engages in an analytical comparison of design of worship space, worship music and distinct language ideologies used by the two churches to stimulate conversion. It argues that the ways in which newcomers learn conversion, through the Alpha course, baptism and church participation, are anchored in embodied processes. This study thus marks the need for a more sensorial and embodied approach to understand contemporary forms of Christianity today.