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Salvation and the School of Christ: A theological-ethnographic exploration of the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy in fresh expressions of church

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Salvation and the School of Christ

A theological-ethnographic exploration of
the relationship between soteriology,
missiology and pedagogy in fresh
expressions of church

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| Doctor of Philosophy in Education Research. King's College, London: 2014 |
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Abstract

This thesis considers the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy in fresh expressions of church.

Having identified the key theological and pedagogical challenges for the fresh expressions of church movement, three heuristic models of the dominant contemporary approaches to Christian education are identified, positing a direct relationship between soteriological and missiological beliefs and the consequential pedagogical praxis of Christian communities.

The methodology of the qualitative research is shown to be grounded within the field of practical theology and utilizes a critical realist framework for the ethnographic approach undertaken in the participant observation of three fresh expressions of church.

The pedagogical praxis, soteriological and missiological beliefs of the three communities are thus outlined and analysed, allowing the ethnographic data to critique, and be critiqued by, the heuristic models put forward.

The three models are shown to be in part upheld by the praxis of the three communities whilst the data analysis challenges the integrity of the theological diversity of the fresh expressions of church movement and calls for further research to be undertaken on identifying the nature and purpose of Christian education with, and for, the unchurched.

For Rog – for your support, generosity and low rental demands.

For Sid – for your never-ending supply of Maltesers and red wine.

For Andrea – well, tit for tat, quite literally!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“We are pupils in the school of the Lord’s service...we are to learn Christ. What other desire is at the heart of the vocation of every fervent Christian man and woman?” (Casey, 1996, p36).

If ‘learning Christ’ is at the heart of the vocation of every fervent Christian, then the history of Christianity may be viewed as two thousand years of debate and disagreement; establishment and assessment; reflection upon and reform of the curricula of the school of Christ. The controversies that continue to blight secondary and higher education in the United Kingdom pale into insignificance when compared with the trauma which has been wrought; blood which has been spilt; and souls which are said to have been lost over the competing accounts of the objectives, methods, content and consequences of Christian education which have been propagated through the millennia. Today, such differences may be fought in the academy rather than on the battlefield, and yet the resultant impact upon the Church and the world, as Jones gloomily suggests, is no less far-reaching;

[T]he disarray in the church, its lack of focus, its discordant voices, its complacent captivity to cultural dispositions, its negligence, its clumsiness, and its sloth are all related to some basic failures in Christian education. (Jones, 2005, p10).

Whilst one might want to invest some Christian hope into Jones’ stark view of current Christian education, there can be no doubting the centrality of the role of education in the life of the contemporary Church.

Moreover, each generation has faced fresh challenges and opportunities in regards to the context in which such teaching and learning is conducted, and that of the researcher is certainly no different. As the age of Christendom, in the economically more developed countries at least, comes to an end and religious apathy and illiteracy grow ever more common, the Church is compelled to reflect upon the essentials of its identity and purpose once again, bringing to the fore questions of form, mission and salvation. It is with these in mind that we approach the issue of Christian education in fresh expressions of church.

The fresh expressions of church movement, born out of the 2004 Mission-Shaped Church report, has already made a significant impact on the ecclesial landscape of western Christianity and has thus, unsurprisingly, been lauded and condemned in equal measure. Like the prophets of old, the movement has stood at the margins of the people of God, challenging current practices, frustrating inherited systems, calling for more faithful engagement with those outside of the institution. Some have viewed such practice as a gift of the Holy Spirit, a much needed reminder of the true vocation of the Church in a time of upheaval and transition. Others have interpreted this behaviour as nothing more than the heretical chattering of a false prophet, trying to lead God's people away from faithful worship and witness and into the wilderness to wither and die.

However one may view fresh expressions of church, the movement has already enabled significant ecclesial reform and contains claims of such importance that it is deserving of rigorous academic attention. Thus, In this thesis I will endeavour to overcome the temptation of playing defender or judge of the fresh expressions of church movement and will instead attempt to be that of critical friend, fairly representing and examining its theological basis and pedagogical praxis in the hope that such work might lead to more fruitful dialogue and more faithful practice, both within the movement and in the wider Church.

Following this introduction as chapter 1, chapter 2 sets the movement in its ecclesial context in a situational and theological analysis of fresh expressions of church. After summarising the nature of the decline of the inherited church in the west, an overview of the emerging church, from which, it will be argued, the fresh expressions of church movement itself emerged, is offered. An outline of the origins of the fresh expressions of church movement will then be given, highlighting the challenges of definition and self-identity within the movement, before we consider the movement's theological basis. It will be suggested that the movement is theologically founded upon a polyphonic, contextual methodology which is boundried by an assumed standard ecumenical orthodoxy and which endorses the *missio Dei* hermeneutic in both its missiological and soteriological outlook. The absence of an explicit pedagogy of the movement will be noted before we consider the theological challenges for, and criticisms of, fresh expressions theology, acknowledging the danger of relativism and the charges of an assumed metanarrative, confused missiology and potentially inconsistent soteriology.

In chapter 3, I shall establish the significance of the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy – a relationship that I will contend is often overlooked in the field of Christian education. I will suggest that there are three dominant approaches to contemporary Christian education that I name as the instructional, enculturation and critical praxis approaches. I argue that each approach is built upon divergent theologies and that as such, it is possible to identify three heuristic models of Christian pedagogy in which soteriology forms the basis for missiology which is the subsequent dominant influence on pedagogy. The models identified here will be subject to iterative testing through the qualitative research that we later outline and thus in chapter 3, I identify the three research questions of the ethnographic study as the following:

1. *What is the pedagogical praxis of fresh expressions of church?*
2. *In what ways does the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy in fresh expressions of church challenge or uphold the heuristic models of Christian theology and education identified in this thesis?*
3. *What further theological insights on Christian education and the fresh expressions of church movement might be gleaned from an analysis of the present praxis of fresh expressions of church?*

Chapter 4 comprises the research methodology of the thesis, grounding the qualitative research in a phronetic understanding of practical theology. Here, I outline the importance and use of practical theology within an interdisciplinary study such as this, justifying my use of a critical realist framework in an ethnographic approach. An account of the key principles of ethnography that form the basis of my qualitative research precedes an explanation for why I have chosen the research methods of participant observation, interviews and questionnaires for this approach, alongside the criteria used to identify potential communities to study. Finally, I explain my process of data analysis and writing up, doing so upholding a critical realist epistemology.

In chapters 5 and 6, the pedagogical praxis of the three fresh expressions of church researched is described and supported with direct examples and lengthy quotations from the leaders and attendees of the communities. In chapter 5, the founding of each fresh expression is explicated in detail and its pedagogy represented on a case-by-case basis. Chapter 6 sees the synthetic analysis of the pedagogical praxis of the three communities,

highlighting the similarities and differences between them, and concludes with a comparison between the heuristic models identified in chapter 3 with the praxis encountered in the research.

In chapter 7 a comprehensive analysis of the soteriology and missiology of each fresh expression of church is undertaken, allowing for a rigorous examination of the relationship between the pedagogical praxis and soteriological and missiological presuppositions of each community to be conducted in the following chapter. Thus, in chapter 8, the spoken and operate theology and the embedded and explicit pedagogical praxis of the three communities will be compared and contrasted with the models of chapter 3, enabling us to consider the veracity and strength of the models which may be challenged, upheld and/or revised.

In chapter 9, the various threads of the thesis are woven together as conclusions are drawn, suggestions for revised forms of theory and practice offered, and areas for further research proposed. Here, a series of recommendations will be given which, it is hoped, will be of use to the fresh expressions of church movement, the field of systematic theology, and to the wider Church as I offer another voice to the ongoing discussion of theology and education in the academy, the Church and the world.

Chapter 2: A Situational and Theological Analysis of the Fresh Expressions of Church Movement

In this chapter, I will consider the situational and theological context in which the fresh expressions of church movement was founded. Having acknowledged the ambiguities and confusions in definition, I will argue that the movement should be identified as an established branch of the emerging church, another loosely defined movement which I shall seek to identify in terms of its relationship with the inherited church and of the pervasive principles which undergird its many and varied forms. I will continue with an overview of what officially constitutes a fresh expression of church before considering the theological methodology of the movement. A survey of the missiological, soteriological and pedagogical themes which are found in fresh expressions literature will be offered before the chapter is concluded with a consideration of the criticisms of the methodology and theology of the movement, thereby highlighting its major soteriological, missiological and pedagogical challenges, which will themselves become the foci for the empirical component of this thesis.

2:1 - Emerging Church and the Fresh Expressions of Church Movement

A review of the literature which critiques the emerging church and the fresh expressions movement in particular highlights the lack of a consistent understanding of the terms by both practitioners and theorists alike. Following a Goldilockian hermeneutic, some commentators argue that the movements are too reliant on a propositional view of the Christian faith (Milbank & Davison, 2010); others claim that they are balanced in their replacing propositional discourse with theo-politics and art (Rollins, 2008); whilst others still claim that there is a deficiency in doctrinal propositions in the movements (Deyoung & Kluck, 2008). Some commentators criticise the movements for their lack of apophatic theology (Milbank & Davison, 2010); some claim apophatic thinking is key to the movements (Rollins, 2006); and others criticise the movements for relying too much upon the apophatic tradition (Deyoung & Kluck, 2008). Moreover, practitioners and critics disagree on whether the movements are dominated by conservative evangelicals (Moynagh, 2004; Drane, 2006; Guest, 2007; Davison & Millbank, 2010); are protest

movements against traditional evangelicalism (Deyoung & Kluck, 2008); are movements constituted of a spectrum of theologies and ecclesiologies (Gibbs & Bolger, 2006) ; or are best represented by churches which have 'no substantial doctrinal centre' (Rollins, 2006, p131).

Amidst this fog of competing and mutually exclusive interpretations of the origins, theology and protagonists of the movements, there is general agreement that the fresh expressions of church movement is part of the international community of the emerging church (Moynagh, 2004; Cray, 2004; Mobsby, 2007; Nelstrop and Percy, 2008; fresh expressions website, 2012a), and so it is to an overview of this movement, and its relationship to the inherited church, that we now turn.

The Emerging Context: The Decline of the Inherited Church of the West

Whilst the veracity and consequences of the secularization theory continue to cause great debate and disagreement, it cannot be disputed that, in line with Protestant churches throughout Europe, church attendance in the UK is in decline. Statistics from Christian charities (Tearfund, 2007), academics (Brierley, 2000; Gledhill & Glanfield, 2009) and Church research (Church Society, 2006) might disagree over the speed and magnitude of this decline, but they all acknowledge that the decline is real and that it looks set to continue (Sawkins, 1998; Brown, 2001; Murray, 2004; Doward, 2008). A glance at the membership of the denomination in which I am being trained for ministry certainly paints such a picture. According to the 1973/4 handbook (the first of the newly formed denomination), the United Reformed Church numbered 192,241 members in 2080 churches (United Reformed Church, 1974). In 2012, despite unions with the Churches of Christ in 1981 and the Scottish Congregational Church in 2000, the figures stood at 63,680 members across 1529 churches (United Reformed Church, 2012). Quite simply, the long-term sustainability of the inherited model of church in economically more developed countries is in question. Many church leaders have begun to acknowledge that the shape of the Church of tomorrow will be considerably different from that of today (Williams, 2011) whilst others are even questioning whether established denominations are being called to their death (Bradbury, 2012). It is no surprise then, that research carried out on behalf of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe has shown that structural and

liturgical reform and experimentation with new models of church is taking place throughout the Church in Europe, in the hope for ‘an upsurge in church life, a more efficient organization, growth in membership numbers and financial savings’ (Fischer, 2010).

Moreover, although the situation in Europe is clearly different from that of North America where church attendance is considerably higher (Bruce, 1990, Davie, 2002; Berger et al, 2008) there is a growing amount of research which suggests that the statistics often cited considerably exaggerate weekly US church attendance (Hadaway et al, 1993; Hadaway and Marler, 2005; Thumma and Travis, 2007) and that weekly attendance in North America is actually decreasing (Lindsay, 2008; Olson, 2008; Weems Jr, 2010; Eagle, 2011), particularly so amongst younger age groups (Clark & Schellenberg 2006; Lindsay, 2008; Hollinghurst, 2010). Moreover, a great deal of literature on both sides of the Atlantic displays a growing disenchantment with the inherited church from those within the Christian community (Cunningham, 2006; Kimball, 2007; Sanders, 2007; Duin, 2008) and an increasingly negative perception of the institutional church from outside the Christian community (Richter & Francis, 1998; Francis, 2001; Savage et al, 2006; Everts & Shaupp, 2009). It is within this perfect storm that the emerging church movement arose.

The Emerging Church

“Emerging churches are so disparate, there are exceptions to any generalisations. Most are too new and fluid to classify, let alone assess their significance.” (Murray, 2004, p73)

Defining the nature of the emerging church is a task which has been frequently likened to ‘nailing jelly/Jell-O to the wall’ (Moynagh, 2004, p14; Deyoung & Kluck, 2008, p17), unsurprising for a movement whose key proponents describe it as a ‘fragile conversation’ (Rollins, 2006, p5) a ‘mindset’ (Kimball, 2003, pp14-15) or ‘going down the rabbit hole, and enjoying the ride’ (Gibbs & Bolger, 2006, p27). The term was first used by Larson & Osborne in 1970 in their call for a revised understanding of the contemporary church and was popularized in the works of Robert Warren, (1995; 1996), National Officer for Evangelism in the Church of England 1993-1998, in which he contrasted ‘the Church in Inherited Mode’ with ‘the Church in Emerging Mode’, the former being a description of

his understanding of the Church post-Enlightenment to late modernity, the latter, a vision for the necessary renewal of the Church in the 'post-Christendom, post-Enlightenment and post-modern world' (Warren, 1995, p42).

Whilst critics of the movement might define it in terms of the bourgeois lifestyle that it is said to endorse (Deyoung & Kluck, 2008, pp20-22), those who consider themselves to be part of the movement are consistently and deliberately ambiguous about its nature, coming closest to self-definition by using broad generalizations which could describe a theology shared by most, if not all, contemporary Christians;

Emerging churches are communities that practice the way of Jesus within postmodern cultures. This definition encompasses the nine practices. Emerging churches (1) identify with the life of Jesus, (2) transform the secular realm, and (3) live highly communal lives. Because of these three activities, they (4) welcome the stranger, (5) serve with generosity, (6) participate as producers, (7) create as created beings, (8) lead as a body, and (9) take part in spiritual activities. (Gibbs & Bolger, 2006, pp44-45).

In order to understand the broad parameters of this apparently amorphous movement, we look to American New Testament professor Scott McKnight who has identified five key streams of the emerging church movement (McKnight, 2007):

Prophetic/Provocative

The emerging movement is consciously and deliberately provocative. Emerging Christians believe that the church needs to change, and they are beginning to live as if that change had already occurred. (McKnight, 2007)

Whether considering Warren's contrasting of the inherited and emerging modes of church or the more recent and more polemic strand of emerging church literature (titles include 'Life After Church', Sanders, 2007; 'Dear Church: Letters from a Disillusioned Generation', Cunningham, 2006; 'Quitting Church', Julia Duin, 2008; 'They Like Jesus but Not the Church', Kimball, 2007) it is clear that those perceived to be in the emerging church are

calling for a reformation of (at least part of) the western church and do so through both word and action, actively experimenting with different models of church.

Postmodern

Whilst rarely defining how they interpret the nature of post-modernity¹, throughout emerging church literature, a pervasive thread is the call to acknowledge the postmodern state of the contemporary western society in which the church is located. Frequently, this postmodern hermeneutic is summarised as ‘the collapse of inherited metanarratives’ (McKnight, 2007) or the acceptance of a ‘provisional, contextual and subjective’ epistemology (Mobsby, 2007, p22).

Praxis-oriented

At its core, the emerging movement is an attempt to fashion a new ecclesiology...Its distinctive emphases can be seen in its worship, its concern with orthopraxy, and its missional orientation. ..The foremost concern...is being missional. (McKnight, 2007)

In emerging church literature, orthodoxy is not held up as of prime importance. Leaders are often keen to point out that their church is free from dogma (e.g. Tomlinson, 1995; Rollins, 2006) or that they ‘hold together the very liberal and the very conservative’ (Wright, 2008, p129). Mutually exclusive doctrines are held by members of the same Christian community and is understood as something to be celebrated rather than challenged for truth is not seen to be found in a set of propositions; “Truth is God and having knowledge of the Truth is evidenced, not in a doctrinal system, but in allowing that Truth to be incarnated in one’s life.” (Rollins, 2006, p56)

In place of orthodoxy, orthopraxy is considered the measure and objective of a Christian community and thus there is much talk of incarnating God’s love in action (Warren, 1995; Tomlinson, 1995; Rollins, 2006) and especially, of being a missional people (Kimball, 2003; Moynagh, 2004; Gibbs & Bolger, 2006).

¹ Many writers have criticised Warren’s simplistic understanding of postmodernity (e.g Shanks, 2000, pp18-24)

Post-Evangelical

McKnight argues that 'the vast majority of emerging Christians are evangelical theologically' (2007) but that the scepticism towards a systematic theology and a deep reluctance to label the elect and the damned deems them post-Evangelical, a term welcomed by many within the movement. Whilst McKnight's judgement on the overarching theology of the movement might need further justification, his pronouncement on the emerging unease with systematic thought and their promulgation of soteriological agnosticism is indeed pervasive throughout the movement.

Political

So gone are the days where churches put all their focus on unchurched Harry and Mary. Now the emphasis is on human trafficking, AIDs, poverty, the homeless and the environment. (Deyoung & Kluck, 2009, pp36-7)

Perhaps as a consequence of the emphasis on orthopraxy and soteriological agnosticism, both critics and advocates of the emerging church acknowledge that the movement is political, often left-leaning (McKnight, 2007; Deyoung & Kluck, 2009).

It is thus within this wider context of a disparate and growing movement predominantly, but not exclusively, within the western Protestant Church, whose thought is founded upon the above five principles that the fresh expressions movement locates itself (Moynagh, 2004; Cray, 2004; Mobsby, 2007; Fresh expressions website, 2012a).

The Fresh Expressions of Church Movement

...[T]he problem with fresh expressions is that nobody really knows what it is. I look on the website and see a vast diversity of churches. This is good but some of them are fairly standard Anglican churches using a tambourine rather than an organ. My concern is that there may be a time when somebody says that the emperor has no clothes on. (as quoted in Mobsby, 2007, p27)

One criticism often levied at the fresh expressions of church movement, as with the emerging church movement at large, is that it is indefinable and nebulous, in that '[a]lmost anything can be a fresh expression' (Percy, 2008, p33). Whilst this may be an over exaggeration of the situation, fresh expressions practitioners admit that there is no consensus on the use of terminology (Mobsby, 2007; Croft, 2008a) and that a tighter working definition is by no means a priority for the movement (Gamble, 2008), a situation further complicated by a contradictory use of terminology in official literature².

The fresh expressions of church movement, formally initiated in 2005 by Archbishop Rowan Williams following the publishing of the 'Mission-Shaped Church report' in 2004, is a national body endorsed by the Anglican, Methodist, Congregational and United Reformed Church denominations in the United Kingdom; has since developed formal partnerships with the Anglican Churches of Canada, Australia and New Zealand and the Episcopal Church USA; and has developed missiological thinking that is 'taking root in denominations beyond those officially involved in the Fresh expressions initiative – from the Assemblies of God to the Baptist Church' (Moynagh, 2012, p59). Bayes (2004) suggests that the phrase 'fresh expressions of church' can be traced back to Bishop Stephen Cottrell but the first explicit classification of churches that were identified as fresh expressions came in the Mission-Shaped Church report in which twelve types of fresh expressions of church were listed (Cray, 2004, p44). This catalogue included:

- Alternative worship communities
- Base Ecclesial Communities
- Café church
- Cell church
- Churches arising out of community initiatives (both out of community projects, and the restructuring or refounding of an existing church to serve a community).
- Multiple and midweek congregations
- Network-focused churches (churches connecting with specific networks)
- School-based and school-linked congregations and churches
- Seeker church

² One example of this is that the 'Mission-shaped Church' report first identifies Seeker services as a fresh expression of church (Cray, 2004, p44) and later states that Seeker services are not a type of church (p71).

- Traditional church plants
- Traditional forms of church inspiring new interest (including new monastic communities)
- Youth congregations

This classification of twelve types of fresh expressions of church grew to fourteen to acknowledge the place of children in the Church (Croft, 2008a, p9) and has since been divided into two or three subgroups (Mobsby, 2007; Gamble, 2007 respectively) and classified as a 'spectrum' or 'mixed economy of fresh expressions' (Croft, 2008a; Mobsby 2007), as practitioners 'err on the side of generosity in applying definitions' (Croft, 2008a, p9).

The current working definition which 'is good enough for now' (Cray, 2012) reads thus:

A fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church.

- It will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples.
- It will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context.

(Croft, 2008a, p10)

Such an open definition has prompted some commentators to criticise the movement for its lack of systematic ecclesiology (Percy, 2008; Davison & Milbank, 2010) and whilst this may be a fair criticism, inherent in the very nature of the fresh expressions movement is a desire not to promote one definite, comprehensive understanding of church - "True to the postmodern undercurrents that fuel them, they wanted to be open to other approaches, to new possibilities, and to the closure of closure." (Nelstrop, 2008, p196)

However, whether such openness is founded upon ecclesiological insecurity (Davison & Milbank, 2010) or a confident, generosity (Croft, 2008a), we will follow Mobsby in narrowing the plethora of fresh expressions of church into two groups;

The first appear to be more akin to ‘inherited’ modes of church, which do not seek to be significantly postmodern in contextual understanding and differ in their model of contextual theology utilising a more ‘translation approach’...The second is akin to more ‘emerging’ modes of church which do significantly seek to be postmodern in contextual understanding and use a ‘synthetic’ model of contextual theology. (Mobsby, 2007, p31).

It is the second mode of fresh expressions of church, similar in classification to Gamble’s ‘fresh expression beyond the traditional church’ subgroup (Gamble, 2008, p21), that we will take as the field of this study. However, it is important to acknowledge that fresh expressions of church are never meant to be static and are therefore said to be constantly evolving in their praxis, structure and identity. The image of a ‘fresh expressions Journey’ is frequently used to describe the developmental process that the establishing and flourishing of a fresh expression of church might take:



Figure 1 - The fresh expressions journey (fresh expressions website, 2012d)

The premise is that by chronologically following the stages outlined here, the initial community of the unchurched may evolve into a more structured community of faith, though such a picture is given as an example of ‘good practice’ (fresh expressions website, 2012d) rather than prescribed as a process that must be strictly adhered to. Nevertheless, the transient nature of fresh expressions of church does mean that the praxis and identity of one will be partially dependent on its age and stage on the formative journey and this must be acknowledged in any qualitative research in the field.

2:2 – A Theological Survey of the Fresh Expressions Movement

A Polyphonic, Contextual, Theological Methodology

As befits its emphasis on contextual theology, denominational diversity and ongoing dialogue, the fresh expressions of church movement is devoid of an authoritative leader or text. The Mission-Shaped Church report (Cray, 2004), may outline the theological rationale grounding the establishment of the movement but fresh expressions thinking has mutated and evolved - in academic literature, in blogs, in praxis - since the report's publication, as is evident in the narrowing of the official definition of a fresh expression of church. Most recently, Michael Moynagh, Fresh Expressions' Director of Research and teacher of pioneer ministry³, has 'gathered, ordered and presented the best learning from the fresh expressions movement' (Moynagh, 2012, i) in a tone which articulates and examines the theology behind 'new contextual churches' (Moynagh, 2012, x) in great detail. It is therefore significant to note that this seminal work is awash with provisional claims, that it critiques the attestations of other fresh expressions scholars, and that it is not confined to the theological justification of the fresh expressions movement. Indeed, an acknowledgement of the many and varied theological 'contributories' to fresh expressions thinking (Atkins, 2008, pp24-5) and the identification of the essence of church as founded upon not praxis or doxis but on the conversations that it is engaged in (Moynagh, 2012, p118) demonstrates the desire for a dialogical, multivoiced theology which is at the core of the fresh expressions movement.

Whilst such a remit may well be applauded for its humility and demotic generosity, one of the many challenges raised for the commentator is how to fairly represent the overarching theology of such a polyphonous, ecclesiological diverse movement, particularly when its leaders claim that 'fresh expressions will not be fully analysed, nor valued, nor critiqued by older models of theological discourse' (Atkins, 2012). Thus here,

³ Pioneer ministry, also conspicuously ambiguous in definition (e.g. Smith, 2009 and Goodhew et al., 2012, the latter of which, in a bizarre affront to its subtitle 'An Introduction to Fresh Expressions of Church and Pioneer Ministry', is devoid of an attempt to explain what pioneer ministry is), evolved from the term 'pioneer church planter' used in the Mission Shaped Church Report (Cray, 2004). A separate category of ministry in the Anglican Church, the phrase 'pioneer ministry' has become a catch-all term that refers to all ministry, whether lay or ordained, which focuses on pioneering missional initiatives that include, though not exclusively, fresh expressions of church (Shier-Jones, 2009).

the limits of my attempt to accurately portray the theology behind the fresh expressions movement are acknowledged. In the remaining part of this chapter, I endeavour to articulate and critique the most accurate representation of the theology of the movement that time and space will allow by focusing my consideration on the theological attestations of the national leaders of the movement, many of whom have also had experience as practitioners of such communities, citing and quoting individuals when appropriate. Such a portrayal of the theology of the movement will be provisional and quickly dated due to the contextual nature of fresh expressions theology and it is to this foundational theological hermeneutic that we now attend.

The term 'incarnational mission' can be found throughout fresh expressions literature⁴, has been heralded as the 'most important insight of Mission-Shaped Church' (Savage et al, 2006, p161) and its application, the 'major missionary challenge' of today's church (Cray, 2004, xiii). Whilst some commentators have fairly criticized the report for the absence of a detailed explanation of the term (Davison & Milbank, 2010), a general description is offered;

God in Christ entered the world, taking on a specific cultural identity. The revelation of God for all cultures was embodied in one particular culture. If cultural solidarity with the Palestinian communities of his day was a necessary aspect of Christ's mission, the same principle applies to us. (Cray, 2004, p87).

It is clear that the fresh expressions of church movement, and the Mission-Shaped Church report in particular, has borrowed from the likes of Warren (1995), Bevens (2008), and Bosch (2010) in their emphasis on the importance of contextualisation in mission, a principle whose presence is felt both implicitly (Atkins, 2008) and explicitly (Cray, 2004, pp90ff) in the literature. Indeed, it is by no means surprising to find that Bevens' 'loci theologici' which form the basis of his influential models of contextual theology (Bevens, 2008, p4) are reflected in the 'conversation partners' of Sally Gaze (1998) as referenced in the report (Cray, 1994, p91). Fresh expressions ecclesiology is thus founded upon the principle that '[c]ontext should shape the church' (Cray, 2004, p105).

⁴ Including in the current official definition of a fresh expression of church (see 1:3)

Explicitly identified contextual theology can trace its roots at least as far back as Schleiermacher and his suggestion that all theology is at least influenced by the context in which it is articulated but it was not until the latter half of the twentieth century, which witnessed the sudden growth of contextual theologies in the form of black theology, queer theology, feminist theology, Third-World theology etc., that the prominence of contextual theology was widely acknowledged. It is unsurprising that many within the Church were reluctant to accept or endorse such thinking for so long, as contextual theology 'represents a paradigm shift in theological thinking' (Bosch, 2010; p423) in its epistemological break with traditional theologies;

Whereas, at least since the time of Constantine, theology was conducted *from above* as an elitist enterprise...its main source (apart from Scripture and tradition) was *philosophy*, and its main interlocutor the *educated non-believer*, contextual theology is theology "*from below*", "*from the underside of history*", its main source (apart from Scripture and tradition) is the *social sciences*, and its main interlocutor the poor or the *culturally marginalized*. (Bosch, 2010, p423, his emphasis)

For those endorsing such an approach, theology is no longer to be considered a static, monolithic body of knowledge, owned by old men in ivory towers but rather a dialectical exercise in which theory and praxis are reflected upon by all believers. Orthodoxy and orthopraxy can no longer be so easily juxtaposed as there is no longer to be one theology but a variety of local *theologies* (Moynagh, 2012, p160) and thus, no longer one model of church but a variety of models of local churches. This is at the heart of fresh expressions thinking;

This missiological approach to the essence of the Church is implicitly contextual. It recognizes and welcomes that various forms, structures and expressions of church can and will emerge naturally from essence so defined. (Atkins, 2008, p22).

Moreover, Bosch notes that one of the central features of contextualisation⁵ is that the agents of this process are not the missionaries or theologians but ‘are the Holy Spirit and the local community, particularly the laity.’ (Bosch, 2010, p453). Such an approach does not exclude the theologian, missionary or ordained but they are to participate in the learning process as others do, ‘no longer...as the ones who have all the answers but are learners like everybody else’ (Bosch, 2010, p453). This approach can be seen throughout fresh expressions literature. Appeals to the prompting of the Spirit in determining when, where and how to do church are central to the nature of fresh expressions⁶ whilst an emphasis on being a ‘bottom up experimental church project’ (Mobsby, 2007, p24) in which ‘listening to the culture of the people they want to serve, and allowing the form of church to be shaped by that culture, is fundamental’ (Fresh expressions website, 2012b). In this endeavour, it is clear that those within the movement see leaders as facilitators, enabling the laity to take part in the process and admitting their need to learn from others – “Gone are the days when the church leader was the expert who told others what to think and who did most of the work.” (Fresh expressions, 2010d, p12).

However, whilst contextual theology is heralded as being pragmatic, scripturally-based and missionally efficacious (Moynagh, 2012, pp154-156), some within the movement acknowledge the challenge that, ‘If there are no gospel and ecclesial cores to put limits on contextualization...does this mean that anything goes?’ (Ibid, p160). To this, Moynagh articulates the view, implicit throughout fresh expressions literature, that ‘the wider body acts as a restraint’ (Ibid, p160) as traditional orthodoxy sits in tension with the challenge of contextual theologies;

Each church’s view of what it means to be church can be judged against the weight of theological reflection down the centuries and around the world. Being part of the whole body encircles Christian self-understandings. (Moynagh, 2012, p160).

⁵ Bosch divides contextualisation into liberation theology and inculturation but fresh expressions literature treats contextualisation and inculturation as synonymous, whilst Bevens suggests that his anthropological model, the same in all but name as inculturation (Bevens, 2008, p55), is but one model of contextual theology.

⁶ Some have criticised the movement for appealing to the Spirit to justify an action in such a way that further debate over the action is discouraged – see Davison & Milbank, 2010.

The challenges of this theology will be considered below but for now, it is sufficient to acknowledge that the boundaries of the contextual theological enterprise that is at the centre of the fresh expressions of church movement appear to be founded upon an undefined standard ecumenical orthodoxy.

Fresh Expressions of Church Missiology

Any theology of the church must ultimately be rooted in the being and acts of God: the church is first and foremost the people of God, brought into being by God, bound to God, for the glory of God. (Cray, 2004, p84)

The Mission-Shaped Church report is clear that it grounds its ecclesiology on the understanding that the triune God is relational, communal and missional – a theological sequence and understanding of the Godhead which is assumed and further developed in later fresh expressions thought;

[The Church's] essence necessarily derives from the Christian Godhead, and therefore the nature and life of the Church is created and configured by the life and character of the Christian Godhead. To use theological shorthand, theology – read mainly through the lens of missiology – produces ecclesiology, rather than vice versa. (Atkins, 2008, p17)

Indeed, fresh expressions thinking may embrace a plethora of diverse theologies but the central theological tenet that all fresh expressions thinking springs from is the understanding that '[t]he Church derives its being from the missionary God and is created and shaped to share in the *missio Dei*' (Ibid, p19). The term '*missio Dei*' is laden with theological assumptions and so often used by people who subscribe to mutually exclusive theological positions (Bosch, 2010), that a brief overview of the use of the term is necessary.

In his seminal work 'Transforming Mission' (2010), Bosch argues that during the middle and latter half of the twentieth century, 'a fundamentally new approach in theology' (p376) was born through a widespread, multid denominational acknowledgement that mission is to be understood as 'not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of

God. God is a missionary God.” (p390). Shaped by growing consideration of the fate of those outside the visible church and by developments in biblical and systematic theology, the formerly narrow and ecclesiocentric view of mission which primarily focused on saving souls and expanding the Church began to be challenged. Traditionally contributed to Barth’s paper to the Brandenburg Missionary Conference, 1932⁷, and later expounded by the 1952 Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council, mission was no longer to be seen as a function of the Church but was derived from the very nature of the Trinitarian God;

The missionary movement of which we are a part has its source in the Triune God Himself. Out of the depths of His love for us, the Father has sent forth His own beloved Son to reconcile all things to Himself, that we and all men might, through the Spirit, be made one in Him with the Father in that perfect love which is the very nature of God.” (Goodall, 1953, pp189-190)

Thus, mission was no longer to be seen as an activity of the Church but as God’s loving movement toward the world – a movement that the Church is called to participate in.

The attestation that the Church’s mission is to participate in the wider *missio Dei*, has been embraced by all major denominations and groupings across the ecclesiological spectrum, to varying degrees and with differing emphases. For example, Vatican II’s ‘Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World’ gave papal recognition of the growing feeling that as God’s concern is for creation in its entirety, God’s mission was therefore for all people in all aspects of their existence and was thus taking place outside of the visible church, through the Holy Spirit (Second Vatican Council, 1965) whilst the report prepared for the 1968 World Council of Churches conference in Uppsala was explicit in its endorsement of a ‘theological framework that emphasized God’s activity in the world, independent of the church’ (Moynagh, 2012, p81).

⁷ As Moynagh (2012) notes, the commonly held view that Barth exerted significant influence in the widespread adoption of the concept of *missio Dei* has been recently disputed by John Flett (2010) who maintains that ‘not a single fragment of textual evidence supports the connection between Barth’s 1932 lecture and Willingen’s Trinitarian developments’ (p15) and that, in fact, ‘A history of direct lineage between Barth and *missio Dei* misidentifies the insufficient Trinitarianism that so plagues the concept.” (p17).

Therefore, when participating in the *missio Dei*, 'the church encounters a humanity and a world in which God's salvation has already been operative secretly, through the Spirit' (Bosch, 2010, p391). Some elements of the Church took this line of thinking further when, amidst the optimism of the 1960s, they declared that the *missio Dei* was *best* witnessed outside of the Church but this understanding did not receive widespread acceptance and the contemporary understanding of the *missio Dei* still reflects that expressed at Willingen;

Mission is, primarily and ultimately, the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world, a ministry in which the church is privileged to participate. (Bosch, 2010, p392).

It is clear that the 'Mission-Shaped Church' report (Cray, 2004) espouses a notion of the *missio Dei* similar to that outlined by Bosch – quoting him directly at times (Ibid, pp23, 85, 102) – in founding it upon the relational, missional Trinity (Ibid, pp84-85) and in reiterating the understanding that mission is from, and of, God (Ibid, pp83ff). It is this identification with the *missio Dei* and the desire for the local church to participate in it which provides the unifying principle of the many different models of fresh expressions of church (Croft, 2008a; Atkins, 2008; Shier-Jones, 2009);

We believe in God who created the whole world and everyone in it. We believe that God loves the world and that God is active in the world both outside the Church and within it. Our calling as Christians is to hold firm to that faith. So our mission is to discover what God is doing in our communities now and join in. (Croft, 2005, p3)

It is therefore apparent that fresh expressions of church theology is indeed 'read mainly through the lens of missiology' (Atkins, 2008, p17) and affirms the Church's participation in the mission of God, which is itself identified by the second person of the Trinity, according to Mission-Shaped Church, 'in terms of the kingdom of God'(2004, p86). The ambiguities found in fresh expressions literature concerning the relationship between church and kingdom will be considered below but for now it is sufficient to attest that the great majority of fresh expressions literature endorses the view that, '[t]he Church is a

fruit of mission – God’s reaching out in love – and a sign, instrument and foretaste of the kingdom of God’ (Goodhew et. al, 2012, p80).

Fresh Expressions of Church Soteriology

“An inadequate soteriology leads to an inadequate ecclesiology...an inadequate ecclesiology leads in turn to an inadequate missiology.” (Chester, 2006, p76)

In ‘Mission and the Coming of God’, Chester argues that Moltmann’s inadequate understanding of the fall, original sin and justification leads Moltmann to an erroneous view of salvation which itself leads to an inadequate ecclesiology and, in turn, missiology. The very same has been said about the emerging and fresh expressions movements, many of whose proponents favourably cite Moltmann (Ward, 2002; Atkins, 2008; Tomlinson, 2008; Gibbs, 2009; Moynagh, 2012). Thus, whilst any attempt to articulate an accepted fresh expressions soteriological stance is absent within the movement, some critics have suggested that an implicit view of salvation runs throughout fresh expressions literature and thus, ‘[a]t stake are not simply our ideas about the Church but also our understanding of salvation’ (Davison & Milbank, 2010, p41).

In ‘Transforming Mission’ (2010) Bosch argues that the paradigm shift in the Church’s understanding of mission as *missio Dei* is inseparable from a shift in dominant soteriology. Classical views of salvation, so simply encapsulated in the four little words of ‘*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*’ for almost two millennia, were mocked and condemned by Christianity’s fiercest critics in the modern period. Whilst some within the Church continued to ‘define salvation in traditional terms, ignoring the challenges of the Enlightenment’ (Bosch, 2010, p395), others took the challenge of modernism more seriously and began to question the doctrine themselves⁸. For some, this meant creating new theologies which would make personal, eternal salvation outside visible Christianity possible (Rahner, 1961; Hick, 1970) whilst others focused upon exploring the social, immanent and worldly understanding of salvation, finding voice in the CWME conferences

⁸ It is interesting to reflect upon what FD Maurice, former Professor of Theology at the institution under which this study is conducted, would make of the contemporary views of salvation. Whilst the F D Maurice Professorship of Moral and Social Theology now commemorates his contribution to scholarship at the College, he was dismissed from his post merely for suggesting that hell might not be eternal, on the grounds that his opinions were “of a dangerous tendency, and calculated to unsettle the minds of the theological students of King’s College.” (Maurice, 1957, p323)

of Bangkok (1973) and Sydney (1980), entitled 'Salvation Today' and 'Your Kingdom Come' respectively. Although the late 1970s and 1980s saw a scepticism at the secularist or liberationist soteriologies of Hoekendijk and his contemporaries, many within the Church were unable to return to the narrow, classical view of salvation and suggested that if the *missio Dei* is seen to be active outside of the Church, then God's salvific action, whether for the individual or community, must be so too and thus;

[I]n missionary circles today, but elsewhere as well, the mediating of "comprehensive", "integral", "total", or "universal" salvation is increasingly identified with mission...Missionary literature, but also missionary practice, emphasize that we should find a way beyond every schizophrenic position and minister to people in their total need, that we should involve individual as well as society, soul and body, present and future in our ministry of salvation. (Bosch, 2010, p399).

According to Bosch then, missiology and soteriology are intertwined in the dominant western view that the primary Christian mission is no longer to save souls but to participate in the *missio Dei* and its accompanying call to herald the kingdom of God and embody its values. It is within this soteriological framework that the emerging church and fresh expressions of church movements appear to be grounded⁹. Indeed, perhaps the area on which the movements have received the greatest amount of criticism has been over their implicitly/explicitly liberal, immanent or universalist views of salvation, attacked by the conservative evangelical wing of the church for abandoning the classical and missionally important exclusivist soteriological position (Purves, 2001; Deyoung & Kluck, 2008, 2009) and by those of a more Catholic tradition for promoting the view that salvation is possible beyond the boundaries of the visible church (Davison & Milbank, 2010).

⁹ Whilst much emerging/fresh expressions literature might appear agnostic or apathetic about salvation, itself suggesting an implicit rejection of the classical approach, some authors are explicit in their rejection of this (Burke & Taylor, 2006; Tomlinson, 2008).

Fresh Expressions of Church Pedagogy

Very little has been written about the pedagogical approach of fresh expressions of church, the vast majority of literature focusing upon the missiological and ecclesiological claims and praxis of the movement instead. Whilst one could isolate lines in texts pertaining to such subjects as church leadership¹⁰ or the psychological impact of fresh expressions¹¹ that may relate to education, such comments are infrequent, are not explicitly concerned with pedagogical theory and could not be credibly used to represent an overarching approach to pedagogy within the movement. References to making disciples are numerous but any attempt to articulate what this might look like in terms of education is minimal. Moynagh's assertion that contextual churches such as those within the fresh expressions movement 'veer towards the praxis end'¹² (2012, p349) is a generic but seemingly accurate observation of the assumed pedagogical praxis of fresh expressions of church and is congruent with the understanding voiced by many of the movement's leaders of the need to emphasise orthopraxy over orthodoxy within the new church communities (Kirke, 2012). However, such comments do not engage with the theological presuppositions and consequences of the differing approaches to Christian education and key questions regarding curriculum content and pedagogical methodology remain unanswered.

2:3 - The Theological Challenges for, and Criticisms of, Fresh Expressions Theology

"...[A] defective methodology, an inadequate theology, and...accepting the very choice-led individualism from which Christianity should seek to liberate us."
(Davison & Milbank, 2010, vii)

¹⁰ "Gone are the days when the church leader was the expert who told others what to think and who did most of the work, carrying the burden of the church." (Fresh expressions, 2010d, p12),

¹¹ "[W]ith emerging forms of church, allowing differences, encouraging honesty and avoiding religious discourses that 'package the right answer *in order to* foster authentic spirituality is an explicit social rule' (Savage, 2008, p55, her emphasis).

¹² Moynagh identifies 'the praxis end' of Christian pedagogy as 'The group shares insights. Learning by reflecting on action. Start with experience. Right actions matter' (2012, p349)

It is fair to say that in its brief existence, the fresh expressions movement and its accompanying theology has attracted praise and criticism in equal measure which, considering the great changes that it calls for across contemporary western Christianity and in particular, the established Church of England, was only to be expected. In the remaining part of this chapter, a commentary on the major theological challenges for, and criticisms of, the theology of the fresh expressions movement as outlined above is offered.

The Polyphonic, Contextual Theological Methodology

a – An Assumed Metanarrative

“Mission-shaped Church is intellectualist because it treats the Faith as a set of ideas we can understand. Christian belief comes down to so many propositions.”
(Davison & Milbank, 2010, p22)

In their critique of fresh expressions theology, Davison & Milbank criticise the movement, and its founding report in particular, for presenting an understanding of faith which can be reduced to a series of propositions. They suggest that the report assumes that there is one ‘abstract, non-cultural ‘meaning of the gospel’’ (p22) which is then contextualised, thus ‘wrapped in the clothing of this or that particular culture’ (p22). In their apparent abandonment of the traditions and language of the Church, all that is left to be contextualised is a list of propositional beliefs, identified in Mission-Shaped Church as ‘the faith uniquely revealed in the Scriptures’ (Cray, 2004, p105);

The reference back to the Scriptures here is significant. It allows the writers...to bypass the culture of the Church. We are not supposed to need the tradition – which is to say, the cultures of thought and practice through which the Faith has been mediated down the centuries. We have the pure word of the Bible, and have no need of the practices of interpretation – either practical or intellectual – that the inherited church has to offer.
(Davison & Milbank, 2010, p23).

Whilst those of a more reformed perspective might have less sympathy with such an analysis and could levy a similar criticism at Davison and Milbank in their treatment of the

mythos of Christianity¹³, the observation that a great deal of fresh expressions material does assume that there is one accepted gospel metanarrative that simply needs to be contextualised for each congregation, context and culture, is accurate.

A consequence of the desire to be applicable to a wide variety of theological perspectives and churchmanship in an ecumenical movement, much emerging church and fresh expressions literature makes generic appeals to 'the gospel', 'the essence of the faith', or 'the Grand Narrative' without explaining and/or justifying what they consider this to be. It is not unusual to find authors within the two movements who pepper their work with isolated quotes and arguments from theologians with mutually exclusive ecclesiologies, soteriologies and missiologies in an attempt to defend (their) one overarching hermeneutic which is agreeable to the claims of the emerging church/fresh expressions movement whilst still not explaining or justifying what that one hermeneutic is¹⁴. The assumption of a Christian metanarrative in fresh expressions literature has led some to argue that there is in fact a movement wide *conservative* understanding of the gospel that is assumed and never articulated (Davison & Milbank, 2010) and/or that no gospel metanarrative is articulated because the movement is more concerned with form than content; with a fresh methodology for church rather than a theological justification of church (Davison & Milbank, 2010). Indeed, just as some have accused Alpha of avoiding controversial issues and of using liberal methods to promote a 'somewhat conservative form of Christianity' (Hunt, 2008, p168) in order to be relevant and accessible, the same critique may be aimed at some within the fresh expressions movement. Thus, critics have condemned the emerging church and fresh expressions movements for their assumption of a non-cultural and epistemologically accurate vision of *the* Christian metanarrative which remains undefined and uncontested by practitioners and theorists alike.

¹³ In the same way that the fresh expressions of church writers might appear to claim that there is one abstract, epistemologically correct set of propositions which defines the essence of Christianity, Davison and Milbank appear to suggest that there is one correct, epistemologically correct mythos of the inherited church which defines the essence of Christianity

¹⁴ See, for example, Pete Ward's 'Liquid Church' (2002) in which he borrows isolated lines of reasoning from Barth, Moltmann, Kuyper and Edwards in his proposal for the liquid church.

b - The Dangers of Relativism

As the nebulous nature of the emerging church/fresh expressions movements dictates, criticisms of their theological foundation can be levied from opposing points of view. Thus, whilst some accuse the movement of holding onto a too-easily determined, propositional understanding of theology, others charge the movements with a relativist epistemology. Certainly contextualization, so fundamental to fresh expressions theory, 'suggests the experimental and contingent nature of all theology. Contextual theologians therefore, rightly, refrain from writing "systematic theologies" where everything fits into an all-encompassing and eternally valid system' (Bosch, 2010, p427).

Denouncing an understanding of theology as monolithic, systematic and the sole task of scholars, contextualization promotes the construction of local theologies, unique to each community, time and place, condoning a biblical hermeneutic in which, 'each scriptural text is viewed as being so deeply shaped by its context that it actually constitutes an isolated theological world in itself' (Bosch, 2010, p427). Such scepticism of systematic theology has led some leaders to claim that their community is doctrine-free (Rollins, 2006) or that it advocates and holds together mutually exclusive theologies (Wright, 2008). The danger, particularly when compounded with an individualistic and consumer-led epistemology, is that individuals and local groups will be encouraged to explore what the Christian faith means to them, in isolation, without an attempt to synthesise or relate their theology with that of the holy, catholic church.

The solution to this, Bosch argues, is that that 'purely contingent perspectives in theology need to be counterbalanced by an emphasis on the metatheological perspectives' (Bosch, 2010, p427). This solution is congruent with Moynagh's aforementioned suggestion that '[e]ach church's view of what it means to be church can be judged against the weight of theological reflection down the centuries and around the world' (Moynagh, 2012, p160).

However, once again, the 'metatheological perspectives' that should counterbalance the contingent theological perspectives are not outlined or justified by Bosch, making them susceptible to the same criticisms as outlined above, whilst Moynagh follows his implication of a standard ecumenical orthodoxy with the claim that '[a]t the same time, as more insights are brought into the church, truth expands within the body' (Ibid, p160)

without elucidating further on how truth is revealed, discerned or debated within the Church. Thus, one significant theological challenge for the fresh expressions movement is how to answer the accusation that its theological methodology might lead to a relativist epistemology.

Fresh Expressions of Church Missiology

We've used the term 360-degree listening to catch this sense of listening in a range of different directions in order to find out what God is doing and how best to join in. This is the tried and tested starting point for fresh expressions. (Croft et al., 2006, p1)

As identified above, the central assumption of the *missio Dei*, so key to the ecclesiological and missiological underpinning of the fresh expressions movement, is that the world is the theatre of God's glory in which God is active in mission within the church and outside of it, and so the Church is to join in with God's already existing mission. This paradigm shift in missiological thinking spawns a number of critical questions for the Church. What is the goal of the *missio Dei*? What is the relationship between God's activity in the world and its salvation? How can we discern where God is at work?

What are the signs in human history that reveal God's will and God's presence? How do we identify God's vestigia, God's footprints in the world? This is an enterprise fraught with danger on all sides, but one of which we cannot absolve ourselves. (Bosch, 2010, 429).

As Bosch notes this latter issue is made all the more challenging when we can acknowledge that the Church has misread the signs of the times in the past, often with tragic consequences.

Moreover, one area in which these issues have been brought to the fore is in the ongoing dialogue on the relationship between the visible church and the kingdom of God. Those who advocate the *missio Dei* hermeneutic argue that the Church and the kingdom of God are not synonymous (Bosch, 2010) – and have even been accused of suggesting that the business of being church can be harmful to the coming of the kingdom (Davison &

Milbank, 2010). Instead, the Church should seek to be a 'seed', 'beginning' or 'instrument' of the kingdom of God (Bosch, 2010, p377); one of (note only *one of*) 'the principal agents of this mission' (Hull, 2006, p5).

The Mission-Shaped Church report regards the goal of a missionary church as joining in with God '[I]n bringing the kingdom' (Cray, 2004, p86). However, the report has a far from systematic approach to the relationship between church, mission and the kingdom of God. As Hull (2006) notes, within the report, the church is described as a sign of the kingdom (Cray, 2004, p34); first fruits but not agents of the kingdom (p34); the fruit and agent of God's mission (p85); and the foretaste of the kingdom (p95). Indeed, Hull suggests that such confusion might be symptomatic of a report which is called 'Mission-Shaped Church' but which, in reality, proposes something very different - a 'Church-shaped mission' which focuses on creating new churches as part of the re-establishing of Christendom (Hull, 2006, p20).

Davison and Milbank (2010) attack the report from a very different ecclesiological stance, arguing that the relationship between Church and kingdom as espoused in the report is not simply inconsistent but is dangerously erroneous in its binary division between Church and kingdom of God. In their view, the Church is both the agent and the objective of mission and thus, the report's assumption that the Church exists for the sake of mission leads to a situation in which '...[M]ission becomes everything, it becomes empty; it becomes something sinister. When mission is cast in these terms, it becomes an idol' (Davison & Milbank, 2010, p54).

It is evident that the identification of the *missio Dei* outside of the visible Church is fraught with challenges of definition and identification. The relationship between Church, mission and kingdom is fundamental to ecclesiological understanding and thus, a rigorous discussion and articulated justification of this relationship in regards to fresh expressions of church is needed.

Fresh Expressions of Church Soteriology

Above, we noted that the 'paradigm shift' (Bosch, 2010) evident in the Church's widespread acceptance that its mission be understood within the wider *missio Dei* that

took place in the twentieth century was inseparable from a shift in dominant soteriology from the classical view of 'extra ecclesiam nulla salus' to one which defined salvation in more holistic, communal language and which saw it operative beyond the boundaries of the visible church. The centrality of *missio Dei* to the emerging and fresh expressions movements was also identified, as was the subsequent claim that the movements had abandoned an articulated exclusivist soteriology (Purves, 2001; Deyoung & Kluck, 2008, 2009) and were erroneously promoting the view that salvation was indeed available to those not initiated into, or participating in the practices of, the institutional Church (Davison & Milbank, 2010).

The work of Catholic theologian Steven Bevans adds further weight to the argument that the fresh expressions of church movement is founded upon a soteriology at odds with the classical understanding. In his book 'Models of Contextual Theology' (2008) Bevans argues that there are two significant theological orientations that come to the fore in a discussion of the relationship between God and humankind – a 'creation-centered' one and a 'redemption-centered' one (Bevans, 2008, pp21ff). The creation-centred orientation 'is characterized by the conviction that human experience, and so context, is generally good' (Ibid, p21) and that therefore sees the world as sacramental;

[T]he world is the place where God reveals Godself; revelation does not happen in set-apart, particularly holy places, in strange, unworldly circumstances, or in words that are spoken in a stilted voice; it comes in daily life, in ordinary words, through ordinary people. (Ibid, p21).

Thus, a creation-centred approach to theology would have a high anthropology and a affirmative view on the world in which, 'human experience, current events, and culture would be areas of God's activity and therefore sources of theology' (Ibid, p22).

In contrast to this is the redemption-centred approach which 'is characterized by the conviction that culture and human experience are in need of a radical transformation or in need of total replacement' (Ibid, p21). Such an approach upholds a pejorative view of humankind and of the world;

Rather than being a vehicle for God's presence, the world distorts God's reality and rebels against it. Rather than a culture being already holy with the presence of God, Christ must be brought to a culture for that culture to have any saving meaning whatsoever. (Ibid, p22).

In his description of the anthropological model of contextual theology, a model synonymous with inculturation (Ibid, p55) and which shares much of the same language, presuppositions and objectives as that of the emerging church and fresh expressions movements, Bosch argues that, '[f]or one to be a practitioner of the anthropological model... a creation-centered theology must be taken as one's basic theological stance' (Ibid, p57).

Whilst one could reasonably argue that Bevans' opposing orientations are too crude a division, Bevans does offer a convincing account of two competing Christian metanarratives, highlighting the inadequacy of the missiological writing which assumes that there is one overarching, agreed Christian story, for the gospel of the creation-centered approach is very different from, if not mutually exclusive to, the gospel of the redemption-centered one.

Moreover, if Bevans is correct, it would be theologically inconsistent for those who advocate a redemption-centered orientation to use the methodology of the inculturation/anthropological approach as it is founded upon a creation-centered understanding of God's nature, creation and mission. However, there is growing anecdotal¹⁵ and academic evidence (Moynagh, 2004; Drane, 2006; Guest, 2007; Davison & Millbank, 2010) which suggests that emerging and fresh expressions ecclesiology has been most keenly adopted by those who adopt a redemption-centred theology, and certainly within the Anglican Church in the UK and Canada, Pioneer ministry is taught at those

¹⁵A key criticism of the movement found in Christian chatrooms and blogs is that some fresh expressions of church advertise themselves as theologically progressive but are found to be conservative in praxis. Such tensions caused one blogger to observe 'the fresh expressions approach has brought in the target audience, but the stale expressions approach has meant bridges have not been built, rather alienation will have taken place...my concern comes from the way that they have used good practice to get people in, but when they've got them in, reverted back to old practice and so very probably not only failed in mission but also reinforced prejudices against Christians' (tractorgirl, 2008). Such thinking echoes conversations that I have had with staff and students at a number of theological colleges and is an issue to which we shall return in chapter 9.

theological colleges associated with a more redemption-centered approach. This apparent tension, similar to that levied at the Alpha course (Brian, 2003; Hunt, 2008) is one which might undermine the advocacy of the fresh expressions approach by some elements of the church and which could challenge the theological consistency and missiological integrity of the movements.

Fresh Expressions of Church Pedagogy

Sceptical of the instructional, emphasising orthopraxy over orthodoxy and built on an assumed yet unarticulated metanarrative, the real danger of fresh expressions pedagogy would seem to be that teaching could be, as identified by Norman Ivison, Director of Communications and Resources for Fresh Expressions UK, 'rather superficial and one-dimensional' (fresh expressions website, 2013). Whilst the practitioners of fresh expressions of church know the stories, traditions and language of the catholic, apostolic Church, it may be assumed that the unchurched who they are hoping to reach may have no such knowledge and will therefore be ignorant of any metanarrative of Christianity. Unless formal teaching about the Christian language, stories and traditions is offered somewhere in the wider fresh expressions curriculum – and some are explicit in their call for this notion of a mixed economy of teaching (Moynagh, 2012) – then those who come to self-identify as Christian within the movement could begin to use and own the terms 'Christian', 'Christianity' and 'the Church' without grappling with or even being aware of the global and historical perspectives on such terms and may subsequently communicate a version of the Christian story that is devoid of the orthodox language, doctrine and praxis of the historical and global Christian Church to the next generation.

Moreover, in their outlining of a theology for Christian education, Estep, Anthony and Allison suggest that the first tasks for any Christian educator are the following:

- Christian educators should identify their theological assumptions and tradition before assuming the role of education.
- Christian educators must develop or accept a distinctive approach to education for the church that is integrated with a theologically aligned worldview. (Estep, Anthony & Allison, 2008, p23)

These suggestions are the practical implications of the understanding that form cannot be separated from content – that an ecclesial community’s pedagogical methodology must be consistent with its theology. Indeed if, as shall be argued in the following chapter, it is true that no pedagogical approach is theologically neutral but is in fact built upon a number of a priori theological assumptions, then that or those adopted by fresh expressions of church may well impact upon the theological consistency and ecumenical validity of the movement.

2:4 – Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have suggested that the fresh expressions of church movement is best understood as a self-identified strand of the emerging church before outlining both the formation of the movement and its current working definition of a fresh expression of church. I proposed that the movement is founded upon a polyphonic, contextual theological methodology which implicitly upholds standard ecumenical orthodoxy as the flexible boundaries of the contextual theological enterprise. I continued by demonstrating that the movement is founded upon the central tenets of the *missio Dei* principle whilst its soteriological foundations, though less explicit were nevertheless seen to embody the understanding that salvation, viewed through a communal, holistic and potentially universalist lens, is available beyond the confines of the visible church. The pedagogical approach of the movement was found to implicitly advocate orthopraxy above orthodoxy whilst remaining silent regarding the wider issues of curriculum content and pedagogical methodology.

The chapter concluded with a consideration of the criticisms of and theological challenges for the movement, starting with the charge that the polyphonous contextual methodology upheld an assumed but unjustified Christian metanarrative and was in danger of endorsing a relativist epistemology. As I considered the missiology of the movement, I outlined the challenges involved in discerning and partnering with the activity of God beyond the institutional Church in the *missio Dei* and acknowledged the ambiguities implicit within the movement’s commentary on the relationship between church, mission and kingdom. In regards to its soteriology, the creation-centred orientation of contextual theology was noted, highlighting the tension in assuming one overarching metanarrative whilst bringing into question the diverse ecclesiology and

ecumenical validity of fresh expressions praxis. Finally, I highlighted the potential risk of a lack of instructional teaching within the movement before suggesting that Christian pedagogy should not be regarded as theologically neutral and it is to this that we turn in the following chapter.

However, before we do so, it should be reiterated that, in this thesis, I do not seek to make a judgement upon the theological validity of the fresh expressions of church movement per se. Rather, as the nature of practical theology dictates, I hope to add to the ongoing conversation both on the movement and on the field of Christian education, by researching and accurately representing one area of praxis within the movement – that of pedagogy. Thus, in the following section, I will offer a broad analysis of Christian education since the reformation, arguing that pedagogical praxis is dependent upon soteriological and missiological beliefs. An analysis of the pedagogy of three fresh expressions of church will then be given, with a consideration of how this practice relates to the soteriology and missiology espoused and embodied by the three communities. This will then enable a reflection upon the theological insights on Christian education that might be gleaned from the contemporary praxis of fresh expressions of church, thereby seeking to encourage further dialogue within the theory-praxis dialectic.

Chapter 3: Establishing the Significance of the Relationship between Soteriology, Missiology and Pedagogy

The relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy remains largely silent or implicit within the field of Christian education and yet, it will be contested, is one that exerts a dominant influence on the differing emphases in the Christian curriculum. This is perhaps particularly significant when considering the praxis of fresh expressions of church due to the missiological emphases and soteriological ambiguities inherent in the movement, and to the fact that the movement encompasses communities with wildly divergent theologies. Indeed, the ecumenical and theological diversity of fresh expressions of church is challenging for a movement whose leaders contend that '[t]he theological sequence is critical...Theology precedes and shapes missiology, which precedes and, together with theology, shapes ecclesiology.' (Goodhew et. al., 2012, p80), for if this is the case, then the question of how Christian communities with widely differing theological foundations could share a similar ecclesiological understanding demands further attention.

In this chapter then, I will examine the relationship between the fields of soteriology, missiology and pedagogy in three dominant approaches to Christian education within the contemporary Church which are here referred to as the instructional approach, the enculturation approach and the critical praxis approach¹⁶ before considering how these heuristic models may relate to the praxis of fresh expressions of church.

In Christian pedagogical literature, even when the discussion is limited to ecclesiocentric learning as here, the categorisation of approaches to education is varied. Burgess (1975), for example, argues that there are four pedagogical approaches – the three that we shall be considering below (termed differently), the fourth being a social-science approach solely founded on the works of James Michael Lee whilst Astley (1994) distinguishes between two views of Christian education which broadly follow those of the enculturation and critical praxis approach, omitting an instructional pedagogy. Scott (1994) and

¹⁶ These three approaches are known by various other labels – Westerhoff (1987) – instruction, formation, education; Burgess (1975) – traditional theological approach, social-culture approach, contemporary theological approach; Pazmino (2008) – the metaphor of production, the metaphor of pilgrimage, the metaphor of growth. The labels here were chosen as the most widely used of their type and are not identified with only one particular scholar.

Seymour (1979) argue for three and six approaches to Christian education respectively and whilst both name at least two of our three categories, both also extend the scope of their work beyond the confines of the Church and consequently, this study. I would suggest that Burgess' four-fold category can be stripped back to three if, as other Christian educationalists have argued (Groome 1976; Seymour 1979; Westerhoff, 1987) Lee is best seen within an instructional approach, whilst Astley's binary division can be added to as he too easily dismisses the instructional approach. Therefore, it is with an acknowledgement of the differences in categorisation that we justify focusing our study to the three aforementioned pedagogies as the most pervasive, consistent and accepted of categories for Christian education.

Before we outline our three models, it is important to note that we are not attempting to generate a rigid typology of Christian education in which every possible Christian community would be sited and contained into just one of three isolated models. Such an endeavour would be foolish and doomed from the outset for if it is true that individuals can hold together diverse or even opposing beliefs and advocate a range of different learning strategies for different contexts, then so much the more for communities. Rather, it is hoped that the following three models will be considered a heuristic tool for enabling us to identify the dominant theological influences on the different pedagogical approaches to Christian education in order that we might consider these relationships in our observation of the praxis of fresh expressions of church. Thus, it is hoped that the models may critique, and be critiqued by, the pedagogical praxis observed.

Furthermore, whilst it will be suggested that the three pedagogical models outlined do follow on from one another chronologically, it must be acknowledged that one does not replace another, in that all three can be observed and experienced within the contemporary Church.

We begin this section with a consideration of how the central tenets of reformed theology led to an implicit pedagogy, as seen in both pastoral care and homiletical discussions, which is of a didactic and instructional nature. The argument that the primacy of scripture led to a Word-centred pedagogy, whilst the doctrine of justification by faith had an inevitable consequence in positioning the minister as authoritative teacher will be considered. It will then be suggested that the belief in justification by grace might have

been a key factor in the laity being seen as passive learners whilst the understanding of the visible and invisible Church and its accompanied soteriology led to the pervasive pedagogical objective that the laity believe and do what is 'right'. This section will then be concluded with a consideration of the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy for the early reformers.

In 3:2, it will be argued that the enculturation approach to Christian education is founded upon a different missiology which is itself the consequence of an a priori soteriology. A more systematic and explicit pedagogical system, the enculturation approach will be analysed to consider the content and method of teaching appropriated before examining the role of the teacher, role of the learner and assessment carried out under such a pedagogy. Following this, attention will be given to the missiological assumptions pervasive throughout such a pedagogy and the soteriology upon which this is founded.

In 3:3, an analysis of the critical-praxis approach to Christian education will be carried out, with particular attention to that found in the work of Thomas Groome and subsequently advocated in the fields of practical and contextual theology. Once again, this pedagogical approach will be analysed in terms of the content and method it promotes and the roles of both teacher and learner that it assumes whilst an examination of the missiological and soteriological principles upon which it is founded will follow.

This section will be concluded by drawing together the questions which these three pedagogies raise for Christian education within the fresh expressions movement and the soteriology and missiology upon which it is built. These questions will provide the framework that will be used in the observation of three fresh expressions of church.

3:1 - The Instructional Approach to Christian Education

In this section, I argue that the soteriology of the early reformers led to a pedagogy which is didactic, unilinear and instructional. Moreover, far from being the pedagogy of a forgotten time, many Christian educationalists have named the instructional approach as still existent, if not predominant, in the Protestant Church today (Burgess, 1975;

Thompson, 1982; Westerhoff, 2000; Pazmino, 2008)¹⁷. Thus, whilst the focus of the section is on the pedagogy, soteriology and missiology of the reformers and Calvin in particular, it is argued that the instructional approach to Christian education in the historical and contemporary Church is built upon the central tenets of the early reformers.

Reformed Soteriology and the Instructional Approach to Christian Education

It is my contention that the soteriological tenets of the reformation led to a pedagogy which was didactic, Word-centred and unilinear. However, as we outline this argument, we must resist the temptation of portraying the pedagogical landscape of pre-reformation Europe as one of a semi-educated clergy and an ignorant laity, languishing in a heretical fog of superstitions, pagan rites and folk religion. The widely propounded picture of lay reliance upon instruction from often inadequately trained clergy who conducted services in Latin portrays only part of the wider pedagogical context of the pre-reformation Church. The laity of mediaeval Europe were far from uneducated, taught as they were through play, poem and pilgrimage; in stone, wood and glass; in the high drama of the liturgy and the seasonal cycle of fast and feast. Indeed, in his seminal work on the nature of traditional religion in England 1400 – 1580, Duffy gives considerable weight to the argument that ‘no substantial gulf existed between the religion of the clergy and the educated élite on the one hand and that of the people at large on the other’ (Duffy, 1992, p4).

However, acknowledging the complexity of the task involved, researching, debating and representing in detail the state of lay education in pre-reformation Europe is outside of the remit of this study and thus, as we turn to consider the soteriological influence on Calvin’s pedagogical outlook, it is sufficient to note that for Calvin, all believers were to be members of the school of God which was itself founded upon the need for *explicit doctrinal instruction*, for centuries the reserve of theologians and the spiritual elite, in order that, ‘evangelical doctrine is not left to decay, and also that its substance be diligently maintained and transmitted from hand to hand and from father to son’ (Calvin, 1537, p48).

¹⁷ This is perhaps unsurprising when those in secular education lament that ‘knowledge acquisition remains the major preoccupation of our school system’ (Hall, 2004, p113).

Calvin's pedagogical outlook cannot be found in an isolated text or systematic treatise but is instead pervasive throughout his sermons¹⁸, commentaries, catechisms and instruction. However, the various strands of his pedagogy do share a common foundation – that of his soteriological emphases – for in all aspects of our Christian learning Calvin attested that we should have 'no other end or purpose than to be instructed in good doctrine, that is, doctrine that is profitable to our salvation' (Calvin, Sermon 1 on Titus, SG51). It is with this in mind that we consider Calvin's central soteriological tenets alongside their pedagogical implications.

A Word-Centred Curriculum

Calvin is unapologetic in his view that salvation is revealed through scripture alone as it is through the *knowledge* of God's salvific act in Christ that one is saved (Institutes III.iii.2). As Gerrish (1957) notes, whilst in theory, Calvin asserts that scripture may be seen as a pair of spectacles (Institutes I.vi.1) which sharpen our perception of the revelation of God inherent in our innate sense of the divine (Institutes I.iii.1) and of God's revelation in creation (Institutes I.v), because of humankind's deliberate suppression of this truth, in practice, scripture alone can bestow upon us the saving knowledge of God (Institutes I.iv). Thus, according to Calvin, 'There is, accordingly, nothing safer than for us to lay aside all the presumption of human understanding, and to cleave solely to what Scripture teaches' (Institutes IV.xviii.12) for in Scripture, 'as nothing is omitted that is both necessary and useful to know, so nothing is taught but what is expedient to know' (Institutes, III.xxi.3).

For Calvin, such didactic teaching could come from confession and catechesis but it was preaching that was to be the primary medium of instruction in the school of God. In Calvin's sermons then, we find a strictly exegetical model of preaching where, 'clause by clause, verse by verse, the congregation was led through the epistle or the prophecy or the narrative' (Parker, 1992, p. 90). The preacher is to invent nothing of his own, is to include no secular knowledge and is to preach the Word as it is. Scripture alone contains

¹⁸ Whilst the majority of Calvin's works are easily available in English, there remains a small section of his sermons which are not. Thus I am indebted to the work of Parker (1992) and Blacketer (2006) for their translations of sections of Calvin's text and denote my reliance on their work here with the following codes – SG, (*School of God*) for when I am using a translation from Blacketer and CP (*Calvin's Preaching*) when from Parker. The Code CCEL stands for Christian Classic Ethereal Library, available on the internet at <http://www.ccel.org/>.

the doctrine that is profitable to our salvation so scripture alone should be taught from the pulpit.

The Preacher as Teacher, Expert and Authority

A second key soteriological assertion of Calvin and all the reformers was that one is saved *sola fide*. This belief, central to Luther's epiphany in his *Turmerlebnis* and subsequent drive for reform, became the foundational basis for all Protestant thinking, including the re-emergence of the belief of the priesthood of all believers. Whilst it might first appear that such an assertion could result in the anathematizing of hierarchy – of the distance between priest and laity – for salvation was no longer to be mediated or bought but was a gift given directly from God, Cornick accurately notes that the 'dangers of lay control were soon writ large in the events at Wittenberg whilst [Luther] was away in Wartburg, in the Peasants' Revolt, and in the rapid development of apocalyptic radicalism' (Cornick, 2000, p230). The reformers were fighting doctrinal battles not only with the Roman Church but with Protestant extremist groups at both ends of the theological spectrum. False teaching was to be feared, fought against and silenced, for heretical teaching – the work of the Anti-Christ – would lead souls to perdition. Consequently, for Calvin, the preacher had to be an expert in Scripture; guardian of true faith; a scholar in *l'escole de Dieu* who could protect his congregation from false beliefs – for in teaching the knowledge of salvation found in scripture, the preacher is the very mouthpiece of God. Calvin thus did not take kindly to those questioning his own authority – calling them brute beasts and dogs that had been brought up in a pigsty or dunghill (Sermon 19 on Deuteronomy, SG120) and frequently compared himself with Moses in his attempts to lead, teach and reform an ungodly and ungrateful generation.

A Docile, Receptive Laity

"[I]f we would make any proficiency in the Lord's school, we must first of all renounce our own judgment and our own will." (Calvin, 1546, Commentary on 1 Corinthians 3, CCEL).

A proclamation of *sola fide* was inseparable from that of *sola gratia*. The reformers proclaimed liberation from the tyranny of the false belief that one could earn one's own salvation, for they would never be good enough or holy enough for God. Salvation came

through true (i.e. 'scripturally correct') faith which was a free gift of God. It was not something which one could work out through sophisticated, scholastic argument and nor was it something which could be earned through merit. Salvation was rather a gracious act of God in which humans were the pre-ordained recipients. Such passivity was reflected in the pew. The laity were not encouraged to think independently but to hear Scriptural teaching and accept it. Comprehension was not necessary (Institutes III, ii, 14) and docility was encouraged (Institutes III, ii, 14) for, if we are to be true disciples of God, we must 'bridle our minds, and hold them captive and constrained under the doctrine of Holy Scripture' (Calvin, Sermon 14 on Deuteronomy, SG107). Humankind, depraved and hostile to the truth, had to be coerced into accepting it and so pastors were encouraged to teach with force;

It is not enough...to preach what is good and useful. For if men were well-disposed and received what God set before them, and were so teachable that they could put their minds and hearts into line with it, to subject themselves to what is good, it would be enough to have said, "This is what God declares to us". But since men are malicious, are ungrateful, are perverse, ask only for lies in place of the truth...for this reason it is necessary," says Paul, "for us to be held as it were forcibly, and for God...to exhort us to persist in obedience to his Word. (Calvin, Sermon 25 on II Timothy, CP pp114-115)

The preacher spoke God's word, the lay member was to accept it, under coercion if necessary, for in scripture alone – and not in direct revelations of the Spirit or in the supplementary teaching of tradition – was truth found and salvation mediated. Thus, just as God justified the passive recipient, His representative in the pulpit taught the passive lay member.

Orthopraxy as Evidence of Salvation

Originally seen to be of great comfort to the believer, the doctrine of predestination handed over the assurance of justification from the insufficient strivings of the flawed human being to the generous and mysterious nature of the mighty sovereign God. Soon, however, the question of who had been given such a gift, who was predestined to salvation or who to damnation, was asked and the challenge of how one could be assured

of one's own salvation became 'the greatest pastoral question of the century' (Russell, 2010, p145). Those who taught or accepted false scriptural truth were to be damned but what of those who held to the true faith? Belief in scriptural truth might demonstrate a grace-filled existence in the present but one could not know what would happen in the future for, as Calvin once mocked; "A fine confidence of salvation is left to us, if by moral conjecture we judge that at the present moment we are in grace, but we know not what will become of us tomorrow!" (Calvin, Institutes III.ii.40)

Thus, that which Calvin scorned as a heretical undermining of the firmness of faith became a cause of profound anxiety for many believers. The demand of 2 Corinthians 13:5¹⁹ rang loud as believers were encouraged to examine themselves for evidence of sanctification and so to look to external conduct as a sign. Salvation by works was dead. Salvation evidenced by works had been born and thus the seeds of the Protestant Work Ethic had been planted. The major consequence that this had on Christian education was that one was taught, tested and disciplined in one's orthopraxy as well as orthodoxy as, for Calvin, '[t]hose who attend God's school show that they have profited in it by living lives of godliness' (Blacketer, 2006, p48). Church discipline was therefore of the utmost importance;

[A]s the saving doctrine of Christ is the soul of the Church, so does discipline serve as its sinews, through which the members of the body hold together, each in its own place...[A]ll who wish to remove discipline or hinder its restoration...are surely contributing to the ultimate dissolution of the Church. For what will happen if each is allowed to do what he pleases? Yet that would happen, if to the preaching of doctrine there were not added private admonitions, corrections, and other aids of the sort that sustain doctrine and do not let it remain idle. (Calvin, Institutes IV. xii.1)

Unbiblical behaviour was a sign that one had wandered from the path that led to salvation and it was the duty of the consistory and ultimately, the pastor, to guide the believer back – to teach them the error of their ways through admonition and scriptural exegesis or else to provide them with the extreme corrective measure of excommunication (Institutes IV.

¹⁹ 'Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, indeed, you fail to pass the test!' (NRSV).

Xii. 10). Thus examination of one’s own behaviour and the pastor’s assessment of one’s orthopraxy was of fundamental importance in evaluating whether or not one was an obedient pupil of God’s school; a sanctified member of God’s elect.

Consequently, we have argued that the reformed tenets of the primacy of scripture, justification by faith alone, by grace alone and of consequential faith-based salvation have led to a pedagogy which can be summarised as follows:

| Soteriology | Content | Method | Role of teacher | Role of learner | Assessment |
|--|----------------|---|---|--|--|
| Individual, predestined salvation; justification by faith/grace alone. | Word-centred. | Religious instruction; acquisition of scriptural knowledge. | Expert and authority. Teaches didactically and corrects heresies. | Accept and receive the teaching given. | Observation & examination of beliefs & actions of learner. |

Table i: Summary of the instructional pedagogical approach.

The Missiology of the Instructional Approach to Christian Pedagogy

Much has been written on the missiology of the early Protestant Church, the great majority of which has suggested that the early reformers were indifferent or even hostile to the idea of mission (Bosch, 1994). More recently however, a number of scholars have suggested that such a finding is naive and an erroneous consequence of judging the actions of sixteenth and seventeenth century Christians with a contemporary missiological mindset (Gensichen, 1960; Scherer, 1987). It may be true that ‘very little missionary activity occurred during the first two hundred years of Protestantism’ (Bevans & Schroeder, 2004, p195) but it would appear that the early reformers ‘believed that practically all the world that was to be saved had already been evangelized’ (Paul, 1992, p354). This is evident in Calvin’s Institutes, for example, in which the role of the evangelists, as the role of the apostles and prophets, is considered to be temporary;

[T]hese three functions were not established in the church as permanent ones, but for only that time during which churches were to be erected where none existed before, or where they were carried over from Moses to Christ. Still, I do not deny that the Lord has sometimes, at a later period raised up apostles, or at least evangelists in their place, as has happened in our day. For there was need for such persons to lead the church back from the rebellion of Anti-Christ. Nonetheless, I call this office “extraordinary,” because in duly constituted churches it has no place. (Institutes IV.iii.4)

In this passage, it is clear that Calvin, living in an unchallenged Christendom and having no contact with non-Christian peoples, did not place high regard on missionary outreach but saw the mission of the temporary evangelists as that of reforming the Church and leading it back to correct Biblical teaching.

Such an insular view of mission – that which focused on being faithful to God’s calling in scripture by purifying the Church of all its aberrations and ensuring that the true Church be an agent for personal salvation through being founded upon an untainted reading of scripture – was a view commonly held and one that constituted the principle task of the early Protestants, perhaps best evidenced in official church statements on their nature and identity (Neill, 1968). As Shenk notes, whether the church be Lutheran, Anglican or Reformed (such as in the Augsburg Confession, Thirty-Nine Articles and Heidelberg Catechism respectively);

All emphasize the being rather than the function of the Church. At no point do they indicate the Church is other than then means of preserving proper order and a fortress within which the faithful...are protected and preserved. (Shenk, 1993, p23).

The Church was defined and identified as ‘a place where something is done, not a living organism doing something’ (Bosch, 1994, p249) and its mission was to be true to the Word of God by administering the sacraments properly and preaching the Word of God purely so as to be an agent of salvation for the invisible elect within the visible community. Thus, it would appear that the soteriology of the early Reformers led to a missiology which focused on propounding ‘correct’ , scriptural teaching so as to guard the

true church and its obedient pupils against the dangers of heretical belief, and thus, damnation. The impact that this implicit missiology had on the pedagogy of the early Protestant Church was therefore secondary and both were dependent upon the underlying soteriology. Consequently, we can suggest that the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy for the early Protestant Church was thus:

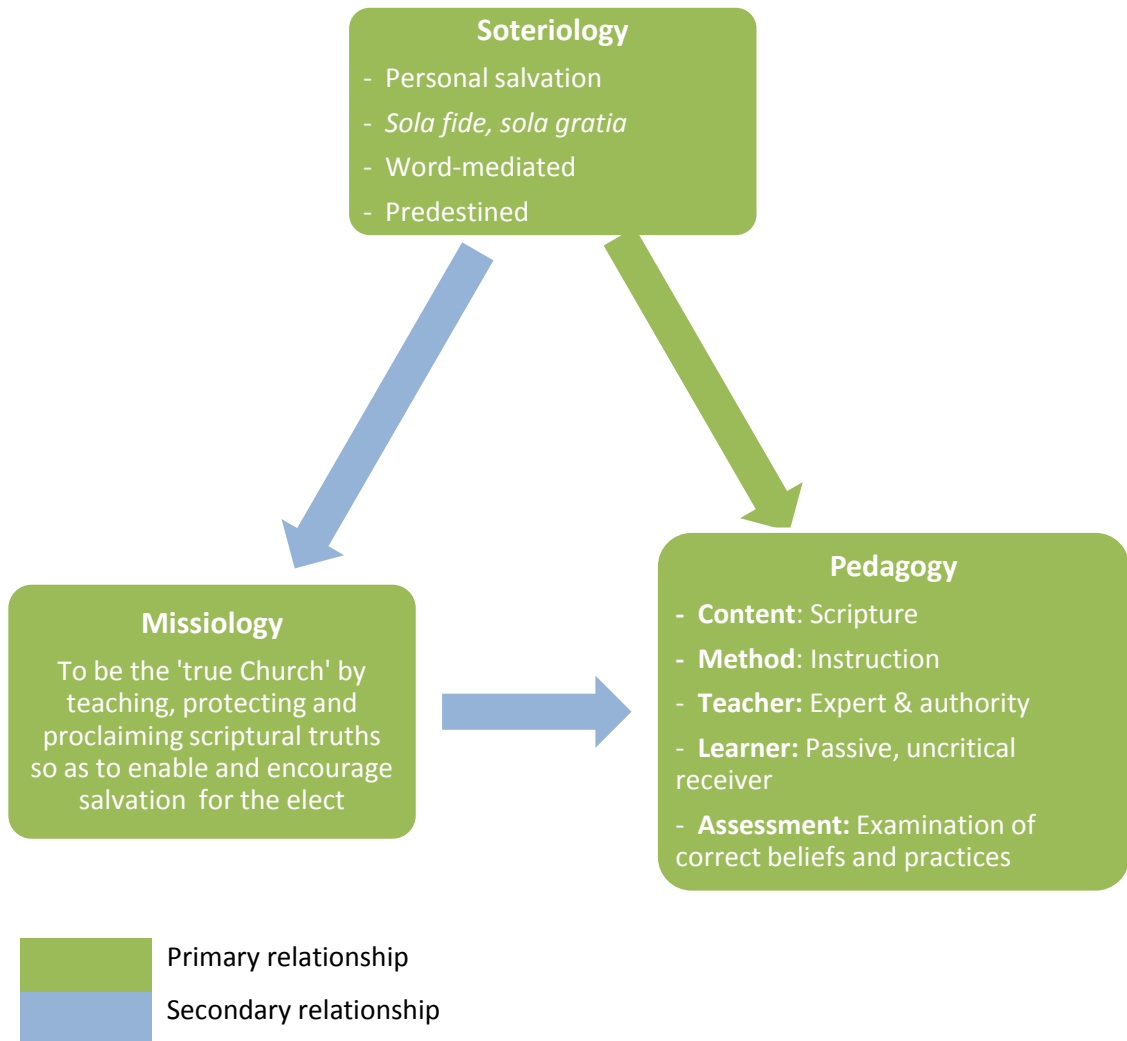


Figure 2: The relationship between the soteriology, missiology and pedagogy of the instructional approach to Christian education.

The Contemporary Instructional Approach

Whilst one might be tempted to write off such a pedagogical approach as the mark of a bygone era, a great number of Christian educationalists (Burgess, 1975; Thompson, 1982;

Westerhoff, 2000; Webb-Mitchell, 2003; Pazmino, 2008), consider it existent, if not predominant, in Christian education today, identifying such an approach in a manner almost identical to that outlined above;

First, theological conceptualizations, based upon data thought to be received by authoritative one-way revelation, are normative for all decisions relative to religious education theory and practice...*Second*, religious education is essentially concerned with the transmission of a unique, divinely authoritative, salvific message derived from the facts of revelation. *Third*, the religion teacher, who must first have received the unique salvific message and in some sense been commissioned to teach, is to transmit the divinely authoritative message fully and faithfully to students...*Fourth*, students, following the reception of the authoritative message in its fullness, will live out the implications of the message both with respect to Christian living and eternal destiny. (Burgess, 1975, p21).

Indeed, whilst the lay of the Christian landscape has dramatically shifted since that encountered by Calvin and his contemporaries, for many in the Church today the same dominant missiological drive – to instruct believers in correct, scriptural doctrine and to teach against false belief, be it heresy within the church or falsity outside of it – and the soteriological principles upon which it is founded still grounds their theology and praxis. Thus, in spite of the increasingly secularized nature of the developed world, the instructional approach to Christian education and its soteriological foundations can be witnessed in the pedagogies of Christian educationalists (Mason, 1960; Allison, 2000); in the catechetical approach of the ‘New Breed of Presbyterians’ (Oliphant, 2010, pp89-172) and Alpha²⁰; in sermons preached on street corners and in stadia²¹; and throughout populist Christian literature today.

²⁰ Heard, 2009 and Brian, 2003.

²¹ The homiletical stylings of Billy Graham, still heralded and mimicked by many today, reflect this approach (Graham, 1969).

3:2 – The Enculturation Approach to Christian Education

This, I contend, is the problem we face in Christian education today. We have accepted the assumptions of the schooling-instructional paradigm and missed the anomalies which make it no longer viable for educational mission and ministry. (Westerhoff, 2000, p8)

Below, it will be shown that a dissatisfaction with the instructional pedagogy, together with an understanding of communal learning and an emphasis on worship as the prime focus of the Church has led many Christian educators to endorse an enculturation approach to Christian education. As an explicit, systematic pedagogical approach, a description of this pedagogy will be outlined based upon works within the Christian educational field. This will be followed by an analysis of its relationship to a missiology which is centred upon a faithful witnessing community and a soteriology which stresses the importance of communal, ecclesiocentric salvation.

Instructional Dissatisfaction and Enculturation

Although the instructional approach to Christian education is still widely upheld today, it has been under increasingly sustained attack. In the nineteenth century, advances in the fields of the natural and social sciences were disseminated to the public in such seminal works as 'On the Origin of the Species' and 'The Interpretation of Dreams' whilst the flourishing field of Biblical criticism saw the publishing of Strauss' 'The Life of Jesus' and Feuerbach's 'The Essence of Christianity', all of which heralded an end to the assumption of the infallibility of scripture in Christian society. The 'old Calvinism was clearly giving way' (Fosdick, 1957, p63) in seminaries throughout the developed world and the didactic, expository sermon was challenged, associated as it was with a polemical type of minister;

He is dogmatic, assertive, uncompromising. He flings out his dicta as though to say to all hearers, Take it or leave it. He has settled the matter concerning which he is speaking and is not asking our opinion; he is telling us. (Fosdick, 1928, pp12-13)

Whilst the issue of Scriptural authority and sound teaching was raging in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy in North America, the progressive period of American education, led by educationalists Parker, Dewey and Fahs, passed in and out of favour but left its mark in its critique of an instructional form of schooling in the secular education system and many Christian educationalists echoed their thinking, even to the point of warning that the inherited instructional approach ‘creates evils for which it is loathe to accept responsibility’, (Coe, 1929, p46). The growth of liberation theologies in the 1950s and 60s provoked an invigorated attack on this pedagogy, and was most eloquently articulated by Paulo Freire in the seminal work ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’ (1970), in which Freire suggested that the use of this pedagogical approach at least maintained if not encouraged the oppression of the poor and uneducated by the wealthy and powerful. Indeed, Friere’s banking system of education bears a striking resemblance to the instructional approach, for as is identified in the latter, in Friere’s portrayal of the banking system, the distance between teacher and pupil is encouraged (Freire, 1996, p54); ‘the more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are’ (Ibid, p53) and the educational goal is ‘of deposit-making and [not] of posing the problems of human beings in their relations with the world’ (Ibid, p60).

Thus, such a contextual backdrop and critique, corroborated by educational theories which have highlighted the communal aspects of learning (Vygotsky, 1934; Bandura, 1977), encouraged Christian educationalist and minister, John Westerhoff, to declare ‘[T]he schooling-instructional paradigm is bankrupt’ (Westerhoff, 2000, p19).

A Learning Community

For Westerhoff, perhaps the most well-known exponent of the enculturation approach to Christian education, the instructional approach overemphasises teaching about the Christian religion from ‘documents, doctrines, history and moral codes’ (Westerhoff, 2000, p19), ignoring the learning that takes place through participation in worship, observation of expressed values within the community, and in the sharing of the faith in relationships;

Faith is expressed, transformed, and made meaningful by persons sharing their faith in an historical tradition – becoming community of faith. An

emphasis on schooling and instruction makes it easy to forget this truth. (Westerhoff, 2000, p19).

The basic premise of the enculturation approach is that we do not learn as individuals but as community. The learner is thus understood as 'a communal being, whose identity and growth can only be understood in terms of life in a community that shares a common memory, vision, authority, rituals and family-like life together' (Westerhoff, 1983, p50). The 'hidden curriculum of socialisation' (Westerhoff, 2000, p14) – the attitudes expressed, values assumed, beliefs implicit in all Church praxis – is, Westerhoff argues, just as if not more powerful than that which is explicitly taught from the pulpit or other formal context of learning. Whilst ritual is the most important component for Christian living and learning (Westerhoff, 1996, p32; 2000, p58), every feature of Church life comprises part of the curriculum;

Using the radical nature and character of a faith community as the context or place for Christian education means using every aspect of our Church's life for education – our rituals and preparation for participation, the experiences we have and provide within the community of faith, and the individual and corporate actions we inspire and equip persons to engage in. (Westerhoff, 2000, p73).

Thus the enculturation approach sees Christian education as occurring in all formal and informal learning environments within the community of faith – a local, visible community which must retell and re-enact the Christian story embodied in 'the whole Church of God across all the earth and through all the centuries' (Smart, 1971, p110).

Content and Method: The Mythos of the Church

The form and content of this approach cannot be separated for its method is founded upon an active participation in all of the aspects of Church life and the content comprises of those very aspects – of ritual and liturgy, of tradition and story. The 'sectarian hermeneutic' (Brueggemann, 1991) of the Church must be taught – the 'mythos' (Armstrong, 2009), 'language' (Martin, 1987) and 'grammar' (Lindbeck, 2009) of the faith must be learnt. Such learning can only take place by participating in these rituals for the

meaning of such activities cannot be separated from 'the context in which we use them, or from the actions with which they are associated' (Davison & Milbank, 2010, p20) as the learner is not simply learning about the religion but, as the passage taken from Lindbeck's seminal work 'On the Nature of Doctrine' (2009) explains, is learning how to feel, act, think and be religious;

Religion cannot be pictured in the cognitivist (and voluntarist) manner as primarily a matter of deliberately choosing to believe or follow explicitly known propositions or directives. Rather, to become religious - no less than to become culturally or linguistically competent - is to interiorize a set of skills by practice and training. One learns how to feel, act, and think in conformity with a religious tradition that is, in its inner structure, far richer and more subtle than can be explicitly articulated. The primary knowledge is not about the religion, nor that the religion teaches such and such, but rather how to be 'religious' in such and such ways. Sometimes explicitly formulated statements of the beliefs or behavioral norms of a religion may be helpful in the learning process, but by no means always. Ritual, prayer, and example are normally much more important. (Lindbeck, 2009, p31).

Teacher as Faithful Participant

As the method centres upon the participation and internalization of the practices, language and traditions of the faith, and the content comprising of those practises, language and traditions, the role of the educator is twofold – to be an individual faithful witness of the Christian metanarrative in their worship, values and relationships in the community and 'to ensure that the Church remains faithful to the norms and inheritance of Christian faith' (Heywood, 2004, p177). Indeed, such a charge – to be a visible, faithful witness to the Christian story demonstrated in visible, faithful Christian living in thought, word, deed and especially in worship, can be seen both as the means of assessing the nature of learning taking place within the community and in the very mission of that community (see below). Thus, one could summarise the curriculum of the enculturation approach as follows:

| Content | Method | Role of teacher | Role of learner | Assessment |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| The mythos of the Church; its language, grammar and story. Centrality of liturgical worship. | Ecclesiocentric: Participation and internalization of the rites, traditions, language and story of Christian faith. | Pass on traditions and rituals; teach and use language faithfully. | Predominately experiential – To participate in the communal, liturgical life of the Church. | Visible, faithful participation in the visible, faithful Church. |

Table ii: Summary of the enculturation pedagogical approach.

The Missiology of the Enculturation Approach

It is unsurprising to find that a pedagogy which understands Christian education to be ‘the education and training of persons within the Church *to be the Church*’ (Burgess, 1975, p101, my emphasis added) is built upon a theology which views mission as focussing upon the maintenance of a faithful witnessing community. Throughout the literature which advocates the enculturation approach, the phrases most commonly used to describe the Church’s work are ‘witness’ and especially, ‘community of witness’ (Smart, 1971; Westerhoff, 1982, 2000; Lindbeck, 2009; Davison & Millbank, 2010) and this is to be the cornerstone of all mission;

The Church’s mission, like Christ’s is to live in and for the gospel, to witness to and to be a sign of God’s coming kingdom...The Church is a pilgrim community of memory and vision. The vocation of the Church is to hear God speak, to see God act, and to witness in word and deed to these experiences. (Westerhoff, 1982, p241).

The Church’s witness is embodied in her rites and rituals; her language and grammar; her traditions and mythos. In contrast to the instructional pedagogy, in the enculturation approach, ‘[t]he primary Christian mission, in short, is not to save souls but to be a faithfully witnessing people’, (Lindbeck, 2002, p159) and thus, as we have seen, it is the

task of the educator to initiate and develop individuals within this story and to ensure that the Church is faithful to the inherited tradition in its praxis.

Whilst most, if not all, established churches would, in part, advocate a similar view of mission, it is the degree to which ecclesial ritual is seen as *the* central educational tool, and its uncompromising attitude to formal liturgical worship, that distinguishes the enculturation approach from other models of Christian education;

Liturgy is the original and distinctive task, the primary responsibility of the Church. Everything else may be conceded, compromised, shared, and even relinquished. However, so long as the Church invites people to worship God and provides a credible vehicle for liturgy, it need not question its place, mission, and influence in the world. (Westerhoff, 2000, p76)

In such a way, the enculturation approach suggests that mission is found in being a faithful worshipping community. If a conception of mission questions this vocation; if a call to mission focuses on works outside of the community of faith and neglects the needs within it, then, it is argued, it has lost its true missionary calling;

When serving the world results in the neglect of the household of faith, the Church becomes not a sign but a countersign, a contributor to the human confusion which is the opposite of God's design. (Lindbeck, 2002, p159).

Thus, mission is not functional but ontological. It is not to be viewed as something extra that the Church does but is embedded in who the Church is. To uphold mission as anything other can be to risk making it into an idol as '[f]ar from the Church and worship being for the sake of mission, it is mission that is for the sake of worship and the Church' (Davison & Millbank, 2010, p55).

Moreover, not only should mission focus on the faithful witness and worship of those within the institutional Church but mission is best served in emphasizing the distinction between the Christian community and the world. Those advocating the enculturation model of Christian education are often found advocating a 'sectarian hermeneutic' (Brueggemann, 1991, pp41-69); 'catholic sectarianism' (Westerhoff, 1987, p585) or

'ecumenical sectarianism' (Lindbeck, 2002, pp100-101) in order to keep the witness and worship of the Church faithful to the Christian story. The chief proponents of this approach admit that this view of mission may well be unpopular – both with those outside of the Church (Davison & Milbank, 2010, pp82-83) and with those who are 'chiefly concerned to maintain or increase the membership and influence of the Church' (Lindbeck, 2002, p192) – but affirm that this is of no real significance to them or their understanding of mission for '...it is the primary duty of the Church to be the Church, whether that makes her popular or unpopular.' (Davison & Milbank, 2010, p82).

Consequently, here it is argued that the enculturation approach to Christian education is founded upon a missiology which sees the mission of the Church as faithful adherence to liturgical worship and witness; on its very being 'as God's chosen people, a community of radical Christian faith, a prophetic community distinct from the world' (Westerhoff, 2000, p40) even when this results in membership decline or apparent inaccessibility.

The Soteriology of the Enculturation Approach

In their critique of the fresh expressions of church movement, Davison and Milbank recognise that the reform of the identity and missiology of the Church, inherent in the movement, would also signify a change in the understanding of salvation for '[t]he Church announces redemption and is the company of the redeemed. Our sense of the Church goes hand-in hand with our sense of salvation.' (Davison & Milbank, 2010, p41).

In our analysis of the instructional approach to Christian education, we saw how an emphasis on predestined, individual salvation by faith and grace alone led to a missiology concerned with defending and promulgating right belief and a pedagogy that was didactic and unlinear. Whilst it is clear that those who advocate the enculturation approach focus less on the afterlife and disparage the need for an overt stress on hell and individual conversion (Lindbeck, 2002, pp78-79; Westerhoff, 2000, p40), references to the need for redemption, eternal consequences of actions and even concern for the souls of the unbaptised do appear throughout the literature (Smart, 1971, p158; Davison & Milbank, 2010, p85; Westerhoff, 2000, p39 respectively).

Moreover, one issue that is made abundantly clear by all chief advocates of the enculturation approach is that salvation is not about the individual, either in this life or the next:

Our understanding of the Christian faith can never be individualistic...Any restriction of religion to the immediate relation between an individual and God is a denial of the Christian story. (Westerhoff, 2000, pp39-40).

In direct contrast to the soteriology of the instructional approach, for those advocating enculturation, 'the Christian account of salvation [is] communal,' (Davison & Milbank, 2010, p57) and the belief that it is purely of personal concern to the individual, that one may be committed to the visible Church yet be unassured of one's individual salvation, is anathema (Davison & Milbank, 2010). Salvation is instead mediated through the Church – God 'carries forward his work of redemption, both in us and through us' (Smart, 1971, p111) for the Church is 'an agent within the wider human society through which God's redemption of the world can be made known' (Westerhoff, 1982, p241). Salvation, in summary, is ecclesial - "We are saved by incorporation into the Body of Christ, which is the Church." (Davison & Milbank, 2010, p56)

Consequently, one can argue that the relationship between the soteriology, missiology and pedagogy of the enculturation approach mirrors that of the instructional approach, whilst the content of each set of beliefs is wildly contrasting. In short, in the instructional paradigm, salvation is dependent upon correct belief so the Church's prime mission is to pronounce, guard and teach correct belief and thus does so accordingly. In the enculturation paradigm, salvation is communal and dependent upon initiation into and participation in the visible Church; the Church's prime mission is to faithfully communicate the Christian story through rite, ritual and formal liturgical worship, and thus learning is centred upon this.

Therefore, we can summarise the nature and relationship of soteriology, missiology and pedagogy of the enculturation approach as follows:

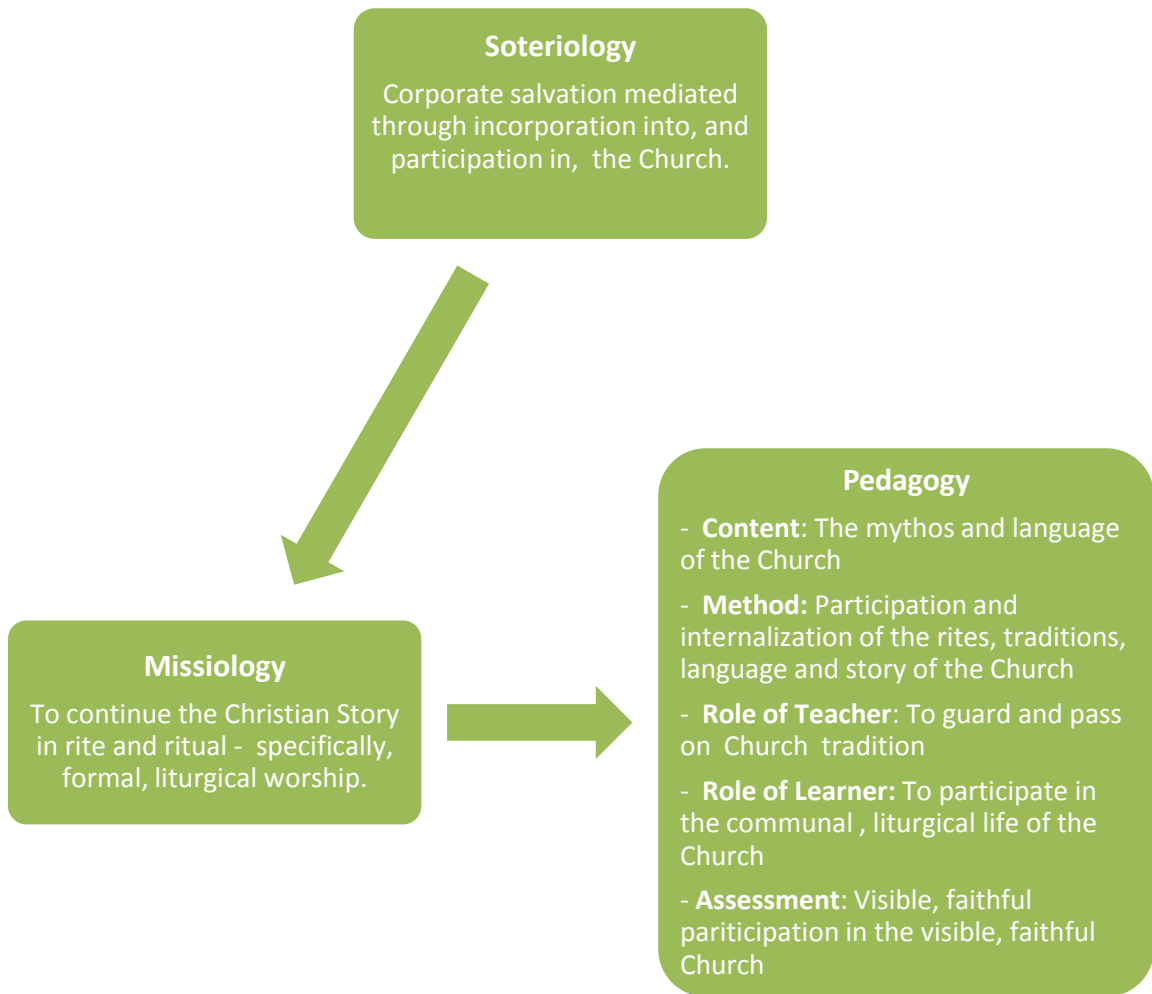


Figure 3: The relationship between the soteriology, missiology and pedagogy of the enculturation approach to Christian education.

3:3 – The Critical Praxis Approach to Christian Education

In this section, we will first consider the objections made to the enculturation approach to Christian education, focusing on the charges of theological imperialism, sectarianism and even idolatry. A description of the curriculum endorsed in the critical praxis approach to Christian education will be followed by an analysis of the accompanying missiology which emphasises God’s activity beyond the confines of the visible Church. We will conclude with an examination of the soteriological roots of such missiological and pedagogical thinking before we consider how this pedagogical system offers a different model of the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy than that assumed in the previous two pedagogies.

Enculturational Dissatisfaction and the Birth of a Critical Praxis Pedagogy

Whilst the chief proponents of the critical praxis approach to Christian education are also vocal in their condemnation of the instructional pedagogy, by no means do they wish to devalue the enculturation pedagogy in a similar way. In many circumstances, the 'truth and value' of the enculturation approach are affirmed (Groome, 1980, p121) and when criticisms of the approach are put forward, it is often in an 'attempt to move beyond it while retaining its validity' (Groome, 1980, p121).

This being acknowledged, the advocates of a critical praxis pedagogy do highlight several inadequacies in the enculturation approach. The first of these is that a Christian pedagogy that comprises solely of enculturation could lead to a form of theological imperialism. As demonstrated above, in the enculturation approach much is written on passing on the language or mythos of the Church and teaching these as the essence of Christian education. Advocates of this pedagogy have even criticised those who support a more instructional approach of making the 'assumption that there is an abstract, non-cultural 'meaning of the gospel', which can be reduced to so many propositions' (Davison & Millbank, 2010, p22) and yet this very criticism can be levied back at these critics and their apparent assumption that there is an abstract, non-cultural 'meaning of the gospel' which can be reduced to an inherited language of the faith.

No acknowledgement is given to the contextual element of theology, nothing is said about contrasting theological orientations or assumptions (Bevans, 2008), and no attention is paid to the 'paradigm shift in theological thinking' (Bosch, 1994; p423) embodied in the flourishing systems of black theology, feminist theology, queer theology etc which challenge the assumption of a monolithic body of theology and its accompanying ecclesial language and grammar. A metanarrative and accompanying language of faith is assumed, not explained or defended, leaving little room for alternative Christian worldviews whilst an outline of one particular understanding of the Church is arrogated with a cry of indefectibility (Davison & Millbank, 2010, p37). Indeed, many of the chief proponents of the enculturation approach are unashamedly advocating their conservative interpretation of one particular branch of Christianity – Catholicism – as the most faithful to the identity

and mission of the Church universal²², arguably using doctrine to articulate a ‘systematic blueprint for the Church that applies normatively always and everywhere’ (Healy, 2000, p50) in an ecclesiological exercise that some theologians have labelled as ‘damaging’ (Bradbury, 2005, p17) or ‘practically and prophetically false’ (Healy, 2000, p50).

In contrast to this, those who advocate the critical praxis pedagogical approach, many of whom come from the Catholic tradition, place a greater emphasis on the pluralism within Christianity:

Clearly Christian Story and Vision should not be idealized as monolithic. There are many stories within “the Story” and many versions of it can be given; there are various consequences or slants of emphasis that different Christian denominations propose as or exclude from its “Vision”. (Groome, 1998, p138).

Indeed, those who advocate a critical praxis pedagogy are often seen to promote local Christian theologies (Sedmak, 2004) and even affirm the presence of divine wisdom in other religions (Groome, 1998). Thus, whilst those who advocate an enculturation pedagogical approach appear to propagate one distinct interpretation of Christian life and worship, those who advocate the critical praxis approach affirm the existence of a plurality of Christian worldviews.

A second criticism of the enculturation approach is that it is too sectarian for, as Coe argues, ‘[t]he Church of the spirit of love seeks...to infuse itself into the whole social body, not to maintain eternal separateness therefrom’ (Coe, 1917, p64).

Those advocating the critical praxis approach have suggested that a purely enculturation approach to Christian education would encourage a view of the Church as separate and distinct from the world. It is argued that such an understanding promotes ‘the disincarnation of the Church’ (Tournier, 1964, p159) which then would simply become a ‘salvation club’ (Groome, 1980, p47). The retreat of the Church from the world is even heralded as a significant cause of suffering in the world today; “The Church, it seems to

²² Even Westerhoff, a noted exception to this trend, acknowledged that he left the UCC to join the Episcopal Church because ‘I needed to embrace the Roman Catholic in me’, (Westerhoff, 2000, xiv).

me, has separated itself from real life and thus simply abandoned the world to its practical difficulties and taken refuge in an ivory tower.” (Tournier, 1964, p159).

Most notably, adherents of the critical praxis approach argue that a pedagogical approach founded upon the idea that ‘so long as the Church invites people to worship God and provides a credible vehicle for liturgy, it need not question its place, mission, and influence in the world’ (Westerhoff, 2000, p76), could easily lead to an insular missiology which would neglect the socially transformative aspect of the gospel;

Training a child in prescribed, indefinitely repeated acts of worship as the main constituent of churchmanship provides for the perpetuation of the Church as a particular society in the community and the world, but not for the reconstruction of the community or of the world. (Coe, 1917, p187).

Moreover, Hull does not mince his words in his condemnation of a missiology which would appear to see the Church as a self-preservation society, neglecting its mission ‘to restore the brokenness of the body of humanity and to renew the face of the earth’ (Hull, 2008, p127);

Again and again Christian history shows that Christians have consciously or unconsciously turned away from the mission of God for justice and peace towards the propagation of their own tribalistic religion or Christian faith has been identified with the interest of Christians and the welfare of the Church (Ibid, p128).

Thus, one serious criticism levied at the enculturation approach to Christian education is that it is founded upon and can perpetuate a missiology and soteriology which neglects the world beyond the confines of the Church.

One final criticism of the enculturation approach which is offered by those endorsing a critical praxis pedagogy and runs parallel to the previous two is that an enculturation pedagogy gives little room for critiquing or reforming the Church. It is argued that the enculturation approach could give rise to the perpetuation of practices or values which might appear to be discriminatory or oppressive, and thus, a pedagogy which fosters

'greater degrees of Christian critical consciousness' (Groome, 1980, p99) is needed, in which;

...[T]he Story is itself to be critically reflected upon, rather than passively accepted by the present, because the version of the Story that any group of Christians own and share can have elements of distortion. (Groome, 1980, p194).

It is argued that a critical and more dialectical pedagogy would allow for people to respond to the demands of the gospel in their context; to critique parts of the Christian story which must be reformed or condemned outright²³; and to encounter the divine wisdom within other faiths more freely.

Consequently, whilst it is acknowledged that many who advocate a critical praxis approach to Christian education affirm much of the value and truth inherent in an enculturation pedagogy, many critics argue that, when used without serious amendment, it can give rise to theological imperialism, sectarianism, a neglect of the Church's mission in society and an unthinking perpetuation of the status quo.

Thus, when Groome states that he affirms the enculturation approach but moves beyond it to what he calls a 'shared praxis approach', what does this revised pedagogy entail?

Christian religious education by shared praxis can be described as a group of Christians sharing in dialogue their critical reflection on present action in light of the Christian Story and its Vision towards the end of lived Christian faith. (Groome, 1980, p184).

Whilst there a plethora of differing takes on the nature and purpose of a praxis-based or critical praxis approach to Christian education, they are founded upon the same key

²³ 'There are aspects of our Story we must refuse to inherit (to cite two obvious examples, dimensions of our tradition that have discriminated against women and legitimated slavery).' (Groome, 1980, p197)

principles outlined here by Groome, a key proponent of this pedagogy, and it is to these that we turn as the basis for an outline of the approach²⁴.

Critical Praxis Aim: 'Towards the end of lived Christian faith'

The purpose of Christian religious education is to enable people to live as Christians, that is, to live lives of Christian faith. This would seem to be its purpose since the Christian community first began to educate. (Groome, 1980, p34)

The overarching purpose of the critical praxis pedagogical approach is to enable Christians to live out their Christian faith in their everyday lives. Throughout the literature, Christianity is primarily seen as a way of living rather than a set of beliefs;

Christianity is primarily a way of life to be lived, a lifestyle, a way of being and doing in the world...[O]ur Christian education should lessen the gap between a person's articulated faith and his/her action, that is, his/her knowing of Christ ought to be a doing of Christlike actions. (Groome, 1976, p225).

Such a focus on orthopraxy is parallel to an assumption that the kingdom of God, 'reign of God' (Groome, 1991) or 'democracy of God' (Coe, 1917) is the 'ultimate purpose' (Groome, 1980, p34) of being Christian and therefore, 'our metapurpose as Christian educators is to lead people out to the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ' (Groome, 1980, p35). This embodiment of the kingdom of God is learnt and lived through a critical praxis pedagogy which stresses both the humanization of the individual and the transformation of the communal – "The worthiest "what-for" of education...[is] that learners might become fully alive human beings who contribute to a society of the common good," (Groome, 1998, p72).

²⁴ Although rooted in the Catholic tradition, Groome frequently notes that his pedagogical approach is not confined to Catholicism (Groome, 1991, pp2-3) and that his understanding of catholicity is sometimes even more apparent in other denominations (1998, p22) whilst the majority of Christian educationalists today suggest that, "the streams of Protestant and Catholic religious education have so merged that the problems of one are in the main the problems of the other...[and] the leaders speak and write for both groups." (Thompson, 1982, p12).

Indeed, those who advocate the critical praxis pedagogy are clear in their understanding of this symbiotic relationship between the 'humanization' of the individual – the 'guiding intent for all curricula' (Groome, 1998, p246) – and the 'transformation of a social order that is largely unjust into one that shall be wholly just,' (Coe, 1917, p36). One cannot take place without the other. Liberation theologies are cited and talk of the spiritual and psychological freedom of the individual are inseparable from the call for social and political freedom of the masses (Groome, 1980, pp95-97). For advocates of the critical praxis approach to Christian education, the Church is very much in the world and has a calling to transform the lives of individuals and society at large;

Christian faith and human freedom are inextricably, symbiotically linked...They are so closely related that both must be posed as the dual purposes of Christian religious education, which has as its metapurpose the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ. (Groome, 1980, p97).

If the aim for Christian education then is to live out the Christian faith through heralding God's kingdom in the humanization of the individual and the transformation of society, then an assessment of the learning that takes place focuses upon how well this is achieved – i.e. is there tangible evidence that the lives of individuals and communities are being redeemed, or, as Coe suggests;

For teachers of the Christian religion the universal guide and test is, Am I helping my pupils grow in the personal or ethical-love way of dealing both with themselves and with others whose lives they touch? (Coe, 1929, p178)

Content and method – 'Critical reflection on present action...'

Groome is clear that a desire to deepen the critical dimension of reflection on experience is central to the critical praxis pedagogical approach;

The intent is to deepen the reflective moment and bring participants to a critical consciousness of present praxis: its reasons, interests, assumptions, prejudices, and ideologies (reason); its sociohistorical and biographical

sources (memory); its intended, likely, and preferred consequences (imagination). (Groome, 1991, p147)

This critical reflection is thus carried out to enable Christians to understand and analyse the many different forces which have an impact on their present praxis, (whether overtly Christian or not), and therefore, to encourage them to critically interpret present praxis. The content of the curriculum at this point is the actions of the individual and the community within the wider society. Indeed, far from focusing upon the sectarian hermeneutic of the Church, in the critical praxis approach particular attention is paid to the present praxis of the individuals in the world for the 'centre for the pupils' attention is men and women, particularly what they do, why they do it, what the results are, and how perhaps something better might have happened' (Coe, 1917, p113). For Groome, this means helping people to critically reflect on 'whatever is "being done" by them, from them, through them, and "going on" around them, to them and to others' (Groome, 1991, p134).

Thus, in contrast to the instructional and enculturation pedagogies, in the critical praxis approach, a critical hermeneutic of the present praxis of individuals, as expressed by them within a group (see below), is a key component of the content and method propagated.

Content and method – '...In light of the Christian Story and its Vision'

"The content of religious education...encompasses all of life's possible experiences as they are enriched, interpreted, and controlled in terms of purposes *in harmony with the Christian ideal.*" (Burgess, 1975, p74, his emphasis).

The naming and reflecting upon present praxis does not take place within a moral or temporal vacuum but in relation to the practices, stories, experiences and teaching embodied within the Christian Story and its Vision²⁵. Thus, expressions of the Christian Story and Vision are made accessible before participants engage in a dialectical hermeneutic to appropriate the Christian Story and Vision to their experiences, stories

²⁵ "Its Story symbolizes the faith life of the Christian community over history and in the present, as expressed through scriptures, traditions, liturgies, and so on. Its Vision reflects the promises and demands that arise from the Story to empower and mandate Christians to live now for the coming of God's reign for all creation." (Groome, 1991, p147)

and visions. There is a 'critique of the Story in light of the stories and a critique of the participants' present stories in light of the past Story' (Groome, 1980, p217).

This dialectical hermeneutic between the past expressions of the Christian Story and the present praxis of individuals and communities is a key development in Christian pedagogical thinking for Groome is elevating present Christian praxis in such a way that it may, and, he argues, sometimes must²⁶, critique parts of scripture, reason and tradition. Groome's acknowledgement of the discernment of the people as a key source of teaching in the Church and his pronouncement that, '[t]heology is to arise from Christian praxis as much as it is to inform further Christian praxis' (Groome, 1980, p279) sees him in harmony with mainstream contemporary practical theology and with the flourishing field of contextual theology. Indeed, the final movement in Groome's pedagogical process is for participants to make decisions about a preferred lived Christian faith in light of their critical reflection of present praxis and its relation to the Christian Story and Vision – a process which bears close resemblance to the final stage in the pastoral theological models of Farley, Tracy and Browning²⁷ and of the process of discernment in Sedmak's vision of 'local theology' (2004).

Therefore, one can see that the critical praxis pedagogical approach sees the present experiences and praxis of the learners in a dialectical hermeneutic with the historical Christian Story and Vision, allowing one to challenge, confirm and critique the other in a desire for a living out of the Christian faith through participation in the kingdom of God.

The roles of teacher and learner – 'a group of Christians sharing in dialogue...'

Groome is explicit in his demand for the learner to be active in the educational process. He argues that a pedagogy which aims at helping learners become fully human;

[C]alls for the antithesis of 'banking education'. It demands a pedagogy that engages people as active participants in the teaching/learning dynamic, that prompts and empowers them to become agents of their own learning rather

²⁶ Groome, 1980, pp194ff

²⁷ Groome's shared-praxis pedagogical approach is so rooted in the domain of pastoral theology that Lartey names it as a key example of the process approach of pastoral theology, (Lartey, 1996).

than treating them as dependents and telling them what to know. (Groome, 1998, p103).

An active subject is, for Groome, one who engages in speaking and listening with oneself, with others and with God because we are relational beings. Our ontic being is 'always "being toward" the world and "being with" others' (1991, p29) and as such, a Christian pedagogy must account for this – "Our pedagogy should honor and help realize the conviction that at the heart of us there is a transcendent disposition that leads us out of ourselves into relationships and interdependence," (Groome, 1991, p430).

Thus, as relational beings, dialogue with others has to be the key component of our teaching and learning. Expressing our stories, experiences and questions and listening to those of others in an active way, in a 'listening that attempts to hear with the heart what the other person is attempting to communicate' (Groome, 1980, p189), is paramount.

The body, mind and will of the learner is to be engaged in this process and the learner is to be given dignity and respect; to be treated as one made in the image of God whose journey back to God is sacred and unique (1980, p263). Thus Groome emphasises the importance of context for the learner, stating that a teaching process must take into account the human 'being' in a particular culture and society, in a particular time (Groome, 1991) so that 'our people may respond to the demands of the Kingdom in their own personal, social and political contexts' (Groome, 1980, p99). Thus once again, the critical praxis pedagogy can be seen to uphold the central tenets of contextual/local theologies in its assumption that a community's theology is 'developed in response to and within a particular social situation' (Sedmak, 2004, p95).

Moreover, for Groome, the dialogical nature of the learning process creates a relationship between the teacher and the learner that 'transcends the stereotype of teacher delivering and students receiving knowledge' (Groome, 1991, p143). Mirroring and frequently citing Friere's call for a community of learning, Groome views the teacher as a partner (1991, p143), or 'leading-learner' (1991, p450) in the process, calling them to participate as a learner without neglecting their responsibilities and gifts;

True partnership...calls the teacher to a new self-image, away from answer person or controller of knowledge and into “being with” participants in a subject-to-subject relationship. Partnership does not mean a false egalitarianism in which teachers forgo their responsibilities as enablers and resource persons; it means being willing to learn as well as to teach, to listen as well as to talk, to be questioned as well as to question, to use one’s training and resources to empower rather than to control the teaching/learning process. (Groome, 1991, p145).

Therefore, Groome proposes a pedagogy in which participants are seen as active subjects, each made in the image of God, who are encouraged to listen and learn from each other in a relationship-centred community of learning. The pedagogy of the critical praxis approach to Christian education can thus be summarised as:

| Content | Method | Role of teacher | Role of learner | Assessment |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| Scripture; tradition; the experience and praxis of individuals. | Person as starting point; communal dialogue & critical reflection. | To facilitate the learning and participate as a leading-learner. | An active subject – to express their story, actively listen to others, critically reflect on present praxis through dialogue. | Tangible evidence of human lives and societies being transformed into the image of the kingdom of God. |

Table iii: Summary of the critical praxis pedagogical approach.

The Missiology of the Critical praxis Pedagogy

a) Kingdom-Focused

Above, we have noted how those who advocate a critical praxis pedagogy have criticized the enculturation approach for being too sectarian, suggesting that a missiology which focuses on the perpetuation of the Church as an institution can lead to the ‘disincarnation of the Church’ (Tournier, 1964, p159). Indeed, whilst many who support the enculturation

approach are adamant in their negation of a Church/Kingdom division, arguing instead that the Church must solely focus on being the Church and that it is mission that exists for the Church, not vice versa (Davison & Millbank, 2010), those who support a critical praxis pedagogy interpret mission somewhat differently – “As a Christian community, the Church’s mission is to be a sacrament of the Kingdom...The Church is to exist for the sake of the Kingdom and never for its own sake.” (Groome, 1980, p50).

Thus, for those who support the critical praxis approach, the Church’s calling is to exist for the sake of the Kingdom/Democracy/Reign of God. The primary mandate for Christians is to show ‘radical love of God through love of neighbor as ourselves’ (Groome, 1980, p50) and this is achieved through all actions which promote the humanization of the individual and the transformation of society. This living out of Kingdom values – whether expressed as promoting social justice, social welfare and a world society (Coe, 1917) or enabling spiritual, personal and social/political freedom (Groome, 1980) – is then, the foundation of the missiology of the critical praxis approach.

b) The *Missio Dei*

Within the critical praxis pedagogy, a sacramental cosmology is advocated in which the world is to be seen as ‘the ordinary medium of God’s outreach to humankind and of human response to God’ (Groome, 1998, p125). God is active and redemptive outside of the visible Church. God’s wisdom is even revealed in other religions (Groome, 1998, pp404ff) and divine love in the actions of non-believers (Tournier, 1971, p55). To believe otherwise is seen to contradict fundamental Christian beliefs;

...[W]e assume that we are the only people to whom God has ever revealed the divine self, that we are the only people among whom God is active. Such an elitist and imperialist attitude contradicts our own Christian conviction about the universal love of God for all people and God’s activity within all history. (Groome, 1980, p200).

Thus, the critical praxis pedagogy is founded upon a creation-centred missiology which sees the Church’s mission as existing for the Kingdom of God which is established through

the humanization of the individual and transformation of society and which acknowledges that God is active in mission beyond the confines of the institutional Church.

The Soteriology of the Critical Praxis Approach

a – Present and Communal Salvation

Groome argues that a soteriology that solely views salvation as exclusively otherworldly is impoverished (1980, p35), guilty of many of Marx's criticisms of Christianity (Ibid, p90) and is merely a consequence of the context of the ancient world (Ibid, p89). Thus, whilst he does affirm the truth 'that there is an existential consequence to Christian faith' (1991, p22), he does so by recasting it 'in language theologically more reflective of contemporary scholarship and...more engaging for our time' (Ibid, p22) in his contention that 'both the impetus for and the consequence of people living in Christian faith is the wholeness of human freedom that is fullness of life for all, here and hereafter' (Ibid, p22). Salvation is both 'this- and otherworldly' (Groome, 1991, p94) as is evident in the material which focuses on the humanization of the individual in this life, the transformation of society in this world.

Moreover, Groome suggests that a view of salvation as individual is also impoverished (1980, p35), an accusation that Coe levied before him;

We have been so taught as to think of the great salvation as a rescuing of individuals, each by himself, from the guilt and power of sin, and of establishing them, each by himself, in the way of righteousness...But our generation has come to see that the redemptive mission of the Christ is nothing less than that of transforming the social order itself into a brotherhood or family of God. (Coe, 1917, p5)

For those advocating the critical praxis approach, our very being is relational; our mission, relational; our salvation, relational. Salvation is, then, about freedom – for the individual and the society, in this world as well as the next.

b – ‘Extra Ecclesiam Est Salus’

Sometimes Protestant Christians can be more faithful to the sentiments of Catholic Christianity than self-identified Catholics, and vice versa. For example, many Protestants in the Calvinist tradition no longer subscribe to the theological notion of predestination...whereas I know Catholics who would seem to subscribe to it, if only by overemphasizing the importance of Church membership to salvation! (Groome, 1998, p22)

Not only does the above quote serve to remind us that delineation between denominations as regards to theology and pedagogy is less apparent than ever before, but it also demonstrates Groome’s general distaste for an understanding of salvation which overemphasizes Church membership. Throughout his work, Groome advocates a soteriology which is more inclusive of those of other faiths and none, less focused upon right belief or Church membership and one which leans heavily toward a works-based judgement; ‘It seems that the decisive criterion by which our lives will be measured for eternity is how we have cared for the neighbor most in need.’ (Groome, 1998, p86).

Salvation, both in the present and in the hereafter, is not confined to those professing the Christian faith but is bestowed upon ‘all people who live their faith with integrity – Buddhists, Hindus, Moslems [sic], and everyone of good will’ (Groome, 1998, p395). Indeed, in an anecdote about an encounter with a more conservative Christian at an airport, Groome stresses his assurance that the strangers he sees will be saved and this undercurrent of universal salvation, implicit throughout Groome’s writing, is made explicit in his citing, expounding and defence of the proclamation of Vatican II which stated ‘the universal design of God for the salvation of the human race’ (Groome, 1998, 401).

Moreover, far from being a lone voice in the wilderness, many of those whom adopt a critical praxis approach to Christian pedagogy also advocate a notion of universal salvation – be they Calvinist (Musick, 1973) or Catholic (Davies et.al., 2007, p135). Thus, it can be argued that a belief in the availability of present and future salvation beyond the visible Church, an emphasis on the salvific liberation of the individual and society in this life, and an accompanying hope for apocatastasis provides the basis for a missiology that stresses the call of the Church to work for the Kingdom through the humanization of the individual

and transformation of society over and above a desire to save individuals from perdition, either through conversion or incorporation into the Church, and is thereby foundational to a critical praxis pedagogical approach.

Finally however, whilst we acknowledge that the soteriology outlined here would appear to be an underlying theological assumption of the critical praxis pedagogy, it is noted that the critical praxis approach would advocate the understanding that such theology is not to be seen as being static or unchangeable for the very nature of the critical praxis approach suggests that all theology is, and must be, the product of the context in which it is created. Thus in the critical praxis approach, traditions, 'doctrines and standards are revised' (Burgess, 1975, p67); present praxis is critiqued by and critiques the inherited Christian Story and Vision (Groome, 1991); and theology arises from, as well as informs, Christian action (Groome, 1980, p229). In short, true to the core nature of practical theology, the relationship between theory and praxis is dialectical. Consequently, the relationship between pedagogy, missiology and soteriology of the critical praxis approach can be summarised as follows:

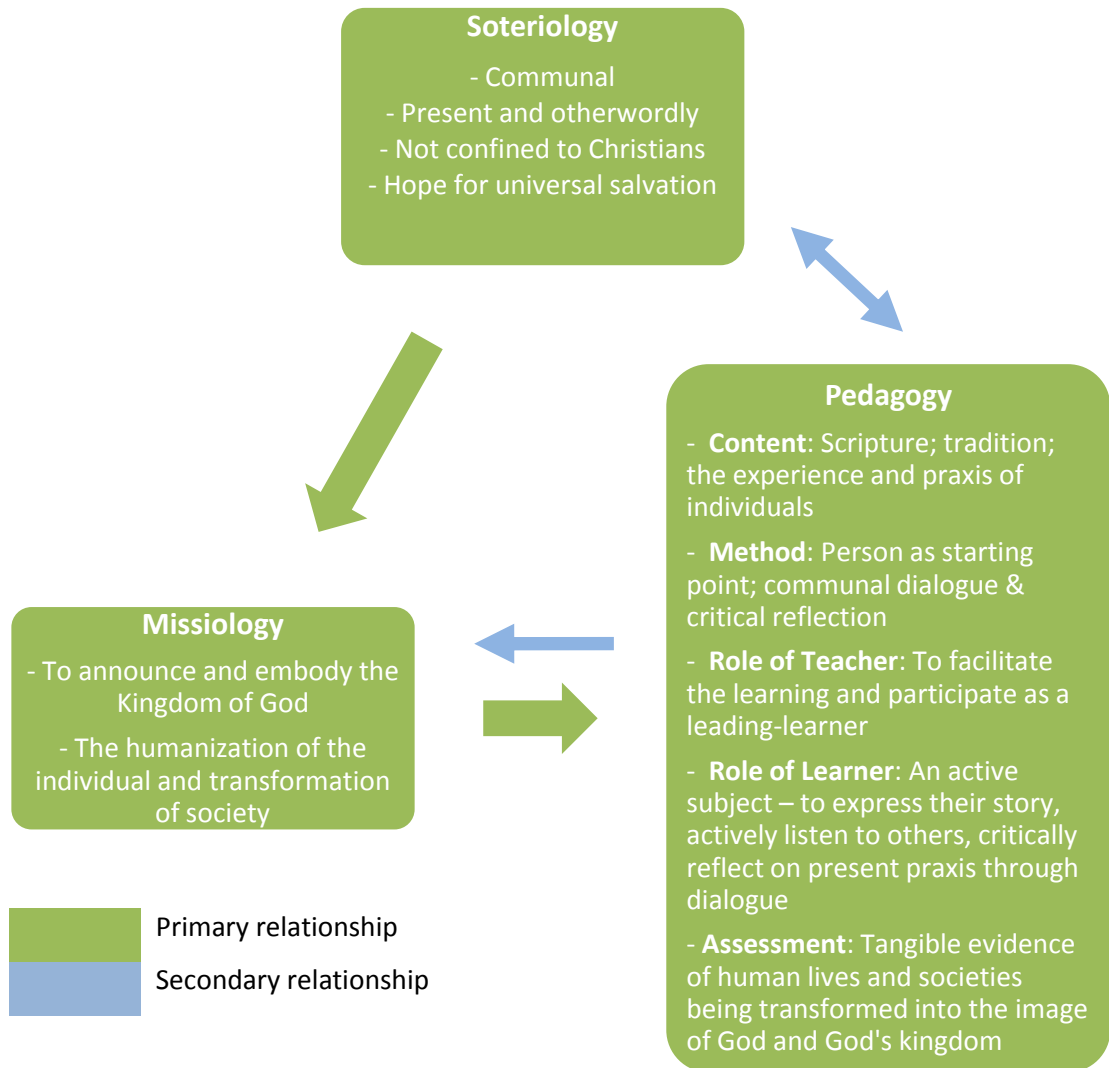


Figure 4: The relationship between the soteriology, missiology and pedagogy of the critical praxis approach to Christian education.

3:4 – Chapter Summary and Considerations for Research

The heuristic models identified above can be summarised as follows:

| | Dominant Soteriology | Dominant Missiology | Content | Method | Role of teacher | Role of learner | Assessment |
|-----------------|---|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| Individualistic | Individual, predestined salvation; justification by faith/grace alone. | To teach, guard and proclaim scriptural truth. | Word-centred. | Religious instruction; acquisition of scriptural knowledge. | Expert and authority. Teaches didactically | Accept and receive the teaching given. | Observation & examination of beliefs & actions of learner. |
| Communitarian | Corporate salvation mediated through incorporation into, and participation in, the Church. | To continue the Christian Story in rite and ritual - specifically formal, liturgical worship. | The mythos of the Church; its language, grammar and story. | Participation and internalization of the rites, traditions, language and story of Christian faith. | Pass on traditions and rituals; teach and use language faithfully. | To participate in the communal, liturgical life of the Church. | Visible, faithful participation in visible, faithful Church. |
| Relational | Communal; present and otherworldly. Not confined to Christians. Hope for universal salvation. | To announce and embody the Kingdom of God. The humanization of the individual and transformation of society. | Scripture; tradition; and the experience and praxis of individuals | Person as starting point; communal dialogue & critical reflection. | To facilitate the learning and participate as a leading-learner. | To express their story, actively listen to others, critically reflect on theology, tradition and present praxis through dialogue. | Tangible evidence of human lives and societies being transformed into the image of the kingdom of God. |

Table iv: Summary of the three heuristic models of the dominant approaches of contemporary Christian education.

Consequently, in this chapter, I have suggested that, in spite of there being little explicit acknowledgement within the field of Christian education, the three dominant pedagogies within the contemporary Church are built upon fundamentally different soteriological and

missiological presuppositions. It is an analysis of this relationship which is the focus for our qualitative research and which thus engenders the following research questions:

1: What is the pedagogical praxis of fresh expressions of church?

As acknowledged in chapter 2, consideration of the pedagogical approach of fresh expressions of church has been largely absent both from the movement's literature and from subsequent qualitative studies and thus, research into the pedagogical praxis of fresh expressions of church will be of inherent value to the movement and to the wider Church in itself.

Moreover, the centrality of the *missio Dei* hermeneutic, assumption of the contextual, dialectical nature of theology, and emphasis on the church being a sign and agent of the kingdom of God, appear to be the founding tenets of both fresh expressions of church theology and critical praxis pedagogy, suggesting that a critical praxis approach would be most consistent with the movement's theological foundations. However, even if the theoretical basis of fresh expressions of church was assiduously carried out in practice (and there is a considerable amount of literature which questions this – Wilkinson, 2008; Hunt, 2008; Stone, 2009) – the nature of fresh expressions of church means that they could not solely rely on a critical praxis pedagogy. Whilst Groome suggests that the approach he advocates is not confined to one denomination or even just to Christianity, (1991, p3; 2002, p595), the shared praxis approach was always assumed to take place within a community of faith – a context that is at odds, at least initially, with the aims of, and theology behind, fresh expressions of church.

Furthermore, it is my contention that the three models of Christian education that we have identified above all uphold a cognitive-propositional approach to Christian doctrine to varying extents. Whilst this may be most apparent in the instructional model, I would suggest that the enculturation model, which affirms a relationship to doctrine akin to that described in Lindbeck's (2009) cultural linguistic model, is ultimately founded upon the cognitive-propositional approach, affirming Wright's reasoning that;

[T]he constitutive function of Christian doctrine envisaged by the cultural linguistic model of Christian doctrine draws its ontological legitimacy and

epistemic warrant from its relationship with the cognitive-propositional model. If the Christian doctrines that constitute the Christian Church are devoid of ontological purchase on transcendent reality, then Christianity is one vast mistake; if, on the other hand, cultural-linguistic doctrines that constitute Christian communities are simultaneously cognitive propositions that enjoy ontological purchase on transcendent reality, then Christianity is true, or at least more truthful than any available alternative. (Wright, 2013, p71).

As regards the critical praxis model, Groome acknowledges the need for a 'catechetical movement' (1980, p214) in the pedagogical process in which the Story of the people of faith is presented and attended to. He is keen to stress that this Story is not merely story but is grounded in historical events, most notably for Christians, the incarnation (Ibid, p192) whilst also acknowledging that doctrines are 'at least part of our Story' (Ibid, p202) and calling for the continued formulation of doctrine as provisional propositional statements about God today (Ibid, p203).

Consequently, the three dominant models of Christian education all uphold a cognitive-propositional understanding of Christian doctrine to varying degrees and all thus assume a degree of formal learning and appropriation of these doctrines within the Christian curriculum. However, the space for, and priority attributed to, teaching the beliefs, stories and traditions of the Christian community within the fresh expressions curriculum is highly contested as theorists and practitioners continue to wrestle with the question of formal instruction within the movement. Therefore, the twin challenges identified in chapter 2 – of how to resist propounding a relativist epistemology and how to transmit an orthodox understanding of the global and historical Christian faith to the currently unchurched within in a movement that is sceptical of the instructional and which emphasises orthopraxy over orthodoxy – are highlighted once again and will be given special consideration in our research into the pedagogical praxis of fresh expressions of church.

Moreover, if, as has been suggested above, Christian pedagogy is not theologically neutral, the notion that fresh expressions of church can be endorsed by communities of varied and even mutually exclusive theologies would be seriously challenged. Those

behind the Mission-Shaped Church report and within the fresh expressions of church initiative continue in their attempts to show the wider (Anglican) Church that most, if not all, forms of Protestant theology can engage with fresh expressions theory and praxis – indeed, the theological diversity of the movement is considered a sign that the movement is faithful to the mission of God (Goodhew et. al, 2012, p73) – and yet many arms of the Church continue in their scepticism of it. If fresh expressions of church are seen to focus on one particular pedagogical approach, it may be argued that the theological presuppositions of that pedagogy may not be attractive to many wings of the Church which will thus have an impact on how fresh expressions theory is accepted and where it might be practised.

However, whilst these two challenges – the nature of Christian education for those who have little or no prior knowledge or experience of the Church and that of encouraging ecumenical unity whilst acknowledging essential theological differences – are fundamental to the nature, applicability and existence of fresh expressions of church, they are also significant challenges for the Church at large today. Thus, it is hoped that an investigation into these issues, through an analysis of the pedagogical praxis of three contextually different fresh expressions of church, will be of interest to the wider Christian community.

2: In what ways does the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy in fresh expressions of church challenge or uphold the heuristic models of Christian theology and education identified in this thesis?

Having suggested that soteriology determines missiology which is the dominant influence upon pedagogy, an analysis of this hypothesis will be carried out. The soteriology/ies and missiology/ies of three fresh expressions of church will be evaluated in regards to their spoken and operate theology and the relationship existent between this theology and the pedagogy practised. This will allow for a dialectical critique of both the theoretical models and the fresh expressions praxis for we will consider how the observed relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy in the fresh expressions of church might challenge or uphold our heuristic models whilst simultaneously evaluating the theological consistency of the fresh expressions movement. Indeed, if we find that fresh expressions of church are advocated by communities who would appear to uphold a soteriology or

missiology at odds with those upon which their praxis is founded, the churches could be susceptible to claims of theological inconsistency and missiological disingenuousness – of using the methods and pedagogy of one theological view to attract the unchurched to a community which advocates a very different or even opposing theological view – a claim which, if found to be true, would compromise the proposed theological sequence endorsed by the movement (Goodhew et. al, 2012, p80) and would make the church vulnerable to further criticism and suspicion, particularly in an age which puts great importance upon an ethic of authenticity (Taylor, 1991).

Thus, our findings on this second research question will enable both a consideration of our claims of this chapter and an analysis of the theory/praxis dialectic of fresh expressions of church.

3: What further theological insights on Christian education and the fresh expressions of church movement might be gleaned from an analysis of the present praxis of fresh expressions of church?

As explicated in the following chapter, this study is situated in the field of practical theology, a field which takes seriously the dialectical hermeneutic between theory and praxis within the Christian Church. It is hoped that reflection on the present praxis of three very different communities within the fresh expressions movement will fashion a fresh perspective on Christian education and the fresh expressions of church movement from which new suggestions might be made; previously held assumptions re-examined; and areas needing further research identified.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

In chapter 4, an explanation of the methodology and methods utilised for the exploration of the questions raised in chapter 3 will be given. The locating of the research in the field of practical theology will first be considered as we reflect on the phronetic aims of the research and the procedural stages of practical theology. Following this, we will consider the nature of the relationship between practical theology and qualitative research before outlining the core values of the ethnographic perspective which will form the basis of the fieldwork. The research methods of participant observation, interviews, questionnaire, and the process of data analysis will then be considered as we complete this section of the study.

4:1 – Phronesis and Practical Theology

The concept of phronesis pervades the fields of hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1990; Browning, 1991), social science (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Flaming, 2001), education (Green, 1976; Fenstermacher, 1986; Noel, 1993) and is at the core of contemporary practical theology, the field in which this study is located. Aristotle distinguished it from the other intellectual virtues in terms of its being ‘directed towards the concrete situation’ (Gadamer, 1990, p21) and whilst translations of the word are diverse and have included, among others, ‘practical reasoning, practical wisdom, moral discernment, moral insight and prudence’ (Noel, 1999, p273), there is widespread agreement that the concept is centred upon praxis, in ‘a pattern in which action and ongoing reflection continually interpenetrate; engagement in praxis, therefore [breeding] the quality of phronesis’ (Labanow, 2009, p15). Such an understanding of phronesis is in line with that advocated by Swinton & Mowat in their work on qualitative research and practical theology;

The aim of Practical Theology is to enable personal and communal phronesis; a form of practical wisdom which combines theory and practice in the praxis of individuals and communities. This phronesis does not aim for knowledge for its own sake, but for an embodied, practical knowledge which will enable a particular form of God-oriented lifestyle. (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, pp26-27)

Indeed, as is true of all academic work, this study does not take place within an intellectual vacuum, but rather is shaped and sustained by the context and narrative of the researcher. The reality that this study is carried out by an ordinand and is endorsed and funded by a Christian denomination²⁸, along with the accompanying prejudices and tensions which this situation may generate, must be acknowledged. My desire to engage with a study which asks questions and seeks answers concerning an issue which is of immediate and practical concern for the Church has clearly impacted upon the nature and direction of the research. The overarching aim of the study is thus not for knowledge for its own sake, but for an embodied, practical, *phronetic* knowledge which, it is hoped, will be of interest and use in my future ministry and for the wider contemporary Church. One way in which this aim has influenced the research is in the focusing of my research on pastoral practice;

Pastoral practice constitutes the habitus of faith; it is both inherited and indwelt but also infinitely creative: a performative practical wisdom (*phronêsis*) which we inhabit and re-enact. (Graham, 2000, p110).

Graham denounces the view of practical theology which focuses on 'individuals, therapeutic approaches, and clerical concerns' (Graham, 2000, p104) and argues for an understanding of the field as 'being primarily undertaken with and by intentional communities of faith' (Ibid, p104). Such thinking is not merely confined to the field of practical theology but spans that of systematic theology too. In a thesis which considers the dynamics of the theological and ecclesial identity of the reformed church, Bradbury (2005) suggests that the ontologies of the Church that doctrine offers fail to articulate a 'theological understanding of the Church which speaks to and from the life of the concrete historical Church' (Ibid, p23) and are thus idealised and damaging (Ibid, p18). He therefore argues that it is concrete, historical practice which is key to understanding the identity of the Church;

The Church becomes what it is through what it does. This presents a fundamental challenge to the life of the churches which is to take seriously what it does, and why it does what it does. What we do in Church life

²⁸ The research was endorsed and funded by the United Reformed Church as part of my training for ministry.

matters. In terms of the formation of our identity as Church it matters more than our doctrinal formulations or our systems of theology. (Ibid, p193).

Such a view is clearly congruent with that of Graham and one which calls for a praxis-based approach in a study which considers the theological identity, mission and practice of a new approach to being/doing Church, such as that endorsed by the fresh expressions movement.

Moreover, Heitink (1999a) and Swinton & Mowat (2006) view such qualitative research – that carried out by the Church, with the Church and partly for the Church – and all practical theology, as a form of action research;

Practical theology is fundamentally *action* research...Within the social-scientific model of action research the focus of action tends to be on generating solutions to particular problems. Practical Theology has a wider theological remit which involves challenging current practices in the hope that they will move closer towards faithfulness. (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, p255-256).

Thus, it is argued that the aims of the researcher, context of the study and emphasis on empirical research of pastoral praxis locate this study firmly in the field of practical theology, the following understanding of which is here endorsed:

Practical theology is critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God's redemptive practices in, to and for the world. (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, p6).

The core tenets of Practical Theology which are embedded within this research follow those of Swinton & Mowat as elucidated in Practical Theology and Qualitative Research (2006);

First, practical theological enquiry is critical...In opposition to models which view Practical Theology as applied theology, wherein its task is simply to

apply doctrine worked out by the other theological disciplines to practical situations, within this definition Practical Theology is seen to be a critical discipline which is prepared to challenge accepted assumptions and practices. (2006, pp6-7).

The critical, hermeneutical nature of practical theology is inherent in its birth and subsequent identity. Schleiermacher, known both as the 'Father of modern hermeneutics' (Jeanrond, 1992, p226) and 'founding father' of practical theology (Heitink, 2001, p154), broke from his predecessors who had limited the concept of hermeneutics to classical and Biblical texts and argued instead for a universal scope of the hermeneutical problem, viewing 'hermeneutics as the problem of human understanding as such' (Thiselton, 1992, p204). Schleiermacher's espousal of the hermeneutical process was then developed by his pupil, Wilhelm Dilthey, revised in the phenomenological approaches of Husserl and Heidegger, brought to the fore once again in the work of Gadamer, and throughout has had considerable influence on the identity and methodology of practical theology. The influence of Gadamer's concept of the fusion of horizons can be seen in both Tracy and Browning's work in the field and their modification of Tillich's unidirectional model of reflection into a 'mutually critical correlation of the interpreted theory and praxis of the Christian faith and the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary situation' (Tracy, 1983, p76). Thus, practical theology is hermeneutical in nature through its recognition that 'the Christian community's horizon for its engagement [is] with the 'script' of the Christian story' (Rogers, 2008, p61).

Swinton and Mowat's second key emphasis is that, '[p]ractical theology is *theological reflection*' (2006, p7). Though 'priestly listening' (Osmer, 2008) takes place in the very act of observing praxis and analysing empirical data, and whilst practical theology will, indeed must, dialogue with a range of other disciplines, it is theology which 'guides and provides the hermeneutical framework within which Practical Theology carries out its task' (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p7). Present human experience and praxis are central to the task at hand but these will be viewed and interpreted within the wider framework of the Christian narratives found in scripture and tradition²⁹.

²⁹ The question concerning whether and to what extent contemporary praxis may critique scripture or tradition is a controversial one and one that will largely be built upon theological presuppositions regarding revelation. As we have already seen, some practical theologians endorse a dialectical hermeneutic which allows for 'critique of the Story in light of the stories and a critique

Swinton and Mowat’s third emphasis highlights the importance of reflecting on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world – a task that I would argue is at the forefront of a study which is looking at the fresh expressions movement and its attempts to interact with the dechurched and unchurched – whilst their fourth emphasis, that ‘the primary task of Practical Theology is to ensure and enable faithful practices’ (2006, p9), has been acknowledged and endorsed above.

Stages of Practical Theology

Adapting the models advocated by Swinton & Mowat (2006) and Labanow (2009), the model of practical theological inquiry which I will be using is as follows:

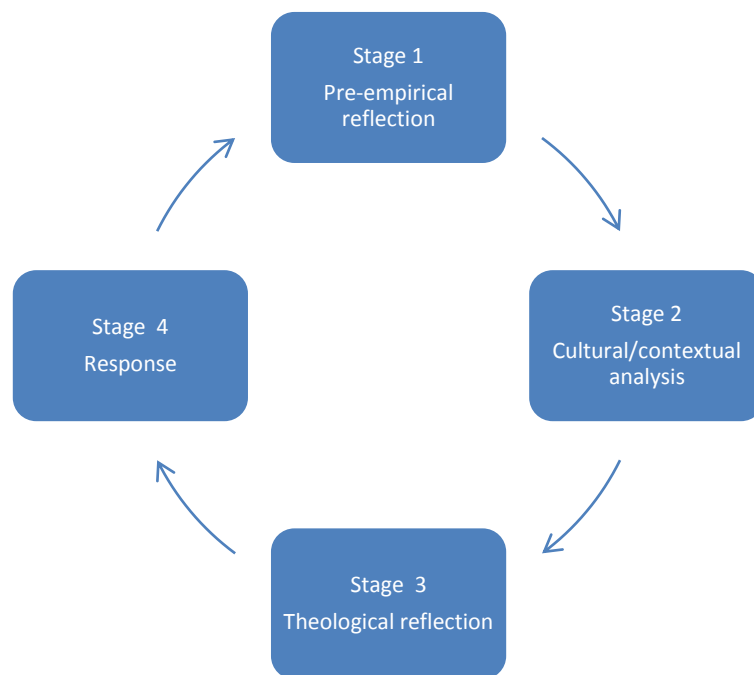


Figure 5: Stages of practical theology

of the participants’ present stories in light of the past Story’ (Groome, 1980, p217) whilst others attest that human experience is not ‘a locus for fresh revelation...that will counter or contradict the script provided by scripture, doctrine and tradition’ (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p7). Rowland and Bennet suggest that the dominant model in contemporary practical theology is that of critical correlation, ‘in which questions are put to the world from the faith and to the faith from the world, or to tradition from experience and to experience from tradition’ (2006, p191) and is thus more aligned to that of the dialectical hermeneutic – as seen in the practical theological cycles of Lartey, Farley, Whitehead et al.

In the first stage of pre-empirical reflection, 'current Christian practice generates questions for the researcher' (Rogers, 2008, p62) which are subsequently explored through the reading of literature concerning the areas of interest with the aim of gaining an understanding of the situation as we see it and so to 'articulate in some initial form what appears to be going on' (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, p94). Whilst this process began informally in my experience of pedagogical practice the various churches that I have attended over the past thirty two years, it is in chapters 2 and 3 that this process has been formalized here.

In the second stage of cultural and contextual analysis, 'the intention here is to enhance and challenge our initial impressions and begin to develop a deep and rich understanding of the complex dynamics of the situation' (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, p96). It is thus in this stage that the empirical research is located as we observe and interpret ecclesial praxis and the forces which underlie such praxis. This stage will be predominant in chapters five and six and, to a lesser extent, in seven and eight.

In stage 3 the theological reflection which has been inherent in the previous stages is formalized as the 'implicit and explicit theological dimensions' of the situation are extracted from the data and discussed in a 'spirit of critical faithfulness and chastened optimism' (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, p96). Such reflection is implicit in chapters five and six but will be at the forefront of the analysis in chapters seven to nine.

Finally, in stage 4, chapter 9 of this study, 'we draw together the cultural/contextual analysis with the theological reflection and combine these two dimensions with our original reflections on the situation' (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, pp96-97). Here, conclusions will be drawn, further areas for research will be suggested and recommendations will be given in our offering to the ongoing dialogue on what it means to belong to the school of Christ.

Practical Theology, Ethnography and Critical Realism

The combination of these two disciplines [of practical theology and qualitative research] provides a wonderful context for the development of

fresh insights, challenging dialogue and revised and more faithful modes of practice. (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, pp254-255).

Whilst Swinton & Mowat's glowing endorsement of the mutually beneficial relationship between practical theology and the social sciences is not at odds with contemporary scholarship, such a view is relatively new in the history between the two disciplines. Various attempts at bringing the disciplines together have led to charges of theological absolutism and isolationism on the one hand and to a denouncement of secularist critique on the other (Schweitzer, 1999; Estep, 2008) as practical theology wrestles with the seemingly problematic task of seeking 'to combine two incongruent, qualitatively distinct realities, the divine and the human, in congruent forms of action' (Labanow, 2009, p34).

However, today, the misgiving that the field of practical theology was too hermeneutically grounded to be congruent with the positivist epistemology of anthropology has been disregarded with the acknowledgement of the interpretative nature of ethnography (Geertz, 1973), the wider endorsement of a reflexive sociology (Gouldner, 1970) and the articulation that 'science which thinks itself nonideological and free of extrascientific considerations is profoundly ideological and political' (Bellah, 1983, p40). As the trend for explicitly ideologically driven ethnography has developed (Rogers, 2008), calls have even been made for a recognized phronetic social science (Bellah, 1983; Flyvbjerg, 2001) in which the basic moral vocabulary is of 'justice, equality and freedom' (Bellah, 1983, p62). This phronetic and hermeneutical framework for ethnography is congruent with the nature of practical theology as outlined above. Thus ethnography is today seen as 'a skill available to the theologian as theologian' (Scharen, 2005, p141) and practical theology as 'characterized by a methodology that takes empirical data with utter seriousness, takes these as its starting point and keeps these in mind as it develops its theory' (Heitink, 1999a, p7).

Such 'empirical intradisciplinarity' (Van der Ven, 1999, p328) must have an explicit and consistent epistemological and ontological foundation for, as Davies puts it;

The search for a philosophically sound basis for ethnographic research which fully accepts its inherent reflexivity while still maintaining that its products are explanations of an external social reality requires both an ontology that

asserts that there is a social world independent of our knowledge of it and an epistemology that argues that it is knowable. (Davies, 2008, p18).

For Davies, as for Porter (1995), Banfield (2004) and Rogers (2008), a critical realist ethnography enables this and it is to critical realism that we now turn as we address the issues of ontological intransitivity, epistemic relativism and judgmental rationality – the three pillars of critical realism³⁰.

Ontological Intransitivity

Critical realism is a transcendental realism which not only affirms the existence of concrete, empirically observed objects but also holds to the existence of underlying but unobservable structures and mechanisms. In his explanation of this stratified depth ontology, Bhaskar (1978) identifies three ontological domains which are inter-related and ordered:

| | Domain of Real | Domain of Actual | Domain of Empirical |
|-------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Mechanisms | ✓ | | |
| Events | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Experiences | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table v: The ontological domains of critical realism (Bhaskar, 1978, p13)

Table v demonstrates that the domain of the Real consists of the processes - the underlying structures and mechanisms – that generate events as well as the events generated and experiences had and is often referred to as the ‘deep structure of reality’ (Danermark, 2002, p57). The hierarchical ordering of the elements within the domain of the Real suggests that there is a causal link between the three elements – the mechanisms creating the events from which experiences are derived. The domain of Actual includes events which exist whether or not they are observed and the experiences which come from those events which are observed whilst the generative structures and

³⁰ A great deal of this section is deeply indebted to Andrew Rogers and his explication of a ‘theological ethnography’ in his 2008 thesis, *Ordinary Biblical Hermeneutics and the Transformation of Congregational Horizons within English Evangelicalism*. Ph.D. King’s College, London.

mechanisms are not recognized. The domain of the Empirical solely consists of the world that is encountered through the senses. Ontological status is thus not confined to empirical validation for the distinction is made between our knowledge claims about the world (the transitive dimension) and the external reality which exists independently of us (the intransitive dimension) and which 'is comprised of mechanisms that cause the complex phenomena we are analysing in interdisciplinary research' (Danermark, 2002, p59). The aim of the critical realist is then, to 'explain observable phenomena with reference to underlying structures and mechanisms' (Blaikie, 2007, p16) which may subsequently 'bring a critique to the empirical and actual domains' (Rogers, 2008, p66) – and is therefore congruent with the aims and ontology of practical theology and phronetic social science (Bellah, 1983; Flyvbjerg, 2001).

Moreover, in his endorsement of the use of critical realism in interdisciplinary work, Danermark emphasizes the critical realist assumption that;

[R]eality is assumed to consist of hierarchically ordered levels where a lower level creates the conditions for a higher level. However, this higher level is not determined by the lower level. Each level has its own generative mechanisms...it is not possible to reduce the causes of what occurs on one level to those of another level (whether lower or higher). (Danermark, 2002, p57).

There is much debate concerning the shape and content of these levels (Collier, 1994) but they can be summarised as:

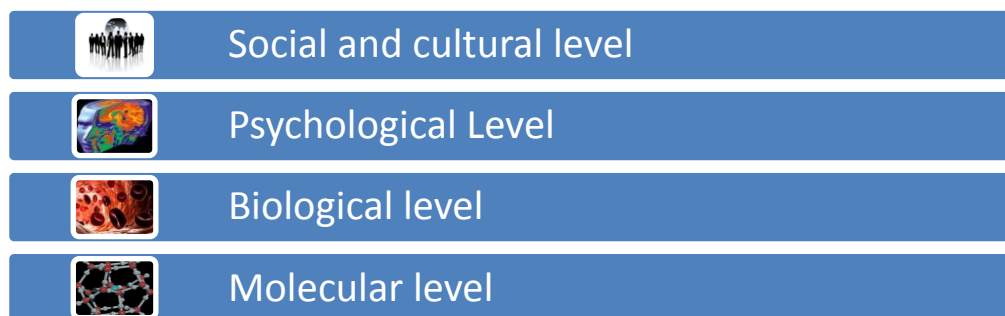


Figure 6: Levels of reality in critical realism

The critical realist therefore believes that the conditions necessary at the biological level must be generated by the molecular level, that the conditions necessary at the psychological level have been produced by the biological level etc, and yet she also claims that one level can neither be reduced to, nor can determine, another level. Building on McGrath (2002), Rogers (2008) argues that this has implications for a *theological* ethnography;

Theology has often been placed at the pinnacle of the disciplinary hierarchy...and, in one sense, ethnography does belong to a lower level than theology, since theological reflection is emergent from the ethnographic reality. Importantly, however, theology is not reducible to a lower level within a critical realist schema. The peculiarity of theology is that its object, God, is 'the most fundamental of all strata of reality' [McGrath, 2002, pp228-229], so in another sense theology lies at the base of the disciplines...However, one can distinguish between God and the theological disciplines that are a response to encounter with God and his revelation. (Rogers, 2008, p67).

In such a way, Rogers upholds a theological ethnography which comprises of different ontological strata, each with its own accompanying methodology, but can argue that an assumed reality of God informs each stratum. Theology, therefore, has priority over the other disciplines. This asymmetrical order, affirmed in this study, is endorsed by Swinton & Mowat (2006) who are keen to give the caveat that such a methodology requires elements of hospitality, conversion and critical faithfulness. Hospitality is seen as welcoming the methods of qualitative research and taking them seriously but as a Christian theologian who enables a conversion of such methods which sees 'qualitative research moving from a position where it is fragmented and without a specific telos or goal, to a position where it is grafted in to God's redemptive intentions for the world' (Ibid, p92). They then advocate that the new knowledge which is generated from this 'hospitable conversation and creative conversion' will enable authentic critical faithfulness which;

[A]cknowledges the divine givenness of scripture and the genuine working of the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of what is given, while at the same time

taking seriously the interpretative dimensions of the process of understanding revelation and ensuring the faithful practices of individuals and communities. (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, p93).

This study follows such a position and consequently affirms the view that ethnography can be used in God's service through its assistance in priestly listening (Osmer, 2008) and its enabling of critical faithfulness (Swinton & Mowat, 2006).

Epistemic Relativism

The second pillar of critical realism is that of epistemic relativism – the understanding that our knowledge of reality is partial and provisional; that the gap between the transitive and intransitive dimensions is considerable. Thus, whilst asserting the existence of reality as something other than the knower, 'the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiralling path of appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known' (Wright, 1992, p35).

Such an epistemology is congruent with the fundamental elements of the ethnographic exercise. Firstly, it articulates the necessary tension of the role of the researcher, for it acknowledges the otherness of the known and yet calls for the knower 'not merely to observe from a distance' as a detached epistemology, but allowing instead 'for the involvement of the knower in the act of knowing' (Ibid, p45). In this way, critical realism is inherently hermeneutical in outlook in its articulation that, 'Knowledge...although in principle concerning realities independent of the knower, is never itself independent of the knower' (Ibid, p35).

Secondly, as Wright suggests, critical realism can be seen to be;

[E]ssentially a relational epistemology. The stories through which it arrives at its (potentially) true account of reality are, irreducibly, stories about the interrelation of humans and the rest of reality (including, of course, other humans). (Ibid, p45)

A relational epistemology which gives credence to human stories resonates with the high anthropology which pervades qualitative research, and ethnography in particular, in which we are called to 'regard our fellow humans as people instead of subjects, and...ourselves as humans who conduct our research among rather than on them' (Wolcott, 1990, p19).

Judgmental Rationality

In his call for a phronetic social science, Flyvbjerg argues;

As regards validity, phronetic research is based on interpretation and is open for testing in relation to other interpretations and other research. But one interpretation is not just as good as another, which would be the case for relativism...the key point is the establishment of a better alternative [interpretation], where "better" is defined according to sets of validity claims. (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p130).

Such a view is congruent with that of the judgmental rationality of critical realism in which differing interpretations of reality can be 'justified and evaluated against other claims, hence reasoned yet provisional judgments about reality can therefore be made' (Rogers, 2008, p69). Some judgements may be made with greater confidence or justification than others, enabling the researcher to offer insights that will aid further reflection on an issue without an erroneous expectation of having to 'generate ultimate, unequivocally verified knowledge' (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p139).

4:2 – Ethnography and the Ethnographic Perspective

In this section, the nature of ethnographic research and participant observation will be considered through an explanation and affirmation of the ethnographic core values as outlined by Julie Scott Jones (2010) and embodied in the research methods of this study (see 4:3).

Ethnography as a social science is fractured along national lines (e.g., USA, UK, and the Commonwealth), disciplines (e.g., education, sociology and

anthropology), substantive interests (e.g., classroom analysis, innovation and evaluation), smaller interpersonal University groups (e.g., Stanford, Manchester, East Anglia etc.), paradigmatic perspectives (e.g., neo-positivists, interpretivists and critical theorists) and commitment to action and reform (action researchers versus more academic interpreters and analysts). (Smith, 1990, pp1-2)

This quote from American ethnographer Louis Smith serves to demonstrate just how extensive and fractured the field of ethnography is. Indeed, it is fitting that interpretation must be applied to the very definition of the word 'ethnography' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p1) – a field at the forefront of the hermeneutic enterprise. However, for the purposes of this study, I am in agreement with Jones in her pronouncement that '[d]ebates on definitions are always interesting (and often entertaining) but can also be nothing more than semantic diversions' (2010, p6) of which we have neither the time nor the space and thus am applying her understanding of;

[A] shared sensibility common to all ethnographers, built on a set of common, core values, that shapes the way they see and orientate themselves towards their discipline, their field setting and ultimately their research. (2010, p7).

Sharing much in common with van der Ven's principles of empirical intradisciplinarity (1999), Brewer's 'ethnographic imagination' (2000, 51-54) and Jeffrey & Troman's 'ethnographic principles' (2004, 535-548) Jones acknowledges the range of interpretations of the ethnographic discipline and subsequently summarises the shared sensibility common to all ethnographers into the seven core values which are explained and endorsed here.

Participation

"Ethnographers make a commitment and demonstrate a willingness to participate in the social worlds of their research subjects on different levels: physical, social, mental and emotional." (Jones, 2010, p7)

Jones is keen to note that whilst ethnography and participant observation must not be treated as synonymous, the central method of ethnography is, conventionally, participant observation and this is indeed the case in this study. The term 'participant observation' has been used within the social sciences since at least the 1920s (Wolcott, 1995) and Gold's classic typology of the relationship between participant and observer (1958) is still widely followed today. There are, of course, different degrees of involvement for the participant observer (Spradley, 1980) from non or passive participation with the field subjects to an active or complete degree of participation and yet; "Although at times a participant observer may be more observer than participant or more participant than observer, the key is to be exclusively neither." (Dowie, 2002, p52).

Indeed, the balance between being an insider seeking to gain an emic interpretation of the group and an outsider, seeking to gain an etic interpretation, is fundamental to the role of the participant observer (Brewer, 2000) and one which can prove difficult to uphold (Porter, 1995; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Consequently, far from being dismissed as 'simply a matter of hanging out' (Coleman, 2005, p52), participant observation must be regarded as an active, 'critical art' (Wolcott, 1995, p162) consisting of 'not one technique, but rather a *mélange* of strategies aimed at producing an accurate model of the behaviors of particular people' (Harrington, 1982, p327).

Thus, in my role as participant observer, I fully participated in the church communities studied. This involved living in three very different contexts for between three and four months and attempting to get to know the locations and local people, engaging in the life of the communities as much as possible, whilst also acknowledging my outsider status. I worshipped and tithed; took Communion and celebrated baptisms; gave and was given hospitality. The amount to which I was seen as an authentic member of the church differed enormously between the communities and individuals within them but throughout, I was seen as both participant and observer to some extent. The inherently hermeneutical nature of this exercise and the thick description which it is built upon will be considered below.

Immersion

“[E]thnographers strive to immerse themselves within a cultural setting; they want to ‘learn the language’ literally and metaphorically.” (Jones, 2010, p7)

Jones acknowledges the need for the researcher to immerse themselves in the culture of their fieldwork, noting that this is not the same as ‘going native’ but can be understood as ‘a commitment to doing as much as you can to become akin to what we might term a ‘knowledgeable tourist’ or a ‘trusted outsider’.’ (Jones, 2010, p7). In the past it was considered that such immersion could only be achieved by living and working with a community for six months to a year or more and some still advocate this today (Angrosino, 2007) whilst others are aware that this can no longer be the norm and therefore differentiate between ethnographies and the use of ethnographic techniques;

Often, contract research budgets or time schedules do not allow long periods of study – continuous or noncontinuous. In these situations, the researcher can apply ethnographic techniques to the study but cannot conduct an ethnography. (Fetterman, 2010, p39)

Such thinking is in line with that of Green & Bloome who differentiate between ‘doing an ethnography, adopting an ethnographic perspective, and using ethnographic tools’ (1997, p183) demonstrating, once again, how diverse and heterogeneous the field of ethnography is. Due to the timing and hermeneutical nature of the research, this study would be located within the category of ‘adopting an ethnographic perspective’, explained by Green & Bloome as ‘a more focused approach (i.e....less than a comprehensive ethnography) to study particular aspects of everyday life and cultural practises of a social group’ (1997, p183).

Moreover, Green & Bloome’s typology of ethnographic study resonates with Jeffrey & Troman’s work on ethnographic timing (2004). Jeffrey & Troman acknowledge that ‘the intensification of academic life...and the pressures from funding bodies...make a sustained 12 month minimum research period a luxury’ (Ibid, p537). In their research into the timing of ethnographic studies, Jeffrey & Troman have identified three modes of research which they name ‘A compressed time mode’; ‘A selective intermittent time mode’; and ‘A

recurrent time mode' (Ibid, pp535-548). The first of these modes refers to 'a short period of intense research in which researchers inhabit a research site almost permanently', (Ibid, p538) actively participating in all areas of the inhabitants culture for a time period of between a few days and one month. The selective intermittent time mode takes place over a longer period – between three months and two years – with the frequency of visits being dependent upon 'the researcher developing particular foci as the research develops and selecting the relevant events' (Ibid, p540). The third mode, that of a recurrent time mode, is one in which 'temporal phases formalize the research methodology' (Ibid, p542) such as in researching particular periods of time (e.g. beginnings and ends of the school term; advent etc) or in sampling at a regular, predetermined basis.

As ever, such heuristic models do not cover every individual case and I would suggest that my research falls between the first two models. As with the compressed time mode of research, I immersed myself in the culture of each church studied by living in the community and participating in all church events, as noted above. Not only did this allow me to build up a more detailed picture of each church but it also assisted me in my endeavour to be regarded as insider as such a venture is in line with the contextual and incarnational approach of the fresh expressions movement. However, my research also resembles Jeffrey & Troman's selective intermittent time mode in that I spent 3-4 months with each church conducting research which became increasingly focused as the study proceeded.

In summary, I strove to immerse myself within each cultural setting by living in the community, attending all church events and adopting an ethnographic perspective which freed me from 'the demands of the full-time anthropologist whilst maintaining claims to rigour and validity' (Heath et al, 2008 cited in Rogers, 2008, p73).

Reflection, reflexivity and representation

Since the early 1970s, interest in reflexivity in the social sciences has increased – part cause, part consequence of the growing prevalence of the hermeneutical worldview. The days of 'the God trick...that mode of seeing that pretends to offer a vision that is simultaneously from everywhere and nowhere, equally and fully' (Haraway, 1988, p584) are over as scholars recommend writing in the first person (Wolcott, 1990; Light, 2010),

including biographical details (Denscombe, 2007), and explicitly reflecting on motives (Jones, 2010). However, ethnographic reflection and reflexivity cannot be reduced to a checklist of concessions and caveats, nor can they be separated from the rest of the research in a few paragraphs of explicit 'benign introspection' (Woolgar, 1988, p22) for to do so would be to ignore the elusive and diverse nature of such a task (Usher, 1996; Davies, 2008).

Reflexivity, then, considered by some to be 'the most crucial dimension of the qualitative research process' (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, p59) must inform and be embedded in 'all phases of the research process from initial selection of topic to final reporting of results' (Davies, 2008, p4) the latter of which brings us to the issue of representation;

Representation...relates to the writing process and consideration of how we construct texts that represent field subjects in a realistic, critical and empowering way...[as...e]thnographers acknowledge that ethnographic writing is not objective and neutral but inherently political. (Jones, 2010, p8).

The hermeneutical nature of ethnography and participant observation means that the research is partial and that whilst 'ethnographic texts can still reasonably claim to represent reality...they must be explicitly identified as fallible representations and necessarily selective of the phenomena to which they refer' (Brewer, 2000, p141). A critical realist paradigm therefore enables an ethnographic study to be conducted in full awareness that the research undertaken is a hermeneutical process in which the 'prejudices' (Gadamer, 1990) of the researcher – her motivations, political understandings, prethinking etc – will affect her interpretation of a culture and subsequent written analysis of it due to 'the inseparability of knowledge from the knower' (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992, p8) but which can still affirm ontological realism, offer insights and draw conclusions about the transitive and intransitive elements of such through a process of judgmental rationality.

Therefore, the use of a research journal, frequent conversations allowing a sharing of perspective with those inside and outside (my supervisor) of the communities studied, and an inclusion of the responses of the members of the communities as an appendix (B), were key features in my attempt to reflect with integrity and represent with accuracy.

'Thick' Description

[Ethnographers] do not just record everything they note in a descriptive manner; rather, they strive to describe the field setting and actions that occur within it in as much detail as possible and with as much contextualisation as possible. (Jones, 2010, p8).

Light (2010) notes that whilst there is no universal formula for recording or writing up ethnography, one of the key principles is that of thick description – ‘a form of dense and elaborate (and ideally exhaustive) commentary on those findings that aims to give the reader a greater understanding by fully contextualising what the researcher observed or experienced’ (2010, p177). Such thinking originated with Geertz (1973) who, borrowing the term from Gilbert Ryle, argues that thick description moves beyond a shallow description of events to one which enables an understanding of those events for the protagonists involved in their own terms and thus, for the ethnographer, ‘what we call our data are really our own construction of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to’ (1973, p9).

The ethnographer thus ‘inscribes social discourse’ (ibid, p19) in her recording and writing up of an event, turning it ‘from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscription and can be reconsulted’ (ibid, p19). Such writing often includes verbatim quotations from events observed and interviews conducted (Light, 2010) with the intention of offering an interpretative account of the observed culture in a fair and thorough representation which, though still objective in nature, allows the reader to judge the validity of the interpretation herself as she is taken ‘to the centre of an experience, event or action’ (Mansvelt & Berg, 2005, p260).

Light (2010) is keen to acknowledge that the researcher’s own Damoclean sword, that of the word count, might result in the thick description being less thick than intended but even so, the principles are still the same even if the description available to the reader is slightly leaner. Thus, in the data analysis of this thesis, verbatim quotes and the reconstruction of events form the prime content of my representation of the communities studied.

An Active, Participative Ethics

[E]thnographers view ethics as an active part of their research, rather than something to be sorted out prior to fieldwork...[and thus ethics] becomes a political issue for most ethnographers, with a concern to empower rather than disempower participants. (Jones, 2010, p9)

Before embarking on the qualitative research, I consulted with the King's College London Education and Management Research Ethics Panel, from whom I was granted full approval for my research (REP(EM)/10/11-69). Indeed, throughout the research process, from initial proposal to writing up, ethical considerations are at the forefront of the ethnographer's mind and broadly fall into three main areas: informed consent; confidentiality; and the protection from exploitation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Rooms, 2007; Davies, 2008).

Informed consent means that the subjects of the research voluntarily elect to participate in the study having been informed of its nature and of what will be expected from them. Thus, all leaders of the groups who participated in this study were sent a consent form informing them of the topic, nature of study etc prior to my first meeting with them and subsequently with other members of the communities, when I was able to explain the study in more detail and answer any further questions that they had. The communities were then given the chance to discuss my research without my attendance, allowing for individuals to raise objections without my presence affecting the discussion. Participants were given the chance to terminate the process at any time for any reason.

In spite of all this, Hammersley and Atkinson point out that even in a study of informed consent, 'the degree of openness may vary considerably across the different people in the field' and also acknowledge that ethnographers who conduct their research in social settings 'simply do not have the power to ensure that all participants are fully informed and freely consent to be involved' (1995, p266). Both comments bore out in my research in which the church leaders, better conversed in the language of fresh expressions and emergent church theology, were perhaps more fully aware of the details and aims of the study than that of a casual attendee, who in turn might have been less informed than a regular attendee who had been present at the initial discussion about the church's

participation in my study. However, without reminding each participant about the exact nature of my research within every conversation – which would have been unnatural and would have negated any possibility of achieving the insider status of the participant observer balance – this could not have been achieved and thus I am content in saying that participants were appropriately informed about the study and still chose to participate voluntarily.

Moreover, in terms of confidentiality, in the initial letter of approach, church leaders were informed that data gathered would be anonymized, pseudonyms given and description designed so as to minimize the potential for identification but that the general location and denomination might allow some within the fresh expressions movement to work out which communities had been observed.

Finally, when it comes to taking care of the people researched, '[w]hether or not exploitation is taking place is always a matter of judgment, and one that is open to substantial possible disagreement.' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p274). The nature of my research meant that no one commonly identified as vulnerable took part in the study and yet it is sometimes claimed that exploitation takes place when those studied 'supply the information which is used by the researcher and get little or nothing in return' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p273). A number of recommendations are given to counter balance this relationship – from giving something back by way of services or financial payment to including the participants' comments on the research in the final write-up – but I would agree with those who argue that the very nature of having an outsider observe and comment on a church's ecclesiology can be of real benefit to that church (Savage & Boyd-MacMillan, 2007; Osmer 2008; Labanow, 2009) whilst bringing the subject of fresh expressions to an academic audience through observing praxis and listening to their words, gives fresh expressions of church a voice in an arena which has been relatively ignorant of the movement. Such a view brings us to the issue of empowerment.

Empowerment

A corollary of active, participative ethics, ethnographers have a commitment to empower field subjects (Jones, 2010). The way in which the researcher aids the empowerment of

the field subjects (or, at the very least, are committed to not disempower them) varies from one study to another. As we noted earlier, practical theology fieldwork most often takes the form of action research ‘which involves challenging current practices in the hope that they will move closer towards faithfulness’ (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, pp255-256) and one could certainly argue that my research is conducted by the Church – myself as researcher; the United Reformed Church as funder; the churches studied as field subjects – and for the Church – as input to the ongoing internal dialogue on the nature of church, ministry and teaching. I believe this to be true whilst acknowledging that apparent divisions of academic status, denomination and theology make the nature of the action research of this study a complex issue.

Moreover, one of the streams of criticism that pervades the emerging church and fresh expressions of church movement is that many in the inherited/traditional church do not give them the credence or voice they would like, a feeling echoed by Cory Labanow in his study of an emerging church in the UK and in which he calls for more academic research to be undertaken with emerging churches to address this very problem:

[I]f the wider Church is to take them seriously and bring them more fully to the table of dialogue, more research will need to be done on congregations identifying with the [emerging] network.” (Labanow, 2009, p126).

It is thus hoped that those in the communities here observed will be, and will feel, empowered by the very nature of an academic study funded by the Church which takes seriously their beliefs and praxis in the hope of developing fresh insights and generating further questions in the ever-continuous journey towards faithfulness (Swinton & Mowat, 2006).

Understanding

“We might argue that at the heart of all ethnography’s core values is ‘understanding’.” (Jones, 2010, pp9-10).

Less of a separate core value, more of a catch-all theme, the ethnographer seeks understanding through their insight into ‘lives as they are actually lived; rather than how

the researcher thinks they are lived.’ (Jones, 2010, pp9-10). This hermeneutical, praxis-based approach is at the heart of the ethnographic task and that of practical theology.

Furthermore, one of the key criticisms that I have frequently heard concerning works written by both those supportive of the fresh expressions network and of those critiquing it is that what is written bears no resemblance to how things actually are in practice. Both a contemporary, consumer-led anti-establishment sentiment and a loyalty to an idealized parish system or traditional church are cited as reasons why those in the academy have a skewed and inaccurate understanding of the fresh expressions initiative. In seeking to understand the implicit and explicit theology and praxis of such churches and to fairly represent their own understanding of this, I will endeavour to paint an accurate picture of the ‘lives as they are actually lived’ (Ibid, pp9-10), albeit from my own subjective understanding, and thus to include, and be included in, the chorus of voices who have an insight to give on this field – the very goal of phronetic research (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p139).

4:3 – Research Methods

Having considered the need for a critical realist foundation to a theological ethnography, the argument for an ethnographic perspective to the qualitative research of this study was outlined. We now examine the research methods utilised in our investigation of the pedagogical praxis of, and soteriological and missiological beliefs espoused within, fresh expressions of church according to such a methodology. In outlining the nature of the fieldwork period, we will elaborate further upon the role of the participant observer before considering the use of interviews and questionnaires in the churches and the nature of data analysis following this period.

4:3:i – The Fieldwork Period

The fieldwork period began with a search for fresh expressions of church which would be suitable and willing to accept me as a participant observer, initially for a pilot study of a few weeks but with the potential of extending the study to a period of three to four months. This proved to be more difficult than I had first imagined. The initial difficulty encountered was that a number of the pioneer ministers and fresh expressions leaders

contacted were unwilling to host an academic outsider for such a period. Whilst this is more than understandable given the fragile and embryonic nature of a lot of fresh expressions of church, I felt that the fear of being judged and scepticism concerning academic analysis of the movement also played a part in the decision.

The second difficulty encountered was that there seemed to be confusion over the identity of fresh expressions of church. In the initial email that I wrote to a number of fresh expressions national leaders and bodies (both in the UK and abroad), I explained that, for research purposes, a potential church should identify itself as a fresh expression of church and stressed that, in congruence with the official working definition established by the movement at the time, they had to be 'a church in their own right (not just an alternative worship service of a traditional church) and established primarily for the unchurched' (identifying email). In spite of this, I was often directed to churches which did not consider themselves to be a fresh expression of church; groups that appeared to be an alternative worship service as part of a traditional church; and communities whose missional focus was not primarily the un- or de-churched. Such confusion over identity appears to be a key challenge to the movement (Moynagh, 2012, p59; Goodhew et al; 2012, pp103f) and one that we shall consider further in our data analysis.

I eventually got in contact with Diana, Anglican curate and leader of Spring fresh expression of church, in April 2011 and after several emails and telephone calls explaining my research, Diana enthusiastically agreed to my proposal. Diana informed me that Spring had hosted several church and academic visitors in the past, that the women at Spring were used to welcoming strangers for a time and that I would be welcome to conduct a pilot study at Spring for the second half of the summer term. This was carried out and when meeting with Diana to discuss the research at the end of the term, it was agreed that I could extend the pilot study into a full-term study which would take place throughout the summer term of the following year (2012).

As my pilot study unfolded at Spring, I continued to search for other possible research placements, hoping to find ones which might contrast with the mother and child nature of Spring. It was then that I came across North Shore Pub Church. I had read about North

Shore Pub Church on a number of websites³¹ and was satisfied that it met the criteria of self-definition as a fresh expression of church for the unchurched in its own right. After contacting James, another Anglican curate and leader of North Shore Pub Church, he very quickly and eagerly agreed to my proposal. This was discussed with the members of the group before I travelled to North Shore for a weekend to attend a social gathering and a North Shore Pub Church meeting during which I explained the nature of my research to the community in person. Following group discussion after I had left, the members decided that I could conduct my research with the group from the summer break up until Christmas.

It had been agreed with my supervisor that researching three fresh expressions for a period of three to four months each would allow for a good comparison and evaluation of the teaching methods and theology of fresh expressions of church and had confirmed the timing of the fieldwork with both Spring and North Shore Pub Church as I sought a final placement. I had been informed that the fresh expressions movement had begun to be adopted by other countries, notably Australia and Canada – where the first formal fresh expressions network outside of the United Kingdom had recently been established. Having researched the nature of the institutional Church and the fresh expressions movement in Canada and finding similar challenges being faced (see appendix A), I decided that a placement at one community there could be justified and would be beneficial to this study, and hopefully to the movement at large. Thus, I contacted those in charge of the movement in Canada, telling them of my research and requirements. The Leader of the Fresh Expressions Canada (FXCA) team put me in touch with Dave, Anglican vicar, FXCA team member and leader of Sanctum – a self-defined fresh expression of church for the unchurched in a major conurbation. After several months of emails, skype calls and letters of reference, Dave and the leadership team of St. Peter's, the church from which Sanctum had originally been established, agreed that I could conduct my research with the community from January until April 2012 and the necessary travelling arrangements began in earnest. The reality of the situation that I encountered at Sanctum was different from what I was led to believe and the challenges and consequences of this will be discussed in 5:4.

³¹ It would appear that once a fresh expression of church gains a reputation for being successful, however that might be measured, it is frequently referred to in the DVDs, websites and assorted media of the movement, local church networks and denominations.

My overt position as a researcher was made clear prior to the start of the fieldwork period at all three communities and was reiterated when joining subgroups. Whilst all congregants were told that pseudonyms would be given and anonymity intended, they were advised that my completed thesis would be made available to the communities studied so complete anonymity within such small communities could not be totally guaranteed. Meetings were only recorded when I had permission and overt note-taking was kept to a minimum as part of my endeavour to appear as a participant and not merely an observer. Indeed, the balance between observer/participant, gaining an etic/emic interpretation of the community was, as other ethnographic and congregational studies testify (Porter, 1995; Dowie, 2002; Swinton & Mowat, 2006; Labanow, 2009), a difficult balance to achieve and one which greatly differed in each setting.

As noted above, I partook in a whole range of activities that the churches engaged in – from those experienced at a traditional church, such as tithing, attending Bible studies, taking Communion and celebrating baptisms – to the more context specific – going camping, attending a karaoke social and donning a wetsuit to swim in the North Sea in October! Living in the communities as I did, I saw church members in social settings – both giving and receiving hospitality as was expected and, due to the transient nature of the communities and the previous experience the two English fresh expressions of church had of ecclesial and academic visitors, I was welcomed into the church communities to a humbling degree. In all settings, I felt I was able to integrate into the community and comments from other church members generally echoed this³². Thus, the observer-as-participant (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p104) aspect of participant observation, in which '[t]he active participant seeks to do what other people are doing, not merely to gain acceptance, but to more fully learn the cultural rules for behavior' (Spradley, 1980, p60) was achieved without great difficulty.

However, acknowledging the dangers of 'going native' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p110), attempting to reduce reactivity and acknowledging the need to make the familiar strange, in group discussions and in volunteering for leadership roles, I kept my

³² In North Shore, I was labelled an 'adopted northerner'; at Sanctum, 'the token Brit' and at Spring 'our little brother' and even 'one of the girls'! This is not to say that every member of each church welcomed me wholeheartedly. For example, there was one leader at Sanctum who was overtly suspicious of me and my research, often undermining my work and calling me 'the judger' in front of large church groups.

participation to a minimum. In each setting, I was still a noted stranger³³ and gave away as little about personal experiences and beliefs as I deemed appropriate, cross-checking such a position with the church leaders at regular intervals and reflecting with them on my attempted balance between insider and outsider status. I was keenly aware of the 'divided loyalties' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p114) often felt by the participant observer and so appreciated the distancing inherent in supervisions whilst also consulting a wide range of literature on congregational studies and research methods (Porter, 1995; Stringer, 1999; Dowie, 2002; Cameron et al., 2005; Swinton & Mowat, 2006; Labanow, 2009) to reflect on my practice as a researcher, using observation protocols (Cameron et al, 2005) and fieldnote recommendations (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) in my written observations. The majority of these I carried out immediately following events, writing keywords on various bits of paper in some meetings in order to jog my memory and relying on a digital recorder, when given permission, in others – the recordings of which, I later transcribed. Thus, as is the want of all participant observers, I attempted to approach events 'with a wide-angle lens, taking in a broader spectrum of information' (Spradley, 1980, p56), subsequently writing up a thick description of each meeting which would enable a fair representation of what I experienced.

4:3:ii - Interviews

Triangulating participant observation with interviews enabled me to compare and check my interpretations with those I was researching, whilst providing me with further contextual and idiographic knowledge that is of fundamental importance to the thick description aimed for in this study. Secondly, regarding the fields of missiology and soteriology, little was explicitly said on these subjects in group meetings and to enquire about such controversial and ecclesiocentric issues in a group setting would have been artificial and inappropriate. Indeed, in the course of my research, I discovered that even Christian leaders of longstanding, let alone non-Christians and newcomers to the faith, were tentative or even embarrassed to talk about questions of salvation in particular and so it was necessary to ask these questions explicitly in a more informal interview setting thus allowing a comparison between the explicit and implicit theologies expressed in the church (Schreiter, 1998).

³³ The southern 'Secret Millionaire' at North Shore Pub Church ; 'the Brit' at Sanctum; the single, childless man at Spring.

Furthermore, extended conversations were not possible in the majority of the church meetings attended and the persistent asking of questions may well have alienated me from the group or encouraged the oft-thought suspicion of the researcher as spy (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Porter, 1995) and thus, it was decided that one-to-one follow-up interviews would be preferable.

The term 'interview' is used here but I would advocate an interpretation of the interview process as suggested by Charlotte Davies in her work on reflexive ethnography;

Interviewing carried out by ethnographers whose principal research strategy is participant observation is often virtually unstructured, that is, very close to a 'naturally occurring' conversation. (Davies, 2008, p105)

From my very first meeting at each of the churches, in particular North Shore Pub Church and Spring, it was evident that free-flowing, communal dialogue was highly regarded, with the power imbalance between clergy and laity/expositor and hearer/interviewer and interviewee deeply discouraged and such an ethos led to an atmosphere in which trust in relationships allowed individuals to share deeply personal information. Whilst acknowledging that my status within the groups led some to treat me differently³⁴ and upholding professional standards and ethics at all times, I did allow the ethos of the groups to influence the nature of the interviews which were semi-structured only in the sense that I was aware of the basis of the questions asked to each interviewee yet allowing differences in vocabulary used³⁵ and space for digression and dialogue. This enabled the relationships already established with participants to form the grounding for a safe, honest articulation of their beliefs, actions and interpretations.

Interviews were predominantly conducted in the last few weeks of the research period, allowing me time to build up relationships and raise questions in the interviews based on previously observed behaviour. All but one of them were conducted in public settings at

³⁴ An illustrated example of this was on the first evening of my placement at North Shore Pub Church in which one member felt able to disclose information to me about familial abuse suffered as a child because I was training to be a 'priest' – a role later articulated in his light-hearted but significant naming of me as 'Father Phil'.

³⁵ Vocabulary differed along lines of education, Christian experience and geography.

various times of the day to suit the interviewees, with the other carried out at the participant's home at her request.

As regards the number of individuals interviewed, Swinton and Mowat suggest that '[i]n research appealing to ideographic knowledge the size of the sample is of less importance than the nature of the sample.' (2006, p204). I would uphold such a view and in my fieldwork, the number of interviewees³⁶ differed at each setting – with five interviewed at Spring, seven at North Shore Pub Church and ten at Sanctum. The reasons for this difference are many. Firstly, the sampling was largely opportunistic as I approached some recommended to me by the church leaders and others who together might represent a balanced sample according to age, gender, ethnicity, frequency and length of presence within the group. All founders and official leaders of the churches were interviewed, ranging between two (North Shore Pub Church), four (Spring) and five (Sanctum), representing the various leadership structures. Sample size was smallest at Spring where, being male, single and childless, I was significantly different to the norm of the group. Here, being particularly aware of the emotional vulnerability of some of the group members and of the number of negative experiences that many of the women had had with men, I was less persistent in asking for interviews and did not closely follow-up the two cases of individuals not turning up to pre-arranged meetings as it was made evident that the majority of the women did not want to be interviewed. At North Shore Pub Church, interviews were easier to arrange and were treated as a comedic rite of passage for regular members of the group whilst at Sanctum, a number of those interviewed expressed gratitude at being able to articulate questions and challenges that they were experiencing with the church. In recognition of this, and of the temptation for interviewees 'to 'let off steam' and so to bias the content of interviews' (Dowie, 2002, p97), I ensured that this was acknowledged and that interviewees also talked about the positive aspects of their experience (Ibid, p97).

Thus, in common with similar ethnographic studies, the interview sample was 'not a sample in the positivistic sense, but rather a common sense spread of individuals through the congregations, partially dictated by the research questions' (Rogers, 2008, p89).

³⁶ With a number of interviewees, a second or even third interview was conducted, sometimes at their request, to cover any issues that warranted further articulation.

4:3:iii – The Questionnaire

Participant observation and interviews provided the primary means of data collection for this thesis but a questionnaire provided supplementary information as it enabled me to ask standardised questions to a wide sample of the church attendees. This gave me further means of triangulation and also provided me with contextual knowledge about the communities which would otherwise have been complex to obtain – such as information regarding the age, longevity and Christian experience of those who attended the churches.

Whilst the questions posed were unique to my thesis in general and to each church context in particular, I researched and based the style and format of the questionnaire on other congregation-based examples (Moser & Kalton, 1983; Ammerman et. al, 1998; Francis, 2000; Cameron et. al, 2005; Rogers, 2008). I designed the outline for the questionnaire mid-way through my time at the first complete placement, at North Shore Pub Church. This was discussed with Dave, who gave very helpful feedback on what vocabulary might need tweaking, and then later discussed with seven friends of varying Christian experience³⁷. This questionnaire formed the basis for the one used at Sanctum and Spring, although questions were amended (as below) as a consequence of streamlining after each use, through consultation with the church leaders, and to account for changes in group structure and Christian experience at each community.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections, the first of which was entitled ‘You and the Church’ and which covered issues of attendance and the perceived purpose of the wider group. Section two, entitled ‘You and your beliefs’ sought information about Church experience and Christian commitment, asking those who self-identified as Christian to answer questions on mission and salvation. This section changed the most during the course of the year as it originally comprised of ten tick-box questions designed to help young Christians to identify what they might believe about these complex issues. At Sanctum, knowing the vast majority of attendees had greater Christian experience, I streamlined these ten down to four with two of them being open-ended; whilst at Spring,

³⁷ It was felt that the questionnaire was so context-dependent that there was little point in piloting the questionnaire with those outside of this community, although working through the questionnaire with seven friends of varying church experience proved useful in checking ease of use and vocabulary.

I returned to a fully tick-box approach but had reduced the number to six, reflecting the difference in community structure between North Shore Pub Church and Spring.

Section three, entitled 'About You' covered questions of age, occupation, educational background and a space to articulate any further questions, comments or criticisms. I deleted the question regarding academic qualifications for Spring as it was a source of concern when I discussed the questionnaire with Spring leaders. Regretfully, at Sanctum, basing the questionnaire on the one used at North Shore Pub Church, I had not considered the need to add in a question on gender and so unfortunately, this detail was left out – a factor I would amend if conducting the research again.

Questionnaires were explained, distributed, completed and collected after a randomly chosen dominant weekly gathering of each community near the end of each placement. All attendees were ensured of their anonymity outside of the group and that non-participation was perfectly understandable. At North Shore Pub Church, 4 of the 4 non-leader attendees present gave a response rate of 100%. At Sanctum, 15 out of 18 gave us 83% and at Spring, 11 out of 14 gave a response rate of 79%. Such response rates are high but unsurprising given the small group numbers, the regularity with which all three groups were observed and/or asked for feedback, and the endorsement of the questionnaire by each fresh expressions leader. As with interviews, in communities with smaller numbers, it is the case that anonymity within the group is more difficult to ensure and it is therefore possible that this skewed results, with some participants censoring their views. However, given the often forthright nature of the members of the smallest group, North Shore Pub Church, and the fact that this cannot be factored out in the research, the possibility must simply be acknowledged both here and in the interpretation of data where results will be triangulated with other research methods.

4:3:iv – Analysis

The literature surrounding qualitative data analysis greatly differs in its pronouncement on the process – from the 'simple' (Seidel, 1998, p1) to 'most mysterious' (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p163) – supporting the view that 'there is no formula or recipe for the analysis of ethnographic data' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p158). Far from an isolated stage in the research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) and in common with other

ethnographic work founded upon a critical realist hermeneutic (Porter, 1995), my process of analysis had already begun in the generation of *a priori* hypotheses that were outlined in my pre-empirical analysis of the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy. These three fields then formed the basis for the compiling, disassembling, reassembling and interpreting of the data collected (Yin, 2011) which took place during and after the fieldwork period and which included a feedback session to the leaders of the communities at the end of each placement, conducted for the hoped-for benefit of both parties³⁸.

Due to the focus of this study, a consideration of the dominant weekly gathering of each fresh expression provides the central thread of my analysis but references to the other facets of community learning have been included, thus acknowledging the different points of entry for each church and the confusion over identity as seen at Sanctum.

In line with my Luddite tendencies, I shunned the use of software in my analysis, relying instead upon the age-old method of repeatedly immersing myself in the data and following DeWalt & DeWalt's recommendation that the fundamental techniques for data analysis are 'reading, thinking, and writing; and rereading, rethinking, and rewriting' (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p163). Whilst my written fieldnotes provided the basis for the analysis, the embodied knowledge inherent in my hunches and headnotes, more recently acknowledged as a significant part of ethnographic analysis (Ottenberg, 1990; Jackson, 1990; Okley, 1992; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), also played a crucial role in the sifting, coding and analysis process.

To enable reflexivity and a fair representation of the three communities, throughout the analysis and writing up process I searched for alternative explanations and 'rival thinking' (Yin, 2011, pp107-9); have included a great number of direct quotations in the finished work³⁹; and have incorporated the comments made by the leaders of the three communities on my written analysis in appendix B. Such thick description should enable

³⁸ This feedback session gave the church leaders the opportunity to hear my initial findings, to offer alternative explanations and to ask final questions of me and my research.

³⁹ When quoting the community's leaders with whom I had most dealings with, I use pseudonyms. When citing comments made by other members of the communities, unless otherwise stated, I refer to them with their placement coding - NSPC (North Shore Pub Church); Sanctum (SM); Spring (SG) – and the number allocated to them in chronological order of interview given or meeting transcribed.

the reader to listen to the different voices involved in this research – a necessary step in considering the veracity of the analysis offered below for, as regards the third of the three pillars of the critical realist framework which is here endorsed and applied;

Judgemental rationality cannot be reduced to the application of a single assessment criterion. Rather, as in a court of law, we seek to attend to a raft of evidence offered by a range of different witnesses, and to arrive at the best possible available explanation in the light of our weighing of both the evidence and the integrity of the witnesses. (Wright, 2013, p16)

Moreover, this process of analysis and thus the structure of our writing up is consistent with the critical realist theory of knowledge;

Critical realist epistemology follows the path of inference in pursuit of the best possible explanation...We make sense of the world by constructing theoretical models designed to provide powerful and comprehensive explanations of the objects and events we seek to understand. This constructive process proceeds from abduction through retrodution to iteration. (Ibid, p14)

Both the macro and micro context of my research follows this constructive process. In the former, the Christian Church encounters abduction – the experiencing of something previously unencountered; that of being church in the increasingly secularized and unchurched developed landscape⁴⁰ – and is in the process of iteratively testing the previously held retroductive models of Christian, particularly ecclesiological, thought and praxis. It is hoped that my research will aid such testing whilst also following the constructive process in the micro context of this research

⁴⁰ The abductive context of contemporary western Europe was the very focus of a conference I attended in April 2013, in Doorn, The Netherlands. Entitled 'Liminal Protestantism' the conference was attended by Christian leaders and scholars from all over Europe who had come to iteratively challenge and discuss previously held retroductive models of ecclesial theory and praxis, as the introductory material to the conference encapsulates; "*Our societies are changing rapidly. We witness life transforming every year, season and day. People find new ways to work, share, connect and believe. Whilst this has always been the case, the pace of change in recent times is remarkable and perhaps more exciting than ever. But what does this mean for the church? How do our ecclesiastical institutions react to these challenges? How do we understand our institutional heritage in today's society and into the future?*" (Council for World Mission: Europe, 2013).

in which the retroductive models of the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy that I have identified will be iteratively tested by the qualitative research and analysis, which may itself lead to further abduction and retroductive reasoning.

The writing up of the analysis will consequently take a three-tiered approach. In chapters five and six, we focus on research question 1 – *‘What is the pedagogical praxis of fresh expressions of church?’*. Stage 2 of the practical theology cycle (contextual/cultural analysis), this pure ethnographic phase constitutes the thick description of the empirical domain as encountered at the three communities. The implicit and explicit pedagogical praxis of the fresh expressions of church, as observed by myself in participant observation, interview and questionnaire, will be outlined and supported with examples and direct quotes so as to enable the reader to evaluate the strength and accuracy of my observations.

Chapters seven and eight consider our second research question – *‘In what ways does the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy in fresh expressions of church challenge or uphold the heuristic models identified in this thesis?’*. Here, as we move from stage two to three of practical theology, our analysis will include and then move beyond the descriptive as we consider the spoken and operative theological motivations and assumptions that may influence the pedagogical praxis observed. The theological reflection engaged in here will enable us to consider the underlying causal mechanisms of the praxis observed, and thereby will take us into the domains of the Actual and Real as we consider their relationship with the Empirical – the pedagogical praxis as outlined in chapters five and six. The models identified will thus be retroductively challenged, upheld and/or revised as we evaluate their relation to the praxis observed.

Chapter nine constitutes stage four of the pastoral theology cycle – that of response as we consider our final research question – *‘What further theological insights on Christian education and the fresh expressions of church movement might be gleaned from an analysis of the present praxis of fresh expressions of church?’*. In this chapter, it is hoped that we might embody the underlabourer of critical realism (Wright, 2013) as we endeavour to identify pragmatic and theological responses to

our research findings. Chapter nine thus constitutes the concluding part of our *transformative ethnography* – an ethnographic study that seeks to describe reality in order to transform it and which is congruent both with the phronetic aims of practical theology and with the critical realist view that;

Since knowledge lies between the extremes of absolute certainty and thoroughgoing scepticism, we have a rational warrant to embrace and act on our beliefs, so long as we have good reason to hold them to be true, and until such times as we encounter good reasons for rejecting them. (Wright, 2013, p14).

Current theological frameworks and ecclesial praxis may thus be upheld, challenged or called to be reformed as we add our voice to the polyphonic Christian enterprise of ‘ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God’s redemptive practices in, to and for the world’. (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, p6).

4:4 – Chapter Summary

In 4.1 it was shown that this research is located within the field of practical theology which is ‘hermeneutical in nature but empirical by design’ (Heitink, 1999b, p266) and consequently that the study bestrides the fields of theology and the social sciences. The concept of phronesis was established as significant to the origins, aims and pervasive themes of this study whilst a critical realist hermeneutic was explained and implemented as it provides an ontological and epistemological framework conducive to interdisciplinary work of this type.

In 4.2, it was explained that whilst the limits of time, space and funding do not allow for a full ethnography of the three churches in this study, an ethnographic perspective has been adopted. It was shown that my role as participant-observer requires a participation with and immersion into the communities studied, enabling an attempt to gain both emic and etic knowledge of said communities. I then acknowledged that the hermeneutical nature of this task requires reflexivity throughout, including in the inscribing of social discourse in which fair representation is paramount. A thick description of community praxis has been used so as to allow for contextualisation of events whilst a consideration

of ethical issues and the empowerment of the field subjects, which I argued is somewhat inherent in the nature of the study, has been prevalent throughout.

Finally, in 4.3, a justification of the research methods used for the ethnographic perspective of this thesis was offered. I began by giving an account of the fieldwork period, addressing the challenges of access to self-defined fresh expressions of church primarily for the unchurched and then considering in further detail the nature of the participant observer role. An explanation of the need for interviews to garner deeper knowledge of the beliefs and perceived actions of individuals within the communities was offered, before I provided an account of interviewee selection and interview process. I then justified my use of a questionnaire as an additional research method and explained its development, content and response rates. Finally, I outlined my process of data analysis and acknowledged the motivations behind, factors considered and checks included in the writing up process, to which we now turn.

Chapter 5: Research Analysis Part One – Individual Analyses of the Pedagogy of Fresh Expressions of Church

In this section, the information gathered during the fieldwork period on the pedagogy of the three fresh expressions of church will be outlined and analysed. A brief overview of the founding, structure and nature of each research placement will precede the description and analysis of the teaching and learning experienced there. The form of this analysis will be structured differently for each church, reflecting the differences in their form, content and structure.

5:1 – Establishing North Shore Pub Church

As is the case with the majority of fresh expressions of church, the establishment and subsequent form of North Shore Pub Church is centred upon its founder. After time spent as a church youth worker, James trained at an Anglican theological college in the first ever batch of pioneer ministers. During this time, he explored various callings and felt led to start a community for ‘lads who would not usually engage with church’ (North Shore Pub Church Vision & Strategy document) in North Shore, a deprived coastal town in the north of England⁴¹. As a curate and whilst continuing his studies on a part-time basis, James began experimenting with events that might bring him into contact with un- and dechurched men aged between 18 and 40. After a long process of trial and error and with the assistance of Sam, who has subsequently become an Anglican curate (not on the pioneer ministry track), James began meeting at the local pub on a Sunday night once a week, inviting other men to join them for a drink and a chat. Many of these men were connected to the established Anglican church where James spent 25% of his workload – the husbands, partners, brothers and fathers of church members – but some began to attend who had no association with this church and had begun to get to know James in other environments – the local football club being the prime context. Four years later, the Sunday evening pub meeting is still the main weekly event of North Shore Pub Church whilst the age range has been extended.

⁴¹ North Shore is a seaside resort, minor sea fishing port and civil parish with a population of 33000. According to the Indices of Deprivation 2010 (Communities and Local Government, 2010), all the LSOAs within the North Shore area were in the 10% most deprived in England.

Between 21st August and 18th December 2011, I attended 15 of these Sunday meetings. The meetings differed enormously in terms of attendance, (between 3 and 8 attendees per meeting including facilitators and observers⁴², with a mean attendance of 6.9); age range (24 – 57 years old); and length of meeting – although the latter is difficult to measure as there was no official start or end time and the informality of the meetings meant that much of the time would be spent in general conversation.

However, given all these variables, the structure of the evening largely remained the same. Sometime between 20:00 and 20:30, depending on the nature of the conversation and the timing/presence of the group's facilitator (always James or Sam), attention would be drawn to leaflets distributed amongst the group. These leaflets contained 4-6 questions and would form a loose structure for the following conversation, although digressions were allowed and often celebrated. The nature of these questions and the discussions that followed will be considered in detail below. Discussions would end between 21:15 and 23:15, depending on group size and enthusiasm of conversation whilst the informal nature of the group meant that it was customary for members to arrive or leave early.

The initial 2-3 questions on the leaflets that framed the discussions would focus on an event in the news during the preceding week and would be about personal experience (Do you play the lottery? 09/10. Did your parents have enough time for you? 18/09) or personal opinion (Did the media go too far showing the images of [Gadaffi's] death and body? 23/10. Do you think the elderly are respected enough in our society? 27/11). The 2-3 questions following this would centre upon questions of ethics and truth (Do you think Gadaffi should have been killed? 23/10. Do you think that God is ultimately in control? 30/10) and could, but did not always, include Christian vocabulary (Christ calls his followers to forgive everything. Could you do that? 06/11). The penultimate point on the leaflet was always 'Acts of Random Kindness' in which members shared compassionate actions that they had undertaken that week and the last was 'Stuff that needs sorting' in which members were encouraged to share any issues that the rest of the community

⁴² A fresh expression deemed 'successful' by others within the Anglican Church, James and North Shore Pub Church was often talked about or referred to in magazines, newspapers (both local and national), websites and other local and national media. Thus, the members of North Shore Pub Church were quite used to people turning up to observe what happened in the meetings, with some individuals setting up similar groups elsewhere.

could help them with – be it practical, emotional or spiritual. A scriptural quote relating to that week's theme was also included on the leaflet but was only referred to on two occasions.

In addition to the weekly meetings, 'stag events' such as paintball, deep sea fishing, beer tasting and shooting, were planned to occur once every two months, though none were arranged during my placement, and weekend camping retreats every six months. I attended one of these which comprised of a weekend (two days, one night) camping near Lindisfarne, Northumberland. The weekend consisted of a number of physical activities – hiking, swimming, building a shelter – and also provided time to talk about St Cuthbert, visiting sites of importance to his life and attending a service at St. Mary the Virgin on Lindisfarne on the Sunday morning.

A number of the members of North Shore Pub Church also attended Oasis, another fresh expression of church established by James. This community met monthly, in the local Anglican church on a Friday evening, followed a more traditional church structure and was open to both genders and all ages. This fresh expression also established midweek meetings which were explicitly learning focused – consisting mainly of Bible studies or Alpha courses.

5:2 – The Pedagogical Praxis of North Shore Pub Church

In this section, the relational and experiential grounding of North Shore Pub Church pedagogy will first be outlined before a consideration of the modelling of hospitality, equality and loving praxis. The intentions behind the openly non-didactic environment of the Sunday night meetings will be considered before examining the variation learning embodied in the discussions, based upon the communal sharing and critical reflection of different worldviews. I will then outline the indirect communication of the gospel experienced within the group, before considering the pedagogical emphasis of orthopraxy over orthodoxy.

5:2:i – Trust as a Prerequisite

The establishment of trusting relationships as a prerequisite for any significant adult learning was inherent in the structure of North Shore Pub Church⁴³ and identified by the group leader as a particular challenge for men⁴⁴. The importance of being able to trust those ‘at the table’⁴⁵ was often cited as a core reason for committed group attendance and was acknowledged by James as a pedagogically efficacious principle that pervaded North Shore Pub Church thinking;

This theme runs right through out [sic] everything we do. I believe community is one of the greatest tools in allowing men to find faith and work it out. To be able to trust and rely on others as we journey in faith, teaches many skills that preaching and teaching can only begin to get the men thinking. (James, North Shore Pub Church Vision & Strategy document).

Whether expressed in the confidentiality of group discussions, in which highly personal matters were openly discussed and/or referred to⁴⁶, or in the sharing of material possessions⁴⁷, group members were encouraged to learn to trust, and be trusted by, the other men in the church⁴⁸.

⁴³ One illustrated example of this is expressed in James’ understanding of the ‘stag events’ (social evenings) and camping retreats as primarily existing for the purpose of group bonding and building up trust between the men, particularly for those who were ‘not yet comfortable to talk about themselves and what they think, like we do on a Sunday’ (James).

⁴⁴ In the North Shore Pub Church Vision and Strategy document, James suggests, “Men aren’t good at small talk. They don’t form trusting relationships as fast and as easily as women. In fact, you might say that when a woman walks into a room she looks for people to talk with and relate to. When a man walks into a room he is plotting his escape strategy and looking for the exit door! So men need a forum and a place to forge good strong friendships which over time will become open enough for conversation about stuff other than what they do for work or the football etc. If this isn’t encouraged most men will go into a default “loner” mode.”

⁴⁵ The majority of the group referred to ‘the table’ as the context in which the Sunday night discussions would occur. More than just an empirical observation (we did sit at a table/s in the pub but the location and size of this table/s changed every week), the phrase ‘the table’ came to embody the time, place, identity and implicit rules of the Sunday night discussion. Thus, when telling me about a man who had attended the group for over a year but had apparently used it to gain business contacts, one member said that ‘he abused the table. Just abused the table’ (NSPC4).

⁴⁶ Loneliness, marital problems, infidelity, divorce, childhood sexual abuse, parenting challenges, sexual performance, suicide of a family member and dealings with the police were just some of the issues openly spoken about by members of the group.

⁴⁷ For example, Sam’s second car was available for anyone in the group to drive.

⁴⁸ The ability to trust other men was an attribute of North Shore Pub Church that was very highly regarded and frequently cited in interviews. One member compared how both he, and his view of

5:2:ii – Learning to Trust Christians

Learning to trust the other through experience was particularly significant when it came to meeting the un- and dechurched. All members interviewed described previous negative experiences of the institutional church. Some simply described the irrelevance or monotony they had experienced but three members described instances – from being ‘preached at’ (NSPC2) by a former friend to being ‘beaten by nuns at school’ (NSPC3) – which had led them to be distrustful of Christians and the Church. The importance of demonstrating that Christians, especially clergy, could be ‘normal’, trustworthy and relied upon was articulated by both the churched and un/de-churched at North Shore Pub Church⁴⁹. In particular, the ability to trust James in both word and deed was highlighted by many within the group⁵⁰ who contrasted James’ trustworthy and compassionate nature with previous church experience;

James cares about people. Without a doubt, James cares about people. And I know that if I was going through a rough time, he would support me. I feel certain about that, without a doubt. And I don’t think I would’ve got that from any other priest or vicar I’ve known in the past. (NSPC3).

5:2:iii – Modelling Hospitality, Inclusivity and Equality

If the establishment of trusting relationships, both as a prerequisite to adult learning and as a learning experience in itself, pervaded the vision and praxis of North Shore Pub

others, changed through attending North Shore Pub Church by saying; “James remembers me from three and a half years ago and I was very difficult. I was a very angry man. Very, very angry man...It’s not anger, it’s arrogance. I’ve tried to become less arrogant. Money portrays arrogance and I was in that trap and it was bad because, if you didn’t know me, I was the most arrogant bastard you ever met in your life. Horrible. Horrible! Because I don’t want to talk to you. Don’t want to meet new people. I just don’t want that. It’s not good. It’s more people to rape you, pillage you. So I had a very close-knit friendship and that’s as far as it went. Now from lads’ church I’ve met people who have helped me through my time. People I wouldn’t normally have the opportunities of meeting and being able to trust and friendship of people like that.” (NSPC4).

⁴⁹ “I certainly don’t believe its my or our job to convert people...erm...but to engage with somebody when they realise that you’re just a normal human being and then realise actually that there’s faith to you as well sometimes challenges them to think well hang on – this bloke here looks normal. He’ll enjoy a pint with me or enjoy a steak with me or whatever – curry – but then you’ve got a different view to me and so that sometimes challenges them as a way of actually just helping them with their consideration.” (Sam)

⁵⁰ One member stated that he first attended the group because ‘I believed in James’ (NSPC1).

Church, then its seeds were planted in the importance placed on hospitality. Acknowledging the restrictions of age (later rescinded) and gender that he first implemented, James was adamant in his desire that all men were welcome to the group, whatever their ethnicity, sexuality, socio-economic status or worldview. Thus, whilst experimenting with the structure of Sunday meetings, James and Sam deliberately chose what they felt was the most inclusive format, deciding 'to take the news as a starting point as it allows everyone to have a voice on the topic' (James). Newcomers, including myself, were formally welcomed into the group and bought a drink whilst members who would not consider themselves extroverts could be witnessed trying to engage said newcomers in conversation. All those interviewed said that they had felt welcomed into the group, in spite of the acknowledged mix of men in attendance⁵¹, and some emphasized their appreciation at being welcomed in spite of differences in age, occupation or religious view;

...[T]hat's one thing I like about the group. Is that...erm...James knows where I stand and Sam does and there's no...they're not trying to convert you, preach at you or anything. I'm accepted into the group. There's no 'well you can't come here because you don't believe in God' sort of thing. (NSPC3).

An indicator, and further example, of this modelling of hospitality was evident in James' welcoming of Greg, a man without address who had recently travelled to North Shore. James had invited Greg to the meetings and told the group of this. Greg did not display a socially determined understanding of personal hygiene or group dynamics yet was still welcomed by the group, some of whom, when Greg was not around, voiced their concerns about Greg's presence but were encouraged by James and Sam to continue in their hospitality. One Sunday evening, Greg turned up apparently inebriated, was incoherent and disrupted discussions and yet the following Sunday, when Greg attended and apologised for his previous behaviour, citing an allergy to medicine, his explanation was accepted without question by James and Sam who pulled him up a chair and expressed their joy that he was in attendance. The rest of the group echoed this

⁵¹ "I mean, there's quite a mix of people in the group. There's no like fixed level of class in the group...you get a right mix of people from different occupations and lifestyles which...people who would probably not normally meet." (NSPC3). "You've got every walk of life at that table. Even in that small community. Semi-retired; hard-working man; accountants; bums who think they're special; however you'd describe me..." (NSPC4).

sentiment (though some were more enthusiastic in this than others and articulated frustration about Greg's presence within the group to me when Greg, James and Sam were not in earshot). Thus, James and Sam modelled hospitality to the group in their welcoming of Greg and whilst some in the group expressed annoyance of his presence, none suggested that Greg should not be welcomed back and all told him he was welcome.

The potential tension between genuine hospitality and inveigled hospitality implicit here was also evident in the use of xenophobic, racist and homophobic language that was used around the table. However, whilst *partially* accepted by James and Sam⁵², it was never promulgated by them, whose condemnation of such language was made clear and understood by the other members.

Moreover, the modelling of hospitality by James and Sam was furthered in their insistence that all opinions were given equal treatment. This is not to say that opinions were not challenged, which they most certainly were, including amongst the leaders, but rather that James and Sam made a conscious effort of making sure everyone had the chance to voice their opinion and that every opinion was listened to. The pedagogical and theological merits of listening to the other were embodied by James in his actions – facilitating the discussions so that those who often were spoken over had a chance to voice their opinions, allowing for the possibility of some opinions given little credit amongst more educated individuals⁵³ – and were explicitly acknowledged in his written vision for North Shore Pub Church, which quoted and endorsed the position of McCloughry who suggests that;

Again and again we have seen that one of the main ways in which men can grow to wholeness is through listening and being listened to. Listening

⁵² Whilst coarse and sexist language was never challenged, James and Sam made known their dislike of racist language which was mostly respected by the rest of the group, such that when one member made a derogatory comment about a German Formula 1 driver that went unchallenged by the leaders, both the individual who made the comment and the member who was known for his racism picked up on this – “It’s because he’s German...fucking ‘ell, I sound like Jack,” said Alex. “Yeah, how come he gets to be racist?” asked Jack. “I thought we weren’t allowed to be racist around the table!”

⁵³ For example, whilst he did not agree with an individual who thought diseases and illnesses such as AIDS, SARS and bird flu were all invented by Governments to keep the population down, James took it seriously by allowing the member to explain his point fully and following such an explanation with a gentle disagreement when, as he expressed to me later, he would ridicule such a position if held by a friend or family member.

conveys love: even if only for a few moments, it counts the other person as more important than ourselves. (McCloughry, 1999, p146)

Advocated by leading scholars of transformative and variation learning as being fundamental to the learning process, (Cranton, 2001; Marton, Runesson & Tsui, 2004; Hella & Wright, 2009), listening to the opinions of others *and being listened to* was also cited by group members as being a key reason why they attend and enjoy Sunday meetings. The fact that 'you can say what you like within reason and as long as you're not being an idiot then you're point of view would be taken' (NSPC3) affirmed the equally valued status of all of the men in the group – "I think everyone's opinion is valid and everyone's opinion is appreciated." (NSPC2).

This equality of opinion was valued in spite of their obvious educational and socio-economic differences, which were often pointed out in interviews as if to compare their status and power in society with the celebrated equality practised 'at the table'. Thus, in welcoming, listening to and valuing the opinion of all who came, James and Sam consciously modelled hospitality, inclusivity and equality to the group.

5:2:iv – Modelling Loving Praxis

Moreover, in addition to the love that is conveyed through the above, James sought to model a loving relationship to all group members in all aspects of their friendship. Thanks, in part, to the flexible nature of pioneer ministry, James made it known that he was available to help in practical (e.g. driving around members who had no car) or emotional (e.g. meeting individuals for a coffee and chat once a week) ways at any time of the day – and welcomed individuals into his home as an aspect of this. He spent considerable time meeting with individuals in his first few years at North Shore and was quickly considered an important friend in the lives of many of the members;

It was interesting how a lot of them called me their best mate really soon after getting to know them and I reckon it's because a lot of their mates...some of them have been let down a lot and not really had anyone who gives a shit. (James)

It is difficult to quantify the ways in which James modelled loving behaviour to members of the group, but the fact that all members stressed how caring James had been to them and their family, that three did indeed call him their 'best mate' and one made James the godfather of his son (the sixth time this had happened since North Shore Pub Church had been established) whilst I was there gives some indication of how his actions were interpreted.

Furthermore, as the Sunday evening structure evolved, James wanted a way to 'cement the ways we could show love to each other through helping each other out practically and in prayer' (James) and thus, he initiated the 'Stuff That Needs Sorting' part of the discussions. An opportunity to ask for practical, emotional or spiritual help from the group, requests ranged from painting a room to supporting members through difficult relationships, and James frequently and deliberately used this time to express things that the other members could help him with, allowing and encouraging them to show love to him as he had to them. This mutuality of love and support was highlighted by many members as something they had not experienced before but which they regarded highly;

It's almost like a benevolent group that you used to get in Victorian times. Our pub church has become like that. A group who will just do anything for anybody without wanting any gain from it. It's just like – I needed a bed for the spare bedroom so Mick said 'I've got a spare bed I don't want any more' and then Stuart picked it up for me and brought it over to mine and we all do the same for each other without want of any reward. Like a benevolent group for each other and society in itself. (NSPC2).

Furthermore, as this quote illustrates, the modelling of loving behaviour was not simply directed to other members of the group but to the wider community. Encouraging and organising the group to get involved in numerous charity events, James formalized such an approach in the 'Acts of Random Kindness' ('ARKs') section of the evening. This was an opportunity and an encouragement for members to share compassionate acts they had committed in the last week for no ostensible reason other than to show love to other members of their community. This approach clearly had a significant impact on a number of the members, who spoke about 'ARKs' in glowing terms;

They [North Shore Pub Church] did acts of random kindness which I really agreed with 'cause I've never been nice to anybody...but the scenario which really stuck in my mind from that was we were at the Sealife Centre at South Shore and there was this couple that were debating...they'd looked at the board and they couldn't decide whether they could afford to get in or not and we got some free passes...and I went up to these people as an act of random kindness which I would have never thought of in my life before and I said 'Sorry to interrupt, I'm not listening or prying into your conversation but I've got a ticket here that one gets in for free, would this help you?' and the little lad desperately wanted to get in. That to me was great. It was a life-changer for me because...I don't know...it was quite nice. I would never, ever have thought of that before coming along on a Sunday. (NSPC4)

As demonstrated here, having acts of random kindness modelled to them by James and Sam led to group members who 'would never, ever have thought of that before' try doing the same and the positive feelings this engendered through this experiential learning was 'a life-changer' for some of the members. Four of the five non-leader members interviewed claimed that the Acts of Random Kindness were not isolated events that they had been simply asked to do by others but that they actually helped enable a positive change in their character. Thus, in summary, I would suggest that through establishing relationships of trust and the modelling of loving behaviour, James (and Sam and later, other members of the community), taught love of self, in the welcoming of all and the listening to and valuing of all opinions, taught love of the other in the North Shore Pub Church community, in loving acts made explicit in 'Stuff that Needs Sorting', and taught love of the wider community, as focused upon in the 'Acts of Random Kindness'.

5:2:v – Learning Christian Praxis Before Christian Beliefs

Thus far, we have seen how the initial learning that can be identified at North Shore Pub Church is experiential and focused on learning behaviour rather than belief. This is an accurate description of the chronology of learning within North Shore Pub Church and one that is in line with the theory of the fresh expressions formative journey in which loving service and forming community precedes evangelism and disciple-making. The following words of Sam echo such a journey;

I don't believe nowadays, and possibly not ever, that you could just preach to people and say 'this is what you need to do' and then leave them. I think what you need to be able to say to people 'This is how I live, would you like to join in living this way? Would you like to join in with what we do? Why would like to join in with what we do? What inspires you about what we do?' You know, disciple them in that way then say, 'Well I do what I do because I believe this' and then start teaching them in that.

The assumption that North Shore Pub Church is founded upon, as demonstrated here, is that didactic, authoritarian teaching is no longer viable and in its place, an invitation to 'join in with what we do', through the modelling of loving action within community should precede an explanation that 'I do what I do because I believe this...' that takes place in relationship and through dialogue⁵⁴. The efficacy of this pedagogical approach was endorsed both by James in his vision for, and evaluation, of the group⁵⁵ and by members in their comparison of the teaching encountered at North Shore Pub Church with that of their previous experience of church⁵⁶.

5:2: vi – The Sharing of Worldviews

The content of the discussions had at North Shore Pub Church varied wildly but the structure dictated by the written questions, and generally followed in the dialogue, moved from the secular to the explicitly religious; from personal experience and praxis to worldview. As an illustrated example, we look at that created for a Sunday evening in October 2011:

⁵⁴ Such an approach is congruent with contemporary approaches on mission and evangelism (Tomlin, 2008; Everts & Shaupp, 2009; Chester & Timmis, 2011) as well as the indirect communication pedagogy advocated by Kierkegaard, both of which will be considered below.

⁵⁵ "Men don't need to be told what is right and wrong but rather they need to work it out for themselves, the forum for honest discussion and debate where nothing is considered unspeakable has profoundly affected the men's spirituality with in [sic] our fresh expression, and awareness of both themselves and the world around them." (North Shore Pub Church Vision and strategy document)

⁵⁶ "Everyone's got their opinion. When you're learning, learning's a two way experience. Y'know, somebody teaches you and you question them. Or you challenge what they're teaching you which is what you should do with that. If you go to church every Sunday and the vicar or padre reads the sermon out, then you're just being preached at. There's no two-way interaction. And that's what the difference is as far as I'm concerned. That's what James is doing." (NSPC3)

The world's population is expected to hit seven billion in the next few weeks. After growing very slowly for most of human history, the number of people on Earth has more than doubled in the last 50 years.

- 1. Does the population growth issue cause you any concern?**
- 2. Do you think we need to prepare for the future? Are you someone who does?**
- 3. Look at the text below, would you like to know your own future if you had the chance?**
- 4. Do you think that God is ultimately in control?**

Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." Gen 37

Here, we see that a summary of a news story is followed by a question of personal experience (1), one of personal opinion (2a) and one of personal behaviour (2b). A scriptural quote is used to illustrate a question about personal preference (3) before a question of ontology (4) – in which the question 'Do you believe in God' is implicit alongside the question regarding the sovereignty of God. The discussion lasted 1 hour 53 minutes, including various digressions and toilet/drinks breaks. Whilst, in moving from question 1 to 4, the nature of the discussion generally progressed from that of the everyday (talk of pensions, petrol shortage and choice of contraception) to an exchange of worldviews (dialogue concerning free will, theodicy, the existence and nature of God), members articulated and listened to questions of belief throughout the discussion. For example, on asking question 2a, the following conversation ensued;

James: So, do you think we need to prepare for the future?

NSPC4: Who gives a fuck once you're dead?

Sam: But you end up preparing for your family's future, surely? I mean that's...I'm sure you'd want the best for them.

NSPC4: I'm a great believer in the more you have, the more they'll squabble over when you're dead. Think about how many families are ripped apart by money.

NSPC1: Yeah but think about how many families are ripped apart by not having money.

NSPC4: No, live fast, die young, leave a good-looking corpse – that's my motto.

NSPC3: You've already failed there!

NSPC4: You shit!

James: But is it right to make a lot of money and keep it to yourself...?

A question about personal opinion soon developed into a dialogue concerning financial ethics and the meaning of employment. Indeed, most evenings, aided by the facilitator's use of questions, the discussions would develop in such a way and thus the dialogue would progress from an exchange of personal opinions to a reflection on the underlying worldviews which influence those opinions.

5:2:vii – Communal Learning

Before we consider the pedagogical objectives behind, and consequences of, such an exchange of worldview, we must acknowledge the communal nature of these discussions. In his analysis of North Shore Pub Church as articulated in the Vision and Strategy document, James states, '[t]here is no expert on the topic expounding wisdom for others to hear, rather there is the discussion of ideas, exchanges of views, morals and ethics that can be challenged or upheld'.

A corollary to the belief in the valuing of everyone's opinion no matter what their age, experience, education or worldview, the analysis expressed here by James is fundamental to North Shore Pub Church's pedagogical approach. The discussions are person-centred in that they focus on the opinions, behaviour, beliefs and assumptions of the people in attendance – a subject that each person is the expert of. Whilst one individual might have more knowledge about the details of a news story, which they will gladly disseminate, the key content of the dialogue is of individuals sharing their own opinions and beliefs and then critically reflecting on them and on those of others – through discussion and debate. Sharing, listening and learning are not considered unilinear activities and if an individual begins to dominate discussions, the facilitator, and often, the other members of the group, will bring attention to this in order to amend the situation. The communal approach to the discussions is frequently emphasized by James and Sam, who consciously try to include everyone at the table in the dialogue, whilst attesting that they are not to be considered experts⁵⁷ and that they have learnt much from other members of the group, even about their own faith⁵⁸.

Indeed, the discussions had on a Sunday evening were dependent upon the nature of the participation of members other than the apparent leaders. This was brought to the fore one week when attendance was low (five) and when three individuals made known their apathy to the subject being discussed, being actively hostile towards James as a result of this. James acknowledged this ('Do you want to just knock this on the head then lads?') and the discussion ended early (47 minutes in). Reflecting on the evening a week later, James remarked, 'That's what makes this so vulnerable. You write the questions but whether they want to engage with them or not...you hand power over immediately'.

Thus, the communal nature of the discussions creates a context in which all members of the group are mutually responsible for the nature of the evening, and consequently power is shared within the group.

⁵⁷ For example, in discussing how to behave towards an individual who was a newcomer and had turned up inebriated, James admitted to the group that "I don't really know what to do now. I don't think anything I said to him tonight he'd be able to remember anyway. So any advice welcome boys."

⁵⁸ "I'm so grateful for this table. It's been brutal but talk about formation! I've learnt so much down here. So much...I've learnt from Christ in a way I'd never expected to because it's dominoes...it's incarnational, in't it? You're saying 'Bang – please show me Christ'. And they do..." (James)

5:2:viii – Variation Learning

Modelled by James and Sam in their articulation of different theological positions⁵⁹, differences of opinion are welcomed and even celebrated. As one member put it;

I think if you didn't have the variety you wouldn't get into a discussion, you'd get into a preaching session. You just go and you just follow the leader. Y'know, opinions are like arseholes, aren't they – everyone's got one and they all stink! But your view on something could be wrong so you might need someone to challenge you and make you look at it from a different angle.
(NSPC2)

Such thinking brings us onto the pedagogical intention of the discussions. When asked 'what do you hope the guys get out of it?' on a well-known Christian television show, James replied;

Erm...I hope that they kind of expand their worldview. You know when you sit down and actually listen to other people, which, let's be honest, doesn't always happen in our society today, it allows us to grow in our own journeys.

The expansion of worldview – the listening to and consideration of other people's beliefs and assumptions and through this, critically reflecting on one's own – is the central pedagogical objective of North Shore Pub Church and one that bears close resemblance to the theory of variation learning. According to the theory, 'variation is necessary for any learning to take place: for example, to discern the air temperature on a particular day as cold, you must have previous experience of variation in air temperature' (Hella & Wright, 2009, p59). Thus, when it comes to the truth claims of religions, variation learning theory suggests;

...[T]o learn about the ultimate truth claims of a tradition other than one's own is simultaneously to reflect on the variation between them, and hence

⁵⁹ James and Sam were frequently willing to articulate different theological positions and considered disagreement and conflict as a sign of a healthy church - "I think that's what the Church should be. It's not that you have to all agree the same thing. In fact, it's often an unhealthy sign when you do." (James)

to come to see one's own tradition in a new light. (Hella & Wright, 2009, p62).

Such a theory, congruent with the basic premise of transformative learning⁶⁰, is borne out in the praxis of North Shore Pub Church in which the members listen to, articulate, argue with and reflect upon the beliefs and worldviews of the various members, who embody variation in their identities, language and beliefs. All questionnaire respondents said that since that had started to attend North Shore Pub Church, they had 'listened to the beliefs or opinions of people I would not normally socialize with' and that they had 'questioned some of my own beliefs or opinions', with two stating that they had changed some of their beliefs or opinions since first attending. Such change was corroborated when describing their religious worldview in the questionnaire, when all four respondents identified a change in their theological beliefs since their attendance at North Shore Pub Church⁶¹, and in the interviews when, time and time again, interviewees spoke of the fact that attending the fresh expression 'makes you more open to things that you wouldn't be open to...not because you have to but because you want to' (NSPC2). One respondent summed up this change in saying;

Everything was always, with me, was always black and white. Very black and white. Bang! Yes or no; yes or no... [North Shore Pub Church has] allowed me to give...learn...whether it's through age or going there...I'd say the bulk of it was through going there...to give things another coat of looking at because if you're listening to different people's perspectives on a question, you're learning other ways to look at situations. (NSPC4).

In summary, discussion with trusted friends in a safe environment enabled members to encounter and discern different worldviews and theologies and thus, in dialogue and disagreement, to critically reflect on those different worldviews, thus learning about the worldviews of others and about their own beliefs, enabling personal reflection and

⁶⁰ "Transformative learning is stimulated by encountering viewpoints that are discrepant with our own...Transformative growth is...based on discourse with others." (Cranton, 2001, pp103-4).

⁶¹ The respondent who ticked 'atheist' to describe himself before attending North Shore Pub Church ticked 'agnostic' to describe his beliefs the day of the questionnaire; the two respondents who ticked 'agnostic' for the former, ticked 'believe in some higher power but unsure what' for the latter; and the respondent who ticked the box labelled 'theist – believed in God (not necessarily the Christian image of God)' for the former, ticked 'Christian but do not attend a traditional Church regularly' for the latter.

change. Meeting the horizons of others resulted in a change to their own, even for those ordained into a religious tradition⁶², once again emphasizing the communal nature of such a learning process.

5:2:ix – Indirect Communication of the Gospel

Congruent with the pervasive attitude of the importance of respecting all members through the respect of their beliefs; the emphasis on communal, non-hierarchical learning; and the awareness of the distrust of Christians in general, James and Sam were very reluctant to be seen to be preaching a Christian message directly. Explicit references to Biblical stories or Christian beliefs were often prefaced with an apology or lightened with a joke and whilst scripture was always included on the leaflet, it was only referenced in two of the fifteen meetings I attended. More explicit, formal teaching about Christianity was offered at Oasis, the sister fresh expression, and the Alpha Course or Bible studies put on by Oasis but at North Shore Pub Church, the situation was very different, as James explains at length;

[Jesus said] ‘Anyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practise will have their lives built upon rock’. And the fact of the matter is that most of the guys who begin to come along to our meetings have never actually heard the words of Jesus. They’ll have gone through school and they’ll have had religious education at school but they will have never studied the scriptures or never had the scriptures expounded or explained to them in any sort of way. They’ve probably never picked up the Bible to find out about things themselves. So what I think we’re doing is we’re doing that commandment that Jesus asks. ‘Whoever hears these words’ very subtly and in a way and in a language that they can understand – they are hearing the words of Jesus through the discussions that we have...so there are a few lads around the table – Sam, myself, a couple of the lads who maybe have a strong faith and have read the scriptures...so when it comes to talking about

⁶² On explaining why his theology had changed since founding North Shore Pub Church, James stated, “Yeah, I think some of it is study...but the majority of it has just been having to explain my theology every Sunday night. And my viewpoint. And in so doing that has informed actually what I believe because when it’s challenged and it’s poked and it’s taken to bits you then start thinking ‘Well okay, why do I believe that? Is it because I’ve read it or someone’s told me? That’s why I believe in Pub Church so much because it’s changed me therefore I know it can change others...It’s a forum that allows change.”

terrorists, abortion, family life – stuff like that –although we’re not quoting scripture and verse, our views and philosophies and worldviews are based from an understanding of scripture and Christ’s teaching so we will automatically begin to talk about and challenge their viewpoint and so through that, they then begin to hear the teachings of Jesus so then they begin to...not always agree...but they knock off the sharp edges of their viewpoint.

Thus, whilst rarely using the words of Jesus to preach to members, James advocates the view that the members, many of whom have no Christian vocabulary or grammar, can first encounter and learn about Christian beliefs through the ‘views and philosophies and worldviews’ expressed by the Christian members of the group, which are themselves ‘based from an understanding of scripture and Christ’s teaching’. Brief accounts of Christian concepts – from grace and sin to forgiveness and atonement – were given within discussions as an explanation as to why members held certain opinions or beliefs and were explained with little use of Christian terminology in the intention of being accessible to the unchurched. In such a way, the gospel was communicated and discussed, albeit indirectly, through the impact that it had on the lives of Christians, rather than directly from scripture or church doctrine.

5:2:x – Emphasis on Orthopraxy over Orthodoxy

In terms of assessing the impact that the group has had on the lives of its members and of the learning embodied at North Shore Pub Church, James argues that;

...[W]hilst some of them have not sat down and prayed a prayer of commitment, in some respects, the way that they now view their own role within their working lives, within their marriage lives, within their lives within wider society as well as in our community has totally changed.

James acknowledged that not all of the members of North Shore Pub Church live out their faith as would be recognisable in a traditional church context and might not be able to ‘sign up to a declaration of faith’ (James) but suggested that ‘the

decisions they now make in business or in the home about...like justice and equality...I believe are works of the holy spirit' (James). It is the demonstration of Christ-like action, not orthodox Christian belief, that James focuses on as a sign of a life changed – as that which Christ will judge upon and thus, that which constitutes the key pedagogical objective of the group;

James: If they don't believe in the two natures of Christ; if they don't understand the story of the Good Samaritan; if they don't understand the story of this, that and the other... then...well...these guys are *living it out*... Y'know when they stand before Christ, y'know, and he says 'Did you love me?', and they say, 'Well actually, I never met you,' and he says, 'Well actually, I was Greg that night' ...that's the story of the gospel.

Me: So is it about action?

James: Fuck, yeah...Christ fed the poor and healed the sick and he hung out with the lowly and the prostitutes and the scum. Not once did he preach, 'Oh you've got to believe in me and my resurrection otherwise you won't go in to heaven'. Did he?

Thus in a group in which didactic teaching about Christian doctrine is deliberately minimal, the demonstration of Christ-like action would appear to take precedence over that of orthodox Christian belief in regards to the assessment of the impact of North Shore Pub Church attendance.

5:2:xi – Summary of North Shore Pub Church Pedagogy

One could thus summarise the pedagogical approach of North Shore Pub Church as follows:

| Typical chronology | Objective | Content | Method | Role of teacher | Role of learner | Outcome |
|--|---|--|---|--|---|---|
| Preconditions for learning. ↓ | To establish relationships of trust, especially between the church and unchurched. | Shared lives in community | Relational;, experiential. | To establish a safe environment where close friendships can develop. To model trust and vulnerability | To learn to trust and be trustworthy. | Trusting relationships established. |
| Learning Christian praxis. ↓ | Encouraging members to learn to love self and neighbour; adopting the Christian principles of hospitality, inclusivity, and equality. | Shared lives in community and wider society. | Relational; experiential. Socialisation of loving behaviour. | To model the Christian principles of hospitality, inclusivity and equality. To love, and be loved by, the other. | To enact the Christian principles of hospitality, inclusivity and equality in the community and wider society. | Demonstration of loving behaviour within community and wider society. |
| Critical reflection on worldviews. Learning Christian beliefs. | To learn about and from other worldviews, including the Christian faith, helping one to critically reflect on one's own. | The worldview and praxis of individuals. | Variation learning - person as starting point; communal dialogue & critical reflection. | To facilitate listening and learning. To participate as a leading-learner. To teach Christian concepts and stories through sharing their impact on one's own beliefs/praxis. | To express their story and actively listen to others. To critically reflect on their worldview and that of others through dialogue. | Deeper awareness of one's own worldview and that of others. |

Table vi: The pedagogical approach of North Shore Pub Church

5:3 – Establishing Sanctum

Sanctum was first referred to me as a fresh expression of church created primarily for the unchurched and which met my research requirements by a member of the Fresh Expressions Canada (FXCA) leadership team and this was subsequently confirmed by Sanctum's main leader and founder, Dave, also a member of the FXCA team leadership team and one who taught fresh expressions of church theory to other church leaders. However, during my time at Sanctum, I heard it referred to as 'an alternative worship service' and 'cafe church' by its members; saw it labelled a 'service' in the annual church report of its founding church; and witnessed it being called a 'new church community' and 'internal church plant' by its leaders. The confusion over the identity and ownership of Sanctum, a confusion acknowledged by its founding leader⁶³ is the result of the varied personalities and motivations which played a part in its founding.

All those involved in the establishing of Sanctum were ordained staff working at St. Peter's Anglican Church in the centre of a major Canadian conurbation. St. Peter's is an established 'legacy church' (Mark, The Rector) with a multi-million pound annual budget; is identified as 'theologically conservative...missionally liberal' (Mark) by the Rector; and is one which saw an average of 640 people attend its four Sunday services per week in 2011. In 2008-9, two of the (then) four ordained members of staff at St. Peter's 'said we needed to start something new' (Mary) as an addition to the existent three services at the church⁶⁴. A proposal for diocese funding was written which, using Acts 1:8 as a template, suggested that St. Peter's was witnessing to Jerusalem (identified as the church by those at St. Peter's) in the 8:15 and 11am services, and Samaria (identified as the *de*churched) in the growing 9:30 service but that it could do more to witness to 'the ends of the Earth' (identified as the *un*churched). Financial support was given, staff came and went, and eventually Dave, a parish minister educated in church planting and with a 'passion for young, urban professionals' (Dave) was employed by St. Peter's and given the task to establish a fresh expression of church, primarily for the 'missing demographic'

⁶³ Speaking on the differences in the identification and ownership of Sanctum, Dave acknowledged "I think there was always a bit of a tension and misunderstanding at St. Peter's about that and I was very determined in carving out for us that Sanctum was separate and different."

⁶⁴ The 'quiet worship' at the 8:15am service (average 31 congregants, 2011, annual church report); the 'relaxed worship' at the 9:30am service (average 238 congregants, 2011, annual church report); and the 'classic worship' at the 11am service (average 348 congregants, 2011, annual church report).

(Dave) of 18 – 40 year-olds who, as specialized research and anecdotal evidence testified, lived in the environs of St. Peter's but did not attend in significant numbers.

Described in more detail below, Dave discerned two interconnected needs held by the young, urban professionals living near St. Peter's – living a healthy lifestyle through cooking healthy food and through enjoying outdoor pursuits – and thus two missional cells, 'the true fresh expression of church' (Dave), were developed (Sanctum Bites and Sanctum Hikes) alongside a new church community which would meet on Sunday evenings for a service at St. Peter's (Sanctum Sundays) and which would be attended and served by approximately 30 'missionaries' (Mary) in their twenties and thirties from the 9:30 and 11am services. These missionaries were encouraged by Dave to cease attending the other services or home groups at St. Peter's and to see Sanctum as their new church community. Dave's vision was that the missional cells would have a 'symbiotic relationship with the new church we were planting' (Dave) and, whilst he acknowledged that the journey of Sanctum has not followed that suggested by official fresh expressions material⁶⁵ and would not replicate such a model⁶⁶, he argued that the missional cells and the Sunday evening service together embody the four named steps in the Fresh Expression process;

I always really saw missional cells as covering from serving needs to a little bit of discipleship and then Sanctum community covering from a little bit of building community forward to mature church and worship. So they overlap a little bit. (Dave)

Thus, whilst other leaders within St. Peter's see the whole of Sanctum as aimed at 'Samaria' and the unchurched, Dave established a structure based on Acts 1:8 within

⁶⁵ "I knew we weren't exactly following word-for-word, the process [described in fresh expressions literature] and I thought this might be a variation that would work. The idea that, y'know, somebody went to a missional cell...erm...that served their needs and they made friends and built community, and get a taste of discipleship...and I thought it might possibly work to have this worshipping and discipling community that overlaps with this building community aspect...I see these two things overlapping on the formative journey and that...that's probably skipping a few steps further than we should but...I see some synergy there. Let's go for it...it's pioneering pioneering." (Dave)

⁶⁶ "I don't plan to do it again. So maybe that means something. I guess I recognise it was kind of an exception to the way I'd like to do things. I wouldn't say it was a bad exception..." (Dave)

Sanctum, thereby founding a tripartite church community within an existing tripartite ecclesial community:

St. Peter's:

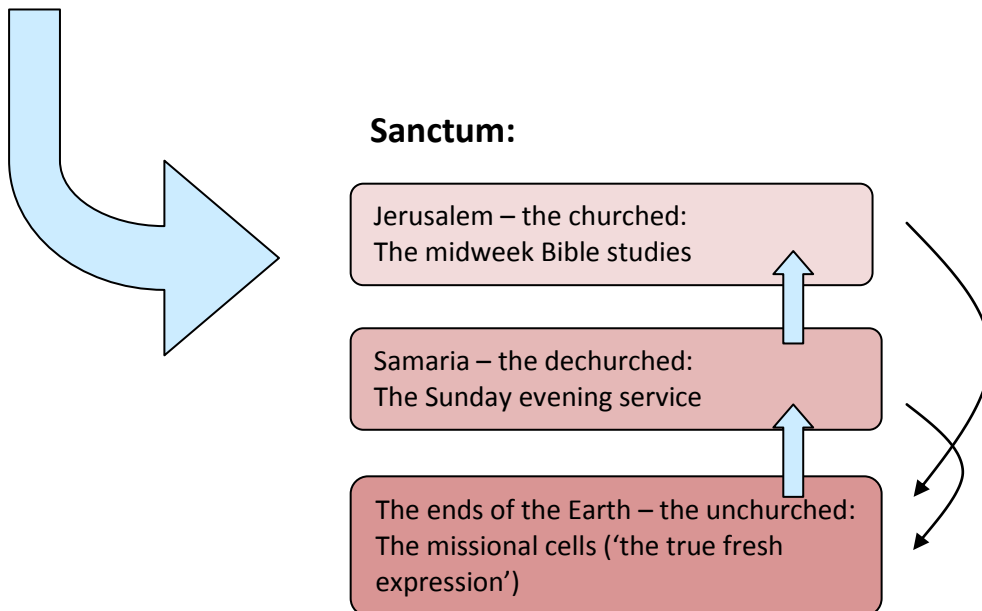
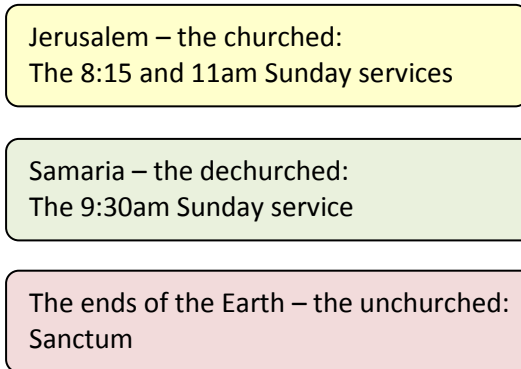


Figure 7: The structure and intended flow of Sanctum

As fresh expressions teacher, Sanctum founder and leader for its first year, it was Dave, with the agreement of St Peter's Rector, Mark, who endorsed my placement at Sanctum and whose vision infused the community's structure and identity for the first year. Thus, much of the analysis below will focus on his understanding of the community as well as the praxis I encountered in the missional cells and Sunday evening services at Sanctum⁶⁷.

⁶⁷ I have decided to focus on the missional cells and Sunday evening services of Sanctum and not the midweek Bible studies because the first two are identified by Dave as covering all stages

However, Dave was the leader of only two of the thirteen weeks that I spent at Sanctum as John, Anglican curate and Dave's assistant leader from Sanctum's birth, took over the leadership of Sanctum from my second week of research. Dave continued to work at St. Peter's and was available to be interviewed and consulted throughout the research process whilst I was also able to access the recordings of previous Sanctum meetings which he led and the literature he produced in the founding of the community. John, who had no formal training on fresh expressions theology or practice, began his leadership in January 2012 with Nigel, member of Sanctum from its inception, worship leader and recently employed as St. Peter's youth pastor, as the assistant leader. It is significant to acknowledge that Sanctum, as is often the case with fresh expressions of church but was particularly apparent here, was experiencing a transition process – of leadership, vision and identity – during my placement. This being noted, the structure and nature of Sanctum Sundays did not change in any significant way during my placement, whilst the missional cells had been disbanded for almost four months prior to my arrival.

5:3:i - The Missional Cells

In spite of the confusion and misidentification of the whole of Sanctum as a fresh expression of church, even by the fresh expression leaders of Canada, Dave was forthright in attesting that 'the true fresh expression of church [is] the missional cell' (Dave). After months of skype calls, emails, references and cross-checking, I was surprised, and somewhat frustrated, to find that my arrival at Sanctum had not been anticipated. Such feelings were exacerbated when, a week into my placement, with flights, accommodation, and university costs⁶⁸ all organised and paid for, I was informed that the missional cells were no longer running. After feeling disheartened for a time, reminding myself of the transient nature of such ventures, I realized that much could still be learnt from research into how these groups worked and where they fitted into the larger picture at Sanctum and so I began interviewing the leaders and helpers of these groups and supplemented this with an examination of the documents produced by or for the cells and by going on a mock-urban hike with that cell's leader.

ascribed in official Fresh expressions teaching to the formational process of a fresh expression of church whilst the Bible studies were structured with the church in mind.

⁶⁸ During my research placement, I attended two modules at the reformed theological college of the local university.

5:3:ii - Sanctum Bites

Modelled on a business already existent in the city, Sanctum Bites was founded upon Dave's observations that many young professionals in the area were eating take away but wanted to eat healthily;

So I thought, there's a need there. You know, people say they want to eat healthy, they want to live a healthy lifestyle, but they also have this demanding career that makes them work late hence they just need to eat something when they get home. I was also looking for ways to make time for people because I think the last thing that people wanted was another drag on their time; another two hours a week devoted to something else. (Dave).

The idea was that people would sign up and prepay for food, then attend one evening every two weeks in which they would be taught and helped to cook it, freeze it and take it home in ziplock bags to eat later in the week. Held in St. Peter's kitchen, sessions occurred every other Tuesday night, lasted 90 minutes to two hours and consisted of 60 – 90 minutes to cook and around 30 minutes to clear up and engage in conversation, in the hope that friendships would develop and community would be formed. The sessions were facilitated by Dave and a lay leader, with the chef at St. Peter's leading the cooking. After two dry runs and a great deal of advertising by word of mouth, leafletting and using social media, Sanctum Bites ran for four sessions before being disbanded. During this time, up to eight people attended but only one of these was not already attending Sanctum and this was a friend of the lay leader who was helping her run the sessions.

Analyses of why the missional cell was not successful in attracting more people ranged from there being no space for 'real conversation' (SM4); asking people to pay upfront (Dave); taking place in a church so being too attractational (SM3); and inadequate discerning of the needs of the community, being 'blinded by the beauty of the idea' (Dave). There was no discussion about returning to this idea as a fresh expression during my time with Sanctum, unlike Sanctum Hikes.

5:3:iii – Sanctum Hikes

The other missional cell pioneered by the members of Sanctum was Sanctum Hikes which was once again founded upon the belief that such a group would serve an existent need of young professionals in the community;

We knew from our demographic study that they wanted to enjoy nature. It was in their values...erm...the environment was important, all those things were important and it's hard when you're living in a major city and you don't necessarily know that there are green spaces. You don't have a car to get out of the city and go somewhere else. So we saw that as a need we could serve. (Dave).

First trialled August – November 2010, and then re-established May – September 2011, Sanctum Hikes sessions were held every other Monday evening. If the weather conditions were good, people were encouraged to meet at a prearranged metro station in the city before heading out on an urban hike lasting 60 – 90 minutes and ending up at a pub where, it was once again hoped, conversations would flow and friendships develop. If the weather did not permit this, then the group would still meet at the metro station and go straight to a pub but on these evenings, no-one from outside Sanctum attended. In addition to these Monday evening sessions, once every 4 – 6 months, a Saturday daytime, extended outdoor activity would be arranged, such as snow-shoeing and cross-country skiing. The Monday evening sessions attracted between 3 and 9 people (including the two leaders – again Dave and a female lay leader – and other members of Sanctum) and of these, there were often 2-3 non-Sanctum attendees, though there was no consistency in the attendance of people from outside Sanctum as none of these attended more than one event. The Saturday sessions attracted between 12 and 23 people and it is estimated that at least half of these were members of Sanctum, with the rest being made up of friends of those at Sanctum. The last event was held on 12th September 2011 due to the worsening weather conditions of winter and an admission by the lay leader of the group that she was 'burnt out' (SM1).

The infrequency of the meetings, named by one leader of Sanctum as a reason for the group's demise, was an issue. Partly the consequence of poor hiking conditions, partly due

to the intention that the group not become a burden on people's free time, in 2011, 10 Monday meetings and 4 Saturday activities were planned and of these, 8 Mondays and 3 Saturdays actually went ahead, leading to an average of one event being held less than every thirty three days.

5:3:iv- Sanctum Sundays

Referencing the official fresh expressions suggested journey, Dave proposed that Sanctum had a two-stage system – “The missional cells are primarily about serving needs and building community and then Sanctum community is primarily about discipleship and church and worship.” (Dave)

Thus, if the missional cells were to be seen as where a fresh expression of church should begin, the Sunday evening sessions were to be considered as what a fresh expression could lead to and the two streams, though distinct in nature, structure and mission, were always intended to blend together:

I thought the cells could be the missional part of Sanctum, the unchurched part of Sanctum and when those people, you know, come to an urban hike, build community, meet friends, there can be a natural flow to a Sunday night service so they could learn more about Jesus to see those same friends from the urban hike or the meal prep, see them in a another setting. That there'd be a natural flow that way. And there could be a flow the other way of followers of Jesus willing to start new missional cells. So we developed this idea of the missional cells and the cafe community working together as one community. (Dave)

Established in January 2011, the Sunday evening meetings were deemed as the 'Samaria' or 'dechurched' part of the Sanctum picture and whilst the nature of the evenings have evolved since its founding, the overall structure of the evening is essentially the same, which, as Dave acknowledges, is 'pretty churchy' (Dave) – not least because it meets in a church building.

Also much publicized on the social media, Sanctum Sundays portrays itself as a relaxed cafe community which revolves around dialogue – the word ‘discussion’ being used in all its advertising. However, the structure of the evening is not atypical to an alternative worship service. Worship songs are played by the band as people arrive, get a coffee and sit down at tables arranged in a semi-circle around the screen, worship band and speaker’s table. Candles may be lit, sweets may be put out, to encourage a more informal atmosphere. The format of the evening is then introduced by the leader at the front who was, during my placement at Sanctum, always male and either ordained or currently undergoing theological training, before an icebreaker question is introduced. It is intended that this question does not require any previous theological knowledge, encourages discussion and is accessible to all, (e.g. ‘Do you make New Year resolutions? Why/why not?’). A timer is put on the big screen to indicate when the five minute discussion is up. Sometimes feedback is encouraged, but other times the leader moves us straight onto the scripture reading which is on the screen and also read out. Following this, a second five minute discussion is encouraged, founded upon a question about the scripture read. This question can be a generic one about a theme picked up from the scripture (e.g. “Under what circumstances would you consider a child being a good counsellor?”, based on Isaiah 9:6-7) or one which requires a belief in God or even scriptural knowledge (e.g. “Why do we think Peter quoted Joel here?”, based on Acts 2:14-24). The ‘teaching’ (Dave) follows this and was always conducted by a male ordained leader.

The teaching varies in length, from 10 minutes to over half an hour, and is exegetical in nature. Film clips are sometimes used to illustrate points. Following this, the band sing another worship song whilst group members are encouraged to text, tweet or write (on a postcard, to be handed in) questions following from the teaching. These are then answered by the speaker and the facilitator, who may give direct answers or may tell the group that they will answer the question at another time (e.g. in next week’s session) or through another medium (such as on the community’s website). Following this, a creed is read out (often the ‘Sanctum creedal statement’⁶⁹ but other recognised Christian creeds

⁶⁹ "We believe we and our world were made to be connected with God in a relationship of trust and love. We believe our human race has broken that relationship, and disconnected ourselves from God through our attitudes, words and actions. We have tried and failed, as individuals and as the human race, to Sanctum with God on our own. We place our trust once again in God, who in

were used during my placement) before prayers are said by a member, from the stage area. The service ends with another worship song before notices are given and tithing encouraged. Both baptism and Holy Communion have been celebrated within this group but the former has only occurred once, the latter three times, since its founding in January 2011.

The Annual Church report of St. Peter's said that the average congregation of Sanctum Sunday was 23, a number not dissimilar to the average I witnessed during my three month stay (19.7). On the day of the survey, 18 people attended, with 15 completing the survey. Of these, all said they were Christian prior to attending Sanctum, 13 of which had been attending a church on a regular basis. No one who had first attended the missional cells had yet been to Sanctum Sunday, whilst 4 of the 15 who attended the Sunday evenings had attended at least one of the missional cells.

5:4 – The Pedagogical Praxis of Sanctum

5:4:i - The Missional Cells

“There was nothing didactic about the missional cells. What they were meant to do was serve needs, build community and maybe a bit of discipleship would happen.”

(Dave)

When asked about the potential for teaching and learning in the missional cells, whether implicit or explicit, all involved were keen to point out that this was never the purpose for them. The missional cells were intended to be ‘totally fun, totally casual, totally friendly’ (John). Perhaps individuals would learn something about how to cook or ‘what it’s like to interact with strangers on a hike’ (SM1) but nothing explicit about Christians or the Christian faith. This was, as some understood it, essential to the nature of these groups; “I don’t think there was any teaching or learning involved. I think that was part of the point from what I understand. That it wasn’t teaching and learning. That it was just about service.” (SM4)

coming to earth as Jesus, dying in our place, and rising again, can Sanctum us with God. We seek to live life as he intended, and join in God's plans to Sanctum with others.”

Whether achieved or not, the focus of the missional cell volunteers was clearly on serving the needs of those in the local community – through meeting their needs for good, healthy food; the desire to enjoy nature in a busy, cramped city; the need to enjoy friendships and community – for the missional cells were, in Dave’s two-part schema, ‘primarily about serving needs and building community’ (Dave). However, whilst didactic, formal teaching was unintended, Dave’s comment that ‘maybe a bit of discipleship would happen’, may reveal an implicit pedagogical aim of the cells. ‘Discipleship’ itself has a plethora of different meanings and whilst Dave was quite elusive on what he meant by the term, his explanation of how and why an individual might go from attending a missional cell to attending Sanctum Sunday, sheds some light on the issue;

So if somebody was coming through, y’know, found their needs were served by bi-weekly urban hikes or meal preparation, would make friends with followers of Jesus as a result...if they’re honest to goodness friends with followers of Jesus, hopefully there is something about those people that is different, intriguing...and conversations will simply happen as life happens. Their friends will speak into their life using gospel words and gospel language...and that’s where discipleship will start to happen – at a very personal, relational level. Real friends but real friendships that talk to their real life and real problems have gospel answers so that’s where I saw discipleship happening in small groups and missional cells, with the hopes that discipleship conversations that started to happen in those missional cells, then there would be a natural way for a member of the Sanctum community, who’s there in the missional cells to say, ‘Hey, we actually talk about this stuff in more depth on Sunday nights. Why don’t you come? I’ll be there – it won’t be that scary. I’m part of this and it’s got the same name, like Sanctum Sunday; Sanctum Hikes.’ The same trusted brand so it would be a smooth transition into the worshipping community.

In such thinking, at least two strands of learning are implied. The first of these is learning to trust Christians. The leaders of Sanctum would often speak of the distinction between the Church and the world and although talk of the elect and reprobate was

(deliberately⁷⁰) not referred to at St. Peter's or Sanctum, it was endorsed by the leadership team. At Sanctum Sundays, it was not unusual to hear about the difference between 'believers' and 'pagans' (denoting anyone who didn't believe in Christ) whilst Christians who believed in false doctrine were labelled 'heretics'. Such dichotomous thinking was evident in the teaching that Christians were to be suspicious of worldly ideals because 'at their core, people are selfish' (Dave) and that such suspicion was not unilinear, for it was assumed that pagans were equally as distrustful of their Christian counterparts. Thus, the first part in the evangelism process was to teach the unchurched that Christians could be trusted and this was to be enabled in forming relationships with them through the enjoyment of shared activities such as the cooking or hiking. Whilst Dave spoke of this as showing, thus, experientially teaching, the unchurched that Christians were 'different, intriguing', John spoke of this in terms of normality and difference;

I think in our, y'know, in a pagan, secular culture, the walls are up and the trust is very low and part of the missional cell, I think, is just getting to know people and showing them that we're people who can just...be, y'know, and hang out with people and that we might be different but we're normal, right?

Thus, once again, a fundamental learning process in itself and one upon which all other learning was seen to be built, was to establish relationships of trust between the church and the unchurched.

The second stream of implicit teaching evident in Dave's understanding of the missional cells is in terms of Christian language and grammar – "Their friends will speak into their life using gospel words and gospel language' (Dave).

⁷⁰ When questioned as to why there was little description of the theological position of St. Peter's on its website, Dave answered, "'We intentionally "bury" some of the things you're looking for since our web site is mainly geared to seekers.'" This position was supported by the Rector, who said that in spite of St. Peter's position against same-sex relationships, this would not be explicitly referenced or preached from the pulpit, stating that "I want St. Peter's to be known as a place that's for. For people. For Jesus. Not against, which I think often conservatives are known for." Such a position was further, and less enthusiastically, corroborated by a member of Sanctum who claimed "St. Peter's is very quiet about just how conservative it is." (SM3)

In Dave's outlining of the journey from attending a missional cell to attending Sanctum Sunday, he makes it clear that attendance at the Sunday 'churchy' (Dave) worship service was one fundamental end goal of the missional cells – a view held and reiterated by many who supported these groups, not least in their expressing frustration or disappointment that this did not happen. Indeed, the very fact that no unchurched individual who attended Sanctum Hikes or Sanctum Bites then later attended Sanctum Sunday was often cited as a key reason for the disbanding of the cells. Thus, the attendance and, hoped-for participation, at the worship services/church of Sanctum Sunday was the ultimate intention in the establishment of the cells and yet Dave, John and the other leaders accepted that the unchurched, the pagans, had little or no Christian knowledge or desire for such and that 'any event at a church building wasn't going to be the first touch point for any truly unchurched people' (Dave).

Therefore, it was hoped that the missional cells would provide an environment in which the unchurched would form friendships with the churching. In time, once trust had been gained, the friends could introduce 'gospel words and gospel language' and begin to talk about 'gospel answers' to 'real problems' (Dave). The unchurched would thus begin to be exposed to Christian language and beliefs in a non-threatening way before being invited to Sanctum Sunday where they 'talk about this stuff in more depth' (Dave). It was evident that the leaders of the cells hoped that this gentle, relational way of first hearing Christian language and beliefs might take some of the fear away from attending a church service and might instead, provoke an interest in it, thus enabling the anticipated end goal of a 'smooth transition into the worshipping community' (Dave) where Christian teaching, as we shall discover below, was much more explicit.

Consequently, I would suggest that whilst the leaders and helpers of the missional cells attested that no, at least explicit, Christian teaching or learning occurred within the missional cells, two implicit streams of learning were hoped for. The first, to teach the unchurched that Christians might be different but could be trusted and befriended – that they were not wholly other. The second, to introduce the unchurched to Christian language and beliefs through natural conversations between newly acquired friends, in the hope that the Sunday evening worship service – the pinnacle of the Sanctum fresh expression journey – would be made more accessible to them. All of which brings us neatly on to the pedagogy of the Sunday services themselves.

5:4:ii - Sanctum Sundays

“Theologically, we’re different from most of the diocese...we’d be theologically more conservative but then, I’d argue, we’re missionally more liberal.”

The above quote came from Mark, the Rector of St. Peter’s who has pastoral oversight over the members and leaders at the church’s various services, projects and plants, including Sanctum, and works as an accurate summary of the pedagogical approach of Sanctum. Here, I discuss how Sanctum promotes itself as a communal, discussion-based learning environment but, in praxis, follows a didactic, unilinear pedagogical model in which the teacher is expert and authority; the content is Word-centred; and the learner is encouraged to accept the teaching given.

Didactic or Dialogical?

Sanctum Sundays, intentionally designed to be accessible for the un- and dechurched, promotes itself as being informal, inclusive and, above-all else, discussion-based, using adjectives such as ‘relaxed’, ‘conversational’ and ‘diverse’ to describe it on various social media. The impression of Sanctum that is thus propounded is of one where communal dialogue, listening and learning are given inherent value;

We’re young urban professionals from all walks of life, who don’t mind wrestling with big questions. We’re putting together a Christian community on Sunday nights with coffee and conversation. Come and join the discussion – it won’t be the same without you! (Sanctum website)

This promotion of the view of Sanctum as a place for free discussion and communal learning was further endorsed in Sunday meetings, in which, at the beginning of the service, the leader would reiterate the conversational approach that would apparently follow⁷¹. Before we examine how closely this advertised perception of Sanctum matches

⁷¹ Thus, on a Sunday in January, John introduced the service with the following remarks; “One of the primary ways that we value at Sanctum is conversation so we want to hear what you have to think then we’ll share what we think as a community, as leaders but it’s a conversation – it’s a dialogue so we do that in a couple of different ways. One is we actually have discussion time built into the service so at the beginning of the service we have a question for you to discuss at your

the praxis, we may first consider why such pedagogy is advocated. The prime motivation behind such a pedagogical approach would appear to be to promote a notion of church which would be more attractive and accessible to those previously disinterested in the inherited church. In describing the conversational emphasis of Sanctum, John attests;

The way that I hopefully teach from upfront...it is teaching, there's no doubt about it. I'm trying to teach people, yeah, but I'm trying to do that in a very conversational way so that people feel like it's more of a discussion than more of a lecture or a sermon. Because one of the things we found was that, in the age demographic, was that people don't, they don't want to be preached at, they don't want to be talked to or down to. People are sick of that, they don't want to come to church to be lectured, so the way I try to teach, although I'm teaching the Bible, I'm teaching theology, I'm teaching doctrine, but I'm trying to do it in a way that's more of a conversation so that people feel like there's an authentic, genuine relationship there as opposed to someone who thinks they're better than them who's imparting their negative knowledge to them...

In this passage, we have an enlightening account of the process through which the pedagogical approach of Sanctum was arrived at. We first see that in researching why the target demographic were not currently attending church, the Sanctum team found that young professionals did not want to be 'preached at', 'talked to or down to', 'lectured'. This was seen as a key stumbling block in their attendance at church and thus this needed to be addressed. As we can see from the quote, John, as with the other leaders of Sanctum, is quite clear that teaching is a foundational part of church community so the question of how to teach without it *feeling* like a sermon or lecture was paramount. The content, according to John, remains the same – 'I'm teaching the Bible, I'm teaching theology, I'm teaching doctrine' – but this can no longer be done in a didactic manner for the aforementioned reasons. Thus, John '[tries] to do that in a very conversational way so that people feel like it's more of a discussion than more of a lecture'. In describing his pedagogical approach, John twice stresses that he wants people to 'feel' like the teaching

table with people round you so that's one way, just to give you a head's up. Another thing is that during the teaching time you can text or tweet or write your questions so if as you're thinking about this topic or your experience and you have some questions, feel free to text or tweet it in or use the blue card on your table..."

is what he believes they want it to be – ‘discussion’ rather than ‘lecture or a sermon’; ‘authentic, genuine relationship’ rather than ‘someone who thinks they’re better than them who’s imparting their negative knowledge’. The unchurched do not want didactic, unilinear teaching, so he wants them to feel like they are not getting it; they want discussion and authentic relationships, so he wants them to feel like this is what they are experiencing. Thus, the content remains the same but he wants the target demographic to feel like the form is what they want – whether it is or not. Indeed, the tension between John’s acknowledgement that he is most definitely teaching the Bible, doctrine and theology from upfront and his desire for those attending to feel like it is a discussion might suggest that he believes the teaching is less dialogical and communal than he would want those attending to feel, a position furthered by Dave’s comments on the design of Sanctum Sundays;

It’s intentionally designed...there’s discussion around the cultural question; there’s discussion around the scriptural question...erm...there’s the teaching...The idea of discussion, discussion, teaching was that that would have the last word so whatever heresy has been discussed at the tables previously...erm...hopefully gets corrected by the last word which is, y’know, here’s the teaching time. We value people participating and discussing and, y’know, being honest about what they really think and all that but then we want the Word of God to...to have the last word.

Out of a 60 – 80 minute average Sunday service, 10 minutes of this (two five minute slots) are discussion based and, as noted above, the first is not faith-based but is a cultural question, acting as more of an icebreaker before the congregation is led into scripture. Discussion is, therefore, quite a minor part of the evening and is, in the words of Dave and in the formal structure of the service, distinct from the ‘*teaching* time’. Indeed, in the original written format for the evening, such time was entitled ‘Teaching/Sermon’, which again suggests that the intended perception of the teaching from those outside the church and the intended form of the teaching from those leading are dissimilar.

Moreover, above Dave notes that whilst ‘people participating and discussing and, y’know, being honest about what they really think and all that’ is valued, the greater importance is that ‘the word of God [has]...the last word’. Discussion – both talking and listening – is

thus said to be valued but in practice, the only part it would appear to play in the learning process is that people air their thoughts and 'heresies' before being 'corrected' by scripture. People's thoughts and experiences appear to have nothing to contribute to the learning of truth – contained in the Bible. It would appear that the opinions they offer might be heard in the discussion groups, before the clergy at the front tell them the correct biblical position. Thus, whilst Sanctum might advertise itself as discussion-based and intends attendees to *feel* that it is such, in praxis, as designed, the discussion element adds little, if anything, to the learning process.

Word-centred

Dave's assertion that the scriptural teaching must correct heresies and that the Word of God must have the last word is indicative of the centrality of scripture in Sanctum's pedagogical approach. The 'teaching' section of the evening is always framed by the previously read scriptural passage and is grounded in scripture, exegetical in style. Heresies may have been discussed following the reading but the teaching section is there to expound scripture and thus correct false teaching. Scripture is seen to contain the truths of Christianity, indeed, of existence, and so a correct teaching of this is imperative. In the question and answer session that followed a sermon based on Isaiah 9:6-7, Dave was asked 'Is there a place to share practical advice or wisdom based on experience or knowledge?' the answer to which included the following;

...Yes but when your counsel, your advice points people to God and is consistent with what else God has communicated and so I point you to a relationship of prayer again and scripture...In scripture there then, we can get some principles to work from that can apply to just about any other aspect of life...whatever scenario you can come up with, it can probably be distilled down to one of those ten commandments, or something that Jesus expanded on from those ten commandments...if we study those principles, we can understand God's will and advice for *any* part of our life... (Dave)

Here, Dave makes clear that non-scriptural, practical advice may have a place but only if it is congruent with what God has communicated in scripture, the study of which can enable an understanding of God's will and advice for any part of one's life. Thus, once again, it

would seem apparent that at Sanctum, the content of Christian teaching is scripture, as correctly expounded by the ordained leader.

Clergy as teacher, expert and authority

A parallel to the content of teaching being the correct expounding of scripture is that the teacher is seen as expert and authority. At Sanctum, the leaders were seated at the front of the hall, with the rest of the attendees sat at tables in a semi-circle, facing them (as well as the media screen and the worship band when they played). The evenings were led by two individuals – one who facilitated the evening, the other who gave the teaching. During my time at Sanctum, the facilitator was, as noted above, either ordained or currently receiving theological education whilst only male clergy gave the teaching. Post-teaching, when questions had been sent in by the attendees, they were read out and then answered by the leaders, typically with no contribution from anyone else⁷². It was in these direct questions and answers that any attempt to be ambiguous about certain topics so as to be accessible for the unchurched, gave way to the fundamental baseline of being true to scriptural truth and some members found the certainty of such answers disconcerting;

Of all of this indirectness and not being clear about something, we go along the line and then Dave says to me that yoga is a sinful practice because it comes from the roots of Hinduism and, y'know, they're worshipping idols...To be so firm on that and then not on other things seemed so contradictory.
(SM4)

The notion that the clergy was the expert and needed to pronounce correct scriptural teaching to the laity is perfectly demonstrated in this example, for when the lay member continued to practise yoga, believing it to be congruent with her Christian faith, Dave continued in his persuasion that this was not a correct Christian viewpoint, was idolatrous behaviour, and needed to be stopped;

We never resolved it. It's a little bit uncomfortable now...And then he sent me emails from these radical Christians in the United States who are writing

⁷² One gregarious member of Sanctum from the deep south of the United States would, on occasion, chose to offer his own input and though this was often welcomed, it was not invited.

anti-yoga articles, using loads of quotes from the Bible, saying it's idolatry and stuff...It made me hesitant to rejoin when I came back [from a period abroad]. (SM4).

Other members at Sanctum gave similar remarks about Dave's authoritarian understanding of his leadership, suggesting that decisions were made unilaterally; referencing the constant postponing of the Sanctum feedback night and remarking that many in the community did not feel that their voice was being heard⁷³. One individual, who later went on to hold a prominent leadership position in the community, commented;

When we had meetings to talk about direction, he wouldn't listen. Like, he would listen but then he'd explain why he did the things he did and why he was right to keep doing them. And that was really hard for people. And he wasn't willing to listen to what the community wanted...He told me that what was happening at Sanctum was like Moses in the...in the desert...um...people turning against him as leader and that he would take things into consideration but nothing changed. Nothing changed. (SM5)⁷⁴

Thus, one can see that the hierarchical structure of Sanctum was such that the male ordained leader was to be seen as expert and authority, expounding correct scriptural teaching in the Sunday services, admonishing unscriptural behaviour in the community and making unilateral decisions about the nature of the community. This style of leadership was modelled in other parts of Sanctum⁷⁵ and in the overall leadership of St.

⁷³ Of the numerous examples given of Dave's authoritarian style of leadership, his telling members that they were not allowed to attend other services at St. Peter's and his asking individuals to not attend Sanctum (because their age was above the demographic aimed for) were the most cited and seemed to cause most upset.

⁷⁴ It is striking how the founder of Sanctum's comparison of himself to Moses in his leading and teaching of an unappreciative people, directly mirrors that of Calvin (see 3:1).

⁷⁵ Sanctum Small Groups, not discussed here due to their focus on churching individuals, displayed such a hierarchy. During my placement, the two groups were led by men, one of whom was ordained, one who was undergoing theological education. The evenings focused on the scripture taught at the previous Sanctum Sunday and featured questions set by the leader of that evening. The following comments, made by an original member of Sanctum would be a fair representation of those I heard regarding the nature of these small groups; "In this one [small group]...it feels like [the leader] is spewing out his knowledge and then there's space for people to ask questions about that or say, like, one little line and then [the leader] spews out more. I don't think that's actually a helpful way for people to learn and grow all the time. I

Peter's where clergy are actively discouraged from voicing alternative Christian viewpoints from their leader, the rector⁷⁶.

5:4:iii – Summary of Sanctum Pedagogy

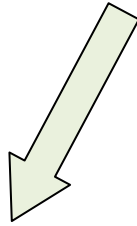
Consequently, the pedagogical approach of Sanctum could be summarised as follows:

think it's similar to Sunday nights...One person saying 'these are the things that you should learn from this scripture' isn't right and that's what happens when someone teaches and then makes up the questions for the small groups. If someone teaches and then we get the chance to look at the scripture and ask our own questions about it, I think, I think people will be willing to go deeper and ask the things that they actually want to look at. And actually realize the importance of the scriptures that we're reading." (SM3)

⁷⁶ The following quote demonstrates the assumed necessity for theological agreement with Mark, the Rector and St. Peter's leader "There is a St Peter's view and my expectation of the ministry team is that the St. Peter's view is essentially, the rector's view...I, in fact, expect that people have personal opinions but they get subsumed in the theological ethos of St. Peter's ministry. Hence, when we interview people, their theological perspective is really critical. And people mistake what we're doing – it's not for agreement. It's for alignment. Big difference...I'm not going to fight over a staff person who disagrees with me about, say, predestination but as soon as we're outside of the ministry team meeting, everyone's on the same page. I think the congregation needs to see...that the leadership team is of one mind."

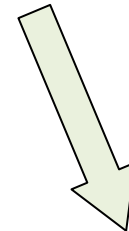
Sanctum Hikes and Sanctum Bites

- No intended explicit or formal teaching
- Relational teaching about Christians: They can be trusted, are not wholly other
- Introduction of Christian language and grammar in order that Sanctum Sundays will be more accessible.



Advertised Sanctum Sunday Pedagogy

Communal learning through dialogue, discussion and critical reflection.



Sanctum Sunday Pedagogical Praxis

- **Objective:** Transition into a worshipping Christian community; learning of correct, scripture-based beliefs.
- **Content:** Word-centred.
- **Method:** Scriptural exegesis and instruction
- **Role of teacher:** Expert and authority. Teaches didactically
- **Role of learner:** Accept and receive the teaching given
- **Outcome:** Demonstration of correct Christian beliefs and praxis

Figure 8: The pedagogical approach of Sanctum

5:5 – Establishing Spring

Officially founded in November 2007, Diana, founding leader of Spring, describes how the community grew out of 11 years of relationship and prayer with other Christian mothers;

As parents of primary school children, we used to meet outside the classroom at 'pick up' time. There were about ten regulars every day, morning and afternoon, and we began to chat about our faith with each other - including some who did not profess a faith. We joked that we should

have a coffee maker there because we were often hanging around outside school for up to an hour, just chatting and sharing prayer requests with each other.

As this community of the mothers of children at St. James' Church of England primary school continued to grow, Diana began to train for ministry at an Anglican theological college and found herself shocked that many Christians could not understand why more people did not attend Church.

The question was asked of us, 'Why don't some of these people come to church?' My response was to wonder why on earth they would!...I wonder, what on earth possesses us in church to think that others outside of the church might want to sit on a pew, sing songs and listen to a lecture, as they view it? It is the Church that is alien in our culture. We are the unusual one, the minority.

Diana wrestled with this issue and whilst questioning what the unchurched would attend, she 'thought of what we did as friends together: breakfast, drink coffee, pray together, laugh together, have relationship and support each other' (Diana) and thus, the seeds of Spring were planted. After a year of prayer and planning, Spring opened its doors, in the community lounge of St. James' Primary School, between 9 and around 11am on a Friday, and has continued to do so during term time ever since.

During my placement, Spring's Friday meetings were attended by between 7 and 17 people (10.3 mean average), comprising almost entirely of women⁷⁷ from their early twenties to their early sixties⁷⁸, the vast majority of whom were, or had been in the past, mothers of children attending the school and some of whom would bring their youngest children (those not old enough to attend the reception class) with them. Whilst there was no overt reference to Christianity in some of the group's advertising, as a fresh expression of church of four and a half years, it had evolved to the point where the Christian foundation of the group had become more explicit. A celebration of Eucharist marked the

⁷⁷ Of the five other men who attended during my fifteen weeks on placement, one individual from the local church attended once, three came to observe the group for fresh expressions research and one was Diana's husband, also ordained, who came to preside over or assist with Holy Communion.

⁷⁸ On the day on which I carried out the questionnaire research, 1 women was in the 18-29 age group; 4 in the 30-39; 5 in the 40-49 and 1 in the 50+.

start and the end of each term and ex temporary prayer was heard in all but two of the sessions. Other than the mornings in which Eucharist was celebrated, the mornings would consist of watching a Nooma DVD⁷⁹ and engaging in discussion (8 of the 15 meetings observed) or in simply enjoying breakfast and fellowship together (5 of the 15 meetings). On these mornings, members would gather, enjoy a beverage and chat between 9 and 9:30am at which point, the leaders, of which four were currently identified, would announce that breakfast was ready or that it was time to gather to watch the DVD. On breakfast mornings, the members would gather around one large table and enjoy a time of fellowship until around 10:30 when many would stay to help clean up. On 'Nooma' mornings, members would gather around the television screen before the DVD was introduced and played. A discussion facilitated by the group leaders would follow this and could last anywhere between ten and forty minutes, following which prayers would be prayed, notices given and the tidying up begun.

In addition to the Friday morning meetings, midweek gatherings had taken place and ranged in content, from conducting an Alpha course and Bible study, to holding an art group. During my placement, the Alpha course took place on Tuesdays between 9 and 11am and also included breakfast. These meetings were attended by between 3 and 7 women, all of whom attended the Friday meetings. It was apparent that members spent time with each other outside of the formal meetings, with social gatherings to which all were invited, taking place frequently.

5:6 – Spring Pedagogy

In this section, the relational pedagogical approach of Spring will be considered before looking at the modelling of hospitality, inclusivity and equality and an emphasis of God's love for all as key curriculum content. Having considered the communal pedagogical approach in which active participation of all members is encouraged and no individual is considered the expert, we will examine the ways in which the Spring leaders enculturate

⁷⁹ Nooma is the name given to a series of twenty four films, written and starring the Church pastor and theologian Rob Bell (who was named in TIME magazine's 100 most influential people in the world in 2011 – Meachem, 2011). The films last approximately twelve minutes, are intended to engender discussion and are frequently used by Christians at events which might be attended by those who have little or no experience of knowledge of Christianity. The producers of Nooma identify the DVDs as 'a series of short films that explore our world from a perspective of Jesus' and 'an invitation to search, question, and join the discussion.' (Nooma, 2012).

members into the stories, language and rituals of the Church before concluding by considering whether orthopraxy takes precedence over orthodoxy in Spring's pedagogical praxis.

5:6:i – Learning Through Relationship: Indirect Communication of the Gospel

“For me, it's one hundred per cent about building relationships with us, with God and with the wider community. Everything we do is about relationship.” (Diana)

There is no doubt that building close, loving relationships is at the core of Spring praxis. The fact that some weeks contain no explicit activity other than to have breakfast and to enjoy fellowship with one another is testament to this, and was corroborated in the questionnaires in which all the respondents ticked 'to provide friendship and community' when asked the purpose of Spring and all ticked 'friendship and community' when asked why they had continued coming to Spring. Indeed, the majority of members communicate and socialise with each other outside of Friday mornings and can be seen to support each other through personal crises – both practically and in prayer⁸⁰. However, more than simply being a by-product of a group which appears to get on well together, learning through relationship is seen to be key to Spring's pedagogical praxis. In describing what she has learnt attending Spring, one leader said the following;

The most powerful witness we have to the unchurched is that they catch a glimpse of the Kingdom of God in the way we live. Therefore I feel that wherever God calls me, be it Parish or Pioneering ministry, I want to show God's love to people in the way that they are accepted and welcomed. I want to teach them about Jesus through the way their brothers and sisters in Christ live their lives and I want them to experience the Holy Spirit in the way that the community of the Church live together. (Pippa)

⁸⁰ During my time at Spring, I witnessed members support each other through addiction, depression, a court appearance, visiting a child in prison, employment problems, marital difficulties and in bringing up children with disabilities.

Similar to that observed at North Shore Pub Church, at Spring, leaders wanted to communicate the gospel indirectly – not through overt proclamation and apologetics but instead to ‘teach about Jesus through the way their brothers and sister in Christ live their lives’ (Pippa). As we shall find below, teaching through the study of scripture or doctrine was minimal and instead, leaders believed that they were teaching about Jesus through the way in which they behaved towards the other. By establishing good relationships with the unchurched and dechurched, the Christian members of the group were able to communicate God’s love, to ‘teach about Jesus’ through their loving actions – a key part of which was through the demonstration of hospitality, inclusivity and equality.

5:6:ii – Teaching God’s Love Experientially – Hospitality, Inclusivity and Equality

We wanted all members to feel they could come along, be welcomed with a cuppa and enjoy a chat with friends. And for those with small kids, that they could put their feet up for a while and have some time off and watch the DVDs or just have a few minutes to themselves while we watched their kids for them. I know how much that can be needed! (Diana)

Showing hospitality to all is given high priority at Spring. Visitors are always formally welcomed to the group whilst more regular attendees are offered free tea, coffee⁸¹ and biscuits on arrival. The breakfasts are also predominately provided by the leaders out of their own pocket⁸², although members are encouraged to bring and share if they can. Individuals know that if they cannot or do not want to attend the discussions, then they are welcome to come and simply enjoy a cup of tea and chat, having dropped their child/ren off at school. Those with children will frequently be given some ‘time off’ (Diana) as other members of the group take care of them, allowing the mothers time to catch up with friends, participate in the discussions or have some time to themselves⁸³. The leaders stress the importance of welcoming all ‘as they are...in various moods, states and

⁸¹ “Good coffee, it’s not gonna be rubbish coffee. And *nice* food.” Diana

⁸² At the time of writing, Spring was not, and had not ever, received financial support from the diocese.

⁸³ One member emphasised this point as a key reason why she keeps coming back to Spring. She claimed that she wouldn’t feel welcome in a ‘proper church’ because she would be embarrassed by the behaviour of her five children – two of whom have learning difficulties – but that at Spring, both she and her children are accepted for who they are.

undergoing all sorts of crap in their lives but they're fully welcome as God's children' (Diana) and of the importance of listening to each individual's story. Explaining why she thought one individual – a challenging woman who was battling addiction whilst preparing herself for a court case and who had been warned about her behaviour by the school in which Spring met – kept dropping in, irregularly, for several years, another leader explained, 'She still comes in and knows it's a place of peace, fun...She can come, she can be herself, she can say anything and she knows that she will still be welcomed and she can be prayed for is she wants to' (Tracy). Thus, such hospitality sits alongside a stress on inclusivity – 'I think I'm trying to show that the Church is for everybody' (Diana).

From the justification given for the choice of resources used⁸⁴ to the ecclesiological radical position taken on Eucharist⁸⁵, hospitality and inclusivity were at the forefront of all decisions made. Members varied enormously in terms of education, socio-economic grouping, family status etc but all were welcomed and included, to the point where one Sikh woman deemed Spring her *sangat* and praised the fact that there was 'an openness and an invitation to dialogue without fear of being judged' (SG6). As attested here, all opinions were welcomed in discussions and those who might be considered by some as being at the fringes of society⁸⁶, were encouraged, not pressured, to share their thoughts just as much as others. Whilst differences of experience were acknowledged, no one's opinion was given greater preference over others, thus emphasizing the sense of equality embodied in the discussions which was also evident in the preparation and tidying away of sessions in which all were encouraged to participate, and of which the four leaders were always seen to serve. This modelling of, and focus on, the principles of hospitality, inclusivity and equality was highlighted by one leader in her suggestion that she had learnt what the kingdom of God should look like during her time at Spring;

⁸⁴ On Rob Bell and his Nooma DVDs, Diana said, 'I would say he's one of the best communicators in the business and I think his way of including people who think they're not included is...well, you can't measure it. It's perfect for what we're trying to do here.'

⁸⁵ Diana and the other leaders decided that they would operate an open table for Eucharist and would give the bread and the wine to any who wanted to receive it, even those who had not been baptised or who did not describe themselves as Christian.

⁸⁶ Such as the Nigerian woman whose English was very poor; the disruptive woman battling addiction mentioned above and the woman suffering from dementia.

The biggest thing is I've learnt what I think God's kingdom should look like or what He wants it to be. Which is everyone from different backgrounds and different academic abilities and everyone all welcome and all in the same place for the same reason, all having a role. And there is a leadership team but there is no evidence of a leadership system when you're there. I would never say Spring is a comfortable place to be, or somewhere I look forward to going to because I can never relax but I find it such an exciting place to be and I'm always attracted to it...but not a comfortable place to be but I think that's how the Kingdom is supposed to be because it's never going to be comfortable because everyone has a role and is equal and God loves them equally. (Pippa)

Thus, in their desire to 'teach about Jesus through the way their brothers and sister in Christ live their lives' (Pippa), the leaders of Spring have emphasized the importance of enacting the kingdom values of hospitality, inclusivity and equality in the praxis observed in the Spring community.

5:6:iii – Teaching God's Love for All

If showing hospitality, inclusivity and equality are three key principles of the Spring community, it is because they put into action the underlying message that the Spring leaders are trying to teach others – that God loves them;

That's what I try to do...you've got to show them the love of God and I think you can do that by modelling the love of God in your own life; showing them love; listening to people....I think my priority probably in life is just to love people. Love them so they get a glimpse of how much God loves them. (Diana).

Communicating the love of God to all is central to Spring pedagogy. It forms the basis for action⁸⁷; provides the foundation for biblical interpretation⁸⁸; and is repeatedly affirmed

⁸⁷ As quoted above, one leader stated, "I want to show God's love to people in the way that they are accepted and welcomed." (Pippa)

in discussions and in prayers. Whilst sin and judgement were only ever mentioned in the Eucharistic liturgy, talk about the love of God was heard weekly, whether said explicitly by the leaders themselves or in their choice of DVD material such as in the 'Lump' episode of Nooma in which Rob Bell ends his talk with the following;

May your whole life become a response to the truth that you've always been loved; you are loved; and you always will be loved. And may you know deep in the depths of your soul that there's nothing you could ever do to make Him love you less. There's nothing you could ever do to make God love you less. Nothing you could ever do to make Him love you less. Nothing. Nothing.
(Nooma: Lump, 2008).

Such comments were frequently reiterated, affirmed in the fact that when Samantha, a woman who had never attended a traditional church but who had been a committed member of Spring for over two years and was soon to be baptised, said that she believed that everyone would go to heaven. When I asked her why she thought this, with the awareness that her Christian knowledge came solely from the Spring group, she answered; "Well, He must do, mustn't He? God loves everyone, doesn't He?" The potentiality that God would not treat everyone equally; that God would not love all and bring all to rest in Godself was not even considered. Thus, the prime content of the Spring curriculum, taught through the actions and words of the churching Spring leaders, was that God loves everyone.

5:6:iv – Active Learners

Witnessed in all the elements of Spring – from preparing and tidying away, to participating in discussions and praying – is a stress on members to be active participants of the community. This approach is to be seen in its pedagogical praxis, such that the unilinear teaching of the sermon is deliberately avoided and exchanged for group dialogue

⁸⁸ In a discussion about the Bible that three members had whilst clearing up after one meeting, one leader said, "You have to read the Bible knowing that God loves us and wants good for us so therefore, if there's anything that you read that you think 'well that's not good!' or 'that can't be right – gouging my eye out' then ask someone and investigate it." Diana responded in agreement, "Yeah. When you read the Bible, it's the story of God. And always remember it says that God is love so that's at the root of it."

that takes place after watching a Nooma DVD, which are themselves founded upon the belief that just as Christ encouraged listeners to be active in their faith journey – ‘to search, to question, to wrestle with the implications of what he was saying and doing’ (Nooma, 2012) – so the Church should facilitate such learning today. Indeed, such was the desire to facilitate non-directed dialogue that Diana and the other leaders chose not to plan for the first, and then subsequent, discussions;

We put Rob Bell on in the first week and I remember thinking to myself, I’ve got no list of questions to ask them because, again, in my eagerness not to be...come over as cringe-worthy or telling them what to think, I didn’t want to say ‘Now let’s have a discussion about this’. So I said to Mary in the very first week, ‘right we’ll show the film and we won’t say anything. If they don’t want to say anything...’ Well, we couldn’t shut them up. They were ‘Well I thought this and this and this’ and ‘I thought, when he said about that...’ and the stuff that came out...! (Diana).

All members were encouraged to share their thoughts and questions with the group whilst the belief that the leaders were the ones with the knowledge to dispense to others was dispelled when questions directed to the leaders were referred back to the one who asked the question or to the rest of the group⁸⁹. Although the efficacy of this non-directed approach was questioned by two members⁹⁰, the majority of attendees frequently commented on how they appreciated this approach, hailing the fact that all members were able to participate irrespective of Christian knowledge or experience; that there was no concern about getting things right or wrong; and that this differed greatly from traditional church services where members were passive and made to listen to a prepared sermon which came from just one perspective⁹¹.

⁸⁹ A pedagogical technique also used in the Alpha sessions and Bible studies which took place on Tuesday mornings and of which Diana explained; “We’ll always ask them what they think about the passages. And if they ask us what something means, we might say ‘well what do *you* think it might mean’? It’s about walking with people again. Isn’t it better that we walk alongside someone and we see the view and discuss it together than for me to point out and explain everything – this is this colour...they don’t need me to tell them everything.”

⁹⁰ One member was vocal in her frustration that some weeks, the conversation isn’t facilitated adequately in order to go past the superficial, another thought the fault lie in the Nooma material which was lacking in ‘gospel truth and substance’.

⁹¹ Indeed, one woman who had been a Christian for many years commented that ‘I come along here and it’s great, actually. Faith here is very often raw and open and I have to say I learn a lot here and often a lot more than I learn on Sundays’.

This emphasis on active learning was founded on the belief that all Christians had a duty to wrestle with theological questions and thus take on the responsibility for their own learning and living out of their faith – that a ‘disciple...someone who has an active relationship with God must come to their own understanding of the faith’ (Pippa). Informed by previous negative experiences of attending churches in which individuals came ‘to believe something because they’ve been told they have to believe it’ (Tracy), three of the four leaders expressed the uniqueness of each individual’s journey of faith and the importance of the individual, not the clergy or church leader, to take responsibility for that – “They need to ask the question because they need to own it, ultimately. I don’t want them to believe something because I’ve told them. I want them to believe it because they know, in their hearts, it’s the truth.” (Diana).

Thus, the praxis of Spring was such that each member was encouraged to be active in, and take ownership of, their own learning which nevertheless largely took place in the context of group dialogue.

5:6:v – Communal Learning

If all I’m doing is trying to convert someone to my way of thinking about spiritual things, I’ve not particularly done much because all I’ve done is make them think like me for a period of time about something. If that person walks with me, or if I walk with *them*, if we walk the road together, it becomes life-changing. (Diana).

The above quote serves to demonstrate that an emphasis on the active learning of all members sits alongside a belief in the importance of communal learning, of ‘walking the road together’ (Diana) at Spring. We have already seen how all members are encouraged to participate in discussions in the belief that every individual and their experiences are of worth to the wider group – that as well as learning about the other, in hearing their beliefs and experiences, attendees ‘hear about other people’s real lives, learning from them and asking ‘where is God in this?’ (SG5). In such a way, some individuals at Spring believed that in learning about and from the other, one can reflect on and evaluate what oneself believes and perhaps even learn new things about God. This position is similar to

that found in the variation learning of North Shore Pub Church, though the discourse at Spring is less confrontational than it could be at North Shore Pub Church⁹².

The emphasis on communal learning over against a hierarchical model is further embodied in the stressing of team leadership at Spring⁹³; in the acknowledgement of a range of valid Christian interpretations of scripture⁹⁴; and most especially in the way that the leaders act as leader-learners. In the discussions, the leaders would participate but were keen to stress that they were not to be seen as experts but as fellow learners. Thus, the leaders would often refer questions addressed to them to the rest of the group and in describing their Christian beliefs, they would sometimes use tentative statements⁹⁵ or admit they did not have the answers⁹⁶ whilst also implicitly showing that they were learning from other members through their encouraging words to views being expressed⁹⁷. Such leader-learning was perhaps best exemplified during Diana's first presiding over Eucharist at Spring in which she could not remember the words of the blessing, looked to her ordained husband for a prompt and said, much to the delight of the rest of the group, "I'm still learning!".

⁹² Even the advertising of the two Fresh expressions demonstrates this difference. North Shore Pub Church's tagline being 'join the debate' with Springs advertised program inviting people to 'join us for coffee, tea and food, chat and a discussion'.

⁹³ In discussing how the unchurched members looked to the Christian members of Spring, particularly the identified leaders, to see how Christians should act, Diana spoke of the need to 'have safety in numbers' so that there wouldn't be one solitary model of how to be a Christian but a variety who all made pains to listen to and learn from the other.

⁹⁴ In a discussion on how to read the Bible, a member who had become a Christian within the last year expressed an uneasiness about reading scripture on her own. The importance, for Christians, of reading and studying the Bible in community was emphasised by Diana, who added, "And the other interesting thing is you might ask a question at this table and get four or five different opinions because actually we all have different suggestions and we come from all different church backgrounds so we might have heard it a different way and it might mean something different, and things like that. So it can be helpful to hear, y'know...a load of different Christian opinions about it. So even when you ask someone, don't assume that what they say to you, it has to mean what they say it does."

⁹⁵ For example, during a discussion about theodicy (not addressed as such), Diana said, "And I'm not sure but my suspicion is that it's the times that are tough that we need to dig in and say 'Okay God, I don't feel you...I don't know whether you're even there but please just help me. Like a child crying out.'"

⁹⁶ During the same discussion, Diana and another leader both gave examples of very difficult times when prayers they had said had not been answered and admitted they did not know why sometimes prayers do seem to be answered and why at other times they don't.

⁹⁷ Statements such as "That's really interesting"; "I'd never thought of it like that before"; and "Thanks, that's a really helpful insight" were often to be heard coming from the leaders.

5:6:vi – Enculturation of Christian Language and Ritual

Whilst Bibles were not physically used at Spring, scriptural language and stories were introduced and frequently explained within the Nooma DVDs and were then referred to in the subsequent discussions. In the DVDs, Rob Bell, praised by the leadership of Spring for his ability to talk about Christian beliefs and stories in a way accessible to all, teaches about Christian concepts such as the unconditional love of God (Nooma: Lump, 2008), salvation (Nooma: Trees, 2008), Christian giving (Nooma: Rich, 2008) and evangelism (Nooma: Bullhorn, 2008) with a great deal of reference to scripture. Biblical characters and stories are introduced without the assumption that listeners will have already heard of them and yet scripture is quoted or referenced to varying extents. Each DVD has some explicit scriptural content whilst some teach about the Biblical context in great detail⁹⁸; teach about the meaning of the original Greek or Hebrew words used⁹⁹; or quote scripture directly and frequently¹⁰⁰.

Moreover, as well as explaining or clarifying Christian beliefs in the discussions which followed the DVDs, intercessory prayers said near the end of the meeting, would always reiterate the Christian beliefs discussed in the DVDs or by the group. Effectively used as a plenary to what had been learnt and/or discussed that day, one of the leaders, normally Diana, would refer to what was considered to be the core message of the DVD as well as incorporating a summary of the gospel in a prayer of thanksgiving. Thus, following a discussion that centred on God's grace and unconditional love for all, Diana prayed;

God, we just thank you that you're so amazing. That you would come to us Lord; that you'd believe in us. And all the things that you sent Jesus to do – to give his life for us and to show us just how much he loved us and yet still you say to us that you believe in us. It's not about always expecting us to come to you and be who we think we should be in your presence. I thank you that with you, we don't need to stand on guard and stand on our best behaviour and dress up in our best clothes and say the right things otherwise you might

⁹⁸ For example, 'Dust' speaks at length about rabbinic education in first century Palestine; 'You' teaches about how the claims of Christ's miraculous birth, healing and resurrection would have been seen within the wider religious context of First Century Palestine (Nooma: Dust, 2008).

⁹⁹ Such as in 'Breathe' (Nooma: Breathe, 2008).

¹⁰⁰ Again, in 'Breathe', the Bible is quoted sixteen times in a period of twelve minutes.

be cross with us. That you love us as we are but also love us so much that you won't let us stay the same...

Such was the impact of the pervasive use of Biblical language, stories and concepts, that several 'unchurched' individuals who claimed to have first attended Spring with no Christian knowledge could be seen to freely discuss such concepts, confidently using Christian language. Much of this appeared to be picked up without explicit reference to the learning of new terms, although there were some occasions when members would ask the leaders or another member to further explain a word used or concept referred to.

Furthermore, it was not simply the Christian language and story/ies that were learnt but Christian rituals too;

I think people just think, 'this is the way it is done.' They assume this is church because they have no other point of reference. We model our faith and they come with us. So, people pray for each other now because they see us as leaders doing so. (Diana)

The Spring leaders are keenly aware that for those unchurched in the community, their understanding of church may be solely reliant on what they experience at Spring. Quite simply, they are learning how to do and be church. Thus, the leaders model and explain concepts which are then tried out and put into praxis by other members. Prayer, in particular, is something that is freely and frequently practised at Spring. Normally, it is the leaders who lead ex temporary prayers but other members are gently encouraged to pray – both in silence and vocally¹⁰¹ – with leaders hoping that a frequent practice of praying will teach both the how and the why behind the ritual;

So...it's subtle things really, maybe even like when we sit down to breakfast, that we'll pray. We'll say grace before and not just...not everybody has to say

¹⁰¹ For example, before a time of prayer at the end of one session, Diana explained the following; "Let's just have a time of relative quiet and then I'll just say a prayer at the end. If you'd like to pray out loud, the opportunity's there and nobody will mock you if you do or think 'that wasn't a very good prayer' so if you'd like to, do, but otherwise, I'll say a prayer at the end. So let's just have a time of quiet..."

grace but they can see how to do it and so maybe understand something about thankfulness to God. (Diana).

This enculturation process – of explaining, modelling, practicing – could also be seen in the sacramental praxis of Spring. On introducing Eucharist to the group (three years after its founding), Diana commented, “They just assumed that was what you did because we did it and they’re part of our community and we said, this is what we’re going to do...”

The first time Eucharist was practised at Spring, Diana, not ordained at the time, asked a friend and school chaplain, used to explaining what Christians believed happened in the sacrament, to preside and explain the meaning and content of the sacrament to the group;

She went through it and explained it bit by bit. Explained what she was doing, what each part was called and she explained, you know, this is the chalice, this is the paten, this is what you do, this is why you do it and whether they remember or all that or not, its fine...and we had agreed at the beginning when we were discussing who could take it and all that...we never made any demarcation, we just said to the people ‘this is what we do, this is what it means, if you want to participate, the table’s open to you’ and everybody took it and everyone’s taken it ever since...For a number of them it was the first time they’ve even partaken and there never seems to be any...embarrassment, they never...it just seems to be what they naturally do now. (Diana)

Here, we see that whilst Diana wanted the sacrament to be explained to the group, remembrance of this knowledge for future celebrations was not given prominence and in practice, individuals who did not express a faith or who did but were not yet baptised were welcomed to participate – both in the liturgy and in the taking of bread and wine.

The liturgy used for Spring Eucharist was taken from the Anglican book of Common Worship and thus included prayers of preparation, confession and absolution; the sharing of the peace; the recounting of the story of The Last Supper etc but interestingly, the Creed was omitted. Even so, the language used during this meeting was the most formal

and explicitly ecclesial at Spring yet in the explaining, modelling and practicing of it – in which understanding and orthodox faith were secondary to hospitality and participation – members, including those who did not express a Christian faith or who had only begun to identify themselves as Christian, appeared to be comfortable in partaking; that for them, in the words of Diana, ‘it just seems to be what they naturally do now’. Thus, the celebration of Eucharist, and even of anointing with oil¹⁰², appeared to be accepted, welcomed and made habitual by a community in which some members had not participated in the Christian sacrament previously.

When asked about the practice of Eucharist at Spring and in particular, about the use of formal liturgy, Diana commented;

We use liturgy for the Eucharist. I’m glad that we do liturgy and we do Eucharist the way that we do because they get used to the language and it opens up...they could go to another church and worship and pick it up if they wanted to. They’ve got the access to liturgy and access to very non-liturgical worship.

The deliberate enculturation of the language and rituals of the Church is clear here. Diana was explicit in her desire that members of Spring would be able to worship in other Christian communities and that they would see themselves as members of the wider Church, an intent further enacted in the welcome of a number of Christian visitors of different denominations and nationalities to the group and in the weekly announcements and invitations to Church events and opportunities that were taking place in the local area and diocese.

Consequently, in the Christian language, stories and beliefs heard in the DVDs and discussed in the dialogue and in the explaining, modelling and practicing of prayer and sacrament, one could observe the enculturation of Christian language and ritual in the Spring community.

¹⁰² One session, Diana introduced the use of oil to anoint those who were ill. Having ascertained the interest and permission of one member who was due to have an operation the following week, Diana showed the group her oil and said, “We’re going to pray for Jerry, who’s just come in. Now Jerry is going in on Monday for a small op. And I brought my oil with me – like I said I’d do – and sometimes I think it’s good to do something a bit symbolic and just to pray for people...” Following this, Jerry was prayed for and anointed in the name of the Trinity.

5:6:vii – Emphasis on Orthopraxy over Orthodoxy

“I think we’re much more about the how to, not the what, we believe.” (Diana)

The omission of the Creed from the liturgy of Eucharist in which those who were not baptised and/or who did not self-identify as Christian were welcomed to participate is indicative of a community in which active participation is stressed over explicit Christian confession; in which Christ-like praxis is emphasised over cognitive-propositional belief. The use of Bibles and explanation of doctrine were both deliberately absent from the Friday morning sessions and explanations about complex theological issues, particularly of those which might be deemed less attractive to the unchurched¹⁰³, were often brief or superficial. The Nooma DVDs, deliberately made to be accessible to individuals who were not practicing Christians, were criticised by one member for their lack of theological depth whilst Diana was ‘very much aware that we never say ‘this is what we believe – a, b, c, d’...’. As explicated above, initial learning about Christian practices and concepts was judged to primarily take place through people – through relationships and experiencing loving praxis – not through the study of doctrine, and thus embodied an approach itself built upon the understanding that to love other people is to love God¹⁰⁴. Those who wanted to learn more about the faith were encouraged to attend the Alpha and Bible study sessions which took place on Tuesday mornings and which, tellingly, were described by one leader as being ‘for those who choose to be taught’ (Tracy). Thus, the pedagogical praxis of Spring’s weekly gatherings was one in which learning and practicing key Christian values, most notably, of loving others, was given precedence over learning and believing orthodox Christian beliefs.

5:6:viii – Summary of Spring Pedagogy

The pedagogical approach of Spring could thus be summarised as the following:

¹⁰³ For example, the only mention of ‘sin’ in the fifteen sessions I attended came in the Eucharistic liturgy.

¹⁰⁴ The conflation of the love of neighbour with the love of God was common at Spring. For example, in Nooma, ‘Bullhorn’: “So may you see that how you love others *is* how you love God. That’s it. That’s the way of love. That’s the way of Jesus.” (Nooma: Bullhorn, 2008). In the ensuing discussion, Diana commented, “It just puts it simply, doesn’t it? You can go round worrying about how to show you love God but, as Rob says, you love God by loving other people.”

| Objective | Content | Method | Role of teacher | Role of learner |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| To learn about the love of God for all. To love and be loved - by God, self and neighbour. | The message 'God loves you'. | Relational – teaching through the loving praxis of others. Communal dialogue which includes the regular attestation that God loves all. | Facilitate loving praxis of hospitality, inclusivity, equality. Facilitate discussions and participate as leading learner. | Active participant. Express their story; listen to those of others; reflect on the dialogue. Experience the loving praxis of community. |
| To learn about, and how to be, church. | The mythos of the Church – some of its language, grammar and story. | Enculturation. Learning and then using Christian language and grammar. Participation and internalization of prayer and sacrament. | To introduce Christian language and concepts. To explain, model and facilitate the participation of Christian tradition and ritual. | Active participant. To learn and discuss Christian language and concepts. To participate in Christian liturgy and ritual. |

Table vii: The pedagogical approach of Spring

5:7 – Chapter Summary

In our reflection on the establishment and pedagogy of each of the fresh expressions of church studied we have observed that, as befits a movement which lays great stress on incarnating God’s love authentically in each unique community, the three churches greatly differ in terms of their form, structure and founding objectives and that such differences were dictated both by their ecclesial and social context and by the worldview and objectives of the founding personalities. Having examined the pedagogical praxis of each church, it is clear that they share a great deal in terms of challenges met and learning invited, particularly North Shore Pub Church and Spring, and yet there are profound and theologically driven differences in the pedagogical approaches advocated and embodied in each place. We now therefore move to a synthetic overview of the pedagogy of the three fresh expressions, therefore enabling deeper comparison and consideration of the pedagogy of the individual communities studied and of the movement as a whole.

Chapter 6: Research Analysis Part Two – A Synthetic Analysis of the Pedagogy of Fresh Expressions of Church

Thus far, our investigation into the pedagogical praxis of three fresh expressions of church has allowed the account of each church community to stand alone in an analysis which reflects the particularity of each community and acknowledges the emphasis on contextualisation as found throughout fresh expressions literature. Indeed, the three churches researched were vastly different in structure and style; age and location; resources used and demographic targeted yet they all claimed an identity of being a 'church in [its] own right established primarily for the unchurched' (identifying email). Here I draw together my observation of the three churches to enable a deeper understanding of the pedagogical praxis of those who bear the fresh expressions of church label and a richer reflection on how such praxis relates to the heuristic models of Christian education as outlined in chapter 3. An overview of the chronological context of the pedagogical praxis at the three church's weekly meetings will be given before the six central pedagogical approaches that were observed – modelling loving praxis; indirect and direct communication of the gospel; introduction of the language of Christian faith; enculturation and variation learning – are considered. This section will conclude with a reflection on the similarities and disparities between the pedagogical approaches explained here with the three identified in part 3.

6:1 – The Chronological Context of the Pedagogical Praxis

i – Trust as a Prerequisite

Congruent with much academic work on the subject (Jarvis, 1995; Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2000), in all three placements there was an acknowledgement of the importance of establishing trusting relationships as a prerequisite for adult learning. Made explicit in the planning and then praxis of North Shore Pub Church and Sanctum, this assumption was embodied in all communities in their emphasis on, and space built in their structure for, time solely for fellowship. Leaders acknowledged that little effective teaching – didactic or otherwise – could take place without such trust between fellow learners and teachers, particularly when it came to the unchurched, many of whom had come to distrust the church. Thus, deliberate attempts were made to establish trust – both between

individuals and as a community – through the enabling of shared experiences (some high-risk¹⁰⁵); the modelling of trust and vulnerability¹⁰⁶ and the explicit articulation of a time and space for confidentiality¹⁰⁷.

ii – An Invitation to Formal Learning Elsewhere

In his seminal work on the contextual church, Michael Moynagh, key proponent of the fresh expressions movement, suggests that;

If contextual churches veer towards the praxis end they will leave space for more cognitive forms of learning, such as an evening course introducing the Old Testament or perhaps worship with a more traditional sermon. Through the wider body, individual churches can pool resources to provide these complementary approaches. (2012, p349).

Such practice was observed to varying degrees in all three church communities. Outside of the main weekly meetings, each church offered an course, albeit intermittently, where those from the main meetings who were interested could experience more formal learning about Christianity. The Alpha course was delivered by two of the churches whilst Sanctum offered its own apologetics course, though only one of these was running during my period of fieldwork (the Alpha course at Spring) and this did not strictly follow the structure of the course in chronology of topic or number of meetings, whilst some of its content was openly questioned by the community's leaders.

¹⁰⁵ Whilst all three placements built in time for shared experiences that were not explicitly of a church nature within their weekly meetings (the pub chat in North Shore Pub Church; the walks/food preparation and pub visits in Sanctum missional cells and the coffee and chat period on Sanctum Sundays; the mornings when breakfast was shared and sometimes no mention of Christianity was given at Spring), North Shore Pub Church was the only community which built adventure events – the 'stag events' which included shooting, sea-fishing, rock-climbing etc – into its wider program. Such activities can be seen within the wider framework of 'adventure education', which itself has much in common with the objectives and methods of religious or Christian education (Hahn, 1960; Shackles, 1991; Breunig, 2001)

¹⁰⁶ James at North Shore Pub Church and Diana at Spring were both intentional in their desire to show their vulnerability and need for trusting relationships, through their sharing of family difficulties and their asking for advice.

¹⁰⁷ Above, we saw how 'the table' at North Shore Pub Church embodied rules that the community were committed to and one of the key ones was that 'what is said at the table stays at the table' (James) within the parameters of the law.

6:2 – Modelling Loving Praxis

In chapters 5 and 6, it was shown that teaching about the love of God, neighbour and self through the modelling of loving praxis was the foundational pedagogical approach at both North Shore Pub Church and Spring. Showing hospitality to friend and stranger; listening to all, especially those on the margins; serving the needs of one another in deed and prayer – from their founding, the key focus of both fresh expressions was to ‘Love [others] so they get a glimpse of how much God loves them’ (Diana). Thus, the leaders were intentional in their service to others, spending time giving pastoral care to individuals during the week and listening to those in the community, whilst they also encouraged such loving action to be reciprocated in showing their vulnerability and need to be loved within the group. At North Shore Pub Church, the modelling of such praxis was made explicit in the inclusion of the ‘Stuff That Needs Sorting’ and ‘Acts of Random Kindness’ sections of the evening, in which the leaders enabled members to be loving to one another (the former) and to the stranger (the latter), leading to altruistic encounters which one member described as a ‘life-changer’ (NSPC4).

At Spring, such encouragement was more implicit but no less present, in the testimonies and support of those who were doing good deeds in the community and in the praying for those in Spring and beyond. In both communities, it was the praxis of individuals, loving or otherwise, which provided the means of an assessment of the efficacy and christocentricism of the community – the pervasive question being, were individuals displaying Christ-like behaviour? The theological justification for this emphasis on modelling loving praxis was centred upon a belief espoused in both communities, that love of neighbour was synonymous with love of God, showing obedience to Christ’s teaching whilst also heralding the first stage in a contemporary process of evangelism, in which showing love to neighbour, and encouraging them to join in with such action, precedes an explanation as to why this is done. It is not surprising, therefore, that in both communities, and in common with some fresh expressions teaching (Kirke, 2012), orthopraxy was stressed over orthodoxy.

At Sanctum, whilst the demonstration of loving praxis may have been implicit within the community, the modelling of such action was not explicitly acknowledged as an important component of the teaching that was carried out. The identification of individuals as

pagans, heretics or disciples was founded upon belief, not action, and thus, as further explicated in chapter 5, at Sanctum orthodoxy was the source and goal of the community's teaching. It could certainly be argued that loving praxis was demonstrated in trying to serve the needs of the community in the missional cells, although such praxis was expressed as being unidirectional and carried out in order to build relationships, which were themselves founded in order to enable a transition into an already established worshipping community. The cancelling of the cells because this end goal was not achieved demonstrates that the focus was on the consequences of such action, not on modelling love to the other *in and of itself*¹⁰⁸. Moreover, the exegetical teaching on Sunday evenings focused on correct belief over correct practice, once again showing that the modelling of loving praxis, though inevitably implicitly present, was not central to the content of the teaching encountered at Sanctum.

6:3 –Indirect and Direct Communication of the Gospel

Sermons as we know them today (i.e. oratory, rhetorics) constitute a form of communication in complete disaccord with Christianity. Christianity can be communicated only by witnesses, i.e., by men [sic] who existentially express what they proclaim, realize it in their lives. (Kierkegaard, 1850, p180).

Hailed as 'the apostle of indirect communication' (Tinsley, 1990, p10), Soren Kierkegaard spent much of his life endorsing and embodying a Christian pedagogy which challenged that of its day, promoting instead one of indirection. A corollary of his kenotic Christology, Kierkegaard's understanding of the divine pedagogy and thus, that which we should seek to emulate, is 'rooted in two very sensitive pedagogical insights...[that] the teacher...cannot simply catechize the learner 'from above' but must be prepared to meet him where he is' (Pattison, 1997, p4) and with the aim 'to preserve the freedom and responsibility of the learner in the teacher-pupil relationship' (Ibid,p 5). Such a pedagogy, argues Kierkegaard, is encountered in the kenotic paradox of the incarnation for which, 'direct communication is an impossibility...for being the sign of contradiction He cannot

¹⁰⁸ This suggested difference in motivation is slight and may not have been articulated or agreed upon by all of those involved in the cells, yet I would argue that there is a fundamental difference between intentionally participating in acts of loving praxis *because of* one's theological stance, as an end goal in itself, rather than *in order to* achieve something other.

communicate Himself directly; even to be a sign involves a qualification of reflection, and how much more to be a sign of contradiction' (Kierkegaard, 1941, p126).

Whilst Kierkegaard's insightful pedagogy and cogent theology on which it is built is worthy of considerably more attention, due to the constraints of time and space, for now it will be sufficient to outline the key pedagogical consequences of it in order to relate it to the current praxis of fresh expressions of church. Kierkegaard's pedagogy of indirect communication led to a fervent condemnation of direct sermons (Kierkegaard, 1850, p180), apologetics (Kierkegaard, 1850, p163; 1941, p100; 1955, pp59-60) and all didactic teaching of the Christian faith (Kierkegaard, 1941, pp126ff) which could not, he argued, be reduced to a set of doctrines¹⁰⁹. In its place, Kierkegaard argued for an understanding of the teacher as a humble leading-learner (Kierkegaard, 1998, p45); that of the learner as being free, active and responsible for their own learning and faith (Kierkegaard, 1970, p69; 1998, p59); and that the gospel is to be communicated by witnesses who express God in their lives, not clergy or professors, who often do not (Kierkegaard, 1848, p221; 1999, p251). True worship for Kierkegaard thus consists of doing God's will in community (Kierkegaard, 1998, p245), endorsing the view that 'from the Christian standpoint to love men [sic] is to love God, and to love God is to love men' (Kierkegaard, 1946, p309).

It is clear that, in spite of their ignorance of Kierkegaard's teaching, both North Shore Pub Church and Spring shared much of the pedagogy outlined here. In both communities, didactic teaching and unidirectional preaching were discarded in favour of the learning implicit in encountering Christ through the lives of his witnesses. The teacher was not to

¹⁰⁹ "What the modern philosophy understands by faith is what properly is called an opinion, or what is loosely called in everyday speech believing. Christianity is made into a doctrine; the doctrine is then preached to a person, and then he believes that it is so, as this teacher says. The next stage therefore is to comprehend this doctrine – and that is what philosophy does. On the whole, this is quite right, in case Christianity were a doctrine; but since it is not that, this is a crazy proceeding. Faith in a pregnant sense has to do with the God-Man. But the God-Man, the sign of contradiction, refuses to employ direct communication – and demands faith." (Kierkegaard, 1941, p41f). Whilst Kierkegaard is quite clear that Christianity cannot be *reduced* to a set of doctrines, he does not negate the religious value of doctrinal statements and, in tension with his work on indirect communication, appears to suggest that doctrines have been divinely and directly revealed (Kierkegaard, 1955, p107). Nevertheless, whilst acknowledging the apparent contradiction or 'ahistoricism' (Law, 2007, p102) in Kierkegaard's thinking, I would support the view of Gouwens who suggests that '[h]owever adequate the doctrine, Kierkegaard's abiding concern lies with the context, the question of the subjective conditions, the faith and character of the teachers and the learners of doctrine' (Gouwens, 1988, p21).

be viewed as the expert with all the answers but as an individual who was also in the process of becoming a Christian, leading to their identity as leading-learner, not teaching from above but journeying alongside the other members in the community. The emphasis on the freedom and responsibility of each individual in regard to their learning and faith journey was also evident as individuals were encouraged to be active in their listening, learning, reflecting and participation in the community, all of which was built upon the underlying principle that 'you love God by loving other people' (Tracy), as demonstrated in their emphasis on teaching loving praxis over teaching correct belief. Indeed, the focus of orthopraxy over orthodoxy, witnessed at both communities, was summarised in Diana's comment that 'I think we're much more about the how to, not the what we believe', an analysis that echoes McPherson's observation that, 'The key word for indicating indirect communication is 'How', while the key word for indicating direct communication is 'What'' (McPherson, 2001, p164).

Moreover, one of the many techniques that Kierkegaard recommends under the all-pervading umbrella of 'indirect communication' is of 'deceiving the other';

What then does it mean, 'to deceive'? It means that one does not begin directly with the matter one wants to communicate, but begins by accepting the other man's illusion as good money. So...one does not begin thus: I am a Christian; you are not a Christian. Nor does one begin thus: It is Christianity I am proclaiming; and you are living in purely aesthetic categories. No, one begins thus: Let us talk about aesthetics. The deception consists in the fact that one talks thus merely to get to the religious theme. (Kierkegaard, 1962, pp40-41).

The process of Kierkegaard's deceiving the other is identical with that practised at North Shore Pub Church. The questions which structure the discussion are deliberately chosen to move from the aesthetic to the religious. The dialogical, communal nature of the Sunday meetings is emphasised in North Shore Pub Church's publicity and in the positive comments of the members who perceived that 'The discussions aren't all about God...[Y]ou don't have to be religious to get involved' (NSPC3). James and Sam were keen to get to the ethical and epistemological issues at stake behind the latter questions but also acknowledged the need to begin with questions of aesthetics that all could easily and

comfortably discuss, and to allow such discussion to take place in the vernacular. In such a way and unknowingly, they followed the process of deceiving the other, as outlined by Kierkegaard.

At Sanctum, whilst the missional cells could be seen to follow a similar process in that the confession of Christian faith was not intended to be heralded in the missional cells where a common enjoyment of an activity could lead to later discussion of the religious, the pedagogical praxis of Sanctum’s weekly meetings was of a different emphasis and embodied the methodology of ‘direct communication’, itself synonymous with the approach of instructional teaching. In chapter 3, we summarised the instructional pedagogy as follows:

| Content | Method | Role of teacher | Role of learner | Assessment |
|---------------|---|---|--|--|
| Word-centred. | Religious instruction; acquisition of scriptural knowledge. | Expert and authority. Teaches didactically and corrects heresies. | Accept and receive the teaching given. | Observation & examination of beliefs & actions of learner. |

Table viii: Summary of the instructional pedagogical approach

Through the analysis of Sanctum’s principle pedagogy, it has become clear that it follows such a model. Teaching is centred upon the proclamation and exegesis of Biblical passages in lengthy sermons preached by an ordained male, who affirms the directly mediated truths of scripture and corrects heretical beliefs in the community. Learners are persistently encouraged to accept such teaching and thus denounce any previously held Biblically incongruent beliefs or practices as the clergy understand them. Outside of these sermons, confessions are read and worship songs sung which corroborate the doctrines espoused in the named ‘teaching’ section of the evening. Such an approach is modelled and endorsed in the wider church of St. Peter’s, both in Sanctum small group and in weekly services.

Before we consider the introduction of Christian language in these fresh expressions of church, it must be acknowledged that whilst the pedagogy of North Shore Pub Church and Spring does indeed share much with Kierkegaard’s pedagogy of indirect communication, as said above, both churches had offered more formal, direct teaching outside of their main weekly gathering, not least of which is the Alpha Course which has been criticised

for its advertising as ‘exploring the meaning of life’ whilst embodying a direct and even prescriptive approach to teaching one particular understanding of Christianity (Brian, 2003; Hunt, 2008). This being acknowledged, such teaching was not offered at North Shore Pub Church during the research period whilst at Spring, where I observed seven sessions of the Alpha Course, the course was seen to be parallel to Spring’s main meetings rather than being part of the wider program and the leaders, who were initially sceptical of conducting a course within the wider Spring program, did not follow the chronology of the course, openly questioned some of its content and could often be heard making such comments as, ‘Don’t tell Nicky Gumbel what we do – we definitely don’t follow the Alpha rules!’ (Diana), and thus the direct course material was adapted for a group who advocated an indirect approach to teaching.

Thus, one can conclude that, despite offering teaching of a more direct nature in their wider curriculum, the praxis of the weekly North Shore Pub Church and Spring meetings shared a great deal in common with Kierkegaard’s pedagogy of indirect communication whilst that of Sanctum was of a direct, instructional pedagogy.

6:4 – Introducing the Language of the Christian Faith

In all three fresh expressions, a pedagogical practice emphasized to varying degrees was the introduction of basic Christian vocabulary and concepts, for there was widespread acknowledgement that those whom each church were trying to reach might have no previous Christian knowledge and might be put off by the assumed and frequent use of what one leader deemed ‘Christianese’ (Diana, Spring). However, each church enabled the learning of the Christian language in different ways and for different ends.

In North Shore Pub Church, the use of Christian vocabulary by the leaders was infrequent in most conversations, which were themselves typically proliferated with language usually deemed unacceptable in a Christian setting. However, a scriptural passage relevant to the discussion set and questions raised was included on the leaflet each week and whilst seldom explicitly referred to, it was always included as ‘some sort sign to them [the men who attend North Shore Pub Church] that the Bible might be of relevance to stuff that’s going on today. Whether they engage with that is up to them but it’s there as an option’ (James).

Moreover, Christian concepts were referred to and sometimes explained within the context of individuals sharing their worldview with the group. The means and the ends of such teaching appeared to be similar – to facilitate the encountering of different worldviews which included those of Christians, thereby showing obedience to Christ’s teaching¹¹⁰ and enabling a learning context in which ‘worldviews are expanded’ (James). In meeting the horizon of those who may previously had no Biblical knowledge, James endorsed an outlook which sometimes led to an overt explanation of Christian language and concept, and which at other times led to a decision to explain a viewpoint with no explicit use of Christian language, dependent upon the nature of the discussion and the discernment of the facilitator, which as James and Sam were all too ready to acknowledge, could be misjudged. Thus, James and Sam’s explicit introduction of Christian language and concepts was hesitant and context-dependent, and yet their belief that the public discussion of Christian concepts, albeit using the vernacular at times, was both an instruction by Christ and thus an end in itself sat alongside the pedagogical assumption that communal variation learning, and the sharing of worldview that it involves, is of inherent value.

Within the Sanctum structure, it was hoped that the Christian friends encountered by the unchurched in the missional cells would gradually ‘speak into their life using gospel words and gospel language’ (Dave). The two-tier system established – missional cells to meet the unchurched; Sanctum Sundays as a service of Christian worship – inevitably led to the hope that those who attended the former would subsequently want to join the latter¹¹¹. An introduction to Christian language was not seen as being an end in itself but part of the bigger picture of enabling ‘a smooth transition into the worshipping community’ (Dave) by familiarising the unchurched with language and concepts that would previously have been alienating to them and so doing in a safe space, before inviting them to Sanctum Sunday,

¹¹⁰ James often paraphrased Matthew 7:24 – ‘Anyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practise will have their lives built upon rock’ – and spoke of the Christian duty to speak those words of Christ in a language and in a way that men of contemporary society would listen to and understand.

¹¹¹ As we have noted above, the very fact that none of the unchurched individuals who came to the missional cells ever attended a Sunday night service was offered as evidence that they had ‘failed’.

part of 'the same trusted brand' (Dave) where this language was spoken freely and Christian knowledge was assumed¹¹².

At Spring, Diana was initially very hesitant to use Christian vocabulary for fear that the women would begin to speak 'churchese' or 'Christianese' (Diana). Her vision was of a church that would speak the language of the surrounding culture and would not alienate the outsider by using Christian terminology. However, five years on from Spring's founding, as a result of the long-term modelling of Christian living and gradual introduction of Christian vocabulary which has included the regular viewing of the Nooma DVDs, the use of Christian language and concepts is very common at Spring. Even those members who do not confess a Christian faith or who adhere to other belief-systems have become proficient in communicating using Christian vocabulary. Those who now join the community and who may have no knowledge of such language have it introduced and explained to them so that they can share the language of the community and thus be fully included.

Therefore, the introduction of the Christian language at Sanctum and Spring would appear to be for similar reasons. At both churches, it was understood that the Christian language was, or in the case of Spring at least became, the language of the worshipping community into which the unchurched were invited to join and thus learning the language of this community was key. However, at Sanctum, this learning was conceived to begin *prior* to the individual joining the already established church-based worshipping community where speaking the language was assumed. At Spring, this learning was not a necessary to joining the community but a natural consequence of being welcomed into a community in which this use of Christian language had slowly become commonplace.

Consequently, whilst all three communities shared the objective of introducing Christian language and concepts to those who were unchurched, the nature and intended purpose of such teaching varied between and within the communities. At North Shore Pub Church, a printed scriptural passage was included each week to encourage the unchurched to consider its relevance for today whilst Christian concepts were explained, often with a deliberately small amount of Christian terms, as obedience to Christ's teaching and to aid the exchange of worldview. At Sanctum, the use of Christian language and concepts was

¹¹² As illustrated in the preliminary discussion questions which assumed an existent knowledge of scripture – e.g. having read out Acts 2:14-24, we were asked to discuss the question, "Why do we think Peter quoted Joel here?"

an intentional part of the process planned to enable a smooth transition into the worshipping community of Sunday evenings, in enabling the unchurched to hear and understand language which could otherwise alienate them; whilst at Spring, the use of such language evolved gradually over five years to a point when its widespread use was the norm and thus those who were ignorant of such linguistics were taught the language of the community whilst they were welcomed into it.

6:5 – Enculturation

In part two, the pedagogy of enculturation was summarised as follows:

| Content | Method | Role of teacher | Role of learner | Assessment |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| The mythos of the Church; its language, grammar and story. Centrality of liturgical worship. | Ecclesiocentric: Participation and internalization of the rites, traditions, language and story of Christian faith. | Pass on traditions and rituals; teach and use language <i>faithfully</i> . | Predominately experiential – To participate in the communal, liturgical life of the Church. | Visible, faithful participation in visible, faithful Church. |

Table ix: Summary of the enculturation pedagogical approach

At North Shore Pub Church, there was little evidence of this approach in praxis. Key Christian vocabulary may have been explained in the sharing of worldviews but it was not intended to be passed on or embodied. The central method of the approach – that of participation in (liturgical, formal) worship was absent from Sunday evening meetings in which there was no semblance of any of the formal components of a service of worship. James regularly reiterated his desire that North Shore Pub Church would one day become a sacramental community but attempts to establish this were met with resistance from some members and no sacramental practice on Sunday evenings or in the wider community had been established when James left the group. Opportunities to experience, participate in and internalize the rites, traditions and stories of the Christian faith in an

ecclesial community were offered through other means¹¹³ but within North Shore Pub Church, the enculturation pedagogical praxis was negligible.

At Sanctum, the situation was quite different. Whilst there was no explicit enculturation experienced within the missional cells, on Sanctum Sundays, an alternative service of worship included worship songs and prayers; scripture readings and sermons; creeds and confessions. The clergy led the community who, in turn, participated in the service in prayer, word and deed. Liturgy was followed and communal reading, singing, praying and even tithing was encouraged in the belief that if this is what the wider Church practices, Sanctum should too. Sanctum was, after all, considered by many to be another service offered by St. Peter's Anglican Church and therefore, it was expected to bear a resemblance to a traditional church service. Once again, the confusion of identity at Sanctum led to an inconsistent approach to enculturation praxis. As a service of St. Peter's attended by up to thirty young Christians who were encouraged to solely attend this church, scriptural knowledge, an understanding of ecclesial practice and creedal assent were, at times, assumed and not explained. However, Eucharist was not celebrated because the leaders believed that 'those who weren't church'd might feel awkward...y'know, whether they should take it or not' (Dave). Thus, the liturgical praxis encountered on a Sunday evening was part-dictated by the experiences of the long-term church'd and part-directed toward those of the un- and de-church'd. Whilst there is no explicit problem with this *per se*, the absence of un- and de-church'd individuals at Sanctum and the disquiet from Sanctum church'd individuals concerning the quality or depth of teaching for them¹¹⁴, might suggest that in attempting to meet the needs of the two groups, Sanctum praxis fails to adequately meet either. Thus, at Sanctum, the

¹¹³ Most significantly, in the praxis of Oasis, North Shore Pub Church's sister fresh expression of church which met monthly, in a church building and which included an alternative worship service as part of its practice.

¹¹⁴ Four of the five non-leader members of Sanctum interviewed expressed a concern about the depth of Christian nurture and learning that they were experiencing, offering remarks as stark as 'I'm not growing in my faith as a result of Sanctum' and commenting that in being prepared to serve others (the un/de-church'd) every week, the church'd were either not fully participating in the worship service (such as a woman who was working behind the coffee bar) or could not express doubts or discuss Christian concepts and scriptural tensions at a deeper level. One questionnaire respondent, in describing the community, explained the problem as follows; "[Sanctum is]...an easy-going, relaxed church for those who are interested in knowing God or have "questions" (good or bad) about God. But then, once you become really familiar with Christianity and want to know more "advanced" knowledge of God, where do we go? Do we have to leave Sanctum and graduate to a regular church?"

enculturation of church rites, stories and traditions was inherent in its very structure but was secondary to the desire to make the community accessible to the unchurched.

In spite of the founder's initial desire that members not speak in 'Churchese', the community which most deliberately endorsed an enculturation approach to Christian education was Spring. Almost every week, prayer was modelled, explained and communally practiced, with the encouragement for members other than the leaders to 'give it a go' (Diana). The celebration of Eucharist, accompanied by a deliberately chosen traditional liturgy, came twice a term, which saw the rites explained and modelled by the leaders whilst all members were invited to participate. The stories of the church were heard and traditions of the church experienced¹¹⁵ on an ad hoc basis, through the teaching of the Nooma DVDs and in the praxis of the Christian members, especially the ordained Diana who was explicit in her desire that members who had come to faith within the Spring community would experience, and become confident participating, in liturgical worship so that they could participate in worship in other, more traditional, churches.

Thus, one can see that an endorsement of the enculturation pedagogical approach greatly differed in the three communities. Whilst enculturation played a minimal role in North Shore Pub Church praxis, it could be witnessed in the practice of Sanctum and Spring, albeit with different emphases. At Sanctum, ecclesial praxis was conducted but not explained to those with little or no previous experience of it whilst simultaneously omitting fundamental ecclesial rites in order to make the community more accessible to the un- and de-churched. At Spring, the passing on of church language, tradition and praxis was deliberate and always introduced, explained and modelled by the ordained and lay leaders.

6:6 – Variation Learning

A relatively recent and growing field of pedagogical research, the variation theory of learning developed within the phenomenographic tradition which emerged in Scandinavia in the 1970s (Marton et al, 2004). As explicated in chapter 5, the key concept behind the theory is that 'variation is necessary for any learning to take place' (Hella &

¹¹⁵ Such as the anointing of oil, laying on of hands and invitation to baptism.

Wright, 2009, p59) for '[t]here is no learning without discernment and there is no discernment without variation' (Marton & Trigwell, 2000, p387).

When it comes to religious, in our case Christian, education the variation theory of learning suggests that '[b]y engaging with a variety of contested aspects of religion (content) students develop appropriate levels of religious literacy (process)' (Hella & Wright, 2009, p59). Particular stress is laid on learning about the differences between *and within* religious worldviews, in the belief that such learning helps one reflect upon one's own worldview as 'to learn about the ultimate truth claims of a tradition other than one's own is simultaneously to reflect on the variation between them, and hence to come to see one's own tradition in a new light' (Ibid, 62). Learners are thus expected to be active participants within a communal learning environment and should intend to;

[U]nderstand the material for themselves, rather than simply reproduce the curricular content; they should interact critically, rather than passively accept ideas and information; they should relate their learning to previous knowledge and experience, rather than concentrate on the assessment requirements; they should use organising principles to integrate their ideas, rather than think unsystematically; they should relate evidence to conclusions, rather than simply memorise facts. (Ibid, 59).

Looking at the praxis of the three fresh expressions of church studied, it is clear that the approach encouraged by the variation theory of learning is at odds with the dominant, instructional pedagogy of Sanctum. In spite of an advertised pedagogy of discussion, reflection and mutual exploration, in dividing individuals into pagans, heretics and the elect, differences in worldview, differences even within the Christian worldview, were sought to be corrected and aligned to that of the ordained leader, whose views were, in turn and in public, expected to be aligned to those of the Rector.

At Spring, a variation pedagogy was more evident. Over breakfast, and most obviously after watching the Nooma DVDs, all opinions were invited and welcomed. Those of different religious faiths and those of none discussed the films' content with the Christian majority as they shared and reflected upon their responses to what had been said. Differences within the Christian worldview were given validation whilst the idea that

hearing about the varied beliefs of others enabled greater reflection of one's own beliefs was frequently articulated. This being acknowledged, the discussions did not focus on the particular and often divisive aspects of Christian belief – sin, the nature of the incarnation, atonement etc – and the theological beliefs of those who did not profess a Christian faith were not discussed or reflected upon at great depth. The expressed desire to create a safe, loving and respectful environment where individuals could explore Christian beliefs at their own pace, if they wanted to, led to a dynamic in which the similarities between different worldviews were emphasised over and above the differences. Thus, whilst there was some element of variation learning in the discussions between the women of varied religious and political outlook, age, socio-economic status etc, this was secondary to a pedagogical approach which prioritised the provision of a safe, loving environment for women, some of whom were vulnerable, above reflecting on the validity of competing truth claims.

It was at North Shore Pub Church that the variation theory of learning was thus most evident. The discussions were focused on an exchange of, and critical reflection on, worldview. Questions of ethics, ontology and epistemology formed the basis for communal debate in which each learner was expected to be active – to listen to the variety of beliefs and worldviews expressed and contested in order to learn about and from them, leading to critical reflection on one's own horizon of belief. Variation – both between different worldviews and, notably, within the Christian one – was heard, reflected upon and often celebrated. The key aim of this pedagogical approach – that 'by cultivating a deep understanding of students' horizons of meaning and the horizons of various religious and secular traditions, religious education should aim to empower students to make informed judgements about the ultimate nature of reality and the implications of this for the way in which they choose to live their lives' (Ibid, 62) was realized and evident in the members' assertions that different perspectives on life issues had been heard and learnt; previously held beliefs challenged and adapted; and behaviour had changed as a result of the transformative discussions that took place amongst trusted friends of varied backgrounds.

Thus, we can conclude that the content, process and intended outcome of the variation theory pedagogy was actively discouraged at Sanctum, could be observed at Spring to a

limited extent and was wholeheartedly, though unknowingly, endorsed and embodied at North Shore Pub Church.

6:7 - Heuristic Models and Pedagogical Praxis

Having outlined the six dominant pedagogical approaches observed in the praxis of the three communities studied and before I move on to consider their soteriological and missiological frameworks, a consideration of the relationship between the heuristic pedagogical models identified in chapter 3 and the pedagogical praxis of the communities must be carried out. Thus, here I concisely summarise how the three dominant approaches to Christian education as seen in the instructional, enculturation and critical praxis pedagogies as identified in chapter 3 relate to the praxis of the three fresh expressions of church researched.

6:7:i – The Instructional Approach

Identified as synonymous with Kierkegaard's direct communication of the gospel, above we saw that both Spring and North Shore Pub Church rejected an instructional pedagogy in the central weekly meetings. This approach, which focuses upon the acquisition of scriptural knowledge through the exegesis and exhortation of an ordained leader teaching didactically to passive learners who are encouraged to accept and assimilate the instruction given, was regarded as outdated, as treating the learner as an object rather than a free subject and as unhelpful to an active and life-long faith journey by the leaders of the two communities. Whilst opportunities for more formal, instructional learning about Christianity were offered in the wider program of both Spring and North Shore Pub Church, such learning was adapted to the pervasive approach of the communities, which stressed orthopraxy over orthodoxy.

At Sanctum, whilst an indirect approach to the communication of the gospel was advertised as being foundational to its identity, we have seen that the actual praxis of the community followed the instructional approach – from its stress on correct, didactic scriptural teaching given by the ordained leaders which was to be obediently accepted by

the laity to its scepticism towards, or even disdain for, alternative Christian viewpoints and biblical interpretations.

6:7:ii – The Enculturation Approach

James may have hoped that North Shore Pub Church would one day become an established sacramental community but during my placement at North Shore Pub Church, there was no evidence of any kind of formal worship, of traditions being passed on, or of members taking part in the liturgical practice of the Church, and thus there was negligible evidence of an enculturation pedagogy being practised there.

At Sanctum, the situation was inevitably different, given that ‘Sanctum Sundays’ was a liturgical alternative worship service which saw members confess sins, pray prayers, confirm creeds and sing worship songs. This service was the pinnacle of the Sanctum two-tier structure and if any un- or de-churched had attended on a Sunday night, they would have been invited to participate in this communal worship. Enculturation therefore was unavoidable in the Sunday night meetings and yet the absence of the unchurched at these services meant that enculturation focused upon those who had some experience of church, many of whom had been regular worshippers at other services at St. Peter’s. Moreover, the decision not to regularly celebrate the sacraments for fear it would make the un/de-churched ‘feel awkward’ (Dave) demonstrates that the enculturation approach was not consistently applied and was secondary to the imperative to make the church accessible to its intended demographic. Thus, at Sanctum, enculturation was partial and not foundational.

It was at Spring that the enculturation pedagogical approach was most consciously practised. Leaders and other Christian members taught about, modelled, and invited others to participate in, Church tradition and ritual – from prayer and the anointing of oil to the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy. Church language and traditions were passed on with the intention that members come to understand that they are part of a historic and catholic Church and with the hope that they would feel at ease and welcomed to worship in the inherited church.

Significantly however, whilst the enculturation of Christian stories, rituals and worship was witnessed at both Spring and Sanctum to a degree, the extent to which this was consistent, pervasive and dominant within the communities wildly differed from that advocated by the chief proponents of enculturation theory who endorse the view that worship – specifically formal, liturgical worship – is the most important pedagogical and missiological task of the Church;

Liturgy is the original and distinctive task, the primary responsibility of the Church. Everything else may be conceded, compromised, shared, and even relinquished. However, so long as the Church invites people to worship God and provides a credible vehicle for liturgy, it need not question its place, mission, and influence in the world. (Westerhoff, 2000, p76)

Thus, the practice at Spring – where formal liturgy is used and Eucharist celebrated just six times a year; where leaders do not want their members to speak ‘Churchese’; where hymns are not sung, creeds are not spoken, scripture not read from source – is clearly not in line with a pedagogy which sees liturgical worship as *the* central and only necessary task of the Church. It is for this very reason that many of those who advocate the enculturation approach to Christian education over and above all others do not consider fresh expressions of church to be church (Davison & Millbank, 2010).

Moreover, although the worship witnessed at Sanctum Sundays far more closely resembled that endorsed by advocates of the enculturation approach, there was no worship element present within the missional cells, which were considered to be ‘the true fresh expression of church’ (Dave) whilst the very fact that Eucharist was consciously omitted at the vast majority of Sunday services so to make the community more accessible for the unchurched reveals an ecclesiology, and accompanying missiology and pedagogy, which puts the consideration of the unchurched over and above what the enculturation theorists would regard as the key task of the Church – that of faithful, liturgical Christian worship.

Therefore, whilst Sanctum and Spring both demonstrated elements of Christian enculturation in their praxis, neither had as deliberate or systematic a pedagogy, nor

placed as great an emphasis on liturgy and worship, as that endorsed in the enculturation model of Christian education.

6:7:iii The Critical Praxis Approach

In chapter 3, we saw how Christian educationalist Thomas Groome summarised the critical praxis approach as ‘a group of Christians sharing in dialogue their critical reflection on present action in light of the Christian Story and its Vision towards the end of lived Christian faith’. (Groome, 1980, p184).

It was then acknowledged that this approach might cause some difficulty for fresh expressions practitioners, as they do not intend, at least in the early stages, to be working in a community with ‘a group of Christians’ but ‘primarily with the unchurched’ (identifying letter), many of whom would have little experience or understanding of the ‘Christian Story and its Vision’ and who may not care to gain such, and yet many of the components of this approach appeared to be endorsed by fresh expressions literature. Thus, what did the praxis show us?

First, it must be acknowledged that the variation theory of learning has much in common with the critical praxis approach. Learning is communal, with the leader expected to facilitate dialogue as leading-learner and other learners expected to actively participate, listening to the experiences and beliefs of the other whilst also critically reflecting on their present praxis and worldview, holding fast to the intended outcome that beliefs and actions should be critiqued and adapted in such a way that encourages greater religious literacy and enables learners to examine the dialectic between their beliefs and actions. The one key difference between the two pedagogies is that the critical praxis approach, conducted within a Christian setting, deliberately and explicitly looks to scripture and tradition as key partners in the dialogue, thus enabling ‘critical reflection in present action *in light of the Christian story and its vision*’ with the hoped-for outcome, not of general religious literacy and more informed ethical action, but ‘towards the end of *lived Christian faith*’ (Groome, 1980, p184).

At both North Shore Pub Church and Spring, therefore, the critical praxis approach was *partially* evident in their pedagogical praxis. At North Shore Pub Church, where the

founding objective was the same as that of the critical praxis approach, in the discussions held present praxis and belief were indeed reflected upon, critiqued and in some instances, reformed. However, whilst there were occasions in which scripture and/or Church tradition were cited as part of this process, this was infrequent and never carried out in such a way that they were promoted as communal resources to critique and be critiqued by, but rather as the stories and praxis of the Church which influenced the thoughts and actions of only some of the individuals around the table. Not all members knew or wished to know 'the Christian Story and Vision', nor would they articulate the objective of the group as to enable faithful Christian living and consequently, whilst North Shore Pub Church praxis shared some of the methods of the critical praxis pedagogy, the assumed religious context, content and shared aim of the approach were not consistently and fully adopted by the community.

At Spring, after five years spent maturing into a community in which Christian language and lifestyle are predominant, in the discussions that followed the Nooma DVDs some individuals would indeed offer suggestions about how the Christian stories or concepts that had been cited might critique their present praxis and belief. However, even in a community which was overwhelmingly Christian, it was not assumed that all shared this outlook and any suggestions made were thus tentative, self-referential and generally went unchallenged. Just as at North Shore Pub Church, not all members of the Spring community viewed scripture or Church tradition as authoritative resources to be wrestled with or the Christian Vision and Story as horizons to fuse with their own and thus, once again, the assumed Christian context, content and shared aim of the critical praxis approach were not shared by all members of a community which so deliberately wanted to include everyone and give equal respect to each member's perspective.

In Sanctum, there was no evidence of the critical-praxis pedagogical approach in action. Whilst the community would have identified with the overall objective of the approach, its validation of Christian pluralism; allowance for the possibility of present experience critiquing scripture and tradition; and fiercely communal and dialogical process of learning were all, like the central tenets of the variation theory of learning, rejected outright and deemed unhelpful in guarding and proclaiming orthodox Christian belief.

Consequently, whilst rejected outright by Sanctum, the pedagogical approach of communal dialogue and critical reflection on present praxis by a community in which the leader is facilitator and leading-learner, learning is active and right action is viewed as a key consequence of the process, as endorsed by the critical praxis approach, was evident at both North Shore Pub Church and Spring fresh expressions of church. However, the authority given to Christian scripture and tradition and the ultimate pedagogical objective of enabling more faithful Christian living, as advocated by the approach, was not and could not be assimilated by the communities which were primarily founded for the unchurched.

6:8 – Chapter Summary

Above, I have outlined and analysed the pervasive pedagogical strands of the three fresh expressions of church studied, demonstrating that whilst the three communities share both the challenges of the Christian education of the unchurched and some aspects of pedagogical praxis which engage with such challenges, significant differences in their pedagogical praxis abound.

I have demonstrated that all three communities laid great emphasis on the establishment of trusting relationships as a prerequisite for adult education, offered more formal learning in their wider curricula and introduced the language of the Christian faith, albeit with different emphases and objectives. However, I have argued that whilst North Shore Pub Church and Spring shared an emphasis on experiential learning through modelling loving praxis and an indirect communication of the gospel, Sanctum taught a direct, instructional curriculum. I then explained how variation learning could be partially observed at Spring, was most fully advocated in North Shore Pub Church and rejected outright at Sanctum whilst enculturational praxis was minimal at North Shore Pub Church, inconsistent at Sanctum and given high priority at Spring.

As concerns the comparison of the pedagogical praxis of the three communities with that of our heuristic models outlined in chapter 3, it has been made evident that, as expected, each fresh expression practised an amalgam of at least two of the pedagogical models whilst embodying pedagogical approaches which would not easily fit into any. That being said, I demonstrated how the praxis of Sanctum closely matched that advocated in the

instructional model whilst aspects of the enculturation approach were observed at Sanctum and Spring. I have argued that the critical praxis approach was not fully adopted by any community, for its dialectical approach was not acceptable for Sanctum whilst its assumption of both the shared belief in the authority of Christian scripture and tradition, and a shared objective of more faithful Christian living could not be fully adopted at Spring or North Shore Pub Church. However I have demonstrated that both Spring and North Shore Pub Church did indeed share much of the methodology of the critical praxis approach in their focus on critical reflection on present praxis, communal dialogue, active learning and an understanding of the leader as facilitator and leading-learner.

Chapter 7: Research Analysis Part Three – Individual Analyses of the Soteriology and Missiology of Fresh Expressions of Church

In this chapter, the information gathered during the fieldwork period on the soteriology and missiology of each fresh expression of church researched will be individually outlined and analysed. Both the explicit, articulated theologies of the communities and the implicit presuppositions and assumed beliefs are considered and evidenced.

7:1 – The Soteriology of North Shore Pub Church

i – An Unarticulated Soteriology

Perhaps unsurprisingly, for a church which is intended to be accessible for the unchurched, there was minimal talk of soteriology within the Sunday meetings of North Shore Pub Church. Words such as ‘salvation’, ‘saved’ and ‘justification’ were deliberately never used and their concepts never explained. Neither the members, frequent attendees or otherwise, nor the leaders, ever asked about the issue. The language and concepts involved in Christian theories of salvation – whether present or future, individual or communal – were judged to be a barrier to an accessible church¹¹⁶ whilst both leaders, when interviewed on their own, were reluctant to endorse a systematic soteriological position, openly rejecting their own previously accepted demarcations of salvation and articulating instead an agnostic approach to the issue;

The theology I now have and speak and preach is one of journey rather than in and out – ‘you’re alright, you’re in; you’re going to burn, you’re out’. It’s now, ‘you’re on a journey, I don’t know where you are on that journey. Only God does’. (James)

The implicit endorsement of such an agnostic, unarticulated soteriology is partly due to the fact that James was questioning his previously held views on salvation. When asked

¹¹⁶ This was particularly the case when it came to more traditional, conservative views on atonement and salvation. For example, James suggested that ‘[S]ociety isn’t going to be open to a judgmental, angry God. It’s desperate to see a God who loves them... We live in a different world. If the church carries on preaching the same gospel as it did fifty, sixty years ago, it just won’t be heard.’

how he would respond to the soteriological claim that individuals must personally confess Christ to be saved and that preaching should reflect this, he answered, “I...I struggle with that. I came to faith through that understanding and it’s...it’s a constant question for me, personally. A journey I’m still on.”

Moreover, when discussing Bevans’ typology of a creation-centred worldview and a redemption-centred one, James freely spoke of how he was brought up and trained in a church which promoted the former but that it was the latter that he was endorsing and embodying at North Shore Pub Church; “My viewpoint would be creation-centred so my fresh expression would revolve around that. You are a good person, whatever your background and if you can’t see the good, we’ll find the good in you.”

Thus, the absence of any talk of salvation at North Shore Pub Church was in order to keep the group accessible to the unchurched; a result of the issue never being brought up by member or leader; and a consequence of James’ changing views on soteriology which began to favour a more creation-centred approach in which the goodness of humanity and creation is emphasised over sinfulness and the need for salvation.

7:1:ii – Emphasis on Works over Belief

Though never articulated on a Sunday evening, when asked about their personal soteriological view in interview, both North Shore Pub Church leaders rejected the view that one had to profess faith in Christ in this life to spend eternity with God in the next;

I don’t believe that the Bible says that the only way to salvation is through professing Jesus’ name on Earth. I believe that Jesus, at the point of judgement, Jesus can stand alongside somebody who hasn’t necessarily confessed his name on Earth and say ‘yeah – this guy or girl is a goodie. I’ll stand by them’. (Sam)

Implied here by Sam’s assertion that Jesus might ‘stand by’ a ‘goodie’ who has not confessed Christ’s name on Earth, the clearest account of an emphasis on the importance of works over belief for future judgement and salvation is found in a dialogue with James, previously referred to;

James: If they don't believe in the two natures of Christ; if they don't understand the story of the Good Samaritan; if they don't understand the story of this, that and the other... then...well...these guys are *living it out*... Y'know when they stand before Christ, y'know, and he says 'Did you love me?' And they say 'Well actually, I never met you,' and he says, 'Well actually, I was Greg that night' ...that's the story of the gospel.

Me: So is it about action?

James: Fuck, yeah...Christ fed the poor and healed the sick and he hung out with the lowly and the prostitutes and the scum. Not once did he preach, 'Oh you've got to believe in me and my resurrection otherwise you won't go in to heaven'. Did he?

Here, in a conflation of judgement and entrance requirements for heaven, it is clear that James believes that Christ's judgement will focus on action – on how we have loved the other – rather than on belief in Christ and his resurrection. As we have seen, such a focus on loving action over and above correct doctrinal or biblical belief is embodied in North Shore Pub Church praxis, pervading the Sunday night discussions¹¹⁷; the charitable acts undertaken by the group; and the ways in which James had identified the Spirit working in the men's lives¹¹⁸. An implicit soteriology which stresses loving action over correct belief would thus seem to be endorsed at North Shore Pub Church, further corroborated by the fact that the one individual who was a self-identified new Christian and who had only received Christian teaching at North Shore Pub Church agreed with the statement 'I believe that good people go to heaven' rather than one which focused solely on belief.

¹¹⁷ In the Christian values practised; in remarks made throughout the discussions; and most particularly, in the 'Stuff That Needs Sorting' and 'Acts of Random Kindness' element of the evening.

¹¹⁸ "It's incredible, the journey that they've taken. And while some of them have not sat down and prayed a prayer of commitment in some respects, the way that they now view their own role within their working lives, within their marriage lives, within their lives within society as well as in our community has totally changed. And the way that they're living out their Christian faith without it being necessarily recognisable in the ways that you would see somebody in church living out their faith...erm...so they might not have a Christian sticker on the back of their car or have a Bible with them wherever they go and stuff but the decisions they make in business about...like justice and equality...I believe are works of the holy spirit." (James).

Therefore, one can conclude that whilst the soteriological position was unarticulated and not given any prominence within the group, the founder had begun to advocate a creation-centred worldview in which the goodness of humanity and creation as a whole is stressed over sinfulness and the need for salvation; that both leaders expressed a soteriological position that rejected the idea of explicit cognitive belief in Christ expressed in this life as being a necessary entry requirement for an eternity with God in the next; that Christ's judgement of an individual would focus more on their actions rather than beliefs and that this was evidenced in the words of the leaders, acquired beliefs of new Christians and praxis of the group as a whole.

7:2 – The Missiology of North Shore Pub Church

i – Engagement with the Unchurched

From its inception, James has laid great emphasis that the fundamental objective of North Shore Pub Church and thus its mission was to enable engagement between church and unchurched men – “The whole Ethos of North Shore Pub Church is to engage with lads who would not usually engage with church, but who are open to faith issues and it is all based on relationships.” (James, Vision and Strategy Document).

In the Vision and Strategy document of North Shore Pub Church, James clearly outlines the argument that ‘the Church in the west alienates men and deters them from participating’. Thus, viewed by James as a personal calling¹¹⁹ and one which the western church at large is called to, James sought to establish a community in which church and unchurched men would enjoy fellowship and build community together. All levels of the North Shore Pub Church structure – the bi-monthly ‘stag events’, Sunday evening meetings, camping weekends – were designed with the intention that strong, trusting relationships be formed between men with differing worldviews who might otherwise not normally meet; a design which, according to the testimonies of various members, has been fruitful¹²⁰. The three other missiological emphases of North Shore Pub Church are

¹¹⁹ “After six to eight months of praying and listening, I had [the absence of men in the church] laid on my heart...So I got talking to Sam and Mike and said, ‘Let’s have a go at connecting with men in North Shore.’”

¹²⁰ Many of the interviewees remarked upon the close nature of the group and the vast differences in worldview, education, life experience etc represented there whilst all of the questionnaire

contingent on this first one, which dictated the very nature of the Sunday evening meetings¹²¹. Thus, the concept of Christian men simply encountering and engaging with men who otherwise would have little or nothing to do with Church is at the centre of North Shore Pub Church missiology.

7:2:ii – Relational Evangelism

“[M]ission is engaging with others who do not know Christ and allowing them to both hear and respond to him and his message...” (James, Vision & Strategy Document)

If the engagement with unchurched and dechurched men is central to the mission of North Shore Pub Church it is such as it enables the subsequent missiological emphases to come to fruition. In interview both James and Sam frequently reiterated their desire for the men of North Shore Pub Church to encounter the Christian gospel with the hope that they would ‘come to faith...come to know Christ in the way that I know him.’ (James)

In chapters 5 and 6, I demonstrated how the indirect communication of the gospel is a key part of the pedagogical approach of North Shore Pub Church and this is central to its mission. The previous evangelism technique of direct apologetics or preaching of the gospel was rejected with the understanding that ‘Men don’t need to be told what is right and wrong but rather they need to work it out for themselves’ (James, Vision & Strategy document) and in its place, James and Sam advocated and enabled the men of North Shore Pub Church to ‘hear the teachings of Jesus [through the] views and philosophies and worldviews’ (James) of his followers around the table, and encounter the teachings of Christ through the loving actions of his followers in the community. Christian beliefs were rarely spoken of explicitly and doctrine not at all, evidenced in the fact that the one interviewee who claimed he had ‘become Christian’ since attending North Shore Pub Church did not take an orthodox Christian view on the authority of scripture or divinity of Jesus. Instead, the gospel was communicated through the lives and words of the

respondents ticked ‘To provide friendship and community’ as the purpose of North Shore Pub Church and all ticked ‘Friendship’ as a reason why they have continued attending Sunday meetings.¹²¹ The original experiment of basing the discussions around an informal Bible study was soon scrapped when several men left and was replaced with the (at least initial) discussion of items from the news which was deemed more accessible to the unchurched.

Christians who would share their views around the table and their lives in community and thus, talk of Christianity took place, indirectly and naturally, through relationship.

7:2:iii – ‘Salt and Light’

Me: Is there a part of your old self that would worry about that...that would question whether they [the men of North Shore Pub Church] were saved or whether they've...

James : No, that's slowly been eroded away.

Me: So, if you've moved from a position where you thought the Church's mission was to convert or save people, what would you say it was about now?

James: It's about...I think it's about being incarnational. Presence. About being salt and light in the world.

Pervading the two previous missiological emphases, for James, the mission of the contemporary Church including that of North Shore Pub Church is to be salt and light in the world. In both word and deed, through the pedagogical and soteriological emphasis of orthopraxy over orthodoxy, the presence of a community that engaged with those who were outside of the traditional church and that centred upon love of self, neighbour and God was constantly reinforced. James and Sam saw the mission of North Shore Pub Church as showing, and inviting others to participate in, an alternative way of living, founded upon the Christian gospel¹²². In an exit interview, when explaining to James and Sam that North Shore Pub Church appeared to embody a missiology which centred upon love; *love of self* – through the praxis of hospitality, inclusivity and equality around the table – *love of neighbour* – both within the group through valuing and supporting each other (affirmed in the ‘Stuff That Needs Sorting’) and in the wider community through taking part in charity events and acts of compassion (affirmed in the ‘Acts of Random

¹²² “I think what you need to be able to say to people ‘This is how I live, would you like to join in living this way? Would you like to join in with what we do? Why would like to join in with what we do? What inspires you about what we do?’ You know, disciple them in that way.” (Sam).

Kindness') – and *love of God* – through the words and actions of the Christian leaders around the table – James commented, “Brilliant, I can retire! That’s it. That’s who we are what we do. I think that’s clear and that’s good and I think you’ve been able to articulate it in a way that we haven’t...that’s why we asked you to come!”

The missional desire to be salt and light – to live and invite others to join in an alternative way of living – was initially to focus on the unchurched and dechurched men of North Shore. Indeed, the assertions of North Shore Pub Church regulars that attending North Shore Pub Church ‘just brings a better quality of life’ (NSPC1); has helped them to become more tolerant of others, being open to alternative worldviews, and critically reflective of their own actions; and encouraged and enabled them to be more loving to strangers (see 5:2:iii:d and h) is testament to the outworking of this mission, as is their description of North Shore Pub Church as a ‘benevolent group’ (NSPC2) and ‘an example of how we should be as a community’ (NSPC1). However, it was never intended that North Shore Pub Church was only to be salt and light to those attending Sunday evenings;

We’re always trying to work out whether what we’re doing is right – is this just becoming a drinking club; is this becoming just a moaning shop or something like this. Or is there another focus? Is it Christ-centred? And as part of that we built in the Acts of Random Kindness to be more missional but in a way that people who don’t understand the concepts of mission or evangelism or social action would understand it in their regards, y’know, you’re just doing something nice for someone else, but to keep us outward focused. (James).

From the outset, James desired North Shore Pub Church to ‘reflect Christ through our community’ (Vision & Strategy document) to those beyond the few who attended on a Sunday. Particularly evident in the establishment and consequences of the Acts of Random Kindness and in the charity events that North Shore Pub Church organized or were involved with in the community and which were frequently reported in the local media, the missional desire to be a group which was salt and light to the wider community of North Shore was at the centre of North Shore Pub Church’s missiology.

Moreover, it must be acknowledged that whilst the enacting of this missiological approach was most clearly evidenced in the actions of those attending North Shore Pub Church, James and Sam and subsequently other members of North Shore Pub Church, witnessed to the Christian narrative through the intentional wearing of clerical vestments at public events, in the often explicit explanation that they acted as they did because of what they believed and in the constant invitation to find out more through attending either North Shore Pub Church, Oasis, the sister fresh expression of church, or a midweek Bible study or Alpha course. Thus, in summary, a core missiological imperative of North Shore Pub Church was to be present as salt and light in both word and deed within the wider community of North Shore.

7:2:iv – The Hope to Become a Sacramental Community

In the North Shore Pub Church Vision and Strategy Document, James wrote that one key objective was ‘To form a christian [sic] community that is centred around the Eucharist, Trinitarian worship, social action and faith sharing’.

Whilst the sharing of faith and involvement with social action was witnessed at North Shore Pub Church, the celebration of the Eucharist and explicit Trinitarian worship was not. This was acknowledged by James in his update to the Vision and Strategy document three years after writing the original in which he stated; “We hope that we will become an [sic] Eucharistic community, but how, where, and when we are still exploring.”

The group had celebrated Eucharist on four occasions in five years with three of these occurring on the weekend retreats and one after a Sunday evening, the latter arousing suspicion with some members of the community,¹²³ and thus the celebration of Eucharist had in no way become a regular or accepted element of the mission of North Shore Pub Church. Thus, as Eucharist had been celebrated infrequently and with varying degrees of success, one could not claim that North Shore Pub Church as observed was a community centred around the Eucharist.

¹²³ One interviewee commented, ““Having the bread and wine at Simon’s house was a little bit funky...that was a little bit...It just wasn’t right. It was more of a...cult. If it had been on in church I don’t think there would’ve been a problem with it.” (NSPC4)

7:2:v – A Tacit Endorsement of the *missio Dei* Hermeneutic

An explicit endorsement of the understanding of mission as being God’s mission was not articulated by James in his words or in the North Shore Pub Church literature. However, much of the Vision & Strategy of North Shore Pub Church Document was based upon the central tenets of the Mission-Shaped Church report, itself founded upon an endorsement of the *missio Dei* and threads of this understanding of mission could be found throughout James’ explanations of the work of North Shore Pub Church. In his description that he spent the first year at North Shore ‘listening to the community, seeing what was going on and trying to work out where God was already doing stuff’ (James) and in his assertions that the Church no longer had the monopoly on God¹²⁴ – that Christ was at work beyond the boundaries of the Church including in other religions¹²⁵, and that the unchurched could teach the church something of Christ¹²⁶ – an implicit acceptance and endorsement of the understanding of mission as God’s mission which the Church has the privilege and duty to participate in, was apparent in James’ theology.

7:3 – Summary of North Shore Pub Church’s Soteriology and Missiology

The soteriology and missiology of North Shore Pub Church could thus be summarised as follows:

¹²⁴ “I think for too long the Church has had the monopoly on God and that’s turned everybody off and so I think at times we need to say, ‘Hmm...you tell us what you think’.” (James)

¹²⁵ Me: “What if someone asked the question, “Bringing together a community is great but why is that different to a Muslim group, an atheist group, a Masonic group?” Does Christ need to be an explicit part of it?”

James: “Is Christ not present in the atheist group? Is Christ not in the Muslim group, the Masonic group?”

¹²⁶ “What I think I find down here...I’ve learnt from Christ in a way I’d never expected to because it’s dominoes...it’s incarnational in’t it . You’re saying ‘Bang – please show me Christ’. And they do.”

| Soteriology | Missiology |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unarticulated within community • Creation-centred emphasis • Explicit faith not considered a requirement for eternal salvation • Judgement based on works, not belief | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with the unchurched • Relational evangelism • Presence of ‘salt & light’ within community – the living of, and invitation to, an alternative way of living • The hope for formal, sacramental worship in the future • Implicit endorsement of the <i>missio Dei</i> hermeneutic |

7:4: The Soteriology of Sanctum

i – An Intentionally Unarticulated Soteriology

As at North Shore Pub Church, the issue of salvation was not freely discussed in the weekly meetings of Sanctum. Whilst leaders spoke dichotomously of pagans and believers, and attested that ‘There is a cosmic battle in this universe for us’ (John), further discussion or teaching about the consequences of this or about the four last things was noticeably missing. This absence was acknowledged by members of Sanctum in the wider context of St. Peter’s, as members commented that they had received no teaching on the issue on the St. Peter’s Christian apologetics course or in sermons in the various St. Peter’s services, with one member explaining this lack of teaching with the comment, “St. Peter’s is very quiet about how conservative it is’ (SM3). Such a view – that St. Peter’s is deliberately quiet about some of its more conservative theology – was supported by the Rector in his explanation of the relationship between the implicit and explicit theology of St. Peter’s:

I think, at least as an Anglican, actually, our theology is actually fairly conservative but I think the application of our theology has to be done in the most liberal and effusive of ways....For example, theologically we cannot condone or sustain that position [the validity of same sex relationships] from

a theological position, however, a huge number of lesbian couples come to St Peter's to worship because I think, I would argue, they know they're welcomed. They know that we're not going to...from the pulpit, as a lot of evangelicals do, is to pound them but I think there's a humility that we screw up so badly on all of the sexual issues, whether it be abortion, divorce, you name it, so we're trying to figure that out. But we still hold to the position that we theologially, that cannot be consistent with who we are.

The Rector's position as advocated here is one of being 'theologically conservative...missionally liberal' (Mark) - thus welcoming lesbian couples at St. Peter's and not preaching against same sex relationships from the pulpit but holding firm to a reading of scripture and a theology which would not condone them. The desire to be 'missionally liberal' would thus appear to be one in which being a welcoming and accessible community takes priority over the public condemnation of same-sex relationships, which is nevertheless deemed to be biblically based. Whilst we cannot simply assume that the same principle can be applied to the soteriological null curriculum of St. Peter's and Sanctum in particular, the reluctance met from the ordained leaders when asked to describe their own soteriological position, the constant reiteration of the importance of being accessible to the unchurched in use of language and concept, and Dave's acknowledgement that 'we intentionally 'bury' some of the things you're looking for since our website is mainly geared to seekers' might point toward such a conclusion.

Thus, it is suggested that soteriological concepts and consequences are not explicitly taught or discussed at St. Peter's or Sanctum because of the belief that the direct teaching of such matters might not be in keeping with its desire to be 'missionally liberal' in welcoming the stranger and making the church accessible to seekers.

7:4:ii – The Assumption of the Necessity of Explicit Belief in Christ for Salvation

Despite the lack of explicit, public discussion of soteriology at both St. Peter's and Sanctum, when interviewed, the majority of members and all the leaders of Sanctum spoke of the necessity of explicit belief in Christ for salvation. Some members struggled

with the pastoral consequences of such a view but still affirmed it as they believed it is taught in scripture whilst others more clearly and freely identified hell 'as a place where God isn't and the people who go there are those who have rejected God' (questionnaire response). When encouraged to explain their own soteriological position, all the leaders of Sanctum affirmed the need to confess Christ in this life, suggesting that adherents of other religions were 'lost'¹²⁷ and that 'anonymous Christians' were not yet saved;

They kind of come half their way on the journey but for them to finish the journey, they have to encounter who Jesus is and confess to follow him. For unless one has called upon the name of the Lord, that Jesus is Lord, you can't be saved. (Mary)

Thus, although the teaching that one had to believe in Jesus as Lord in this life to be saved was not explicitly taught in the articulated theology of Sanctum, this belief was assumed and unquestioned.

7:4: iii – The Assumption of Individual, Other-Worldly Salvation

The position described above advocates an understanding of salvation that is both individual and other-worldly. Such a position was held by the ordained leaders of Sanctum, none of whom made mention of salvation in this life or of corporate salvation and all of whom also wanted to make it explicitly clear that they did not advocate a belief in universal salvation – of either all humanity or all creation. This position was also to be found in the questionnaires in which only one of the fifteen respondents, who had been attending Sanctum for 1-5 months, spoke of salvation in corporate terms. Thus, the implicit belief in individual, other-worldly salvation was held by leaders and members of Sanctum alike.

¹²⁷ Indeed, using the language of 'pagans, heretics, unbelievers', there appeared to be an emphasis on a tribalistic understanding of the Christian God who was more powerful than all other deities. A favourite song played on Sunday evenings was entitled 'Our God' by Chris Tomlin and contained the lyrics 'Our God is greater, our God is stronger; God You are higher than any other. Our God is Healer, awesome and power. Our God, Our God... And if Our God is for us, then who could ever stop us? And if our God is with us, then what can stand against?'

7:4: iv – An Unarticulated Assumption of Predestination

The ordained leaders who had been directly involved in the founding of Sanctum were all ambiguous about the nature of election and were unwilling to give a definite answer on the subject. However, there was some evidence which suggested that the doctrine of predestination was a theological supposition at St. Peter's and therefore, Sanctum. Firstly, the work of Timothy Keller, Presbyterian pastor and apologist, was advocated at St. Peter's. According to Dave, when he first joined St. Peter's and asked for a summary of the theology of the church, he was directed to the writings of Keller, 'the icon of St. Peter's' (Mark), as were all of those enrolled on the St. Peter's 'Introduction to Christianity' course. Keller advocates a reading of scripture which understands hell as everlasting and which sees individual, eternal salvation as preordained for the elect. Such a view was held by Mark, the rector of St. Peter's and his explanation of his pastoral oversight of all of St. Peter's and his leadership of the ordained team implies that his understanding of election was not to be publicly questioned¹²⁸. Thus, whilst I did not observe the leaders of Sanctum explicitly articulating a reading of scripture which supports predestination during my placement, the Christian writers who St. Peter's endorse, use in their apologetics course and sell in their bookshop do advocate such a view, as does the rector of St. Peter's, who also expects all other clergy to uphold such a soteriological position in public gatherings.

7:5 - The Missiology of Sanctum

i – An Ambiguous Missiology

The mission of Sanctum was oft referred to but seldom defined. Leaders frequently spoke of the mission 'to people who aren't in the church' (John) or emphasized the 'missional edge of Sanctum' (Dave) but when pushed as to what this entailed and where it came

¹²⁸ As noted in chapter 5, when asked about the theological diversity of St. Peter's, Mark commented, "There is a St Peter's view and my expectation of the ministry team is that the St. Peter's view is essentially, the Rector's view...I, in fact, expect that people have personal opinions but they get subsumed in the theological ethos of St. Peter's ministry. Hence, when we interview people, their theological perspective is really critical. And people mistake what we're doing – it's not for agreement. It's for alignment. Big difference...I'm not going to fight over a staff person who disagrees with me about, say, predestination but as soon as we're outside of the ministry team meeting, everyone's on the same page. I think the congregation needs to see...that the leadership team is of one mind."

from, explanations were decidedly ambiguous. In interviews, members too were unclear as to the missiological understanding and purpose of the church, repeatedly and tentatively couching their answers in terms of what they thought the leaders might have intended.

The cause of this missiological uncertainty would appear to be grounded in the confused origins of Sanctum. Part consequence of the desire to establish an alternative service which would reach the missing demographic of St. Peter's¹²⁹; part consequence of an intention to plant a new church community which was explicitly not meant to be an alternative worship service¹³⁰; and part consequence of the variety of personalities¹³¹ and financial considerations involved in its founding¹³², the leaders of Sanctum and the wider St. Peter's community were not united or consistent in their explication of the identity, leadership structure or intended demographic of Sanctum. Hence, the minister at St. Peter's who was responsible for promoting fresh expressions of church in the diocese could rail against the idea of Sanctum becoming an alternative worship service for disaffected Christians as it was intended to be a church in its own right whilst a serving leader of Sanctum could admit that he 'always saw it as a service of St. Peter's, even though it was clearly defined as a church in its own right' (Nigel). Or again, Sanctum could be identified as a fresh expression of church by members of the national fresh expressions leadership team whilst simultaneously being described as having lost its status as being a fresh expression of church by its founding leader¹³³. Such confusion

¹²⁹ "The director of St. Peter's wanted to see a new service start that would reach the demographic that wasn't part of St. Peter's right now." (John)

¹³⁰ "It was always supposed to be a separate church. I want it to be a separate church...My fear for Sanctum is that it will become a service for trendy Christians...or that it will be for young, hip Christians who are disaffected from other churches...and that is not growing the kingdom, that is moving the saints, right?" (Mary, ordained minister at St. Peter's and Archbishop's Officer for Mission).

¹³¹ At least five ordained leaders played a part in the founding of St. Peter's, each expressing a slightly different emphasis on its identity and mission.

¹³² When asked why he set up Sanctum as he did, with three separate but overlapping communities (missional cells; Sunday evening meetings and midweek Bible studies), rather than follow the model of fresh expressions of church that he himself taught, Dave's first response was to explain that "We went the direction we did, probably because of the way the project was conceived...there was already a project with funding when I joined St. Peter's. The diocese was funding a few large-scale, large budget projects and this was one of them."

¹³³ Dave, founding leader of Sanctum, always claimed that the missional cells were 'the true fresh expression of church' so when asked if the cessation of the missional cells meant that Sanctum was no longer a fresh expression of church, Dave responded, "[A]s it stands today, if the missional cells never existed again...then I'd say we have an internal church plant. The congregation has grown out of a larger congregation. Is it strictly a fresh expression of church? Not so much."

was inevitably heightened during the period of my research in which a transition of leadership and vision was being undertaken and yet, it is argued, the seeds of this were sown in its founding. Thus, a confused understanding of identity and purpose unsurprisingly led to a confused understanding of Sanctum's mission from members and leaders alike.

7:5:ii – Engagement with the Unchurched

In spite of the many, varied and sometimes contradictory understandings of the very purpose and identity of Sanctum, both leaders and members were united in their assertion that the mission of Sanctum, whatever that may be, was intended to be for the unchurched;

So really it's a mission to people who aren't in the church, who don't know God, and specifically where we are now, it's for people in their twenties and thirties, young professionals, in the city, who need to be reconnected to God. So that's the primary mission of Sanctum. (John)

Engagement with the missing demographic of the unchurched professionals in their twenties and thirties pervaded all thinking behind Sanctum praxis, from the focus on building relationship and community in the missional cells to the structure¹³⁴ and sacramental praxis of the Sunday evening meetings¹³⁵. The desire to form relationships with the unchurched and to show them that Christians 'might be different but we're normal' (John) or even 'intriguing' (Dave) was thus a prime missiological objective of the community.

¹³⁴ The structure of Sunday evenings was purposefully designed to be 'accessible' (Dave) to the un- and dechurched.

¹³⁵ The absence of a regular Eucharist at Sanctum was due to the desire that the un- and dechurched would not 'feel awkward as to whether they should take it or not.' (Dave)

7:5:iii Relational Evangelism and the Transition into the Worshipping Community

Perhaps unsurprisingly for a 'legacy church' (Mark) with an average weekly congregation of over six hundred and fifty people, great emphasis was laid on the importance of a worshipping community at St. Peter's and therefore, at Sanctum too. Indeed, one crucial strand in the establishment of Sanctum was the acknowledgement that young professionals in their twenties and thirties were currently not attending the traditional church and therefore, 'The director of St Peter's wanted to see a new service start that would reach the demographic that wasn't part of St Peter's right now' (Dave). The absence of one group from the worshipping community thus prompted the missiological desire to attempt to reach this missing demographic and aid them in their transition into a worshipping community. The way of achieving this, as explained in 5:5:i, was to be through relational evangelism;

If they're honest to goodness friends with followers of Jesus, hopefully there is something about those people that is different, intriguing...and conversations will simply happen as life happens, their friends will speak into their life using gospel words and gospel language...and that's where discipleship will start to happen – at a very personal, relational level. Real friends but real friendships that talk to their real life and real problems have gospel answers so that's where I saw discipleship happening in small groups and missional cells, with the hopes that discipleship conversations that started to happen in those missional cells, then there would be a natural way for a member of the Sanctum community, who's there in the missional cells to say, "Hey, we actually talk about this stuff in more depth on Sunday nights. Why don't you come? I'll be there – it won't be that scary. I'm part of this and it's got the same name, like Sanctum community; Sanctum nature." The same trusted brand so it would be a smooth transition into the worshipping community. (Dave).

As seen here, enabling the unchurched to experience a smooth transition into the already established worshipping community (one that affirms creeds, sings worship songs,

confesses, prays, receives scriptural teaching and tithes) was always the desired outcome of the establishment of the missional cells. The intention was that the 'missionaries' gathered from the other services at St. Peter's would build relationships with the unchurched and would later invite those friends to attend the Sunday evening worshipping community which was no longer as inaccessible (due to the drip-feeding of Christian language and concepts by the churched Sanctum members) or 'scary' (as it was part of the 'same trusted brand' as that which oversaw the weeknight activities). The Sunday evening meetings were to be the central focus of Sanctum mission, so that when the missional cells yielded no new attendees on a Sunday evening, they were considered a failure and disbanded. Thus, one central missiological aim of Sanctum was that relational evangelism would be carried out *in order to* enable a smooth transition into the worshipping community for those who were previously outside of it.

7:5:iv – Expounding Scriptural Truth

We have already seen how the leaders of Sanctum held, if not always publicly articulated, a worldview which understands that there is a 'cosmic battle in the universe for us' (John) in which 'Satan wants to take down gospel ministry' (Mary); that non-believers are identified as 'pagans' (John); those of other religions as 'lost' (John); those of alternative Christian theologies as 'heretics' (John); and that those who do not affirm and confess Christ as Lord in this life will not be saved in the next (Dave, Mary). As a consequence of this, it is not surprising that a fundamental element of Sanctum missiology is to expound a particular interpretation of scripture and correct that which is regarded as heretical;

[W]hatever heresy has been discussed at the tables previously...erm...hopefully gets corrected by the last word which is, y'know, here's the teaching time. We value people participating and discussing and, y'know, being honest about what they really think and all that but then we want the Word of God to...to have the last word. (Dave).

As would perhaps be expected by a church which self-identifies as 'conservative evangelical' (Dave) and 'reformed' (Dave), St. Peter's and Sanctum both lay great emphasis on preaching and teaching that which they regard as the correct interpretation of scripture. As identified above, members may be allowed to express different scriptural

interpretations during discussions, but if considered to be errant, these will be corrected in the exegetical ‘teaching time’ by an ordained individual, who will also identify and teach against heretical practices by those within the community too¹³⁶. Thus, the expounding and guarding of what is seen as scriptural truth, is a central missiological aim and practice at Sanctum.

7:6- Summary of Sanctum’s Soteriology and Missiology

The soteriology and missiology of Sanctum could thus be summarised as follows:

| Soteriology | Missiology |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An unarticulated soteriology • The assumption of the necessity of explicit faith in Christ for salvation • The assumption of individual, other-worldly salvation • An implicit endorsement of the doctrine of predestination | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ambiguous missiology • Engagement with the unchurched • Relational evangelism to enable a smooth transition into the worshipping community • The expounding of scriptural truth |

Table xi: The soteriology and missiology of Sanctum

7:7 – The Soteriology of Spring

i – An Articulated, Creation-Centred Approach

Contrary to both North Shore Pub Church and Sanctum, the concept of salvation was frequently articulated in the weekly Spring meetings. Whilst the discussion of *other-worldly* salvation was noticeably absent and concepts such as sin and redemption were not referred to, the Nooma DVDs explicitly endorsed a soteriological position which was assumed by Spring members. We shall go into this in more detail below but for now, it is important to acknowledge that both Nooma and Sanctum advocate a creation-centred approach to issues of salvation. In the DVDs, the preaching of otherworldly salvation is

¹³⁶ Such as we saw in the case of the woman who practised yoga.

spoken against¹³⁷ and a redemption-centred hermeneutic is rejected¹³⁸ in favour of one which sees the world as sacramental¹³⁹ and that sees God, whose spirit is in everyone¹⁴⁰, as loving us ‘exactly as we are’ (Nooma: Bullhorn, 2008). The leaders of Spring endorsed this position – rejecting the proclamation of heaven and hell as an evangelistic tool¹⁴¹, affirming the significance and sacramentality of God’s creation¹⁴² and of the presence of God within all people¹⁴³ - and such a view went unchallenged by the rest of the community. Thus, following the Nooma: Rhythm DVD (2008), which suggested that all of humanity was in an existent relationship with God whether they were aware of it or not, the group affirmed such a positive anthropology with members giving the following comments;

SG6: My understanding is that God created us in His image and therefore we all have God within us so I think when we define someone as a Christian or not a Christian, we actually limit ourselves from seeing God.

¹³⁷ For example, in ‘Nooma: Bullhorn’ (2008), Rob Bell speaks against using heaven or hell as an evangelistic carrot or stick, partly because he asserts that Jesus did not do this – “The hellfire and brimstone stuff is so dangerous. When you tell me that I should follow Jesus so that I don’t burn forever, it sounds like a threat. As if you scare people enough, they’ll all of a sudden magically decide to love God and follow Jesus. But that isn’t what Jesus did. Jesus went around inviting people into the best possible kind of life. I mean, at one point, He even says: “I’ve come that you might have life and have it to the fullest.” You just don’t find Jesus waving heaven in front of people as some sort of carrot on a stick.”

¹³⁸ ‘Nooma: Trees’, ‘Nooma: You’ and ‘Nooma: Bullhorn’, (2008).

¹³⁹ ‘Nooma: You’. (2008).

¹⁴⁰ ‘Nooma: Breathe’ (2008).

¹⁴¹ For example, one leader, who spoke angrily about previous experience of churches which proclaimed heaven and hell on a regular basis and which, she believed, directly led to both her father and her son struggling to accept, or even outright rejecting, the Christian faith, said “It just can’t be about telling people ‘you’ve got to believe in this so you get into heaven and avoid hell’ because that’s not about Jesus and it’s not good news. Jesus is so much bigger than that. If that’s what you preach, then, like Rob says, you’re missing out on the real good news. That Jesus loves us all and nothing can change that.” (Tracy)

¹⁴² One leader commented that “The problem is some people who think that salvation is... the traditional view of are you saved or are you not saved, they just don’t care about this life at all. All they’re interested in is the beyond which we know nothing about. Some don’t care about the planet because it doesn’t matter because we’re going to have a new heaven and a new earth. As far as I’m concerned, the new heaven and the new earth is the kingdom that God’s restoring. It’s our responsibility to look after this planet. After all, this planet is where Jesus walked. This is what God created” (Tracy).

¹⁴³ Diana – “Well, why wouldn’t He love us? We’re made in His image...It’s about finding the Christ in people and drawing Him out.”

SG2: There's a wee saying that I really like and it says, 'If you can't see God in all; you can't see God at all' and that...sort of...helps me to remember that God is in all of us.

Diana: Surely then, it's about tapping into the goodness of God in people, which I think is already there.

Thus, in affirming the goodness of creation and humanity; rejecting the belief in or direct proclamation of heaven and hell; and affirming the presence of God in all people and creation both Nooma and Sanctum advocate a creation-centred hermeneutic to issues of soteriology.

7:7:ii – Emphasis on Present Salvation

When I'm talking to people and I want to bring them to faith, I don't want to bring them to faith because I don't want them to go to hell...I'm thinking about God transforming lives now and that's what drives me. (Diana).

Once again in line with the teaching of Rob Bell, salvation at Sanctum is spoken of in terms of lives being transformed in the present. In interviews leaders repeatedly spoke of their disdain for those in the Church who 'count up the number of people you've saved' (Tracy), who preach a message of 'pie in the sky when I die' (Diana) and instead, they emphasised the importance of 'changing people's lives here on Earth...I want cake on the plate while I wait' (Diana). Thus, when discussing why mission and discipleship was of such importance to Sanctum if a focus on otherworldly salvation was not promulgated, all leaders stressed the salvific impact of a relationship with God in the present;

Why not just do it later in life? Well then you miss out on the amazing relationship you have with God. Like that bit from Zacchaeus...what does it say? 'Salvation has come today'. Not sometime in the future but *today*...[S]o the benefit to us now of recognising Him is the relationship we have now with Him for our lives and it makes our lives easier coping when things are hard to face. I'm not saying we're not going to face difficulties but with God alongside us we can cope with them in a different way. (Alice)

In such a way, the leaders of Spring emphasised the importance that their understanding of present salvation had on the missional objectives and praxis of the community.

7:7:iii – Communal Salvation and the Hope for Universal Salvation

In the Nooma DVDs and in his written work, Rob Bell clearly advocates a communal view of salvation – one that speaks of all creation being restored, “To make the cross of Jesus just about human salvation is to miss that God is interested in the saving of everything. Every star and rock and bird. All things.” (Bell, 2005, p161).

Indeed, Bell’s promulgation of the salvation of all creation has led him to imply a soteriology of universal salvation¹⁴⁴, most famously put forward in the controversial book ‘Love Wins’ (2011).

At Sanctum, both the belief in the salvation of the cosmos¹⁴⁵ and the possible salvation of all humanity is advocated over and against a dichotomous soteriological position;

For me, actually, I do think...so I was raised in a Pentecostal Church where they’re very tight on this issue. You put your hand up and you go forward and you give your life to Jesus and you’re saved. You’re in or you’re out. The way I look at things now is I’ve come to view it a different way. If Jesus said, ‘I’m not willing that *any* should perish’...you know, John 3:16 – God so loved *the world* ...doesn’t that mean that He wants to save everyone? (Diana).

Like Bell, none of the leaders were prepared to declare outright that all *would* be saved, and yet all affirmed the possibility of this and espoused a theology which pointed to this as a valid Christian belief. This was corroborated by the fact that the only questionnaire respondent who had come to faith through attending Spring and who had received no Christian teaching outside of the community, ticked ‘I believe that everyone goes to

¹⁴⁴ “So this reality, this forgiveness, this reconciliation, is true for everybody. Paul insisted that when Jesus died on the cross, he was reconciling “all things, in heaven and on earth, to God”. All things, everywhere.” (Bell, 2005, p146).

¹⁴⁵ In explaining her soteriological position, one leader commented, “My understanding about salvation is that it’s not just about salvation of individuals but about the salvation of the universe. So, in other words, salvation is about renewal. A gradual renewal. It’s about the kingdom coming and that is a gradual process.” (Tracy).

heaven' to describe her soteriology and thus, explicit or not, a corporate soteriology which allowed a hope for universal salvation was indeed promoted at Spring.

Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that this soteriology does not make salvation contingent upon individual, earthly belief. Such a position was denounced in *Nooma: Trees* (2008) which was played twice during my placement at Spring and which was spoken of as being 'a favourite' by a number of the members;

Now, some people see faith as, like, a ticket. It's like, if you believe the right things, and if you nod your head at the right times, then when you leave you get to go to a better place. And so, essentially, faith becomes a bit like fire insurance. It's like a guarantee that something bad won't happen to me someday, and so, essentially, this life is like a waiting room for the next place, and there becomes no real point to this life except for getting people to believe like I do and convincing them that they need to be like me, and we'll all go to the same place. (*Nooma: Trees*, 2008).

The soteriological and evangelistic consequences pejoratively described here were also rejected at Spring. Due to their understanding of the corporate nature of salvation, individual earthly belief in Christ, whilst a cause for transformation in the present life, was not seen as necessary for reconciliation with God in the next. Thus, the leaders expressed concepts of anonymous Christianity¹⁴⁶, post-mortem confession¹⁴⁷ and the impossibility of denying the beatific vision¹⁴⁸ (though none spoke of these concepts in such terms) as possible ways in which non-Christians would eventually be reconciled with God in eternity.

¹⁴⁶ For example, one leader, in explaining how she believed members of other religions could be saved, spoke of C.S. Lewis' suggestion of anonymous Christianity in 'The Last Battle'.

¹⁴⁷ One leader vehemently defended this position – "There could absolutely be a chance after death. Who's to say it has to happen here? We don't know what happens when we pass over. Who's to say we don't meet Jesus on the other side and get given that choice then? Nobody has any right to say that we don't have that choice." (Tracy)

¹⁴⁸ One leader said, "I sort of see it as... when Jesus comes again there will be a second coming and Jesus will come and every knee will bow but when Jesus comes in all His glory, I do believe it will be impossible not to recognise him as Jesus... God coming to rescue the world and so even at that point, the people we think can't possibly go to Heaven because they have done horrendous things and whatever, they might still see God's glory and bend the Knee and they will be saved and they will get into Heaven." (Pippa)

Consequently, in the Nooma DVDs and in the theological positions espoused by Sanctum leaders and members, a corporate view of salvation, which affirms that God will restore all of creation, sits alongside the hope for the universal salvation of humanity and thus the belief that our eternal destination is not contingent on our earthly beliefs.

7:8 – The Missiology of Spring

i – Relational Evangelism

I think standing on street corners, or whatever the equivalent is, and telling people about Jesus with a placard just isn't the way to go about it. I think you've got to earn the right to share the gospel with people. You can't force it on people. You have to get to know them and become friends before you can even think about even the possibility of evangelism or whatever we want to call it. (Tracy)

The words of one of Spring's leaders here provide a summary for Spring's missional emphasis on relational evangelism. As outlined in chapter 5, Spring was founded upon the premise of the indirect communication of the gospel through experiential learning within relationships. Didactic teaching of Christianity through the study of scripture, tradition or doctrine was rejected in favour of a communal dialogue emphasis. All the leaders of Spring were keen that members come to learn about Christ through the loving actions of his followers, because of the transformation that can come from having faith in Christ. Thus, it is the witness of Christians – through the embodying of the gospel in the way they behave towards others – that is fundamental to Spring's missiology;

I think [Spring's mission is] to go out to the community, but mostly the school community because that's where it's based and that includes the teachers and everybody, and show them who Jesus is and what a difference he can bring to people's lives. And this is done by the people who are there, who know Jesus and we can show His love to them by the way we listen to them, pray for them and talk with them... The most powerful witness we have to the unchurched is that they catch a glimpse of the Kingdom of God in the way we live. (Pippa).

7:8:ii: Practicing Love of Neighbour

The church doesn't exist for itself; it exists to serve the world. It is not ultimately about the church; it's about all the people God wants to bless through the church...It is when the church gives itself away in radical acts of service and compassion, expecting nothing in return, that the way of Jesus is most vividly put on display. (Bell, 2005, p167)

Articulated in his writing and pervasive throughout the Nooma DVDs, Rob Bell suggests that the mission of the church is to 'give itself away in radical acts of service and compassion' – to 'love without agenda' (Nooma: Bullhorn, 2008; Bell, 2005, p167), and this line of thinking is at the heart of Spring's missiology;

You've got to show them the love of God in themselves and I think you can do that by modelling the love of God in your own life; showing them love; listening to people...I think my priority probably in life is just to love people. Love them so they get a glimpse of how much God loves them. (Diana).

Demonstrated in loving acts of hospitality; articulated as the natural outworking of a loving God¹⁴⁹; and given priority even above Church tradition¹⁵⁰, the love of neighbour in word, deed and prayer forms the basis of, and objective behind, Spring praxis. Every week, members spoke to me about how they had felt loved at Spring – from simply being given a cup of tea and a rest whilst their children were being looked after to support through addiction, debt and the breakdown of relationships. One member, named Gita, put it as follows;

I come here for the support they've given me through my problems. When I was at my lowest, I knew I could come here and get a smile and a cup of

¹⁴⁹ In the discussion that followed the showing of a Nooma DVD ('Bullhorn'), one leader commented, "It just puts it simply, doesn't it? You can go round worrying about how to show you love God but you can ignore that because, as Rob says, you love God by loving other people."

¹⁵⁰ Diana's desire to show Christian love by welcoming and including all in the Eucharist, including those who were not baptised and/or did not express a Christian faith, demonstrates how she regarded (her understanding of) love of neighbour as having greater priority over strict adherence to official Church teaching.

tea...knew I'd be accepted for who I am. I lost Gita for a while but now she's back.

Thus, love of the other through acts of compassion, service and support, is a fundamental strand of Spring's missiology.

7:8:iii – Transformation Through, and of, the Community

"God's love for everyone is being shown to people who have no idea who He is, and it is changing them." (Pippa)

In teaching God's love to all and enacting love of neighbour within Spring, the leaders came to believe that lives were being transformed;

We were seeing women who, before coming, were too nervous to speak, chatting away and laughing and there are some who have come off drink and drugs since coming here and are still holding on. Erm...there's Claudia who was getting into fistfights in the school playground and who the staff were scared off...[and she has] calm[ed] down and [is] making friends in the group...It's not all been plain sailing but I do believe, yes, that God was...that He is...very clearly at work in their lives. (Pippa)

Moreover, whilst it is claimed that the lives of individuals have changed since attending Spring, the mission of Spring was never just focused on the individual, but on the communal. In explaining how Spring evolved from a group of Christian mothers chatting away at the school gates to taking the form that exists today, Diana explains;

I was talking to God about it and told him, 'It's no wonder people don't go to church.' I 'heard' the question, 'What would they come to then?' I thought of what we did as friends together: breakfast, drink coffee, pray together, laugh together, have relationship and support each other. I said to my friends, 'Let's keep on drinking coffee but, if it's going to be church, it has to have more to it than a coffee morning. *It's about transforming the community that we live in*

through our relationships, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. (Diana, my emphasis)

From the outset then, Diana and the other leaders intended that Spring be a community which would be involved in transforming the wider community through their prayers, relationships and actions – a sentiment very much in line with the missiology advocated in the oft-played Nooma: Trees DVD;

May you believe...that you can be a partner with God in redeeming and restoring this fallen, broken, hurting world. That you can literally be a partner with God in making this the kind of place that God originally intended it to be. (Nooma: Trees, 2008)

Thus, within the school community, the leaders visited, listened to and prayed for members of staff who had no connection with Spring whilst other members volunteered to help out at various school events. Beyond the school community, the ways in which Spring members, 'in the power of the Holy Spirit' (Diana) transformed the community is more difficult to quantify but the women did socialize and support each other, and the families of one another outside of Spring meetings, and when intercessory prayers were said at the end of meetings, they included prayers for the people in the local community. Individuals were also encouraged to model God's love to all outside of Spring, with stories of compassionate acts being met with praise and encouragement alongside talk of future formal involvement in a community centre.

Moreover, within the aim of being a 'partner with God' (Nooma: Trees) in 'transforming the community that we live in through our relationships, and in the power of the Holy Spirit' (Diana) is an implicit endorsement of the *missio Dei* hermeneutic – an endorsement which is pervasive throughout the Nooma series and made explicit in the written works of Rob Bell which were recommended at Spring;

Mission then is less about the transportation of God from one place to another and more about the identification of a God who is already there. It is almost as if being a good missionary means having really good eyesight. Or maybe it means teaching people to use their eyes to see things that have

always been there; they just didn't realize it. You see God where others don't. And then you point him out. (Bell, 2005, 87-88).

Indeed, in Spring meetings, the belief that God was already present and active in the community – in places and in people beyond the confines of the visible church – was frequently articulated¹⁵¹.

Thus, we can affirm that one missiological emphasis of Spring, a corollary of loving the neighbour, was an intention to partner with God, who is already present and active, in the transformation of the local community.

7:8:iv – A Sacramental Community

About two years ago we started to think about what it means to be a worshipping community and how we encourage spiritual growth amongst new believers...the big question, of course, has been what to do about Eucharist. It was really difficult to explore ways through this but, in the end, we just thought, that if this is God's feast and his journey with us, then he will show us what to do. We decided to do a simple Eucharist with a short liturgy. (Diana)

Whilst, in its organic origins, celebrating the sacraments was not a key aim for the community, as Spring evolved, Diana and the other Christian leaders decided that they did want to celebrate Eucharist as this was central to their understanding of the praxis of a Christian community. When asked to describe the mission of Spring, Diana's first words were 'We're relational. And Eucharistic now', thus demonstrating the centrality of the twice-termly celebration of Eucharist in her understanding of Spring's missiology. Indeed, Diana spoke to me about her intention to hold a weekly Eucharist for parents and members of staff at the school as part of the 'outward-focused mission of Spring' (Diana) in the near future.

¹⁵¹ See 7:7:i

On mornings in which Eucharist was celebrated the community followed a short Anglican liturgy which included the reading of scripture, sharing of the peace and prayers of approach, confession, absolution and intercession and all those present were invited to participate. Formal worship outside of these mornings was absent and yet the anointing of oil was witnessed in one other meeting whilst the baptism of one member and her family was set to take place in the parent-church of the school shortly after my placement ended. Thus, it is evident that the celebration of the sacraments within Spring meetings are a significant component of its missiology.

7:9 – Summary of Spring’s Soteriology and Missiology

The soteriology and missiology of Spring could thus be summarised as follows:

| Soteriology | Missiology |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An articulated, assumed, creation-centred approach • Emphasis on Present Salvation • Emphasis on Communal salvation • Lean towards Universal Salvation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relational Evangelism • Practicing Love of Neighbour • Transformation through, and of, Community • Implicit Endorsement of the <i>missio Dei</i> • Establishing a Sacramental Community |

Table xii: The soteriology and missiology of Spring

7:10 – Chapter Summary

In the reflection on the implicit and articulated soteriologies and missiologies of the three churches studied, it was once again demonstrated that the three churches endorse a range of theological positions. I have shown that whilst North Shore Pub Church and Sanctum share an unarticulated soteriology, they greatly differ in that which is accepted or assumed by the church leaders. I observed that at Sanctum, an assumption of the necessity of Christian confession for individual, other-worldly salvation sits alongside an implicit endorsement of predestination – a doctrine rejected in the soteriologies of both

Spring and North Shore Pub Church where a focus on present and corporate salvation is promoted in the former, a stress on action over belief in the latter whilst an endorsement of the creation-centred approach pervades the praxis of both. As concerns missiology, North Shore Pub Church and Spring were found to share a focus on relational evangelism, an endorsement of the *missio Dei* hermeneutic and an emphasis on practicing love of neighbour and community whilst North Shore Pub Church's hope for future celebration of the sacraments has already been realized in Spring. A consequence of its founding, Sanctum's mission was shown to be less easily identifiable, though engagement with the unchurched, the expounding of scriptural truths and the facilitation of relational evangelism to enable the unchurched to have a smooth transition into the worshipping community have been acknowledged as key missiological emphases.

Chapter 8: Research Analysis Part Four – An Examination of the Relationship Between the Pedagogical Praxis and Soteriological and Missiological Presuppositions of Fresh Expressions of Church

In this section, the relationship between the pedagogical praxis and soteriological and missiological presuppositions of the fresh expressions of church observed will be considered. An analysis of how each placement relates to the heuristic models identified in part 3 will be carried out in the hope that such an examination will enable us to discern the veracity and strength of the models and thus, the credibility of the hypothesis that Christian pedagogy is, or should be, largely determined by, and consistent with, the soteriology and subsequent missiology of the community in which it is practised.

8:1 – The Instructional Model and Fresh Expressions Praxis

In part 3, it was argued that the instructional approach to Christian education was contingent upon a soteriology and missiology which could be summarised as follows:

| Dominant Soteriology | Dominant Missiology | Content | Method | Role of teacher | Role of learner | Assessment |
|--|--|----------------|---|---|--|--|
| Individual, predestined salvation; justification by faith/grace alone. | To teach, guard and proclaim scriptural truth. | Word-centred. | Religious instruction; acquisition of scriptural knowledge. | Expert and authority. Teaches didactically. | Accept and receive the teaching given. | Observation & examination of beliefs & actions of learner. |

Table xiii: The heuristic model of the instructional approach to Christian education

In chapters five and six, we demonstrated that the pedagogical praxis of both North Shore Pub Church and Spring was at odds with, and in part, a reaction against, the instructional approach to Christian education, whilst in chapter 7 we saw that the soteriological and missiological presuppositions on which the instructional approach is founded were also rejected by both communities.

In spite, or perhaps because, of their Christian formative Christian education taking place within communities which advocate such a position, James and Sam at North Shore Pub Church and Diana and the other leaders at Sanctum all expressed their disassociation with a soteriology which stressed individual, otherworldly salvation for those who confessed Christ in this life and individual, eternal damnation for those who did not. Both communities articulated their belief that salvation was not dependent upon the correct religious beliefs of the individual and both advocated a creation-centred position which held a high anthropology and endorsement of an understanding of *missio Dei*. The missiology of both communities therefore did not need to focus on an imperative to teach, guard and proclaim scriptural truth in order to ensure that members did not remain in unbelief or fall into heresy and eternal damnation.

Indeed, the leaders of North Shore Pub Church and Sanctum upheld the validity of different Christian interpretations of scripture and embodied an indirect communication of gospel truths – predominantly through loving action, relational witness and communal debate – in place of direct communication. Consequently, it may be argued that the communities of North Shore Pub Church and Spring did not share the soteriological presuppositions of the instructional pedagogy; did not therefore view the teaching, proclaiming and guarding of scriptural truth as the foremost priority of the mission of their respective communities, and thus did not practice an instructional pedagogy¹⁵².

However, the instructional approach, and the theological presuppositions upon which it is built, was embodied and advocated in its entirety by the Sanctum community. We have seen that the soteriological position which advocates individual, otherworldly, predestined salvation by faith and grace alone is common to the instructional approach and to that of Sanctum. In both systems, those who do not confess Christ in this life are considered lost; those who advocate alternative Christian viewpoints to that proposed by the leaders of the community in question as heretics; and those who are destined for eternal salvation as the elect. Salvation for the individual is thus contingent upon one's religious beliefs. The dominant Christian mission in the instructional theory and demonstrated in Sanctum praxis is therefore to teach, guard and proclaim scriptural truth so that individuals might learn and believe those things which are both true in themselves

¹⁵² The process outlined here is not necessarily unilinear or considered and will be explored in further detail below.

and which must be believed in order to be accepted into God's eternal presence. The teaching that follows is thus one of instruction in which the teacher, as expert and authority in biblical exegesis, expounds scripture, corrects heretical beliefs and admonishes those whose behaviour does not demonstrate a mature understanding of true doctrine. The relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy is thus internally consistent. At Sanctum, as in the instructional pedagogy, it would therefore appear that the pedagogy practised in the community is founded upon a missiology whose dominant tenet is to teach, guard and proclaim scriptural truth and that such a missiology is predominantly the consequence of a soteriology which promotes a biblical understanding of individual, otherworldly salvation for the elect, *sola fide*.

Consequently it would appear that our research analysis has yielded evidence which gives some validity to the model outlined in part 3 which suggested that the instructional approach to Christian education is contingent upon a dominant soteriological position and, to a lesser extent, its subsequent missiological emphases. The two communities which vehemently rejected the soteriology of the instructional approach did not explicitly endorse its subsequent missiology and practised a pedagogy which was at odds with the instructional one, of which the leaders of the two communities were particularly disparaging. The community of Sanctum also gave credence to the model for the pedagogy of Sanctum and that of the instructional approach both appear to be founded upon a soteriology of individual, otherworldly salvation for those whom confess Christ in this life which itself leads to an understanding of the dominant mission of the church as being to teach, guard and proclaim correct scriptural truth.

8:2 – The Enculturation Model and Fresh Expressions Praxis

In part 3, it was argued that the enculturation approach to Christian education was contingent upon a soteriology and missiology which could be summarised as follows:

| Dominant Soteriology | Dominant Missiology | Content | Method | Role of teacher | Role of learner | Assessment |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Corporate salvation mediated through incorporation into, and participation in, the Church. | To continue the Christian Story in rite and ritual - specifically, formal, liturgical worship. | The mythos of the Church; its language, grammar and story. | Participation and internalization of the rites, traditions, language and story of Christian faith. | Pass on traditions and rituals; teach and use language <i>faithfully</i> . | To participate in the communal, liturgical life of the Church. | Visible, faithful participation in visible, faithful Church. |

Table xiv: The heuristic model of the enculturation approach to Christian education

In chapter 6, we observed that there was little evidence of the enculturation of Christian rites, traditions and practices at North Shore Pub Church; that this was observed in elements of praxis at both Sanctum and Spring; but that none of the three communities demonstrated a consistent and systematic commitment to the liturgically focused methods and objectives of Christian education as advocated by the chief proponents of the enculturation approach.

Moreover, in our analysis of the soteriology of the three communities, we also found that none espoused the belief that salvation was solely mediated through incorporation into, and participation in, the institutional Church. As acknowledged in part 3, such a soteriology is most commonly associated with traditions that have a high ecclesiology and which therefore have been most sceptical of the fresh expressions of church movement so to find that none of the fresh expressions communities researched endorsed an ecclesiocentric soteriology does not come as a great surprise.

However, that two of the three communities demonstrated some of the methods of the enculturation model but did not demonstrate a commitment to what we claimed was its founding soteriology and subsequent missiology gives us cause to reflect. Indeed, it could be argued that such results seriously challenge the hypothesis inherent in the models put forward in part 3 – that pedagogy is contingent upon missiology which is in turn founded upon soteriology. I would venture that such a conclusion is too simplistic but before

alternative explanations are explored, it is necessary to recognize the limits of the hypothesis.

The models identified in part 3 were ventured as heuristic tools, designed to offer a broad picture of the relationship between two key branches of systematic theology and Christian educational theory. It was advanced then and reiterated now that such models were never intended to be prescriptive, for it is self-evident that one could never expect the soteriologies, missiologies and pedagogies of all churches and ecclesial communities to be agreed upon, labelled and isolated into one of only three possible models. Such systematic thinking and praxis might make the Church a more manageable yet a far more staid body. Thus, an observation that aspects of one of the three models were being practised in a community identified as not sharing the wider theological or pedagogical hermeneutic of the same model was to be expected, is here acknowledged and does not challenge the claim that pedagogy should be contingent upon soteriology and missiology.

Moreover, in the infrequency of any formal worship at Spring; in the placing accessibility to the unchurched over regular sacramental practice at Sanctum; and in the importance both communities placed on Christian education coming from sources other than liturgical worship; it is once again attested that neither community demonstrated a conscious, consistent or systematic commitment to the objectives and methods of the enculturation theory of Christian education. Passing on the Christian story in tradition and testimony, faithful worship and witness is surely one missiological tenet and pedagogical emphasis of *all established Christian communities*, evidenced by the advocating of enculturation alongside other educational approaches by the chief proponents of differing Christian pedagogies (e.g. Groome, 1980; 1991) and thus it is simply the interpretation and application of this common missiological aim that differentiates communities. That such enculturation practices can be observed at Sanctum, a community established as a church plant/alternative worship service attended by Christians, and Spring, a fresh expression of church that has matured over many years into one that is mostly attended by Christians and is explicit in its Christian grounding, should thus come as no surprise and once again, does not nullify the hypothesis in question.

Indeed, whilst we cannot claim that these results yield evidence in support of the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy as outlined in the

enculturation model advanced in chapter 3, the praxis observed matches that which the models would lead us to expect, for the enculturation model of Christian education suggests that an observable commitment to liturgical and sacramental worship which supersedes any and all other purposes of the church would be expected in churches which endorse a soteriology of corporate, ecclesiocentric salvation. As none of the communities studied upheld such a soteriology, the models would lead us to believe that a focus on liturgical worship over and above all other missiological foci should not be observed, and this was born out in our data analysis. This observation clearly cannot be trumpeted as proof of the veracity of the model in itself, but may be seen as another small brush stroke in the wider picture of alignment with the models.

Consequently, we have suggested that the demonstration of some aspects of enculturation in two of the communities studied who do not uphold what was said to be the underlying soteriology of the enculturation approach to Christian education might remind us of the limits of the models identified in chapter 3 but does little to challenge their veracity and applicability for no community was practicing a commitment to the approach as outlined by Westerhoff and his colleagues and thus, the argument that pedagogy must be contingent upon soteriology and subsequently missiology, remains upheld.

8:3 – The Critical Praxis Model and Fresh Expressions Praxis

In part 3, it was argued that the critical praxis approach to Christian education was contingent upon a soteriology and missiology which could be summarised as follows:

| Dominant Soteriology | Dominant Missiology | Content | Method | Role of teacher | Role of learner | Assessment |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|--|
| Communal; present and otherworldly. Not confined to Christians. Hope for universal salvation. | To announce and embody the Kingdom of God. The humanization of the individual and transformation of society. | Scripture; tradition; <i>and the experience and praxis of individuals</i> . | Person as starting point; communal dialogue & critical reflection. | To facilitate the learning and participate as a leading-learner. | To express their story, actively listen to others; critically reflect on theology, tradition and present praxis through dialogue. | Tangible evidence of human lives and societies being transformed into the image of the kingdom of God. |

Table xv: The heuristic model of the critical praxis approach to Christian education

In our discussion of the pedagogy of Sanctum, it was clear that whilst a pedagogy that appeared to share much in common with that of the critical praxis approach was said to be practiced within the community, in practice, this was certainly not the case as a direct, instructional approach was dominant. We have seen above how this instructional pedagogy is inherently consistent with the soteriology and subsequent missiology upheld at Sanctum, as advocated in our identified models. The critical praxis model advocated above would have been seriously challenged had Sanctum’s advertised pedagogy been practised for the soteriology of Sanctum is contrary to that which we have suggested the critical praxis approach is built upon. As it is, the hypothesis is still upheld, for the model would suggest that as Sanctum advocated a soteriology at odds with that of the critical praxis approach, it would not share its dominant missiology and would therefore not endorse the pedagogical praxis of the approach. Although our results cannot demonstrate that this process was as conscious, systematic or unilinear as perhaps suggested by the model, the fact that the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy at Sanctum appears to be in alignment with the models identified in part three adds further strength to their claims.

Moreover, in chapter 6, we found that it could not be said that Spring and North Shore Pub Church fully endorsed the critical praxis pedagogy as neither community expected that all members would self-identify as Christian and thus the authority of Christian scripture and tradition and its importance of critiquing and being critiqued by the experiences and beliefs of those in the community, was neither articulated nor assumed. That being acknowledged, we did find that, particularly in their practicing of the variation theory of learning, both communities shared a great deal of the assumptions, objectives and methods of the critical praxis approach. What then, of their underlying soteriology and missiology? Crucially, both Spring and North Shore Pub Church upheld a soteriology which endorsed the view that salvation was not confined to Christians or to the Church (as in the instructional and enculturation approaches respectively). Whilst at North Shore Pub Church, such a soteriology sat within the leader's acknowledged creation-centred hermeneutic yet was never articulated within group meetings, at Spring, the belief in communal, present and otherworldly salvation and the hope for universal salvation, were explicitly articulated. Thus, the soteriology evident at North Shore Pub Church closely matched that suggested in our model of critical praxis whilst that of Spring was a thorough embodiment of it.

Furthermore, our model suggests that such a soteriology would lead to a missiology which emphasised the announcing and embodying of the kingdom of God alongside the mission of the humanization of the individual and the transformation of society. Once again, both Spring and North Shore Pub Church appear to be in alignment with the model. At North Shore Pub Church, the establishing of a community which embodied the values of hospitality, inclusivity and equality and modelled love of self and neighbour sat alongside an invitation to participate in an alternative way of living¹⁵³. North Shore Pub Church's mission was identified as 'being incarnational. Presence. About being salt and light in the world' (James) and the desire to transform the lives of all members within the 'benevolent group' (NSPC2) was coexistent with the attempt to 'reflect Christ through our community' (James, Vision & Strategy document) through loving actions.

¹⁵³ "I don't believe nowadays, and possibly not ever, that you could just preach to people and say 'this is what you need to do' and then leave them. I think what you need to be able to say to people 'This is how I live, would you like to join in living this way? Would you like to join in with what we do? Why would like to join in with what we do? What inspires you about what we do?' You know, disciple them in that way..." (Sam).

At Spring, the values of hospitality, inclusivity and equality were embodied within an articulated desire to build a community in which the unchurched ‘catch a glimpse of the Kingdom of God’ (Pippa). As God’s love was modelled and spoken of, the lives of members, including those of the leaders and other established Christians, were said to have changed and such transformation was, from the outset, intended to be for the wider society, with the founder explaining that ‘It’s about transforming the community that we live in through our relationships, and in the power of the Holy Spirit’ (Diana).

Consequently, acknowledging and allowing for the absence of the assumed authority and relevance of the Christian story in the two communities, it would appear that both North Shore Pub Church and Spring enacted a great deal of the pedagogical assumptions, objectives and suggested methods of the critical praxis approach and embodied a soteriology and missiology which was similar to, in the case of North Shore Pub Church, or seemingly identical with, in the case of Spring, that identified as the foundation of the critical praxis pedagogy. Thus, it is my contention that the pedagogical praxis of both North Shore Pub Church and Spring shared much in common with that endorsed by the critical praxis approach and was contingent upon assumed and a priori soteriological and missiological beliefs which form the foundation of the critical praxis approach, adding further evidence to support the veracity of the critical praxis model identified in chapter 3.

8:4 – Heuristic Models and Research Analysis

In our discussion of phronetic social science and critical realism in chapter 3, we emphasised the importance of judgmental rationality in the analysis and concluding of qualitative research, noting that ‘some judgements may be made with greater confidence or justification than others, allowing for the researcher to offer insights that will aid further reflection on an issue without an erroneous expectation of having to ‘generate ultimate, unequivocally verified knowledge’ (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p139). Here, the findings of our research into the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy in fresh expressions of church are offered in recognition of this significant claim.

This acknowledged, I would argue that the qualitative research supports the theory behind our models – that soteriology, missiology and pedagogy are causally interdependent and that, for an ecclesial community to be theologically consistent and

authentic, pedagogical praxis should be contingent upon missiology which is in turn dependent upon soteriology. The close similarity between the pedagogical approach suggested in the instructional model with the praxis witnessed at Sanctum; that endorsed in the critical praxis approach with that practised at Spring and North Shore Pub Church; alongside the absence of a consistent commitment to the central components of the enculturation model in the three communities, would thus appear to give credence to the models. The theory that soteriological beliefs should affect those of missiology and that pedagogical praxis should be founded upon such beliefs is therefore upheld¹⁵⁴ with the following caveats:

8:4:i - Caveat 1: The Limitations of the Heuristic Models

We have commented upon this in some depth above but it demands a brief reiteration in relation to the qualitative research. Whilst the praxis of the three fresh expressions bared a close resemblance to that outlined in the models, no community embodied a pedagogical praxis that was identical to only one of the models put forward. Thus, at Sanctum, whose praxis was most closely aligned to that endorsed by one model, (that of the instructional approach), the praxis aimed for in the missional cells; the advertised praxis of the community's weekly meetings; and the identification of methods endorsed in the enculturation model and of those not articulated by any of the three models, demonstrates that the praxis of a community of people can never be so uniformed and systematic as to perfectly fit into one model. People are messy. Community, of any sorts, is messy. Therefore, whilst the three models are endorsed in theory and in our research findings, they are so in the knowledge that they are to be used as heuristic tools and not prescriptive rules.

8:4:ii – Caveat 2: An Unconscious, Dialectical Relationship

Whilst my analysis corroborates the attestations of other Christian theologians who have argued that missiology is contingent upon soteriology (Chester, 2006; Goodhew et al., 2012) and further advanced that pedagogy is subsequently dependent upon these two

¹⁵⁴ The consequences of which are discussed in chapter 9.

fields, one must concede that we have not proven this relationship to be unilinear or consciously enacted.

A conscious, systematic approach to the relationship between theology and embedded pedagogical praxis was not evident in any of the placements. In two of the three communities (North Shore Pub Church and Sanctum), soteriology was not articulated by or within the community; in two of them (Spring and Sanctum) a soteriological position was assumed rather than discussed and critiqued; and in all three of them, the leaders expressed an unease with articulating their own soteriological position as it was seen as a field that was rarely discussed in public with good reason. Indeed, as one might expect, there was no evidence to suggest that any of the founders of the community had reflected upon, discussed or drawn up a proposed understanding of the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy prior to starting their fresh expression of church, nor had done so since.

Moreover, whilst we continue to attest that in theory there is, and from theory to praxis there should be, a causal relationship from soteriological foundations through a developed understanding of mission to pedagogical theory and praxis, no direct, unilinear process can be traced from our research. Indeed, James and Diana, leaders of North Shore Pub Church and Spring respectively, both spoke of how engaging in ministry predominantly with those deemed 'unchurched' helped them reflect upon and move away from the soteriology advocated by the church environment in which they grew up, with James explicitly stating:

I think theology has to adapt to the mission field, doesn't it? That's what happened with me really, coming here... My worldview was able to exist because I didn't spend my time with people who weren't in the church. When you step out of the church and spend time with people who aren't in the church that view is going to change....The theology I now have and speak and preach is one of journey rather than in and out - you're alright, you're in; you're going to burn, you're out. It's now, you're on a journey, I don't know where you are on that journey. Only God does...The way I begin to try and articulate this is this job is about two things – it's about God and it's about

people...that has been my experience of the past five years whereas before, I probably would have said this job is just about God.

Thus, we come to a conclusion so integral to the very nature of practical theology and endorsed in the critical praxis model: that the theological relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy may appear unilinear in theory but is experienced as a dialectical and ever-continuing process in which theory critiques and reforms praxis which critiques and reforms theory and so on.

8:4:iii – Caveat 3: The Heresy of Theological Isolation

Above, we have noted that the models cannot be prescriptive and that a consciously thought out, unilinear process from soteriology to missiology and pedagogy was not observable in practice. Here, it is significant that we acknowledge that the fields of soteriology, missiology and pedagogy are not isolated subjects of theological reflection that only impact upon one another. To say that our a priori soteriological assumptions are, or at least should be, the *dominant* influence on a church's/the Church's missiology, then, is not to say that they are the *only* influence. One criticism of this study might be that the scope of research has been too narrow or that it should have taken a more strictly systematic direction, taking into consideration how beliefs about revelation and discernment influence the fields of soteriology, missiology and subsequently, pedagogy. In his endorsement of the critical praxis approach, Groome (1980, 1991) is in fact explicit in his acknowledgement that different perspectives on Christian education, including his own, are dependent upon differing accounts of revelation, whilst Kierkegaard¹⁵⁵ and later Tinsley (1990), argue the same and remind us that our understanding of revelation is inseparable from our Christology¹⁵⁶.

¹⁵⁵ See 6:3.

¹⁵⁶ It is my contention that further study into the interrelationship between Christology and the fields of this study would be a fruitful line of enquiry. Indeed, much is to be said for Wells' assertion that - 'This is the first proposed criterion of theological adequacy: A Christian theology must be founded and centred in Jesus Christ...[who] is our primary norm. Our premise, of course, is that Jesus reveals God, and knowledge of true deity is the goal of all theological inquiry. To say that, for Christians, all theological proposals must be defensible christologically is to say that they must be shown to be congruent with our best understanding of Christ' (Wells, 2004, p117).

The ever-present constraints of time and space mean that further research concerning how Christology, ecclesiology and theological outlook concerning revelation and discernment might impact upon the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy in fresh expressions of church is beyond the remit of this study. However, it is hoped that this thesis will serve as an underlabourer in the continuing dialogue between the academy, the Church and the world, in encouraging the Church to re-examine the relationship between its theological assumptions and pedagogical praxis with the intention, in common with all practical theology and as identified in 4:3, of thereby adding to the polyphonic Christian enterprise of 'ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God's redemptive practices in, to and for the world' (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, p6). Such thinking therefore acknowledges the limitations of this thesis, calls for further research into the relationship between Christology, revelation and the tenets of this study, and demonstrates an understanding that no component of a community's systematic theology, whether implicit or spoken, is isolated from the influence of all others.

8:5 – Chapter Summary

In this chapter, whilst acknowledging the limitations of the heuristic models identified in chapter 3 – highlighted by the reality that none of the communities studied could be limited to just one model; that the relationship between theology and praxis was often neither conscious nor unilinear; and that the theological breadth of this research was limited in scope – I have argued that the theology and praxis encountered at the three fresh expressions of church have given enough support to the veracity of the models as to warrant further discussion and testing. At Sanctum, the soteriology and missiology observed closely resembled that of the instructional model as did the operant pedagogy, itself at odds with the approach advertised. North Shore Pub Church and Spring shared the soteriological and missiological foundations of the critical praxis approach and, in spite of the assumption that many members of both communities would not uphold the authority of Christian scripture and tradition and thus would not seek to critique and be critiqued by either, shared much in common with the pedagogy outlined in the critical praxis model. I suggested that whilst Sanctum and Spring showed elements of the enculturation model, neither displayed an adherence to the centrality of liturgical worship

as suggested by the approach nor did they advocate the soteriological or missiological foundations of the model. In such a way, the internal consistency and suggested applicability of the heuristic models are here upheld. With such conclusions offered and caveats given, it is time to turn to our last chapter and the accompanying call for assumptions to be re-examined, new suggestions to be made and areas needing further research to be identified.

Chapter 9: Thesis Conclusions, Revisions and Recommendations

In this concluding chapter of the thesis, the various strands of the research topic will be woven together as we summarise findings, offer recommendations and identify areas for further research. An analysis of the conclusions and subsequent consequences of the analysis of the pedagogical praxis of fresh expressions of church will begin proceedings as specific recommendations to the fresh expressions movement are offered. We will then consider the relationship between the soteriology, missiology and pedagogy of the communities studied and what our results might have to say both to the fresh expressions movement and to the wider field of Christian education. We will then consider what further theological insights might be gleaned from our findings that do not sit easily within the remit of the prior two questions before bringing the study to completion with a succinct summary of the thesis.

9:1 – Conclusions and consequences of research question 1:

What is the pedagogical praxis of fresh expressions of church?

In chapters five and six, we discovered that the pedagogical praxis of the three fresh expressions of church studied varied in objective, content and method yet also shared a great deal, particularly the two communities based in the UK. All three communities laid emphasis on establishing trusting relationships between Christians and the unchurched as a prerequisite for any learning, invited members to attend more formal learning in their wider curricula and introduced the language of the Christian faith, albeit with different emphases and objectives.

The communities of North Shore Pub Church and Spring also shared a focus on experiential learning mediated through the modelling of loving praxis and enacting of apparent kingdom values, as well as an indirect communication of the gospel through a process of moving from aesthetics to the religious at North Shore Pub Church and the condemnation of the banking method in favour of a communal, dialogical approach which stressed the freedom of the individual in both. Contrary to this, whilst Sanctum advertised and identified itself as offering such a

pedagogical approach, a direct, instructional approach was witnessed in praxis, with consequential emphases on the authority of the ordained leader, didactic teaching and admonition, and centrality of scriptural exegesis. Variation learning theory was observed on occasion at Spring, was strongly embodied at North Shore Pub Church and played no part in Sanctum's praxis whilst an enculturation approach was minimal at North Shore Pub Church, secondary to other considerations at Sanctum and practised in part at Spring, albeit without the model's central focus on liturgical worship.

A comparison between the praxis observed and that suggested by the heuristic models identified in chapter 3 reminded us of the non-prescriptive intent of the models in that each community practised an amalgam of at least two of the pedagogical approaches whilst also displaying pedagogical methods which would not easily fit into any. This acknowledged, the praxis of Sanctum closely followed that advocated in the instructional model and aspects of the enculturation approach were seen at Sanctum and Spring. In their missional basis of being founded for the unchurched, both North Shore Pub Church and Spring could not fully adopt the critical praxis approach with its assumption of a shared and consistent understanding of the authority of Christian scripture and tradition and yet both communities did share much of this model's methodology whilst at Sanctum, the implicit assumption of the Christian narrative was observed but the dialectical approach of critical praxis pedagogy rejected.

Such analysis brings us back to the field in which we located this study – that of practical theology – and thus, begs the question: what do such observations have to ask or say about Christian education and/or the fresh expressions of church movement which might enable 'the development of fresh insights, challenging dialogue and revised and more faithful modes of practice' (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, pp254-255).

First, we turn to the pedagogy implicit in fresh expressions of church literature. In chapter 3 we observed that whilst little was explicitly written about pedagogy in the literature, much of the critical praxis methodology was implicitly advocated¹⁵⁷. In our research, we

¹⁵⁷ Advocating a 'mindset that starts not with Church but with people who don't belong to Church' (Fresh Expressions website, 2012a), the literature encourages listening to the experiences of people, their culture and context (Fresh Expressions website, 2012c); stresses the relational, communal and dialogical aspects of learning (Mobsby, 2007, pp38-39); enables critical questioning

found that two of the communities embodied a pedagogy which reflected elements of the critical praxis approach, albeit with the absence of an assumed acceptance of the authority of Christian scripture and tradition which will be considered below, whilst the other community, that of Sanctum, rejected the methods of this approach in favour of an instructional one – which would appear to be incompatible with the pedagogy advocated in fresh expressions literature.

One plausible explanation as to why Sanctum's pedagogical praxis was at odds with that advocated, albeit often implicitly, within fresh expressions literature is that whilst both North Shore Pub Church and Spring followed the foundational principles advocated by the fresh expressions movement as outlined in chapter two, Sanctum did not follow the precepts sufficiently¹⁵⁸ and thus did not strictly adhere to the current working definition of a fresh expression of church – a finding acknowledged by the community's founder¹⁵⁹. The instructional approach practised; confusion of ecclesiological identity; absence of any unchurched attendees; and acknowledgement by the community's founder that from the outset he did not intend the community to follow the formative journey of a fresh expression of church and that he also did not consider the community that I observed to be a fresh expression of church, together suggests that Sanctum should not be identified as a fresh expression of church. It could therefore be argued that Sanctum's embodying of a pedagogy which seems to be at odds with that advocated in fresh expressions literature offers little insight into the pedagogy practised within the movement.

However, whilst it is true that it would be possible to classify Sanctum as an internal church plant or alternative worship service, as it was often identified by its leaders, the

and reflection of experience and belief (Savage, 2008); and berates the past pedagogy of the Church 'when the Church leader was the expert who told others what to think' (Fresh Expressions, 2010d, p12), insisting instead on a church that 'will learn before it teaches' (Moynagh, 2012, p133).

¹⁵⁸ In interview, Dave acknowledged this: "I knew we weren't exactly following word-for-word, the process [of fresh expressions of church] and I thought this might be a variation that would work. The idea that, y'know, somebody went to a missional cell...erm...that served their needs and they made friends and built community, and get a taste of discipleship...and I thought it might possibly work to have this worshipping and discipling community that overlaps with this building community aspect...I see these two things overlapping on the formative journey and that...that's probably skipping a few steps further than we should...I don't plan to do it again. So maybe that means something. I guess I recognise it was kind of an exception to the way I'd like to do things. I wouldn't say it was a bad exception..."

¹⁵⁹ "[A]s it stands today, if the missional cells never existed again...then I'd say we have an internal church plant. The congregation has grown out of a larger congregation. Is it strictly a fresh expression of church? Not so much." (Dave).

very fact that it was *intended* to be a fresh expression of church; was identified as such by practitioners and diocesan leaders of the movement; and was founded and cited as such by two members of the national overseeing body suggests that simply deeming Sanctum to be an aberration within the movement is naive. Indeed, it is my contention that the confusion of identity at Sanctum is by no means unique to that community but is indicative of a movement which ‘err[s] on the side of generosity in applying definitions’ (Croft, 2008a, p9).

The rhetoric based on church statistics claims that there are at least a thousand fresh expressions of church just in the Church of England (Fresh Expressions, 2012e) and that the movement has, in the UK, born ‘thousands of new congregations’ altogether (Fresh Expressions, 2012f). However, my experience in struggling to find just three communities to study which met the movement’s preferred definition; my being referred to communities who did not self-identify as a fresh expression of church by national leaders of the movement; and my observation of the confused identity of Sanctum by local, diocesan and national leaders of the fresh expressions of church movement suggests that there is a real crisis of identity within the movement¹⁶⁰. Indeed, whilst such identity confusion may be the result of optimistic generosity¹⁶¹ or of the natural evolution of fresh expression communities¹⁶², I would suggest that a more rigorously applied definition would help to ensure against identity confusion which, as we have seen, can lead to ambiguity in mission and confused church praxis; would lead to a more credible, and thus authentic, picture of the scope and influence of the movement; and might encourage others in the Church and the academy to take the movement more seriously, for it would be better protected from the oft-levied charge of being everything and nothing – all of which leads me to my first recommendation:

¹⁶⁰ Such a claim is not altogether new but whilst this accusation often focuses on fresh expressions theory (Mobsby, 2007; Croft, 2008a; Percy, 2008), here it is founded upon observed praxis.

¹⁶¹ One national leader admitted to me that the numbers of fresh expressions of church might have been exaggerated and that many should be identified as fresh expressions of *worship*, not of *church*. He suggested that the misidentification of some groups and communities as fresh expressions of church was, perhaps, a compromise worth making if it meant that established churches across the nation were given the vision and resources to enable greater engagement with the unchurched or to simply experiment with and establish alternative services of worship for the churched.

¹⁶² The transient nature of fresh expressions of church is acknowledged and some practitioners have explained that they founded a fresh expression with the explicit intention to engage with the unchurched but an influx of dechurched and churched to the community dramatically changed its identity and objectives (Stone, 2010; Seabass Travelcast, 2011).

Recommendation 1: Greater effort should be made to ensure that communities who self-identify as fresh expressions of church have received appropriate training in fresh expressions theory in the hope that they will adhere to the movement's own working definition of a fresh expression of church.

Traditional church plants, missional outreach groups and alternative worship services all have their place in the Church but as long as these are misidentified as fresh expressions of church, any critique of the movement will be skewed and the relationship between the movement and the traditional church confused. If the movement has anything to say to the wider church, and I believe that it most certainly has, it must do so from a position of a consistent, albeit broad, self-identity, ridding itself of the temptations to justify its existence and measure its success with the criteria used by the traditional church, else the charges of 'Emperor's new clothes' (Mobsby, 2007, p27) may well stick.

Recommendation 2: That those facilitating the fresh expressions of church movement focus on developing a theologically robust and pragmatically appropriate pedagogy/ies.

The fresh expressions of church movement is still in its infancy and has, understandably, spent much of its early years debating ecclesiology and missiology with its ecclesial sisters and brothers. However, Christian education is at the core of a movement that aims to engage with the unchurched; listen to and speak with the local community; discern God's mission and make disciples; and thus, in not actively engaging in the theories and theologies that ground models of Christian education, the movement is susceptible to enabling teaching that is, 'rather superficial and one-dimensional' (fresh expressions website, 2013). Introducing, assimilating and critiquing the Christian language, beliefs and traditions in a manner that is congruent with the dialogical, communal and incarnational principles of the movement and which respects the freedom of the individual is by no means an easy task and is thus one that demands further study, dialogue and debate by those within the movement. It is my contention that the pedagogies of critical praxis and variation learning have much to offer the movement, are consistent with its foundational theology, and are being practised in individual fresh expressions of church, albeit in part and unknowingly. Further research on fresh expressions pedagogy and the ways in which

the critical praxis approach and variation learning theory can inform good praxis, is therefore advocated.

Moreover, in his discussion of pedagogical practice within the fresh expressions of church movement, Roberts suggests that;

There is much good creative work being done to develop learning approaches that are culturally relevant and appropriate for disciple-making in a postmodern context. The approaches I encountered resonated strongly with the 'Discipling Model of Teaching' described by Sylvia Wilkey Collinson. (Goodhew, Roberts & Volland, 2012, p128).

Whilst I would support Roberts' claim in acknowledging that there are a number of similarities between Collinson's discipling model of teaching and the pedagogical praxis witnessed at both North Shore Pub Church and Spring, crucially, Collinson's discipling model of teaching 'requires a basic body of shared belief agreed upon by both disciple and 'discipler' in order for both parties to consider a learning relationship to be worthwhile' (Collinson, 2004, pp85-86) and in fresh expressions of church, a basic body of shared (religious) belief will not, at least initially, be shared between the Christian leaders and unchurched attendees. It is reasonable to suggest that, *if* attendees of fresh expressions of church do come to share a basic body of Christian belief with the community's leaders and other members, then the discipling model of teaching outlined by Collinson and identified by her as sharing a high degree of congruence with Groome's critical praxis approach (2004, pp212-218), might well have much to offer the community at that time. However, such a situation would first require the learning of a basic body of Christian belief, whatever that might look like, and thus, we are led to our next recommendation:

Recommendation 3: That greater attention be given to consider how the Christian Story be heard and subsequently critique, and be critiqued, by present praxis within the fresh expressions curriculum.

In Chapter 2, I suggested that:

Unless formal teaching about the Christian language, stories and traditions is offered somewhere in the wider fresh expressions curriculum...then those who come to self-identify as Christian within the movement could begin to use and own the terms 'Christian', 'Christianity' and 'the Church' without grappling with or even being aware of the global and historical perspectives on such terms and may subsequently communicate a version of the Christian story that is devoid of the orthodox language, doctrine and praxis of the historical and global Church to the next generation. (p40)

This concern was found to be warranted in my research. At both North Shore Pub Church and Spring, I observed a focus on orthopraxy over orthodoxy in the pedagogical approaches employed – an emphasis actively endorsed by national fresh expressions leaders¹⁶³. However, the founding leaders of both North Shore Pub Church and Spring expressed some unease concerning the orthodoxy of the beliefs articulated by, and attributed to, those who understood themselves as Christian in their respective communities and the case of one individual at North Shore Pub Church who declared that he had become a Christian since attending the community but who was sceptical of the authority of the Bible, the divinity of Jesus, and a Trinitarian God, and yet was allowed to lead discussion evenings and worship services gives cause for such unease.

At both Spring and North Shore Pub Church, formal teaching about Christian beliefs was offered outside of the main weekly meetings in the form of Alpha courses and Bible studies but these courses were offered intermittently, were overwhelmingly attended by those who self-identified as dechurched rather than unchurched, and the one Alpha course that I witnessed was consciously of a less didactic, more dialogical nature than that endorsed in the literature.

Thus, it would appear that a significant challenge to the pedagogical praxis of fresh expressions of church is of how to enable the dialogue between the Christian Story and

¹⁶³ Speaking at the 'Following the missionary spirit' fresh expressions conference at Holy Trinity Brompton in November 2012, practitioner and fresh expressions teacher Revd. Annie Kirke told the audience that 'We need to espouse orthopraxy over orthodoxy...right living, right acting, obedience, actually leads to right belief'. (Kirke, 2012). This is in agreement with a great deal of contemporary Christian literature on mission that affirms the belief that in engaging with the unchurched, direct teaching, evangelism and apologetics can only take place after the demonstration and modelling of loving praxis (Tomlin, 2008; Everts and Shaupp, 2009; Chester and Timmis, 2011).

the present praxis of the community – a dialectical relationship that was found to be imbalanced in all three communities researched. At Sanctum, the present praxis of those attending had little to offer the learning context for it was assumed that the Bible contained the truths that have to be transmitted and accepted for salvation, whilst non-scriptural beliefs were labelled as heretical or pagan. At both Spring and North Shore Pub Church, a dialectical relationship between Christian tradition and present praxis of the members of the community was evident to an extent but the communication of Christian beliefs in the form of cognitive-propositions was hesitant and minimal. This is perhaps best exemplified by the fact that in the liturgy used in the celebration of the Eucharist at Spring – the most explicitly Christian expression of belief and worship witnessed in the two communities – the Creed was omitted. In seeking to provide a safe, hospitable learning environment for the unchurched, it would appear that the Christian pedagogical pendulum has, for the fresh expressions of North Shore Pub Church and Spring, swung from one of formal, didactic teaching of Christian doctrine, now deemed inappropriate in the unchurched context of the contemporary developed society, to a praxis-based communal and dialogical approach which shies away from direct doctrinal teaching.

This tension – of creating a learning environment in which the beliefs and stories of the unchurched are heard, welcomed and learnt from alongside those of the Church – is acknowledged by Astley, chief protagonist of the recent turn to ‘ordinary theology’ (2002), who, in his endorsement of Groome’s critical praxis pedagogy, notes:

Although this learning is never a monologue in which academic theology (or the Christian tradition) speaks and the learners silently record what it says; neither should it be a monologue in which they only speak about their own point of view, without ever hearing it being challenged or allowing it to be transformed. (Astley, 2013, p47)

Still in its infancy, the fresh expressions of church movement can most certainly be forgiven if, due to its focus on being contextual, accessible and engaging to the unchurched, it has allowed the voices of the unchurched to be given prominence over those of the Church. Indeed, many would see this as a corrective for the many years in which ‘ordinary theology’ (Astley, 2002) was mocked, ignored or silenced by those at the top of the ecclesial hierarchy. However, in order to withstand the

accusations of endorsing a relativist epistemology and of transmitting a form of Christianity devoid of its historical and catholic beliefs and traditions, the movement must find a way in which to further encourage the Christian Story, including Christian cognitive-propositions, to challenge, critique and be critiqued by the present praxis and beliefs of those whom the movement is trying to reach and once again, an appropriation of Groome's critical praxis pedagogical approach is here endorsed as one way of achieving this aim. In the meantime, the wider Church must be patient and supportive as the fresh expressions of church movement experiments with and learns, inevitably through trial and error, how to bring together the voices of the unchurched with those of the Church in order for each to listen to, be challenged by, and learn from, the other.

Moreover, if fresh expressions of church are to be viewed and treated as valid and valued alternative forms of church by, and in, the wider Church, questions must be asked about the requirements of membership (note, not *attendance*), a topic that practitioners are understandably reluctant to discuss, and the learning of Christian cognitive-propositions such as those found in creedal statements that might accompany initiation rites, particularly that of baptism. These issues are not confined to the fresh expressions movement but must be revisited throughout the Church, particularly in those times and places in which the absence of any previous Christian education is common.

9:2 - Conclusions and consequences of research question 2:

In what ways does the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy in fresh expressions of church challenge or uphold the heuristic models of Christian theology and education identified in this thesis?

Recommendation 4: That the heuristic models identified in this thesis be further tested, debated and critiqued as part of the ongoing dialogue between the theory and praxis of Christian education.

It is my contention that the models identified in this thesis have been sufficiently upheld by the observed praxis that they warrant further consideration and critique. The relationship identified between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy is, I believe, of fundamental significance to the field of Christian education and one that has largely remained silent or implicit within the literature. With the acknowledgement that some alignment between the models identified and the praxis observed at three fresh expressions of church does not place the validity of the models beyond criticism, as indeed no heuristic models of Christian theology and praxis should ever be, it is suggested that they be probed, applied and further debated in a variety of Christian contexts with the intention that they may critique and be critiqued by current practices.

Recommendation 5: A thorough review of the integrity of the theological diversity of fresh expressions of church must be conducted.

The ecumenical and theological diversity of the movement is frequently celebrated and has been cited as an indicator that the movement is faithful to the mission of God (Goodhew et. al, 2012, p73). Training to be a minister in the United Reformed Church, a denomination whose existence and ongoing vision depends upon the call for ecumenism and Christian unity, that the fresh expressions movement has enabled dialogue, mutual support and even joint action between and within denominations of varied theological bias, is, for me, a cause for great joy and celebration. Indeed, in producing this very thesis, worship has been offered, learning has been shared and profound friendships have been forged between the researcher and his Anglican sisters and brothers who demonstrated such humility, hospitality and generosity in allowing and encouraging the carrying out of the research.

However, a significant conclusion of this thesis is that the soteriology, missiology and pedagogy which is endorsed by the fresh expressions movement, implicit or articulated, is not theologically neutral. In our theological analysis of the movement in chapter 2, we acknowledged Bosch's argument that the paradigm shift in the understanding of mission as *missio Dei*, a pervasive and accepted foundation of fresh expressions thinking, is inseparable from a shift in soteriological emphasis which stresses the potential for God's salvation beyond the boundaries of the church and that the practice of contextualisation, another key component of fresh expressions theory, was founded upon a creation-

centred hermeneutic. We then noted how critics of the emerging and fresh expressions movements also argued that the movements endorse a soteriology that attests the possibility of salvation for those who are not confessing Christians in this life (Purves, 2001; Deyoung & Kluck, 2008, 2009; Davison & Milbank, 2010).

In chapter 3, it was argued that no Christian pedagogical praxis is theologically neutral, that the praxis suggested in fresh expressions literature most closely resembles the critical praxis model and that this approach was, once again, founded upon a missiology congruent with that of *missio Dei* and an understanding of salvation as communal, present *and* otherworldly; one that is not confined to Christians and which leans toward universal salvation.

In chapters 5-8, the heuristic models that suggested soteriology influenced missiology which in turn influenced pedagogy were, at least in part, upheld. The community which displayed a praxis both ecclesiological and pedagogical at odds with that advocated by fresh expressions literature was found to be internally consistent with, and built upon, a missiology which did not explicitly endorse an understanding of the *missio Dei* and which instead emphasised the importance of a traditional worshipping community and the expounding of objective scriptural truths; and a soteriology which assumed individual, other-worldly salvation for only those who confessed Christ as saviour in this life whilst also implicitly endorsing the doctrine of predestination.

In contrast, the two communities whose praxis most closely resembles that advocated in fresh expressions literature were found to uphold the *missio Dei* hermeneutic in a missiology that endorses the partnering with God in the pronouncement and embodying of the kingdom of God and the transformation of community; and which uphold a soteriology that advocates the availability of salvation beyond the confines of the Church or Christian belief, stressed the importance of works in future judgment (North Shore Pub Church) and which emphasised the belief in present and communal salvation alongside the hope for universal salvation (Spring). In both of these communities, the founders and leaders expressed how their own views of salvation had evolved from one that assumed the necessity of Christian belief for individual, other-worldly salvation to that advocated by their respective communities above and that this change was partly a response to their ministry with the un- and dechurched.

Therefore, it is my contention that the claims made by the movement's critics; the praxis encountered in all three communities; and the reforming of personal theology as a result of founding and leading a fresh expression of church as seen in two of these communities, are factors congruent with the theological presuppositions and implicit pedagogical theory of the fresh expressions movement which can be seen to advocate a creation-centred hermeneutic and soteriology which upholds the belief that God's salvation is active and available to those beyond the boundaries of the Church (in baptism and belief), and which promotes a missiology founded upon the desire to herald and embody the kingdom of God through the transformation of individuals and communities in this life. Thus, it is here argued that the theological basis of fresh expressions of church is inconsistent with the belief that only those who confess Christ as Lord and/or those who belong to the visible Church may be saved.

Whilst it could be argued that such thinking is not revelatory but is intrinsic to the theological foundation of the fresh expressions movement, the celebration of the theological diversity of the movement and, more importantly, the widespread acceptance, implementation and recommendation of the fresh expressions approach by those of a more conservative soteriology and redemption-centred hermeneutic suggest that the theological foundations of the movement have largely been ignored. As acknowledged in chapter 2, there is considerable anecdotal and academic evidence which suggests that the emerging and fresh expressions ecclesial methodology has been significantly, if not most keenly, adopted by those who advocate a more conservative theological worldview (Moynagh, 2004; Drane, 2006; Guest, 2007; Davison & Millbank, 2010) whilst Pioneer ministry within the Anglican Church in the UK and Canada is being taught at the theological colleges most associated with a redemption-centred approach.

Moreover, the example of Sanctum demonstrates that a church community can self-identify as a fresh expression of church whilst upholding a soteriological and missiological position apparently at odds with the theological presuppositions of fresh expressions theory. Such an observation goes some way to explain the tension between the communal, person-centred dialogical approach that is recommended in fresh expressions literature and which was *advertised* at Sanctum, and the hierarchical, didactic, Word-centred approach that was *observed* in its praxis.

The claim made here is a very serious one. In chapter 3, I argued that:

[I]f we find that fresh expressions of church are advocated by communities who would appear to uphold a soteriology or missiology at odds with those upon which their praxis is founded, the churches could be susceptible to claims of theological inconsistency and missiological disingenuousness – of using the methods and pedagogy of one theological view to attract the unchurched to a community which advocates a very different or even opposing theological view – a claim which, if found to be true, would compromise the proposed theological sequence endorsed by the movement (Goodhew et. al, 2012, p80) and would make the church vulnerable to further criticism and suspicion, particularly in an age which puts great importance upon an ethic of authenticity (Taylor, 1991).

The scenario outlined and feared for here was observed in practice at Sanctum. Therefore, it is my strong recommendation that in order for the fresh expressions movement to be able to withstand the slings and arrows of its fiercest critics – the claims that it divides form and content; that it favours methodology over theology; that it does not take heed of the basics of faithful Christian pedagogical practice¹⁶⁴; and that if advocating a communal, dialogical and person-centred pedagogy at first, only to revert to a didactic, hierarchical model later, it may even ‘reinforce prejudices against Christians’ (tractorgirl, 2008) – a radical review of the theological foundations and diversity of the movement is needed.

¹⁶⁴ In chapter 2, the first tasks for any Christian educator, including that of church founders and leaders, were identified as those outlined by Estep, Anthony and Allison:

- Christian educators should identify their theological assumptions and tradition before assuming the role of education.
- Christian educators must develop or accept a distinctive approach to education for the church that is integrated with a theologically aligned worldview. (Estep, Anthony & Allison, 2008, p23)

9:3 - Conclusions and consequences of research question 3:

What further theological insights on Christian education and the fresh expressions of church movement might be gleaned from an analysis of the present praxis of fresh expressions of church?

Throughout chapters 5 – 8, and explicitly in the conclusions outlined above, theological insights concerning Christian education and the fresh expressions of church movement based on the analysis of the praxis observed in the three communities that I researched have been offered. Here, recommendations that did not easily sit within the conclusions of the previous two research questions are offered.

Recommendation 6: A greater discussion of soteriology in all contexts of Christian education.

In this thesis, I have argued that an individual or community's soteriological framework will directly affect their missiological and pedagogical approaches. Such a finding is not new and yet an acknowledgement of the foundational importance of soteriology is absent from the great majority of both Christian education and fresh expressions of church literature, and was not explicitly considered in the ecclesial theory or pedagogical praxis of any of the fresh expressions of church studied. Indeed, in all three communities, my questioning of the leaders' views on salvation was often met with unease, an inability to articulate belief, or comments such as, "Oh...wow. In all the years of speaking with students, I've never been asked that question. Well done!" (Mary, Sanctum). Such a response was in direct contrast to the lay members of the communities, some of whom, without any prompting from me, and corroborated in other emerging church studies (Labanow, 2009) and in the contemporary demand for populist works on the subject¹⁶⁵, articulated their desire to talk about issues of salvation for which they perceived profound theological and pastoral consequences. Clearly, and justifiably, the demand to discuss the currently assumed or unspoken subject of salvation¹⁶⁶ and the varied Christian

¹⁶⁵ The success, and controversy, surrounding Rob Bell's book 'Love Wins' (2011) and accompanying worldwide tour is testament to this.

¹⁶⁶ A distinction is made here between those individuals and communities who have wrestled with the issue and come to an agnostic or apophatic understanding of salvation and those who have not explicitly considered it, whether through embarrassment, fear, apathy or otherwise.

interpretations of this is significant. The enabling and equipping of all Christians to discuss this matter, with the acknowledgement that disagreement is acceptable and can be healthy, has to be a key task for the ordained, who in turn must be equipped and enabled to fulfil this and which thus leads us to our next recommendation:

Recommendation 7: A greater emphasis on learning how to be a (leading-)learner in church and non-church contexts for those training for ministry.

Aware of how fortunate I have been in attending five very different institutions over a number of years as part of my theological training and with the acknowledgement that the curriculum for most ordinands is not as voluminous and is already sated, I nevertheless contend that greater time and energy must be spent on teaching ordinands pedagogical theory alongside its theological and praxis-orientated consequences. Many ordinands leave theological college with little or no training in how to teach or to equip others how to learn, and with little impetus to reflect upon the theological causes and consequences of the pedagogy they practice. Inertia, clericalism, the scarcity of other models in observance, the oft-assumed expectation that clergy be scripturally and theologically omniscient and a fear of this being found to be errant, are all possible barriers to abandoning the instructional, didactic pedagogical approach which is still prevalent in the Church today. If this is not addressed, and alternative approaches to Christian education taught, reflected upon and even modelled in our theological colleges, then the dearth of stimulating, challenging, holistic theological teaching for the laity in the western church will only increase.

Moreover, the claim articulated by James at North Shore Pub Church and Diana at Spring, that their engagement with, teaching to, and learning from, the un- and de-churched led to reflection on and changes within their own theological framework – an experience common to many pioneer ministers (Keith, 2012) – speaks of the profound consequences that may come from listening to ‘ordinary theology’ (Astley, 2002) and highlights the place of engagement with the unchurched as a locus for theological reflection. Greater engagement with those who are un- and de-churched as part of one’s training would therefore not only better equip ordinands for their future pedagogical role but would also enable them to engage with, and learn from, the thoughts and beliefs of those whom they hope to later encounter, learn from and teach. Thus, I heartily commend the following

comments made by Astley in his attempt to encourage greater interaction with ordinary theology as part of an ordinand's theological education, and which have great resonance with the 'method of pedagogic humility' (Astley, 2002, p10) that is the indirect communication of the gospel¹⁶⁷, as recommended by both Astley and by this researcher:

Those engaged in Christian religious or theological education need to know about the religious beliefs and thoughts of their learners, and the processes of their religious believing and thinking...What clergy really most need, and what they usually most lack, is a large dose of careful, reflective experience of *people*, and of a wide variety of people. Along with academic theological content, insights from other disciplines, and training in skills of care, communication and leadership, they need to *meet* people in their own context and *listen* to them. This sort of experience should not and cannot be left until after ordination because by then the barriers will have come down on both sides. (Astley, 2002, p146 – his emphases).

Recommendation 8: That all pioneer ministers work in pairs.

The benefits of founding a church as a team have long been known and thus practised by church planters. The mutual encouragement, pooling of ideas and sharing of ministry which comes from such teams have proven to be invaluable to those hoping to engage in local communities in order to plant and grow churches whilst the advantages of team ministry within traditional church contexts have also become more widely acknowledged. I therefore find it baffling that many pioneer ministers hoping to establish a fresh expression of church are sent to do so on their own. Following a meeting in which we reflected on what I had observed about North Shore Pub Church, James blogged the comment that 'a mark of authenticity [of a fresh expression of church] would be that the

¹⁶⁷ In his reflection on his kenotic Christology and the divine pedagogy, Kierkegaard comments; "In order to help another effectively I must understand more than he – yet first of all surely I must understand what he understands. If I do not know that, my greater understanding will be of no help to him. If, however, I am disposed to plume myself on my greater understanding, it is because I am vain or proud, so that at bottom, instead of benefitting him, I want to be admired. But all true effort begins with self-humiliation: the helper must first humble himself under him he would help, and therewith must understand that to help does not mean to be a sovereign but to be a servant, that to help does not mean to be ambitious but to be patient, that to help means to endure for the time being the imputation that one is in the wrong and does not understand what the other understands...[T]o be a teacher in the right sense is to be a learner." (Kierkegaard, 1962, pp27-29).

community would be very fragile, messy and most of the time in crisis' (Appendix B). Such a comment was observed in, and echoed by, all three communities studied. Pioneer ministry involves vulnerability, the blurring of boundaries and frustrations which are different in nature to those experienced by those in traditional ministry¹⁶⁸ and thus it is my contention that no pioneer minister should be sent to establish a community on their own – both for their own good and for those whom they are hoping to meet, serve and engage with¹⁶⁹.

Recommendation 9: Further research be undertaken to consider the applicability of the indirect communication of the gospel as a pedagogical model for the contemporary, western Church.

Kierkegaard is frequently and favourably cited by those commenting on and practicing within the emerging and fresh expressions movements as a theologian who has much to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about the nature and purpose of the contemporary church (Streett, 2006; Molgaard, 2008; emergingchristian, 2010; Tammeus, 2010; Mobsby, 2012). His critique of the institutional church, condemnation of didactic teaching, and call for more authentic Christian witness have resonated in the experiences and objectives of the movements. However, I believe Kierkegaard's pedagogical approach of indirect communication of the gospel deserves greater attention within the emerging community and beyond. For the emerging community, one that is often criticised for focusing upon form over content, methodology over theology, Kierkegaard's work may provide a justification of, and demand for, much of the praxis witnessed in the emerging and fresh expressions of church movements. Further research into the relationship between Kierkegaard's theology and emerging church praxis may enable more fruitful dialogue to take place both between the emerging church and systematic theology, and

¹⁶⁸ By no means am I saying that those serving in the inherited church do not experience vulnerability, the blurring of boundaries or frustration. I am merely saying that formal pioneer ministry is in its infancy and that pioneer ministers would greatly benefit from the support, challenge and different perspective that comes from working with another in their navigation of the opportunities and pitfalls that will accompany this new mode of ministry.

¹⁶⁹ If such use of resources was deemed to be unsustainable, then perhaps the church might consider sending two ministers to a traditional pastorate needing one full-time minister, with the expectation that they establish a new fresh expression of church, separate to the inherited church, as part of their ministry. Such a model would have a plethora of practical and theological advantages and might also be seen to act as a prototype for future ecclesial experiments.

between the emerging church and its more conservative detractors, who often question the place of Christ within the movement.

Moreover, Kierkegaard's work on indirect communication is relevant far beyond the confines of the emerging movements and should be seen as a challenging and christocentric call for ecclesial reflection and reform. Polemical, bewildering and unsystematic at times, the pedagogy of indirect communication weaves together strands of the divine pedagogy, kenotic christology and the wonder of the incarnation in a way that affirms the freedom of the learner, the humbling of the teacher and the incarnating of the subject matter in the Church and in the community; by God and by humankind. It is thus recommended here that further attention be given by the contemporary Church to Kierkegaard's pedagogy of indirect communication and the theology upon which it is built.

Other Areas Requiring Further Research

It is hoped that this study will generate more questions than it has provided answers. Indeed, it is evident to me that several paths of theological enquiry have been hinted at and touched upon within the thesis which I have not had the time or space to develop further and I would thus wish to highlight the following areas for future research: the impact that gender and adopted models of ministry have upon the praxis of fresh expressions of church; the ownership of a fresh expression as church, in particular exploring the reasons why leaders of the communities attend other churches; consideration of Christian identity in relation to fresh expressions theory and praxis; further reflection on the relationship between reason, revelation and the pedagogy of fresh expressions of church.

9:4 – Thesis Summary

Following chapter 1 as introduction, the thesis opened in earnest with the situational and theological analysis of the fresh expressions of church movement in chapter 2. The nature of the decline of the institutional church in economically more developed countries was summarised and an overview of the emerging church and fresh expressions of church movements given. I demonstrated that fresh expressions of church were built upon a polyphonic, contextual methodology in which no one leader or key text dictated

proceedings. Instead, it was shown that the movement assumed an unarticulated standard ecumenical orthodoxy and endorsed a missiology seen through the *missio Dei* hermeneutic. The soteriology upon which this was built was shown to distance itself from the classical position of 'extra ecclesiam nulla salus', preferring a holistic, communal, present (as well as other-worldly) view of salvation which leaned towards the universal, whilst an explicit pedagogical basis appeared to be largely absent. The criticisms of the movement's theology were identified as those of the risk of relativism, a confused missiology, inconsistent soteriology and danger of communicating a doctrinally superficial understanding of Christianity.

In chapter 3, I established the significance of the often neglected relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy. In my analysis of the dominant forms of contemporary (Protestant) Christian education, I identified the instructional, enculturation and critical praxis approaches and argued that these pedagogies are built upon competing views of salvation and subsequently missiology. It was stressed that these models were to be seen as heuristic tools rather than prescriptive structures and that they were to be tested in the qualitative research undertaken.

In chapter 4, I explained how my thesis was grounded in a phronetic understanding of practical theology in which the aim of my research was not 'for knowledge for its own sake, but for an embodied, practical knowledge which will enable a particular form of God-oriented lifestyle' (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, pp26-27). A critical realist framework was explained and endorsed as a necessary one for an interdisciplinary study such as this. The key principles of ethnographic work that I put into practice in my qualitative research were then outlined before I justified my use of participant observation, interviews and questionnaire alongside the nature and purpose of my data analysis and write-up.

Chapters 5 and 6 saw the individual and then synthetic analyses of the pedagogical praxis of the three communities studied in which I explained how community had been established, described the pedagogical praxis observed and identified the following eight approaches to learning that were observed: the prior establishing of trust; the offer of formal learning outside of the main weekly meeting; the modelling of loving praxis; the direct and indirect communication of the gospel; the

introduction of the language of Christian faith; enculturation; and variation learning. In the analysis of the pedagogical praxis of the communities, it became clear that whilst no community fitted a model precisely and all three displayed praxis that was not fully accounted for in the models, it was found that one community closely reflected the instructional model (Sanctum); two contained elements of the enculturation model (Spring and Sanctum); and two shared much in common with the critical praxis approach (North Shore Pub Church and Spring).

In chapter 7, the soteriological and missiological beliefs of each community were represented in detail, allowing for the consideration of the relationship between soteriology, missiology and pedagogy to take place in chapter 8. Here, the provisional nature of the heuristic models of Christian education was reiterated as it was nevertheless contended that the veracity of the models identified in chapter 3 was, at least in part, upheld by the theological assumptions and pedagogical praxis of the three fresh expressions of church and I thus recommended that the models be subject to further debate, criticism and testing.

The thesis has been brought to a close in this current chapter in which conclusions have been given, recommendations for revised theory and practice offered, and suggestions for further research proposed – highlighting in particular the need for a more consciously developed approach to enable critical dialogue between present praxis and the Christian Story, including its cognitive-propositional statements, within the fresh expressions curriculum and a review of the integrity of the theological diversity of the movement – in the hope that this piece of research stimulate renewed interest in, and discussion of, the relationship between theology and education in the academy, in the Church and in the world.

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Appendix A: The Decline of the Inherited Church in Canada

If falling attendance, fewer clergy and an increasingly negative perception of the institutional church represents the significant challenge to the church in the UK (see section 2:2), the same can be said for that of Canada. Talk of 'a march toward secularization' (Valpy & Friesen, 2010) and the 'extinction of religion' (Palmer, 2011) is common amidst the secular press whilst Canadian Church leaders acknowledge that in Canada, secularism and agnosticism have become 'normative' (Couto, 2001). A glance at the statistics for the Anglican Church in Canada shows that membership fell from 1.3 million in 1961 to 658 000 in 2001, with attendance of at least two church services a month standing at just 325 000 (Nicolosi & Jenkins, 2009) and such decline is far from restricted to the ACC. Sociologist David Eagle notes, 'According to the General Social Survey, the combined rate of weekly and monthly attendance at religious services in Canada has declined by about 20 points from 1986 to 2008'. (Eagle, 2011, p187)

A few dissenting voices have suggested that this decline has halted (Bibby, 2011) whilst some academics have rightly pointed out that regional variation in religious attendance in Canada is significant (Clark 2003; Clark & Schellenberg 2006) and yet the vast majority of research corroborates the anecdotal evidence and ecclesial statistics which all point toward the decline of church attendance, particularly among younger age groups (Clark & Schellenberg, 2006; Lindsay, 2008; Abrams et.al, 2011). Alongside this decline, the shortage of clergy (Friesen, 2010) and an increasingly negative perception of the institutional church (Clark & Schellenberg, 2006) would suggest that the Christian Church in Canada is facing the same challenges as experienced in the UK. Indeed, the very fact that Canadian churches are looking to Fresh Expressions leaders from the UK to advise them and teach both clergy and laity about Fresh Expressions theology and process (Swift, 2012), demonstrates that many within the Canadian Church identify with and wish to learn from the context of, and proposed responses by, the Church in the UK. For such reasons, I felt justified to conduct ethnographic research of a Fresh Expression in Canada alongside the two from the UK.

Appendix B: Leader Responses

Prior to its completion, a draft of the sections of the thesis relating to their community was sent to the leaders of each fresh expression of church, accompanied by correspondence thanking them for their participation and welcoming any feedback within a six month period. It was emphasised that qualitative research such as that undertaken here rests on an understanding that 'Knowledge...although in principle concerning realities independent of the knower, is never itself independent of the knower' (Wright, 1992, p35) and thus, I encouraged them to give feedback that could be included alongside my observations. The following feedback was given:

North Shore Pub Church

After lengthy, and continuing, discussions on my observations, James blogged the following and consented to include this as his response:

Lessons from the seaside...

Reflecting on the developing Fresh Expressions in North Shore that I was part of, one thing has struck me recently, and that has been that when it comes to Fresh Expressions of church we should not be so quick to defend and justify them. It is an easy trap to fall into, especially for the pioneer who will have ploughed a lot of blood, sweat and tears into birthing a new community. Of course everyone wants newly formed Fresh Expressions of church to be successful in reaching those who have no connection with either faith or church. We want them to look good, but it is easy to miss the reality of authentic markers of church. There is also the fact that at times we might want to measure how well they are doing by comparing them to other inherited forms of church to see how well they are getting on.

One of the hardest things I find when it comes to critiquing fresh expressions of church is that the only yard stick we have got is one that seems rather inadequate for the job. (the tools no longer fit the situation) tools such as critiquing new communities using orthodoxy and doctrine as a way of interpreting what is going on. Whilst these issues

are important they might not always be easily recognisable in the way we might want to understand them

For example, one of the comments of the Fresh Expressions in North Shore was that it seemed that we never actively preached the gospel, in as much as there was no recognised reading and expounding of the scriptures. I believe the question therefore is one that can be found in the Psalms, at a time when God's people found themselves in an unfamiliar place, with no recognisable markers to order their sense of God. "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?"* (the foreign land for us, this time being cultural rather than geographical.)

What we did do is take a hermeneutical approach to exploring issues in the news. Exploring, sharing and debating the topics that everyone was facing. It was through this way of engaging with each other that conversations of faith, ethical, moral, and spiritual ideas were put forward and critiqued and pondered by those who did not profess a faith based world view. This was often messy, with view points being aired and language used that may make some people feel shocked or offended by. Indeed I often asked myself the question "what would people say if they thought this was church?" Of course this was an environment in which everyone was welcome and all views were encouraged to be shared. They would be challenged at times and although there were never any serious consequences the debates would get heated. It was messy and I as the pioneer constantly felt vulnerable about what it was we were doing. With questions like "is this church?" "are these men seeing and hearing the teachings of Jesus?" "can we see authentic signs of the Kingdom here?" and always in the back of my mind were the voices of those who would criticise no matter what we did.

But on reflection, I believe that if a Fresh Expression of church is authentically engaging with and creating disciples then it will look most of the time anything but successful. Just like the disciples, and the early church. In fact I would go so far as saying that a mark of authenticity would be that the community would be very fragile, messy and most of the time in crisis. I say this not only from my own experience but also reading Paul's letters to the early church. (1 Corinthians 1: 10-17**) Most of the time sorting out the issues that were arising as new disciples worked out their faith in a messy and uneasy way. There is an album by the band Dubh called 'Fractured,

broken and beautiful', I believe that this sums up the church in every place and not just Fresh Expression communities, but this is what we want. A church reliant upon the saving grace of God through the continued work of the Holy Spirit.

Sanctum

The following is an email written by the Rector of St. Peter's and overseer of Sanctum, in response to my observations and which he consented to include here:

Hi Phil. Thank you for sending the chapter w.r.t. 'Sanctum' and St. Peter's. As you suggested, I have forwarded your chapter to others, including those you interviewed and spent time with in Sanctum. What is important to note, is that Sanctum is a very different and developing community from your brief time with us. John left leadership ministry last October, so issues such as identity and leadership are still prevalent. However, the Sanctum community is evolving into a healthier and more focused community in spite of that. We have had some good discussions regarding your written material these past few days. Out of this discussion, there are three observations.

1. Many of your observations were very helpful and confirmed what we had been wrestling with. We appreciated the critique. Thank you for that.
2. One of my concerns, as one who teaches and marks papers like yours for two seminaries, is a two-fold issue.
 - a. There is a lack of appropriate and beneficial contextualization of your commentary. As you are from a different religious, political, ecclesiological and sociological culture—there are number of points of contact, both similar and distinct, that were not identified and assessed. This weakens the import of your argument.
 - b. Every student, as part of the learning process, must come to understand their natural and formative 'grid' or worldview and how it influences their assessment of things. A lack of clarity was evident, both in your purpose and presence in the community, as well as the paper. Your perspective is implicit yet not acknowledged by you as the author. The personal theological and ecclesiological

presuppositions, dare I say biases, are embedded and need to be articulated in the interests of full disclosure. Hence, it devolves into easy criticism versus constructive critique.

3. As you mentioned, this is a draft. To note, there are a number of textual and editing errors that will need to be addressed in the interests of accuracy. I assume you are dealing with those.

Once again, thank you for your time and energy and I wish you all the best in this endeavour. Happy New Year to you as well. Mark.

John, the leader of Sanctum during the majority of my placement, emailed the following response:

Hey Phil,

So sorry for the delay in getting back to you. I really appreciate your email and encouragement. I think your assessment is bang on.

I will be praying for you as you put this together. The only think I could think of in reflection in terms of the "bias" is just try to soften the edges. Hope that makes sense.

Thanks Phil,

John

Spring

In spite of continued positive relations with the leaders of Spring, following several requests for feedback, nothing was received.

Appendix C: Questionnaires

North Shore Pub Church Questionnaire

PLEASE READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

- Please answer all the questions.
- Unless directed otherwise, tick only one box per question.
- Do not write your name on the questionnaire.
- Please read any guidance provided, usually in brackets.

Part 1: About You and North Shore Pub Church

1) How long have you been a member of North Shore Pub Church?

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than a month | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 2 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 - 5 months | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 – 5 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 – 11 months | |

2) On average, how frequently have you attended North Shore Pub Church Sunday evening sessions?

- 3 times a month or more
- Twice a month
- Once a month
- Less than once a month

3) On average, over the time you have been coming, how frequently have you attended North Shore Pub Church socials?

- 5 – 6 times a year
- 3 – 4 times a year
- 1 – 2 times a year
- Never

4) How many North Shore Pub Church weekend camping trips have you attended?

- 2 or more
- 1
- None

5) Which of the following have you done at North Shore Pub Church?

- Written the flyer for a Sunday evening session
- Led the discussion at a Sunday evening session
- Helped to organise a social event

6) How did you first hear about North Shore Pub Church? (Please tick any that apply).

- Personal invite from James/Sam
- Personal invite from another member of North Shore Pub Church
- Told about it by friend/family member
- Told about it at local traditional Church
- First attended a social event
- Follow-on from Alpha Course
- Came across it on internet
- Other (please specify) _____

7) What prompted you to attend your first session of North Shore Pub Church? (Please tick any that apply).

- Prompting by James/Sam
- Prompting by another member of North Shore Pub Church
- Prompting by a friend/family member
- Curiosity
- Wanted to learn more about the Christian faith
- Attracted by the opportunity for interesting discussion
- Something to do on a Sunday evening
- Other (please specify)

8) Why have you continued coming to North Shore Pub Church? Please tick any that apply.

- Friendship
- Support through personal issues
- Enjoyment of the discussions
- Wanting to support the group
- Wanting to learn more about the Christian faith
- Something to do on a Sunday evening
- Other (please specify)

9a) Since you started to attend North Shore Pub Church, which of the following would apply to you? (Please tick all that apply).

- I have learnt more about the Bible
- I have learnt more about Church
- I have learnt more about what it means to live as a Christian
- I have learnt more about what Christians believe
- I have learnt more about what I think on certain issues
- I have learnt none of the above

b) Please elaborate on any of your answers

10a) Since you started to attend North Shore Pub Church, which of the following would apply to you? Please tick all that apply.

- I have listened to the beliefs or opinions of people I would not normally socialize with
- I have questioned some of my own beliefs or opinions
- I have changed some of my own beliefs or opinions

None of the above

b) Please elaborate on any of your answers

11a) In your opinion, what is the purpose of North Shore Pub Church?
(Please tick any that apply).

- To provide friendship and community
- To provide a safe space to talk about personal issues
- To listen to and discuss issues from the Bible
- To provide a forum in which the big issues in life are explored
- To provide a place to learn more about the Christian faith
- To become a worshipping community
- Other (please specify)

b) Please elaborate on any of your answers

Part 2: You and Your Beliefs

12) **Before** attending North Shore Pub Church, which of these would best describe you?

- Atheist – did not believe in God.
- Agnostic – could not decide whether or not God exists.

- Had not given the issue much thought
- Believed in some higher power but unsure what
- Christian but did not attend traditional Church regularly
- Christian and attended traditional Church regularly (if so, which church/denomination) _____
- Other (please specify) _____

13) As you are **today**, which of these would best describe you?

- 1 - Atheist – do not believe in God.
- 2 - Agnostic – do not know whether or not God exists.
- 3 - Have not given the issue much thought.
- 4 - Believe in some higher power but unsure what.
- 5 - Christian but do not attend a traditional Church regularly.
- 6 - Christian and attend a traditional Church regularly (if so, which church/denomination) _____
- 7 - Other (please specify) _____

If you ticked box 5 or 6, please go to question 14. For all others, please skip to question 17

14) In your opinion, which, if any, of the following are the tasks of a Christian:

(Please tick any that apply)

- To regularly worship God
- To regularly read the Bible
- To regularly participate in the life of a church
- To live a good life
- To tell non-Christians about Jesus
- To be an example of how to behave to non-Christians
- To try to follow the example of Jesus
- To learn more about the Christian faith
- Other (Please specify)

15) In your opinion, which, if any, of the following are the tasks of the Church:

- To regularly worship God
- To regularly read the Bible
- To maintain Church tradition and customs
- To teach about the Christian faith
- To tell non-Christians about Jesus
- To help those in need
- To provide community
- Other (Please specify)

16) Which of the following statements applies to you?

- I believe that only Christians who believe the right things go to heaven
- I believe that only Christians who participate in the Church go to heaven
- I believe that all Christians go to heaven
- I believe that good people go to heaven
- I believe that everyone goes to heaven
- I believe heaven and hell are here on Earth
- I do not have a set belief about heaven and hell
- Other (please specify)

17) Have you attended an Alpha course?

- Yes
- No

18) If yes, when was this?

- Before I started attending North Shore Pub Church
- After I started attending North Shore Pub Church

19) Have you also attended St. Max's?

- Yes. (Please go to question 20)
- No. (Please go to question 22)

20) How regularly do you attend Oasis ?

- Once a month
- 4 times a year or more
- 1-3 times a year
- Only ever attended 1-2 times

21) In your opinion, what is the purpose of Oasis? (Please tick all that apply).

- To provide friendship and community
- To provide a safe space to talk about personal issues
- To provide a forum in which the big issues in life are explored
- To provide a place to learn more about the Christian faith
- To become a worshipping community
- Other (please specify)

b) Please elaborate on any of your answers

Part 3 – About You

22) What age group do you belong to?

- 18 – 29
- 30 – 39
- 40 – 49
- 50 or above

23) What is your current occupation?

24) What qualifications do you have? Please tick all that apply.

- None
- CSE
- GCSE/ 'O' Levels
- GNVQ
- C&G
- 'A' Levels
- AVQ
- HND
- Certificate/Diploma
- Degree
- Professional qualification
- Higher degree
- Other (Please specify)

25) Is there anything else you would like to write about any of the topics discussed above?

Please continue overleaf if necessary.

Sanctum Questionnaire

PLEASE READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

- Please answer all the questions.
- Unless directed otherwise, tick only one box per question.
- Do not write your name on the questionnaire.
- Please read any guidance provided.

Part 1: About You and Sanctum

1) How long have you been attending Sanctum?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than a month | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 – 11 months |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 - 5 months | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 year or more |

2) On average, how frequently have you attended Sanctum Sunday evening sessions?

- 3 times a month or more
- Twice a month
- Once a month
- Less than once a month

3) Were you in the Sanctum launch team?

- Yes
- No

4) Are you in the Sanctum leadership team?

- Yes
- No

5) Have you attended either Sanctum bites or Sanctum hikes?

- Yes (go to question 6)
- No (go to question 7)

6) How often did you attend either Sanctum bites or Sanctum hikes?

- Once
- 2 – 4 times
- 5 times or more

7) Do you attend Sanctum small groups?

- Yes (go to question 8)
- No (go to question 9)

8) How often do you attend Sanctum small groups?

- 3 times a month or more
- Twice a month
- Once a month
- Less than once a month

9) How did you first hear about Sanctum? (Please tick any that apply).

- Through attendance at St Peter's
- Through attendance of St Peter's apologetics course
- Told about it by friend/family member
- Through internet advertising
- Other (please specify) _____

10) In your opinion, what is the purpose of Sanctum?

12) As you are **today**, which of these would best describe you?

- Atheist – do not believe in God.
- Agnostic – do not know whether or not God exists.
- Have not given the issue much thought.
- Believe in some higher power but unsure what.
- Christian but do not attend a church regularly (including Sanctum)
- Christian and attend a church regularly (if so, which church/denomination – including Sanctum)

Other (please specify)

If you ticked 'Christian', please go to question 13. For all others, please skip to question 15

13) In your opinion, what is the mission (tasks/purpose) of the Christian Church?

14) What do you belief about salvation? (e.g. who is saved; how are we saved; what does 'saved' mean?)

Part 3 – Your Life

15) What age group do you belong to?

18 – 29

40 or above

30 - 39

16) What is your current occupation?

17) What qualifications do you have? Please tick all that apply.

- None
- High school diploma
- CEGEP
- Certificate/Diploma
- Degree
- Professional qualification
- Higher degree
- Other (Please specify)

18) Is there anything else you would like to write about any of the topics discussed above?

Please continue overleaf if necessary.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE!

Spring Questionnaire

PLEASE READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

- Please answer all the questions.
- Unless directed otherwise, tick only one box per question.
- Do not write your name on the questionnaire.
- Please read any guidance provided, usually in brackets.

Part 1: About You and Spring

1) How long have you been a member of Spring?

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than a month | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 2 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 - 5 months | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 – 5 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 – 11 months | |

2) On average, how frequently have you attended Spring on a Friday morning?

- 3 times a month or more
- Twice a month
- Once a month
- Less than once a month

3) How did you first hear about Spring? (Please tick any that apply).

- Personal invite from a member of Spring
 - Heard about it at a traditional church
 - Came across it on internet
 - Son/daughter attends St. James' School
 - Other please specify) _____
- _____
- _____

4) What prompted you to attend your first session of Spring?
(Please tick any that apply).

- Prompting by a member of Spring
- Curiosity
- Wanted to learn more about the Christian faith
- Somewhere to get a coffee and some rest on a Friday morning
- Possibility of friendship and community
- Other (please specify)

5) Why have you continued coming to Spring? Please tick any that apply.

- Friendship and community
- Support through personal issues
- Enjoyment of the discussions
- Wanting to support the group
- Wanting to learn more about the Christian faith
- Something to do on a Friday morning
- Other (please specify)

6) In your opinion, what is the purpose of Spring? (Please tick any that apply).

- To provide friendship and community
- To provide a safe space to talk about personal issues
- To listen to and discuss issues from the Bible
- To provide a forum in which the big issues in life are explored
- To provide a place to learn more about the Christian faith
- To become a worshipping community
- Other – please specify:

Part 2: You and Your Beliefs

7) **Before** attending Spring, which of these would best describe you?

- Did not believe in God.
- Could not decide whether or not God exists.
- Had not given the issues much thought
- Believed in some higher power but unsure what
- Christian but did not attend traditional Church regularly

Christian and attended traditional Church regularly (if so, which church/denomination) _____

Other (please specify) _____

8) Have you attended an Alpha course at Spring?

Yes

No

9) As you are **today**, which of these would best describe you?

1 - Do not believe in God.

2 - Do not know whether or not God exists.

3 - Have not given the issue much thought.

4 - Believe in some higher power but unsure what.

5 - Christian but do not attend a traditional Church regularly.

6 - Christian and attend a traditional Church regularly (if so, which church/denomination)

7 - Other (please specify)

If you ticked boxes 5 or 6, please go to question 10.

If you ticked any other box, please skip to question 13.

10) How long have you identified yourself as a Christian?

- 0 – 6 months
- 6 months – 1 year
- 1 – 5 years
- 5 years +

11) In your opinion, which, if any, of the following are the tasks of the Church:

- To regularly worship God
- To regularly read the Bible
- To maintain Church tradition and customs
- To teach about the Christian faith
- To tell non-Christians about Jesus
- To help those in need
- To provide community and support
- Other (Please specify)

12) Which of the following statements applies to you?

- I believe that only Christians who believe the right things go to heaven
- I believe that only Christians who participate in the Church go to heaven
- I believe that all Christians go to heaven
- I believe that good people go to heaven

- I believe that everyone goes to heaven
- I believe heaven and hell are here on Earth
- I do not have a set belief about heaven and hell
- Other (please specify)

Part 3 – About You

13) Are you:

male

female

14) What age group do you belong to?

18 – 29

30 – 39

40 – 49

50 or above

