Leadership in the Church
A heuristic framework and critical appraisal of contemporary British Church leadership literature

Kimber, Jonathan Richard

Awarding institution:
King's College London

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Jonathan Kimber

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Abstract

Since the mid-1970s, there has been a significant increase in British ministerial literature focusing on a particular understanding of leadership. Whilst many within the Church have eagerly adopted this approach, others have been troubled by significant aspects of its recommendations, sensing them to be anomalous within the life of the Church.

Treating this ministerial literature as a *discourse* (which it terms the *Church Leadership Discourse (CLD)*), this thesis has held against it a heuristic framework comprising two approaches to reality (which are derived from the works of McGilchrist and Louth in particular). One of these approaches, termed the *Cartesian*, is characterised by clarity, focus and detailed analysis. The other, termed the *Gestalt*, is attuned to questions of degree, of disposition, and of connectedness. Importantly, both approaches are needed, but their proper relationship is not one of simple balance. Rather, the clarity of the Cartesian approach should always be in service of the broader wisdom of the Gestalt. A further significant move, inspired by the work of Kuhn, was to recognise the importance of *anomalies* as potential indicators that an existing paradigm may be insufficient.

In the core chapters of the thesis, I examine the CLD in the light of this heuristic framework. My conclusion is that the CLD is significantly biased towards a Cartesian approach. Examining the CLD in the light of this framework proves fruitful not only in identifying a broad range of *anomalies* within it, but also in establishing their *interconnectedness*, *pervasiveness*, and theological *insufficiency*. Taken together, these findings form a strong argument that the CLD arises from an approach to reality that is inappropriate and inadequate for a significant role within the Christian Church. The thesis concludes by offering an outline of a reconfigured ministerial discourse. Here, the calling of the Church is to improvise faithfully and trustingly within God's unfolding drama, in such a way that the mode of being of the Church is increasingly conformed to the very being of God.

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Introduction and overview

Focus and aims

In recent decades, some significant new vocabulary has been incorporated into much literature on church ministry. Words, phrases and concepts are now commonplace that would never previously have been used in a church context. Practice on the ground, at least in some places, has changed as a consequence. For instance, a method known as *Mission Action Planning* has been affirmed as a helpful *strategic tool* by the Church of England General Synod[1]. *Measurable targets*, for instance regarding church attendance, are encouraged at diocesan and parish level[2]. *Leadership* is frequently prioritised as a desirable characteristic of clergy, who in turn are often redesignated *church leaders*. Terms such as *dynamic, forward-looking, positive* and *inspiring* are held as aspirational. *Vision statements* and *SMART objectives* offer churches the chance to become lean and focused organisations. Tangible *results* and quantifiable *outcomes* are expected to follow. *Statistical charts*, plotting church attendance against a wide range of variables, are carefully scrutinised for possible correlations. *Mission* is frequently described as separate from *ministry*, and often implied to be the most important and interesting part of church life.

Within the Church of England, some have enthusiastically welcomed such new practices and terminology. They perceive them as a source of focus and energy, and as a way of cutting through frustrating inertia. For such proponents, the practices themselves are viewed as effective tools, which are assumed to be theologically neutral, and thus appropriate for the church to adopt in a form of 'consecrated pragmatism'. Others, however, in spite of the sometimes compelling rhetoric around vision and leadership, remain to be convinced. Some simply try to ignore the changes. Others 'play the game' to the extent that they have to, seeking to bypass its worst effects. According to anecdotal evidence, however, increasing numbers within the church are experiencing deep unease at these developments. Their strong instinct is to resist such practices, diagnosing them as a foreign body, inappropriate for ingestion by the body of Christ. Being asked to reconceive their ministry in terms of objectives, methods and outcomes is leading to frustration and resentment, but also to anger and resistance.

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[1] In 2011.
[2] In some dioceses.

Within this context, open and clear debate is neither as prevalent nor as articulate as one might hope. Although arguments have been made both for and against the place of these practices within the church, there has rarely been a sense that the arguments of one 'side' actually engage to any great depth with those of the other. One major reason for this has been the lack of an obvious framework and vocabulary for constructive dialogue and evaluation. Furthermore, one suspects that it has not been an overly high priority. The proponents of leadership via vision and objectives have not always prioritised theoretical reflection, perhaps due to the perceived urgency of the task confronting them. And many of the resistors have avoided directly addressing the cultural shifts unfolding around them.

Such, in broad brush strokes, is the context into which this thesis speaks, and to which it aims to contribute. How will it do so? Within the thesis, I will argue three main claims regarding the developments I have outlined: I will highlight their *interconnectedness*, their *pervasiveness*, and their *insufficiency*. At this early stage, I will put just some initial flesh on each of these three claims:

First, then, these new developments are substantially *interconnected*. This is unlikely to be immediately obvious. For instance, at first sight, the conceptual separation of mission from ministry may appear to have nothing in common with the setting of church objectives. My argument will be, however, that these and other new trends all arise from a shared broad approach to reality. They are not simply unrelated phenomena that happen to have arisen at a similar time, but, rather, are varied manifestations of a common way of thinking. I term this approach to reality a *Cartesian* approach. On what is a Cartesian approach based? Davison and Milbank, commenting on the type of thinking within the church report *Mission-Shaped Church* (2004), perceptively observe that '*separation is the watchword*' of such thinking (2010, p. 60, my emphasis), and that 'sharp distinctions' are prevalent[3]. What they have identified here is arguably the primary governing principle of a Cartesian approach: dividing or separating one thing from another, making distinctions, constructing boundaries. I will explain in subsequent chapters quite how this primary principle of separation relates to the varied phenomena I have mentioned. For now, my first main claim will be the interconnectedness of this broad range of new developments, held together in what I term a Cartesian approach.

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[3] An example they cite is the separation in the report between the Church and her mission.

Having established such commonality, my second claim is that the influence of a Cartesian approach has become *pervasive.* Its impact and influence is now widespread, though not always obvious. The primary focus of the thesis is on leadership in the Church, and that is the main area in which I will be drawing attention to the prevalence of such a Cartesian approach. For convenience, I introduce the term *Church Leadership Discourse* (CLD) to denote this main focus of the thesis. In brief, I mean by this term that body of contemporary ministerial writing, primarily addressing the Church of England, in which the language of leadership is prominent, and in which leadership is characterised by the likes of vision and objectives. I will seek to make clear the extent to which the Cartesian has influenced and shaped such literature and the practice it inspires. These first two claims, then, are linked to a heuristic aim. My purpose is to help the reader recognise the characteristics of what I call the Cartesian, and thus be able to discern the considerable extent of its influence, both within the CLD and elsewhere.

A Cartesian approach has some compelling strengths, including detailed focus and logical analysis. Nevertheless, the third overall claim of this thesis is that a Cartesian approach on its own is *insufficient and imbalanced*. Used in isolation, such an approach is theologically inappropriate. I can best describe how I will substantiate this claim by drawing on an observation of Thomas Kuhn in his seminal work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970). I begin with some brief background. Kuhn's focus in this book is the general process of transition from one scientific paradigm to its successor. For instance, one well-known example of such a transition is the shift from a geocentric understanding of the universe to a heliocentric model (see especially pp. 68-69. This shift is sometimes referred to as the Copernican revolution.). What was it, Kuhn asks, that stimulated such a significant transition? His answer to that question, in this and many other cases, is to emphasise the importance of the recognition of *anomalies* (Section VI. Anomaly and the Emergence of Scientific Discoveries). In this case, the anomalies consisted of differences between, on the one hand, actual observations of the movement of the planets, and on the other, the predictions of the geocentric model. Initially, these anomalies were treated as minor discrepancies. Astronomers responded by adjusting the basic geocentric model, making it ever more complex. As increasing attention was focused on the anomalies, however, so awareness gradually dawned that it was the underlying model itself that was flawed. Such awareness created the necessary conditions for the creation of a new model.

Anomalies can be irritating, and it is often tempting to ignore them. They may, however, be highly significant. They deserve attention. In this thesis I aim to create space to take seriously

what many perceive as anomalies between the CLD and more traditional Christian faith and practice. I have chosen not simply to brush away the sense of jarring, of foreignness, of unease experienced by many. The existence of an anomaly, of course, is always relative to a particular paradigm or worldview[4]. Anomalies in the context of this thesis can work in either direction. Some will be instances of CLD recommendations jarring with traditional faith or church experience. In other cases, church practice uninfluenced by the CLD proves remarkably fruitful nevertheless[5]. Overall, it is the *accumulation of anomalies* that, more or less gradually, leads to the realisation that a particular understanding cannot be redeemed by minor adjustment. It needs, instead, at least substantial surgery, and perhaps replacement.

This leads, then, to my constructive contribution. As well as offering a critique of the CLD, I also sketch, at least in outline, what an alternative paradigm might look like. I do so in two ways over the course of the thesis. In one of these ways, primarily expressed in Chapter 2, I propose how a Cartesian approach can helpfully and properly contribute as a subordinate partner to an alternative approach to reality. This alternative approach to reality I term the Gestalt[6]. My second way of describing an alternative paradigm uses the language of ecclesiology, theology and virtue to offer a reconfigured ministerial discourse. I develop this alternative discourse in the final chapter. My aim there is to outline an ecclesiological understanding that is theologically alert, anthropologically grounded, and ministerially realistic. It will take seriously those valid concerns that led to the turn towards the CLD, whilst demonstrating how it manages to avoid the imbalances which I have contended are probable when that discourse becomes dominant.

By the end of this thesis, then, I hope to have achieved two useful ends. One is the construction and use of a conceptual framework, involving what I term Cartesian and Gestalt approaches to reality, that will enable a more discerning and articulate level of debate in this whole area. The second end is a sketch in broad strokes of a reconfigured ministerial discourse. Overall, how can the nature of this thesis best be described? It is certainly *intentionally interdisciplinary*. This arises in part from it necessarily bringing into conversation

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[4] For instance, observed planetary motions had anomalies with respect to a geocentric universe, but not with respect to a heliocentric solar system.

[5] For instance, Percy cites the fact that, according to the Church Statistics 2010/11, although many dioceses with well-developed mission strategies showed continuing numerical decline, one that enjoyed 'a whopping 17% [increase] in average weekly and usual Sunday attendance' was Canterbury, the Bishop of which was not obviously a proponent of the CLD (M. Percy, 2014, p. 262).

[6] Some of the main characteristics of a Gestalt approach include sensitivity to questions of tone, texture and degree; awareness of connectedness and relationship; facility with ambiguity, paradox and depth.

the realms of leadership, ministry and broader theology. But its interdisciplinary nature will be further extended in the development of its heuristic framework, drawing as this does on areas such as Critical Discourse Analysis, the relationship between the sciences and the humanities, and indeed the study of neurophysiology. The thesis thus seeks to harness insights from a broad range of disciplines. But, at heart, I see it as a piece of *grounded ecclesiology*. The nature of the Church is its focus. And by Church I do not mean an abstract unattainable ideal, but rather an understanding of ecclesial life firmly rooted in the typical experiences of real people amidst the twists, turns and contingencies of real life under God.

The fact that I cited the Copernican revolution as an example could seem to imply that I expect this thesis to have similar revolutionary impact. That is not the case. What is very much the case, however, is my growing conviction that the questions under consideration here are of vital importance. The discourse under discussion, I contend, reshapes the very '*mode of existence'* of the church, its '*way of being*' (Zizioulas, 1985, p. 15). A church formed primarily by the CLD is likely to come to a substantially altered understanding of how the presence of God to the faithful is to be construed (drawing on a phrase of David Kelsey, cited in Healy, 2000, p. 42). Is the church primarily to be conceived as a lean, task-focused organisation, prioritising consistent year-on-year numerical growth? Or might such an ecclesiology seem to have lost perspective on matters such as grace, worship, humility, communion, and the transcendence and love of God. Issues regarding the very soul of the church are at stake.

Background

I will shortly outline more fully the academic fields to which this thesis relates. It may be helpful, first, to summarise the background of how this research germinated in my own life and thinking. My first main encounter both with themes of leadership and also with aims and objectives was during seven years working in computing, following my first degree in Mathematics. I remember responding with interest and excitement to Stephen Covey's bestseller *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (1989), when I first read it in my mid-20s. I particularly warmed to the clear sense of purpose and direction. When, during my ordination training around the year 2000, I began to encounter similar concepts in a church setting, it was not surprising that I took a particular interest.

My desire to write a thesis in this area was particularly initiated by going on a diocesan course, entitled Godly Leadership, in 2007. Whilst the domain which the course addressed was fairly

broad, near its heart was an approach for shaping congregational life modelled around (what I term) CLD orthodoxy - the crafting of a parish 'vision statement', from which aims and objectives should flow. Several factors aroused my interest and my suspicion over the duration of the course. First, the default mode of instruction appeared to be assertion ("This is what you should do") rather than explanation or persuasion. In particular, there was no comparison with alternative approaches. This did little to convince me that the recommended methods had solid theoretical or theological foundations. Second, and relatedly, I repeatedly found myself questioning how on earth, if what was presented was indeed the necessary and only way to lead a church, the Church had managed to survive for the many centuries prior to the crafting of this method. Third, I had a crystallising moment on the way home from the final course session. One of the colleagues with whom I was travelling, a dependable, caring, responsible and innovative clergyman, declared with some feeling "What a relief that's over! Now I can get back to being a parish priest." It's not that Ben[7] was a shirker, or stuck in a rut. He had simply found the assumptions and methods prescribed in the course neither convincing nor appropriate. Others, however, responded very differently, keen to have a go at trying what was recommended. What I observed was a fairly straight dichotomy of reaction. It was like Marmite, in that my colleagues seem to either straightforwardly like it, or straightforwardly reject it. With Marmite, that's fine, and there is no particular need to be able to have a deeper discussion of what's going on. With practices that shape the life and soul of churches, the stakes are rather higher. In the terms offered by Kuhn, as described earlier, I had begun to recognise an anomaly – although at this stage the precise nature and identity of the anomaly remained unclear. The combination of divergent reactions on the one hand, with, on the other, no obvious framework for discussing the divergence, seemed to me to cry out for attention. And so I embarked on the project behind this thesis.

Academic location

Initially, I struggled to find a way to have purchase on both 'sides of the equation': this particular approach to leadership, and church life. An early metaphor by which I encapsulated something of the struggle drew on my (rather hazy) memory of A-level physics, within which I first encountered the notion of wave/particle duality. Strange as it seems, the nature of light can be described both in terms of waves, and also in terms of particles. Two apparently irreconcilable descriptions of the same phenomenon turned out both to be true. Was this in any sense an analogy for what I was observing? Notwithstanding some emphasis on being

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[7] Not his real name.

inspiring and touching people's hearts, much of the content of the CLD seemed to have parallels with the nature of particles. Either they were there or they were not. Either the objective had been completed, or it hadn't. There was a clarity, a linearity, a tendency towards either/or thinking. I could see situations in which such an approach might be useful. But how did it relate to the more wavelike, curvilinear, conceptions of reality, community and personhood which I had imbibed in my Christian and ministerial formation? Were both true, but to be called on at different times? Was one superior, and the other essentially wrong? How should the relationship between such conceptions be construed?

Although this metaphor primarily functioned to articulate my puzzlement, beginning to formulate the question in this way proved pivotal. It meant that, when I subsequently encountered two very different texts, I quickly realised their relevance and potential to my concerns. I encountered first an essay, *Discerning the Mystery*, by Andrew Louth (1983), exploring how theology should be understood in relation to the sciences and the humanities. Roughly speaking, the sciences corresponded to the binary options of the particles, and the humanities to the curvilinear attributes of waves. I noted with interest that Louth proposed an understanding in which a scientific approach did have an important role, but one that was fundamentally ancillary within a broader enterprise.

A little later I came across Ian McGilchrist's *The Master and His Emissary* (2010), in which he explores the contrasting dispositions of left and right brain hemispheres. The correspondence of these to the sciences and the humanities was initially striking, and even more so was the fact that he described the ideal relationship between left and right hemispheres in a way very similar to that of Andrew Louth. Two further points by McGilchrist were fascinating. The first was his explanation of why the left hemisphere frequently tends to usurp the proper prominence of the right. The second was surprisingly convincing: McGilchrist offered a reading of the broad shaping of Western culture over the centuries, narrated in terms of the ebb and flow of left or right hemisphere dominance. To be clear, a theoretical understanding of differences between left and right brain hemispheres may seem too fragile a foundation to support an analysis of Western culture. Whether or not current neurophysiological theory is fully accurate, what McGilchrist describes is *at the least* a portrayal of two important and contrasting approaches to reality. And here is a crucial point: these two approaches, broadly speaking, are what I term the *Cartesian* and the *Gestalt*. And it is these two approaches, along with Louth and McGilchrist's descriptions of their ideal relationship, that I use as a heuristic framework within this thesis. As I will explain in due course, I believe there is good reason to

take this framework seriously. But it can also be used with some lightness of touch: if we treat it at least as a working hypothesis, what light does it shed? What insights emerge? What questions does it raise?

There still remained one substantial theoretical gulf to be bridged. That gulf was the question of how aspects of such a theoretical framework, for all its shaping of Western culture, might have become manifest in what I term the CLD. When I came across the concept of *discourse*, a bridge seemed to present itself. Turning my attention to leadership *discourse*, both within and without the church, helped to connect the specific vocabulary, ideas and assumptions of the church leadership books on my shelves to the broad cultural movements which McGilchrist describes. I learned how the implicit rules of a discourse govern (much more than we realise) that which we perceive or don't perceive, that which we value, and that which we assume to be possible or desirable. Furthermore, rich and fruitful insight was forthcoming from scholars in the area. In particular, Critical Discourse Analysis, epitomised by the work of Norman Fairclough offered helpful analysis of broad trends. Further clarity was offered by the work of Simon Western, focusing in particular on different discourses over the decades within the field of management and leadership.

As I indicated above, this thesis is intentionally interdisciplinary, but fundamentally about ecclesiology. It is the nature of what the church is called to be, I contend, that should determine the forms of ministry and leadership appropriate within it. Ecclesiological considerations come most clearly to the fore within the final chapter of the thesis, in which I develop a more appropriate reconfigured ministerial discourse. One major source here is the recent ecclesiological work of Stephen Pickard, who draws substantially on Dan Hardy. A second major pair of sources is Sam Wells and David Ford. I draw selectively on their work to propose a conception of the background texture of church life (and indeed all human existence) that much more closely resembles an unfolding drama than a methodically implemented plan.

Parameters

Whilst the focus of this thesis is clearly on the area of local church leadership, its remit is very much interdisciplinary. A major part of its contribution will be in suggesting and demonstrating the fruitfulness of connections previously under-acknowledged or unexplored. The range of such connections is deliberately broad. However, the constraints of a thesis

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require considerable conciseness in both making and justifying these connections. Furthermore, I have not been able to gain encyclopaedic knowledge in every area on which I touch. I trust that, despite these constraints, the thesis will prove fruitful and thought-provoking, perhaps stimulating others to explore or develop particular connections more thoroughly. In order to keep this work manageable, I have had to make a number of decisions regarding its parameters, which I summarise next.

First, my focus is on leadership and ministry within the Church. Clearly, leadership exercised by Christians might also be expected to be distinctive within other sectors. I trust that such leadership may be illuminated by my work, but it is not my focus.

Second, within that, my primary focus is on leadership within a local context (such as a parish or benefice), and within the Church of England. Concentrating thus on local ministry means that most writing on ministry is pertinent. Furthermore, it is the area which I know best, having served three years as a curate, and now nine as incumbent, each in a large, broadly suburban, parish[8]. Although my primary focus is on the Church of England, I do draw at times on writers from beyond this context, for instance some from Baptist churches in Britain, and others from the USA who have been influential here.

Third, the area of 'church leadership' is itself sufficiently broad that I have had to be selective. I have focused most frequently on those aspects of leadership to do with the shaping of church life, including changes within it. I have done so for two reasons. One is that, in my judgement, this is where 'anomalies' are most clearly to be found. The second, relatedly, is that in this area there has been the most distinctive shift in discourse and vocabulary. I have also, however, referred to some writers who make little explicit reference to leadership. Nevertheless, the 'texture' of their assumptions and reasoning leads me to include them within what I term the Church Leadership Discourse.

Fourth, I seriously considered whether to include one or more empirical studies within my research, but decided not to. My primary rationale is that proper consideration of the theoretical concerns arising from the literature was more than enough for one thesis. If,

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[8] At this stage it may seem strange to mention, but I should register that, during my incumbency, the current church I serve has seen substantial growth in numerical attendance. (The number of people who attend regularly has approximately doubled.) When, later, I argue against an overly focused emphasis on such growth, it would be easy to assume that I do so to justify the lack of such growth in my experience – but that is not the case.

however, my theoretical considerations subsequently inspire others to empirical research, I will be very interested to read of their findings in due course.

Structure

This thesis is divided into three parts. Part A sets the scene with two introductory chapters. The first introduces key concepts of discourse in general, before offering an orientation to the contours and context of what I term the Church Leadership Discourse. The second describes more fully what I have already introduced briefly, namely the primary critical axes of the thesis: what I term Cartesian and Gestalt approaches to reality. Part B forms the central core of the thesis. It comprises a careful reading of representative CLD texts. Its aim is to discern the degree of influence of a Cartesian approach, and the extent to which this is theologically problematic. Its purview covers a wide range, from statistical analyses, through processes for instigating change, to heightened rhetoric and a strong emphasis on the positive. It includes reflection on the effect (or performativity) of the CLD, and also, importantly, of its (largely implied) ecclesiology. In the course of this reading I aim to demonstrate the *interconnectedness* of a range of Cartesian manifestations, their *pervasiveness* across a range of literature, and also their theological *insufficiency*. In the course of doing so, I will give particular attention to aspects of the CLD that appear anomalous with respect to mainstream ecclesiology. I will argue that the cumulative weight of such anomalies forms a strong argument for the insufficiency and imbalance of the CLD. Following this sustained critique, Part C (focused in a single chapter) offers a constructive alternative, comprising a sketch of a reconfigured ministerial discourse. On the one hand, this aims to model a healthy relationship between the Cartesian and Gestalt. On the other, it seeks to be much more fully derived from and integrated with Christian theology. Indeed, it aspires to be guided by the dictum of Zizioulas, that the mode of existence of the church, its way of being, is and should be 'deeply bound… to the very being of God' (Zizioulas, 1985, p. 15).

PART A - LEADERSHIP DISCOURSE AND A HEURISTIC FRAMEWORK

Chapter 1 – Discourses of leadership and management

Introduction

The broad aims and general parameters of this study have already been outlined; this chapter is the first of two that sets out the main foundations for the thesis as a whole. This chapter has three main preliminary priorities. First, it introduces the concept of *discourse* in general, arguing that the discourses we use have a highly significant, but often hidden, role in shaping our perception of, and approach to, reality. Second, it surveys the rise and development of discourses of management and leadership within Western culture as a whole. It then turns, third, to outline the ways in which particular understandings of leadership have shaped much recent writing on the practice of church ministry. I introduce the term *Church Leadership Discourse* (CLD) as a label for such writing, and consider the main characteristics of this discourse via four representative texts. Within this initial survey of the CLD I will begin to highlight those features that seem to be anomalous with respect to traditional Christian understandings of ministry, in preparation for more detailed examination in future chapters. Finally, I go on to contrast the CLD with some further works around or beyond its boundaries. Given, then, the significant role played by discourse within the arguments to follow, it is important to begin by examining quite what is meant by the term.

1.1   Discourse: the shaping of 'normality'

A discourse can be conceived as a way of thinking, speaking and writing that both enables and limits that which can be thought about a specific topic. In one sense, a discourse itself can be conceived as a purely abstract entity. It will be manifest, however, in a range of texts and ways of speaking. Sometimes there are two clear-cut discourses to choose between in referring to particular situations, such as discourses of 'freedom fighters' or 'terrorists'. More frequently, however, a particular discourse will represent to us 'what seems normal', and the fact that we are using a discourse at all thus remains out of consciousness. As a consequence 'it is difficult to grasp how a discourse confines us into a way of thinking' (Western, 2008, p. 81). This hidden quality is a highly significant feature of the operation of discourses. While their

existence remains hidden, critique and contestation remain unlikely. Once their true nature can be identified, analysis, evaluation and choice become possible.

It is not that each person crafts their own discourses. Rather, discourses are held in common by social groups. One crucial aspect to register is how discourse use interacts with human engagement with reality (people, things, possibilities). In speaking about an object, the discourse whose terms I use *itself influences* how I perceive that object, how I value it, and what (if anything) I might wish for it. There is a mutual interaction here, perhaps a dialogical relationship. My discourse use on the one hand is *constituted by* my engagement with reality to date. On the other hand, however, my engagement with reality is significantly *constituted by* my discourse usage. Thus, any culturally prevalent discourse, when perceived clearly, can be seen to 'reflect back to society its own… unconscious preoccupations and concerns' (Western, 2008, p. 85).

How is it that a discourse can shape my engagement with reality? One might consider the analogy of a filter used in a telescope. Just as a filter can absorb and hide light of certain wavelength, so a discourse can render invisible certain aspects of reality. There may literally be no words for them within the discourse, or it may be that attention is drawn elsewhere much more strongly. Secondly, the filter may bring to the fore light of a different wavelength. So a discourse may spotlight particular entities or activities as especially valuable or desirable. Third, other aspects of reality may also be spotlighted in order to be valued negatively, perhaps as a counterfoil. Fourth, the common vocabulary and modes of the discourse may include prescriptions of appropriate response to particular situations. In some or all of these ways, a discourse may thus operate what we might term *hermeneutical filtering*.

Thus far I have assumed discourses to be discrete entities. But they do not always remain as such. One can put the case for particular forms of discourse assuming dominance across society. For instance, Fairclough diagnoses 'marketisation' and 'promotion' as dominant genres of discourse, focusing on universities as a case study (Chapter 4 in Fairclough, 2010, pp. 91-125). In particular, such dominance can happen by 'hybridity'. Here an existing form of discourse is significantly altered by the influence of another form, leading to, for instance, what Fairclough terms new 'hybrid partly promotional' genres of discourse (Fairclough, 2010, p. 99).

If it is true that discourses can be such significant influences on perception and action, then their role in any society is of crucial importance. In particular, the task of becoming aware of operant discourses becomes vital. For it is only when the particular emphases and assumptions of a discourse are made explicit that proper critical evaluation becomes possible. A major task of this chapter, therefore, is to describe and analyse some of the primary themes of what I term the contemporary Church Leadership Discourse. What are the aspects of reality that this discourse particularly hides and highlights? What are its embedded valuations and prescriptions? What are its assumptions and taboos? Before we address this set of questions explicitly, however, I turn first to examine those discourses of leadership and management which have been most influential in the British Church's host culture. Doing so will begin to illustrate in less abstract terms quite what a discourse might look like. It will also provide a useful initial background against which to see the specifically church leadership discourse with greater clarity. Furthermore, we will be in a much better position to discern the influence of other dominant forms of discourse, potentially including the hybridisation of ministerial discourse. Overall, by the end of the chapter we should be able to see much more clearly the (conscious or unconscious) 'preoccupations and concerns' of those 'within' the CLD.

1.2   Discourses of management and leadership in Western culture

The sheer volume of material published on leadership is well-documented. For instance, it has been claimed that the number of books published on the subject of leadership is greater than the total number of books ever published in Portuguese. Furthermore, to say that not all authors agree on how leadership should be defined would be a considerable understatement. However, my priority here is to provide neither an exhaustive survey of all the different approaches, nor indeed an incisive new typology of the subject. Rather, I will first give at least some indication of the range of the approaches on offer, before going on to focus on the broad typology offered by Simon Western, itself based around discourses.

Ways of conceiving leadership

Literature on leadership has existed not just for centuries, but for millennia. Both ancient Greek and ancient Chinese civilisations reflected and wrote on the subject, as have many in the intervening years (not least from a military perspective). Notwithstanding that longevity, a broad situating of the topic also needs to register the considerable expansion of interest in the subject in recent decades. One initial way of situating this expansion is offered by Ford, Learmonth and Harding (2008). They describe how, first, a discourse focused on

administration was replaced by one of management. Then, second, the management discourse, in its turn, was largely displaced by a prioritisation of leadership (pp. 32-38). It would not be impossible for the same person to occupy what was largely the same job, but described in different ways, under all three discourses. But that which was particularly valued and prioritised was seen to shift with each change of discourse.

It is worth touching at this early stage on the question of how concepts of management and leadership relate to each other. There is no straightforward delineation here. But differences of definition do indicate the differing 'status' of the two concepts within today's prevalent discourse of leadership. For instance, Western summarises the 'general tone' of articles discussing management versus leadership: 'managers are more scientific, rational, controlling, they relate to structure, stability and bureaucracy whereas leadership is about passion, vision, inspiration, creativity and cooperation rather than control' (Western, 2008, p. 35). His diagnosis is in line with that of Ford *et al* in that he sees management often now functioning as the 'other' against which leadership is contrasted and defined. There are indeed various dualisms and dichotomies which may offer some insight into the contrast between the two, such as 'visionary as opposed to rational, passionate versus consulting, creative versus persistent, inspiring versus tough-minded, innovative versus analytical, courageous versus structured (Dubrin, 2000, quoted in Western, 2008, p. 37). Nevertheless, Yukl seems justified in cautioning that such dichotomies 'oversimplify a complex phenomenon and encourage stereotyping of individual leaders' (Yukl, 1999, p. 34, quoted in Western, 2008, p. 37). For now, I register some of the above differences of emphasis between the roles of management and leadership, but also allow for significant overlap between the two. In general within this thesis I will default to using the terminology of leadership.

How, then, can we get a feel for something of the range of leadership approaches over recent decades? Northouse, in his 'classroom standard' textbook, identifies and outlines no less than 15 different types of approach[1] (Northouse, 2009). Huczynski summarises more concisely into what he calls 'management idea families', of which he proposes six: bureaucracy; scientific management; administrative management; human relations; neo-HR; and guru theory (Huczynski, 1993, p. 6). For Grint, the crucial move is to recognise that there will never be a consensus on a universally agreed description of ideal leadership. Rather, the theory and practice of leadership should be recognised as an 'Essentially Contested Concept', a term

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[1] As some indication of the range of these, they include a trait approach, a skills approach, a situational approach, path-goal theory, transformational leadership, and an approach that focuses on culture.

introduced by W B Gallie in 1955/56 to describe power. Gallie's idea was that rival uses of a given concept, however much one disagrees with them, should be recognised as of 'permanent potential critical value to... interpretation of the concept in question' (Gallie, 1964, pp. 187-8, quoted in Grint, 2010, p. 18). Grint himself then proposes four dimensions of leadership, all of which will often need to be held in tension in a particular context: who leaders are (and the vital role of the whole community); what leaders achieve (being realistic about the difficulty of causally connecting results and leaders); leadership as process (and how leadership is learned from particular communities); leadership as position (and the pros and cons of distributed leadership). This small sample of leadership overviews gives at least an indication of the diversity of perspectives on the subject. I now, however, select one model on which to focus, which helpfully encapsulates key leadership trends since the beginning of the 20th century by summarising them in four, approximately successive, discourses.

Western: successive discourses of leadership

Simon Western uses the concept of discourses to help identify the 'commonly held perceptions, assumptions and norms' (Western, 2008, p. 80) that have evolved as leadership thinking has changed over the last century or so. His purpose in identifying the characteristics of distinct discourses is precisely so that their implicit assumptions can be brought to consciousness, thus making them open to appropriate analysis and contestation (as discussed in the previous section). In identifying each of his main leadership discourses, Western explicitly draws on the work of Alasdair MacIntyre (Western, pp. 82-85). He does so, first, by following MacIntyre's example of identifying specific 'characters' as carrying particular cultural significance (MacIntyre, 1981, pp. 27-31). MacIntyre's broad aim in doing so is to encapsulate characteristics of a modern 'emotivist' culture.   The three characters he identifies as embodying significant cultural features are the Rich Aesthete, the Manager and the Therapist. Western's broad aim, however, is different from that of MacIntyre: he is only interested in the area of leadership and management. Rather than focusing on a single point in time, moreover, he seeks to discern the major trends over the course of a century. The three main characters Western proposes, consequently, are all situated within the sphere of leadership and management, and embody approximately consequent discourses. His three main characters, then, he names the Controller, the Therapist, and the Messiah. He also suggests a fourth, the Eco-leader, epitomising what he sees as an emergent leadership discourse of ecology.

It is worth commenting briefly on Western's use of MacIntyre's characters, including some apparent lack of transparency in doing so. Western correlates MacIntyre's Manager with his

own Leader as Controller discourse (a bureaucratic manager identifying primarily with rationality and efficiency) (Western, pp. 84-85). He goes on to comment that 'MacIntyre's interpretation of the manager character now seems outdated, a retrospective view' (p. 85). However, in proposing Leader as Therapist as a successor leadership discourse to that of the Controller, Western fails to mention that the character of Therapist (albeit therapist as the role is more commonly understood, rather than as a mode of leadership) is in fact one of the three characters already highlighted by MacIntyre. This omission is particularly surprising because MacIntyre's brief depiction of the role of the therapist *highlights its commonality* with that of the manager. Both manager and therapist are seen as treating ends as given, and therefore being primarily concerned with technique and with 'the realm of measurable effectiveness' (MacIntyre, p. 30). It is striking that Western's most substantial citation from MacIntyre includes four lines of text the purpose of which, in their original context, is precisely to emphasise this commonality (MacIntyre, p.30, quoted in Western, p. 84). However, for whatever reason, Western's presentation of these four lines portrays them as relating solely to the character of the manager. He makes no mention at all of the therapist[2].

Returning to the main thread of the argument, then, Western proposes the existence of four main leadership discourses over the course of the last century or so, each embodied in a particular character. He uses the diagram reproduced here both to summarise some of the primary qualities of each discourse, and also to indicate something of their relationship to each other over time.

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[2] Western begins his citation from MacIntyre's page 30 with the phrase 'The manager is not… able to engage in moral debate.' The clause 'The manager is not', however, does not appear on that page in MacIntyre. In fact, the sentence from which Western is quoting reads as follows: 'Neither manager nor therapist, in their roles as manager and therapist, do or are able to engage in moral debate.' (MacIntyre, p. 30). Western has taken MacIntyre's concept of the therapist, transposed it to a context of leadership, and developed it in legitimate and interesting ways, but failed to acknowledge any indebtedness to MacIntyre.
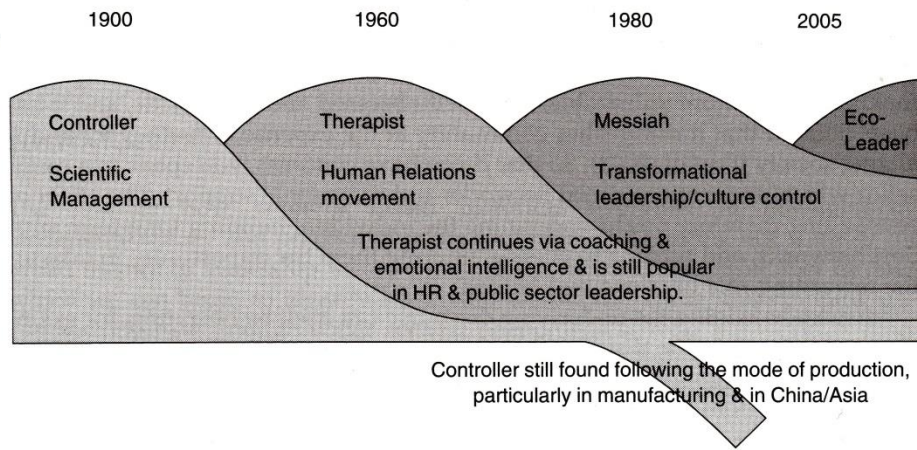
Figure 6.1 Approximate timeline of the leadership discourses

Diagram illustrating the relationship between leadership discourses over time (Western, 2008, p. 82).

In particular, although each discourse so far has gradually ceded dominance to a successor over a number of years, its influence has not disappeared entirely. Rather, at least some of its insights and emphases continue to be influential. I conclude this section, next, with a synopsis of each of Western's four discourses. I will return to them towards the end of this first chapter, holding up against them the characteristics of the Church Leadership Discourse for some initial reflection.

The *Controller discourse*, then, first emerged at the beginning of the 20th century. It's seminal text was Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), which responded to the rapid development of industrialisation with a rationalistic and technocratic management style (Western, 2008, p. 86). Taylor's approach was widely adopted in what historians later termed 'the efficiency craze'. Machine metaphors are dominant within this discourse, and 'rationality' the primary consideration. The efficiency enabled by these methods did lead to huge economic success, epitomised by Henry Ford and his company. Taylor's approach was developed with industrial production in mind, and the leadership style was that of 'command and control'; hence the description of the discourse as that of the Controller. This approach emerged in a period of considerable demarcation of social class. However, as the approach spread beyond the confines of factories, and as deference and hierarchy diminished as social norms, the Controller discourse came to be seen as problematic. With its neglect of social relationships and emotional needs, linked to its machine-based worldview, it was increasingly experienced as dehumanising. Particularly following the experiences of the Second World

War, new social conditions and cultural expectations meant that this discourse was essentially no longer tenable.

The *Therapist discourse* began to emerge in the 1930s, reaching its zenith in the 1960s and 1970s. Since then it has faded from dominance, but it continues to exert some influence, for instance in contemporary emphasis on emotional intelligence (Western, 2008, p. 82). This discourse had its roots in the Human Relations movement, with Elton Mayo a seminal figure in the 1920s and 1930s. His work began to turn attention to informal aspects of organisation, including motivation and group dynamics. The belief that 'happier workers work more productively' led to the focus on control being replaced by an emphasis on the motivation and psychological welfare of employees (pp. 90-91). The concerns of the Human relations movement merged with an emerging culture of personal growth, leading to what Philip Rieff proclaimed in 1966 as 'The Triumph of the Therapeutic'. Such emphases on self-actualisation and in due course Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Coaching were quick to find their way into the workplace, and into the discourses of leadership and management. Overall, from having been a figure of scientific rational efficiency, operating by command and control, 'the ideal leader became an individual with highly developed people/coaching skills, emotional intelligence, and self-awareness. The leader's task is to use these skills to support individuals and teams in order to improve working relationships, communication and get the best out of people.' (p. 104). However, as Western economies began to be overtaken by those of Japan and the 'Asian Tigers', the Therapist leader discourse waned, and a 'new "hero leader" arose like a Phoenix from the ashes' (p. 105).

Western's third discourse he entitles *Messiah leadership*. Before attending to the particular implications of this title, I outline the developments to which he refers. This leadership discourse is epitomised by what is known as the Transformational leader (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). This approach is understood most clearly by contrasting it with Transactional leadership. A transactional approach is based on straightforward exchanges (or transactions) between leaders and followers. A worker, for instance, is given a tangible incentive to do a job particularly well. The aims of Transformational leadership, by contrast, are much higher. Through their strong charisma and their inspirational motivation a transformational leader will transform the whole culture of an organisation. They are intellectually stimulating, encouraging the questioning of old ways of doing things. They offer individualised consideration, treating followers differently but equitably. Overall, they are expected to promote a common culture, through a compelling vision and the alignment of moral values

(Western, p. 112). *In Search of Excellence* (Peters & Waterman, 1982) encapsulated these ideals, and became a bestseller. Strong visionary leadership characters would re-energise tired American companies to create cultures of vibrant commitment, cooperation and mutual trust (Western, p. 108).

Such a discourse clearly sets the bar very high. But the very height of its aspirations, and the degree of hope invested in it, are themselves problematic. For instance,

> 'This description of an individual heroic leader does sell leadership books and courses, as it appeals to the narcissism of those in leadership roles, and to the dependency instincts of followers who would like to be saved/led by Messiah leadership characters' (Western, p. 112).

Western also articulates a number of specific concerns. Transformational leadership appears to ignore the argument that different situations and cultures call for different leadership approaches. Transformational leadership sets up a paradox, in that such leaders are required to be exceptional, but any given organisation needs transformational leaders at every level, and so they are also required to be common. There appears to be a tension between followers needing to think critically, but also adopting the company values. Whilst transformational culture change may initially be dynamic and engaging, 'to maintain this level of excitement and commitment is nigh impossible and those subjected to these cultures become conformist and jaded' (p. 160). Critics have been troubled by transformational leadership attempts to 'engineer culture' and to create 'designer employees'. They see these as the ultimate form of manipulation (p. 120), as 'a subtle form of domination, a 'culture trap' combining normative power with a delicate balance of seductiveness and coercion' (Kunda 1992, p. 224, quoted in Western, pp. 120-121). These dangers, coupled with the almost cultlike recommendations of some proponents, are what lead Western to brand this discourse *Messiah leadership*. Personally, I find this denotation a step too far, and so will refer to this discourse simply as *Transformational leadership*. But in doing so, I still take seriously Western's diagnosis that such leadership 'is popular because the messiah represents hope, fulfilling the fantasy of being saved from anxiety, fear, and the unknown' (p. 126). Further,

> 'Instead of looking for saviours, we should be calling for leadership that will challenge us to face problems for which there are no simple painless solutions – problems that require us to learn in new ways. (Heifetz, 1994, p. 2, quoted in Western, 2008, p. 125)

In spite of his criticism of these discourses, Western's perspective is that each of them may be broadly suitable approaches in the appropriate contexts. No leadership discourse will ever be perfect, but recognising that it is a discourse, and being aware of the likely weaknesses of the discourse in use, will make appropriate understanding and adjustment much more likely.

Western complements the analysis that I have summarised thus far by suggesting there are some early signs of a new emergent discourse. He names this the *Eco-leader discourse*, seeing it as characterised by post-heroic leadership, leadership spirit, and a systemic approach. Compared to the transformational leader, an eco-leader is 'toned down, forceful but with humility and quiet but focused influence'. At the heart of this discourse is an understanding of connectivity, understanding that 'solutions in one area of business may create problems in another' (p. 183). The connectivity is to embrace, eventually, all of humanity and also the natural order. Further, rather than focusing leadership hope and expectation in one charismatic individual, this discourse looks to dispersed and emergent leadership: 'what we've been learning... is that the future can emerge within the group itself' (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2004, 185-6, quoted in Western, 2008, p. 186). This discourse concludes that a leadership focused on control, hierarchy and omnipotence is actually essentially vulnerable. In contrast, the 'real strength of leadership lies in devolved power, dispersing leadership and having the confidence of not-knowing, of being able to follow emergent patterns, rather than fixed plans' (Western, 2008, p. 197).

This synopsis of the still embryonic Eco-leader discourse concludes my survey of the shifts in leadership discourse in Western culture over the last century or so. Given the impact of these shifts on the working lives of so many, and indeed on Western culture as a whole, it would have been surprising if the Church had simply ignored that which I have just described. I turn now to outline the rise and characteristics of leadership discourse within writing on church ministry.

1.3   The rise of leadership within church discourse

This section offers a historical overview of the rise of the terminology and concepts of leadership within 'popular' church literature, before examining in more detail four representative texts in the next section. It commences by identifying a number of distinct strands of influence that together led to a much more prominent emphasis on leadership.

The first strand of influence can be found in the Church Growth movement, founded by Donald McGavran in California (see, for instance, McGavran, 1955, 1959, 1970). This was developed and promoted by his follower C. Peter Wagner, especially in the popular *Your Church Can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church* (1976). Three of their themes are worth underlining here. Wagner's 'Vital Sign Number One' is the 'dynamic leadership' of a pastor

motivating the entire church into action for growth (pp. 55-68). Here, arguably, is the starting point of a new church discourse focused on the terminology of 'leadership'. Second, both McGavran and Wagner emphasise the importance of good *methods*. By a 'good' method is meant an 'effective' method, and effectiveness is to be evaluated by measurement. Thus, for McGavran, 'constantly measuring the effectiveness for church growth of all activities is both feasible and necessary' (McGavran, 1955, p. 51). Wagner similarly calls for a ruthlessness of evaluation, recommending a 'fiercely pragmatic approach to evangelism' (Wagner, p. 136). The third emphasis I wish to highlight is Wagner's call for 'clearly defined objectives' (p. 30). He presents these as an indicator both of seriousness of intent, and also of faith (rather than timidity).

The influence of the Church Growth movement crossed the Atlantic, not least through *I Believe in Church Growth* (Gibbs, 1981) . Regular large conferences in Britain led by John Wimber, and the spread of his Vineyard churches to the British Isles, further increased its reach. Wimber's influence, however, combined church growth thinking with a strong charismatic element. This latter also proved to be a stimulus for the development of leadership thinking and writing. This was, in part, because the charismatic movement, in line with broad theological trends, increased emphasis on the ministry of all church members. Such development and diversification of ministry, especially when it involved unfamiliar, and for some uncomfortable, areas of practice, clearly called for heightened levels of leadership skill.

A distinct strand of influence can be seen in the publication of *Ministry and Management* (Rudge, 1968). Here Rudge held together the fields of organisational theory and theology, looking for the example of the former that was 'most consonant with' (Rudge, 1968, pp. xiii-xiv) the fundamentals of the latter. This book proved seminal, but not in the sense of opening the floodgates of further detailed examination of the relationship between the two subject areas. Rather it led the way in a gradual reflection over the ensuing decades as to how the fields of administration, management, and then leadership, might enrich and complement traditional ministerial theology and practice.

The last two decades of the 20th century saw a continuing increase of emphasis on leadership in churches. One repeated assertion was the vital importance of leadership itself. For instance, John Perry wrote that 'in the final analysis it is the quality of leadership in the local church that makes all the difference… Even the best schemes for church growth come to nothing unless there is the right kind of leadership to ensure their implementation' (Perry,

1983, p. 7).   Paul Beasley-Murray describes leadership as 'the key pastoral task… because without it churches engage in maintenance rather than mission. Without leadership churches die.' (Beasley-Murray, 1995, p. 43). David Pytches made the vocabulary of leadership central to his description of ministry, with all but one of his 25 chapter titles containing that word (Pytches, 1998). Greenslade starts by highlighting the danger of over-glamorising leadership, alongside the risk of denigrating it (Greenslade, 1984, pp. 6-8). He sees spiritual leadership as part of God's kingdom rule, and describes Christians as badly needing 'heroes worth looking up to… It is precisely this lack which true spiritual leadership is intended to supply.' (Greenslade, 1984, p. 192).

Within writing on church leadership at this stage, many writers continued to affirm the potential of articulated goals and objectives. Rick Warren's *Purpose-Driven Church* (Warren, 1995) is typical in this regard, and remains influential. Warren recommends what he calls a 'purpose statement' for each church, encapsulating in a single sentence its particular calling.

> 'I cannot overemphasise the importance of defining your church's purposes. It is not merely a target that you aim for; it is your congregation's reason for being. A clear purpose statement will provide the direction, the vitality, the boundaries, and the driving force for everything you do.' (Warren, 1995, p. 109)

For Dayton and Engstrom 'There are few things more powerful than the idea of a goal' (Dayton & Engstrom, 1985, p. 51).   They list ten reasons why articulating goals can benefit an organisation, including providing a sense of purpose, giving power to live in the present, and placing emphasis on output rather than activity (pp. 56-58). For them, something that counts as a goal must be measurable: you must be able to tell whether or not you have achieved your goal (See also King, 1987, p. 143)*. Gill and Burke combine Church and University perspectives in their advocation of 'strategic leadership'. They also see it as 'important to stress that' their approach of rational strategy development comprises 'techniques and not ideology' (Gill & Burke, 1996, p. 42). Richards and Hoeldtke similarly claim to have 'established enterprise and management as neutral tools' (Richards & Hoeldtke, 1980, p. 194).

John Finney's *Understanding Leadership* (1989) can be taken as representative of a fairly integrated and broad approach to the subject at that time[3]. One distinctive move that Finney makes is to name and reject the overly clinical approach of Management by Objectives (MBO) (Finney, 1989, p. 119).   In its place he recommends a process of audit, leading to the development of 'vision', which should harness the imagination and not just facts. For Finney,

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[3] Although it is not explicit in the title, the remit of this book remains focused on a Church context.

the vision itself need not be articulated in achievable terms, but it should be expected to lead fairly naturally to related objectives (notwithstanding his rejection of MBO) (Finney, 1989, pp. 130-131; See also King, pp. 136-146). The high profile of leadership continued through the 1990s, including adjustments to church selection criteria and training. The organisation MODEM (Managerial and Organisational Disciplines for the Enhancement of Ministry) was launched in 1993, and continues to produce books in the area (see for instance Adair & Nelson, 2004; Nelson, 1996, 1999; Nelson, Lofthouse, & Muller, 2012).

In the first decade of the 21st century, many of the emphases of the previous decade continued to spread, for instance through diocesan leadership training schemes for clergy. The approach that Finney described, featuring an articulated vision leading to identified objectives, was formalised and given the name Mission Action Planning (also sometimes known as Growth Action Planning). Such an approach was supported across a number of dioceses, and indeed the production of a Mission Action Plan by parishes is increasingly a requirement. This method (though not named as such) merited a chapter in Church House Publishing's *The Vicar's Guide* (Ison, 2005), and, in 2011, was approved by General Synod for use at both local and national levels. 2005 saw the launch of the Foundation for Church Leadership, and CPAS refocused their whole emphasis around leadership training, with many clergy and lay leaders experiencing both their 'Arrow' and 'Growing Leaders' courses.

This section, then, has outlined the increasing emphasis on leadership in ministerial literature since around 1970, and has made clear the main ways in which such leadership was and is understood. I now make a key move in developing the overall argument of this thesis. That move is to claim that such literature can accurately be described as a distinct discourse, and that it is helpful to do so. Why is such a move legitimate? First and most obviously, there has been a significant shift of vocabulary, for instance towards using the terminology of 'leader' to describe ministers, vicars and pastors. Secondly and relatedly, there have been substantial changes of expectation regarding what ministers are for, and what they should do. It is not necessarily that the previous priorities, including worship, preaching and pastoral care, have disappeared. But, for those formed by this discourse, a major spotlight has now been turned on the perceived need to proactively shape congregational life, along with recommended ways of doing so. To put it very imprecisely, just as Western's Therapist would be encountered in a very different way from his Controller, so also the 'feel' of what is expected of such a church 'leader' differs significantly from previous ministerial discourse. Throughout this thesis I will

use the term Church Leadership Discourse (CLD) to denote this new discourse[4]. The next stage of this chapter, then, involves deepening our understanding of the CLD by focusing in turn on four texts. These, between them, indicate the dominant themes and the range of focus of this discourse. The text to which I turn first will receive the greatest amount of attention; the following three will primarily be considered for what they add to this first text, or because of ways in which they vary from it.

1.4   A primary text for the CLD – *Growing Leaders* (2004)

Growing Leaders (2004) is by James Lawrence, an ordained Anglican minister and the Director of the CPAS Arrow Leadership programme for young Christian leaders, on which this book is based. There is much in it that is good, wise and realistic. Lawrence is candidly realistic about the dangers of burn out and 'living in the red zone' for Christian ministers, and offers clear practical advice on their avoidance. There are many helpful suggestions, most of which are applicable to any committed Christian. He emphasises the need for integrity, the danger of skewed motivation, our need for, and reality of, God's grace. He affirms the need to live in God's love, to develop Christ-like character, and to lead in community. For Lawrence, competence in leading is very important, but character must always be the priority. When, however, Lawrence turns his attention to the specific ways in which leadership is to be exercised, it seems to this reader that there is a tangible change of tone. Furthermore, it is as if he has also changed up at least one gear. In the following paragraphs, I will identify some of the dominant themes in this part of his book, giving also some indication of the prevalence of these themes in other CLD works. I will, furthermore, highlight some initial concerns connected with his treatment of these themes, setting them up for a broader and more rigourous examination in the central chapters of this thesis.

'The Christian life is about change'

Lawrence's Chapter 10, entitled 'Leaders discern, articulate and implement God's vision' (pp. 192-213), is where this change of gear is most apparent. The first theme from this chapter which I wish to highlight is the degree of emphasis Lawrence places on *change*. This he

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[4] This label is offered as the most obvious one available. I acknowledge, however, its imperfection: though the terminology of leadership is widespread within the discourse, it is not universal. As will become clear, there are a number of significant works which share the CLD's approach to reality, but make little mention of leadership *per se*.

perceives as a fundamental dynamic of the Christian life, and the lack of it as evidence of drifting from God's ways. For instance:

> 'The Christian life is about change… It is about being changed into the likeness of Christ, growing in holiness. Discipleship implies learning and growth through change. Local churches need to be about change, discipleship, growth and outreach. Where those responsible for leadership in the local church don't lead, churches and Christians begin to atrophy.' (pp. 192-193)

One senses considerable frustration behind these comments, and perhaps some of it is justified. But quite what Lawrence is saying, and why, merits careful unpicking. First, what exactly would qualify for Lawrence as the type of change that the Christian life is all about? At one level, he answers this question in terms of 'being changed into the likeness of Christ': a fair answer, at least on an individualistic level.   But one strongly expects, and the following pages confirm, that that alone is not sufficient. The title of the chapter already gives some significant clues. I draw particular attention to the word 'implement'. Not every type of change can be implemented. I suggest that 'the likeness of Christ', for instance, cannot. Although he does not make explicit his thinking, it seems to me that he is primarily thinking here of the sort of change that can be proactively planned, for instance by leaders.

Lawrence asserts that 'The Christian life is about change'. Instead of 'change', he might have been expected to affirm the primacy of 'love', or perhaps 'grace' or 'joy'. So why might it be that change in particular has been singled out?   This is a highly significant question. Subsequent chapters will offer answers to it by pointing to broad cultural shifts. My answer at this point, however, highlights what is something of a tautology within this literature. For there is some circularity in the connection made between the perceived need for leadership and the perceived need for change. Thus Lawrence, having set out his argument regarding the need for leadership (to which we will turn shortly), goes on to assert that 'leadership without direction is meandering' (p. 192). We need leaders. Leaders lead. Following their lead involves change. And so we must have change - and specifically the type of change that leaders can lead.

Returning to the question of why the Christian life might be about change, rather than love or grace, I am both intrigued and concerned by the apparent disconnect, in this section of the book, between the content of leadership and the riches of the Christian tradition. Let me illustrate with two examples. First, I focus on the brief impression given in the paragraphs quoted above of 'sit(ting) Sunday by Sunday in church'. The picture Lawrence paints offers no hint of the transformative potential of corporate worship, of the ministries of Word and

Sacrament, of the presence of God. It is as if even the possibility of such experience has been excluded from Lawrence's thinking. Could this be an instance of the hermeneutical filtering that I described earlier, as subtly exercised by discourses? Second, Lawrence writes movingly, earlier in the book, of his personal experience of an eight-day silent retreat, and of the powerful and wonderful restoring of love and grace in his life (pp. 81-82). On the one hand, this strikes me as an excellent example of the sort of change that can be seen as central in Christian experience. But on the other, that sort of 'change' cannot be made to happen, and I'm not convinced that it's within Lawrence's view in this chapter.

I am concerned that *change* is portrayed as such a fundamental driver, and an apparently constant one at that. Further, it seems that what counts as change is limited in some ways: it is not obvious that those types of transformation most obviously rooted in the Christian tradition have remained within Lawrence's field of vision. Moreover, the impression is given that well-established faith practices have little or no part to play in energising or inspiring the change under consideration. All these factors give me cause for concern, and also cry out for deeper understanding. To use Kuhn's term, they appear to be anomalies. All these areas will therefore receive further analysis in the chapters ahead. For now, however, I move on from this first significant theme of *change* to the closely related one of *leadership* itself.

Leadership without meandering

Clearly the theme of *leadership* is a remarkably broad one, which in one sense encompasses all that I cover in this section. Here I draw attention to two particular aspects of how Lawrence relates to this theme. First, I suggest that the idea of a *journey* forms the *main metaphor* behind the leadership that Lawrence advocates. This is, indeed, perhaps the most obvious metaphor to be associated with the concept of leadership. But it is not the only possibility. For instance, there is leadership in war, and also in reconciliation. There is leadership in the particularly challenging circumstances of exile or captivity. Each of these metaphors brings forth quite different images and priorities. Lawrence focuses solely on the journey metaphor. Within that range of possibilities, this is not a journey of exploration, heading out into the unknown. Neither is it a leisure or pleasure trip, taking time to drink in the delights of creation before returning to the stability of home. Rather, I suggest that the underlying metaphor, which often remains implicit within the discourse, is of *an organised, planned, purposeful journey towards a pre-identified destination*. The leader in particular is responsible for identifying and articulating the direction of travel. Lawrence asserts that 'leadership without direction is meandering' (p. 192), with the clear implication that meandering should not be on

the church's agenda. Furthermore, the type of journey metaphorically envisaged clearly involves leaving where you are in order to get to a new, and better, place. I note, therefore, a further accentuation of the already established primacy of change over continuity. The fact that the journey metaphor is used, and that the journey is to be purposeful and well organised, is directly connected to the recommended processes of leading: being clear about the intended destination, and then working out the details of how to get there. Interestingly, Lawrence does not make explicit his use of journey metaphor. However, he does uses associated vocabulary (e.g. 'where God is leading' (p. 195), 'where they are going' (p. 197), helping the church 'chart its way ahead' (p. 29)), and it is clearly a primary influence on his understanding of leadership. In fact, this image of *an organised journey towards a pre-identified destination* may be the primary metaphor of the whole CLD. We thus encounter here a strong case study of how the assumptions and metaphors embedded within the discourse can have a very significant role in shaping its influence, without necessarily ever being made explicit. I now move on to consider two further aspects of how Lawrence recommends leadership should be executed, before concluding this section by reflecting briefly on the theme of rhetoric.

The necessity of method

I here want to make a point that may seem obvious, but is worth underlining. The point is this: Lawrence *recommends a method* for the leadership of change. Lawrence, in this respect, is entirely in line with other authors within the CLD[5]. Like other authors, Lawrence uses a diagram, which I reproduce below, to encapsulate what he sees as key features and stages of the method. The precise emphases of diagrams vary, but my primary point is this: a clear description and prescription of method is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the CLD[6].

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[5] See for instance Edmondson (2005, pp. 57-70), Chew and Ireland (2009, pp. 56-82), Williams and Tanner (2004, pp. 8-11) and Finney (1989, pp. 133-151). In fact, Lawrence could be described here as being outside the CLD mainstream, in that he states that it is often best to use the method in an implicit and informal manner in many local church settings (Lawrence, p. 198). Whilst the advice itself seems to me to contain much wisdom, I find it hard to imagine how the method Lawrence describes could in fact be used in an implicit manner.

[6] This point may be further emphasised by means of a contrast: it is hard to imagine Michael Ramsey including any such diagram, for instance in his *The Christian Priest Today* (1972).

Stage 3
Listen to the context

↓

Revise

VISION

Stage 1 → Stage 2 → Stage 5 → Stage 6 → Stage 7 → Stage 8
Agree terms   Identify   Formulate   Test and   Make a   Implement
              process   the vision   weigh   decision   the vision

↑

Stage 4
Nurture the ideal
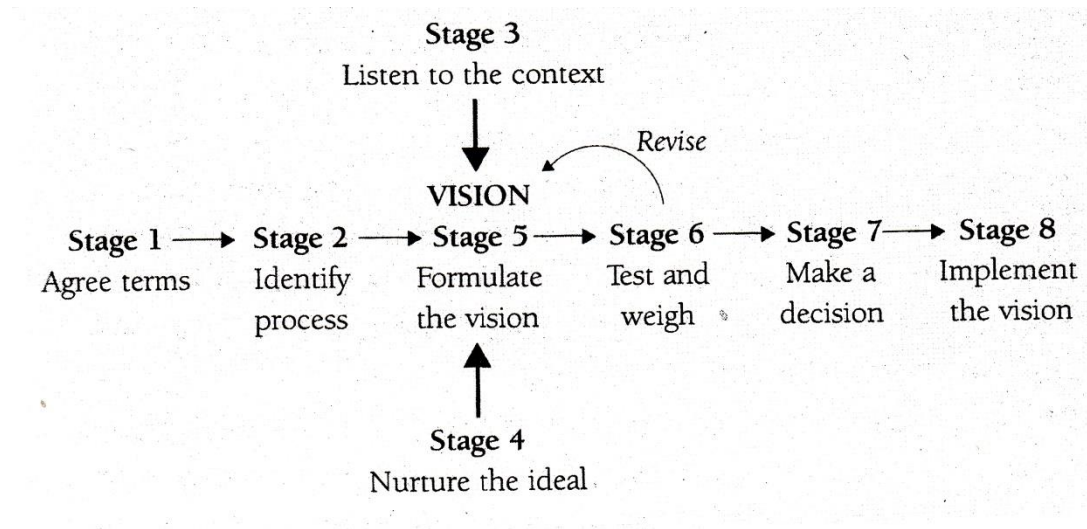
Diagram indicating the eight stages of Lawrence's method of leading change via vision (Lawrence, 2004, p. 199).

Vision: striking, simple, compelling – and instrumental

As the diagram makes clear, Lawrence's method for the leadership of change is focused on a concept of *vision*. Vision refers both to an imagined future state (the endpoint of the metaphorical journey), and also to a form of words encapsulating that desired destiny. At this stage I register several brief points. First, what is to be discerned is understood to be *God's* vision. The method implicitly assumes that God already knows what such a vision should be for this church, and that we can discern that vision and articulate it clearly. The vision in this model is to carry divine authority. Second, relatedly, much is made of the *potency* of having such a vision. For instance, it 'captures imagination', 'helps decision-making', 'gives meaning' and 'generates resources' (Lawrence, pp. 196-197). It is very important to register, however, that Lawrence is here *making an interpretation* in asserting a direct causal link from the articulation of vision specifically to the experienced positive effects. To offer but one alternative, he overlooks any contribution that the simple fact of congregational conversation, as part of the process, might have made. It is also worth registering that this potency, however, appears ambiguous and may need maintenance. Lawrence, accurately but somewhat surprisingly, identifies the risk of the articulated 'vision statement' ending up 'gathering dust' (p. 212), in spite of its authority and potential. Third, to register the likely *conciseness* of the vision. It will be short and focused. In prioritising some areas, it must exclude others. Different authors use slightly different definitions of mission statements and vision statements. For Lawrence, a mission statement 'is likely to be short, and may be captured in a pithy slogan or strapline' (pp. 260-261). A vision statement will be longer, but still clear and compelling (p. 262). The fact that one of Lawrence's criteria for such a vision

statement is that it should be 'simple enough to be remembered' indicates quite how concise it is likely to need to be. Fourthly and finally I make the point that such a vision statement is *constructed* so as to be *instrumental*. It will have work to do within the life (and discourse) of the church. It has been discerned and/or designed in order to fulfil a purpose, namely motivating and directing people on a journey.

Optimism and rhetoric

This book, in common with much of the CLD, is characterised by a strong strand of *optimism*. I highlight two ways in which this is manifest. First, Lawrence is implicitly optimistic that, simply put, this method of discerning and implementing appropriate change *will work*. To be sure, for this to happen, all will need to play their part. Nevertheless, 'achieving God's vision for his church' (p. 213) is implied to be a realistic expectation. Second, there is considerable optimism about the power of leadership itself to deliver what the church needs in current challenging times. Lawrence does qualify his optimism to some degree: 'It's not that Christian leadership is an end in itself, or that good leadership will definitely lead to church growth, but leadership is a key factor in the spread of the gospel.' (p. 11). In his foreword, Graham Cray is less cautious. For him, any adequate response from the church to our contemporary context is, under God, 'dependent on *one supreme factor* – the quality of leadership' (p. 9, emphasis added). We find ourselves at a 'critical moment of opportunity', and it is primarily the responsibility and role of leaders to inspire and enable the necessary 'renewed imagination, clear vision and… mobilisation of the people of God'.

Theology

The final area, that of *theology*, I address concisely at this stage. *Growing Leaders* as a whole primarily seeks to be informed by the life and example of Jesus. The necessity of investing in our relationship with God is made clear. Within the specific processes of discerning God's leading, the importance of prayer is emphasised. It is good that some attention is given to theological evaluation of the content of vision as it is being discerned. However, this part is disappointingly brief at just over one page in length (pp. 206-207). Should this not be considered the most vital aspect of the whole process? Moreover, it is important to register that there is no consideration of how the process itself might be theologically assessed. As discussed previously, I suggest that this is because it is assumed to be a neutral tool.

Growing Leaders, then, encapsulates within its covers much of the essence of the CLD. However, to gain a broader and richer understanding of that discourse, I now turn to examine more briefly three supplementary, secondary texts.

1.5   Three secondary texts

Developing Visionary Leadership (2004)

Developing Visionary Leadership comes in the format of a 28 page booklet from Grove publishers (Richard Williams & Tanner, 2004). Its two authors were, at the time, 'vicar of an ordinary parish church' (now Warden of Cranmer Hall, Durham) and Chief Executive of a voluntary organisation. In brief, this booklet can be described as a summarised version of *Growing Leaders*, but with greatly heightened emphasis and rhetoric:

> 'Fantastic organisations… have fantastic leaders. With great leadership churches can be transformed into places where people are excited to belong… What we are saying is that if you are a church leader then the future is in your hands…' (p. 3).

Williams and Tanner clearly prioritise change, see leadership as vital, and recommend a method focused around the development of a vision. For 'churches love to grasp vision. This is how it works with God.' (p. 6).

There are two key aspects of this booklet which I want to highlight. The first is its *pragmatism*. This is 'a practical introduction to great leadership' (p. 4). The authors will 'suggest some key aspects of leadership… and give some hot tips for success'. This is not 'a theorist's book'. Works within the CLD do vary as to how much they reflect on the theoretical underpinning of the recommendations. And, to be fair, the 28 page format of this booklet does not leave a lot of space. Nevertheless, a bias towards pragmatism can fairly be identified as a frequent characteristic within the CLD (see, for instance, Gibbs, 1981; Wagner, 1976). The second aspect is part of their vision-focused model for change. As with Lawrence, the articulation of vision is expected to lead to identifying a number of objectives or aims. In one of Lawrence's appendices, in which he 'defines terms', he asserts that aims and goals should ideally be SMART, and goes on to explain the meaning of this acronym, meaning:

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Realistic, and

Time-limited

This recommendation is widespread across the CLD. Williams and Tanner give more emphasis on this assertion, for instance by including some examples of SMART objectives. For example, Williams and Tanner suggest '50 people to commit to joining a community organisation (e.g. sports club, aerobics class, wine tasting club, PTA) by 30 September', and 'Encourage 100 to pray weekly for three of their neighbours, by 30 June' (p. 10). This dictum is adopted from secular management writing (although I don't remember this being acknowledged within the church literature). When a rationale for these precepts is offered, it is framed (with some circularity) in terms of making sure it is clear whether or not the objective has been achieved. Such desire for clarity, I will go on to propose, is a significant overarching characteristic of the discourse. The asserted need for SMART criteria is a very striking characteristic of the CLD, and one that many consider to be an anomaly in the life of the church. I therefore give these criteria, and the general issue of measurable targets, sustained attention within Chapter 4.

How to Do Mission Action Planning; a Vision-Centred Approach (2009)

As with the previous text, this book is the combined work of two people, in this case a commercial Business Excellence Director and a vicar (Chew & Ireland, 2009)[7]. As the title implies, the explicit focus has narrowed from leadership *per se*. Its remit is essentially the same process as that recommended by Lawrence, and by Williams and Tanner. The title Mission Action Planning (MAP) is credited to David Hope, when he was Bishop of London in the early 1990s. Rather than reiterate much of what has gone before, I highlight three main observations, each loosely linked to one of the three words in the name of the method. First, *mission*. Most writers within the CLD have a clear priority of mission, understood primarily in terms of church growth. Within the CLD, such growth is seen as arising from planned action. Second, then, *action* is a central word: in this discourse, as well as in the title of the method. What sort of action is called for? Deliberate, planned, proactive instrumentality. This leads directly to the third word of the title, *planning*. A focus on planning draws attention back to the role of method, as well as to its content. Chew and Ireland assert that this particular method for leadership is based on 'solid biblical concepts' of vision, planning and action (Chew & Ireland, 2009, p. 11). It is worth emphasising that planning within the CLD is frequently conceived as being *strategic*, in two distinct senses. First, strategic in the sense of aspiring to an overview, and thus being able to rationally judge what should be the highest priorities. Second, strategic in the sense of being particularly effective in achieving stated aims.

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[7] The vicar, Mark Ireland, is now one of the two clergy members of the Archbishops' Council.

Interestingly, though Chew and Ireland are happy to adopt the language of leadership, its role and necessity tend to fade into the background.

Hope for the Church; Contemporary Strategies for Growth (2002)

A former Government Economic Adviser, Jackson spent 20 years in parish ministry before becoming a Research Missioner within Springboard, and then an Archdeacon and Bishop's Growth Officer in the diocese of Lichfield. *Hope for the Church* (Jackson, 2002) is neither directly about leadership, nor does it recommend a specific method for church development. Rather, this book recommends particular 'strategies' via which both dioceses and local churches can draw up effective plans. A distinctive feature of Jackson's work, perhaps related to his background in economics, is the degree of emphasis he places on statistical analysis. The text is thus liberally illustrated with bar charts and tables analysing a wide range of potential factors in church growth. I discuss and critique Jackson's work extensively, especially in chapters 3 and 4, so will reserve most of my comment until then. For now, I register three points. First, Jackson's approach assumes at least some degree of *predictable linear causality* when it comes to church growth. He is not overly simplistic (although I do not always find his analysis or reasoning convincing), but a certain form of *rationality* strongly undergirds his approach. Second, much of his analysis is *category-based*. This may seem obvious, given his predilection for bar charts. But a really important point is being highlighted here. Embedded in his writing, and I believe across the CLD, is an assumption which should be made explicit. The assumption is that those issues and areas of church life and ministerial practice which might have a bearing on church growth are susceptible to categorisation. Furthermore, in order to be categorised, they must first be able to be measured in some way. A major impact of such an assumption is its logical consequence, namely that those things not susceptible to measurement must have little or no impact on the flourishing of the church. Third, in line with Chew and Ireland, Jackson explicitly argues the case justifying his focus on *numerical growth* (see in particular Chapter 2: Bums on seats – why they matter, pp. 17-26). If Jackson does not focus on leadership per se, why do I include his work within the CLD? My judgement is that, though his primary emphasis is in slightly different areas to that of the core of the CLD, he embodies very well a type of rationality on which much of the discourse depends. Furthermore, that rationality is more explicit in his work than most others, and therefore more readily open to critical analysis.

Having surveyed four main representative texts of the CLD, its main contours should be becoming clear. The final stage, then, of this initial orientation is to add further clarity by contrasting the CLD with works that lie beyond its boundary.

1.6   Beyond the CLD

The Church Leadership Discourse is not required to have precise boundaries: it need not be crystal clear exactly which works qualify to be included within it, and which should be excluded. Nevertheless, the purpose of this section is to shed further light on the characteristics of the CLD by surveying the contrasting features of works around and beyond its boundary. I have designated these in three broad categories: popular passive resistance to the CLD, popular active resistance, and academic resistance, which categories I will attend to in turn. I begin, however, by commenting briefly on the relationship between the themes of the CLD and the discourses of leadership proposed by Western, summarised in section 1.2.

CLD and Western's discourses

Comparing the church leadership discourse with Western's analysis, the clearer correlations are with his first discourse (the Controller) and his third (Transformational leadership). To what extent can the CLD be seen as corresponding to the scientific management of Western's leader as Controller? One important area of commonality is the frequent assumption, implicit or explicit, of fairly linear and direct relationships between cause and effect, not least in the work of Jackson. It is noteworthy that Wagner was happy to describe his approach as scientific, and argue for the need for such an approach, in the mid-1970s, but that such open endorsement of the term 'scientific' is scarce or non-existent thereafter. Quite a lot of the 'feel' of more contemporary manifestations of the church leadership discourse can be differentiated from the relatively clinical approach of the Controller. Nevertheless, I would argue that much of its content, focusing as it often does on prescribed methods, achievable goals and explicit outcomes, retains important characteristics of that discourse. I would contend, however, that the contemporary CLD also has substantial commonality with Western's third discourse[8]. What, then, is held in common with Transformational leadership? Principal features include notions of inspiration, of releasing energy, of aligning an organisation

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[8] Note that, within Western's descriptions, it is not that one discourse fully replaces another. Rather, some significant characteristics are likely to be carried forward to influence subsequent discourses. It need therefore not be surprising if contemporary church leadership shares common ground with earlier as well as later discourses.

through the articulation of shared visions and goals. Furthermore, and strikingly, some works within the CLD particularly overlap with this discourse in their strongly optimistic rhetoric (which one might term 'hype'). There is, therefore, at least a moderately strong relationship between the features of the CLD and certain features of contemporary secular leadership. What is striking is the lack of acknowledgement within the CLD of such a relationship. In particular, I do not recall any CLD author suggesting that their own recommendations *were derived from* secular leadership. Such lack of openness may be connected to the lack of critical examination of the presuppositions and priorities that underlie the recommended leadership approach.

Popular passive resistance

The first area of literature I describe as offering *popular passive resistance* to the CLD. By *popular* I intend that this literature is aimed at an audience that would include all clergy. I describe the resistance as *passive* because these works resist the CLD primarily by choosing not to participate in it or endorse it. However, the boundary is not clear-cut, and there is ambiguity and perhaps ambivalence, in the writing and perhaps the writers. An example that may fit into this category is *The Life and Work of a Priest* (Pritchard, 2007). Pritchard is happy to commend the roles of both leadership and management as part of the role of the clergy. But these receive just one chapter each, out of 16 different metaphors and descriptions, grounded in a much richer and fuller depiction of Christian existence[9]. Others within this area of literature are happy to focus their work on the terminology of leadership, but do so in a broader and richer way, not accepting CLD orthodoxy as the single prescription for leadership within the church. Thus Watson, for instance (2008), portrays 'inspirational leadership' as just one of four leadership modes which Jesus used. Watson helpfully argues that, at least as much as *vision*, a leader must offer *perspective* and *insight*. Furthermore, as one who 'is somewhat suspicious of… the pithy one-liner that summarises complex truth in a single phrase', he finds it 'encouraging to note the variety of Jesus' mission statements' (p. 156). Watson is for leadership, but not straightforwardly for the CLD.

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[9] See also *Being a Priest Today* (Cocksworth & Brown, 2002), which occupies an approximately similar position. *Wisdom and Ministry* (Sadgrove, 2008) I would also place in this area of literature. This rich and inspiring book focuses on the relationship between the inner life of the minister and their necessary public role, with wisdom as its central theological category.

Popular active resistance

The second area of literature offers *popular active resistance* to the CLD, to varying degrees and with a range of emphases. This area 'lies right next to' that of popular passive resistance, and any boundary between the two is fuzzy and indistinct. Relatively few authors have written against the CLD, and most of these have been within the last few years[10]. Here I mention a selection of the key works.

I turn first to *Ministry in Three Dimensions* (Croft, 2008). Croft describes himself (in my terms) as an early enthusiast of the CLD, who was given pause for thought by the significant number of clergy who resisted its approach (pp. 28-29). What Croft does very clearly is to lay out an understanding of local ministry with three complementary dimensions: *diakonia*; presbyteral ministry; and the ministry of *episcope*. Most local ministers will normally exercise all three dimensions. What the CLD describes as 'leadership' appears to correspond quite closely to his description of *episcope*. It is thus a close call as to whether or not Croft does actually resist the CLD. My judgement that this work is, on balance, one of resistance, is based on two factors. The first is Croft's explicit reluctance to refer to any minister primarily as a 'leader' (p. 169). The second is that, although his depiction of *episcope* as being primarily characterised by 'responsible initiative' has much in common with the method of the CLD, he falls short of calling for articulated or measurable objectives, which I consider to be one of the more significant hallmarks of that discourse.

The title of Keith Lamdin's *Finding Your Leadership Style* (2012) is, I suggest, misleading. Lamdin describes and explores six different 'paradigms' (a word that, in his hands, carries broadly similar resonances to my own use of 'discourses') that he has found within church life, and examines their content and dynamics. His aim is *not*, in spite of the title, that the reader simply chooses the best one for them. Rather, it is to share insight, that readers may appreciate the contrasting perspectives offered from different viewpoints within the leadership 'landscape', and thus deepen their understanding (p. viii). He describes his first two paradigms, those of the monarch and the warrior, as 'by far the most popular paradigms operating in church today' (p. xi). The monarch provides 'safety and stability and organisational effectiveness' (p. 43). Lamdin's warrior is even closer to what I term the CLD: Lamdin, for instance, points out its parallels with what Simon Western terms the Messiah discourse. Lamdin does not rule out either of these two paradigms, and indeed acknowledges

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[10] It will be interesting to see what happens to that trend in the future.

that many have no choice but to work within some version of the monarch paradigm. Nevertheless, he does offer the counterbalancing perspective of four substantially different paradigms: servant, elder, contemplative and prophet. These he sees as carrying 'more hope for the Church' (p. xi).

David Runcorn acknowledges his *weariness* with the subject of leadership (Runcorn, 2011, p. 3). 'What were we doing before we discovered 'leadership'?' (p. 1). 'How did we come to believe that this is what we need?' (p. 2). Diagnosing contemporary leadership as preoccupied with 'securing the future' (p. 3), he finds in the narratives of 1 and 2 Samuel perhaps surprisingly strong parallels with the concerns of today's world. He describes the 'real business of life' as 'learning to live in the grace of God' (Hirst, 2006, p. 109, quoted in Runcorn, p. 57). He explores the significance of God being known as I AM – a name 'not defined by any task, achievement or characteristic' (p. 82). He attends to the necessity of *waiting*, finding it to restore our ability to be present – to ourselves, to others and to God. Overall, he describes our calling as being to 'honest, disciplined *attentiveness'* as we are led along the 'vulnerable but essential journey from fear to trust' (p. 9).

While Runcorn critiques the CLD primarily by focusing on different strands of leadership, Starkey includes some explicit challenge and criticism within *Ministry Rediscovered* (Starkey, 2011). He wrote the book in part out of his frustration with the standardised models of church leadership he had encountered, describing conferences on the subject as 'hilariously irrelevant' (p. 9)to the modest, motley circumstances of the first church of which he was vicar. Rather than looking to California for answers, clergy energy 'could more profitably have gone into looking at the world on their own doorstep and asking God for fresh eyes to see' (p. 32). He describes different ways of looking at the world – for instance, primarily as 'a series of problems requiring brisk and effective solutions', or, citing Donald Allchin, 'primarily as a mystery which is not closed but open to us and which summons us to ever deeper knowledge and understanding'. This perspective, the knowing of a poet or of 'the person who prays' sees the world as 'a reality greater than ourselves to be progressively explored and known, loved and praised' (Allchin, 1997, p. 125, quoted in Starkey, 2011, p. 56). Starkey, like the CLD, frequently uses the metaphor of a journey. But Starkey's depiction of the *mode* of the journey, and the *manner in which it is to be undertaken*, differ significantly from the CLD. For him, this is a journey into the unknown along an intriguing path, which will sometimes uncover the ancient trails of those who have gone before us. Furthermore, this journey will be 'slow and inconvenient, unpredictable and risky… It is an adventure.' (p. 56).

Perhaps one day, as we approach the end of the journey, we will be able to look back and see some kind of logic and direction to the path we have helped to make. For now, we shall regularly make mistakes and may get lost from time to time; we shall spend a surprising amount of our time improvising. But that is OK, because that is the stuff of adventures. (p. 57)

Starkey challenges the CLD orthodoxy that says we need to have a clear vision of our destination, and that we need to set clear goals in order to reach it (p. 107). I summarise here five of his specific criticisms. First, it is a flawed model of vision. 'What if we only begin to understand the problem as we begin to tackle it?… What if the people and places we encounter along the journey help to determine where we want to end up?' (p. 119). Second, the visions we come up with are rarely broad enough (p. 120). Third, people matter more than the destination (pp. 121-123). In particular, he cites the important work of Alan Roxburgh (2010), who argues strongly that strategic planning ends up objectifying human beings. Fourth, the journey matters as much as the arriving (pp. 123-124). 'The way I relate to people day-to-day makes a more eloquent statement than any number of vision statements and dynamic church programmes.' (p. 123). Fifth, he questions the assumption that there is a blueprint in God's mind for what each church (and Christian) should do. Amongst other things, such an assumption leads to anxiety, and encourages passivity and immaturity (pp. 146-148). Rather, he encourages the growth of discerning wisdom, looking to the leading of the Spirit, as we seek to improvise and explore on the journey to which we are called.

I conclude the section with a brief reference to Richard Impey's *How to Develop Your Local Church: Working with the Wisdom of the Congregation* (Impey, 2010). Focusing on issues of story, identity, life-cycle, home and context, Impey recommends seeking to develop the shared wisdom of the whole congregation. He draws on James Hopewell (1987) in setting out four contrasting 'outlooks on the world'. Only one of these particularly corresponds with the CLD, namely that described as visionary and inspirational. There is an implicit critique, in that such a perspective is not the only one. But Impey also describes the visionary, inspirational outlook as '[belonging] more naturally to the "youth" of the church, and a pragmatic, realistic output to the stages of and beyond maturity' (p. 67).

Academic resistance

Academic resistance has generally been expressed in relation to focused subsets of the area under consideration, rather than to the CLD as a whole. Proposals and publications that have generated particular attention include: the Church Growth movement (and especially its

'Homogeneous Unit Principle'); the 1995 Turnbull Report, *Working As One Body* (hereafter WAOB); and the 2004 *Mission-Shaped Church*. Whilst the second and third of these in particular lie beyond the boundaries of the focus of this thesis, the rationality they embody, nevertheless, has substantial similarities with that of the CLD. What have been the reasons for resistance? One important strand of resistance has focused on *the nature of the church*. Critics have argued that the above publications view the church primarily as a means to the conversion of individuals, rather than seeing a richer and more central ecclesiological role within salvation itself, and a higher value on the Church's calling to *be* the Body of Christ. Such views can be linked to a consumerist view of the gospel as a product to be packaged, marketed, and sold in the greatest quantities possible (see for instance Davison & Milbank, 2010, pp. 41-63; Milbank, 2008, pp. 120-121; Roberts, 2000, p. 90).

A second common theme in resistance to this discourse is its *impact on human subjects*. For instance, Percy expects that *people* will take second place behind *effectiveness*, with the discourse oppressing 'the weak, powerless and (allegedly) inefficient' (Percy, 1998, p. 127). Pattison, attending to the workings of managerialism in wider society as well as the church, articulates his concerns about that which the discourse systemically *excludes* - for instance the present and past; limitation and failure; the human and unpredictable; and the intangible (Pattison, 1997, pp. 88-98) - not least because of the dehumanising consequences of such exclusions. Further, Percy suggests that what people are actually looking for includes 'more hopeful, profound and transcendent forms of living' (Percy, 1998, p. 134). Impact on people is clearly intertwined with conceptions of how *power* is used. Roberts diagnoses behind WAOB a view of the desirability of 'real' ecclesial power with which he fundamentally disagrees (Roberts, 2002, pp. 166-167).

With respect to some of the main themes of the CLD, Roberts, for instance, doubts whether strategic leadership can be adopted (or imposed) 'without affecting the substance of the faith' (Roberts, 2000, p. 95). Percy, similarly, drawing on Hopewell (1987, pp. 19-32), laments the turn from contextual organic understandings to a more mechanistic perspective and a pragmatic response. Here, 'critically, the supporting philosophy of the agency or tool being used is left unaddressed' (Percy, 1998, pp. 127-128). The argument is not, however, entirely in one direction. For instance, Poole argues for the portability of management (as distinct from managerialism) between sectors, whilst emphasising the existence of 'challenges' (such as the epistemological bias of a default empiricist mindset) which need to be continually borne in mind in the process (Poole, 2008, pp. 83-95). Overall, however, the doubts expressed by a

number of commentators certainly raise significant questions about the appropriateness of the CLD within the Christian church.

Conclusion

The starting point of this chapter, then, was to explore the significance of discourses, emphasising the often subtle ways in which they shape human engagement with reality. Through what they hide and what they highlight, they operate as hermeneutical filters. These theoretical considerations were then followed by an overview of successive leadership discourses through the last century or so, with their substantial shifts of tone and emphasis. The majority of the chapter focused on the rise of leadership and related concepts in much church literature, since around the 1970s. This body of writing was termed the Church Leadership Discourse (CLD). The main themes highlighted included: the degree of emphasis on particular types of *change*; the metaphor of *an organised journey towards a pre-identified destination*, which appears to underlie most CLD conceptions of leadership; the fact that such leadership is also understood to be based on a universal *method*, characterised by the articulation of *vision* and *objectives*; the strikingly optimistic tone of much CLD literature; and the small proportion of attention devoted to theology within the writing, not least because of an apparent assumption that the recommended method is itself theologically neutral.

A survey of both popular and academic works beyond the boundaries of the CLD identified a range of concerns with its practice, assumptions and prescriptions. Perhaps Starkey more than any other was seen to develop a sustained critique, for instance of the detail and impact of the journey metaphor described above. An important and legitimate question therefore arises. If Starkey and others have already done such a good job of identifying shortcomings in the leadership literature and prescribing appropriate remedies, why precisely is the rest of my work necessary? What this thesis will go on to construct is a framework which makes clear why the anomalies identified by Starkey and others are not simply isolated and independent phenomena. Rather, they are deeply interconnected, sharing a common origin in a particular approach to reality. The fact that this approach gives rise to a range of anomalous phenomena must be taken seriously, as, I will argue, it is a clear indication that this approach on its own theologically insufficient and ecclesiologically inappropriate. It is, therefore, to the construction of the heuristic framework at the heart of this thesis that we now turn, in the next chapter.

Chapter 2 - Introducing the primary critical axes: *Cartesian* and *Gestalt* approaches to reality

Introduction

'I am going to suppose for a while that there are two different kinds of human mind: the Rational Mind and another, which, for want of a better term, I will call the Sympathetic Mind. I will say now, and try to keep myself reminded, that these terms are going to appear to be allegorical, too neat and too separate – though I need to say also that their separation was not invented by me.

'The Rational Mind… is the mind all of us are supposed to be trying to have… The Rational Mind is objective, analytical, and empirical; it makes itself up only by considering facts; it pursues truth by experimentation; it is uncorrupted by preconception, received authority, religious belief, or feeling. Its ideal products are the proven fact, the accurate prediction, and the "informed decision". It is, you might say, the official mind of science, industry, and government.

'The Sympathetic Mind differs from the Rational Mind, not by being unreasonable, but by *refusing to limit knowledge or reality to the scope of reason* or factuality or experimentation, and by *making reason the servant* of things it considers precedent and higher.' (Berry, 2004, pp. 87-88, emphasis added)

Wendell Berry (farmer, poet, novelist and theologian) posits the allegorical existence of two different types of human 'mind'. He does so as a way of making sense of two radically contrasting approaches to reality that most of us encounter, in others and perhaps within ourselves. Berry is far from alone in perceiving such a phenomenon. Rather, it is striking how many writers have articulated a similar perception, using diverse terminology and imagery to do so. Some, like Berry, hold these two different approaches together, whereas others focus on the rise or fall of one approach or the other. Examples, from widely contrasting backgrounds[1], include: Jürgen Habermas, who laments the rise of a 'one-sided rationalized lifeworld' (Habermas, 1985, p. 96, quoted in Alvesson & Willmott, 1996, p. 74); Marilynne Robinson, who critiques what she calls *The Absence of Mind* (Robinson, 2010); Andrew Louth, who talks of the 'dissociation of sensibility' experienced by modern cultures (Louth, 1983, pp.

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[1] In every case mentioned here, the dichotomy between modes of experience or existence is deeply intertwined with the developments of the Enlightenment, and the characteristics of modernity. These deep connections are both important and interesting, but lie outside the parameters of this thesis. Louth's first chapter offers an initial orientation.

1-16) [2]; and Ian McGilchrist, who describes two 'fundamentally opposed' human 'modes of experience' (McGilchrist, 2010, p. 3) [3].

Is Berry's use of the term 'mind' extreme? I think not. What he conveys by it is the breadth and depth of disjunction between two broad approaches to reality. The disjunction includes what is perceived, and the manner in which it is perceived. The dichotomy extends to what is considered desirable or valuable, and what is not. The very modes of reasoning and decision-making are founded on different sets of assumptions. To switch between approaches is tantamount to switching between minds[4].

These writers do not only share a perception of two distinct approaches to reality. They also have in common a judgement that the influence of one approach (that which Berry terms the Rational Mind) has become unduly dominant in contemporary Western culture. None would argue that this approach should be eliminated. However, all of those quoted would contend that its influence should be restrained, and a more appropriate 'balance' should be restored.

My aim in this chapter is to develop and describe two approaches to reality, in line with the concept and the content of Berry's 'two minds', but drawing particularly on the work of Ian McGilchrist (2010), complemented and theologically grounded by that of Andrew Louth (1983). I will use the two approaches thus developed as a pair of critical axes against which to examine the Church Leadership Discourse I described in chapter 1. My purpose in doing so is heuristic and experimental[5]. My construction of this pair of axes will offer a new hermeneutical framework within which to perceive, describe and assess the CLD. It will, I trust, enable informed theological reflection, both within and beyond this thesis, and also offer some new terminology as a catalyst for discussion and debate.

The chapter is structured in two main sections. The first gives a brief introduction to each approach, and makes explicit my particular dependence on the work of Louth and McGilchrist,

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[2] This phrase is a quotation from TS Eliot.
[3] I will consider Louth and McGilchrist in more detail shortly. A more detailed comparison of the extent and limitations of these other parallels is beyond the scope of this project. Were such a comparison to be undertaken, it could fruitfully include how such dichotomies relate to the existence, in several different languages, of two distinct words relating to two different forms of knowing. For instance, *wissen* and *kennen* in German, *savoir* and *connaitre* in French, *sapere* and *cognoscere* in Latin.
[4] There are, indeed, many parallels between Berry's allegorical concept of 'minds' and the characteristics of discourses that I surveyed in the first chapter.
[5] The efficacy of this experiment will be determined, not by measurable criteria, but according to the quality of the insights that it yields.

before attending to possible objections. A major part of my overall hypothesis is that the writing of the CLD is substantially biased towards what I term a Cartesian perspective. I therefore devote the second section of this chapter to expanding on the characteristics of the Cartesian perspective. I do so via its three overarching emphases: its bias towards that which can be categorised; its strongly instrumental disposition; and its tendency towards optimism and the 'positive'.

2.1 Two approaches to reality

An initial sketch: linear clarity and integrated holism

What, then, are these two approaches to reality? I begin with a broad brush answer. The first approach to reality, the first mode of attention, is characterised by careful, detailed, focus. Linear, logical analysis is its forte, and this analysis is normally geared towards instrumental use: it has an end in mind. This approach specialises in clarity, in unambiguous boundaries, and in using or seeking method, relying on general principles. It typically proceeds by focus on parts of a whole in isolation, subsequently combining the fruits of its analysis into a map of the whole. This first approach to reality has substantial commonality with the most common mode of the sciences: the 'scientific method' is dependent on this type of attention. This approach has made a particular contribution within the spectacular progress of the natural sciences in recent centuries. This approach is also substantially correlated with what many neuroscientists believe to be the main mode of attention of the left brain hemisphere.

The second mode of attention, the second approach to reality, is characterised more by open attentiveness to the whole. Through rich understanding of context, including complexity and ambiguity, it hopes to accumulate wisdom from experience, enabling good discernment. Rather than focusing on isolated parts, its gaze is directed to the whole, to relationship, to 'betweenness' and to integration. It is sensitive not just to *what* is done, but to questions of degree, and to the *manner in which* things are done. Furthermore, the *purpose* of paying attention is different. Whereas the first approach is geared toward instrumentality – reaching out in order to use – the second is characterised by what we might call contemplation – 'reaching out – just that' (McGilchrist, 2010, p. 107). Broadly speaking, its strengths are much more correlated to the humanities than the sciences (although the actual practice of science depends on the second approach to no small extent). The second approach is also substantially correlated with the right brain hemisphere.

Naming the two approaches

As these two approaches form the primary critical axis for this thesis, it is important for me to label them in some way. I rejected at an early stage two possible naming schemes, namely left/right hemisphere, and science/humanities, judging it more helpful to formulate two distinctive qualifiers specifically for my purposes in this project. These two qualifiers may well each soon acquire in the mind of the reader links with science and the left hemisphere on the one hand, and, on the other, the humanities and the right hemisphere. Nevertheless, I judged it important in principle to make a distinction between my descriptive qualifier for each of the approaches, and whatever connotations these other possible terms might already carry for anyone following my argument.

The first approach I outlined, characterised by detailed linear analysis and an instrumental disposition, I will describe as the *Cartesian* approach. My naming this approach after René Descartes can be understood on two levels. First, more broadly, Descartes's thrust to extend the precision and certainty of mathematical reasoning across most branches of knowledge, coupled with his assumption of a homogenous cosmos obeying universal laws, is very much in line with the texture of this first approach (Cottingham, 1995). A second level focuses specifically on the Cartesian coordinate system. Within this scheme, any point within a two-dimensional plane can be uniquely identified via two numbers, the x-coordinate and y-coordinate, which precisely locate its position. What relevance has this to the first approach to reality? What this symbolises is the sense of clarity and fixity, unambiguous and detailed. The Cartesian coordinate system, with its rectilinear grid, has a clear-cut, right-angled feel which matches well with that of the first approach. As with that approach in general, the Cartesian coordinate system can contribute hugely within certain domains, but has little if any purchase within others.

The second approach I will term the *Gestalt*. By this term I intend to capture something of the holistic perspective of Berry's 'Sympathetic Mind'. The Gestalt approach attends to interconnectedness, relationship and complexity. Although the German use of the term can carry implications of *organising*, this connotation is not what I wish to emphasise[6]. Having sketched an initial outline of these two approaches, I now introduce the primary source I will use in developing a fuller picture of them in the second half of this chapter.

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[6] A proper degree of *ordering,* however, is entirely compatible with a Gestalt approach.

McGilchrist: two fundamentally different 'versions' of the world

This primary source is *The Master and His Emissary: the Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (2010) by Iain McGilchrist. McGilchrist is not only a philosopher, but also a psychiatrist, with a background in neuroimaging. He begins his work by describing the differences between the 'preferred modes' of each of the two hemispheres of the human brain. McGilchrist believes that

> many of the disputes about the nature of the human world can be illuminated by an understanding that there are two fundamentally different 'versions' delivered to us by the two hemispheres, both of which can have a ring of authenticity about them, and both of which are hugely valuable; but that they stand in opposition to one another (p. 5).

These two different 'versions', according to McGilchrist, correspond to and arise from the different *dispositions* or *modes of attention* of the two hemispheres of the human brain. The distinctive ways in which the two hemispheres pay attention, and the different aspects of reality which they are more attuned to perceive, combine to render their 'takes' on the world substantially different. The world of the left hemisphere is that of a Cartesian approach to reality, and that of the right corresponds to the Gestalt.

Both versions are 'hugely valuable', and yet McGilchrist proposes that the ideal relationship between the two is asymmetrical. According to McGilchrist, the role of the left hemisphere is always subordinate to that of the right, for reasons I now outline, in three steps. First, he sees the right hemisphere as being fundamentally more open and attentive to external reality (whereas the left tends to focus on that which it has itself constructed). The right hemisphere is thus likely to be the one that recognises or selects a new feature of reality worthy of attention. Second, however, such attention may often benefit from the clarity of analysis in which the left hemisphere specialises. And so the right hemisphere 'hands over', as it were, to the left a particular subject for attention. The left hemisphere duly uses its considerable analytical powers, often leading to new insights or possibilities. That is the end of the second step, but the third step is crucial. In the third step, the left hemisphere 'hands back' the fruit of its analysis to the right. Whereas the left specialises in atomistic consideration of 'parts', it is the right that has the greater wisdom in discerning issues of the whole, and of the relationships between parts. The right is, consequently, much the better equipped for judging whether and in what ways the analytically-derived insights of the left hemisphere should be incorporated into its overall understanding of this area of reality, and its relationship to reality as a whole. This picture gives a feel for McGilchrist's construal of an ideal relationship

between left and right hemispheres[7]. Having established this picture, three further points are important to make.

First, the properly subservient left hemisphere nevertheless has a strong 'tendency' towards usurping the dominant role of the right. It is this tendency that inspired the title of the book, which relates to a story in Nietzsche about a wise master who was selflessly devoted to the people of his small kingdom[8]. One of his cleverest and most trusted emissaries gradually came to see his master's temperance as weakness, and so became contemptuous of him. 'And so it came about that the master was usurped, the people were duped, the domain became tyranny; and eventually it collapsed in ruins.' (McGilchrist, p. 14). McGilchrist intends this as a parable of what can easily happen with the brain hemispheres. The right is the master, and the left the emissary. The left hemisphere, having primary control of language, logic and linear analysis, can easily seem rhetorically much more powerful than the right. Its clarity, and the ensuing sense of certainty, easily persuade it of its own superiority (p. 229). For these and other reasons, the properly subservient left hemisphere can be expected to tend towards dominance.

Second, then, McGilchrist proposes that the broad movements discernible in the making of Western culture can be correlated with and illuminated by such a 'power struggle' between the hemispheres. This is clearly a large claim, to say the least, and McGilchrist devotes the whole of the second half of the book to substantiating his argument. In brief, he highlights parts of ancient Greek culture as being periods in which cultural developments most suggest a properly ordered relationship between brain hemispheres. In such periods of 'unparalleled richness' it is not that left and right hemispheres were marked by 'some sort of compromise… but on the contrary by a going further than had ever been gone before in both directions at once, an unfolding of the potential of each hemisphere such as the Western world had never seen before' (p. 296). In contrast, for instance, whilst Roman civilisation included much that suggests the co-operation of both hemispheres, it also 'provides evidence of an advance towards ever more rigidly systemised ways of thinking, suggestive of the left hemisphere working alone' (p. 290). He goes on to portray the Renaissance as a time of properly ordered

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[7] Clearly this is an anthropomorphic portrayal, which would often be inappropriate. In this case, however, given that both brain hemispheres are a vital part of what it is to be human, such anthropomorphism is valid.
[8] Unfortunately McGilchrist is unable to point the interested reader to the location in Nietzsche's work where this story can be found. Having said in his main text that 'There is a story in Nietzsche that goes something like this', in the accompanying footnote 21 (p. 464) he confesses 'Very roughly indeed, and I cannot now remember where.'

hemispheres, but the Enlightenment as another period in which the shift moved substantially towards the dominance of the left hemisphere. That shift, despite, for instance, Romanticism, has not only continued but increased. Within such a narrative, claims McGilchrist, much contemporary Western society is increasingly within the grip of an overzealous left hemisphere. This thesis, therefore, is concerned with the extent to which the CLD is in the grip of an overzealous Cartesianism.

The third point is a broader one, going back to the relationship between the brain hemispheres and our experience of reality. It is not simply that using one brain hemisphere more than another – or adopting a more Cartesian or more Gestalt approach – affects what aspects of reality we perceive and value, important though that is. At least as importantly, our disposition towards the world and one another, fundamentally affects *what it is that we come to have a relationship with*' (p. 5, emphasis in the original). In parallel with the earlier discussion of discourse, our approach to reality, or disposition, is not just *constituted by* external reality, but is also, at least in part, *constitutive of* the external reality that we experience.

I have summarised in brief McGilchrist's broad thesis about the differing dispositions of the two brain hemispheres, their ideal relationship and typical pathology, and their influence on the shaping of Western culture. I now turn to a very different interlocutor who, nevertheless, engages with some substantially similar issues.

Louth: should theology seek to be recast as a science?

Andrew Louth's *Discerning the Mystery* (1983) explores what should be the proper academic location and orientation of theology. Noting the spectacular progress of the natural sciences since the time of the Enlightenment, he charts ways in which theologians have sought to recast their discipline along scientific lines. As chief amongst the characteristics of science he includes the clarity (and thus apparent certainty) of its conclusions, and also its emphasis on *method*. What is this method? In brief 'an attempt to reduce the subject matter to simple items, which could be discerned clearly and distinctly, is then followed by piecing together of the simple items into a body of reliable knowledge' (p. 7)[9]. The question that Louth asks is whether theology should seek to become a science in this sense? His answer is a clear 'No',

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[9] See Schouls's thorough *The Imposition of Method* (1980) for an extensive discussion of the origin and spread of this method, in which Descartes played a significant role.

and his reasoning along the way is broad, rich and illuminating. It can be summarised in three steps.

The first step is to see clearly that, whilst the progress of science has often been spectacular, that progress has always been within particular domains. The forward movement of science has happened by, on the one hand, identifying problems that are accessible to the currently available methods and tools, and, on the other, ignoring the 'penumbra beyond', at least for the time being (p. 145). Furthermore, scientific progress 'is the result of [scientists] developing (in a remarkable and impressive way) one side, one dimension, of the human faculty of rationality' (p. 66).

The second step is to recognise the fundamental difference in approach of the humanities. In part, this is because the domain in which they operate is different. To portray the contents of that domain in terms of 'a problem needing a solution' is to reduce it beyond recognition. Rather than *solution*, the humanities deal more in terms of *understanding*, or to use Louth's preferred term, *contemplation*.   Moreover, that which is being contemplated within the humanities Louth denotes with the word *mystery* (p. 68). Furthermore, Louth draws on Gadamer in proposing that there is a substantial difference between the approaches of the sciences and the humanities. Rather than the humanities seeking 'a method' 'which will lead unerringly to the truth', Gadamer proposes a process of *Bildung*, meaning approximately formation and education, leading to *phronesis* (practical wisdom). Louth draws on Polanyi to assert that the knowledge within such Bildung, rather than simply being an objective account of reality, is much more a personal orientation towards reality. The former is at best a step towards the latter (pp. 62-63). Knowledge understood as personal orientation towards reality is particularly resonant for theology, and, as Louth consistently points out, for the early Church Fathers in particular:

> '[The philosopher] Hort's assertion that "the perception of truth depends as much on the state of him that desires to perceive as on the objects that are presented to his view" is axiomatic for the Fathers.' (Louth, p. 65)

We might, then, expect Louth to conclude that there is no place at all for science within the humanities, including theology. Rather, Louth's third step is to propose an important, but strictly delimited, role for science within theology. As already mentioned, what the scientific approach excels at is the formulation and solution of problems. Within the sciences, once a problem is solved, attention moves on (thus generating a sense of progress and 'success'). However, whereas the sciences are based around solving problems, the humanities have a

fundamentally different centre of gravity. Yet, there is often an *element* of problem-solving within them[10].   He offers the example of reading a poem in which, for instance, some words have obscure meanings, no longer in current use.

> 'These can sometimes be "solved" and a definitive answer produced. But having done all that, we have not finished: we have only begun - we have, as we might say, cleared the ground for an attempt to read, to understand, the poem.' (p. 67)

There can be a role, then, for a scientific approach within theology, but it must always remain ancillary and subordinate, for 'the heart of [theology] is found in another (and deeper) dimension' (p. 66). That deeper dimension lies in the infinite and bountiful mystery of God, and God's relationship with humankind. Rather than seeking to *solve* that mystery, our calling is to *participate* in it (p. 69). 'The heart of the matter is sharing in the mystery of love which God is'.

My final point here is to emphasize the very striking correspondence between Louth's depiction of how a scientific approach can properly contribute within the humanities, and McGilchrist's description of a harmonious ordering of left and right hemispheres. First, the right hemisphere or the humanities, in engaging with what is before them, identify an area which might benefit from logical or scientific analysis, and hand over that area to the left hemisphere or scientific approach. Second, the analysis is carried out, or the problem is solved. This is (just) a clearing of the ground, so that, third, the mystery can be contemplated with clearer insight, with the fruit of the logical analysis being incorporated into a newly enriched holistic, contextualised, perspective. What is the *purpose* of all of this? That we might participate more fully, with clearer sight and more appropriate action, in the mystery of the love of God.

Having emphasised the striking degree of correspondence between Louth's and McGilchrist's approaches, what do I intend to make of it? I will proceed through the thesis on the working assumption that a life-giving and theologically appropriate approach will see the Cartesian and Gestalt mutually ordered in accordance with what they both propose, and then, within the conclusion of the thesis, reflect on the fruitfulness or otherwise of such an ordering. Before I proceed along those lines, however, I want to acknowledge the possibility of objections to the approach I have set up so far.

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[10] Louth calls it the 'detective element': 'a peripheral, if important and time-consuming, activity' (p. 67).

Possible objections to the use of McGilchrist

It will be clear by now that I am drawing heavily on McGilchrist's work in constructing and describing the primary critical perspective within this thesis. This primary perspective will be drawn on to do most of the work in the following, central section of the thesis. Readers therefore need to have the maximum possible confidence in this critical perspective. In this section, therefore, I identify three likely possible objections to McGilchrist's work and my use of it, and offer a response in each case. What are these objections? First, that McGilchrist's thesis is itself insufficiently solid. Second, objecting that it should be given such prominence in a thesis that should primarily be theological and ecclesiological. Third, objecting that both McGilchrist's and my own approach are essentially elaborate ways of trying to undermine anything that might be effective.

First, then, one could object that McGilchrist's work is bad science. One could argue that his conclusions rest on insufficient foundations, or that the evidence that exists points more convincingly to alternative interpretations. There are three levels within his work at which criticisms could be directed: his descriptions of the 'dispositions' of the two brain hemispheres; his understanding of the ideal relationship between them, and its pathologies; and his linking of these to the shaping of Western culture. The first two levels are more completely in the domain of 'science', albeit with the second probably including a higher degree of interpretive discernment. For our purposes, three lines of support can be mentioned. First, McGilchrist's career includes research in neuroimaging at a University Hospital in Baltimore, and time as a Consultant Psychiatrist and Clinical Director at the Bethlem Royal & Maudsley Hospitals, London. He has experience in the field. Second, *The Master and His Emissary* features extensive referencing. Chapter 2 in particular, 'What Do the Two Hemispheres 'Do'?', includes 535 footnotes, the substantial majority referring to one or more scientific publications. Third, those who review this work favourably include Professors of Cognitive and Behavioural Neurology, and of Clinical Psychology. Nevertheless, not all are convinced. For some, even if some of the more detailed brain hemisphere observations are scientifically justified, McGilchrist's overall conclusions go far beyond what can be proven.

This is certainly the case for the third level of his work, linking brain hemisphere asymmetry to the shaping of western culture. Here McGilchrist does not pretend to offer the certainty of scientific proof. Rather, he offers a perspective, and seeks to convince that such a perspective sheds important new light on cultural developments over many centuries. He believes his perspective to be based on solid evidence based on actual differences between human brain

hemispheres. But, right at the end of the book, he addresses the possibility that future research might overturn his conclusions about hemisphere differences. What would his response be? "I would be surprised, but not unhappy"(p. 461). He would still hold to the observation that there are 'two major ways, not just of thinking, but of being in the world'. If these two ways turn out not to be correlated to the two brain hemispheres, he would, broadly speaking, recast the broad sweep of his argument, but with brain hemispheres used metaphorically to represent these two ways of being.

Moving to the second possible objection identified, one might grant that McGilchrist's overall thesis deserves to be taken seriously, but remain unconvinced of the appropriateness of its use within this thesis. Given that the primary focus of this work is on leadership within church ministry, surely, depending on one's perspective, the primary criticism should be found in biblical texts, church tradition and/or leadership theory? How can I justify this degree of weight resting on neurological research, however excellent? I respond in two ways. The first is to do with where my focus is. My focus is not on physiology. Rather, I am very interested in the two ways of being of which McGilchrist talks. In particular, I want to attend very carefully to how these ways of being affect which aspects of reality are perceived or not, what is seen as desirable or not, how the fabric (or machine) of reality is understood to 'work'. Such issues and questions, I contend now and intend to demonstrate in subsequent chapters, set up deep and important theological questions, and are therefore both theological themselves, and entirely appropriate within this thesis.

My second response to such an objection takes a different tack. I phrased the objection using the metaphor of the 'weight' of an argument obviously 'needing' a solid 'foundation' if undesirable slippage or collapse is to be avoided. But this is not the only possible metaphor. Perhaps a more accurate one for what I seek to do relates to the earlier concept of hermeneutical filters, but this time incorporates filters within a special pair of spectacles. Rather than building the massive edifice of an argument on the solid underpinning of a foundation, perhaps I am asking the reader to try on a pair of spectacles and discover whether these help them to see more clearly at least some aspects of the Church Leadership Discourse[11]. The metaphorical spectacles still need to be carefully constructed. The view

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[11] To be precise, hermeneutical filters feature twice here. The metaphorical pair of spectacles contain, incorporated in their lenses, one set of filters. These help the wearer perceive as clearly as possible the characteristics of two broad approaches to reality, Cartesian and Gestalt. When the wearer turns their attention to the CLD, they are consequently enabled to perceive, secondly, the hermeneutical filters of that discourse, and the degree to which they correspond to one or both of these two broad approaches.

through them must be convincing. But perhaps they don't need to be perfect in every respect. Perhaps if the new perspective they offer enables previously unseen features to be highlighted, articulated and then addressed, then they can be deemed good spectacles. Or, to put it all another way, perhaps there can be a degree of playfulness and exploration about the overall enterprise within this thesis. *If* we held McGilchrist's thesis against the Church Leadership Discourse, what might we see? What might come to light? What might be affirmed, and what might need to be questioned?

Such a way of conceiving my approach, however, could lead directly to the third objection, which might be very strongly felt. "Precisely!", one might say. "This whole primary perspective appears to be deliberately constructed to portray important leadership concepts as unbalanced. The dividing line between the two 'approaches to reality' has been chosen specifically to try and undermine the strengths of objective-based leadership, and to shore up the insecurity of ineffective clerics. This is not a solid argument, but is simply playing with spectacles! It is all an elaborate cover-up for a hermeneutic of suspicion directed towards anything which is effective. Surely it would be more honest to confess that this is what you are up to?"

It is important to take this position seriously. I focus first on the perception that the dividing line between the two approaches to reality has been arbitrarily chosen. I acknowledge that this can indeed seem to be the case, and have repeatedly questioned myself on this point. I respond in two ways. First, *even if this dividing line were entirely arbitrary*, the resultant approach need not be invalidated. There may be many possible ways of constructing two approaches to reality which would still offer fruitful insight, albeit some more than others. A constructed line of division need not imply an invalid approach. However, second, I do not believe that the dividing line between these two specific approaches is arbitrary. How would I argue in support of this position? I began this chapter by referring to a range of sources and types of authority, all delineating a similar perception of two broadly correlated approaches to reality. Relevant authorities include: a disparate range of writers across a range of disciplines; the neurological research indicating brain hemisphere asymmetry; the existence in several languages of distinct terms for 'knowing'; the degree of difference between science and humanities; and indeed my own experience of 'operating in' these modes. These are not the only two possible approaches, but they are certainly not arbitrarily chosen.

Nevertheless I again want to take seriously the final part of this third objection. That is to say that my analysis of the CLD is essentially a covert attempt to evade my own responsibility as a parish priest, namely my duty to initiate effective organisational practices based on well-established contemporary leadership theory. My response to such a charge is clear. My aim in writing this thesis is precisely to examine how well-established are the foundations of that contemporary leadership theory, and especially how compatible or otherwise they are with my responsibility as a parish priest. I am well aware that questioning of the CLD *could* be motivated by a desire to avoid responsibility or reality. I am also well aware that the prescribed methods of the CLD could seem to offer more accountability than will the reconfigured ministerial discourse I will propose in the final section of the thesis. Nevertheless, I appeal, in response to such a charge, to my own experience in the course of this project. That experience has been very much of a heightened awareness of my responsibility as a parish priest, and (what I believe to be) a considerably deepened and enriched engagement with reality, both human and divine.

Having set the background for my approach, it is now time to engage in more detail with the two approaches themselves. In doing so, I will focus primarily on the Cartesian, organising my analysis via three overarching emphases that can be discerned within that perspective. However, in the process of examining the Cartesian I will also frequently highlight the relevant contrasting features of the Gestalt. By the end of the analysis, therefore, a richer appreciation of both perspectives should have been achieved.

2.2   A Cartesian approach: three overarching emphases

The purpose of this second half of the chapter is to build a richer and more detailed conception of what I term a Cartesian approach. As I have already made clear, I will focus almost exclusively on the work of McGilchrist in developing this picture, but will take as axiomatic sufficient correlation between McGilchrist's understanding of the left brain hemisphere, Louth's perception of scientific method, Berry's Rational Mind, and so on. My approach will be to separate out Cartesian characteristics into three overarching emphases. These I describe as: an emphasis on that which can be categorised; an instrumental disposition; and the tendency to optimism and the 'positive'. The three subsections that follow each attend to one of these overarching emphases. Although I intend my separation of the Cartesian approach into three to be helpful, these three emphases are in fact deeply

interlinked, being co-dependent on common instincts and assumptions. At the end of this section, I pay brief attention to one important reflexive question that will have arisen.

1: That which can be categorised

The best starting point for an understanding of a Cartesian perspective is what McGilchrist identifies as the most important 'governing principle' (p. 137) of the left hemisphere. That principle is *division*, by which is meant the capacity and propensity to identify or construct clear boundaries that separate one thing from another. Within this section I begin by expanding on this propensity, before going on to illustrate some of the ways in which it affects the Cartesian approach. In particular, I will explain how division relates to the title I have given to the first overarching characteristic of the Cartesian mode of attention, namely an emphasis on that which can be categorised. Furthermore, in the course of these discussions I will draw out some of the ways in which the Gestalt approach to reality differs from its Cartesian counterpart.

For McGilchrist, for the left hemisphere to operate well, it requires clarity and fixity. Its forte is linear, sequential analysis, and it can do this best when what is being analysed is as unambiguous as possible. As reality often presents itself as complex and blurred, the left hemisphere has an initial task of creating some sense of order in what it encounters[12]. How is such a sense of order to be enabled? Precisely by what the left hemisphere does well: separating out one thing from another, creating a sense of clarity, working out what is broadly the same and what is essentially different.

Two brief examples may help get a sense of this separation and division. First, consider a novice birdwatcher. They may initially find it hard to differentiate between the different birds which they encounter. But a beginners' guide to bird-watching will help them learn how to recognise what distinguishes one species from another. Sometimes this will be obvious, based on striking plumage. At other times careful attention is needed, for instance to a bird's flight pattern. In this example, a Cartesian perspective helps to distinguish between different species, and recognise what exactly divides one category of bird from another. And so this example leads us to the connection between the fundamental Cartesian principle of division and separation, and the general theme of categories which gives this subsection its title.

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[12] This is akin to the common felt need to 'get a handle on' some new situation or topic when we first encounter it.

A second example relates to wind speed. In this context, the Beaufort scale illustrates a different form of Cartesian separation. In the case of birds, the conceptual boundaries between species relate to actual genetic differences. In the case of the Beaufort scale, however, its different categories are entirely constructed, from force 0 (Calm), through force 4 (Moderate breeze), all the way to force 12 (Hurricane). It can be helpful to be able to describe the wind speed using these well-established categories. There is, however, no actual division as such between force 4 and force 5 wind. The boundary between the two is entirely a constructed concept.

These two examples illustrate the connection between Cartesian division and the recognition or construction of categories. The division operates via some form of binary separation, with the framing and answering of either/or questions[13]. What results is at least the appearance of clarity and sharp boundaries, whether or not the boundaries actually exist in any independent sense. The perception of reality yielded by such a Cartesian, left hemisphere perspective can be represented by straight lines and right angles. There is a clear-cut, orthogonal feel to this approach: it can be symbolised by the Cartesian coordinate plane, with X and Y axes drawn on graph paper. It is worth noting that the squares in the metaphorical graph paper may be very small indeed. The analysis offered by this Cartesian perspective can be finely calibrated and give space for detailed attention. Nonetheless, at whatever level, the texture is that of binary separation yielding clarity.

Returning to our novice birdwatcher, as they gain experience they will become frustrated by their beginners' guide. The single picture for each species[14] was initially very helpful in separating one species from another. They soon realise, however, that reality is more complex. Within a species, bird plumage varies – with age, with the season, and even between individuals. A more sophisticated guidebook will take categorisation to a more precise level, but it will never capture all of reality. McGilchrist articulates well the vital underlying issue:

> 'Where one is dealing with individual people or things, when one respects the contingencies of the situation in which they find themselves, and by which they are modified, when one accepts that the things or persons themselves and the context are continually subject to change, no two entities are *ever* equal in any respect… However, once the items are classified and entered into categories, they become equal: at least *from the standpoint of the categoriser* every member of the category can be substituted by any other member of the category… [This] means that, while the

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[13] Did the bird have a long bill? Did any of the waves have white crests?
[14] Or perhaps one for each gender of the species.

individual variations of living things are flattened out, the differences between *categories* become where the inequality resides.' (p. 344, italics in original)

Thus far I have described how a Cartesian perspective brings to reality an instinct to divide and to categorise. But a crucial important point must also be made that involves, as it were, reversing this observation. Yes, this perspective categorises what it pays attention to. But that is not all: also, importantly, *it only pays attention to that which it will be able to categorise*. This Cartesian perspective fundamentally includes a biasing of attention such that only 'that which can be categorised' will be perceived by it.

The Cartesian strategy of division has a further important consequence. This is that its mode of attention is directed towards *parts* of reality, rather than the whole. In its action of division, clarifying by constructing boundaries, it leads to an experience of 'separable, bounded, but essentially fragmented entities, grouped into classes' (p. 31). What this enables is the clarity of a certain type of knowledge, facilitating analysis and more detailed understanding. However, were the Cartesian perspective to operate on its own, such gains would come at price. What falls from vision is the overall context, the unique characteristics of its component parts, the continual flux, the complex network of interdependencies, the sense of betweenness and connectedness of a whole world. To perceive this latter domain requires the Gestalt mode of attention.

Having attended in turn to the separate component parts of the situation, it is not simply that the Cartesian perspective views them in isolation from each other. Rather, it reconstructs a picture of the whole from its category-based analyses of its parts. What happens within this process of reconstruction is very important to appreciate. The reconstruction of the whole from its categorised parts is inevitably a *simplified* map of reality. Why, precisely, must the resultant map be a simplified one? For three reasons. First, the Cartesian perspective on each part will have been simplified, to at least some degree. Each part is seen as a category member, stripped of individual variations. Second, the Cartesian perspective is not attentive to the quality of connections and relationships between individual entities, and so these vital features, that normally offer depth and richness, will be missing from its reconstituted overall map. Third, a Cartesian perspective offers clarity at a point in time, but is poor at registering flux. For these reasons, what the Cartesian perspective reconstructs will be a map of reality that is both simpler and clearer than reality itself (p. 30).

Such a simplified map of reality is certainly open to misuse, as will become clear. It also, however, holds great potential for good. McGilchrist writes very interestingly in an early

chapter about how a well-ordered brain positively benefits from the asymmetry between the modes of the two hemispheres. In particular, he says this:

> 'the difference [between brain hemispheres] seems to have to do with *the necessity of attending to the world in two ways at once…* We need to be able to be open to whatever there is, and yet, at the same time, to provide a 'map', a version of the world which is simpler, clearer and therefore more useful' (p. 30, emphasis added).

In McGilchrist's terms, it is the right brain hemisphere that is primarily 'open to whatever there is', and the left that can offer the helpfully simplified map of the world. Attending primarily to the simplified map may well be sufficient for guiding us through many routine day-to-day choices and habits. At times, it is precisely its simplified nature that yields helpful clarity. But both perspectives are needed. The map on its own is not sufficient. Crucially, without the balancing perspective of the right hemisphere, the left hemisphere all too easily treats the simplified map of reality, which it has constructed itself, *as if the simplified map were itself the reality[15].* This is one of the great dangers of a Cartesian perspective operating on its own.

My final descriptive point at this stage concerns *certainty*. McGilchrist claims that the left hemisphere 'needs certainty' (p. 82), and observes that those things which we have ourselves made are inevitably more certain, because our construction of them means that we know them inside out. Furthermore, that which the left hemisphere constructs, has, by definition, the appearance of *clarity* (since the governing principle of division leads to clear-cut boundaries). It is vital to note, however, that *'clarity implying certainty' is in fact an illusion*. One can be very clear, and thus apparently very certain, but in fact inaccurate, because over-simplified. Says McGilchrist, 'The illusion that, if we can see something clearly, we see it *as it really is*, is hugely seductive.' (p. 181) The strength of this illusion will be illustrated more than once in later chapters.

In this section, then, I have drawn substantially on McGilchrist's work to describe the first overarching attribute of a Cartesian perspective, namely attending to that which can be categorised. Its key features have been identified as:

- a fundamental principle of division and separation;

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[15] If I were sailing single-handed at sea, the simplified map of reality offered by the shipping forecast (e.g. Fair Isle, North-West, Force 4) would offer a helpful initial orientation to the likely wind conditions. Even more important, however, would be ceaseless attentiveness to the constantly shifting direction of the wind, and its fluctuations in strength. If I simply set the sails according to the forecast, and left them like that, it would be foolhardy! Rather, they would need regular adjustment, in line with the changes in the actual wind conditions.

- a consequent focus on what can be categorised;

- a rectilinear, orthogonal texture;

- attention directed towards distinct parts;

- the re-combining of these parts to form what is a simplified map of reality;

- a resultant clarity, which can easily be mistaken for certainty.

It is now time to turn to the second overarching attribute, namely the instrumental disposition of the Cartesian perspective.

2: An instrumental disposition

> [What would an imaginary world dominated by the left hemisphere look like?] The concepts of skill and judgement, once considered the summit of human achievement, but which come only slowly and silently with the business of living, would be discarded in favour of quantifiable and repeatable processes… Skills themselves would be reduced to algorithmic procedures which could be drawn up, and even if necessary regulated, by administrators, [to ensure that] these nebulous 'skills' are being evenly and 'correctly' applied. (p. 429)

When considering the differences between left and right brain hemispheres, one could ask as to the difference of *function* between them. Such a question would be understandable, and its answering would yield some insight. However, a very important point to grasp is that this question is itself posed in the terms of the left hemisphere, and thus according to a Cartesian perspective. One can think of the dominant metaphor of the Cartesian approach as being that of a *machine*. Within such a metaphor, the dominant questions are concerned with *function*, and with *what is done*. These, however, are not the only possible type of question. These types of question, moreover, are unable to capture the important distinctions between hemispheres, and thus between the two broad approaches to reality. Appreciating these distinctions more fully requires attention not just to *what is done*, but also to *the manner in which it is done*. Furthermore, the distinction between hemispheres goes beyond questions of what is *done*. To encapsulate it fully requires attention not just to doing, but to *presence*, to considerations of a *disposition,* and to a *mode of being* in the world. For the right hemisphere and the Gestalt perspective, the disposition can be described in terms of poise, and open attentiveness to what is. For the Cartesian perspective, I would summarise the disposition as being *instrumental*. By this I intend two distinct but related emphases, on which I will enlarge within this section. The first emphasis is a focus on *function*, conceived from a fairly mechanical perspective. A Cartesian perspective is best at appreciating functional aspects of reality, but it also tends to reinterpret less mechanical processes in functional terms. The second emphasis is that a Cartesian perspective operates *with an end in mind*. It has a

teleological disposition. Its engagement with reality is normally in order to change it. The functional and teleological together form what I term *'an instrumental disposition',* which is my second overarching attribute of a Cartesian perspective.

The Cartesian focus on pseudo-mechanical function is in essence a corollary of the characteristics I described in the previous subsection. Given its preference for clear-cut binary division, leading it to focus attention on what can be quantified, it is hardly surprising that its perception is biased towards that which can be conceived in terms of functionality. Whereas the right hemisphere is interested in the personal, the living, and especially the human, the left hemisphere has a particular affinity for 'tools, man-made things, mechanisms and whatever is not alive' (p. 55). In McGilchrist's concluding chapter he imagines the characteristics of a world in which the left hemisphere has become preeminent:

> 'Increasingly the living would be modelled on the mechanical.… When we deal with a machine, there are three things we want to know: how much it can do, how fast it can do it, and with what degree of precision. These qualities summarise what distinguishes a good machine from a bad one: it is more productive, faster and more precise than a less good one. However, changes in scale, speed and precision in the real world all change the quality of the experience, and the ways in which we interact with one another… In human affairs, increasing the amount or extent of something, or the speed with which something happens, or the inflexible precision with which it is conceived or applied, can actually destroy. But since the left hemisphere is the hemisphere of What, quantity would be the only criterion that it would understand. The right hemisphere's appreciation of How (quality) would be lost. As a result considerations of quantity might come actually to replace considerations of quality altogether' (p. 430, emphasis added).

Such an emphasis on the functional, and on what can be measured and quantified, also leads to a mechanical re-conception of human skill, wisdom and experience. As the quote at the beginning of this section indicated, a Cartesian perspective on such human attainments tends to focus on that which can be captured and routinised as a repeatable process, as a method which can be made explicit. Thus McGilchrist cites Giddens's reference to 'disembedding mechanisms', via which 'expert' systems are promulgated as an improvement on both the subtleties of human skill and also the particularities of local context. Such 'expert' systems tend to take the form of 'a centralised process dependent on rules' (p. 390, citing Giddens, 1991). Such mechanical reduction makes possible straightforward transmissibility of procedure. As context is held to be of little value, a function that 'works' in one place can safely be assumed to be of general relevance, and therefore transferable elsewhere.

Mention of 'a function that "works"' leads straightforwardly to the second emphasis within this section, namely a teleological disposition. Machines do not just operate for the joy of it. Rather, they are operated in order to achieve specific ends, and in order to do so as productively and effectively as possible. Such a teleological, instrumental, focus is an important characteristic of a Cartesian perspective, and of the left brain hemisphere. It is widely known that the left hemisphere is primarily responsible for the actions of the right hand, and vice versa[16]. According to McGilchrist, it is no coincidence that our right hands, which are our supreme tools of grasping and manipulation, are under the control of the left hemisphere. For this hemisphere always has an end in view. Its engagement with the world, its disposition towards the world, 'is one of reaching out to grasp, and therefore to *use'*. By contrast, that of the right hemisphere 'appears to be one of reaching out – just that. Without purpose.' (p. 127)

Within the previous subsection I described *clarity* as being one of the priorities of the left hemisphere, and one of the consequences of its mode of operation. An important point was to emphasise that the apparent certainty offered by such clarity can be *illusory*. The left hemisphere can be deceived by its own mode of operation. A parallel observation applies when considering its instrumental disposition. The left hemisphere 'believes it is the one that makes things happen, even makes things live. But nothing in us, actively or positively, makes things live – all we can do is permit, or not permit, life, which already exists.' (p. 230) The left hemisphere does provide will to action, and the motive power for much human making. However, there are things which the left hemisphere believes it has created or made happen, when in fact it has simply managed not to get in the way too much.

Moreover, the mode of being of the left hemisphere is to actively pursue what seems to be of value, and especially that which might be instrumentally useful. However, there are important qualities which not only cannot be grasped by wilful pursuit, but for which the attempts to harness them simply drives them further away. McGilchrist cites Jon Elster here, in whose book *Sour Grapes : Studies in the Subversion of Rationality* (Elster, 1983) he mentions among such values wisdom, humility, virtue, courage, love, sympathy, faith and understanding. 'If pursued for their utility, they vanish into nothing.' (McGilchrist, p. 161).

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[16] McGilchrist registers that, in the case of left-handed people, it is not normally simply a case of the 'standard pattern' of brain hemispheres being inverted (see further pp. 11-13).

As I have sketched above, the Cartesian focus on that which can be quantified and categorised results in an instrumental disposition towards the world. In such a mode of being, the preference is towards engaging with the mechanical, or reconceiving the natural in functional or mechanistic terms. Subtlety and complexity, especially involving the tacit dimension, are replaced by explicit method and procedure, which are seen as generically transferable. Moreover, all this is for a purpose. A Cartesian perspective has a teleological momentum, seeking to grasp in order to use for its own ends. Such are some of the contours within my second overarching attribute of a Cartesian perspective, an instrumental disposition. The move, now, to introducing the third overarching attribute is perhaps less seamless than the previous transition. But the left hemisphere's conception of reality in terms of problems which it may be able to solve gives it a sense of direction and progress which underpin this third emphasis, to which I now turn.

3: Optimism and the 'positive'

I have used the term 'hermeneutical filter' as a sort of common denominator between the effect of discourses on the one hand, and the effect of particular approaches to reality on the other. All three of the overarching attributes of a Cartesian perspective described within this chapter can be conceived in the terms of the metaphor of a hermeneutical filter. The 'feel' of the filtering on this third attribute is, however, rather different from that of the first two. What is 'highlighted' here is 'positive' affect. What is 'hidden', displaced to the background or out of view, is anything that contradicts or threatens the desired mood of upbeat, forward-moving optimism. 'The emphasis on "light" in "Enlightenment" suggests not just clarity and precision, but of course the banishment of the darker, more "negative" emotions' (McGilchrist, p. 337).

Thus, for instance, King Lear was for 150 years from 1681 performed in a revised version with a happy ending by Nahum Tate (p. 337). The 16th century, by contrast, was a period in which McGilchrist diagnoses a better relationship between brain hemispheres (of which see more in the next section), and thus a greater influence from the right hemisphere. One consequence or sign of this is that at this time, a melancholic disposition was commonly viewed approvingly, and associated with wit, intelligence and wisdom (p. 305). One manifestation of such respect for melancholy was the introduction, in the sphere of music, of highly expressive melodic lines, including repeated suspensions, evoking and portraying a deep sense of longing.

How can we best make sense of this distinction between brain hemispheres? It is perhaps more straightforward to comment on the right hemisphere's ease with the 'negative'. This can be attributed to two primary factors. First, in contrast to the utilitarian disposition of the left,

the primary mode of attention of the right hemisphere is of an open attentiveness to what is. Its desire, so to speak, is to see things as they are, and in particular to be sensitive to the personal. Thus affect or emotion that could be interpreted as 'negative' is still very much of interest to the right hemisphere. Secondly, in contrast to the explicit univalent clarity of the left hemisphere, the right is at ease with ambiguity, paradox, and the multivalent resonance of metaphor. It appreciates depth. Not only do the more negative emotions contribute to depth and authenticity. In a paradoxical way (accessible to the right hemisphere), their presence does not rule out the simultaneous presence of the 'positive'. Furthermore, McGilchrist points out that

> 'The more we are aware of and empathically connected to whatever it is that exists apart from ourselves, the more we are likely to suffer… Perhaps to feel at all is inevitably to suffer… This is just one reason to doubt the easy equation between pleasure and happiness, on the one hand, and 'the good', on the other.' (p. 85)

Turning to the link between the left hemisphere and an optimistic outlook, it is worth emphasising that there is clinical evidence pointing to such a connection. A range of conditions in which the right hemisphere is more or less inactive has led to 'naïvely optimistic forecasting of outcomes… view[ing] pictures more positively… Exhibit[ing] a surprising joviality (at the same time complaining of a fierce headache)'. Tellingly, the left hemisphere on its own 'is always a winner: winning is associated with activation of the left amygdala, losing with right amygdala activation' (p. 85). This sense of winning may also be an interpretive key for making sense of the left hemisphere's prioritisation of the positive. When the left hemisphere is using its strengths at its best, it will be making progress through clear analysis, and the solution of genuine problems. It will be operating within a sphere in which it exercises significant control, and such factors combined can indeed yield a sensation appropriately similar to winning. When problems are solved, and clarity is genuine, 'positive' emotions can appropriately be both present and enjoyed.

Let me now outline three further consequences of this bias towards the positive. The first of these is a strong preference for activity over seeming passivity. This characteristic can clearly be seen to arise in part from the left hemisphere's instrumental disposition. But its desire for positive emotion also sheds important light on what is going on. The left hemisphere's preference is for clarity and fixity, not least in order to have a sense of control. Such a sense can be both demonstrated and reinforced by preference for action, with resultant change giving a sense of winning and seeming to confirm the importance of the left hemisphere's approach and indeed existence. From a Cartesian perspective there can seem to be a clear

dichotomy between activity (or proactivity in contemporary parlance) and passivity, with the latter clearly both weaker and inferior. From this viewpoint, passivity is 'a failure of instrumentality' and thus 'loss of control, loss of self-determination': a letting go of much that is central to a Cartesian perspective. Without activity, the left hemisphere fears that it will have nothing to show for itself, no proof of its worth. The Gestalt perspective, however, understands that there can be 'a wise passivity that enables things to come about less by what is done than by what is *not* done, that opens up possibility where activity closes it down'. (p. 174, italics in original). This perspective rejects the straight dichotomy, the binary division, between activity and passivity. Its disposition of poised and engaged attentiveness is not accurately described simply as passive. Rather, it is respectfully holds a space, ready for whatever action may eventually be appropriate, whoever the appropriate actor might turn out to be.

Secondly, the bias towards the straightforwardly positive easily leads to a thirst for novelty and stimulation. The preference for activity just mentioned contributes to this propensity, feeding the sense of satisfaction arising from creating change. The flipside of this, however, can easily be devitalisation. Whereas the right hemisphere can perceive value and receive nourishment from the depth, interconnectedness and beauty of what is, such considerations lie beyond the domain of the left hemisphere. A Cartesian perspective thirsts for the new and the different.

Third, then, what are we to make of this propensity? The positive and optimistic outlook of a Cartesian perspective is not without benefit. When it acts for change with wisdom, its forward-looking initiative can yield much good. For this to be the case, however, the left hemisphere must be operating in an appropriate relationship with the right, as the next section describes. Without such a context, as the clinical evidence mentioned above demonstrates, the optimism of the Cartesian perspective tips over into being 'unrealistic about its shortcomings'. Because of its broader field of view, and its lack of bias towards the positive, the right hemisphere is, by contrast, 'more realistic about how it stands in relation to the world at large, less grandiose, [and] more self-aware' (p. 84).

This third overarching attribute of a Cartesian perspective, then, consists of a hiding from that which is not obviously positive, and a biasing of attention and energy towards what is most likely to yield 'positive' feedback. This emphasis in part arises from the fundamentally instrumental disposition of this perspective, coupled with its desire for control. It can seem less straightforward to grasp than the two previous overarching attributes. Indeed, in my

description of this characteristic, I have resorted more frequently to anthropomorphism. But perhaps this is significant. The Cartesian perspective's preference for that which can be categorised, and also its instrumental disposition, themselves lie within the functional domain which it perceives most clearly. By contrast, the optimism and preference for the positive under discussion here are much more 'personal' than 'mechanical' characteristics. But perhaps it is not such a bad thing for both hemispheres of the brain, and both of the broad modes of attention to reality, to include personal as well as mechanical attributes.

Is this framework not self-defeating?

Before turning to anticipate the next section of the thesis, one further point should be addressed. On the one hand, a central contention of this thesis is that much contemporary discourse is over-reliant on a Cartesian perspective, with its fundamental governing principle of constructing boundaries between entities. On the other hand, the framework which I have set out in this chapter has been constructed in precisely such a Cartesian manner, with the construction of a clear division between one approach to reality and another. Is not this rather self-defeating, or at least ironic? This is an important issue, and I respond to it in two stages. First, this thesis unashamedly uses a lot of Cartesian analysis, not least within the construction of its primary critical framework. *It is vital to be clear that I am not simply saying that Cartesian is bad!* I hope that the thesis will illustrate much constructive and appropriate use of Cartesian clarity[17]. Second, however, what is bad is when a Cartesian approach is used in an unbalanced way, and without recognition of its limitations. No doubt my own practice will fall short to some degree of the ideal. Nevertheless, I am very clear that the Cartesian analysis within this thesis, not least the Cartesian aspects of the framework itself, should be used as a servant of a broader perspective. I emphasise, therefore, that the critical framework consists not just of the separation between Cartesian and Gestalt (a Cartesian move). It also comprises an understanding of the mutual interdependence between Gestalt and Cartesian. This is a much more Gestalt consideration. An initial orientation to that mutual interdependence can be offered by a Cartesian simplified map of reality, but a fuller appreciation of its dynamics, tensions and subtleties grows with experience over time. Overall, this critical framework does indeed depend heavily on a classic Cartesian separation of one thing from another. The *purpose* of that separation, however, is precisely to help us attend to the depth, richness and

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[17] Indeed, more than once I will demonstrate that it is a lack of Cartesian clarity that has led to shortcomings within the CLD.

complexity of reality itself, rather than to substitute for it a simplified, category-based representation.

Conclusion: Summary of Part A and Approach for Part B

In the first chapter I put the case, first, for the existence of a significant new broad strand of ministerial literature, and, second, that this can appropriately be conceived as a discourse. In discussing the attributes of discourses in general, I outlined how the 'hermeneutical filters' of any discourse serve to shape the perspective of the person using the discourse. Through highlighting some aspects of reality, hiding or de-emphasising others, and offering an interpretive framework, discourses can significantly affect how we attend to reality. They can shape what we perceive and how we perceive it, what we deem worth desiring, and what we understand to be an appropriate path towards fulfilling those desires. Importantly, the working of a discourse is itself often hidden. It is very easy to 'live within' the perspective of a discourse, and thus not be aware of the degree of its influence. In attending to the Church Leadership Discourse (the main focus of this thesis), a primary task is therefore to bring to consciousness the ways in which this discourse influences how those who use it approach reality.

How can this bringing to consciousness be achieved? In this thesis, I will achieve it by holding up against the CLD the two broad ways of approaching reality which I have constructed and described within this chapter. Terming these the Cartesian and the Gestalt, I have fleshed out in some detail what each approach can do very well, and what are its limitations. In doing so, I have drawn extensively on two related pairs of contrasts: the contrasting approaches of the sciences and the humanities, and the different preferences of the left and right brain hemispheres. In particular, I have proposed three overarching attributes of the Cartesian approach under which its more detailed characteristics can be summarised. The first overarching attribute is a biasing of attention towards *that which can be categorised*, arising from its particular facility with binary, either/or analysis. The second is an *instrumental disposition*, both in the sense of conceiving reality in a mechanical and functional way, and also in its teleological emphasis, always having an end in mind. The third overarching attribute is its biasing towards '*the positive'*, including preferences for activity, novelty and stimulation. In the course of describing the Cartesian approach, I have also delineated the contrasting characteristics of its counterpart, the Gestalt. This latter, the Gestalt, attends more (as its name suggests) to a holistic overview, rather than focus on isolated detail. It is more attuned

to questions of depth, context and betweenness than is the Cartesian. Ambiguity and paradox also lie within its domain. Whereas the Cartesian is oriented towards instrumentality, and changing things for a purpose, the default stance of the Gestalt is closer to contemplation of the current state of what lies before it. Importantly, as well as considering each approach separately, I have also indicated what a proper ordering of the relationship between the approaches should look like. Both approaches have vital and distinctive contributions to make. The fruit of clear Cartesian analysis, however, should always be handed over to the richer and broader perspective of the Gestalt, for discernment and integration as appropriate. More concisely, the role of the Cartesian should always be subordinate to that of the Gestalt.

These first two chapters, together forming Part A of the thesis, combine to set up the detailed analysis of the CLD which will form the central section of the thesis. How will this central section, Part B, proceed? Its first three chapters, chapters 3 to 5, each focus on one strand of emphasis within the CLD. Chapter 3 attends to the statistic-focused rationality which undergirds much of its logic. Chapter 4 examines the primary method recommended in the CLD: leading change via vision and objectives. Chapter 5 explores arguably the primary metaphor within the CLD, that of a planned journey. Chapter 6, the final chapter of Part B, takes a different perspective. It asks whether the CLD's conception of the church itself is primarily Cartesian. Overall, the primary question explored in Part B is the degree to which the CLD is biased towards a Cartesian perspective. It is to this consideration that we now turn.

PART B –THE CHURCH LEADERSHIP DISCOURSE IN THE LIGHT OF THE HEURISTIC FRAMEWORK

Chapter 3 – Statistic-focused rationality

Introduction

This chapter attends to one important area of the CLD, which I term statistic-focused rationality. In one sense, this area of the CLD is quite distinctive from other parts of the literature, with its particular statistical focus. My reason for focusing on it, however, is that it makes more explicit a mode of reasoning that underpins much of the rest of the literature. I have chosen to analyse this area of the CLD via one representative text (a book by Bob Jackson), and one area of recent research within the Church of England. This latter is the Church of England's recent (2011-2013) Church Growth Research programme, looking for causal factors in numerical church growth. I focus in particular on the two strands of this programme led by Professor David Voas. The substantial common ground in the approach between these two works illustrates well the statistic-focused rationality that characterises this area of the CLD. The first main part of the chapter comprises a close reading of these two areas, looking in particular for ways in which a Cartesian approach is manifest within these works. The second main section sits at a little more distance from these works, but draws in perspectives from both philosophy and theology to enable a richer critique of the themes identified in the first section. Within the second section I also introduce some important background terms and themes to which I will return throughout this central section of the thesis.

3.1   Reading CLD literature

Jackson: *Hope for the Church; Contemporary Strategies for Growth* (2002)

The first focus of my attention is a book by Bob Jackson. A former Government Economic Adviser, his ordained ministry included a national role as 'research missioner' before five years as Archdeacon of Walsall and Bishop's Growth Officer for the Diocese of Lichfield. He retired in 2009 from his role as Archdeacon in order to concentrate on church growth consultancy. In one sense, Jackson's work is not central within the church leadership discourse as I have

defined it, not least because his primary focus is on growth rather than leadership per se[1]. I would, however, describe his approach as foundational to many of the other writers within the CLD. My judgement is that his implicit approach to reality, including his views on ecclesiology and on causality, combine to form a sort of strategic pragmatism shared by many writers within the discourse.

Hope for the Church is a work that takes numbers seriously. On the one hand, it presents openly a range of statistics indicating decline in the Church of England on a range of fronts. On the other, it explores a wide variety of characteristics of churches and clergy, seeking to use the statistics as a key tool for discerning appropriate action to counter the decline. To what extent, then, can we discern a bias towards the Cartesian within this work? The book can be described as optimistic overall, in that Jackson contends that there are clear actions to be taken which will reverse decline and enable growth. Nevertheless, it is not this third overarching Cartesian emphasis[2] which is most obvious within his work. The second emphasis, an instrumental disposition, is manifest, but I will discuss this primarily in conjunction with the work of Voas, within the next subsection. What is most prominent, rather, is the first overarching Cartesian characteristic, a bias towards that which can be categorised. It is this in particular on which I will focus in this section, noting not only its manifestations within his work, but also something of its impact, and its relation to the type of rationality he adopts. In order to focus and ground my comments, I will give particular attention to one piece of analysis offered by Jackson, in which he argues for a correlation between the age of Church of England incumbents and the attendance trends of their churches. I include here his Figure 14.2 for clarity:

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[1] Nevertheless, Jackson does agree with the widespread view that 'leadership is the single most important factor in determining the effectiveness of local churches', (Jackson, 2002, pp. 41-42).
[2] The reader may remember that, within section 2.2, I drew out three overarching characteristics of a Cartesian approach: an emphasis on that which can be categorised; an instrumental disposition; and a bias towards optimism and the positive.

Figure 14.2 Attendance growth and decline in Church of England churches, 1989–98, by age of incumbent in 1998
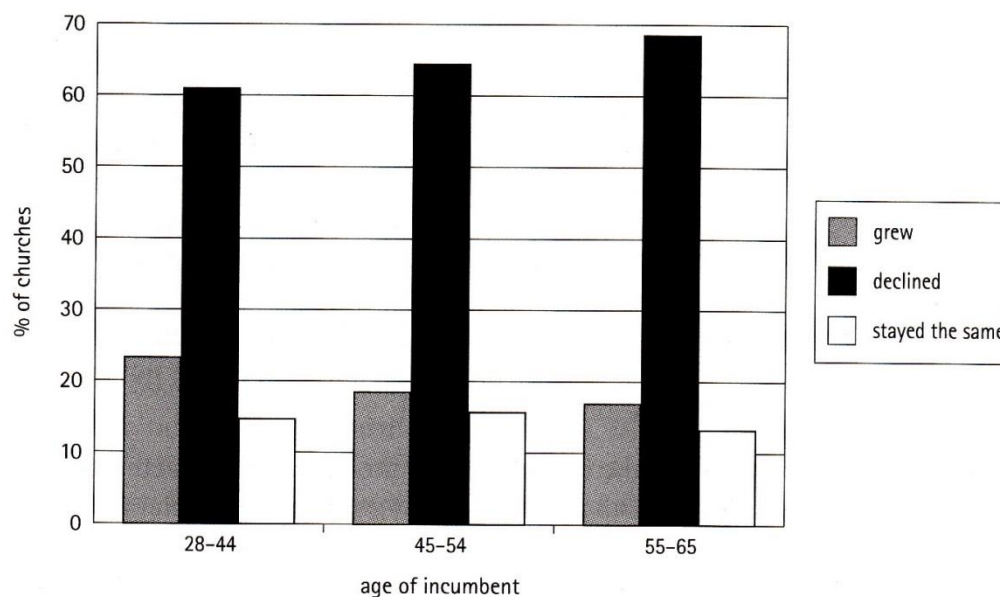
159

Chart comparing church attendance change against age of incumbent.

Figure 14.2 in Hope for the Church *(Jackson, 2002, p. 159)*

Hope for the Church (2002) includes thirty-four figures (such as this one), nine tables, and two maps showing attendance variation across dioceses. With just three exceptions[3], all of the tables, maps and figures focus on church attendance statistics. Each chart holds such statistics against another 'variable'. In nearly every case, that variable can either straightforwardly be quantified (e.g. length of incumbency), or is the answer to a binary question (e.g. is a youth worker employed?)[4]. The charts and figures are not the only aspect of the book. Jackson does include discussion of a broad range of issues at local, diocesan and national level. Nevertheless, his approach is strongly biased towards the quantifiable, and that which can straightforwardly be categorised.

In the previous chapter, *division* was identified as probably the most influential principle within a Cartesian perspective. This is manifest not only in identifying existing genuine distinctions

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[3] The exceptions relate to: questionnaire answers relating to 'The Soul of Britain' survey (p. 84); age profile of recommended ordination candidates, 2000 (p. 158); 'Seven marks of a healthy church' (p. 182).

[4] The single exception is that of the 'setting' of a parish, where three categories are offered: UPA; urban and suburban; rural.

between entities, but also in constructing clear boundaries between one thing and another. In the context of *Hope for the Church*, and even within the broad arena of the quantifiable, it is striking how frequently Jackson's presentation of statistics involves him in *constructing category boundaries*, in line with a Cartesian approach. For instance, many of the other statistical charts share with this one the simple separation of churches into three categories: those which 'grew', those which 'declined', and those which 'stayed the same'. Jackson makes explicit where he has decided to place the boundaries between these categories. To count as 'staying the same', a church's usual Sunday attendance in 1998 needs to be within 10% of what it was in 1989. The categories of growing and declining are, equivalently, defined in terms of a change of more than 10% in usual Sunday attendance over the same period. These may well be reasonable decisions. Their purpose, presumably, is to enable a helpful clarity. I highlight three things. First, the contingent and constructed nature of these boundaries: other arrangements would have been possible. Second, although in many cases this construction of categories may lead to reasonable descriptions of individual parishes, it is easy to imagine situations where the reverse is true. For instance, consider a case where church attendance fell from 100 to 70, 9 years ago, perhaps during a long vacancy. Over the past eight years it has grown steadily, from 70 to 88, an encouraging increase of 25%. The comparison with the ten-year figure, however, is a decrease of 12%, and thus this steadily growing church is categorised as declining. Third, the inevitable consequence of the categorisation is a map of reality that is substantially simplified. The simplification does yield an impression of clarity. The clarity certainly comes at the cost of nuancing, and in some cases, at the cost of accuracy. It is one small but significant example of a Cartesian construction of a simplified map of reality.

The simplification involved in category construction is even more evident when we consider the way in which Jackson attends to clergy age. I suggest that a Cartesian desire for the clarity of binary options, rather than for more nuanced questions of degree, lies behind Jackson's decision to construct just three age categories for clergy. For, if there are just three categories, it is almost inevitable that one of them will clearly be the 'best' one (or, failing that, that one is the 'worst'). One might term this *trifurcation in order to dichotomise.* In his comments on Figure 14.2 (reproduced above), Jackson's narrative of interpretation is essentially binary:

> 'Figure 14.2 shows that… older incumbents are more likely to be associated with decline and less likely to be associated with growth… Attendance growth is clearly more likely for the younger clergy and decline for the older… [This evidence indicates] the urgent need to seek younger candidates for ordination as a matter of policy' (p. 159).

Jackson emphasises the *difference between* categories, in a binary manner, rather than *questions of degree*. Someone reading these words before scrutinising the details of the chart might be surprised to learn that the proportion of older incumbents associated with growing churches was as high as 17%, and the proportion of younger incumbents as little as 24%. Conversely Jackson's comment would not necessarily lead a reader to expect that as many as 61% of the youngest category of clergy have declining churches. If Jackson had, for instance, instead constructed six evenly spread age categories, the 'message' might well not have been so clear cut[5]. It might, however, have been both more accurate and more useful. The particular construction of age categories, therefore, for a range of reasons, is further evidence of a Cartesian-style approach, using a substantially simplified map of reality.

Furthermore, an even more fundamental simplification must be registered with this particular chart. This simplification relates to precisely which 'age' is being linked with the previous 10 years of attendance statistics. That age is the age, at the end of the decade, of the person *who was incumbent at the end of the decade*. In those places where the same person was incumbent for most or all of the preceding 10 years, this may often be reasonable[6]. However, Jackson tells us that the average length of incumbency at the time was between six and seven years (p. 160). At any given point in time, across all parishes, the average length of time that the current incumbent has been in post will be approximately half of the average length of incumbency. At that time, that figure would therefore have been less than four years. For the chart in question, therefore, the 'age' being linked to the attendance statistics will, in more than half the cases, be of an incumbent who has been present for less than half of the decade in question. Moreover, by definition, the very youngest incumbents are likely to have been in post for the shortest periods of time. Their age, consequently, is being correlated to attendance statistics under their predecessor, for better or for worse. No doubt the compilation of a more accurate analysis would be significantly more complex. Nevertheless, Jackson's decision to base this significant argument on such an accumulation of simplifications is surely a striking example of a Cartesian simplified map of reality being mistaken for reality itself[7].

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[5] Jackson makes no comment as to the imbalance between the ranges of his chosen categories: 17, 10 and 11 years respectively.

[6] But note that in the imagined parish from two paragraphs back, the age bracket of the current incumbent, whatever that is, will be linked to a 'declining' parish, in spite of the 25% growth during their tenure to date.

[7] Why do I describe this argument as 'significant'? Partly because Jackson talks of the urgent need to ordain younger candidates as a matter of policy. Partly because, at the end of this chapter (in a section

A Cartesian approach is strong at applying detailed analytical focus to distinct entities. It is much weaker at perceiving and exploring interrelatedness between them. This is the case even within its own simplified map of reality, never mind within reality itself.   This characteristic of a Cartesian approach is very evident right throughout this book. 'Factor' after 'factor' is singled out for logical analysis *on its own*. Furthermore, *precisely the same growth or decline* in any given church's attendance is causally linked first to one such 'factor', and then to another.   But there is little if any attempt to acknowledge, explore or even look at any relationship between these 'factors'. Rather, the reader is presented with multiple, distinct, unconnected claims of causal relationship. One specific example where Jackson's commentary suggests a link, but he fails to follow it up, relates to larger churches. As we have seen, Jackson argues strongly that younger clergy are more likely to be associated with growing churches (p. 159). He also contends that growth is much less prevalent in larger churches than in smaller (pp. 108-131). There is, however, no mention of the possibility that younger clergy are less likely to be responsible for larger churches - or indeed for other churches perceived as challenging or difficult in other ways.

This leads us to the oft-made, but vital, point of the difference between statistical correlation and causality. One could produce a chart very similar to Figure 14.2 that, instead, compared church growth or decline with how many slices of toast the clergy ate each week. Divide the toast-eating figure into three categories, and a clear narrative will suggest itself. But there is unlikely to be a causal link. I suggest that the 'factors' that Jackson chooses for statistical analysis vary considerably in the likelihood of there being a reasonably direct causal link.

The 'factors' that he does choose, as we have seen, are heavily weighted towards the quantifiable, or at least that which can be straightforwardly categorised. This is entirely in line with a Cartesian approach. A range of 'softer' attributes appear to have been entirely filtered out from his consideration, or perhaps even perception[8].   For instance, again, the consideration of clergy age does not register the possibility of discernment and good judgement increasing with age, or wisdom growing with experience. Moreover, he does not mention the possibility that the drive and enthusiasm often linked with youth might ever benefit from tempering.

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entitled 'Supporting the clergy'), Jackson proposes eight 'practical actions for a parish church'. The first of these, quite simply, is 'Appoint a young incumbent to your parish.'

[8] I use the term 'softer' not only to include more pastoral attributes, but also, more broadly, to include all that cannot easily be categorised.

A particularly striking example of some 'soft' characteristics appearing invisible to Jackson can be seen in his chapter section entitled 'Clergy characteristics matter', in which he argues that '*the personal characteristics of the incumbent* are important determinants of the direction of church life' (pp. 159-161, emphasis added). A typical churchgoer would very probably agree with this statement. However, if you went on to ask *which* personal characteristics they especially value, I'm not convinced they would suggest the three 'characteristics' which Jackson lists. Some possible responses from a churchgoer might include warmth, humanity, understanding, wisdom, approachability, godliness, energy, kindness. Jackson lists: their age; the length of their incumbency; and their ability to avoid pastoral or personal breakdown. Describing these three entities as 'the personal characteristics of the incumbent' strikes me, overall, as a remarkably Cartesian claim.   It is the first two of these 'characteristics' that fit most obviously into a Cartesian perspective, being easily measured and categorised. The 'ability to avoid pastoral or personal breakdown' appears to be of a different order.

However, Jackson's treatment of this last 'characteristic' deserves particular attention. He includes it because of the experience of two dioceses. One diocese discovered, not surprisingly, that when there was a large fall in attendance in a given parish, this was nearly always linked to such a breakdown. The other, seeking to understand its relatively good attendance trends, realised that it had had a period with hardly any pastoral or personal breakdowns amongst its clergy, and thus 'virtually no parishes with steep or sudden attendance falls' (p. 161). Jackson thus concludes that the 'ability to avoid' such breakdowns is an important 'clergy characteristic'. Having categorised it in this way, his rationality permits him to treat this as '[a] final piece of evidence for the importance of the personal characteristics of the clergy in determining growth and decline' (p. 160). What I find remarkable is that, just *two sentences later*, in a new section headed 'Recruitment, selection and training', Jackson argues that 'the old pastoral model whereby clergy are selected on the basis of pastoral sensitivity rather than gospel enthusiasm may need an overhaul'. Does 'pastoral sensitivity' really have nothing to do with the 'avoidance of breakdown' which he has just highlighted as (implicitly) one of the top three clergy characteristics? How can this apparent self-contradiction be explained? McGilchrist's perspective suggests an explanation as follows. Jackson appears to treat the 'avoidance of breakdown' as a clear-cut, either/or, statistical phenomenon, thus accessible to and prioritised by the left hemisphere. The phrase 'pastoral sensitivity', however, is much more vague, unquantifiable and ambiguous. It certainly lacks explicit instrumentality, and resonates much more with the right hemisphere. If, in line with my overall hypothesis, Jackson is indeed operating substantially in Cartesian, left

hemisphere mode, the former ('avoidance of breakdown') will be visible and prioritised, but the latter ('pastoral sensitivity') can happily be sidelined - even if, in fact, they have much in common.

Jackson, then, has a strong bias towards attending to the measurable. I conclude this subsection by drawing attention to two consequences of this bias. The first relates to his consideration of 'the congregation'. This includes attention being paid to the range of its ethnicity, to the age of its members, the number of its children and, especially, to its total size. What Jackson's approach does not enable is any conception of its vitality, humanity, humility, or love, or the quality of the relationships within it. His questions are unable to ascertain whether there are even a few individuals with the pastoral sensitivity to offer appropriate welcome to a wide range of visitors and newcomers[9]. Might it be that these considerations are even more important than at least some of the 'factors' to which he attends?

The second consequence of this category-based approach, follows on from the invisibility of genuinely personal attributes, for instance of the clergy. That consequence is the strong impression that the only thing that matters is which categories the incumbent falls into. Thus, within any given category, any two members are treated as effectively interchangeable. Difference *between* categories is constructed as much more significant than variation in tone, personality, character, humanity or wisdom *within* any given category. The particular, unique, personhood of clergy and congregation members has been filtered out of consideration. Their humanity has become hidden.

I have drawn attention to several ways in which a Cartesian approach can be discerned within Jackson's work. In some cases, attending to the details of that approach has highlighted weaknesses within it. Furthermore, his neglect of more Gestalt features has been seen to be an impoverishment. Nevertheless, one interesting and unexpected point has emerged from the study thus far. Particularly when analysing the detail of the 'clergy age' 'factor', the weakness of Jackson's argument arises from *insufficient* Cartesian rigour. Had he harnessed the firepower of a Cartesian approach *in self-examination* of what he was proposing, Jackson would have come to see the weak foundations of this chart. What I have aimed to do in this

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[9] Jackson's Chapter 9, however, is devoted to the theme of 'Welcoming all'. The majority of the chapter is devoted to discussing various structural choices, and recommending a parish assembles 'some facts and figures' (p. 89). However, the final section of the chapter is entitled 'Hearts matter more the structures', within which Jackson does say that, 'as in the whole of church life, it is the attitude of the heart that matters most' (p. 93).

section, therefore, is to use *more* Cartesian analysis than Jackson, rather than less. Moreover, that Cartesian logic has been deployed in two specific ways: interrogating the foundations of other Cartesian analysis, and pointing towards more Gestalt considerations.

Up to this point, my primary attention has been on the first overarching characteristic of a Cartesian approach. I will save for now my examination of the second such characteristic, an emphasis on instrumentality. This I will consider in conjunction with a further piece of work that can be described as based upon statistic-focused rationality, to which work I now turn.

Church of England Church Growth Research Programme

The second area of statistic-focused work is a part of the Church of England's 2011-13 Church Growth Research Programme[10]. This programme is conceived as a 'comprehensive study of the causes of church growth'. The primary stated reason for this initiative is to 'advise decision-makers at every level of the Church, and indeed other bodies who wish to allocate funds effectively to support the work of the Church of England'[11]. This rationale, coupled with the title of the final summary report ("From anecdote to evidence : findings from the church growth research programme 2011-2013," 2014), makes clear that this research was commissioned (by the Church Commissioners) in the hope and expectation of identifying clear and dependable causal factors that consistently lie behind numerical church growth.

The overall research programme had three strands, of which this thesis concentrates on the first two, 'Data Analysis' and 'Church Profiling'. The same research team, led by Professor David Voas[12], considered both these strands in conjunction. The Data Analysis strand concentrated on learning more from data that the Church already holds, primarily through annual parish returns. The Church Profiling research was centred around a 129-part questionnaire, completed by around 1700 clergy/churches (including myself). Acknowledging that existing data did 'not cover all the relevant factors related to church growth', this questionnaire was designed to 'collect some rich data' which would then be analysed for correlation to numerical growth. Importantly, responses from particular parishes to this

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[10] See http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/ accessed September 1, 2014 10:09 AM

[11] Taken from http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/about_the_programme accessed June 17, 2014 10:48 AM

[12] 'Professor of Population Studies in the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) at the University of Essex. David is recognised as a leading quantitative social scientist, an influential sociologist of religion, and the country's foremost scholar in the quantitative study of religion.'
http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/university_of_essex referenced June 17, 2014 11:06 AM

Church Profiling strand, including 'subjective', or 'self-reported' growth, were correlated for comparison with the objective data held for the same parishes[13].

In the analysis of this research that follows, it is important to highlight the distinction between three discrete texts: the questionnaire; the detailed report compiled by the researchers for these two strands[14]; and the summary report relating to all three strands. As will become clear, the relationship between these three texts is itself of considerable interest. I include within the analysis a degree of comparing and contrasting the approach of this research with that of Jackson. I attend to each of the three texts in turn, beginning with the questionnaire.

Church Growth Research Questionnaire

Six main points are important to make regarding this questionnaire. First, most broadly, the overall feel and texture of the approach has much in common with Jackson's work. A high proportion of the questions look for clear-cut answers, and the whole research is explicitly designed towards identifying causal factors for numerical growth. Secondly, however, there are significant ways in which this questionnaire feels more nuanced. In part, this is because the final question of each section (four questions in total) allows for free-form 'additional comments'. And in part, this is because of the high proportion of questions which have multiple options for answers, rather than just two[15]. Nevertheless, even the seven-point spread isn't always sufficient to capture reality truthfully. For instance, question 4 appears to assume that contemporary and traditional music will not both feature in the same service.

Third, there are a significant number of instances where reality is rather more complicated than is allowed for by the question and the response options offered. One aspect of a complication is variability between cases. For instance, question 73 asks how many people are involved in making the decisions at your church, with a seven-point spectrum ranging from 'everyone is involved' to 'the senior leader makes the decisions'. My answer, for one, varies hugely depending on the question. A second type of complexity arises from variability of interpretation. This is, for instance, illustrated by question 36, in which there are three options

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[13] The third strand of research comprised a number of sub strands, each focusing on a particular type of church, such as cathedrals, Team Ministries and fresh expressions. The combined research of strands 1 and 2 is of sufficient interest for the purposes of this thesis.

[14] Available via http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/progress_findings_reports/reports September 1, 2014 10:22 AM

[15] A choice between seven positions on a spectrum is a common type of response offered, for instance between 'Low church' and 'High church' as descriptions of the 'worship style' of the largest Sunday service (Question 2).

(Disagree, Neutral/Unsure, Agree) in response to each of four statements, such as 'Our church has a clear mission and purpose'. Some might respond "There is a published statement about this, but I don't know what it is", or "… but I disagree with it", or "… but it doesn't seem to affect what we do". Or one might very reasonably respond "Yes – every church is called to glorify God and bless their neighbours". Variability of opinion across the body of worshippers leads to further complexity. The third statement in question 36 reads 'Our church wants to be racially and culturally diverse'. One can imagine churches where different worshippers would have different responses to such a question. Finally under this main point, there are several instances where the questionnaire uses terms such as 'new churchgoer', 'potential new member' or 'regular attender'. For some people, one or other of these terms can be used in a straightforwardly appropriate way. But I regularly encounter others whose attendance pattern resists such straightforward categorisation. Taking this point as a whole, even in a relatively nuanced questionnaire such as this, I highlight both the constructedness of the category boundaries implied by the questions, and also the much richer, more complex, interconnected, fluid and contingent reality to which the categories on offer cannot really do justice.

The fourth main point, then, is the tendency, perhaps especially in what are seen as the most significant questions, for a very focused answer to be requested. Question 69 lists nine 'functions that ordained ministers perform', and asks the respondent to tick 'no more than three' that they consider 'especially important priorities'. Given the breadth of most parish roles, three priorities really is not a lot. Question 17 is concerned with ways of 'connecting with potential new members', of which it offers seven, plus 'Don't know' and 'Other'. But it is only 'the *most* effective' (emphasis in the original) that is of interest to the researchers. Or again, question 27 has the advantage of asking for a free-form text response, but is only interested in 'the main reason for any growth or decline'. My questions are these: *Why, precisely, is it that the researchers want to exclude a broader, perhaps more balanced, consideration of potential influences? What advantage is gained by such exclusion?* I suggest that the tendency to seek the one supreme factor is correlated with a Cartesian approach, separating out that which is potentially influential but not central until only the most important remains. This gives the appearance of clarity, and thus certainty, but is based on a highly simplified map of reality.

For my fifth main point, I want to bring Jackson back into consideration, and consider the second overarching Cartesian emphasis, namely instrumentality. On the one hand, this refers to focusing on the functional, pseudo-mechanical aspects of reality, or conceiving it in those

terms. On the other, it refers to teleological thrust, an emphasis on working towards desired endpoints. To what extent is such instrumentality evident within this questionnaire, and within Jackson's work? That teleological thrust is evident in both should not be surprising. Both are explicitly exploring that which might positively influence numerical church growth. So they have a clear teleology themselves, and they are searching for 'factors' that might be instrumentally potent. To what extent, then, could either of their conceptions of church life be described as pseudo-mechanical? Do they focus on the functional? Yes: such a *focus on the functional* comes across as a significant bias for each of them. It does not seem a surprising bias, given the prior choice of a broad statistical approach, but any lack of surprise does nothing to reduce the bias. Even some of the language used in the introductory paragraphs of the questionnaire can seem to conjure up a mechanistic metaphor: we 'need to understand why different settings produce different results'. This phrase, read in the context of the 129 questions that follow, easily suggests a large black box, with complex wiring, and many dials and switches. At the top right-hand corner is a fluctuating digital display of 'output'. Engineers bend over the box, intent on discovering as much as they can about the relationship between the 'settings' and the 'results'. This is clearly a caricature, and no doubt is not what Jackson or Voas intend. Having completed all 129 questions, however, this caricature sums up rather accurately how being on the receiving end can feel. The final introductory paragraph on the questionnaire begins thus: 'We want to *ensure* that the work of the Church flourishes in every part of the country.' (emphasis added). Is there an optimum combination of factors that will indeed ensure growth? That, it seems, is the Holy Grail being sought.

Finally, with respect to the questionnaire, as with much of Jackson's writing, the questions here simply do not attend to many dimensions of church life that the Christian tradition considers central. Qualities of love, truthfulness and forgiveness are not mentioned. The character, clarity, insight or wisdom of those who preach or lead prayers is effectively deemed irrelevant. The fruit of the Spirit get no mention at all. So what is being attended to? The aim is explicitly to garner some 'rich data' relating to church growth. And it is implied that the questionnaire aims to cover 'all relevant factors'[16]. My contention is clear: it is precisely because the questionnaire attends almost exclusively to the Cartesian domain that it inevitably ends up failing to perceive much that is of the greatest importance.

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[16] http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/strands_of_the_research, accessed 20.6.13, 15.27 PM

Detailed Report on Strands 1 and 2

As previously mentioned, the researchers on Strands 1 and 2 of the Church Growth Research programme compiled a detailed report, including comprehensive appendices, on their findings. How does this report compare to Jackson's work, and to a Cartesian perspective? Compared with Jackson, it appears both more sophisticated and more rigorous[17]. One notable distinction between the two is the absence of Jackson-style charts in the detailed report. Churches are still categorised as having grown, stayed the same, or declined. But additional variables, such as clergy age, are not separated out into categories, as with Jackson. Rather, the analysis is done in a more technical, and more nuanced, manner. Thus the question in each case is whether, or not, the 'association' between a variable and growth is statistically significant. Interestingly, that between clergy age and self-reported growth over a five-year period is found to be statistically significant. However, that between clergy age and objectively measured growth over a ten-year period is not statistically significant (*pace* Jackson).

A further notable characteristic of the detailed report is the large number of quotes included from the free format sections of the questionnaire. Whilst the numerical analysis has obviously received significant attention, and is reported, multiple narrative quotations are clearly taken seriously, and significantly humanise the texture of the report. Taken together, these considerations mean that the feel of the findings is significantly less clear-cut than either the questionnaire itself or Jackson's work. In the terms of this thesis, why might this be? The most significant factor appears to be the researchers' willingness to use Cartesian rigour in reflexive interrogation, repeatedly asking "Is there really a statistically significant association here?"

Of particular importance is 'Appendix 4: A general model'. The researchers identified those variables that seemed most likely to be genuinely related to numerical growth, and then constructed 'regression models' on those variables. Of most significance for the purposes of this thesis is the final paragraph of this appendix, which I quote in full:

> 'The models account for only a modest amount of the variance in the dependent variables: about a quarter for self-reported growth and a tenth for objectively measured growth. Random measurement error, or noise, will be part of the reason. It is also probable that numerical growth in any given case is the product of a host of idiosyncratic factors that cannot easily be detected. We cannot rule out the possibility that some major explanatory factor has escaped consideration, but the sheer diversity of parish experience is more likely to be responsible. The amount of variation that cannot be pinned down may ultimately be good news; the scope for action is broad.

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[17] Having access to such a large set of bespoke questionnaire results no doubt helps.

Growth does not result from following a rule book, but from local reflection on what the church and its parish need.' (p. 85)

If the constructed regression model corresponds approximately to the black box of my caricature, the researchers have not set aside black boxes as irrelevant. What they have done, however, is to acknowledge the very limited degree to which the factors they have explored can account for the numerical growth or decline experienced. Even with the best model they can find, when considering self-reported growth, three quarters of that variation is unaccounted for by the model. And when it comes to objectively measured growth, 90% of the variation is for reasons other than those explored within the questionnaire. This is really a very significant conclusion, and it is unfortunate that it is relegated to the fourth Appendix. Nevertheless, at least it is acknowledged openly.

When considering the reasons behind the limitation, several possibilities are suggested, such as 'a host of idiosyncratic factors that cannot easily be detected'. Within the terms of this thesis, a much simpler explanation straightforwardly presents itself: the questionnaire largely ignores the Gestalt domain, in which can be found the most important things in life. However, this detailed report, when compared with either the questionnaire itself or with Jackson's approach, gives much more acknowledgement of complexity, of limitation, of 'idiosyncratic' local factors, and of the significance of personal narrative. One might say that, although most of the questions it explicitly addresses are focused in the Cartesian domain, the manner in which it addresses them shows a much more appropriate balance between Cartesian and Gestalt considerations. However, when we turn, next, to consider the overall summary report of the Church Growth Research programme, the emphasis takes a step back in the direction of the Cartesian.

From Anecdote to Evidence (FATE)

This summary report has a strikingly different tone to the detailed report[18]. There is a significant shift away from the acknowledgement of limitation, and towards the perceived instrumentality of clear 'factors' in promoting the numerical growth of the church. This report

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[18] The authorship of the *FATE* report is not stated. Intrigued by the difference of tone compared to the detailed report, I inquired on the subject. The response was that 'Commissioners staff worked with an external copy writer to draft the text of the publication. The draft text was shared with the researchers from each of the strands for comment / correction.' Personal correspondence with Kevin Norris, Senior Strategy Officer (Analyst), (Resource) Strategy & Development Unit, Church House, July 11, 2014.

seems closer to having a pseudo-mechanical 'black box' assumption in its understanding of why growth happens, and thus evidences more of the second overarching Cartesian characteristic. Furthermore, its stronger, more confident voice, coupled with the eclipsing of the acknowledgement of limitation, resonates considerably with the third overarching Cartesian emphasis of optimism. Taken together, these correlate considerably with the sense of progress in problem-solving which Louth sees as characteristic of sciences. Taken in the context of the detailed report, however, it is not obvious that quite as many problems have been solved as a reader of *FATE* alone might be led to believe.

On what do I base these assertions? First, the very title of the report puts strong rhetorical emphasis on the superiority of evidence over anecdote (even though a significant proportion of the report is devoted to anecdotes). Evidence is portrayed as more dependable and more desirable. Furthermore, the implication is that the investment of money, energy and effort in the research programme has (at least substantially) enabled a quantum shift from relying on (implicitly woolly or undependable) anecdote, to the causally consistent world of evidence. "We have found the settings that will produce the results" isn't actually stated, but is perhaps implied[19].

Second, key paragraphs from the detailed report and *FATE* take a significantly different angle to the same question. Under its section 4, 'Church profiles: Where growth is found', the detailed report summarises as follows:

> 'There is no single recipe for growth; there are no simple solutions to decline. The road to growth depends on the context. What works in one place may not work in another... Growth is a product of good leadership (lay and ordained) working with a willing set of churchgoers in a favourable environment.' (p. 33)

On its page 5, *FATE* includes this entire quote. On page 8, however, *FATE* puts things rather differently:

> 'there is "no single recipe for growth" but there are a number of "ingredients" which are linked to growth in parish churches *and can be applied to any setting'* (emphasis added)

This *FATE* presentation seems confident of the existence of pseudo-mechanical factors, universally applicable in all contexts. But the detailed research seems rather less optimistic, and more modest.

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[19] It is, however, intriguing that, although the title implies movement away from anecdote, not only the detailed reports but also FATE itself see fit to include a range of short anecdotes and slightly longer case studies.

Third, it is good that *FATE* does acknowledge some limitations to what the research shows[20]. But it is striking that the overall modesty of Appendix 4 (in which even the variables with the strongest association are acknowledged as accounting for only 10% of objective growth) is entirely missing from *FATE*. Neither this appendix, nor its message, is mentioned. No doubt to have acknowledged that conclusion, never mind given significant attention to it, might have felt like failure to those who commissioned the research. For to do so would mean acknowledging that it may simply be a category error to conceive of church growth as a problem for which universal solutions can be found.

Over the course of this first section, then, we have seen significant evidence of a Cartesian approach in both Jackson and Voas, and much less sign of the Gestalt. Salient features include recognising the degree of category construction in both pieces of work, and acknowledging the impact of the consequent simplified map of reality. We have registered the fact that work of this nature tends to treat any two members of the same categories as effectively interchangeable. Furthermore, a clear teleological thrust, coupled with apparently pseudo-mechanical conceptions of causality, have been evident. The work of Voas in the detailed report has shown a good example of Cartesian rigour employed to acknowledge the limitations of its results, a self-examination which was somewhat lacking within Jackson. We noted the significant difference between Voas's detailed report and *FATE*, the overall summary report for the research programme. As well as making stronger claims to instrumentality, this latter report also showed more signs of Cartesian optimism, with its at least implicit claims of significant progress. Having attended in detail to these two areas representing a statistic-focused rationality, we now turn to the somewhat broader critique of the second main section of this chapter.

3.2   Critical reflections

In this second main section of the chapter, I offer critical reflections that interweave two broad purposes. One is to introduce perspectives that will shed further light on the CLD literature that was considered in the first main section. The other is to introduce some new themes and terminology that are both pertinent to the early part of this chapter, and will also form recurrent threads throughout this central part of the thesis. As I have mentioned in the thesis introduction, my conversation partners are deliberately eclectic and interdisciplinary, which

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[20] It includes a footnote on page 6 emphasising over several sentences that 'association does not establish causality'. Further, on page 8 it refers to the 'potential problems of attributing causality when reporting associations'.

fact is very clear within this section. I begin by combining two distinct philosophical perspectives with that of an ecclesiologist.

Critical Realism, the 'tacit dimension', and househunting

After an introduction to the relevance of Critical Realism, I will focus on two particular aspects of its approach, nuancing one of them slightly in its application to church life. I will go on to relate this to what the philosopher Michael Polanyi called the 'tacit dimension'. The relevance of these combined reflections to the statistic-focused rationality of the early part of the chapter will be made clear. Ecclesiologist James Hopewell's analogy of househunting will then be drawn upon to set the statistic-focused approach we have been considering in a broader perspective.

Critical Realism

There has been some tendency for approaches to 'organisational studies' to be essentially polarised between positivist and post-modern perspectives. A number of more recent writers, however, have insisted that these are not the only possibilities, with Critical Realism being a clear alternative (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000; Fairclough, 2005). Critical Realism has been concisely summarised as combining and reconciling 'ontological realism, epistemological relativism and judgemental rationality' (Archer et al, 1998, p. xi, quoted in Danermark, 2002, p. 10). Amongst other reasons for its relevance, Fairclough, for instance, cites the space it creates for a moderately socially constructivist understanding: thus within organisations a genuine tension can exist between, on the one hand, 'the causal powers of structures and practices', and on the other, 'people with their capacities for agency' (Fairclough, 2005, p. 923).

To say that Critical Realism is ontologically realist but epistemologically relativist is to affirm that there is an external reality, but that human knowledge of that reality is limited and fallible. This is emphasised within one of the foundational tenets of critical realism's philosophy (Danermark, 2002, p. 20), encapsulated within Bhaskar's 'ontological map' (1978, p. 56). He proposed that it can be helpful to distinguish between three ontological domains: the empirical, the actual and the real. The domain of the empirical includes all that we experience, whether directly or indirectly. All of this is also included within the actual domain, but this also contains those many events that remain unexperienced. The set of all occurrences in the universe is rather larger than the set of those occurrences which are observed. Thirdly, the real domain is defined as including not only events, but also those factors that cause or generate

events. (These are sometimes called, metaphorically, 'generative mechanisms' (Bhaskar, 1978, pp. 14, 48-50 etc.; Danermark, p. 20), but I remain unconvinced of the appropriateness of that metaphor.)

Having very briefly introduced Critical Realism, I attend first to some of its perceptions relating to *causality*. First, a given object (of any sort) may always *possess* certain powers, but those powers may not always be *triggered*. For instance, a match may always have the power to ignite when struck, but for ignition to happen a number of conditions must be met. Someone must strike it, it must be dry, and there must be sufficient oxygen. Thus the triggering of a power is often substantially contingent on external conditions (Danermark, p. 55). Secondly, especially when it comes to human beings, rather than 'causing', a more accurate term is often 'tending' towards a particular outcome. People carry varying degrees of social conditioning, but their behaviour is not fully determined. Moreover, any given person will not infrequently have powers acting to influence them in opposing directions. The tension between the powers may sometimes lead to no discernible external change in the person's actions, so that no variation is detectable in the empirical domain. Nevertheless, there may be substantial 'action' going on in the real domain (Danermark, p. 57). Thirdly and finally, with the natural sciences it is sometimes possible to observe phenomena in what is described as a 'closed system', in which a single variable can be adjusted at a time, for instance. In the social sciences this is rarely possible. Here we encounter an 'open system', with multiple, complex, potentially conflicting factors, forces and generative mechanisms.

What is the relevance of such considerations for the purposes of this thesis? These Critical Realist distinctions between various aspects of causality strike me as being helpful in a very particular way. It is not that I would recommend Jackson or Voas to use these distinctions in constructing a yet more complex analysis of factors relating to church attendance. Rather, in setting out the (rather rectilinear) considerations of a finely calibrated Critical Realist approach, I suggest that they function primarily to illustrate that such a clinically logical approach would be so complex as to be unusable. If this is broadly true, the question then arises whether there is any alternative approach likely to be more fruitful. I hope that the considerations of Polanyi and Hopewell later within this subsection will at least partially answer this question.

A second benefit arising from Critical Realism is its clear highlighting of the dangers of the *epistemic fallacy*. This is the name given to the assumption that *what can be known* is identical

to *what is*. Moreover, within the statistic focused rationality of the CLD which has been the subject of this chapter, attention has been focused on only one portion within the realm of the empirical. That portion, I have argued, consists of those things which can straightforwardly be categorised, frequently via quantification. A stronger version of the epistemic fallacy could thus be posited as existing within the CLD (and in other parts of contemporary discourse). This stronger form comprises the mistaken assumption that *what can be quantified* is identical to *what is* (or at least to *what matters*).

Moving on, the third and final aspect of Critical Realism on which I wish to focus concerns the relationship between the empirical domain and the actual domain. I begin by noting that my own empirical domain, that which I experience, is not the same as the empirical domain of anyone else, be they a researcher, a regular worshipper, or a parishioner who would never dream of entering a church building. Furthermore, there will be attitudes, opinions and motivations within me which no one else will ever directly experience, and even some of which I myself am not aware. In one sense, something is either experienced or not: it is either purely actual, or it is also empirical. But in another sense, one can conceive of a spectrum between the two: there are aspects of reality which we only just glimpse, in a fleeting instant. To put it another way, the *degree of* our knowledge or experience of the empirical can vary substantially.   Moreover, our experience of the empirical often involves subjective interpretation, for instance in response to questions like "Does it feel special to be in the church?", or "Is the vicar friendly?". Overall, there will be many aspects of church life that either remain totally hidden within the actual domain, or else are only just perceived, perhaps by just one or two people. Many of these aspects will in fact be highly significant not only in affecting numerical church attendance, but also much more broadly in their influence on the overall tenor of church life, for better or for worse. Recognising the limitations highlighted in this paragraph help nurture a proper epistemological modesty.

Michael Polanyi and the 'tacit dimension'
The sort of realm whose existence I am sketching here may be helpfully held up against what the philosopher Michael Polanyi calls the 'tacit dimension' of knowing, or simply 'tacit knowing' (Louth, 1983, pp. 59-65; Polanyi, 1969, pp. 123-207)[21]. 'At the heart of Polanyi's insight', as Louth puts it, 'is his recognition of what one might call the mysteriousness of our engagement with the outside world.' (Louth, p. 59) Polanyi's point is to emphasise the

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[21] Quotations from Louth within this subsection relate to his clear and extensive summary of the work of Polanyi.

oversimplified epistemological assumptions that often underpin conceptions of the scientific method.   From such an oversimplified perspective, the external world is relatively straightforward and unproblematic.   We observe what happens in it, organise our observations, and grow in knowledge. For Polanyi, by contrast, our perceiving and knowing is frequently much more complex.   In particular, what we perceive and how we come to understand is 'often unspecifiable in detail' (Louth, p. 59). So, for instance, we cannot say precisely how we recognise another person's face, and yet we do so. We learn by experience which particular features are significant, and which are less so. Polanyi gives examples of a wide range of situations in which similar patterns apply: the diagnosis of disease, the performance of skills, the mastery of tools, the use of language (Louth, pp. 60-61; Polanyi, pp. 123-130). Louth, in summarising, describes how we bring to our perception

> 'a whole range of anticipations we have learned by experience. We bring a kind of interpretative framework within which we seek to interpret our conceptions: and this framework is *tacit*, it is something we have learned by experience and *cannot* make wholly explicit.' (Louth, pp. 61-62)

These considerations have two very important consequences. First, they undercut any notion that the scientific method is the single way of moving from ignorance to objective knowledge. Second, they reframe what is most important in our knowing. Knowledge becomes

> 'much more a personal orientation towards reality than any kind of objective account of it: the attempt to achieve some objective description of reality, or a part of it, is [only] an aspect of what is involved in my gaining a genuine orientation of my own towards reality, rather than the end in view.' (Louth, 62-63)

This tacit dimension is of vital relevance in human existence in general, and in local church life in particular. The notion of interpretive frameworks carried by individuals, and in some sense by congregations, but unspecifiable in detail, can be very helpful.   For those newcomers previously unfamiliar with church life, there may be a significant 'clash of frameworks', with only a gradual, and quite possibly a tacit and unarticulated, metamorphosis. There may well be some things that help this metamorphosis more than others, but what those things are will vary between people and contexts. That which is helpful and transformative may well itself be rooted in the tacit dimension: for instance, some intuited understanding that one is deeply welcome, and offered space within which to encounter God.

Secondly, well-formed ministerial practice draws extensively upon the tacit dimension. Furthermore, it is vital that ministers are aware of the existence of this dimension, whether or not they have a name for it. Objective knowledge, as in the quote from Louth above, is not the

main aim in and of itself, but rather a proper personal orientation towards that reality. Furthermore, as Critical Realism helps us to understand, objective knowledge may frequently not be available. Rather, much ministerial practice relies upon subtle skills of discernment, of reading individuals and situations, and of understanding congregations. Deeply embedded interpretive frameworks, frequently refreshed and refined in reflection, study and prayer, cannot be made fully explicit, never mind translated into flowcharts or uniform policies. The clear and careful focused analysis in which the Cartesian specialises can indeed contribute to the refinement of one's interpretive framework. But the condition for this being fruitful, as McGilchrist points out, is that the results of Cartesian analysis are handed over to the Gestalt for a proper integration into a broader context and sensitivity.

Polanyi's tacit dimension cannot be precisely mapped onto one or more of Bhaskar's three ontological domains. It informs, and is formed by, what we experience, but somehow that experience includes that of which we are barely conscious. Perhaps it is close to a hinterland lying between the empirical and the actual. And yet the tacit dimension also forms an important part of the real, as it can play a vital part in influencing decisions and behaviour. When held up against the two approaches to reality of this thesis, the tacit dimension can clearly be situated within the Gestalt. It does not comprise the totality of that domain, but Polanyi and Louth's depictions of it helpfully fill out a picture of at least part of the character, and the essential nature, of the Gestalt.

Hopewell and househunting

I conclude this subsection by weaving in with the previous considerations an analogy offered by the practical theologian James Hopewell in his seminal work, *Congregation* (Hopewell, 1987). The analogy is that of househunting: the process by which, and the ways in which, a family (for instance) might explore and decide upon a potential new home. Hopewell distinguishes between four distinct dimensions of the househunting process, which he names contextual, mechanical, organic, and symbolic. Whenever a local congregation is the subject of attention, whether within an academic study or by potential new worshippers, Hopewell expects all four dimensions to be in play, but that one of the four will dominate (Hopewell, p. 19). My approach here is to summarise what each of these four dimensions represents in congregational life, and then to relate these considerations to the previous discussion.

First, then, when considering a house, the *context* or neighbourhood is a vital consideration, for better or for worse. Hopewell summarises (pp. 21-23) a significant movement in the 1960s

that sought to turn the attention of local churches outward to their neighbourhoods, thus becoming, as one book title put it, 'the church inside out'. For a range of reasons, these efforts waned in the early 1970s, being replaced by a heightened focus on the vitality of congregations themselves. This focus developed along two lines. The more popular of the two was what Hopewell terms a *mechanistic* examination (p. 23) of local congregations. This is the second of his four dimensions. In the literal process of househunting, this corresponds to checking how well its fixtures and fittings work. In a church context, Hopewell characterises mechanistic approaches as focusing on program effectiveness, and operating according to rational principles. Primary among contemporary mechanistic approaches for Hopewell was the church growth movement, summarised in chapter 1, represented by McGavran and Wagner. This movement 'sought reliable formulas for gathering large numbers of persons into congregations. For dependable, sophisticated techniques it turned to organisation science.' (p. 25) Hopewell notes the significance of church annual reports within such a perspective. 'The average report portrays the congregation as a machine whose work is detected by quantitative measurements… about money, membership, and meetings.… Statistics comparing this year with last are included to reveal the relatively greater efficiency of the parish mechanism' (pp. 25-26). Those who follow a mechanistic approach see as the primary need of churches 'the rationalisation of congregational process and the animation of social will to achieve results' (p. 26).

Third, *organic* approaches are different. Unlike the prescribed homogeneous units of church growth science, 'organic approaches recognise the heterogeneity of members and their deep need to be reconciled in a common, if complicated, life' (p. 26). Furthermore, they see 'the whole of a congregation as greater than the sum of its parts'. The main aim is not necessarily growth of 'size and efficiency', but rather 'a full ripening of its communal nature' (p. 28). The fourth and final approach is the one that Hopewell particularly advocates, namely the *symbolic*. He does so not least because of its 'dangerous' underrepresentation in previous studies (p. 32). For househunters to consider the symbolic language of a potential new home means for them to ask what this place would say about them. Would it 'speak' truthfully about their values and identity? 'Identity' is one good word that comes close to encapsulating the focus of symbolic studies. Another is the 'personality' of the congregation. How is this to be construed? Hopewell seeks to 'detect the symbolic and idiomatic discourse of a congregation and to probe its significance to the church members who convey it' (p. 30). Thus he uses a linguistic model, but one richly construed, to include 'not only verbal and written signs but also gestures, smells, touches, and physical configurations' (p. 31). Furthermore, his understanding

of the parish is 'decidedly narrative in its orientation' (31) and he goes on to use narrative categories to frame much of the rest of the book.

How, then, does Hopewell's metaphor of househunting relate to the works considered in the first section of this chapter? Jackson's work is clearly most similar to Hopewell's mechanistic approach. He is primarily concerned with whether a congregation is *functioning well*. He gives limited attention to a church's context, but is not so obviously interested in organic considerations, and even less in any sense of narrative identity. Voas's research has some more subtlety and breadth, but nevertheless appears to conceive of the likes of 'worship style' in primarily instrumental terms, and thus also belong most obviously in the mechanistic camp. Such mapping, however, is less important than Hopewell's broader point.   For what Hopewell does well is to indicate the richness and complexity of congregations and congregational life, and the inability of any approach on its own to exhaustively encapsulate that richness. Furthermore, the organic and symbolic approaches in particular, and to a lesser extent the contextual, depend not only on Cartesian considerations but also on Gestalt. Thus it is not surprising to find, even within Hopewell's initial summary of a symbolic approach, mention of significant factors that will not be susceptible to easy categorisation, such as gestures, smells, and physical configurations. With a symbolic approach in particular, but also with the organic and the contextual, the tacit dimension is highly relevant.

Within this subsection, then, I have combined the disparate perspectives of Critical Realism, the tacit dimension, and Hopewell's househunting in a single aim. That aim has been to shed light on first the existence, and then the importance, of aspects of reality beyond the concerns of any category-based analysis. These aspects, this realm, are important for rich human flourishing in general, and for church life in particular. However, they are substantially inaccessible to a Cartesian approach. For all its significant strengths, therefore, an over-exclusive reliance on the Cartesian can have serious negative consequences. It is to one aspect of these that I turn in the next subsection.

Focusing or reducing? A recurring ambivalence

McGilchrist describes one of the major tasks of the left hemisphere as being 'to bring things into focus', thus enabling 'a certain kind of vision' that can yield 'detailed information' and 'clear pinpointing' (McGilchrist, p. 181). These visual metaphors he links to the way in which a microscope or telescope functions. Such instruments enable extremely detailed perception. However, at any given time, they can only do so within one two-dimensional plane. (One is

most aware of this fact during the actual process of focusing.) Clarity within that plane is bought at the expense of any sense of depth or context. When using a microscope this may not matter. But with the left hemisphere generally, deliberate action may be needed to appropriately situate its findings within the finely discriminated depth of its context. Otherwise, as McGilchrist puts it, 'our vision stops at "the thing itself". The price is that this shearing away of the context produces something lifeless and mechanical.' (p. 181)

In our consideration of the work of Jackson and Voas such Cartesian focusing has repeatedly been in evidence, not least in attending to potential church growth factors, either in isolation (with Jackson), or in conjunction with each other (Voas). With the latter I highlighted[22] several instances where only 'the most effective' or 'the main reason' was of interest to the researchers. Such depth-excluding focus both seems strongly congruent with McGilchrist's description of the left hemisphere, and also obviously problematic, even within the terms of the research[23]. A further strong instance is question 67 within the Voas questionnaire, which asks 'Which of these three church objectives is your priority?', then offers three options of which only one can be selected: 'Numerical growth; Spiritual growth/discipleship; Social transformation'. The question is presumably intended to mean 'Which priority do you rank as the most important of the three?'. The way it is phrased, however, implies that only one of the three will be 'a priority' of the respondent, or indeed that they only have one priority[24]. But it is striking that the researchers should assume that, for any clergyperson, one of these three priorities will be straightforwardly identifiable as always the most important, regardless of the particular situation to which they are attending. Furthermore, it is also intriguing that they are only interested in registering this topmost priority, rather than gaining any sense of the relations between priorities.

I will reflect further on this question in chapter 6. For now, it serves as a strong example of Cartesian focus, and also one which highlights the considerable ambivalence of such focus. If we describe it as *focus*, we highlight the potential strength of this practice in enabling clear perception and analysis. If, however, we describe it as *reduction*, we emphasise its downsides. Why might it be appropriate to consider 'reduction' as an appropriate description? Precisely

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[22] Within my fourth point regarding the Church Growth questionnaire.

[23] For instance, it could easily be the case that no consensus emerged amongst respondents as to 'the main reason' for church growth, but, if the question were widened to include 'the most important factors', substantial consensus would be revealed.

[24] The FATE report takes yet another subtly different slant, assuming that one of these three will be the respondent's *top* priority. That, however, is not what was asked.

because of the narrowing of focus, the excluding from attention of everything which is not perceived as 'the most important' or 'the main reason'. Or, alternatively, when Jackson or Voas turn their Cartesian focus on 'worship style', and seek to analyse the extent to which it influences church growth, they considerably reduce the concept of worship from wholehearted attentiveness to the source of all life, to something much more instrumental. The very processes of categorising easily lead to a flattening, a homogenising, and changing almost beyond recognition, for which 'reduction' seems an appropriate term. McGilchrist puts it like this:

> 'Many things that are important to us simply cannot withstand being too closely attended to, since their nature is to be indirect or implicit. *Forcing them into explicitness changes their nature completely*… Too much self-awareness destroys not just spontaneity, but the quality that makes things live; the performance of music or dance, of courtship… humour,… and religious devotion *become mechanical, lifeless, and may grind to a halt* if we are too self-aware' (p. 180, emphasis added)

Two aspects of church life: *schema* and *morphe*

At this point I introduce a pair of terms, *schema* and *morphe,* which I will shortly define, and to which I will return throughout the thesis. These terms seek to encapsulate some aspects of how the Cartesian and the Gestalt might relate to church life. Each term is closely derived from a Greek word meaning 'form'. The Greek word *morphe* is held to imply essential character as well as outline, whereas *schema* can be taken to refer primarily to the outward form of a person or entity.

Let me define *schema*, for my purposes, to refer to those aspects of the life of a local church which a Cartesian perspective is best suited to perceiving, describing and analysing. This would include aspects that could be counted (e.g. attendance, financial matters), and aspects that could be clearly represented in diagrams, lists and flowcharts (committee structures, responsibilities, procedures, officials lines of relationship or reporting). By being introduced to the *schema* of a particular church, one might get a good initial sense of its size, structure, and form. Furthermore, changes to various aspects of the *schema* over time could be identified and analysed, as with Hopewell's mention of annual reports. The *schema* of a church, then, is important, and includes much of interest. But it is not everything. I define the second term, *morphe*, to refer to what we might call the *character* or *inner nature* of the church. The *morphe* correlates to a Gestalt approach. Included here are qualities that are not measurable, and can be hard even to articulate. *Morphe* might include a sense of joy, of mourning, of determination, of grace, or of division – or some complex combination thereof. *Morphe* includes something of the spiritual heartland of the church, the tenor of its relationship to

Scripture and to sacrament, the range of timbres of its worship. The *morphe* of a church is both related to the *morphe* of people within the church, but also transcends these individuals. The *morphe* will include, for instance, the depth and quality of relationships between people associated with the church. The *morphe* will be neither uniform nor constant, but, nevertheless, certain aspects of it are likely to set the overall tone, and to be sensed or intuited by newcomers to the church.

Schema and *morphe* are distinct from each other, but it is important to recognise that they are also, to some degree interdependent. Some subtlety is needed here. On the one hand, one can imagine two churches with almost identical *schema*, whose *morphe* are strikingly different. On the other hand, for a given church, adjusting the *schema* in one way or another (perhaps engaging on a building project, or changing the service pattern) is likely to have some effect on the *morphe* - though not necessarily a predictable effect, or the one that was desired. I have defined *schema* and *morphe* with reference to the Cartesian and the Gestalt respectively. A Cartesian approach will be good at perceiving and analysing the *schema*, but much less suited to engaging at all with the *morphe* of a church. Furthermore, and importantly, Cartesian analysis alone will be poor at predicting or understanding the likely impact on the *morphe* of any change of *schema*. Having defined these terms, I will return to them, and to the relationship between them, on several occasions throughout the thesis, as my argument develops.

The focus on categories, and the 'veiling' of human faces

Section 3.1 demonstrated that the work of Jackson and (to a lesser extent) Voas focused on human beings primarily via the categories into which they might be placed. This final substantive subsection within the chapter highlights one undesirable consequence of such categorisation, through the consideration of the human face.

David Ford's *Self and Salvation* begins with an extended meditation on the centrality of *faces* and *facing* in much human existence. The face is both uniquely individual, and also a primary locus for relating to others (D. Ford, 1999, p. 19). Both language and emotion are substantially focused on the face, the latter in evidence through

> 'smiles, tears, frowns and other endlessly nuanced expressions… We meet cold and hard faces, faces that turn away, blush, laugh, and are attentively still. There are beauty and ugliness, compassion and hatred.… It is in face-to-face meetings, deeply resistant to adequate description, that many of the most significant things in our lives happen… A word, a glance, an instantaneous interpretation, a confrontation… an

indirectly conveyed attitude - these can be turning points, moments of insight, decision or shame. No wonder this is the realm of life most usually rendered in the dominant media of our time…' (D. Ford, 1999, pp. 17-18)

The face cannot fully encapsulate our sense of identity as a 'self', but it is nevertheless 'pervasively important'. In spite of the considerable importance of the face, and of face-to-face interaction, Ford suggests that 'the Enlightenment and its aftermath tended towards a "faceless self"'. The face has been 'ignored, neglected or suppressed in much modern Western thought and culture' (p. 21). Ford moves the discussion on from 'the face' to the dynamics of 'facing'. Moreover, he summarises much of Christianity within these terms, drawing on central images from 2 Corinthians:

> 'Christianity is characterised by the simplicity and complexity of facing: being faced by God, embodied in the face of Christ; turning to face Jesus Christ in faith; being members of a community of the face; seeing the face of God reflected in creation and especially any human face...; having an ethics of gentleness towards each face; disclaiming any overview of others and being content with massive agnosticism about how God is dealing with them: and having a vision of transformation before the face of Christ "from glory to glory" that is cosmic in scope' (pp. 24-25)

Facing is of great relevance not only to Christianity in general, but also to ministry in particular. A minister unable to 'read' the faces of others will be severely handicapped, to say the least. Such reading of faces is not a competence acquired through attending a course. Rather, it is deeply embedded within a much broader formation of character, honing of instinct and accruing of wisdom over time. It is not a discrete skill or activity, but rather an integral part of one's disposition towards others, linked to the 'personal orientation towards reality' of which Louth and Polanyi speak.

Ford presents the human face as a central part of humanity and of Christianity. How, then, is the human face attended to within the substantially Cartesian analysis of Jackson? It is hidden. Even the most personal of the three 'personal characteristics of the clergy' (Jackson, 2002, p. 160) he highlights is the ability to avoid personal or pastoral breakdown, which criterion may be desirable, but hardly reveals much personhood. The questionnaire used by Voas does try harder to capture some feel for human individuals, using two broad approaches to do so: personality type, and self-reporting regarding each of eight selected attributes. The combination of these approaches may shed some light on a person. Nevertheless, the primary feel, and probably the primary aim, is in fact *not* to attend to the face of a human individual, but rather to focus on those categories into which they can be placed most accurately. The consequence is that 'at least from the standpoint of the categoriser every member of the category can be substituted by any other member of the category' (McGilchrist, 2010, p. 344).

The category-based analysis of Jackson and Voas has had this effect on those surveyed: *their faces have become veiled*[25]. Such veiling may be legitimate for some temporary and provisional analysis. But if the quality, the orientation and the disposition of our facing is indeed as central as Ford convincingly portrays, then any analysis that keeps human faces veiled should always be expected to be only partially truthful.

Conclusion

This chapter has commenced Part B of the thesis by examining one important area of the CLD: its statistic-focused rationality. This area has been examined via two representative works: Jackson's *Hope for the Church*, and parts of the Church of England's Church Growth Research Programme. The primary question under consideration has been the extent to which these works show evidence of a bias towards a Cartesian approach. Within both of these works the first overarching Cartesian emphasis, a bias towards that which can be categorised, has been particularly evident. We have seen repeated examples of the construction of boundaries to separate people or churches into categories. This has led to the presumed equivalence of members within a category, and reduced the possibilities of subtlety and nuancing. The categorisation has often led to an appearance of clarity, but that clarity has been shown, at least sometimes, to be at the cost of accuracy. Especially with Jackson, the focus has been on particular parts of reality, examined in isolation from each other. The work of Voas was more successful in attending to parts of reality in relation to each other, and also in examining and recognising the limitations of its analysis. Both works led to simplified maps of reality, and although there was some consideration of the realm of the Gestalt, this was substantially overshadowed by the Cartesian.

There was also reasonable evidence of the second Cartesian overarching emphasis, namely an instrumental disposition. Both works were conceived with a clear teleological purpose, and were concerned with examining the instrumental impact of a wide range of potential factors. Voas was found to acknowledge the significance of context, meaning that there was no simple recipe for church growth. While Jackson's work is broadly positive, as is the tenor of the *FATE* summary report, the detailed report by Voas showed less evidence of the third Cartesian characteristic, an optimism that can verge on the inappropriate.

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[25] Redeploying and reorienting a powerful metaphor from 2 Corinthians 3.

A major part of the second section of the chapter was spent on shedding light, from different angles, on those parts of reality that lie beyond the categorisable. Polanyi's tacit dimension of knowing was particularly important in illustrating the validity and prevalence of knowledge that cannot be specified in detail. Such considerations helped make clear that the Cartesian strength of detailed 'focus' is intimately connected with one of its weaknesses, a tendency to 'reduce' conceptions of reality by ignoring vital dimensions. I introduced and defined two terms to which I will return, *schema* and *morphe*, which represent, respectively Cartesian and Gestalt aspects of church life. Finally, I drew on David Ford's meditation on the central importance of the face in Christianity. I crystallised one of my deepest concerns with work such as that of Jackson and Voas by arguing that its focus on categories means that the human faces of those involved become veiled and thus invisible.

Summary of main anomalies

As I said in the introduction to the thesis, my overall aim is to demonstrate three things about the Cartesian: how it connects a surprisingly wide range of phenomena; how pervasive it has become; and the insufficiency of an approach that is biased towards it. In particular, such an approach can be expected to lead to a number of features which appear anomalous with respect to the Christian tradition.   This chapter has made substantial progress in demonstrating the influence of the Cartesian on a wide range of phenomena, and its substantial pervasiveness within the works surveyed. As regards the insufficiency of a substantially Cartesian approach, I here recapitulate in summary form the main anomalies identified in this chapter. Several of these are more evident in Jackson than in the Church growth research, or vice versa. Others are pertinent to both:

Anomaly 3.1   Constructed analytical categories leading to repeated and cumulative oversimplification

Anomaly 3.2   Repeated assignation of the same growth to many different causal factors

Anomaly 3.3   Assumption that the causal texture of church life is substantially linear and direct: what could be termed pseudo-mechanical

Anomaly 3.4   Apparent blindness to likely interrelatedness between possible causal factors

Anomaly 3.5   The invisibility within these analyses of characteristics and features that cannot be straightforwardly categorised: e.g. virtue, the organic, the contextual, the symbolic and the tacit. In summary, the substantial invisibility of the Gestalt.

Anomaly 3.6   The assumed existence of universal causal rules, or 'ingredients', that will create growth and 'be applied to any setting', regardless of context or contingency.

Anomaly 3.7   The strong thrust to identify 'the main factor' in several areas, thus reducing rich complexity to apparent, but misleading, simplicity

Anomaly 3.8   The fact that the human face remains veiled, or invisible, within these approaches

Although the texture of rationality employed in the works considered in this chapter is common throughout the Church Leadership Discourse, these works could be described as lying near its periphery. Those to which I turn in the next chapter, however, lie right at its heart.

Chapter 4 – Leading change via vision and objectives

Introduction

A priest had been summoned to a routine review meeting with her bishop, in which she was invited to reflect on significant aspects of her recent ministry[1]. In doing so, she recounted a pastoral encounter which she had found challenging but fulfilling. A family in one of the villages for which she was responsible had requested a christening. Such was the complexity of the family situation that she had had to involve both police and social services before the service. In the end, the christening had not only happened, but had gone well. Though she would not have put it like this, it proved a fitting culmination to her deft pastoral instinct and sensitivity. "What was the result?", asked the bishop. "Did they join? Did they become regular worshippers?". "No, but…". "Let's move on" concluded the bishop.

Many may have sympathy with the bishop's apparent desire to see numerical growth in worshipping congregations. Many may also find it understandable if he experienced some frustration that such time-consuming pastoral engagement yielded no more tangible 'result', or at least not in the short term. Some might even speculate that he himself was under pressure to show results, whether from a diocesan bishop, an Archbishop, or perhaps the church commissioners. Nevertheless, however understandable such impulses may be, some will feel that the bishop's response falls short. Might it be that it was precisely his clear focused attention on measurable outcomes that led him to undervalue an encounter that may in fact have been very worthwhile indeed?

I do not know the identity of the bishop from this anecdote, nor to what extent he has been influenced by the CLD[2]. Nevertheless, as I turn in this chapter to consider questions of priorities and objectives, and in particular their formulation in measurable terms, it may seem reasonable to hypothesise that the CLD may have been influential in shaping this particular bishop's *modus operandi*.

How does this chapter relate to its predecessor? Chapter 3 can be viewed as providing a step towards the concerns of chapter 4. It was a preliminary exercise in discerning the influence of

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[1] This, I believe, is a faithful account of a genuine encounter, which I heard second hand.
[2] Neither do I know whether he is one of several bishops who have been consecrated after having written books which I would describe as belonging to the CLD.

the Cartesian within a type of rationality that influences the whole CLD, but often in a background way. In this present chapter I turn to consider a process that lies right at the heart of the Church Leadership Discourse. That process would be possible without the work of Jackson or Voas. Nevertheless, the assumptions of fairly linear causality that underlie Jackson's approach can be seen as implicitly reinforcing the rationality under consideration here. What, then, is that process, and how will it be considered within this chapter?

A short description of the process is offered in the title of this chapter: leading change via vision and objectives. This process is presented as probably the central part of leadership. It is concerned with the leading of change within the church. And there are two aspects of how change is to be led that command universal approval. The first is the articulation of a 'vision' or 'vision statement'. The second, flowing naturally from this, is the crystallising of specific objectives for the church[3]. Within this chapter I primarily explore this process via three of the representative CLD texts that I identified in chapter 1: *Growing Leaders* (Lawrence, 2004)*, How to Do Mission Action Planning* (which book I continue to refer to as *MAP*) (Chew & Ireland, 2009), and *Developing Visionary Leadership* (Richard Williams & Tanner, 2004).   When referring to the process itself, at times I will call it 'the recommended process', but at other times, for variety, I will refer to it as 'Mission Action Planning'. That is not to say that there are no differences between how *MAP* describes the process and how other books depict it. I do, however, make the broad claim that such differences are not significant for the purposes of this thesis and that, consequently, Mission Action Planning is as good a title as any for the process in question.

These preliminaries indicate what I am attending to, and what terminology I will use. This chapter will use once more the primary critical axis of this thesis in its consideration of this process. As it is some time since I introduced the terms Cartesian and Gestalt, I offer here a brief reminder of the principal characteristics of these two dispositions. In summary, the Cartesian has three overarching areas of emphasis. The first is the construction of *clear-cut categories*, giving a rectilinear texture. Focus tends towards isolated parts, viewed at a fixed point in time, so that subtlety, flux and ambiguity fade from perception. The second overarching emphasis relates to an *instrumental disposition*. This includes always having an end in mind, but also attending mainly to the 'functional' or even 'machine-like' aspects in any

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[3] Although authors within the CLD vary in their chosen terminology, and put particular emphasis on different phases of the process, there is, nonetheless, substantial commonality across the discourse as to the broad shape of the process recommended.

context. Questions of productivity and effectiveness thus tend to come to the fore. The third overarching emphasis concerns *optimism and the positive*. It includes a preference for proactivity, and a thirst for novelty and stimulation. It can also include limited appreciation of its own shortcomings. These three strands of categorisation, instrumentality and the positive stand in contrast to a Gestalt approach. This latter, the Gestalt, attends more (as its name suggests) to a holistic overview, rather than focus on isolated detail. It is more attuned to questions of depth, context and betweenness than is the Cartesian. Ambiguity and paradox also lie within its domain. Whereas the Cartesian is oriented towards instrumentality, and changing things for a purpose, the default stance of the Gestalt is closer to contemplation of the current state of what lies before it.

It remains to emphasise the two primary questions under consideration. First, to what extent does this process of Mission Action Planning show evidence of a bias towards Cartesian characteristics, more than a Gestalt approach? And second, to what extent does any Cartesian bias lead to anomalies with respect to mainstream Christian tradition. As I have indicated, Mission Action Planning is oriented towards the leading of change, and it is to the consideration of that subject that I now turn.

4.1   The centrality of change

One of the assumptions deeply embedded within much contemporary discourse concerns 'the need to change'. This section will focus on this question of the role of 'change', and has three aims. First, it will seek to denaturalise the emphasis on change, pointing out its constructed nature. Second, it indicates the significance of the emphasis on change within the CLD. Finally, it will explore connections between this emphasis and the Cartesian and Gestalt approaches to reality.

Denaturalising the need for change

Chris Grey, in his introduction to the contemporary study of organisations, diagnoses 'the centrality placed upon the concept of change' as an emphasis that 'ties together' the majority of the preoccupations of mainstream organisation theory.

> 'Change provides a kind of "meta-narrative", an overarching rationale or assumption which then acts as an explicit or implicit justification for specific change programmes in organisations… Change is a notion which is drawn upon in a largely unthinking, but very significant, way so that it takes on an almost magical character. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the change fetish is the way in which it figures as the contextual, introductory and taken for granted. So obvious is it taken to be that it typically takes

the form of rushed assertions at the outset of any particular treatment of organisation and management.' (Grey, 2009, p. 93)

The stereotypical form of such 'rushed assertions' has two clauses. The first clause describes the present era as characterised by unprecedented change. The second cause deduces from this the need for further organisational change, implying this deduction as a logical consequence so obvious that it merits no explanation.   Grey critiques this widespread approach on two main grounds. First, he argues that there is no obvious basis on which to make the claim that current rates of change are unprecedented (pp. 95-96). Second, he points out that, if we 'collectively construe' rapid change as a defining feature of our times, then our actions may well render that belief self-fulfilling (p. 97). A 'treadmill of change' (p. 97) is constructed, whose effects may indeed be real, but also 'in part an effect of organisational practices rather than a precursor of those practices' (p. 100).

It is not just that change is perceived as pervasive and necessary. Pattison, in addition, diagnoses *'the positive moral evaluation of change'* (Pattison, 1997, p. 122, emphasis added). (Pattison, exploring the impact of contemporary management practices in the secular workplace, uses the concept of 'management as religion' as a heuristic tool.) As he puts it, the very idea of change is often not simply portrayed as 'difference', and thus morally neutral. Rather, it is frequently 'tacitly consecrated with notions of progress and development'. Such a perspective, such hermeneutical filtering, increases the subtle or overt pressure simply to collude with whatever change is proposed. Grey agrees, describing anyone who questions the orthodoxy of change as being automatically

'painted as retrograde, old-fashioned, elitist… and fundamentally out of step with the modern world. Change is a crass theology, but a theology it is. It is the doctrinal orthodoxy of those who rule us.' (Grey, 2009, p. 107)

To be clear, the argument is not that there is no place for change. But the perceptions of Grey and Pattison heighten our sensitivity to the 'almost magical character' imputed to change *per se*.

Change within the CLD

Given such a cultural context, it may not be surprising that an assumed need for change plays such a significant role within the CLD. Two quotations must suffice to give an indication of the restless energy and the clear dissatisfaction with the *status quo* often displayed by its authors.

The first quotation is from *Growing Leaders*, and is taken from the introduction to Lawrence's Chapter 10, 'Leaders discern, articulate and implement God's vision'.

> 'Many Christians sit Sunday by Sunday in church, unsure about where they are *going* personally in their walk with Christ and together as a local church. The lack of *corporate direction* ultimately undermines any sense of *personal direction*. If the church doesn't *move forwards* in its worship, discipleship, mission and evangelism, it suggests that *lack of change* is an acceptable position for the people of God. "As it was, is now, and ever shall be" is sadly a suitable epitaph for far too many churches, and far too many Christians.
>
> The Christian life is *about change*. Walter Wright describes it clearly: "A biblical vision, according to Paul, results in *changed* lives in everyday living." It is about *being changed* into the likeness of Christ, *growing* in holiness. Discipleship implies learning and growth through *change*. Local churches need to be about *change*, discipleship, growth and outreach. Where those responsible for leadership in the local church don't lead, churches and Christians begin to atrophy.' (Lawrence, 2004, pp. 192-193, emphasis added)

The second quote is taken from the first section of *Developing Visionary Leadership*, which is entitled 'Fantastic Leaders – God's Change Makers'. It does not quite follow the standard format of the 'rushed assertions' observed by Grey. Nevertheless, the unquestioned significance and centrality of change within the rhetoric is very clear:

> 'We believe your church has the potential to *lead the development and transformation* of your local community into a passionate and purposeful place welcoming many people into faith.... We live in a *rapidly changing* and increasingly secular world, where we need to meet people's needs in all sorts of different ways. Fantastic organisations, be they churches, charities, businesses or sports teams, have fantastic leaders. With great leadership our churches *can be transformed*... and *this change* can only be driven and held together by prophetic, wise and courageous leadership, in the service of Christ. What we are saying is that if you are a church leader than *the future is in your hands*. We believe that God wants to build an army of great leaders... who are skilled in leading others and *making change happen*.... [This] is not a theorist's book. It... is for those who *want to get on and change things.'* (Richard Williams & Tanner, 2004, pp. 3-4, emphasis added)

Stephen Pattison describes the Christian tradition as having 'an ambivalent relationship with change' (p. 118). On the one hand, religion is often conceived as a comforting source of stability, perhaps especially in times of turbulence. On the other hand, 'enthusiastic Christians' in particular have often had a particular focus on radical change, both that to be instigated by Christ's second coming, and also the 'fundamental and ongoing lifestyle change' (p. 119) required in the meantime. Pattison sees parallels between the 'hope of the inestimable benefits of radical, future-oriented change' held by at least some Christians, and the parallel hope held out by many management theorists and practitioners. The main distinction between the two concerns the source of change. Pattison describes the former as coming

from the 'will and power of God', whereas for management theorists a 'brighter, better future' will arise because of the 'efficacy of change management theories and techniques' (p. 119). Against such a backdrop, two things can be said clearly about the position of both Lawrence and also Williams and Tanner. First, in the context of Christianity's 'ambivalent relationship with change', their centre of gravity is firmly on the side in favour of ongoing radical change. Second, Pattison highlights the *distinction* between Christian and managerial views of change, identifying that difference as being the perceived source of that change. With the CLD, however, that distinction is at least blurred, and arguably entirely removed. God is portrayed, at least implicitly , as having some involvement in the change. However, considerable potency is also ascribed to the recommended processes and techniques, which themselves have been adopted from the management theorists.

Two initial points are worth registering. First, for a church in a context of external change (however constructed), an obvious pair of questions to consider is this. To what extent, and in what ways, is changing church practice an appropriate response? And, similarly, to what extent, and in what ways, is church *continuity* appropriate or even vital? For now, I simply register that there is no evidence that these questions have been considered. The second point relates particularly to the quote from Lawrence. On the one hand he rightly asserts the importance of 'being changed into the likeness of Christ'. But on the other, Lawrence's depiction of many Christians 'sit[ting] Sunday by Sunday in church' (p. 192) suggests a concerning disjunction between the type of change under consideration and the riches of the Christian tradition. His portrayal offers no hint of the transformative potential of corporate worship, of the ministries of Word and Sacrament, of the presence of God. Either, for some reason, he has lost confidence in that transformative potential. Or, perhaps, the mode of change most typically ensuing from regular worship somehow falls short of qualifying for what would count, from his perspective, as authentic change. What *sort* of change, then, is it that is desired by these CLD authors? And how does such change, and the desire for it, relate to the Cartesian and the Gestalt?

CLD change, the Cartesian and the Gestalt

I mention here five genres or characteristics of the types of change which the CLD prioritises, and make explicit their relatedness to the Cartesian and Gestalt. Furthermore, for clarity, I also highlight several further aspects which do not appear to be prioritised or obviously valued within this literature.

First, such change is envisaged as arising from planning and proactivity. What is in focus is not change that 'just happens', but rather change that we have implemented. There is instrumentality and deliberate purpose behind it. It is, secondly and consequently, likely to have a focused and directed quality. Third, the change can be expected to have a very tangible, explicit character. We won't miss the fact that it has happened. Fourth, it may well be construed as the solution to a problem. Fifth, an important aspect of this whole dynamic of change is the role of the 'emotional register' involved. Whether the emotional register shifts as a *consequence* of the change, or as a *cause* of the change, may vary. But, for instance, Williams and Tanner's vocabulary of 'dynamic', 'passionate and purposeful' (p. 3) and 'galvanised' (p. 7) would indeed mark a change in and of itself for not a few churches. This last facet, that of emotional register, I will attend to within Chapter 5, including its relationship to the Cartesian and Gestalt. The previous characteristics, and others, will be expanded upon as I turn shortly to give each phase of Mission Action Planning separate consideration.

For now, I summarise broad areas of commonality between the first four of these types or characteristics of change and a Cartesian approach. As McGilchrist puts it, 'the left hemisphere, with its rational system-building, makes possible the will to action; it believes it is the one that makes things happen, even makes things live.' (McGilchrist, p. 230). We can see clear signs of the left hemisphere's influence, and thus of a Cartesian approach, in the substantial desire to 'make things happen' within the CLD. Its instrumental thrust is much more correlated with the Cartesian than with the Gestalt. This is evident both in the 'will to action' of the authors we have been considering, and also in the 'rational system-building' manifest in the methods they recommend (as we will go on to see).

One further point should be registered. There exist many forms of worthwhile change that are not characterised by the attributes listed above. For instance, it is impossible to 'implement' wisdom, love, joy or worship. Or again, there can be transformative change which is nevertheless impossible to quantify or categorise. I think, for instance, of changed relationships or mood within a church, or of the tone and depth of corporate worship. There are types of change which cannot be quantified, or which rightly remain hidden to public view. Or there is that change which can be mistaken for constancy. That which is done repeatedly,

week after week and year after year, may appear to remain identical. And yet each successive iteration is necessarily different, at the very least because it is not the same iteration[4].

4.2   Cartesian characteristics of what is recommended

Vision

Great emphasis is put throughout the CLD on what Williams and Tanner call 'the unimaginable power of vision' (p. 6). Considerable claims are made for the difference that 'having a vision' will make in the life of a local church. Given that a major part of that difference is expected to be in the area of motivation, passion and excitement, at first sight it may seem unlikely that the area of vision will have much in common with a Cartesian approach.   As previously indicated, I will save until the next chapter consideration of the emotional register of the CLD. Setting that aside for now, clear signs of the presence of the Cartesian can still be discerned in the area of vision. In order to perceive these clearly, one distinction must first be made.

It is helpful to distinguish between two different ways in which the word 'vision' is used within this discourse.   One is the 'vision' that any church member has at a given point in time, meaning their understanding, their 'picture', their perspective on God, the nature and purpose of the church, and their own role within that context. Such 'vision' may change over time, and the twists and turns of life can be trusted to test and probe the content and depth of each person's vision. It is likely to be multi-layered, and a substantial proportion of it may well remain at the level of the subconscious. Such vision is important, and will have considerable impact on the person's subjectivity, relationships and action. This first meaning of 'vision' uses the metaphor of sight in a broad way, for instance including perspective and insight.   The second sense of the word 'vision' is much more focused, even explicitly defined. The second sense refers to what is known as a 'vision statement' within the CLD[5]. Alternatively, some authors talk of the need to 'capture the vision in words, clearly' (Lawrence, p. 208), which we can summarise as 'a statement of the vision'. This second sense is not unrelated to the first sense of 'vision'. But it is crucial to recognise the differences between the two. Lawrence wants the second sense of vision, vision captured in words, to 'reflect the fullness of God's

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[4] Jeremy Begbie makes this point and explores this theme powerfully in *Theology, Music and Time* (Begbie, 2000, pp. 155-175).
[5] Some authors take care to distinguish between a vision statement and mission statement, although the definitions offered are not uniform across the CLD. My comments here apply broadly to both forms.

vision' (p. 209). However, it is hard to imagine how this can be managed simultaneously with his other requirements, namely that the vision statement should also be:

- Straightforward enough to be understood

- Startling enough to be exciting

- Specific enough to give direction

- Simple enough to be remembered (p. 209)

Why has it been helpful to distinguish between these two senses of vision? In part because some of the rhetoric within the CLD draws on the significance of the former sense in order to argue for the necessity of the second sense. Furthermore it appears to assume a straightforward causal link between articulating and communicating the second sense of vision, and the transformation, even replacement, of the first sense of vision for most congregation members.

The first sense in which the word vision is used has much more in common with a Gestalt approach. Within this sense, for instance, there is ample space for depth, ambiguity, and flux. Furthermore, it allows for 'betweenness': multiple relationships are implicated within it and affected by it[6]. In contrast, the second sense of the word 'vision' has significant overlap with the Cartesian, for the following reasons. It is characterised by *fixity*, a strong left hemisphere preference. Not all authors mention any sort of time limit on the lifespan of the vision, but those who do would expect it to be at least five years. It is required to be *simple* and *specific*, again prime Cartesian attributes. There is to be one, single vision for each church: the possibility, never mind the desirability, of multiple perspectives exerting mutual corrective pressure is not even mentioned, and certainly not commended[7]. It is asserted that a vision statement can be expected to lead naturally to the identification of a small number of priorities or objectives. This means that a vision statement must inevitably offer what is very much a simplified map of reality. This fact is both a strong feature of a Cartesian approach, and also highly significant. As I explained in Chapter 2, it is very easy for a simplified map of reality (in this case what the vision statement identifies as priorities) to be treated as if it were reality itself. When this happens, the result is the exclusion of much that is important. The potential positives of *focus* are replaced by the negatives of *reduction*.

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[6] I think, for instance of David Ford's concept of the 'community of the heart' (D. Ford, 1997, pp. 1-4).
[7] For comment on the close relationship between the doctrine of the Trinity, and the general need for 'corrective pressure' between different perspectives see (Healy, 2000, p. 34, also referring to; Lash, 1992, p. 93).

A vision statement will 'give direction', in two senses. First, the *content* of the vision statement is expected to be end-directed. Thus, for Williams and Tanner, the clarity offered by the vision statement will 'ensure that this is the direction into which all [of a church's] efforts, activities and resources are focused' (p. 6). We encounter here both significant instrumentality, and also the rectilinear clarity that comes from clear binary divisions between what is in the vision and what is not in the vision. Second, *the purpose of having a vision is itself instrumental.* Its construction is in order to induce movement and change, as previously discussed. In summary, we encounter repeated evidence that both the content and the form of this second sense of vision have multiple Cartesian attributes. Moreover, it is the second sense to which the CLD gives explicit attention.

Before moving on, I cite a typical 'example' vision statement offered by Chew and Ireland, and make one comment thereupon.

> 'We will become a growing church where all ages can grow in faith and receive spiritual support, and with a reputation for loving service to the local community' (p. 70)

What is this a vision *of*? It is a vision of *this church*. The vision, the direction of attention, is both self-directed (oriented towards the church itself), and self-directing. It does make reference to the local community, though it is striking that it is the *reputation* of the church that is emphasised in that context. What this vision is *not* is a vision of God. 'Be thou my vision' is not a guiding tenet of this process. 'So would I gaze upon you in the sanctuary, to behold your power and glory'[8] refers to a different genre of visual metaphor. That this example vision statement is focused on the church itself is not surprising, given the surrounding discourse, and how it constructs the role of such a vision statement. Furthermore, it is indeed necessary to give appropriate attention to the nature and calling of the church. Nevertheless, I highlight the fact that the attention, the gaze of the church is being directed towards its own self-understanding, rather than towards the God of grace and glory.

Priorities and objectives

Authors within the CLD vary to some extent both in the number of phases that they identify following the articulation of vision, and also in their terminology for those phases. Thus, for instance, Chew and Ireland are unusual (although, to my mind, helpful) in signalling the identification of priorities as a distinct phase, prior to formulating objectives. Or again, each

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[8] Psalm 63.2, Common Worship Psalter

author tends to choose their favourite from the words 'objective', 'goal' or 'target', but the intended meaning appears to be the same. Having previously reflected on the articulation of vision, this subsection will concentrate on priorities and objectives. The subsequent phase of planning I will attend to within chapter 5. As throughout this chapter, the primary question under consideration is the extent to which Cartesian attributes are evident within these aspects of the CLD and of the Mission Action Planning process.

A short answer to this question can be articulated as follows: The degree of Cartesian influence evident within these phases steadily increases as we start with priorities, then move to objectives in general, and end up with objectives formulated according to the SMART acronym (which will be explicated shortly). The identification of church priorities, then, shows some Cartesian signs. In order to choose some priorities, for instance for the coming year, other possibilities must be excluded. Such prioritisation therefore requires clear-cut clarity, and binary 'yes-or-no' decisions for each contender. When priorities have been identified, an outline simplified map of reality has been produced. This offers an initial sense of direction and instrumentality. Such moderate Cartesian symptoms can, at this stage, still leave space for the Gestalt. If, for instance, a priority was to explore starting a group for mums and toddlers, a number of variables would still be left as open questions: Could such a group be viable? Could appropriate leaders be found? Could practicalities of timing and venue be resolved? Would there be initial enthusiasm which might then die off, or might an initial small group gradually grow? Flux, lack of control, and space for responsiveness to unfolding circumstances are all in evidence.

When an initial priority is reformulated as an objective, the balance takes a significant shift towards the Cartesian. To begin to think in terms of 'an objective' is precisely to start constructing clear boundaries as to what exactly we want to achieve. The rectilinear texture that characterises the Cartesian consequently comes into view. I will not pause at this stage, however, because of the striking ubiquity within the CLD of a very specific formula stipulating precisely how objectives should be constructed. This formula is encapsulated in the acronym SMART, the letters of which represent the need to be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-limited. Before commenting on each of these in turn, I cite Chew and Ireland's rationale for these criteria, which is easily the most explicit I have come across:

> 'Churches have discovered that in order to bring each priority to life, the priority needs to be translated into a goal statement. These are written in such a way that everyone will know what is to be achieved. To do this in the best way, we use the SMART method to arrive at the goals.' (pp. 71-72)

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One can appreciate the need for reasonable clarity regarding priorities, but these authors make no comment at all on precisely why this degree of specificity is essential. Rather, this requirement seems to be an essential part of the discourse, but not one about which we are encouraged to *think*. I make a particular point of this because these SMART requirements play a very significant role in shaping the overall texture and tenor of the approach being recommended.

SMART criteria

I turn now to consider each of the SMART components in turn, drawing on the main example offered by Chew and Ireland as I do so (p. 72). They illustrate the requirement to be 'Specific' as follows: 'engage with young adults aged 18-30'. We see here one of the prime Cartesian impulses, namely the separation or division of a certain set of people from all others. The specificity is achieved by constructing category boundaries, thus replacing any ambiguity by clear-cut orthogonality. We know who the goal is aimed at, and who it is not aimed at.

The second requirement is that progress should be 'Measurable'. Quantification lies very firmly within the Cartesian domain. Again, it is clear-cut, and not ambiguous. A Cartesian disposition always has an end in view. Incorporation of a requirement for measurability sharpens the definition of such an 'end'. Thus, Chew and Ireland continue to develop their initial example: 'to see an increase in total attendance of the 18-30 age group of 10 per cent' (p. 72). They make the following comment:

> 'It is very important to choose the right thing to measure! As a rule of thumb, try to measure the outcome that is desired, but if this is not possible or too difficult, select the most appropriate leading indicator' (p. 72)

My best estimate is that this requirement is essentially seen as motivational, and intended to guard against complacency or laziness. Two issues arising from the requirement for measurability, however, should be emphasised. One is the probability that, if the objective is specified in terms of the 'most appropriate leading indicator', that indicator will become the focus of attention, rather than the main issue itself. It has been well documented how measurable targets can easily end up skewing efforts in inappropriate directions in fields such as education and healthcare, with, for instance, hospitals 'shifting resources around in time to comply with specific medical audits rather than concentrate on medical improvements' (Grint, 2010, p. 67). Such a possibility in a church context has not been registered as meriting reflection within the CLD. Second, areas of church life which should be priorities end up being undervalued because of the *impossibility* of reconstructing them as quantifiable. As Collini

pithily summarises it, 'not everything that counts can be counted' (Collini, 2012, p. 139). Pattison describes this frequent impact of measurement as 'the exclusion of the intangible' (Pattison, 1997, pp. 94-96).

Third, objectives should be formulated so as to be Achievable. At first sight, this is to be welcomed, not least because the mention of achievability forms a welcome counter-balance to the otherwise idealising tendencies of whole method. On the other hand, it is very striking that no mention is made of the difficulty, or more frequently impossibility, of knowing in advance what will turn out to be achievable. Chew and Ireland expound the term as follows: 'Ensuring that people believe that the goal is significant, but possible' (p.72). I propose this will most likely be done by making a reasonable guess. One can imagine, however, that admitting to basing significant aspects of objectives simply on guesswork would rather undermine the rhetorical and motivational potency ascribed to objectives themselves[9]. Is achievability particularly Cartesian? This is much more difficult to call. I propose that the *discernment* of achievability relies very much on Gestalt instinct, but that the *terminology* of 'achievability' reformulates that Gestalt instinct as a clear-cut Cartesian 'yes' or 'no'.

When it comes to the 'R' of SMART, we encounter a rare case of divergence within the CLD. Within *MAP*, 'R' stands for 'Resourced: ensuring that there are sufficient human and financial resources' (p. 72). Whether being resourced is more of a Cartesian or Gestalt consideration, I propose, will depend very significantly on the objective in question. There may or may not be particular Cartesian bias here. Other authors offer alternative construals of the 'R'. Williams and Tanner define it as Realistic, which to me means the same as Achievable. For Lawrence, the 'R' stands for 'Relevant' (p. 262) but without further comment. It would certainly seem surprising to want an Irrelevant objective. Perhaps the 'R' is, in fact, essentially a 'filler' letter.

Finally, the 'T' indicates the need for clear Timing of the expected completion of the objective. Chew and Ireland's example goal statement is now completed thus:

> 'To engage more with young adults aged 18 to 30 so that we see an increase in Sunday and midweek regular attendance of 10 per cent within 12 months.' (p. 72)

This final aspect of specification increases the Cartesian nature of the objective. A clear boundary is constructed in the third dimension of time, supplementing those around age and attendance numbers. There is an assumption that the church possesses a substantial degree

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[9] See further, for instance, Collini's discussion of why a figure of 50% was selected by a previous government as a target for participation in higher education (p. 158).

of control over causal factors, so that it can be instrumental in achieving this target. All these are strongly congruent with a Cartesian approach to reality. Nevertheless, if one imagines oneself into a position 11 months beyond the formulation of this objective, for instance with the relevant attendance only up by 5%, how would this objective be likely to function? One possibility would be to go down the route of pedantry: the term 'regular' has been left remarkably unspecified in the objective. Can I find a plausible way of defining it that means I may yet make the objective? (Perhaps a Christmas party would do the trick?) Another possibility would be to let go of the target of 10%, but still be pleased with 5%. In neither case is it clear why the SMART characteristics of the objective have turned out to be helpful, never mind essential. Furthermore, crucially, the more seriously one took the objective, the less attention one would have available for the people for whose benefit, presumably, the objective is perceived to be formulated.

Overall, what has been the impact of 'developing' a priority into a SMART objective? The striking increase of Cartesian features has already been made clear. I make four further comments. First, not only is the recommendation of SMART characteristics shared across authors, but it is also applied across priorities. The assumption is made that this strongly Cartesian part of the overall method is to be applied *in toto* and universally, irrespective of the content or context of a particular priority. No author, for instance, suggests that in some cases the requirement for measurability might be dropped. Whereas a Gestalt perspective will be alert to particularities and local contingencies, a Cartesian perspective, based on a pseudo-mechanical metaphor for much of life, easily assumes that algorithmic formulae will normally suffice. This first point leads into a second, more general, observation. It is striking across the CLD that questions of *process* are given a lot of attention, whereas questions of *content* are given very little. Lawrence, to his credit does include a short section encouraging the leadership team to 'test and weigh' a proposed vision, including to make sure that it does not 'simply reflect external, measurable qualities' (p. 207). There is, however, only one page devoted to such reflection. Chew and Ireland include no less than forty-seven questions in their '10-point health check for your MAP' (pp. 79-82). Only two of these, however, have any connection with content[10]. The other 45 questions are purely about process. Overall, one could easily get the impression that it is primarily the accuracy (a Cartesian concern) with

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[10] The two exceptions simply ask whether the mission statement and vision statement respectively are 'good' and 'well thought out'.

which one carries out the process that is significant, rather than the creativity, depth or sensitivity (Gestalt concerns) of one's overall approach and priorities[11].

Third, Chew and Ireland assert that SMART criteria are needed 'in order to bring each priority to life' (p. 71). It may be that some of those criteria are relevant for very particular types of priority. However, it would often seem more likely that the imposition of these criteria would *reduce* a life-focused priority to a target-focused task. Fourthly and finally, I concluded earlier that the letter 'R' may essentially function as a 'filler' within the SMART acronym. By this I mean that its primary purpose is not about any additional content or meaning. Rather, its function is to 'pad out' what would otherwise be an obviously unsatisfactory acronym: removing the 'R' leaves one with 'SMAT'. However accurately this might summarise the criteria seen as essential, such an acronym could not be taken seriously! Insert the 'R', even though it effectively stands for 'Redundant' and a transformation is effected. It is no coincidence that the word 'smart' has been deemed desirable as an acronym. It combines monosyllabic crispness with a self-congratulation that is subtle enough not to appear arrogant. Moreover, the construction of the acronym operates in partnership with the way which is wielded: First, assert the necessity of SMART criteria. Second, briefly describe the meaning of each of the five criteria. Third, take care not to linger too long, lest people begin to question the universality of the prescription. Overall, the impression of clear-cut reasonableness will normally carry considerable rhetorical impact. Why is it that so many authors follow a similar practice of simply asserting the need for SMART criteria in the formulation of objectives? Is it that they have each, independently, carefully considered the pros and cons of each of the five criteria, in the context of all likely genres of church priority, and have separately concluded that they too can affirm their universal necessity? Or, might it be that this acronym fits very well within a substantially Cartesian discourse, and so has been accepted as credible and confidently passed on, but with all too little critical examination?

4.3   On tools and machines

Within this subsection, I focus on the question of the instrumentality of the CLD, attending to one dimension of instrumentality in particular. That is the Cartesian tendency to view every context through the metaphor of a 'machine'. As McGilchrist puts it, 'the model of the machine is the only one that the left hemisphere likes' (p. 98). But what exactly might it mean to have a pseudo-mechanistic disposition in this way? Certainly it might include a particular

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[11] Taking the same consideration a step further, I have encountered several instances where a diocese is interested in whether a church *has* a Mission Action Plan, but is not obviously interested in the *quality* of its content.

focus on quantity and timing or speed, which factors have already been identified through consideration of the SMART criteria. I now wish to complement those considerations with one more. I do so via a distinction made by Hannah Arendt (1958), namely that between *tool* and *machine*. I will summarise her main point, then develop it further, with some help from Polanyi, in order to shed light on ways in which the CLD's recommended process may be machine-like. How then, first, does Arendt delineate the difference between a tool and a machine?

> 'Unlike the tools of workmanship, which at every given moment in the work process remain the servants of the hand, the machines demand that the labourer serve them, that he adjust the natural rhythm of his body to the mechanical movement… Even the most refined tool remains a servant, unable to guide or to replace the hand. Even the most primitive machine guides the body's labour' (Arendt, 1958, p. 147)

The tool is most clearly a servant of the 'hand' and of the person using it. The machine, in contrast, though not quite becoming the master of its operator, does have the significant distinction of 'replacing the rhythm of the human'. It is the machine that guides, and that determines the temporal outworking of the process.

Let me develop and expand, in two ways, upon this distinction between tools and machines, before going on to analogically relate the distinction to the CLD[12]. The first point to make is that the use of many tools involves subtleties of touch and judgement. Such *sensitivity* is accrued only gradually through experience, frequently accumulated over years or even decades. Think for instance of Stradivarius using a set of planes to shape what will become the back of a violin, or Rembrandt employing a brush. Furthermore, the acquisition of such skills involves what Polanyi describes as the 'tacit dimension'[13]. The tool user will not be able to specify in precise detail exactly what they are doing, but will have developed or imbibed an interpretive framework that enables them to 'just know' the appropriate shadings of touch and pressure. Moreover, from the perspective of the person using the tool, it is almost as if any distinction between the tool and their hand has disappeared. The tool has become an extension of its user; they indwell it, and appear to sense directly through it. For instance, as Louth paraphrases Polanyi,

> 'A rower pulling an oar feels the resistance of the water, not the various sense impressions in his hands… A blind man using a stick feels not the impact of the stick on his hand, but what the end of the stick is knocking against.' (Louth, 1983, p. 61)

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[12] I am aware that there may well be something of a continuum between tools and machines. Nevertheless, emphasising the distinction between the two (in clear Cartesian fashion) will help yield valuable insight.

[13] Described in section 3.2.

The second point I wish to add to Arendt's distinction follows on directly. Such sensitivity enables *responsiveness* on the part of the user of the tool. That is to say that the user can be expected to *adjust* what they do and how they do it, depending on what they encounter, what they experience, what feedback they get through the tool regarding the nature of that with which they are working. Sometimes the adjustment may be very marginal, perhaps without the user even being aware of it. At other times, for instance as a skilled craftsman engages with a specific piece of wood, the responsiveness will be much more evident. It is as he 'feels' and experiences its character and properties that he may revise his conception of the carving he had been planning to make, or choose to switch to using a different tool.

Such sensitivity and responsiveness apply to the use of tools, but are not evident in the functioning of machines. As Arendt described the machine determining the rhythm of its operator, so that rhythm will not be expected to vary. My bread-making machine will not adjust its functioning if I use a different type of flour – or indeed if I accidentally insert coffee powder rather than flour. Machines are not sensitive in such ways, and therefore cannot be responsive.

Tools, machines, and the CLD – illumination from the metaphor

What light, then, do these distinctions shed on the methods of the CLD? I referred in the introduction to the thesis to the commonly voiced perception that Mission Action Planning and its equivalents are 'just a tool'. My contention, however, is that the recommended method of the CLD actually has more in common with a machine-like process. The input to the machine comes from the likes of community audits, and church SWOT analyses. And the output from the machine will emerge in the form of vision statements and SMART objectives. To be fair, there is some space for responsiveness, and adjustment if necessary. Nevertheless, both the process that will be undertaken and the form of the results of that process are determined in advance, and uniform across all churches. I contend that, in substantial ways, such an approach is substantially machine-like. What are the implications of such a resemblance? I make three points.

The first connects this discussion with the broader logic of both the chapter and the thesis. A functionalist pseudo-mechanical approach is a significant indicator of a Cartesian approach[14].

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[14] It forms one half of my definition of the *instrumentality* that is the second overarching emphasis that I discerned within a Cartesian approach (see chapter 2).

Second, such machine-like functionality is anomalous within the church. Third, however, a possible way forward suggests itself. It is possible to imagine Mission Action Planning, not as a total solution that must be adopted in its machine-like entirety, but as something closer to a tool-kit. In the terms of the metaphor with which I have been engaging, perhaps this is a machine with a particular quality: it can be disaggregated, taken apart, and resolved into distinct tools. An appropriately discerning practitioner might then choose to use some of those tools, probably alongside other tools from elsewhere, in their engagement with their local context. But, under the new terms of this reframed metaphor, they would be both free and encouraged to be selective, to be sensitive and to be responsive as they did so. *Holy Conversations* (Rendle & Mann, 2003) is a resource from the USA advocating precisely this sort of approach. Although the authors set out a range of 'tools', that could be used in a total, machine-like manner, they repeatedly emphasise the need for *appropriate* planning, tailored to the specific situation, people and possibilities being faced (p. 11).

4.4 Why measurable targets should not normally be welcomed in church

In contemporary British society, numerical targets are ubiquitous. Writing in 2000, David Boyle claimed in *The Tyranny of Numbers* that the then British government had set itself 8000 new targets at the last count (Boyle, 2000, p. 217). The omnipresence of targets within much contemporary discourse can easily lead to assumptions that they are universally appropriate and helpful. For many, however, the CLD's blanket prescription of target-setting within church life is one of its clearest anomalies. For that reason, I now devote a short section to setting out at least some of the reasons for proper concern regarding such an approach.

I begin by employing some Cartesian analysis and boundary construction, to enable greater precision. First, I will treat 'measurable objective' and 'target' as two equivalent ways of summarising 'objective formulated according to SMART criteria'. Second, there is a significant distinction to be made between what I term *targets of sowing* and *targets of reaping*. With a target of sowing, the objective is construed exclusively in terms of what I myself will do. Whether or not I meet the target is under my control. This is not the case with a target of reaping. There may be ways I can make the target more likely, whether directly or more tangentially. Here, rather than control, the relationship is one of partial influence. The degree to which I can influence the meeting of the target may vary. And the likely impact of external factors may also vary, and is likely to be highly significant.

Third, a further dimension of significant variability relates to what we might call the *authority* of the target. Here there is a continuum. At one end of the continuum lies what is hardly a target at all, but more a playful exploration of possibilities. This could engender a creatively enriching stretching of the imagination ("I wonder whether it would be possible to… Let's imagine that the response could even be…"). Further along (rated at perhaps 3/10) lies a loosely held target ("Let's see whether we can get to…"). At 7/10, the target is taken very seriously indeed, but purely from the volition of those involved ("We will do our utmost to reach this target."). Beyond this point, external consequences are invoked ("If your attendance doesn't increase by 30%, you will have to share a priest with the neighbouring parish."). Such invocation may or may not make a difference to the attitude and actions of those involved. All the CLD discussion of targets that I recollect has focused on the setting of the target, rather than the manner in which the target should be held or invoked[15]. But consideration of this latter factor opens up a much broader range of possibilities, both for better and for worse.

Taking some of these considerations together, what insight ensues? Targets of reaping are revealed to have rather questionable foundations. For instance, the church of which I am a vicar may meet its target, but for reasons that have nothing to do with me. My neighbour's church may fall short, in spite of her superior character, dedication, wisdom and prayer. Focusing attention on how each church 'measured up to' the targets, yielding typically Cartesian either/or conclusions, is not obviously going to be helpful. Targets of sowing *may* be more helpful. But they are not without their own dangers. For instance, they can still lead to objectification of people (of which see more below). Or again, once something is formulated as a target, it can easily be assumed that it should automatically take precedence over something that would otherwise be a priority (but that has not been formulated as a target)[16].

Several more sets of concerns need to be registered. The first relates to the *quantitative* focus of targets. As has been registered previously, such focusing of attention on the measurable inevitably distracts attention away from the more important, but unmeasurable, qualitative aspects of church life. The rationale for inducing the quantitative also deserves exploration. This may, in part, be because a Cartesian approach assumes that measurement is more

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[15] As has been made clear previously, focusing on what is done, and not on the manner in which it is done, is a classic characteristic of a Cartesian disposition.

[16] It is this need to be wisely responsive within the unfolding drama of life that led Stephen Cherry to coin the phrase *time wisdom*, as distinct from *time management* (Cherry, 2012). A *time wise* person will discern well when the priority should take precedence over the target.

trustworthy than the judgement or discernment characteristic of a Gestalt approach. The significance of this move can hardly be exaggerated. Wisdom, discernment, and good judgement have for millennia been highly prized qualities. They should not be set aside lightly. To the extent that a rationale for measurability is made explicit in the CLD, it is largely described as being energising. The other reason for specifying a target in measurable terms is so that you can tell whether or not you have reached the target (Dayton & Engstrom, 1985, p. 54). This assertion clearly begs the question why it is so important to know whether or not a target has been reached. The answer is not at all obvious, though the influence of a Cartesian desire for binary clarity seems highly probable. What, precisely, is wrong with working creatively, responsibly and intelligently towards a priority, and reflecting prayerfully on what ensues?

Second, the assumed effect on clergy and church members created by the setting of a SMART target deserves closer examination. The CLD apparently assumes that all people will always find such targets to be energising and motivating. Such an assumption would depend upon an essentially Pavlovian response via which contact with a target automatically sets all concerned salivating with excitement and energy. To be clear, I do not rule out the appropriateness of such targets *in some settings*. But the assumed universal effect of targets both relies on a depressingly thin anthropology, and is also manifestly untrue. Furthermore, the CLD appears to view such target setting, perhaps coupled with the articulation of a vision statement, as *the single possible source of energy*[17]. It does not mention, for instance, the tried and tested possibility of someone having a good idea, discussing it with others, exploring options, finding support from the PCC, but all without actually needing an objective as such, never mind a SMART one.

A third set of concerns surrounds the impact of target setting, particularly around church attendance, on those who might help the target to be met[18]. These concerns can be summarised by the term *objectification*. The potential new members, along with the existing worshippers, become a useful means by which the target might be met. Imagine that a church has set a target of increasing attendance by 10% over two years. CLD orthodoxy would encourage the whole church to be galvanised in seeking to meet this objective. As most (Anglican) churches primarily meet together in the context of worship, this objective is likely to be publicised during the notices, probably with all present being exhorted to do their bit to

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[17] Chapter 7 will explore alternative sources and mediators of energy.
[18] If the target is about church attendance, this will include both existing and potential new worshippers.

help. Imagine the perspective of someone who has summoned the courage to cross a church threshold for the first time, wanting to explore whether Christian faith might be credible after all. They hear the exhortation to increase attendance by 10%, following which other worshippers act in a friendly manner towards them. What is really going on, they may well ask? Is this friendliness genuine, or am I essentially target-fodder?

The fourth reason for describing such target-setting as anomalous relates to *Scripture*. Target-setting in the biblical narrative is conspicuous by its absence. Whilst Jesus was often purposeful, I recall no suggestion that he had set himself measurable objectives. When he sent out his apostles in pairs, there is no mention of targets for their ministry. The Acts of the Apostles repeatedly tells of remarkable fruitfulness, but without specifying the numerical goals that had been worked out in advance. The letters to the churches in the book of Revelation are in some instances deeply searching and challenging, and in others strongly encouraging. All of this is achieved without targets. No one can doubt the desire of the apostle Paul to see the church grow in numbers. Nevertheless, a letter such as that to the Ephesians devotes its first half to rich theology, and the second to the individual and corporate quality of church life. There is no obvious allusion to church growth at all, never mind the setting of targets as a means to that end.

Target setting is, thus, conspicuous by its Biblical absence, but that is not all. Jesus in particular frequently seemed almost irresponsibly unconcerned with the consequences of his encounters with people. He let the rich young ruler go. He was robust, even rude, with the scribes and Pharisees. There is no sense that the *number* of people following him was a concern. Rather, faithful obedience and love, improvised as situations unfolded, appear to have been his priority. It could be argued that the parable of the lost sheep acts as a counterexample here. There may just have been one lost sheep, but the rehabilitation of that sheep was the overriding target of the shepherd, until the measurable target of one was achieved. Indeed, McGavran uses this and related parables to argue for an emphasis on outcomes rather than input. How would I respond? By highlighting that, when a sheep or a coin is lost and then found, one can pick it up and take it home. This is not the case with people. The lost son had to come to his senses first, and his father apparently had no influence whatsoever on whether or when that would happen. I follow Percy in seeing the parable of the sower as offering an alternative perspective. As well as making clear the almost irresponsibly generous sowing of God, it also makes explicit the simple fact that fruitfulness varies. What are the implications of this? Percy puts it clearly:

'you might work in a parish with the richest soil, where every seed planted springs to life… But some places are stony ground, and faithful mission and ministry in those fields might be picking out the rocks for several generations.… The question the parable throws back to the church is this: what kind of growth can you expect from the ground conditions you work with? And this is where our current unilateral emphasis on numerical church growth can be so demoralising and disabling. Is it really the case that every leader of numerical church growth is a more spiritually faithful and technically gifted pastor than their less successful neighbour? The parable says "no" to this.' (M. Percy, 2014, pp. 259-260)

In conclusion, might targets ever be appropriate in a church setting? I don't rule out that possibility. But I have highlighted a range of significant reasons why, in many cases, targets should at least be held very lightly, and probably avoided if at all possible. Rather than identifying a (moderately arbitrary) specific destination, then doing our best to get there within a specified time, why not focus instead on appropriate steps forward from our current position?

Conclusion

This has been the second chapter of Part B, in which a primary aim is to discern the extent of Cartesian influence within the CLD. The focus within this chapter has been on the perceived centrality of change within the CLD, and also the processes that the CLD recommends for the enabling of such change. I demonstrated that the CLD approach is strongly biased towards the sorts of change to which the Cartesian is attuned. Focusing on objectives which will be implemented limits attention to change that involves clear-cut boundaries: either it has been done or it hasn't. What is excluded is often both Gestalt and more important. For instance, neither love nor wisdom can be implemented or categorised in such ways.

In examining the different stages of Mission Action Planning, more fingerprints of the Cartesian were discerned. The process of formulating a vision statement and articulating main objectives will lead to a simplified map of reality, which will then be accorded a position of considerable authority in the shaping of church life. The associated clarity, fixity, and expected instrumentality are also strong Cartesian characteristics. These observations were heightened and magnified yet further with the ubiquitous requirement that objectives should be formulated as SMART. Furthermore, I argued that the process as a whole, rather than being a 'tool' (sensitively and responsibly used by a skilled practitioner), can more accurately be characterised as pseudo-mechanical. Such a characterisation fits well with the SMART criteria, and their emphasis on measurable outcomes.

Can anything positive be said about the Cartesian characteristics of the CLD in this area? I believe that it can. For instance, the identification of a modest number of priorities for a particular church to focus on, coupled with clear-sighted thought and analysis, will often be very helpful. The Cartesian within the CLD, however, seems to have what we might call totalising ambitions. It does not stop at identifying priorities, but focuses and cartesiates them as far as it can[19]. The end result is SMART objectives, which I register as arguably the most problematic of all features of the CLD.

Are there any traces of the Gestalt within this aspect of the CLD? There is indeed potential for its positive engagement, primarily in consideration of vision. I registered the distinction, however, between vision and vision statements. The requirements of vision statements, such as their conciseness and the expectation that objectives will naturally flow from them, are significantly constraining here. As a consequence, it will be an exceptional vision statement that manages to resist substantial cartesiation.

One of the recurrent tensions here is again the ambivalent relationship between *focusing* and *reduction*. The desire to enable positive and appropriate focus all too easily spills over into inappropriate reductionism, that proves anthropologically, theologically and ecclesiologically demeaning. Again, primary focus is directed towards the *schema* of the Church. If objectives are required to be SMART, it is very hard to make them pertinent to a church's *morphe*, its inner nature. As with the Cartesian, the attention is much more on what is done than on the manner in which it is done.

Summary of main anomalies

As I said in the introduction to the thesis, my overall aim is to demonstrate three things about the Cartesian: how it connects a surprisingly wide range of phenomena; how pervasive it has become; and the insufficiency of an approach that is biased towards it. In particular, such an approach can be expected to yield a number of features which appear anomalous with respect to the Christian tradition. As in the previous chapter, I here recapitulate in summary form the main anomalies identified in this chapter:

Anomaly 4.1   The degree of prioritisation accorded to *change per se.*

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[19] I introduce the verb *to cartesiate* here, with an intended meaning along the lines of 'to change into Cartesian form'

Anomaly 4.2   The way in which attention is biased towards those *changes which can be implemented*. A wide range of vital qualities and practices (wisdom, love, worship) are thereby excluded.

Anomaly 4.3   In the construction of a vision statement and objectives, the dominant position given to what must be *a simplified map of reality*, because of the relatively small number of such objectives.

Anomaly 4.4   The setting of *measurable targets* as a universally applicable approach. This is arguably the anomaly that is most problematic in the whole CLD. There may be areas where this approach can be legitimate. But in others, not least those focused on church attendance figures, I argue that this approach is deeply misguided and inappropriate.

Anomaly 4.5   Relatedly, the implicit assumption that the articulation of a specific objective is not only the *best* source of motivation, energy and momentum available for a church, but perhaps also the *only* source.

Anomaly 4.6   The *pseudo-mechanical* nature of the recommended process.

Anomaly 4.7   In all of this, the *disjunction and lack of integration* between what is recommended and the normal worshipping life of a church.

Chapter 5 – A positive planned journey

Introduction

> 'Church growth as a science helps us maximise the use of energy and other resources for God's greater glory… It would be a mistake to claim too much, but some enthusiasts feel that with church growth insights we may even step as far ahead in God's task of world evangelisation as medicine did when aseptic surgery was introduced.' (Wagner, 1976, p. 41)

> 'We believe your church has the potential to lead the development and transformation of your local community into a passionate and purposeful place welcoming many people into faith. We believe that you and your team can develop and nurture dynamic, loving and serving disciples, in whom God is glorified abundantly every day of every week in all that they say and do… With great leadership our churches can be transformed into places where people are excited to belong, where faith is constantly growing and pouring out to share Christ in word and deed' (Richard Williams & Tanner, 2004, p. 3)

Literature within the Church Leadership Discourse is often strikingly positive. Its conception of an attainable future tends towards the very optimistic, such as in the quotes above. Within this chapter I explore four main aspects of the discourse, relating to and arising from these emphases. In the first main section, I explore several aspects of its positive nature, before going on, in the second section, to critically examine its dominant metaphor, that of a planned journey, positively and proactively moving towards a better future. This leads, third, to the deliberate examination of planning and plans, and their relationship to the Cartesian and the Gestalt. The final section, then, draws on wider academic disciplines to examine the effects of the CLD, both intended and unintended. I commence, however, by summarising once more the optimistic mood that forms the third overarching attribute of a Cartesian perspective, and sketching its relationship to other Cartesian tendencies.

The third overarching attribute of a Cartesian perspective, then, is a 'mood' of upbeat, positive optimism. Here the 'light' within 'Enlightenment' 'suggests not just clarity and precision, but ... the banishment of the darker, more 'negative' emotions' (McGilchrist, 2010, p. 337). A number of interrelated factors are at play here. We have already discussed the Cartesian preference for an instrumental disposition, seeking to shape and create its own future through clear analysis and end-focused action. Such a preference both depends upon and reinforces this third positive and optimistic Cartesian attribute. For the Cartesian default is not only to

prefer a sense of control, but also to have an optimistic confidence in its ability to determine its own destiny. This confidence is linked to the left hemisphere knowing most clearly only that which it has constructed itself, such as its simplified map of reality. What it knows less clearly is the actual state of affairs beyond itself. And, as its primary focus is on using or manipulating reality towards its own ends, it may end up paying less attention to a realistic, grounded appraisal of how things really are. Its optimism regarding the future, therefore, may not always be appropriate.

The instrumental disposition contributes towards the sense of the positive in two further respects. The first arises from the Cartesian tendency to interpret situations in terms of problems needing solution. To the extent that it can live within this default stance of problem-solving, a Cartesian approach can frequently experience the positive sensations of progress. 'Positive' here refers both to the often enjoyable subjective experience of achievement, and also to the more objective sense of 'moving things forward'. This latter sense links as well to the Cartesian preference for action, or 'proactivity'. 'Sitting around waiting for things to happen' is not a typical Cartesian posture - its preference, rather, is to do something. I describe this preference as a further manifestation of 'the positive', but will devote attention later in the chapter to pointing out some of its shortcomings. Finally, a Cartesian preference for the positive includes optimism not just about the future or the external world. It also strengthens any natural desire to be seen in a positive light, and indeed to see oneself positively. As I will argue below, this is one of the factors leading to a mutual reinforcement between a Cartesian perspective and contemporary tendencies towards promotional discourse.

5.1   We are positive, confident and upbeat: why don't you join us?

I introduce the positive theme in dialogue with the contents of a PowerPoint presentation, included as Appendix 1. This presentation was kindly provided by the Mission Enabler of a local Church of England diocese. He uses it, regularly, to put to parishes and benefices the case for using Growth Action Plans (effectively another name for Mission Action Plans). Typically, this presentation will form the main component of the first session of a planning day, for PCC and other interested church members. Having seen this presentation, along with the Mission Enabler's commentary and explanation, those present would then go on to put together a Growth Action Plan, at least in draft form, during the rest of that day. My use of this material within this chapter follows a similar rationale to my use of Jackson's material in

chapter 3. Thus my claim is that this material manifests particularly clearly the attributes of positive optimism on which this chapter focuses. Having recognised the different strands writ fairly large within this PowerPoint presentation, I trust that it will then be easier to discern their presence in slightly more subtle forms elsewhere within the CLD.

I acknowledge that the 'text' of a PowerPoint presentation (which I intend to include visual imagery as well as verbal) is normally experienced with the accompaniment of commentary from the Mission Enabler. Such commentary not only has cognitive content, but also affects the colour and mood of the presentation as a whole, in one direction or another. Clearly, then, isolating the presentation 'text' for examination removes it from its normal context. How much weight can it therefore legitimately be expected to bear? In responding to this question, I make two simple claims. The first is that, although there may be some instances of irony within the presentation, it is reasonable to interpret the presentation 'text' as broadly representative of the normal 'presentation experience' as a whole. This first claim is supported by the second, namely the strong degree of correlation between the mood and message of this presentation and the general thrust of the CLD in this area.

A prescribed positive mood

'What Is a Growth Action Plan (GAP)? A short document that states where we are going, and how we will get there' (Appendix 1: slides 1 & 2). Right from the start, this presentation is punchy, confident and concise. Its mode is one of straightforward assertion: This is the positive impact you can expect from a GAP. This is what it will deliver. It will have these positive effects on your church members and parishioners. Yes, there is some work to be done, both in putting the plan together and then in enacting it. But if you follow these steps, there is no obvious reason why the fruit will not follow. In fact, why on earth didn't we do this years ago?

Such a tone and timbre may not be universal throughout the CLD, but it is certainly not uncommon. Even the titles of books can epitomise it: *Your Church Can Grow; I Believe in Church Growth; The Road to Growth; How to Do Mission Action Planning,* and *Developing Visionary Leadership*. The positive assertion of possibility, and often probability, is frequent. The tone from the outset is that of a straightforward process, which can be mastered by anyone. Turning beyond the title pages, the optimistic tone is still often to be found, as in the quotes that began this chapter.

It is worth distinguishing between several different domains of optimism found within the literature. One is optimism regarding the attainability of visionary, effective, dynamic leadership, implicitly by any reader of the literature. A second is optimism regarding the effect of adopting a method such as MAP/GAP. A third facet is of the *necessity* of optimism and the positive outlook if the first two are to be realised. This third facet is made explicit in the 'highly popular' course for clergy and other church leaders, *Leading Your Church into Growth*. The first two of the course topics listed on the website are 'Becoming a positive leader', and 'Leading a positive team'. Although these brief titles put no flesh on the bones of what is meant by 'positive', it seems fair to conclude that 'being positive' is seen as a foundational attribute if a church is to grow[1].

This third facet, the necessity of optimism, is readily apparent within the PowerPoint presentation. It is important to register the degree to which it aims to *inspire and excite* (in common with much of the CLD). For example, in slide 5, one of the three reasons offered as to why vision is vital is that 'It gets people excited'. Slide 7 emphasises precisely those words, underlining them with an image of four young professionals leaping in the air with hands raised. And slide 8, under the heading of 'excited people', has four single-word bullet points: Energy; Commitment; Fun; Success. The image of Harry Redknapp's somewhat doleful expression stands as an ironic counterfoil: 'We wouldn't want to look as un-excited as Harry, would we?!' The message is clear: first, we need to get people excited; second, if we can do that, then great things will follow, and previously untapped resources, of finance and energy, will be released (slide 13). What we have here, then, is another example of a fundamentally instrumental disposition. Although at first sight words such as inspiration and excitement appear to go beyond a Cartesian perspective, or the left brain hemisphere, in fact, the aim of the CLD is to engage them precisely for its instrumental purposes. That which appeared to be somewhat more holistic than, for instance, the category-based analysis of Jackson and Voas, turns out to be less than straightforwardly integrated.

A parallel example can be found in a simple diocesan publication – Top 10 Tips for Church Growth (included as Appendix 2, and possibly written by the same diocesan Mission Enabler). Under the heading 'Inspiring worship services', 'Tip' number 6 states:

> 'Churches that have worshipers (*sic*) who describe their services as "inspiring" tend to grow. This does not favour one type of worship style against another but rather points to the positive experience of the worshipper.'

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[1] Taken from course website, http://www.leadingyourchurchintogrowth.org.uk/, on 28th Aug 2013.

At one level this may seem unsurprising and unproblematic. For, to consider the counterexample, if most worshippers chose the adjective 'uninspiring' as their main description of their church services, we might not expect that church to grow. My concern with the quoted statement is strongly related to its being positioned as a 'Tip for church growth'. The implicit recommendation is that we should *aim for* church services to be 'inspiring', *so that* they can offer a 'positive experience' to worshippers. The *reason* for such a recommendation is clearly intended as instrumental. Give people a positive worship experience, and your church will tend to grow. It's not that I would recommend that services should be as uninspiring as possible. But one cannot help calling to mind the likes of Isaiah 30:10, which describes a rebellious people who say to the prophets "Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things".

The tensions inherent here are potentially subtle. But I find it a concern that they appear not even to be acknowledged within the literature. Perhaps the primary tension which I have been describing can be framed most accurately in terms of the ordering of aims. It is easy for more proximate aims to end up displacing and usurping ultimate aims. In the context under discussion, a more ultimate aim might be to shape church services so that engaging connections are enabled between God, those present, and the culture and context in which they live. If this is done well, then services may indeed often be experienced as 'inspiring' or 'positive'. But that cannot be the primary aim.

Impey offers a critique of the weight the CLD often places on inspiration, excitement and vision (Impey, 2010, pp. 65, 67). In the first place he proposes that an approach with a similar worldview to the CLD simply may not resonate with a significant proportion of the churchgoing population. Furthermore, he suggests that an inspiration-dependent approach is something that many people mature out of and grow beyond. As so often, questions of degree are pertinent here. I am not arguing that inspiration has *no* place. But I do question the amount, the proportion of weight that appears to rest on inspiration and excitement within much of the CLD. These alone are insufficient for what is asked of them. Furthermore, I do not recognise the centrality of excitement and inspiration as motivators and drivers within the Christian tradition.

One way of encapsulating why the CLD's degree of positive emphasis might be a shortcoming is via a musical thought experiment. What music might represent well the mood and tone of

the CLD? Let me suggest something along the lines of Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1 (from which we derive *Land of Hope and Glory*). The music, I suggest, would be positive, with a clear beat, at a loud volume most of the time, and with a strong forward momentum. Many would find it rather enjoyable, perhaps inspiring and energising, at least for a while. The mood is indeed one of marching confidently forward. It is not, by contrast, one of exploration, walking alongside, or indeed of pilgrimage.

What would be a faithful musical representation of a more traditional conception of ministry? For me, a Mozart string quartet would be a good starter suggestion. Such music includes a much greater variety and range: of mood, of tempo, and dynamics. Sometimes eager and dancingly alive, at other times slow and pensive or contemplative. Sometimes robust and straightforward, at other times feeling the tension between temporary discords and their resolution. Yet it is here that even the variety of Mozart would fall short in its representation of at least some ministry, and instead the starkness of (for instance) Shostakovich would be called for. Whereas Mozart resolves his dissonances most frequently within a short space of time, Shostakovich frequently sustains a vision of barrenness or bleakness over much more extended periods. However, he also manages to combine the purity of the bleakness with at least a partial redemption of it, simply by the fact of the accuracy of his musical rendering. Here is a really important point: I understand that there were many of Shostakovich's fellow-Russians, for whom the suffering of the Stalinist era was further accentuated by the requirement to be happy, who found great healing in listening to his music. Here at least they could recognise a truthful representation of their circumstances, and the truthfulness itself was a source of hope.

The CLD, then, encourages a positive, upbeat, mood within churches, not least as a source of energy. This sense of the positive, however, may well be expected to be tangible to those 'outside'. I turn now, therefore, to consideration of the CLD in the wider context of a culture that has been characterised as a 'promotional' or 'consumer' culture (Wernick, 1991; Featherstone, 1991; both quoted by Fairclough, 2010, p. 99).

The influence of a promotional culture

Norman Fairclough is a seminal figure in the relatively young field of Critical Discourse Analysis. I attend to some of his work at this point, and will return to it later in the chapter. Fairclough comments on the contemporary 'general reconstruction of social life on a market basis', with a consequent increased emphasis within the economy on 'consumption'. One consequence of

this broad cultural shift is that 'promotion' as a communicative function has been generalised across many orders of discourse (Wernick 1991, p. 181; cited by Fairclough, 2010, p. 99). This substantially increased role for promotion has had 'quite radical' consequences: 'for example, the genre of consumer advertising has been colonising professional and public service orders of discourse on a massive scale, generating *many new hybrid part promotional genres'* (Fairclough, 2010, p. 99, emphasis added). Fairclough goes on to identify such a shift in the genres of University prospectuses and of CVs. He explores these in fascinating detail, for instance noting how a sense of 'dynamic activity' is deemed desirable. In reflecting on the personal experience of writing a CV according to the new rules, as it were, he notes how easy it is for such rhetorical shifts to 'quickly and easily become a part of one's professional identity'. He concludes, therefore, that 'self-promotion is perhaps becoming a routine, naturalised strand of various academic activities, and of academic identities' (p. 113). Of what relevance is the theme of promotion to the CLD? I begin by considering the nature and role of vision statements in its light.

The attention that the CLD pays to vision statements focuses almost exclusively on their desired function within a congregation. This function has several related strands, including unifying, inspiring, and energising. A vision statement, however, has other, and broader, roles. One such is its function in inter-church competition. If I move into a new area, and am looking for a church to join, whether the contenders have a vision statement, and what that vision statement says, may well be significant factors in my decision. A vision statement is likely, for instance, to be prominent on a church website, and it would be surprising were it to be drafted without at least half an eye to this market-related function. Self-promotion may well, as a consequence, be written into it. Similarly, potential newcomers with little or no church background are also likely to encounter a vision statement at any stage. So, again, one might expect the promotional content to be phrased with such people in mind. I suggest, therefore, that church vision statements can be considered a hybrid part promotional genre.

Immediately, however, one encounters problems. Fairclough diagnoses two. The colonisation by promotion which we are discussing frequently involves 'the subordination of meaning to, and the manipulation of meaning for, instrumental effect' (Fairclough, 2010, p. 99). To put it another way, he identifies the temptation to phrase our self-description in ways that will make us appear more attractive. Second, he identifies a 'serious problem of trust: given that much of our discursive environment is characterised by more or less overt promotional intent, how can we be sure what's authentic?' (p. 100). For example, how can we tell 'when friendly

conversational talk is not just simulated for instrumental effect?'. This is an issue both in our interpreting of the communication given by others, and also in our own discourse, written and spoken. The temptation to make self-promotion an integral part of our identity can have 'major pathological effects upon subjects', and is an important issue within 'the ethics of language and discourse' (Fairclough, 2010, p. 100).

Philip Plyming, in his doctoral thesis *Transforming News* (2008) offers a sustained theological examination of a parallel theme, how 'news' is handled by Christian organisations (including the Church of England, and Alpha). Plyming concludes that the apostle Paul's communicative choices (what stories to share, and how to share them) are shaped by 'the controlling paradigm of the crucified Messiah in whose path the Christian is called to walk' (Plyming, 2008, p. 264), and proposes such cruciform news-handling as a model for contemporary practice. It would be interesting to transpose Plyming's work to the context of the CLD, and to hold up his practical and theological critique against the actual contents of the vision statements formulated by churches.

Erich Fromm's consideration of *The Art of Loving* (1978) has a further insight to offer, straightforward but incisive, from the world of interpersonal relationships. When considering 'the problem of love', he points out that most people construe the question in terms of how to *appear lovable*, rather than considering how they might increase their *capacity to love.* People assume they will be more lovable if they come across as successful, or as attractive, according to the conventions of the day (p. 9). What is the relevance of these observations? Might Fromm's comments serve as a clear-sighted critique on how churches direct their efforts, not just individuals. Surely not a few vision statements at least implicitly carry the message that this particular church is just the sort of attractive and successful body (according to the fashions of today) that makes it the 'best object available on the market'. Furthermore, Fromm's comments raise the pointed but necessary question of how much effort the church devotes to the challenging task of increasing its capacity to love, as compared with presenting itself as attractive.

The positive evaluation of the proactive

One factor which the CLD clearly finds attractive is a particular form of action. It is 'positive' in the sense of being deliberate action towards an intended outcome. In this subsection I will outline the characteristics of such action, not least in contrast to other forms largely overlooked by the CLD. Such action is closely linked with the CLD conception of the positive,

and with its dominant metaphor of a planned journey. Such action is frequently described as dynamic, bold, or proactive. It is explicitly mentioned widely in the CLD, and at other times implicitly prioritised. The highlighting of such deliberate initiative is closely linked to the perceived centrality of change, and to the types of change most in view. Such action can indeed be a great blessing. However, I contend that the CLD's prioritising of this form of action is unhelpful. In relegating to the background other modes of action, it has deprived itself of a range of dispositions that are often appropriate and necessary. I consider several of these, concisely and in turn.

First, I propose that the CLD's prioritisation of positive action arises in part from an assumed simple dichotomy between being active and being passive. For a start, the apparent assumption that to be passive is always a bad thing does not withstand theological scrutiny, with the passion of Christ offering the ultimate counterexample. (McGilchrist commends an 'open, active, passivity' (McGilchrist, p. 155).) Moreover, the dichotomy itself is oversimplistic (as well as arising from the prime Cartesian impulse of division). There are important dispositions, such as poised attentiveness, which, while not obviously active, are certainly not passive. For instance, silent, caring, presence alongside is often an invaluable part of ministry, but straddles any active/passive dichotomy[2]. Or McGilchrist comments that 'gaze is active' (McGilchrist, p. 165).

Second, I highlight the general lack of priority accorded to thought and thinking within the CLD. This has been evident, for instance, in the emphasis on pragmatism by several writers, and in the general CLD practice of asserting what should be done, without any sustained justification or consideration of alternatives. To enrich our understanding of this CLD bias, I draw now on Ronald Barnett's *The Limits of Competence* (1994). This work is an insightful investigation into the rise of concepts of *competence* within higher education, along with associated concepts of outcomes, skills, capability and so on.   Barnett uses the term *operationalism* to describe an approach characterised by these concepts. His critique of the growing domination of such notions has considerable parallelism with this thesis. Given the constraints of this thesis, however, I focus here on just one of his insights:

> 'For operationalism, thought is subservient to and is reducible to action. Legitimate thought is evident in action. [But this position is] incoherent. Action worthy of the name… has to draw on independent thought *and* to be susceptible to evaluation by

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[2] See, for instance, Ben Quash's discussion of the centrality of 'being with' in any understanding of care (Quash, 2012, p. 80). 'All the other [understandings of care] would mean a great deal less if they did not have it [i.e. care as *being with*] in view.'

thought drawing on cognitive frameworks other than that in which the action was captured. Thought, correspondingly, has to be expressed, articulated, shared, offered and exchanged. In other words, thought is a complex of forms of action.' (pp. 189-190)

In fact, Barnett's listing of what is required of thought could fruitfully be extended, for there are hard-won stages prior to the expression of thought[3]. His fundamental point, however, remains, and offers an important corrective to the CLD: *thought is itself a form of action*, indeed a complex of forms of action. Moreover, the quality of thought underpinning a mode of being is likely to determine the quality of that mode of being. The CLD, therefore, to the extent that it neglects that mode of action which is thinking, impoverishes itself.

Moving on, in *The Human Condition* (1958) Hannah Arendt offers a thought-provoking three-way division of forms of action. For her, *labour* refers to routine and repetitive work, for instance in an agricultural or domestic setting. Her second term, *making* or *fabrication* is the closest to the CLD conception of positive action, albeit in an analogical manner. Whilst she primarily has in mind action leading to the construction of objects, the fact that this is planned action in service of a specific aim, and with a definite endpoint, leads to the correlation. What she means by her third category, which she terms *action*, can be harder to grasp. It consists of action directly between human beings, which action may take the form of speech. Such action may start a new process, or influence an existing one. Action takes place within the 'already existing web of human relationships, with its innumerable conflicting wills and intentions' (p. 184). As a consequence it 'almost never achieves its purpose'. Action does, however, '"produce" stories with or without intention as naturally as fabrication produces tangible things'. Arendt values the role of labour, but particularly prioritises action. Her main concern with making arises from the perception that it is often enacted 'in order to erect a world, not - at least, not primarily - to help the human life process' (p. 151). The frustrating attributes of desirable 'action' lead to what Arendt calls 'The Traditional Substitution of Making for Action'. 'Fabrication alone has both a definite beginning and a definite, predictable end. Labour has neither. Action may have a definite beginning, but never has a predictable end.' (pp.143-144). The temptation, therefore, is to opt for fabrication where possible, with its satisfying potential for conclusion and completeness, rather than entering the more chaotic and unpredictable arena of action, never mind seeking to make space for the action of others.

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[3] These may include: the identification of an anomaly; the sustained focus and rigorous attention needed to identify precisely what is anomalous; the creative capacity to conceive alternative descriptions or explanations; and the clarity to exclude those new descriptions that are themselves anomalous.

Holding Arendt's categories against the CLD, I contend, first, that the CLD gives insufficient recognition to the value of ministerial *labour*. What may appear routine and repetitive from the perspective of the minister may nonetheless be vital. Its necessity arises both from its role in maintaining the fabric of the community, and also because it is often in the midst of *labour* that life-giving *action* happens[4]. Furthermore, the CLD bias towards what is planned and instrumental may mean that *action*, which is often responsive, can get overlooked or squeezed out. Moreover, making space to elicit the action of others can be as important as acting ourselves. CLD emphasis on our own proactivity is inherently asymmetric, in a potentially detrimental way.

Two further comments should be made. First, the desired CLD proactivity is strongly correlated with the Cartesian approach: it likes clarity, control, and to be exercised with a clear end in mind. Second, once again, such proactivity can often be very helpful, and precisely what is called for. My criticism, however, is of imbalance within the CLD, and of the undervaluing of passivity, of poised attentiveness, of thinking, and of Arendt's labour and action.

5.2   The nature of the journey

In Chapter 1 I identified the notion of *an organised journey towards a pre-identified destination* as the primary metaphor within the CLD. Within this section I start by highlighting how this metaphor relates to CLD notions of the positive, as well as to broader Cartesian characteristics. I then go on to articulate some of the limitations bound up with the pre-eminence of this metaphor, before broadening my considerations to the world of the American Western, via the work of Lewis-Anthony.

The CLD journey metaphor – positive and Cartesian

First, then, I underline how the CLD conception of a journey relates to its emphasis on the positive. Slides 5-9 in Appendix 1 encapsulate concisely the positive excitement seen as bound up in the notion of a journey. What, precisely, is so positive about this metaphor? I suggest there are two simple primary facets that make it rhetorically powerful. The first is the allure of the destination. This is inevitably held out as superior to the present state of affairs. It is a

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[4] Emma Percy's recent work exploring motherhood as a metaphor for ministry illustrates this point excellently (E. Percy, 2014).

bright, new, future. The primary biblical analogy is that of the promised land, carrying with it connotations of abundance and of blessing. Within the CLD, however the destination is described, it will be presented as both attractive and attainable. The second facet of the metaphor tends to remain implicit. That second facet is the leaving behind of the present – by which is intended, presumably, all that is currently frustrating, challenging and unsatisfactory. The promise of such a fresh start seems hard to turn down.

The type of journey envisaged is strongly in line with the CLD's preferred mode of action, as discussed in the previous section. Having discerned our intended destination, the rest is up to us. Dynamic, planned activity is called for. There is no sense of the existence of any external events, never mind their influence or relevance for good or ill. As Williams and Tanner put it, 'the future is in your hands' (Richard Williams & Tanner, p. 3). This is a Cartesian vision, characterised by clarity, control, order, and a simplified map of reality. The image of a straight road ahead in Slide 6 in Appendix 1 is precisely in line with the writing within the CLD. If we apply ourselves to the task, there is no reason why the journey should not be fairly straightforward. The road is clear of other traffic: our focus need only be on our own actions. The road is tarmac: this is not a journey to undertake on foot, but in a motor vehicle. The surrounding landscape is remarkably uninteresting and monochrome, but that does not matter: this journey is primarily about getting to somewhere else, arriving at the destination, speedily and efficiently. Such, at least at times, is the nature of the CLD journey metaphor. However, on its own it is signally insufficient. It is to an exploration of its anomalies, however, that I now turn.

Anomalies within the CLD journey metaphor

I begin by recapitulating those features of the metaphor which Starkey identified as problematic, as discussed in section 1.6. He challenges the assumption that we could or should be able to identify the destination of our journey well in advance. He contends that our conceptions of the destination are rarely broad enough. Citing Roxburgh, he argues that prioritising the destination inevitably leads to the objectification of people. He puts the case that the journey itself is at least as important as arriving at the destination. Finally, he questions the assumption that there is a blueprint in God's mind for 'where each church should be' in five years' time. I concur with Starkey's diagnosis on each of these fronts, and add three main further points of my own.

First, in Chapter 3 I made the point that the primary type of 'change' that 'counts' within the CLD is change that involves some measurable shift from one category to another. I would put the case that precisely the same condition holds true when it comes to considering what 'counts' as a valid journey or destination within the CLD usage of this metaphor. When we reach our destination, in one year or in five, the change will be tangible and unmistakable. I would argue that it is highly likely to include a change in the *schema* of the church. It will be clear-cut: something will now be happening that was not happening previously. Something will have been implemented. Such change may be positive, and may open up new potential. As previously, however, I would argue that such an emphasis on clear-cut category change distracts attention from what is even more important. Those attributes or qualities that are simply not susceptible to implementation, such as grace, wisdom, justice and love, are by definition excluded.

My second point highlights one potential motivation for such an emphasis on the metaphor of journey. That motivation is the Cartesian thirst for novelty and stimulation, shared by much contemporary culture. Not least because of an underdeveloped Gestalt sensitivity, many simply not have developed the attributes of patient attentiveness needed to live well in a relatively stable environment. Thus the only known way of avoiding boredom is to find an external environment that is frequently in flux. Rather than learning to discern beauty, depth and richness amidst the everyday, the emphasis (from this perspective) is always on the next new thing (McGilchrist, pp. 336, 433). This search for novelty is not the only motivation for the journey metaphor, but I put the case that it may be a contributing factor that bolsters its appeal to at least some of the population. Such a conception may also contribute to the demands of the CLD to *always* be moving forwards. Rest and satisfaction are not prominent concepts within this writing. Whilst the reaching of 'milestones' is to be celebrated, there is to be a constant striving towards the next target. Christ's promise to give rest to the weary is not normally mentioned (Matt. 11.28-30), nor the message through Isaiah, 'In returning and rest you shall be saved' (Isa. 30.15).

The third aspect of the journey metaphor which I identify as anomalous focuses on the fact that each church is conceived as being on *one* journey. In order for the question 'Where will your church be in five years' time?' to be meaningful, the assumption must be that the whole church is travelling in the same direction at the same speed. In the context of the photograph on slide 6, everybody is perhaps in the same coach. This assumption of homogeneity I identify as an anomaly. This is partly because different areas of church life are likely to be journeying

at different rates: it will only be *the process of Mission Action Planning* for which the journey is unified. Even more importantly, this assumption of a single journey is anomalous with respect to the likely *variety of people* within a typical church.

The CLD claims that the articulation of a vision will 'create unity' in a church (see for instance Slide 12 in Appendix 1). There may indeed be some aspects of church life which it is both desirable and meaningful to describe via a metaphor of everyone travelling together. For instance, 'concrete' developments such as building projects might come into this category. I am, of course, well aware that significant disunity can be a real challenge. Nevertheless, there may well also be a huge diversity in members' experience of 'direction' in their church and Christian lives. One may be excited to discover previously unknown gifts of pastoral care; another may be working out their discipleship in a challenging office environment. One may be very slowly experiencing the healing of years of pain from an abusive relationship. Another may be exploring areas of social justice, and seeking to include others in the church in an existing local project, coordinated by a secular agency. Might these four very diverse examples each rightly be the primary priority of those involved? Quite possibly. Are any of them likely to be explicitly included within, or co-ordinated by, the church vision statement? No. Should they be? We encounter here, again, a tension between *focusing* and *reducing*. And, I argue, the notion of a single church journey tends to underline such unhelpful simplification. By contrast, Starkey writes of the 'astonishing range of ways' in which we are to help different people experience the coming of the kingdom of God (Starkey, 2011, p. 128). And Gillian Stamp commends 'the creative leadership needed to hold together apparently disparate activities, to provide a way in which it is always possible simply to say "and" rather than "but"' (Stamp, 2004, p. 118).

I have, then, questioned: whether it's normally possible to know in advance a church's five-year destination; whether the destination itself deserves such prioritisation; the degree of homogeneity of God's kingdom implied by the metaphor; the degree to which any journey is motivated by an inappropriate thirst for novelty and stimulation; and whether what 'counts' as a destination is likely to be of primary importance. All of these considerations and more are taken up together when we simply face the question "Where is God calling our church to be in five years' time?" (GAP Powerpoint Slide 16), and answer it literally. The answer, of course, in the vast majority of cases is quite simple. The answer is this: "In five years' time, our church is called to still be *here*". A calling to remain in the same place does have clarity and certainty, but lacks the senses of dynamic activity leading to demonstrable progress so prized by a

Cartesian perspective. Nevertheless, most churches are, rightly and positively, called to be rooted and stable institutions. That rootedness, stability and longevity is itself a prophetic statement in a substantially transient cultural environment. The calling to still be "here" in the medium and long-term does, of course, have its challenges. For most people and in most cases, that calling includes learning to work and worship alongside a wide range of people, some of whom we will find challenging. But might not *committed rootedness*, rather than a perpetual journeying, be what most communities primarily require from the churches that seek to serve them? Such commitment offers the challenge and promise of stability, which forms one of the vows of Benedictine monks. As Benedict well understood, stability was not in order to avoid necessary change. Rather it was to provide an environment in which each one can face the truth of themselves, revealed in stable community, in order to grow in the school of the Lord's service.

Do I, then, think that all talk of journeys and destinations should be banned from church discourse? No, I don't. There is necessary movement, change and transformation, and there are times when this metaphor is appropriate. On some of those occasions, the journey will be to a 'destination' known in advance, what we might call a Mosaic journey. On other occasions, however, the church's metaphorical journey will be much more Abrahamic: having some sense of a broad direction of travel (at least for the next step), but with the emphasis on learning to follow God's leading, rather than on getting to a pre-identified endpoint. Within section 5.3 I will reflect further on the significance of planning within the metaphor of the journey, and go on to consider complementary or alternative metaphors that might better reflect the realities of church life. Before doing so, however, I give attention to a recent work which draws attention to the link between one powerful metaphorical journey and common conceptions of church leadership.

John Wayne and the journey West: Lewis-Anthony and the CLD

This section fulfils two functions. First it gives attention to an important and interesting recent book by Justin Lewis-Anthony, whose subject area overlaps substantially with my own. Entitled *You Are the Messiah and I Should Know* (2013), it draws heavily on the genre of war films in particular to argue the case summarised in its subtitle: *Why Leadership Is a Myth (and Probably a Heresy)*. Secondly, it brings forward the discussion of the metaphor of journey, and connects it to the importance of 'the journey West' within American culture. Within this current section I begin with a brief summary of Lewis-Anthony's book, before going on to comment on, and develop, some pertinent aspects of it.

Lewis-Anthony, I suspect, begins his work with a similar motivation to my own, namely a dissatisfaction with contemporary church appropriation of leadership language. His angle of investigation, however, is substantially different, focusing as it does on film. Lewis-Anthony proposes that three dominant models of leadership can be discerned: managerial, missionary, and mythological leadership. These he abbreviates to ManL, MissL, and MythL respectively.

> 'In short, the dominant model of leadership in the Church proclaims allegiance to Missionary-Leadership, acknowledges the lessons to be learned from Managerial-Leadership, but, ultimately, is an expression of Mythological-Leadership.... Mythological-Leadership, in turn, depends upon assumptions of violence and domination… Fundamentally, MythL has nothing to do with the Christian gospel.' (Lewis-Anthony, 2013, p. 6)

It is worth expanding on his use of the term mythological, as it forms a central strand of his work. Relatively early in the book, he asks the important question, 'Where do people get their ideas of leadership from?' (Lewis-Anthony, 2013, p. 54). The answer he offers is in terms of *mythology*. By this he means an 'interpretive lens', a 'mediating discourse', a mythology which is 'omnipresent, omnipotent and omni-transparent… Our knowledge [of] leadership comes from believing in and living under the power of the myth of leadership.' (p. 56). There is considerable overlap between Lewis-Anthony's use here of mythology and my own emphasis on the significant influence of discourse, including that of its hermeneutical filters, highlighting some aspects of reality or potentiality, and hiding others. For both of us, interpretation is of great importance.

Lewis-Anthony's designation of mythological leadership as a separate, third, category, can be a little misleading. On the one hand, he intends mythological leadership to refer to a genre of leadership that is distinct from the managerial or the missional – for instance that of the war film. But on the other hand, by denoting this third category as mythological, he is not implying that mythology is irrelevant to his first two categories, the managerial and the missional. Rather, if I understand correctly, all three categories are mythological in two important senses. The first sense is that, in spite of some very different 'surface dressing', he believes the managerial and the missional to share many of the fundamental (and inappropriate) characteristics of his third category of 'mythological' leadership. And the second, related, sense is, I believe, that the *propagation* of all three models of leadership happens substantially via the mediation of cultural myths.

Lewis-Anthony highlights the significant influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson on the formation of a mythological image of leadership, and sees it as combining two distinct, but related American myths: the myth of the Frontier, and that of the American Adam (Lewis-Anthony, 2013, p. 79). Focusing first on the Frontier, de Tocqueville described its gradual progress in terms of 'a providential event. It is like a deluge of men, rising animatedly, and driven daily onward by the hand of God' (quoted in Lewis-Anthony, p. 83). And, whilst the precise location of the Frontier was always changing, its direction remained constant in the West. Thus Henry David Thoreau could say 'we go eastward to realise history and study the works of art and literature, retracing the steps of the race; we go westward as into the future, the spirit of enterprise and adventure.' (quoted in Lewis-Anthony, p. 84) Thus 'West' became much more than a direction, but encapsulated a 'moral attitude'. By the mid-1800s, it was also presented as 'a political and economic imperative', memorably articulated in the phrase "Go West, young man!" (Lewis-Anthony, p. 85)

This summary of the actual and symbolic importance of the Frontier, is joined by the mythological role of 'the American Adam' in shaping the cultural backdrop to American self-understanding and films. Perhaps the primary characteristic here is the requirement of self-definition, seen as holding out unlimited possibility as the Frontier moved West. Thus R. W. B. Lewis would articulate in 1955 the myth of the American Adam, concerning 'a pre-lapsarian Adam, given a second chance to live as if the Fall had never happened, and whose life and destiny would be limited only by the illimitable bounty of the American land and the sincerity of the American settler' (quoted in Lewis-Anthony, p. 89). Such self-definition, however, can be at least as much a burden as a blessing, and is closely linked to the experience of being 'a socially un-situated self' (Bellah, 1988, pp. 55, 65; quoted in Lewis-Anthony, p. 96).

Lewis-Anthony, then, has established his grounds for seeing at the roots of American, and hence contemporary Western, mythology an Adamic figure tasked with the adventure of continually pushing back the Frontier. From here, he draws on Paul Ricoeur and Walter Wink, among others, to argue that the 'system' that arises from this myth is substantially based upon domination and indeed violence. From here, the argument is first, not surprisingly, that such attitudes have no place in the Christian church. And, second, he presents Dietrich Bonhoeffer as an excellent recent example embodying 'leadership' much more fitted to the cause of Christ. Having thus summarised the main strands of Lewis Anthony's work, what should be said regarding its pertinence within this thesis?

First, I agree strongly with Lewis-Anthony that, when considering what sort of thing leadership is, one enters the world of interpretation and mediating discourse. As a consequence, one is unlikely to find a universally applicable method by which leadership can be enacted. Rather, the most helpful ways forward will involve removing layers of veils from what is assumed within leadership discourse, and from the means by which these assumptions are disseminated. Lewis-Anthony adds very valuable insights in these directions, through his focus on the contribution of films to leadership discourse, and their own derivation from the Emersonian Ur-myth (Lewis-Anthony, p.79).

Second, high amongst these insights is the connection between the myth of the Frontier and the prevalence of the journey metaphor within leadership discourse. The Frontier, symbolising the future-focused adventure that lies to the west, draws the reader/viewer towards itself, whilst implicitly downplaying the pertinence and attractiveness of the past, lying to the east. Identifying the degree of influence of these cultural connotations makes possible their analysis and evaluation. To be sure, there are strong resonances in Scripture and the Christian tradition of the call to set out in new directions, leaving behind what is no longer appropriate. But this strand of the tradition is clearly held in tension with another, which deliberately and repeatedly looks backwards to its origins and sources, remembering and re-incorporating the actions and promises of God over the generations. This tension, evident in Scripture, often appears to be missing within the CLD.

Third, I underline Lewis-Anthony's ambivalence regarding *self-definition*. The perceived need for self-definition is clearly manifest in the CLD requirement for vision statements and the like. But should this most accurately be interpreted as a liberating demonstration of freedom to mould communal identity, or a burden arising from an inadequate appreciation of the community's social and theological embeddedness in a given relational identity? Stanley Hauerwas, in his foreword to Lewis-Anthony's book, has commented insightfully that in a good community 'the leader is an agent of memory to help the community not lose what makes them who they are' (Hauerwas in Lewis-Anthony, p. xi). Is 'who they are' more significantly derived from their own self-definition, or from the past actions of God in Christ, continually re-experienced afresh through the ongoing gracious gift of the Spirit? Is primary identity mainly to be received as a gift from God, or to be constructed? My judgement is that the CLD tends to unhealthily bias churches towards self-definition based on action and objectives.

Fourth, Lewis-Anthony writes with some conviction of how the church talks of Jesus Christ, but expects John Wayne (especially in Chapter 7 pp. 199-213). His thesis regarding the impact of the myth of an American Adam on contemporary leadership understanding carries some weight. However, one area he does not address is how 'an American Adam' might relate to the process-focused prescriptions of much contemporary leadership discourse. This strikes me as an important question. It is not straightforward to imagine John Wayne embarking on a process of Mission Action Planning, complete with vision statement, objectives and SMART targets. So how might the mythological influence on contemporary leadership be understood in the context of such process?

My answer to this question brings us back to considerations of Cartesian and Gestalt perspectives on the world. It seems to me that the culturally dominant Cartesian perspective has a lot in common with the Emersonian Ur-myth, such as its focus on instrumentality, its emphasis on breaking new ground, and its optimistic non-paradoxical outlook. As we have seen previously, however, a fundamental axiom of the Cartesian perspective is that any worthwhile activity can be analysed into its component parts, and reconstructed as a generalizable process, in principle able to be used in any and every situation. From such a perspective, then, Mission Action Planning can be seen as a serious attempt at *the routinisation of John Wayne*. The Cartesian perspective is confident both in its skills of detailed analysis, and also in its ability to control the world around. Thus the romance of the journey pushing back the frontier is (so the theory goes) captured and articulated by statements and targets.

The routinisation of John Wayne, I believe, is a fair approximation of what Mission Action Planning is trying to do. But serious attention must be paid to the incongruity of that very phrase. Can the spirit of John Wayne really be captured in such a way? Is there actually such a connection between the idealised romanticism of the West and the pseudo-mechanistic processes of SMART objectives? Yes, there may be a place for 'visionary' influence, and yes, a degree of careful and realistic planning is often necessary. But that falls some way short of what is prescribed, both in terms of its vision-factor and in terms of its clear-cut measurability. Rather, most of the time, I propose, what is required is neither so clear-cut nor so glamorous as what is prioritised within the CLD. What is more, I would not recommend John Wayne as a vicar.

5.3   What place for planning?

> 'What we are talking about here is strategic planning… This is crucial work for [most organisations] – if they get it right, they can thrive; if they get it wrong, they may face problems…   Every church has a vital role to play in building God's kingdom, and therefore the same need for strategic planning' (Chew & Ireland, 2009, pp. 1, 2)

The claimed necessity of strategic plans

The prioritisation of planning and of plans is deeply embedded and uncontested within the CLD. In particular, it is the *strategic* planning process that is highlighted, as evidenced in the quotes above. What is meant by 'the strategic planning process'? Chew and Ireland offer a seemingly obvious answer to this question, namely 'the way of producing the strategic plan' (p. 2)[5]. The word strategic is not itself defined by Chew and Ireland. It is portrayed, however, as having two main implications. One is the sense of an *overview*, capturing all important strands of activity or potential. The second is a sense of *instrumentality* and effectiveness. This is a plan through which we expect to make things happen.

In putting a case for strategic planning, Chew and Ireland do acknowledge that there is caution on the part of some church leaders regarding the use of 'business tools' in church life (p. 10). They comment that this may be because 'in the past there has appeared to be incompatibly [*sic*] between a hard-edged "bottom line" emphasis and human/faith considerations'. Readers may find it reassuring that

> 'secular business writers are increasingly incorporating Christian concepts into their approaches… For example, the business strategy process step of developing a clear Vision has origins in the Old Testament.' (p. 10)

Chew and Ireland make a distinction between, on the one hand, 'processes' or 'methods' and, on the other, 'tools'. Within this distinction, the tools that are used within a given process may change over time, but the processes themselves endure. From here, the final step of the rationale is presented as straightforward, although, again, not every reader will necessarily be convinced:

> 'Mission Action Planning is a process, similar to strategic planning in the secular world, and therefore there will always be a need for it. It may be called different names by different churches or dioceses, but it is not a passing fad!' (p. 12)

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[5] I will argue later in this section that seeing *planning* purely as a means of producing a *plan* is itself a surprisingly significant anomaly.

Planning and ordering: often necessary, but rarely sufficient

Dan Hardy and David Ford, in *Praising and Knowing God* (1985), reflect on *disorder* and *order*. They comment that disorder has often been equated with evil, and order with good. Such a view, however, is insufficient. 'The dominance of order… allows little room for another dimension of goodness' (p. 96). This other dimension is the realm of laughter, freedom and joy, play and delight: Hardy and Ford's term for this dimension is *non-order*[6].

> 'Non-order is not just a means of producing new order, but is to be valued in itself, whatever its practical consequences. It is good simply to laugh, to play, to enjoy… Many forces, psychological, social and spiritual, try their best to order the non-order out of existence, often labelling it disorder.' (p. 97)

Disorder, then, can indeed be deeply unhelpful, inhibiting the good. Order is often a source of blessing. But a crucial point is that order is rarely an end in itself. Rather, it is more frequently a means by which the richer blessings of non-order can be helped to flourish. A simple example is the offering of hospitality for a special occasion. Care and attention will often be put into an appropriate 'order' for the occasion, for instance in the setting of the table(s). For instance, the cutlery may be laid neatly, and floral decorations carefully arranged. Such order, however, is not an end in itself. Rather it is a contribution to the greater aim of marking the occasion, giving a sense of its specialness, enhancing the mood and the atmosphere. If, at the end of the meal, the most memorable aspect was the symmetry of the cutlery, the organisers would be disappointed. What they hope for, instead, is the abundant overflow of conversation, friendship, laughter and joy. The order plays a vital part. Without appropriate order, the occasion would be deeply inferior. But the order itself is subservient. A proper ordering is often necessary, but rarely sufficient. The purpose of the order is to enable non-order.

These concepts of Hardy and Ford shine very helpful light on the role of planning within churches. I make three points. The first is very important to affirm, which is that *good ordering and wise planning are normally necessary*. Without them, disorder easily leads to frustration, wasted energy, and strained relationships. The shaping of appropriate order is a great gift and blessing, and to be welcomed with open arms. Second, however, *ordering and planning should not be ends in themselves*, but rather, normally, means of enabling the riches of non-order. Third, it is easy to assume that all that is not order, is disorder. But to do so is a mistake. Hardy and Ford describe the result as 'dullness and boredom' (p. 97). I would

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[6] I confess I do not find this a fully satisfactory term for such an important concept, but have not managed to conceive an appropriate alternative.

describe it as missing the point, failing to attend to what matters most. Furthermore, the fact that 'over-ordering' is an undesirable possibility is a helpful warning, which needs to be taken seriously.

At this point I move to highlight the significant correlation between Hardy and Ford's insights on the one hand, and on the other, McGilchrist's description of an appropriate relationship between the Cartesian and Gestalt. Within this parallelism, the Cartesian corresponds to the realm of order. If there is insufficient harnessing of a Cartesian perspective, disorder will surely ensue[7]. Wise appropriation of the full strength of Cartesian clarity should therefore be sought and welcomed. However, if the focus does not go beyond the Cartesian to the Gestalt, the blessings of non-order are likely to be far from abundant. Yet again, the fruit of Cartesian analysis is to be handed over and integrated into the broader context.

Having made this connection, I want to link it further with one of McGilchrist's most significant insights. He says this:

> 'The left hemisphere, with its rational system-building, makes possible the will to action; it believes it is the one that makes things happen, even makes things live. But nothing in us, actively or positively, makes things live – all we can do is permit, or not permit, life… [The left hemisphere] thinks it gives life to [things]. In this it is like a cat pushing a dead mouse about the floor in order to see it move. But we do not have the power to make things live: like the cat, we can only either permit life, or not permit it.' (McGilchrist, p. 230)

This observation clearly contains an injunction to considerable modesty regarding our own powers of causation and control. I particularly want to link it with the notion of non-order, developed above. The crucial point is this: the blessings of non-order *are not caused by* the order which the Cartesian left hemisphere can create. The Cartesian may have a *necessary* role, and even a *positive* one. Its influence may *enable* non-order, and make its flourishing more likely. The Cartesian, however, cannot *make* non-order happen. This point is utterly fundamental. The fact that the CLD appears not to have registered this distinction is one of its most significant shortcomings. If the Cartesian *could* indeed make non-order happen, then much of its rationality would have a surer foundation, and more of its prescriptions would be worth serious consideration. But it cannot: neither the Cartesian nor the Gestalt is able to cause non-order.

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[7] Quite what counts as sufficient use of the Cartesian will be highly context-dependent.

At this point I step sideways for a paragraph. This chapter has critiqued from a number of angles the CLD dominant metaphor of a planned journey to a pre-identified destination. I have sketched alternative types of journey, and modes of travel that may offer better metaphorical underpinning for aspects of church life. Here I go a step further, and argue in favour of metaphors that have an *ecology*[8]. One example would be that of a *habitat*, such as in a nature reserve. Here there is a proper role for the ordering of the environment, perhaps including pruning, cutting, and planting. But the interventions of ordering are always secondary and subsidiary. The purpose of the ordering is to shape a habitat most conducive to life. The ordering does not create the life, but it does shape conditions conducive to it. It removes that which wars against life - but the life itself is not within its gift. Importantly, in most nature reserves, the habitat that is cultivated is designed to encourage a glorious and diverse profusion of a wide variety of life. It does this, not least, by enabling a wide range of niche micro-habitats, precisely so that a broad range of creatures can find a home there.

Another metaphor with an 'ecology' is that of a *household*[9]. Indeed, this metaphor can nearly be applied literally to the life of many local churches. Here, what is done does matter, but the manner of its doing is also of crucial concern. Moreover, there is rich and realistic space for the long-term shaping both of individuals and of relationships. From here, it is but a small step to the metaphor of a *family*. This can incorporate the concept of an ecology, but also adds the vital strand of relatedness and relationship. Here, our identity is not primarily construed in terms of function or task. Rather, what makes us who we are is the gift of relatedness, to God and each other, and the offer of relationship. The prevalence of agrarian parables within Jesus teaching resonates strongly with the perspective of a habitat in which life can be enabled, but in which growth itself remains mysterious. Moreover, Jesus' profound imagery of himself as the vine, with his followers as the branches, combines the notions of ecology and relationship with powerful simplicity.

The cumulative argument of this subsection now enables me to fill what has been a gap in my reasoning to date. At several points in the thesis I have made claims, without explicit justification, that unmeasurable, qualitative aspects of church life are more important than those that can be quantified. Hardy and Ford's insights now offer a clear rationale for such assertions. Concisely put, that which can be quantified or categorised corresponds to the

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[8] I am not saying that any one of these should be the sole metaphor (of which more in Chapter 6), but rather that the dominance of the CLD metaphor should cease.
[9] The close link between *household* and the Latin *habitat* is noteworthy.

realm of order, but those good things which cannot, belong in the domain of non-order. The former is properly subservient to the latter.

Addressing the risk of over-ordering: planning need not lead to a plan

Having established earlier the possibility of over-ordering, I now make a bold claim: the emphasis within the CLD on *producing a plan* significantly increases the risk of over-ordering church life. The degree of emphasis on the order constructed by the plan can easily lead to the blessings of non-order being overlooked, or even smothered. This will particularly be the case if the plan is formulated according to the prescribed SMART criteria discussed at length in chapter 4. Rather than going over that ground again, here I will focus instead on a vital distinction that enables a fruitful way forward. The distinction I wish to emphasise is between, on the one hand*, the activity of planning*, and on the other, the actual *plan* that may be produced[10].

Put simply, *engaging in planning need not be expected to always lead to the production of a plan.* The fact that the verb and the noun share common etymology must not be allowed to skew our judgement of what is appropriate in a particular set of circumstances. The apparent paradox here can be resolved by attending to quite what is meant by the participle *planning*. Clearly this activity can *include* the production of a plan. But it may also include a surprisingly broad range of other modes of thought and activity. These could include thinking, considering, reflecting, conversing, discussing, arguing, discerning, paying attention, pondering, wondering, resisting, imagining, and anticipating. In addition, all sorts of questions may well be asked: questions beginning "What if…?", "What is really going on with…?", "Who may be able to…? ", "When do we need…?", "Would X be able to…?", and so on. If these approaches are engaged in with integrity, intelligence and imagination, all involved (which may be one or more people) are likely to gain a richer understanding of the areas, the terrain, under discussion. Such richer understanding may include some or all of the following: the particular context; specific people or groups, and the dynamics between them; Scripture; action (of 'us' or 'others') in the recent or more distant past; potential action (of 'us' or 'others') in the near or distant future; contingent factors likely to be influential or determinative in some way. (I highlight at this point that the range of activities in the semantic field of planning definitely includes Cartesian analysis, but also requires substantial Gestalt wisdom, for instance in its attentiveness to context and timing, and in discerning how to balance the influence of a range of factors.)

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[10] For the purposes of my argument here, I will focus purely on plans formulated according to the prescriptions of the CLD.

Assuming, then, that some such aspects of richer understanding have been gained, the next point is a crucial one: *the precise form which that richer understanding takes, and what it should appropriately lead to, will vary from context to context*. Sometimes the richer understanding will mean realising that we simply don't know something: for instance, why the congregation or the broader population haven't responded to an initiative as expected, or why somebody is behaving in a particular way. (Furthermore, it may or may not be possible or appropriate to try to gain knowledge of what we currently don't know.) Sometimes the richer understanding gained may clarify that a particular area deserves to be explored more fully, but that it is not yet clear whether development in that area is at all viable. Sometimes the fruit of the activity will be a clear consensus on what a 'next step' should be, but with no idea what will happen beyond that. And, sometimes, the fruit of the activity will be a clear plan, or the recognition that one needs to be produced. Taking these two paragraphs together, I conclude that the range of activities often summarised as 'planning' is important and often demanding. However, 'the production of a plan' is only one option among many valid potential results from these worthwhile activities[11].

It would of course be possible to define one's terms differently so that an activity is counted as planning *only if* it included making a plan. My argument, however, is that such definition is *not* that in common usage. Rather, all of the approaches outlined above are commonly seen to be aspects of planning[12]. The CLD, I contend, is wise to encourage careful and insightful planning in the broad sense described above. However, it makes a logical error, and an error of judgement, when it goes on to assume that planning must lead to a plan[13]. Furthermore, the status, authority and instrumentality accorded to the resultant plan, as I will argue in Section 5.4, can easily be unhelpful, unrealistic and anomalous[14].

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[11] Note that the discussion here is bound up with the precise form of the journey metaphor assumed. For instance, if one is using the metaphor of an exploratory journey in unfamiliar territory, then gaining familiarity with the terrain is obviously a useful result.

[12] One can say "I'm doing some planning this afternoon", and emerge with a clearer idea of what is likely to be needed, but without a plan as such.

[13] See for instance Chew and Ireland's description of 'the strategic planning process' simply as 'the way of producing the strategic plan' (p. 2).

[14] I find it very interesting that Mark Ireland acknowledges that, over the course of his ministry, 'often the most significant works of God have been quite unplanned or unforeseen' (p. 35). Strikingly, he argues that engagement with Mission Action Planning 'makes us more receptive to the unexpected guidance and prompting of God.' (p. 36). I would argue that, for many people, the creation of SMART plans is likely to militate *against* such responsiveness, for two reasons. First, adjusting or relinquishing the plan is unlikely to be done lightly, because of the amount of effort invested in its creation. Second, the work required to create the plan, and to implement the objectives, could easily leave no energy (or good will) for responding to the unexpected.

Strategic nudging

The perspective I am advocating has much in common with that expounded in *Living Leadership* (Binney, Wilke, & Williams, 2005). This book is significant in that its focus is not on leadership *theory*, but rather on real experiences of leadership. The book is based on broad and deep research, of which the central part was a set of eight case studies in a range of commercial contexts. In each of these studies, an experienced researcher accompanied a new senior manager for a full 12 to 24 months in their new job. In the course of doing so, they held regular reviews and discussions, both with the leader and with others who worked with them, in which they reflected on what was really going on. The resultant book draws out the main strands of their conclusions. Central amongst these are the need to, on the one hand, reduce the heroic expectations placed on the shoulders of leaders, and also the expectations made of particular leadership techniques. On the other hand, the authors find much to affirm in what can be achieved by a context-focused approach, in which leaders draw on the full spectrum of their experience and humanity, and relate to their colleagues as human beings. At this point in my thesis, the book's most relevant contribution comes from its chapter 12: 'Strategy: nudge it forward'.

In that chapter, the authors challenge the commonplace view that what leaders do is develop visions and strategies, which are subsequently implemented. That, they say, is the 'cleaned up, rationalised version - good for a case study in the business school classroom, not much use as a practical guide' (p. 179). Rather, the reality is 'much more like a blindfolded man who wants to cross a room'. He's never been there before, has no idea what's in the room, and can only feel a short distance in front of him. So, by a combination of trial and error, going backwards, sideways, perhaps over a number of obstacles, he eventually reaches the other side… only to find himself going through a door into yet another room.'

It is not, say the authors, that strategy is completely irrelevant. However, strategy is not often helpfully encountered in the form of an epic overview. Rather, it is more about an emerging sense of particular trends or challenges that deserve attention and response. The distinctive contribution of leaders is often to articulate such trends in a way that helps people 'make sense of the chaos and complexity of daily work' (180). For leaders, then, the authors recommend repeated attention to 'the classic strategy questions'[15] but without expecting 'final

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[15] For instance, two of the nine sets of examples they give are 'What's the current reality of our position today? What challenges are we not facing up to? What opportunities are we not seeing?; What continuity do we need to be successful in the future? And what change?' (p. 189).

answers'. The focus is not on the production of a plan, but rather on sense-making, in a much more narrative form. Thus, commenting on the experience of the leaders within the research,

> 'Their job as leaders was to go on listening and talking and shaping the story that enabled the organisations to make sense of the road they were on.' (p. 188)

Roles of the leader include keeping expectations realistic, holding uncertainty, and bringing together 'thinkers' and 'those at the coalface who know how things really work'. The authors put particular emphasis on judging issues of timing, arguing against a plan that is strategic in the sense of aiming to cover all areas:

> 'We strongly caution against tackling all the issues at once. Usually this only leads to superficiality. Better, usually, to identify the vital few questions for now and work through them thoroughly' (p. 191)

Overall, the portrait offered is of serious and engaged attention to important questions. However, rather than any expectation of clear-cut, controlled, predictable objectives, they encourage leaders to anticipate a process that, whilst much less straightforward, will still be fruitful and productive. As with the image of the blindfolded man, they encourage readers to trust 'to the power of small steps. Over a period they add up.' (p. 193). This way of proceeding still has considerable instrumentality, but manages to exercise it in a much more sensitive and responsive way. It consequently resembles much more the skilled and subtle use of tools, rather than the initiation of a machine-based process. What is assumed to be knowable in advance is vastly reduced. The degree of control is much lower. There is no clear rectilinear time plan on which the outworking of various objectives can be confidently plotted into the future. But it does involve planning, in a broad, rich, realistic and ongoing sense.

5.4   The effects of the CLD, intended and unintended

Discourse performativity

In this final section of the chapter I draw attention to what has been called the *performativity* of the CLD. This term arises from the work of the British philosopher of language JL Austin, in his seminal work *How to Do Things with Words* (1962)[16]. Austin focused not just on the *meaning* of statements, but on the *effect* that they have. Sometimes the effect is entirely in line with their obvious referential import. But at other times it may go beyond what has been

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[16] Robin Tolmach Lakoff offers a concise introduction to Austin and performativity, as part of a subsection entitled 'language makes reality' in her *The Language War* (2000, pp. 21-23).

said, or even contradict it[17]. As a simple example, the intended performativity of the exclamation "Bus!" will vary according to context. If this is addressed to someone who wants to catch a bus, it will probably mean "Run – there's a bus coming." If, however, it is addressed to a person crossing a road, it is a warning to avoid being run over. In fact, a high proportion of the thesis thus far can be construed as an examination of the performativity of the CLD: I have been very keen to explore the likely *impact* of the discourse, as well as its content. Within this section I will highlight five further aspects, considering in particular the performativity of the words *leader* and *leadership*. In doing so I draw on *Leadership As Identity*, by Ford, Harding and Learmonth (2008), a work informed by post-structuralist theories. I start by summarising some of their key points.

The aim of *Leadership As Identity* is not to spell out how to be a good leader. Rather it aims to look critically at the demands that leadership writing places on individuals, and the impact of such demands on the self-conceptions of leaders. Chapter 2 of the book is entitled 'Leadership As Performative: or How the Words 'Leader' and 'Leadership' *Do* Things'. The focus of the chapter is on chief executives within the NHS, and it charts three stages of discourse over the years since 1948. For the first 40 of those years, no one was officially known as a manager within the NHS: 'administrator' was the preferred term. Since then, 'manager' and then 'leader' have come to the fore. The main aim of the authors is to consider the 'consequences and implications' (Ford, et al., 2008, p. 41) of these discursive changes. For instance, not least, being termed a 'leader' rather than an 'administrator' 'can be understood as a *resource* to be called upon in struggles for power and legitimacy'. Thus, when termed an administrator, their identity was (at least outwardly) subservient to the wishes of doctors, whereas being termed a leader legitimates acting in a substantially different manner (pp. 42-43).

Such an observation, then, is an example of the *performativity* of language use. The choice of words *does* things beyond their 'obvious' referential function. Furthermore, 'a performative "works" to the extent that it *draws on and covers over* the constitutive conventions by which it is mobilised' (Butler, quoted in J. Ford, et al., p. 43). The 'constitutive conventions' in this case are the meanings and associations commonly linked with administration and leadership. Furthermore, 'constant citation has covered over the constitutive conventions… so much so that it has been forgotten that leadership, management and administration are conventions' (J. Ford, et al., p. 43). Martin Heidegger once observed that 'language is the house of Being' (quoted in J. Ford, et al., p. 46). Within this analogy, the discourse used shapes the 'house of

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[17] Sarcasm, for instance, generally involves such contradiction.

Being' that the people involved inhabit - whether the NHS, or a local church. This shaping of the house of Being can, strongly but not inaccurately, be described as 'imposing a version of social reality'. In the NHS context, often the very same activity could equally be thought of as administration, management or leadership. Thus the terms themselves 'become merely provisional, subjectively significant and hence contestable heuristics to make the world comprehensible' (p. 49). I now turn to the CLD and focus on five different aspects of its performativity, commencing with two that relate to the use of the word 'leader'.

What difference does it make to denote someone as 'leader' rather than, for instance, 'vicar'? If I am primarily referred to as the church 'leader', one straightforward consequence is that I will be expected, and I will expect myself, to devote a higher proportion of time and energy to 'leading'. Precisely what *that* will mean will depend on which forms of leadership are deemed acceptable within my context (which is in part why I have devoted so much energy to a critical examination of the CLD). Relatedly, being termed 'leader' will also make likely the devaluing and the hiding of tasks, priorities and qualities properly associated with a 'vicar', but not so explicitly contained within 'leadership'. For instance, receptiveness, forbearance, and the ability to bide one's time might fall into this category.

A second, less immediately obvious, direction of the CLD performativity becomes apparent when we ask *'Of who or what* is the vicar the leader?' Within the Church of England, importantly, the person in question is *vicar* of the parish or benefice, and not simply of the congregation(s). But they will certainly not be *the leader* of the parish (although, using a significantly different construal of the term, they may be considered *a* leader within the parish). Rather, to the extent that they are 'the leader', they are 'the leader of the congregation(s)'. Calling the minister 'leader', in consequence, is likely to sharpen the sense of a clear-cut division between those 'inside' and those 'outside' the church (even though there are many possible ways of construing such a boundary). Much more could be written on this theme. For now I, first, note the Cartesian nature of such a division. Second, the whole shift from vicar to leader could very easily seriously impact the minister's conception of those beyond such a boundary. Rather than the church and its vicar being there *for* them, the shift could easily be that they now become primarily *the target of* the church and its leader.

The third aspect of performativity that I examine focuses not on a particular word, but on the role played by the development and articulation of an imagined *ideal*. Such an ideal is often termed, or closely connected with, the 'vision' being discerned. Thus, for instance, Lawrence

links the recommended process to a comment by Steven Croft: 'At the heart of any process of defining, refining and communicating vision is this simple dynamic of comparing reality with an emerging ideal' (Croft, 2002, Chapter 3, quoted in Lawrence, p. 198). Such a 'simple dynamic' may appear straightforwardly helpful, with the articulation of the ideal making the 'way forwards' much clearer[18]. There may, however, be ways in which the actual impact of the ideal – its performativity – would be likely to run counter to what is intended.

Pattison devotes a chapter of his work to the theme of idealism. He links it to perfectionism, and is deeply concerned by its 'ambivalent effects'. Whether in Christianity, in business, or in the public services, 'the call to perfection… has often led to despair and the abandonment of any kind of aspiration to virtue at all' (Pattison, 1997, p. 74). Pattison is realistic, and acknowledges that there are situations in which idealised standards may be appropriate and helpful (p. 77). Nevertheless, he still points to the 'pernicious effects of idealisation', which arise in particular from a divergence between rhetoric and reality. In response, Pattison points out that 'the search for the ideal can blind people to the value of the good' (p. 82). He borrows a concept from psychoanalysis, and recommends 'good enough' management in place of idealising perfectionism. This concept is taken up by Emma Percy, in her rich and wise exploration of a maternal metaphor for ordained ministry: her concluding chapter[19] explores the concept of 'good enough ministry'.

These perceptions are not unique to Pattison and Percy. Plyming, in the thesis I referred to previously, discovered that the idealised stories and testimonies within Alpha News were found by a majority to be discouraging rather than encouraging (Plyming, 2008, pp. 235-236). Idealisation within the CLD does not only apply to a possible future for a given church. Binney *et al* (2005) describe the idealisation of leadership itself, in particular prevalent concepts of 'transformational leadership'[20]. What did they conclude was the impact, the performativity, of such conceptions[21]? This ideal:

> 'paradoxically disempowers leaders and stops them giving of their best. The leaders themselves feel they cannot live up to the hero ideal. They are uneasy. In their gloomier (or more rational) moments, they know they are unlikely to be - or find - a transforming figure. Yet the ideal sits on their shoulders - reminding them of what they feel they *ought* to be doing as leaders.' (p. 34)

Or, finally, according to Ford *et al*,

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[18] Note the implied single positive homogeneous journey.
[19] Entitled 'Living up to the calling – being good enough' (E. Percy, 2014, pp. 143-162).
[20] Readers may remember that this approach is what Western terms 'Messiah leadership'.
[21] Based on their extensive research.

'leadership… is something that managers find attractive and to which they aspire, but in finding it unattainable they suffer disappointment and become demotivated. Leadership theory is perhaps problematic because it *exaggerates* what can be achieved' (J. Ford, et al., 2008, p. 114, emphasis in original).

A fourth broad aspect of discourse performativity lies in the temptation towards, and the impact of, *reification*. The term reification describes what can happen when some human construction, having been completed, is treated as if it had some sort of independent existence. It highlights the fact that 'man [sic] is capable of forgetting his own authorship of the human world' (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p.89, quoted in Middleton & Walsh, 1995, p. 34). Within the CLD, one can see how easily vision statements, objectives, plans and targets, once articulated and agreed, could become reified. McGilchrist highlights that it is an illusion to assume that clarity implies certainty (McGilchrist, 2010, p. 181). With reification there is perhaps a parallel illusion, namely that clarity implies solidity and status. The implied status arising from reification will be compounded if the vision statement and objectives are presented as being no less than *God's* vision for a local church. So what, we should ask, is the likely performative impact of this reification on the probability of genuine debate and discussion? One possibility is that areas where there is genuine disagreement, however important, may simply be set aside and ignored, so that a 'reduced' vision statement and objectives can be articulated, regarding which there is substantial consensus. (There may be times when such an approach is appropriate. It may, however, simply lead to an accumulation of frustration and conflict.) A second possibility is that one dominant perspective, in an area where there is substantial difference or concern, is captured and reified as part of God's vision, closing down the likelihood of open communication and proper attentiveness to the perspectives of all. The articulation required by the recommended process can thus easily lead to a 'setting in stone' of particular power relationships.

In a forthcoming paper focusing on the emerging approach of the current Archbishop of Canterbury, Percy sketches some similar dynamics at play on a broader stage. Percy commends several aspects of Archbishop Welby's approach, such as his personal warmth, energy, and 'capacity to be directive and decisive' (Percy, Forthcoming, p. 17). This charismatic style he describes as a 'compensator' for the dominant managerialism (and focused targets) currently shaping the Church of England. But the notion of a compensator is not to be understood in purely positive terms. Rather, highlighting a number of parallels with Tony Blair's premiership, Percy identifies this combination (target-focused managerialism and charismatic personal leadership) as a collusive alliance. Within this alliance,

> 'managerial hegemony and charismatic leadership [are] free to dominate in different ways: one rules through controlling and regulating structures; the other is left to improvise, and deploy visionary rhetoric that heightens expectation and maintains momentum. Both appeal to the rhetoric of "enabling", but also have the capacity to dominate and control those who believe they are being liberated.' (p. 19)

The risk of inappropriate domination, however significant, is not Percy's only concern. Both managerialism and charismatic leadership see what Daniel Hardy describes as the inherent 'dynamic tension' of the church as 'something it needs rescuing from', rather than part of the gift of the church (p. 20). Thus the alliance between the two, 'beguiling as it is - only further distances wisdom, critical reflection and theological acuity from the very centre of discourse and governance within the church, which is precisely what is needed to enable ecclesial institutions.'[22] (p. 19)

I highlight briefly one final insight, which can be linked at least loosely to the notion of discourse performativity. That insight is that the characteristics of a Cartesian approach often give its utterances an impressive appearance of rhetorical power. The Cartesian discerns or constructs clarity; it has an optimistic sense of the possibility of making progress happen; it tends to sidestep complexity or paradox. The combined package can be very compelling. Robin Tolmach Lackoff, in *The Language War* (2000), comments on a different context, but one that may have some parallels, namely conservative and liberal discourse[23]. She points out that simple conservative dichotomies (good versus evil, right versus wrong) are 'intellectually easier to grasp and emotionally more evocative of sympathy' whereas 'liberal discourse often bogs down in the yes-buts and on-the-other-hands' (p. 58). As a consequence, the clear-cut arguments that conservatives will propound are 'rhetorically… the easier task'. My point is not about conservatives and liberals, but to emphasise the need to recognise the insufficient foundations which lead to the apparent rhetorical clarity of an over-dominant Cartesianism.

Critical Discourse Analysis and discourse technologisation

Having introduced some of his work in section 5.1, I now return to draw once more on the work of Norman Fairclough. I begin by commenting on some of his broader perspectives, before going on to focus on one set of insights in particular.

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[22] Percy clearly means that the enabling of church institutions requires wisdom *et al* to be prominent in the centre of ecclesial discourse and governance. The sentence quoted could be read as meaning the opposite.

[23] It is clearly beyond the parameters of this thesis to compare and contrast conservative/liberal with Cartesian/Gestalt, but the results might be interesting.

Fairclough acknowledges that Critical Discourse Analysis is often viewed as a marginal, and sometimes suspect area of language study. Yet he argues for its importance, not least because the relationship between discourse usage and other aspects of social existence 'is not a transhistorical constant but a historical variable' (Fairclough, 2010, p. 96). Furthermore, he is one of a number of critical conversation partners within this thesis who draws upon the work of Jürgen Habermas[24]:

> 'Habermas gives a dynamic and historical twist to the analysis of the discourse of modernity through his postulation of a progressive colonisation of the "lifeworld" by the economy and the state, entailing a displacement of "communicative" practices by "strategic" practices, which embody a purely instrumental (modern) rationality.' (Fairclough, 2010, p. 97)

Fairclough argues that critical awareness of how language is being used should become a 'pre-requisite for democratic citizenship', as few people 'have even an elementary metalanguage for talking about and thinking about such issues' (p. 100). Such raising of critical awareness as to how language is being used is one of the main overarching aims of this thesis, as well as being a particular focus of this section. I have been highlighting ways in which the CLD seeks to harness discourse in a pseudo-mechanical manner. Such perspectives correlate strongly with Fairclough's diagnosis of an increasing 'technologisation of discourse'. The term 'technologisation' implies that there is (believed to be) some systematic, predictable (or pseudo-mechanical) causality behind particular forms of language use. Such a belief or assumption leads to many contemporary organisations or institutions seeking to reconfigure their 'order of discourse' in line with such technologisation. Fairclough views such moves 'as part of a more general struggle to impose restructured hegemonies in institutional practices and culture' (Fairclough, 2010, p. 137). Several of his observations are pertinent when it comes to the discursive practices of the CLD. Here I highlight four of his main observations.

First, he registers 'the emergence of expert "discourse technologists"'. By this he means people perceived as experts or consultants 'with privileged access to scientific information', whose interventions consequently 'carry the aura of "truth"' (Fairclough, 2010, p. 138). Their expertise is seen as lying in the areas of 'the efficiency of organisational operations, the effectiveness of interaction with clients or "publics", or the successful projection of "image"' (Fairclough, 2010, p. 137). I suggest that the CLD authors who confidently pronounce on the need to formulate specific forms of discourse (vision statements, objectives etc), and assert

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[24] Other critical conversation partners who draw explicitly on the work of Habermas include Alvesson & Willmott (1996); Deetz (1996); Pickard (2012) and Western (2008).

the efficacy of the same, are fulfilling something of the role of an expert 'discourse technologist'.

Second, he registers 'a shift in the "policing" of discourse practices', from a local institutional level (in our terms, a local church) to a trans-institutional level (such as the diocese). In simple terms, something of such a move can be seen in the practice of some dioceses in asking parishes to submit copies of their mission action plans to some central agent.

Third, Fairclough highlights the 'design and projection of context-free discourse techniques'. Here, again, my example is of the practice of constructing vision statements and objectives. The CLD does not suggest that such a practice might be more appropriate in some churches (perhaps with a high proportion of articulate professionals), and less in others. More fundamentally, the question of whether a discourse technique constructed in the context of the private sector is appropriate in the Church is under-examined.

Fourth, relatedly, he registers 'pressure towards standardisation of discourse practices' (p. 138), 'across as well as within institutions and different types of work' (p. 140). All of the previously registered observations act as pressures in the direction of centralisation and standardisation. If the discourse technologists are right, this should be a good thing. But if their recommendations are not as universally applicable, or indeed as grounded in wisdom, as is claimed, then such a standardisation should be at least contested, and possibly opposed.

These four points summarise pressures that Fairclough discerns under the heading of the technologisation of discourse. The reaction of real people to such pressures, however, may vary: 'they may comply, they may tactically appear to comply, they may refuse to be budged, or they may arrive at all sorts of accommodations and compromises between existing practices and new techniques' (p. 141). This last option, of compromise and accommodation, he sees as the most interesting, and expects to be the most common.

Conclusion

I begin by emphasising once more that, notwithstanding the critique I will shortly summarise, the Church Leadership Discourse has been found to include some genuine gifts. To highlight but one example, the area of planning and organising can make a highly significant positive contribution to the life of any church, and its lack can be a huge constraint. A proportion of my critique, then, is that the CLD offers a reduced and unsatisfactory range of approaches, which it offers as universally necessary. This has been manifest in the degree of its emphasis on the

positive, in its prioritisation of the proactive, and in its dominant metaphor of a planned journey towards a pre-identified destination. I have critiqued the assumption that the production of a strategic plan will always be appropriate, but have argued that the activity of planning, when understood broadly, is a rich and vital component in church life. The influence of the Cartesian has again repeatedly been evident in the areas under consideration: its clarity, its boundary construction, its lack of awareness of its own limitations. I have registered reasons why Cartesian discourse can often appear to have a rhetorical advantage, and proposed that this apparent advantage may not have firm foundations. Considerations of discourse performativity and the technologisation of discourse have added further insight and depth to our understanding both of how the CLD is expected to work, and of what its actual consequences may often be. Perhaps the most important contribution of this chapter has been its incorporation of Hardy and Ford's insights regarding disorder, order and the blessings of what they term non-order. There is clear parallelism between their construal and McGilchrist's depiction of a proper ordering of the Cartesian and the Gestalt.

Before concluding the chapter with a final metaphor and a link to what follows, I first offer a summary of the main anomalies identified within this chapter.

Summary of main anomalies

Anomaly 5.1   The degree of emphasis on being *positive*, at the cost of a broader emotional range

Anomaly 5.2   Central reliance on *excitement* and *inspiration* as motivators, rather than factors more obviously or deeply Christian

Anomaly 5.3   The extent to which *promotional discourse* has shaped the CLD recommendations

Anomaly 5.4   The exclusivity of emphasis on being *proactive*. This leads to the downgrading of other dispositions that are often appropriate, including attentiveness, thinking, routine 'labour', receptiveness and responsiveness.

Anomaly 5.5   The dominant metaphor of a *single, planned journey* for each church: the implied homogeneity, the suggested leaving behind of the present and past, and the downgrading of the call to committed rootedness.

Anomaly 5.6   The delusion that it is possible to cause 'non-order'/Life, for instance by a method or a plan.

Anomaly 5.7   The assumption that a full-blown strategic plan is always necessary

Anomaly 5.8   The way in which referring to clergy as *leaders* will re-construe their relationship to a benefice

Anomaly 5.9   The 'pernicious effects of *idealisation'*, including disappointment and demotivation, in contrast to the encouragement of 'good-enough ministry'

Anomaly 5.10   The 'technologisation of discourse': vision statements and targets perceived as pseudo-mechanically *causing* certain desired effects, rather than using words for respectful, insightful, encouraging, persuasive person-to-person communication

Coda: masking

Towards the end of Chapter 3, I drew on David Ford's extended meditation on the centrality of faces and facing within Christianity. I offered the metaphor of *veiling* to convey the loss of visibility of the human face within the category-shaped focus of the work of Jackson and Voas. Returning to this central image of faces, human and divine, the reflections of the present chapter suggest a different metaphor, that of *masking*. In the aspects of the CLD under consideration here, the human face is more visible than in Jackson's statistical analysis. However, all is not right. As the musical metaphor offered in Section 5.1 indicates, the range of responsiveness of the faces in question has been seriously diminished, and one particular emotional register has been substantially privileged above all others. It is as if all who would be church leaders have been issued with a CLD mask, which mask has the form of a human face, but a form fixed in an attitude of positive, inspiring, objective-focused purposefulness. Church members are perhaps expected to acquire similar masks themselves, or at least to learn to imitate what they see on the 'faces' of their leaders. Have the faces of those who

'don't count' as church members been considered? I am not sure. As for the face of God?

Perhaps it too is perceived in in a similar fixed attitude of positive, inspiring, objective-focused

dynamic activity. Alternatively, might it even be that God's face, and its consideration, has

somehow been eclipsed by more pressing tasks?

As has been emphasised throughout this thesis, the discourse that we use significantly shapes

how we perceive ourselves, as individuals and as groups. This fact makes the final insight of

section 5.4 particularly important: discursive techniques are being increasingly standardised

not only within but between institutions and organisations. If, then, discourse is showing

increasing commonality between organisations, what assumptions about the nature of the

church are implied by the CLD, and, conversely, what is the impact of the CLD on ecclesiology?

It is such broad but essential questions that the next chapter seeks to address.

Chapter 6 – A Cartesian Church?

Introduction

Imagine three groups of people. One is a subgroup of the British Antarctic survey, preparing for a three month visit to the region. They are all experienced scientists, and all but one have had substantial previous experience of the Antarctic. Between them, they will continue two established experiments, and initiate three more. The second group is an amateur string quartet. Two of its members have been so for 35 years, one for 15, and one for three years. They play together, for personal enjoyment, roughly once a fortnight, although two of them are frequently required to travel overseas with their paid employment. They normally put on a concert about once a year, with proceeds going to one charity or another. They enjoy arguing which charity should be the beneficiary almost as much as they enjoy arguing which music they should play. The third group is a family with three children, aged 9, 13 and 15. Most days bring with them new requests, ideas or demands of things that should or could be done. These come from the family members themselves, from the three different schools, from the various clubs in which the children or parents are involved, from one or both of the parents' workplaces, and from their church. In amongst all this, relationships ebb and flow, identities are formed, various lengths of conversation happen, and each day is somehow negotiated. Three different, imagined groups (though possibly with some overlap of membership). What form of leadership, if any, is appropriate in each case?

What does this imaginative exercise illustrate? In each case, *proposing an appropriate form of leadership is dependent upon understanding the nature of the group*. Appreciating the nature of the body must be the *prior* consideration. Moreover, simple categorisation on its own (for instance, 'this is a string quartet') will not offer sufficient insight or understanding. It is the *particular* nature of *this* group that matters, rather than its resemblances to any other group. (For instance, it is easy to imagine other string quartets for which very different forms of leadership would be both feasible and appropriate.) Furthermore, it is not difficult to imagine groups where the idea of leadership being appropriate at all either seems highly unlikely, or else requires a significant redefinition of the very concept of leadership.

This emphasis on discerning the distinctiveness of groups is in tension with the contemporary trend of increasing standardisation of discourse across institutions, noted at the end of Chapter 5. What causes such tension? Drawing on the understanding of discourse that has been developing throughout this thesis, we note two significant facts. First, the

standardisation of discourse between institutions is *based on* implicit (although perhaps unexamined) assumptions of the fundamental similarity of the natures of the respective institutions. However, discourse is not only *constituted by* our current understanding and assumptions; it is also *constitutive of* it. As a consequence, second, such discourse standardisation also actively *works to increase* the similarity between institutions. It shapes how they are perceived, and what is expected of them. It moulds them, increasingly, into a common form. Attention is focused primarily on a simplified map of reality that both assumes and shapes substantial commonality between particular groups, organisations and institutions, rather than being directed towards what is distinctive about the nature of each group (as sketched at the beginning of this chapter). These trends do not only affect churches. Stefan Collini, as a university professor, comments thus, (and without approval): '[life in universities] is now less unlike life in other large organisations than at any time in the long history of these singular institutions' (Collini, 2012, p. 18). What he wishes to do instead is to capture the 'quiddity' of universities as institutions (p. 7).

These reflections lead into the central questions of this sixth chapter. The previous chapters in this central Part B of the thesis have considered aspects of the CLD's rationality, of its prescribed methods, and of its discourse. It is now time to examine how the CLD understands *the nature of the Church*. How does the CLD conceive the Church's essential quiddity – or does it primarily tend to make life in the church much like life in other large organisations? In particular, to what extent has the CLD understanding of the nature of the Church been influenced by a Cartesian approach? Are there anomalies to be identified in CLD ecclesiology? The chapter proceeds in three main sections. The first differentiates the main strands of (the substantially implicit) CLD ecclesiology, then draws on the work of Nicholas Healy to offer some critical perspective. The second section offers two new terms, *ecclesiocracy* and *ecclesionomics*, as a deliberately sharp critique of CLD ecclesiology. The third, perhaps surprisingly, draws on some Pure Mathematics in framing the question 'What sort of space might the Church be, and offer?' The chapter conclusion is followed by a brief conclusion to Part B. First, then, it is important to attend to what ecclesiology we can find within the representative CLD texts.

6.1 CLD ecclesiology and its consequences

CLD ecclesiology

Substantial reflection on ecclesiology is not evident within the CLD. Indeed, theory in general is not obviously held in high regard[25]. Nevertheless, glimpses of reflection on the nature of the church can be found. I summarise those parts within the CLD representative texts, beginning with that which perhaps contains the most, namely Jackson's *Hope for the Church* (2002). Jackson does not devote a concentrated chapter or section to considering the nature of the church. Rather, he touches relatively briefly on the question in several distinct places, and, in doing so, draws on five main images. Three of these are Biblical, and I touch on them first, beginning by explaining their context. These three Biblical images are situated in chapters 2 and 3 of Hope for the Church. Chapter 2 is entitled 'Bums on seats – why they matter' and in it Jackson identifies and responds to a number of arguments against paying serious attention to church attendance statistics. It is within this chapter that he briefly describes the church as the Bride of Christ, a 'loving partner' who cooperates with Christ in the work of the kingdom. Rather than her 'wasting away', Christ will 'rejoice in her growth' (p. 18). Whilst the idea of the numerical growth of a bride is not quite congruent, the relational aspect of this metaphor is commendable. Chapter 3, 'Church growth – mission possible', proposes that growth is 'the natural condition of the Church' (p. 27). Here, Jackson draws on agrarian parables. He emphasises that it is God who 'ultimately makes the church to grow'. The church itself, therefore, is seen as 'an organism that grows naturally' (p. 29). Or again, third, using the metaphor of building,

> '[God's] intention is clearly to build and grow his church in every time and place, but he chooses to place the success of his building project in human hands.'

Under either metaphor, he concludes that 'decline is the result… of the failure of the church to adapt to changing and more challenging times' (p. 29). This interpretation is striking. It is not, for instance, a mainstream interpretation of Jesus's parable of the sower, in which variation in 'yield' is seen as arising from variation in context. *This* patch of ground, whether conceived as an individual person or a community of whatever size, is not the same as *that* patch of ground[26]. Jackson's straightforward linking of decline with failure to adapt does, however, have strong connections with two non-biblical ecclesiological analogies that he offers.

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[25] See for instance Williams and Tanner: rather than being 'a theorist's book', they conceive of their work as being for 'those who want to get on and change things' (2004, p. 4). Although other authors may not make such an attitude explicit, their silence on the subject suggests a similar attitude.

[26] See further Martyn Percy's reflections on this parable, drawing on Eugene Peterson and Wendell Berry (M. Percy, 2014, p. 259).

One of these analogies is the structure of the Provisional IRA, which changed from being based around battalions, to being formed of active service units[27]. Jackson uses this analogy to argue for the importance of small, highly committed 'cells, each with a clear mission and an efficient command and supply line' within 'the battle ahead' (p. 127). His other non-biblical analogy, however, I suggest is the most influential throughout his work. That analogy or description, quite simply, is with 'an organisation'. A typical example of this is his reasoning based on the experience of the cinema industry within chapter 2. I quote at some length, to give the full flavour of Jackson's reasoning:

> 'If an organisation is to survive it has to make major adjustments. Not so long ago, the cinema industry was facing extinction. It reversed its long-term trend of attendance decline by building cinemas that were more attractive and had more screens. No longer did people simply have to take or leave the one show that was on offer, they could make their own choice of what to watch. And they could watch in comfort as well. "Cinemas as we knew them" have largely gone to the wall, but a new, and better, sort of cinema has taken their place. As a consequence, cinema attendances have been rising again for a number of years.

> It is possible that "church as we knew it" will go to the wall. But it is equally possible to prevent the demise of the Church by offering a better-quality product with greater choice. Quantity matters, and quality is the solution to it.' (p. 19)

Moving from Jackson's exposition, to comment upon it, it may be that the church can learn in some ways from the cinema industry. Nevertheless, there are several major disparities between that realm and the realm of the church, to say the least! First, within cinemas there is a clear delineation between the ownership of the cinema, its staff, and its customers. With the church, in the terms of the analogy, in which category are existing congregation members to be construed? Are they customers, whose desires are to be met, or staff, who are to be flexible in the service of potential customers? And at what point, precisely, would a new worshipper shift to becoming a member of the staff? Second, Jackson's analogy appears to prioritise choice, convenience and comfort. These may not be totally irrelevant in a church context, but it is not obvious that they are primary theological factors. Third, in highlighting the adaptivity of the cinema company, Jackson could have gone to explore the possibility of a future shift to specialising in digital downloads, to be enjoyed at home, with the greatest possible choice, convenience and comfort. Or indeed, moving out of films altogether, and into a more profitable venture. To be explicit, there is no obvious reason within his analogy why there should be any limits on the 'adaptation' of the church which may be deemed necessary.

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[27] Jackson does point out that 'mercifully, [the Church of England] has little in common' with that organisation (p.126).

Most fundamentally, and unacceptably, this analogy embraces what Davison and Milbank term 'the marketing model of the Faith as a commodity' (Davison & Milbank, 2010, p. x)[28].

But perhaps none of this is surprising. Jackson is not aiming to consider rich ecclesiology, and let it shape his proposals. Rather, as the positioning of these analogies makes clear, he is using a range of metaphors, biblical and otherwise, in order to try and support his argument. Nevertheless, from the analogies that he chooses, and the ways in which interprets them, I suggest that his implicit ecclesiology is of a growth-focused adaptive organisation.

Moving on, Chew and Ireland devote one and a half pages to ecclesiological matters, under the heading 'Church as an instrument of God's mission' (Chew & Ireland, p. 43). Within this, they quote with apparent approval the description of the church as 'a sign, instrument and foretaste' of the kingdom of God[29]. It may not be surprising that it is the second of these three terms, namely *instrument*, which is prioritised within their section heading. Having introduced the phrase, they make no further comment on it. Rather, the rest of the section has two components. The first is a substantial quote from David Bosch, developing the concepts of church as sign and foretaste, and offering the evocative image of the church as 'God's experimental garden on earth, a fragment of the reign of God' (Bosch, 1991, p. 11, quoted in Chew & Ireland, p. 44). Chew and Ireland respond that 'Bosch's beautiful image of the Church as a garden intrinsically implies planning and design', and go on to share an anecdote on the need for a 'brief action plan' on moving to a house with an overgrown garden (pp. 44-45). What I suggest is most significant about this short section is how swiftly Bosch's substantially Gestalt image of a garden, is essentially and speedily reduced to the need for a Cartesian action plan. The former could easily evoke images of overflowing bounty, generously given as blessing, in which time can be taken for enjoyment and wholesome pleasure, and in which life can be trusted to unfold in both planned and unexpected ways. The latter returns to the world of objectives, timescales and task-completion. Gestalt elements are filtered out, and focus is redirected towards the Cartesian.

Turning to consider Williams and Tanner, explicit ecclesiology is not visible, at least not in the sense of the deliberate naming of concerns, influences, analogies or models relating to the

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[28] Much more could be said on how the concerns of this thesis relate to issues of consumerism, both within the CLD in particular, and in contemporary faith more generally. For a satirical take on the subject, see *Faith in the Free-Market: a Cautionary Tale for Anglican Adults* (Percy, 2012, pp. 197-203).
[29] This description is expounded, amongst other places, in the ARCIC agreed statement *Church as Communion*, and the Meissen, Porvoo and Reuilly statements with the continental Protestant churches.

nature of the church. Nevertheless, their implicit ecclesiology is not far from the surface. For instance, here are the first three sentences of Williams and Tanner's second chapter:

> 'Organisations very rarely end up where they want to be unless they are purposeful about it. What is the number one task of the Christian leader? It is to discover what God wants for the church or organisation he or she leads and then ensure that this is the direction into which all its efforts, activities and resources are focused.' (Richard Williams & Tanner, 2004, p. 6)

The move from an assertion about organisations (the first sentence) to an imperative conclusion for all Christian leaders (the second and third sentences) is presented as requiring no further justification. Furthermore, something of the *form of organisation* envisaged is also very apparent. This organisation is lean, purposeful and task-focused. It can be characterised as both effective and efficient. And it has much in common with what Jackson appears to have in mind.

Moving on to the work of James Lawrence, his approach feels at least slightly broader than those previously considered. He does, for instance devote a section to 'leading in community' (Lawrence, 2004, pp. 231-247), which itself includes three pages on 'community as fellowship' (pp. 237-240). Lawrence includes humane advice on, for instance, the need for forgiveness, authenticity, and vulnerability, then goes on to commend 'teams' as a particularly good way of 'leading in community' (pp. 240-246). Overall, he has a more evident concern for grace-filled relationships than the other works considered. However, there is still no explicit reflection on what the nature of the church is or should be, or consideration that such a question might influence what form of leadership was appropriate. Moreover, Lawrence's significant chapter on the articulation and implementation of change via vision still correlates strongly with Jackson's growth-focused adaptive organisation.

Ideals, supermodels, and the construal of God's presence to the faithful

Following this survey of the fairly implicit ecclesiology of the CLD, I will now hold it against the work of Nicholas Healy, before coming back to questions of the Cartesian and Gestalt. In his book *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology* (2000), Healy has two main concerns. One is to counterbalance contemporary tendencies to focus on ideals of church, such as those offered by 'blueprint ecclesiologies'. Instead, Healy would focus honest and clear-sighted attention on the 'concrete church', the church that actually exists, with all its complexity, frailty and sinfulness. The second is to help the church have confidence in the distinctiveness of the way of life to which it is called. Healy's critiques are primarily addressed towards 'modern ecclesiology' in a way that assumes that that ecclesiology is explicit. My

application of them to the implicit approach of the CLD consequently requires at least a degree of adjustment and interpretation, but I trust that the pertinence will nonetheless be clear.

Healy identifies 'five key methodological elements' (p. 26) of contemporary ecclesiological styles, of which I select three for particular attention. The first element is 'the attempt to encapsulate in a single word or phrase the most essential characteristic of the church'. The second element is to construe the church as having two distinct ontological aspects, 'a bipartite structure'. Of these, the primary aspect is seen as

> 'spiritual and invisible, often described as the church's "true nature" or its "essence". The other aspect is the everyday, empirical reality of the church, its institutions and activities. The relation between the two aspects is often described by saying that the primary one "realises" or "manifests" itself in the subsequent one' (p. 28)

The third methodological element, then, combines the first two 'to develop normative descriptions of the church' (p. 30). The logic is that, having identified the most essential characteristic of the ideal church, it is then necessary both to increase that characteristic within the actual church, and also to reduce everything that is counter to it (p. 31)[30].

Healy describes such moves as commonplace, but as unsatisfactory. One obvious problem is the lack of agreement regarding 'the most essential characteristic of the church'. Moreover, Healy argues convincingly that the New Testament offers an 'irreducible plurality of ways of talking about the church' that must be taken seriously. As a consequence, any good theology of the church must be informed by several, if not many, such models. Healy describes 'Body of Christ', 'communion' and 'People of God' as being obviously essential (p. 34). However, 'it would be difficult to argue from Scripture or tradition that one of these should be considered the primary one in a way that relegates all others to secondary status'.

Furthermore, Healy draws on Lash and other theologians to argue that the doctrine of the Trinity 'requires us to keep shifting our perspective so that we view a theological *locus* like the doctrine of the church in relation to one and then another person of the Trinity, as well as to the Trinity as such' (p. 34). Citing Nicholas Lash's *Believing Three Ways in One God*, he argues that no one model or viewpoint is sufficient in and of itself: each will need the 'corrective pressure' of others (Healy, p. 34, quoting Lash, 1992, p. 93). It is not that models or metaphors

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[30] Note the strong parallelism between these three elements, and the process of constructing vision statement and objectives, then focusing on their implementation.

should be abandoned. Instead, the motivation for their use should be the discovery and imaginative exploration of 'the many facets of the Christian church' (p. 36).

Pausing to relate some of the above to the concerns of this thesis, the CLD does not *explicitly* argue for the primacy of one ecclesiological supermodel. Nevertheless, there is significant commonality between its approach and that which Healy is critiquing. That commonality exists on two distinct levels. The higher level is implicit in the *form* of the CLD recommended methodology, for instance Mission Action Planning. The implied supermodel within this approach is of church as a focused organisation, working towards the completion of predefined objectives, as part of a planned journey towards a predetermined goal[31]. The lower level supermodel perhaps stretches the boundaries of that term. The lower-level model, or blueprint, can be seen in a local church's construction of its own vision statement and objectives. The fact that the vision statement may well have three main strands (I suspect this is likely to be the most typical number) rather than just one is to be welcomed as a small step in the right direction. But the requirement of the CLD that objectives should flow naturally from this vision statement will constrain the breadth of perspective within that vision. A church's vision statement and objectives together can be interpreted as a 'local blueprint ecclesiology', towards which the local church will then explicitly strive. In summary, the CLD asserts the necessity of a 'blueprint methodology' (to adapt Healy's phrase) which does two things. First it describes how a local church should construct their own 'blueprint ecclesiology'. But, second, it implicitly constrains the nature of that ecclesiology within the supermodel of an objective-focused organisation.

Healy's diagnosis of why such a state of affairs is problematic is pertinent: the emphasis within the CLD is on focusing ecclesiological understanding towards targeted action leading to growth, rather than seeking out any corrective pressure from alternative perspectives, or imaginative exploration of different facets of the Christian church. This shortcoming is compounded by the fact that CLD ecclesiology remains largely implicit, and is asserted rather than justified, never mind held open for discussion. The consequence is that essential dimensions of ecclesial life are undervalued, but the lack of open discussion of ecclesiology means that the undervaluing itself is hidden, rather than supported by clear reasoning. What are some of those important yet undervalued dimensions? I have already highlighted the

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[31] Healy writes of a supermodel being encapsulated in a 'single word or phrase'. What I have just offered is indeed a phrase, but rather a long one. There may not yet exist in common parlance a single word to describe such an entity. However, I will shortly offer a new term that aims to encapsulate such a concept.

invisibility of such dimensions as worship, wisdom, grace and joy. Healy also highlights such an approach's 'curious inability to acknowledge the complexities of ecclesial life in its pilgrim state' (p. 37). What is likely to be the consequence of such a move?

> '[Then] the temptation arises to set up false goals that cannot be realised, which may lead to depression for those who try to realise them, and cynicism in those who compare the ideal vision with reality' (p. 37)

Healy makes one further perceptive observation relevant to my purposes. He points out that, in practice, what governs the prescriptions arising from any ecclesiological model is not actually so much the model itself, but 'the respective imaginative judgements and agendas' (p. 45) of those using it. Models themselves are surprisingly underdetermined. There is a wide range of ways in which, for instance, the 'communion' model could be deployed[32]. When it comes to different theologians' construals of a particular model,

> 'if we agree with their agenda, we will likely agree with their use of the model; if not, not.… For what is in dispute among [such] theologians is *not* the word "communion" but *everything that guides its use*.' (p. 45, emphasis in the original).

This highlighting of the determinative significance of background assumptions is very helpful. To help crystallise what it might mean in practice, one very helpful question is how a given theologian or writer construes 'the mode of God's presence to the faithful' (Kelsey, 1975, p. 160, quoted in Healy, 2000, p. 42). So, for instance, some theologians understand God to be with us primarily in Eucharistic communion, or in the biblical stories about Jesus of Nazareth, or in the struggle of the oppressed for liberation. But how, as best we can judge, does the CLD construe the mode of God's presence to the faithful? For instance, do any of these three examples resonate strongly with the CLD? Or might its implicit construal be in terms of change, of the completion of objectives, of achievement and effectiveness?

Chew and Ireland's treatment of the image of the garden is perhaps a good demonstration of precisely Healy's point. What is determinative is not the metaphor itself (the garden), but rather the background assumption (most things, including gardens, can have plans made and objectives set – so we will take Bosch's image of the garden and use it as a further example to put our case). If you can do that with the concept of a garden, you can do it with agrarian parables, metaphors of buildings, and analogies with cinemas.

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[32] Healy mentions its use in feminist, ecumenical, liberation, and Western modernity contexts (p. 45).

6.2   Ecclesiocracy and ecclesionomics

In this subsection, I propose two new terms, *ecclesiocracy* and *ecclesionomics*.   Before expanding on what I mean by each of them, let me first clarify that I offer them as 'ideal types', not necessarily claiming that they can be seen to exist in pure forms. Nevertheless, I do claim that their influence is strong and significant, and that their characteristics can frequently be discerned.   In many ways, these two terms offer complementary crystallisations of my discernment of the influence of the Cartesian within the CLD[33]. I do, nevertheless, see them as having a distinct additional role, acting as 'sensitising concepts', clarifying yet more sharply the undesirable consequences of an inappropriate bias towards the Cartesian.

Turning first to *ecclesiocracy*, I offer this term as a single-word encapsulation of the ecclesiological supermodel behind the CLD.   One technical point must be clarified at the outset. I do *not* mean by this term that which its etymology would suggest, namely rule by the church[34].   What I *do* intend to signify is *church-as-bureaucracy*.   My contention is that the influence of the CLD, notwithstanding its stated desire for dynamism and inspiration, results in a significant increase in the bureaucratic within the church.   Kenneth Thompson, in his work *Bureaucracy and Church Reform* (Thompson, 1970), posits a strong link between the establishment of bureaucracies and:

> 'the growth of instrumental orientations in modern society – the increased prevalence of a "rationality" based on cause-and-effect thinking that is preoccupied with immediate, empirical ends, and pragmatic tests.   On the level of organisational structure this entails the establishment of highly rational bureaucracies; on the level of ideology it calls for the maintenance of legitimations that are adequate for such bureaucracies.' (p. v)

Thompson charts the growth of bureaucracy within the Church of England over the period from the beginning of the 19th century, and also the many facets of resistance to such bureaucratisation. Du Gay's *In Praise of Bureaucracy* (2000) acknowledges that 'these are not the best of days for bureaucracy', with some accounts holding bureaucracy 'responsible for most of the troubles of our times' (p. 1). He goes on to argue for particular merits arising from bureaucracy, such as fairness. I acknowledge that 'bureaucracy' is all too easily used bluntly and without sufficient precision in a derogatory sense[35].   Furthermore, I support the use of 'good bureaucracy' in appropriate contexts within local and national church life, as one aspect

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[33] Complementary, both in the sense that they complement my depiction of the CLD as substantially Cartesian, and also in the sense that they complement each other.

[34] I accept that, for that reason, this is not a perfect term.

[35] See Thompson (220-221) for four distinct meanings of the term, 'any or all' of which were used by critics of bureaucracy in the Church of England.

of the good ordering which I have argued (in Section 5.3) is necessary but rarely sufficient. Nevertheless, my contention is that the developments which this thesis has been examining indicate an over-extension of the domain of the bureaucratic, and a consequent reduced emphasis on that which good bureaucracy should properly serve. This can be seen in the reduction of persons to category members, particularly within the statistic-focused rationality examined in chapter 3. It is evidenced in the prescription of a universally applicable method, and the degree of preoccupation with empirical, ideally measurable, ends and outcomes. This inappropriate spread of bureaucracy is not only indicated by what it prioritises and highlights, but also very much by that which it eclipses and ignores. The domains of wisdom and discernment, of relationship and friendship, of love, worship and joy are either invisible to these new forms of church bureaucracy, or, probably worse, harnessed for instrumental ends. It is for these reasons that I propose the term *ecclesiocracy* as a crystallisation of what is primarily an undesirable trend.

A recurrent focus within the analysis that Thompson offers is the relationship between financial considerations and bureaucracy. The need to manage with more limited financial resources, and the desire to redress inequities in their use, both operated as forces towards increased bureaucratisation. Very similar territory to Thompson's was explored by Richard Laughlin in his 1988 analysis of the accounting systems of the Church of England (Laughlin, 1988). Laughlin's particular interest was the impact of changes in accounting system on the 'lifeworld' of the Church[36]. His conclusion was that, despite a continuing resource crisis, at that time accounting still played a secondary rather than primary role. As Alvesson and Willmott summarise his work,

> 'The lifeworld values of the church have been largely preserved because, [Laughlin] suggests, in this context the corrosive potential of an accounting mentality has, to date, been successfully resisted' (145)

That was Laughlin's conclusion in 1988, but what would be the equivalent conclusion in 2014? It is not the concern of this thesis to explore the degree to which it is accounting systems that have been 'corroding' the 'lifeworld values' of the Church. Nevertheless, the connection between the bureaucratic and the numerical is an important one. The fact is that bureaucracy's seemingly positive instinct for fairness will often lead to a focus on some quantitative measure, so that equitable arrangements can be assessed and demonstrated. Furthermore, the desire of bureaucracy for maximally honed rational efficiencies will also tend

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[36] As his use of the term 'lifeworld' suggests, Laughlin draws on aspects of the critical theory of Habermas.

towards such numerical, calculable focus. Reality will often be interpreted through numbers. It is this emphasis, deeply interconnected with the bureaucratic, that leads me to introduce a second term.

That second term I offer is *ecclesionomics*. This term describes the approach most clearly manifest in the likes of *Hope for the Church* and *How to Do Mission Action Planning*. It aims to encapsulate three main strands within such works. The first strand is the *primary attention paid to the numeric*. Chart after chart portrays church attendance statistics from one angle or another. Commentary and analysis range beyond the purely numerical, but the strong impression is that numerical considerations are primary. The second strand follows directly on, and is the *straightforward emphasis on growth*. One illustrative cameo can be found in Mark Ireland's reflections on his time as vicar in the town of Baxenden (where Mike Chew was a member of the congregation). There are no less than three charts of Baxenden usual Sunday attendance on pages 19, 23 and 25[37]. I reproduce here the third such chart, and the introductory paragraph of Ireland's comment on it:
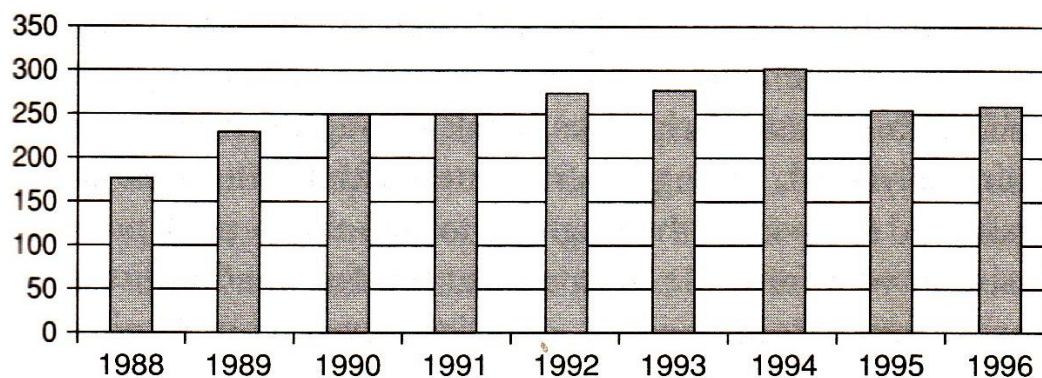
Figure 2.4 Baxenden usual Sunday attendance: 1988 – 1996

Chart showing Baxenden church attendance over the period of Mark Ireland's incumbency. Figure 2.4 in How to Do Mission Action Planning *(Chew & Ireland, 2009, p. 25)*

> 'The attendance graph for the 8 1/2 years I was vicar of Baxenden (see Figure 2.4) shows how we came up against three clear glass ceilings, and how (by God's grace) we managed to find a way through two of them, but failed to break through the third near the end of my time.' (p. 24)

I draw attention to Ireland's discernment of 'clear glass ceilings'. I presume that by 'clear' he means 'obvious' rather than 'transparent', but suggest that the fact that three glass ceilings

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[37] The first covers the time of Ireland's predecessor, 1967-1988; the second covers the period 1967 to 1994 (the latter year having the highest attendance during Ireland's incumbency); and the third 1988 to 1996 (including the decline of around 15% for the last two years of his time there).

seem obvious to him indicates quite how central is his presumption of continued numerical growth. Where are these clear glass ceilings to be discerned within the chart? In 1991, 1993, and 1996. It just needs two consecutive years with the same usual Sunday attendance to have hit a glass ceiling.

The third strand which I intend to include within the term ecclesionomics relates to the *search for law-like generalisations* which can be proven, or at least asserted, to predictably lead to numerical growth. For Ireland, in this passage,

> 'The need to find a way through a glass ceiling demonstrates the importance and value of Mission Action Planning. Prayer, preaching and pastoral care are all vital, but, without planning, the church will eventually find its optimum size and stop growing' (p. 24) [38]

I suggest that the most obvious reading of these sentences is that they imply planning to be even more important than prayer, preaching and pastoral care. Furthermore, this prioritisation arises from 'the need to find a way through a glass ceiling' which, given the related graph, one could interpret as 'the need to demonstrate unrelenting short-term growth figures'. It is both the degree of focus on numbers, and also the mode of reasoning I have just explored, that suggest a strong correlation between this mode of attention to the church, and that of economics. In highlighting such a mode of attention, I am not claiming that there is no place for attending to relevant numbers. Rather, yet again, I contend that questions of degree matter profoundly, and that here we encounter a degree of bias towards the measurable that has gone beyond the appropriate. Moreover, the question of precisely how numbers – not least church attendance statistics – are *interpreted* deserves attention. Percy, for instance, suggests that church arithmetic carried out in whole numbers is 'fuzzy logic':

> 'Is a newly baptised infant "one unit" in terms of believers? Does the person who comes every week, but has more doubt than faith, count as "one" or a "half"?… Does the person who comes to everything in church, but has a heart of stone, count as one? Or less?… We live in a culture that is obsessed by measuring things numerically, and judging success from this… God's maths is different to ours. And God does not easily concur with our cultural obsessions with "growth equals success".' (260)

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[38] Two aspects of this quote are confusing. First, I presume that Ireland did not literally mean that the size of a church that lacked planning would become 'optimum'. Perhaps he meant something more like an 'unnecessarily constrained maximum'. Second, I find the logic of the first sentence unconvincing. I cannot understand how any 'need' (genuine or assumed) can 'demonstrate the importance and value' of a particular process. I believe that, actually, rather than being an *argument*, the first sentence is actually an *assertion*, whose content is in fact identical to that of the second sentence, as corrected above.

An ecclesionomic cameo: applying a top priority of numerical growth

Within chapter 3, one of the questions on which I particularly focused within the Voas questionnaire was number 67. I return to this now, more extensively, proposing that the whole 'life-cycle' of this question may be seen to encapsulate a shift from a primarily ecclesiological/theological to a primarily ecclesionomic perspective. Question 67 asks 'Which of these three church objectives is your priority?', then offers three options of which only one can be selected: 'Numerical growth; Spiritual growth/discipleship; Social transformation'. I examine its life-cycle in three stages. First, it is noteworthy that the question did *not* ask which of these is your 'highest priority'. I suggest that this phrase was deliberately avoided for good theological reasons: a straightforward reading of Jesus description of the greatest Commandments makes it clear that none of these should be our 'highest priority'. The presumed original intended meaning, therefore is, 'Which priority do you rank as the most important of the following three?'.

The second stage of the question's life-cycle is when it is answered by numerous clergy across the country. Imagine four such ministers sitting down to consider it. Clergyperson number one is as far from the CLD as is possible, and probably ticks the second option. Frankly, numerical growth is not a concern of his. Number two has worked prayerfully and consistently with her congregation to help make the church more welcoming. She has been acutely aware of what can be a tension between 'making services accessible' and sustaining a rich and living tradition. She is sensitive and gifted, and attendance has more than doubled during her incumbency. Numerical growth matters to her, but she is very clear that it is secondary, so does not tick the 'numerical growth' option. Clergyperson number three has much in common with number two. However, his congregation find the idea of any change, or even any new members, threatening. He has, consequently, put gentle but sustained emphasis on the need to extend Christ's welcome to others. When faced with question 67 he feels exasperated at being required to select just one priority. Nevertheless, he selects 'numerical growth', because it is his current emphasis (albeit for reasons of rebalancing). Clergyperson four has no such hesitation. Having been in post six months, he recently revealed to his PCC and congregation challenging targets for numerical growth of 20% in the next 12 months, and 100% over four years[39]. Quite what effect his approach will have remains to be seen, but his answer to question 67 was never in doubt.

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[39] Such targets are not exaggerated for effect, but in line with those adopted by a colleague in recent years.

The third stage, then, is the statistical analysis of the answers to this question. Within this stage, clergypersons one and two are assumed to be equivalent, as are clergypersons three and four. One person's prioritisation of numerical growth is assumed to be essentially identical to another's. Clearly this may be very far from the truth. Questions of degree have not been captured. Hesitation, nuancing and confident clarity all disappear. It is assumed that the three responses offered to the question correspond clearly and accurately to three modes of being of clergy. Each of the three answers will be linked to some churches that are growing, and some that are not, in varying proportions. But the statistical analysis cannot see beyond the clear-cut answer. If, perish the thought, clergyperson four's approach actually led to declining attendance, but number three's church was growing, the statistical analysis would have no way of distinguishing between the actual practice. The specific comment, in the main body of the detailed report on this strand of research was brief and straightforward:

> 'Numerical growth was only the priority for 13% of respondents, but it is significantly associated with growth.' (p. 53)

We come, finally, to the fourth and final stage (to date) in the 'life-cycle' of this question. This is the stage at which the detailed analysis of responses to the question are interpreted for presentation within the overall summary report of the Church Growth Research Programme, *From Anecdote to Evidence* (*FATE*). At this stage, the amount of attention given to the question, and the positioning of that attention, are expanded and heightened. The results of this question appear on the first full page of text (p. 8, following the Executive summary (pp. 5-6), and a title page for chapter 1). That page begins with a partial quote from Professor David Voas (which is reproduced in full on page 5), about there being 'no single recipe for growth'. This, however, is immediately followed by the assertion that the research 'clearly points to the conclusion… [that] there are a number of "ingredients" which are linked to growth in parish churches *and can be applied to any setting*.' (p. 5, my emphasis). This claimed conclusion surely contradicts the assertion within the detailed report that 'what works in one place may not work in another' (p. 2). This introduction then leads to 'leadership' being presented as one of the factors leading to growth. I quote the relevant paragraphs in full:

> 'The findings confirm that effective leadership leading to growth is a **combination of having specific qualities and skills with an intention to grow.**
>
> The survey results show a strong correlation between those clergy who prioritise numerical growth and those clergy whose churches grow in numbers.
>
> When asked a question about which type of growth was their **top** priority, **only 13%** selected numerical growth (the other options being spiritual growth/discipleship and

social transformation); however this choice is **significantly associated with actual growth recorded in the findings**.' (p. 8, emphasis in the original)

Several points are in order, as well as those already made above. First, the third paragraph is inaccurate. The original question was not phrased in terms of a 'top priority', as discussed. Second, the middle paragraph assumes that those who did not select the 'numerical growth' option *do not prioritise* numerical growth. This is quite simply a false assumption. Some human beings, remarkably, are capable of having more than one priority. Third, the implicit assumption, from the three paragraphs and the introductory phrases that I quoted, is that having 'numerical growth' as a 'top priority' is an 'ingredient' that can be 'applied to any setting'. It is not clear whether the 'setting' in question is a parish, to which clergy and/or congregation might 'apply' such a priority, or whether the 'setting' is actually the clergyperson, in which case presumably some higher authority might be involved in the 'applying'. Either way, the application of priorities appears to be conceived as a straightforward and mechanical exercise, akin to adjusting the dials on our imagined black box from Chapter 3. Any sense of the depth of human engagement, thought and belief involved is entirely missing. The clear rhetorical message from this passage is, quite simply, that far more clergy should have numerical growth as their top priority, and that this would then be a straightforwardly positive causal factor.

The fourth point is substantially the most important. The total absence of any indication that this might be a fundamentally theological question, or even that theological considerations might be worth considering, is deeply worrying[40]. If such a question as number 67 had been put to Jesus, what is the probability that he would have accepted the terms of the question, never mind ticked the numerical growth box? If numerical growth is to be asserted as the 'top priority' of the Church of England, a fundamentally *theological* case must be put, and put convincingly. Speaking personally, I am more than happy to assert the importance of church welcome, and of a generous overflowing and sharing with others of the good news of God's grace, focused in Jesus Christ. I strongly desire to help many people grow in faith and in church involvement. But I would need substantial convincing before being able to agree that 'numerical growth' should be my 'top priority'. And I could not *make* it my priority in any authentic sense in the absence of such convincing.

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[40] To be clear, part of the issue here is the construction of the question so as to focus on *a single priority*. (This was my primary point when considering this question within chapter 3. Such focusing is strongly congruent with the Cartesian approach, and almost invariably leads to unhelpful reductionism, as here.) Thus no space has been left for numerical growth to be given an important, but nonetheless secondary, role.

The degree of significance attached to the answer to this question within *FATE* (but not present within the detailed report), coupled with the lack of theological consideration relating to it, raise important questions about the authorship of the *FATE* report, as well as the authority ascribed to that report within the Church of England. *FATE* is silent on the subject of its own authorship. When I enquired on the subject, I was given this response:

> "'From Anecdote to Evidence' was a publication commissioned by the Church Commissioners (who also commissioned the research programme) to provide a popular presentation of the research findings. Commissioners staff worked with an external copy writer to draft the text of the publication. The draft text was shared with the researchers from each of the strands for comment / correction."[41]

Neither Church Commissioners staff nor an external copy writer will obviously be best placed to address the theological considerations I consider to be essential. I do not know what comments may have been made by members of the research teams, or whether they resulted in any changes to the draft text. However, it may be worth noting that Professor Voas's expertise is as a quantitative social scientist, rather than as a theologian. It is thus possible that he did not see it as part of his brief to consider such theological critique. Which begs the question where and how such theological appraisal was expected to arise. Alternatively, dare one suggest it, might it be that this small but significant cameo is evidence of a shift away from a fundamentally theological form of reasoning, and towards one based on ecclesionomics[42]?

6.3   Maths and the church: what sort of space?

As a final analogy within this section, I draw, perhaps surprisingly, on Pure Mathematics. I will briefly introduce two related concepts from that realm, and then use them as analogies for how the church is, and could more fruitfully be, viewed[43]. The first such concept is that of a *metric space*. A metric space is defined as a non-empty set, in conjunction with a clearly defined way of 'measuring' within that set (with three criteria for the properties of a valid metric[44]). For instance, the space inside my study, in conjunction with 'normal' measuring, is one example of a metric space. The point to emphasise is that *measurability* must be possible

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[41] Personal correspondence from Kevin Norris, Senior Strategy Officer (Analyst), (Resource) Strategy and Development Unit, Church House, July 11, 2014.

[42] Perhaps *FATE* should be re-interpreted as standing for *'From Anglicanism to Ecclesionomics'*.

[43] I believe that my understanding of the concepts concerned is substantially mathematically accurate, and apologise for any falling short in that respect. I will omit some details of precise definition that would be of interest to a serious mathematician, but refer any interested reader to *Introduction to Metric and Topological Spaces* (Sutherland, 1975).

[44] Namely: the distance between two points can only be zero if the two points are identical; the distance from x to y is the same as that from y to x; and, roughly speaking, the sum of the lengths of two sides of any triangle is not less than the length of the third side (Sutherland, p. 21).

between any two points throughout the space. It is that universal and consistent measurability that is definitive for a metric space, and that gives rise to its name. If all points in a space satisfy such criteria (as will be the case for a metric space), the space is described as being fully *metrizable*.

The second concept is that of a *topological space*. Here, measurement may still be possible, but it is not primary. What is primary is to do with *shape* (but is quite hard to encapsulate non-mathematically[45]). The key point for our purposes is how a topological space relates to measurement: that is to say, whether it is necessarily metrizable. Here there are several possibilities. Some topological spaces are fully metrizable; some are non-metrizable (in that no sensible metric can be defined); there are topological spaces 'in which although the spaces are metrizable, it is rather irrelevant to use metrics' (p. 48); finally some topological spaces have metrics which work locally, between two points that are 'close enough', but not universally across the space. One favourite example of a topological space is the surface of a teacup with one handle. From the perspective of a non-mathematician, the 'obvious' thing about the teacup is primarily its shape. Considered as a topological space, it is possible to have a local metric, but not a universal one. Why is this? If you consider two points close to each other on the surface of the teacup, for instance two points on its base, 'normal measurement' satisfies the criteria specified. If, however, you try to measure from a point on the handle to a point on the base, making sure that the measurement is always 'along' the surface of the teacup, the third criterion cannot be satisfied[46].

My primary concern is, of course, not with the abstract concepts of Pure Maths, but to use these concepts as analogies for our perception of different groups, activities or indeed physical spaces. One might, for instance, consider the game of cricket. This has a very clear metric, which can be applied at the level of each ball bowled, each match played, the career of each player, or the history of rivalry between teams. The metric of cricket is a vital part of the game, and a necessary part of its interest. However, the metric is not everything, and cannot cover everything. It is irrelevant to the aesthetics of a fine cover drive. It cannot explain the ebb and flow of a player's career. Nor is it a sufficient depiction of the intense passion of an long-running rivalry. It is, therefore, insufficient to perceive cricket as an essentially metric

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[45] Sutherland summarises it concisely, in mathematical terms (p. 45).
[46] To adopt the terminology of mathematics textbooks, I leave the proof of this assertion as an exercise for the reader.

space. With cricket, the metric is necessary, but only partial. If that is true of cricket, how much more is it true of the nature of the Church.

A wide range of metrics may helpfully shed some light on different aspects of church life. As well as the obvious metric of usual Sunday attendance, others could include time spent in prayer, or the number of people in an area who have had some sort of positive experience of their local church. However, no single one of these metrics can be considered universal in any sense. Neither any metric (or combination of metrics), nor the insights that they may offer, is sufficient to encapsulate the nature of the church. No metric can capture a sense of God's transcendence experienced in worship. No metric can fully capture either the faithfulness of a lifetime's service, or the impact, for healing and encouragement, of words spoken. Attention paid to metric(s) necessarily involves both a focusing on selected and limited aspects of church life, and therefore a reducing, which must always be counterbalanced by attention paid to the non-metrizable.

Three further comments are required. First, as will be clear, a Cartesian approach to reality is strongly correlated with the concept of a metric space. A Gestalt approach, by contrast, is substantially non-metrizable. Second, having established that 'church as metric space' is manifestly insufficient as an ecclesiological approach, 'church as topological space' is not the only alternative. Rather, the question 'What sort of space is the church called to be?' might well call forth creative and imaginative metaphors and conceptions that could contribute to a rich but realistic ecclesiology. Some initial answers to that question might include: a space for relating (to God and others); a space of blessing; a space of attentiveness; a space for worship; a space for humility; a space for wonder; a space for joy; a space for truthfulness – and many more. Clearly, drawing on Healy's point noted above, no single such metaphor can be sufficient. However, exploring a range of possible answers to such a question, in combination, might be generative of both energy and appropriate action or transformation (perhaps even without the need for the setting of objectives, SMART or otherwise). Third and finally, I draw attention to the word *space* itself. To view the church as in any sense 'a space', is not particularly a Cartesian perspective. I suggest, nevertheless, that the concept of the church providing, creating and offering space is itself theologically rich. Thus Martyn Percy, for instance, offers the image of a 'very familiar "complex space"… – a great Gothic cathedral'. He cites John Milbank:

> 'One walks through such a building conscious of continually unfolding vistas. It is a whole, yet it cannot be seen as a whole… [one sees] new altars representing a multiplicity of concerns and commitments… It can represent both diversity, and the

imperfection of incompleteness, without compromising its unity or confusing its purpose. A cathedral points beyond itself.... Its verticality is a reminder that it is not just about human beings and human relationships. It provides a complex space which can bring home to us where, as transitory, contradictory, sinful and yet ultimately hopeful and receptive human beings, we really stand before God' (J. Milbank, 1997, p. 284, quoted in Percy, 2012, p. 16)

Percy comments that such a space 'speaks of the incarnation, transcendence, and mystery of God; yet [is] also crafted from the stones, wood and endeavours that speak of humanity' (2012, p. 16)[47].

Chapter conclusion: a Cartesian church

What sort of ecclesiology, then, does the CLD offer? I contend that CLD conceptions of the church are strongly biased towards the Cartesian. To put it another way, the CLD assumes that the church both is and should be substantially Cartesian. What are some of the dimensions that contribute to this contention? There is a strong sense of the CLD church being bounded: it is assumed to be clear who is a member, and who remains a potential member. As a consequence, the CLD church can be quantified. The CLD church is seen as fundamentally instrumental, another major Cartesian attribute. Moreover, it is assumed that the objectives towards which it aims not only can but must be formulated in strongly Cartesian terms. It is important to note that these objectives, along with the vision from which they will have arisen, will themselves have been crafted and constructed by the church itself[48]. McGilchrist observes the preference of the left hemisphere for detailed knowledge, and also that the fullest knowledge is only possible of those things which it itself has made (see, for instance, McGilchrist, pp. 42, 79). The vision statement, aims and objectives of the CLD church offer considerable scope for such full knowledge. They certainly function, furthermore, as a deliberately simplified map of reality. The CLD church is strongly in favour of change, perhaps even of novelty. It is optimistic and positive in temperament. Ambiguity, depth, context, paradox and history are not obviously valued by it, or perhaps particularly recognised by it. It is guided by a methodology assumed to be universal in its applicability. It is for these reasons that I characterise such an ecclesiology as fundamentally Cartesian.

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[47] For rich reflection and creative ideas on how physical space can be explored and honoured within parish ministry, see Davison and Milbank's Chapter 8: *Rebuilding a Christian Imaginary in the Parish* (Davison & Milbank, 2010, pp. 170-208, in particular pp. 190-200)

[48] The discourse uses the vocabulary of 'discerning God's will' in such matters. I would contend that this still leaves at the least a considerable role for human construction – not least in their formulation according to SMART criteria.

Had space allowed, this thesis could have expanded its parameters to include a proper consideration of how CLD ecclesiology relates to the field of organisation studies[49]. As that is not the case, I restrict myself to making two broad points. The first addresses the question of whether the church is more truly an *institution* than an *organisation*. The case can certainly be made that, compared to the idea of a lean, task-focused organisation, the concept of an institution is much more appropriate. This latter can easily offer appropriate and realistic space to acknowledge complexity, history, multiple interrelated subgroups and competing factions – what I once heard described as a 'complex omni-gathering'. Furthermore, an institution is concerned not just with short-term targets, but with the transmission of values and dispositions across decades and centuries. The case for conceiving the church as an institution, rather than an organisation, therefore seems to me a strong one. That said, my preference is neither to say that the church *is* an institution nor that the church *is* an organisation. There may be helpful insights that either conception gives. But to *identify* the church *as* one of these concepts risks reducing it to the terms and contours of one of these constructed ideas.

Second, I noted in Section 6.1 the general CLD aversion to theory. Had, however, the CLD paid attention to the academic field of organisation studies (never mind to a fuller consideration of ecclesiology), many of its imbalances could have been avoided. As early as 1979, Burrell and Morgan published a seminal work, *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis* (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Their argument was that the dominant functionalist paradigm for organisational analysis was only one possibility out of the four legitimate paradigms they identified. Such functionalism correlates considerably with the approach of the CLD. This work could have alerted the CLD the existence of important alternatives. Stanley Deetz, in 1996, went a step further in his response to Burrell and Morgan's work. He offered a different set of four approaches to organisations. Crucially, he construed these differently from the paradigms of Burrell and Morgan. These latter were essentially alternatives from which one might choose. In contrast, Deetz presented his four approaches as *orientations* rather than *paradigms*. It is not that all are equal, or that one is best. Rather, they are 'sensitising concepts' (Deetz, 1996, p. 191), to be 'used as a way of focusing attention'. The point is not to choose *one* of them, but to deliberately attend to the contrasting concerns of *all* of them, thus highlighting the partiality, incompletion and one-sidedness of any given approach (p. 203).

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[49] Relevant works here would include those of Rudge (1968), Torry (2005), Harris (1998) and Watkins (Watkins, 1990, 1991, 1993), as well as staple textbooks of organisation studies.

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Any given approach, ' if freed from its claims of universality and/or completion' (p. 193) can provide an important contribution 'in the larger dialogue about organisational life'.

I have offered the term *ecclesiocracy* as a concept crystallising a critique of the CLD's Cartesian church.   And I have proposed that such ecclesiocracy both arises from and reinforces a substantially *ecclesionomic* viewpoint, over-focused on the measurable, and on unrelenting short-term numerical growth.   In contrast to the *metric space* of an ecclesionomic, ecclesiocratic church, I have shown that the question 'what sort of space is our church called to offer?' can elicit a rich and life-giving range of Christian responses.

Conclusion to Part B

The conclusion of this chapter brings to an end the central Part B of this thesis. Over four chapters, I have sought to discern the extent to which the Church Leadership Discourse is biased towards a Cartesian approach to reality. I have attended in turn to its statistic-focused rationality, to its recommended processes, to its heightened rhetoric and emphasis on the positive, and to its implicit ecclesiology. Throughout, there has been a strong correlation with the Cartesian approach, affecting what is perceived, what is valued, what is desired, and what response is prescribed. To be clear, such Cartesian clarity and analysis has, at times, offered a positive contribution to church life. Moreover, at times there was *insufficient* Cartesian rigour. Overall, however, the degree of emphasis on the Cartesian was seen to be very considerable, along with a frequent lack of emphasis on richer and broader Gestalt considerations. Such considerations were paralleled by a worrying disjunction and lack of integration between the prescriptions of the CLD and the normal worshipping life of the Church. In the course of this analysis I have demonstrated the *interconnectedness* of a broad range of Cartesian manifestations, as well as their *pervasiveness* across a range of literature and practice. Moreover, the degree of bias to the Cartesian was often connected to theological *insufficiency*, evidenced in multiple *anomalies* in the form of church life conceived by the CLD. Any single such anomaly on its own might be deemed acceptable. Taken together, however, this accumulation of anomalies can be taken as a clear sign that the approach of the CLD needs, at the least, substantial revision. I do not intend, however, to *revise* the CLD. Rather, my approach in the final chapter of the thesis (which constitutes Part C) is to sketch the contours of a *reconfigured* ministerial discourse, drawing on more fundamentally theological concerns in a way that enables a proper ordering of Cartesian and Gestalt.

PART C – A CONSTRUCTIVE ALTERNATIVE

Chapter 7 – Towards a reconfigured ministerial discourse

Introduction

Thus far my argument has focused on highlighting the degree to which the CLD is biased towards the Cartesian, and identifying why this is theologically problematic. The time now comes to sketch a constructive alternative, which is the purpose of this final substantive chapter. What I will *not* do is prescribe a new *method* to replace that of the CLD, as I have argued that the CLD's universal adoption of a single method is itself a significant shortcoming. Whereas the main focus of the CLD was on what a church should *do*, I will place substantially more emphasis on how the church and its members should *conceive of* their nature, their context and their calling. In doing so, I will sketch a way of perceiving and approaching church life that I believe to embody a much better relationship between Cartesian and Gestalt, and to be both realistic and very much alive. Moreover, and even more importantly, I contend that this construal arises much more straightforwardly and naturally from the Christian tradition. In consequence, the mode of existence of such a church, its way of being, has a much greater chance of being in tune with that of the God from whom its identity derives.

The move from the proposed method of the CLD to my recommendations within this chapter can be seen as analogous to the contrast between the sciences and the humanities described by Louth. In particular, Louth draws on Gadamer in highlighting the concept of *Bildung*, which corresponds approximately to formation.

> 'By suggesting that *Bildung* occupy the place in the humanities which method occupies in the sciences, Gadamer means that initiation into the study of the humanities is not so much initiation into any techniques as into the tradition with which we are concerned in the humanities. Our primary aim is not to find a way that will enable us to achieve objectivity, but rather a sufficiently activated subjectivity, a sensitivity to our historical situation and all that has contributed to it... so that we can engage with the past in a fruitful dialogue.' (Louth, 1983, p. 43)

The approach of this chapter is much more about *Bildung* than about method. Its concern is to draw, as best it can, on 'all that has contributed to' the nature of the church, understood both in terms of ecclesiological insight, but also more profoundly in terms of the Church's relationship to God. Its aim is to highlight the need not only for objectivity, but even more for a 'sufficiently activated subjectivity', not least our calling to be formed in deep issues of

character and virtue. This will then enable us to engage 'in a fruitful dialogue' not only with the past, but also with the present. Strikingly, Louth notes that the origin of the word *Bildung* 'lies in German mystical literature in the notion of man [sic] as the image of God, *Bild Gottes*, and refers to the refashioning of man in that image' (p. 42, footnote 38). The concern of this chapter, then, is about seeking not a method, but rather the refashioning towards the image of God of all Christians, of all ministers, and of the Church itself.

The constructive alternative which this chapter offers will be built in three stages. In the first stage I argue for a shift in the background operating texture of church life. Rather than a primarily functional organisation aiming to complete articulated objectives in a substantially metric space, I offer a concept of church life based on the metaphor of drama. To be specific, we find ourselves in God's unfolding drama, with continuities, twists and turns, and a range of actors, relationships and contexts. Our calling is to improvise well within this drama as it unfolds, in a way that is faithful to God and the Christian tradition. The second stage of constructing an alternative is my highlighting of four themes from the work of the ecclesiologist Stephen Pickard: connectedness (or sociality); energy; the relation between pace and presence; and modesty. These go some considerable way both to further highlighting weaknesses of overreliance on the Cartesian, and also to restoring confidence in the dynamic potential of a more Gestalt ecclesiology. The third stage, then, shifts attention from the church itself to focusing on its ministers and members. Within a reconfigured discourse I choose to highlight four virtues and dispositions as more primary than competences or skills. First, I call for a renewed concept of 'fullness of vision', for which I offer the term *pleriscope*. This is to be complemented by trust, wisdom and love. In the final main section of the chapter, having sketched the primary outlines of this alternative discourse, I outline some ways in which it might be worked out in practice.

7.1 Faithful improvisation in God's unfolding drama

The first stage, then, in my reconfigured ministerial discourse, argues for a shift in what we might term the background operating texture. Rather than focusing on the achievement of articulated objectives, I propose a substantially different conception of ongoing church life. That conception can be described as *faithful improvisation within God's unfolding drama*. Within this section I will argue in favour of such a shift in three steps. The first step will take us

from the world of outcomes[129] to a primarily *narrative* conception. The second step will take us onwards to a specifically *dramatic* orientation, including a more technical sense of that word. The third step explores what it means to be part of a drama that lacks a full script for its actors. It takes us to the realm of *improvisation*. Finally, I will draw out some of the principal implications for church life of such a conception[130].

The shift from outcomes to narrative

I have put the case at some length within Part B of this thesis that the CLD is significantly shaped by its emphasis on clear-cut outcomes and objectives. Furthermore, I have contended that such a shaping will significantly alter the mode of existence of churches using a CLD approach. My argument here is that a fundamentally different conception is required. I put the case that an understanding of ecclesial existence, and indeed of life in general, framed in *narrative* terms is strongly preferable to one based primarily on objectives. This is the case in part because it is significantly more true to life, but also because such a narrative construal is supported by the fundamental shape of the biblical witness. Not only is a narrative construal theoretically preferable: I contend that *living within* such a narrative (and in due course dramatic) conception can lead to perceiving, thinking, interpreting, acting and responding that will be qualitatively different, and significantly more likely to be in tune with the Christian tradition. The claims of this paragraph are of course substantial, and could merit a thesis in their own right. I restrict myself to some justification of the preferability of narrative, and to some discussion of the specific mode of narrative I am advocating.

The first question to address, then, is why a narrative conception of life, including church life, should be considered more true and more accurate than one primarily oriented around articulated objectives. One reasonable way of approaching such a question is offered by Dan Hardy, in his 'contemplation of the deep conditions of the very life that we live' (2001, p. 64). Hardy suggests that there are two major ways in which people have traced the plot of history. One focuses primarily on individuals and their influence. The other is much more systemic, finding 'complete' explanations in either machine-like or more organic systematic concepts. Hardy considers neither of these to be satisfactory. He describes a better alternative as 'complex narrative-histories', where 'both individualistic and overarching views of history are

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[129] 'Outcomes' being a primarily Cartesian term.
[130] The shape of this section was inspired by Part One of Samuel Wells' *Improvisation: the Drama of Christian Ethics* (Wells, 2004). I also draw on this book at several points, both directly, and in citing some of the sources quoted by Wells.

rejected in favour of more complex – often local – connections of people, movements and events' (p. 65).

Such an understanding is more social than the individualistic one, and less neat than the systemic. It is 'a highly dynamic form of understanding… We are participants involved in a changing network of relations between particular people in particular places, interacting through events (pp. 65-66)'. This network of relations can include continuity, development and also fracture: Hardy is realistic in highlighting the 'delicate fabrics of trust, learning and productivity' (p. 67) that are features of social life at every level. Within an overarching narrative conception there is still plenty of space for purposefulness, for intention, for action towards an end, for careful consideration of likely cause and effect. But a narrative context also draws much more attention to the diverse range of other factors which complicate, enrich, frustrate or hasten the fulfilment of such desires and plans. Within narrative, *stuff happens*, and people's circumstances change. Events unfold in unexpected directions as well as in expected. Furthermore, the fulfilment of plans is not always primary within narrative. Rather, attention is also rightly given to such aspects as the growth or fracture of relationships, and the development of character and community. Within narrative it is much more clear that proactive initiative is far from the only requirement, but also wise and discerning response, often in challenging contexts. For the 'terrain' through which a church 'journeys', to use that frequent CLD metaphor, does not consist of a fixed landscape (never mind one with a straight tarmac road along which to travel). Rather, the metaphor needs to be stretched to breaking point or beyond if it is to do justice to reality. Perhaps the journey is across shifting sands, or across an ocean in which tides, currents and winds frequently vary. Alternatively, perhaps it just isn't a journey. It is a narrative, which is yet unfolding.

The second question to address, then, concerns the mode of narrative to be advocated. For one could describe the CLD as offering a narrative of church life, albeit a highly focused, confidently predictive, bullet-point-style narrative. One could, indeed, put forward a case that the CLD narrative has some characteristics in common with the mode of oppressive metanarrative rightly critiqued by a number of commentators. A mode of narrative different from this is needed for a theologically appropriate construal of church life. I propose that Richard Bauckham's concept of a 'nonmodern metanarrative' (2003, p. 48) is precisely such a mode. Bauckham uses this term to describe Scripture. He accepts that the claims and scope of the Bible means that it does qualify as a metanarrative. However, he identifies a number of ways in which the biblical material differs from the genre of 'modern metanarrative' against

which post-modern critiques are directed. These differences include the fact that explanatory priority within Scripture is not given to 'immanent reason or human mastery' (p. 48), but rather to God's freedom, and human freedom to resist or obey God. Furthermore, the Biblical narrative is not characterised by oppressive imposition of artificial order. There is considerable space for complexity and ambiguity, as well as attention to 'the apparently redundant superfluity of little stories'. Even more importantly, Israel's story is 'rarely portrayed as the dominant metanarrative, but rather as a story of resistance, up against the dominant narratives of the great empires from Pharaoh to Rome.' (p. 51) The Biblical narrative suggests 'not that the kingdom of God is merely a more powerful or more successful version of the imperial powers, but that it is an altogether different kind of rule'. Thus, not only does Scripture repeatedly portray God's choice of the outsider and the powerless, but it also 'breaks the cycle by which the oppressed become oppressors in their turn' (p. 52).

These characteristics of a 'nonmodern metanarrative' can appropriately be transposed to characterise a good narrative of the local church. Thus any such narrative should not be concerned with the artificial imposition of order, the dominance of human reason, or the silencing (or simply silence) of alternative perspectives. We should not be at all surprised if the narrative of church life includes and embodies a subversive call to non-violent resistance against the dominant narratives of the 'empires' in which we find ourselves. Indeed, the argument of this thesis could be strongly put in such terms, characterising Cartesian discourse as the narrative of an empire increasingly and inappropriately dominant across Western culture. What is required is not the appropriation of this dominant discourse in the service of the church, creating a more 'Godly' manifestation of its imperial power, but rather 'an altogether different kind of' discourse.

The shift from narrative to drama

Having shifted from outcomes to narrative, the subsequent step from narrative to drama is a smaller one. Drama can, indeed, be seen as a subset of narrative. What, then, are the benefits of identifying drama in particular as an appropriate background context for the outworking of ecclesial life? Before going on, shortly, to outline two moderately technical benefits from such a conception, I first register some more straightforward consequences of a shift from narrative to drama.

The acting out of a narrative in drama draws our attention even more clearly to particulars and specifics: these people, in this place, at a specific period of history. Moreover, the acting out

of drama makes more explicit the fact that *events unfold over time*. It is within time that character is shaped, relationships strengthened or destroyed, and decisions are made. For these reasons and more, David Ford finds drama to be a 'remarkably fruitful way of conceiving Christian theology' (2011, p. 23):, and of understanding the Bible and life.

> 'Drama, like life, unfolds over time. It can have plots and sub-plots; major and minor characters and events; clashes of people, ideas, and perspectives that may or may not be resolved; loose ends and mysteries; intensive dialogues, soliloquies and cries… wisdom and foolishness; tragedy and comedy. It is able to convey the dynamic particularity of human existence, with its physicality, surprises, initiatives, contingencies, necessities, tensions, and multi-levelled complexity.… Drama is also a powerful way of portraying the complexity of human belonging, allowing for identities and conflicts that change over time and are subject to much negotiation and debate.' (pp. 23-24)

A five-Act drama

Moving on, then, to my first more technical consideration, N. T. Wright, adopting a dramatic metaphor for salvation history, proposes a scheme for dividing that history into a number of Acts (1992, pp. 140-143). Sam Wells takes this concept and adjusts the details, thus offering a scheme which can be succinctly summarised as follows (2004, pp. 53-57):

> Act 1   Creation
> Act 2   Israel
> Act 3   Jesus
> Act 4   Church
> Act 5   The eschaton

 What, then, is the significance of this particular division of salvation history into these acts? This question can be most clearly answered by considering some of the mistakes that can be made in interpreting the drama. Wells identifies two broad kinds of mistake, and spells out some of their consequences. The first kind of mistake is 'to think one is in a one-act play rather than a five-act play' (Wells, 2004, p. 55). Within such a conception, 'all achievements, all results, all outcomes must be celebrated and resolved before the final whistle… Everything must be squeezed into the unforgiving span of a single life'. In highlighting the difference it makes for Christians to understand themselves to be living in a five-act drama, the terms that Wells chooses are, from the perspective of this thesis, striking indeed:

> 'The five-act drama… means that Christians are spared such a crisis. They are not called to be effective or successful, but to be faithful. Faithfulness is but effectiveness measured against a much longer time scale: since Act Three has happened and Act Five is to follow, Christians can afford to fail, because they trust in Christ's victory and in God's ultimate sovereignty.' (p. 55)

The second kind of mistake, Wells proposes, is to get the wrong act: to assume that one is in an Act other than Act Four (pp. 55-57). For instance, to assume one is in Act One means to assume the role of creator. 'There have been no significant events before one's appearance in the drama. There is no experience to learn from, no story to join, no drama to enter.' Alternatively, assuming one lives in Act Three, 'it is easy to confuse one's own role with that of Jesus' (p. 56). Here the tendency is to seek to be a hero rather than a saint.

> 'This point of view is always fashionable - everyone likes to think they live in significant times. But the shape of the five-act play reminds the church that it does not live in particularly significant times. The most important things have already happened [the coming of the Messiah and the Spirit].... This is a great liberation for the church.' (p. 57)

Overall, then,

> 'Baptism takes the Christian from a one-act play to a five-act play.... Christians find their character by becoming a character in God's story. They move from trying to realise all meaning in their own lives to receiving the heritage of faith and the hope of glory.' (p. 57)

How, then, does such a conception of God's drama relate to the CLD? I suspect that the CLD's fear, in the face of such a conception, is that being in Act Four could be used as an excuse for complacency, and for doing nothing[131]. Perhaps the CLD itself is prone to the common temptations of imagining oneself in Act Three, or indeed Act One or Act Five. I suggest that it certainly feels itself to be more responsible, to have more weight on its shoulders, than is merited by Wells' depiction of Act Four. Instead of an excuse for complacency, this depiction should rather be seen as a liberation to trust, and thus faithfully improvise (of which more shortly).

Epic, lyric and dramatic perspectives

My second more technical consideration is to introduce three dramatic 'modes' or 'perspectives' that have been suggested by Hegel, appropriated by von Balthasar, and subsequently found helpful by others. They function as 'ideal types', not necessarily to be found in pure forms, but nevertheless clarifying significant tendencies. Each of these three perspectives can be found within drama (although not every drama will include all three). But they can also be used helpfully to characterise other forms of narrative or discourse. The argument of this section will be that the 'dramatic' perspective, the view 'from the middle' of

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[131] I genuinely wonder whether 'doing nothing' ranks as one of the most significant sins, or at least things to be avoided, from a CLD perspective. This would clearly be linked to its emphasis on dynamic activity, discussed in Section 5.1.

the action, is the most significant and important[132]. This is true both for the nature of the biblical narrative, and also for ongoing faithful Christian living. First, then, to outline the nature of each of these perspectives, drawing on the summaries offered by Ford, Wells and Quash.

The epic perspective aspires to a detached, objective overview, free from distortion by personal subjectivity. God is typically referred to in the third person.   'The epic mindset likes clarity, completeness, and objectivity, systems, overviews, and comprehensive structures. It is impatient of ambiguity, … multiple perspectives, and of characters, ideas, or events that do not seem to fit the movement toward a final resolution ' (D. Ford, 2011, p. 25). It is not that there is no place for epic considerations. But it is not sufficient on its own.

The lyric perspective focuses on intimate, expressive, subjectivity, rather than a detached overview. It looks inward, and at the present moment, rather than outward. It is the mode of intense and existential engagement.   God is addressed directly in the second person. Important things can happen in the lyric mode, but, again, it is insufficient on its own. It treats the self, a creature, as being of exaggerated importance in relation to the rest of space and time. And the salvation narrative of incarnation, death, and resurrection 'is not primarily an event in the believer's heart' (Wells, 2004, p. 49).

The dramatic perspective harnesses the best of both epic and lyric. It 'brings together the internal intentions and dispositions of acting characters with the external events and deeds of the story' (Wells, 2004, p. 49). It maintains a

> 'sense of plot and purpose without suppressing individuality, diversity and complexity… [enabling] a sense of coherence without assuming one overview. Because its primary concern is with characters and events in interaction, it can resist absorption either into the lyric interiority of one subjective consciousness or into an epic overview that assumes a standpoint far above the contingency and untidiness of life.' (D. Ford, 2011, p. 26)

One further aspect of the dramatic mode is particularly important: its perspective is always *'from the middle'* of the action (Quash, 2005, p. 28). It has no privileged access to a detached panoramic overview. It accepts the limitations on knowledge of its humble placing, on the level and in the middle. There are, indeed, often as many *different* dramatic perspectives from the middle as there are actors in a drama. They see from the middle, as it were 'spatially',

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[132] The fact that one of these perspectives (or modes) is known as the 'dramatic', but that all three are possible perspectives *within drama*, can be confusing. I will, nevertheless, stick with this terminology.

without being able to know everything happening at a particular moment. And they see from the middle 'temporally', aware of some things in the present and past, but not genuinely knowing the future at all. Thus the dramatic is 'concerned with *what-is-going-forward'* (Quash, 2005, p. 34, using a term of von Balthasar).

Quash, Wells and Ford agree that, whilst there is a proper place for both the epic and the lyric, the dramatic mode is of primary importance. Ford argues that both the Bible in general, and the Gospel of John in particular, can be conceived as 'epic, lyric, and above all dramatic' (D. Ford, 2011, p. 27, summarising his argument of pp. 24-34). John could, for instance, have had a primarily epic aim, seeking as complete an account as possible of Jesus' ministry, along with the definitive meaning of his teaching. Instead, the author of the gospel emphasises the superabundance of events, and the inexhaustible symbolic depth of the meaning within his teaching. Neither of these could be satisfactorily encapsulated within any epic account. Ford describes the 'quietly dramatic character' of '"ordinary" Christian living' (p. 32), as depicted by John as involving 'nothing less than daily living in intimacy with God, minds and hearts being stretched, active in love, alert to whatever is required to glorify God, to "bear much fruit", and to be learners'. He pays particular attention to the conclusion of the gospel, and to Jesus' interaction with Peter (John 21:17-23). Here, the culmination of history will definitely be centred on Christ, 'everything else is left vague, and curiosity about precise details is discouraged with a rhetorical question twice repeated. The positive emphasis is on "Follow me!" – drawing attention to the immediate, dramatic future, and again centring on Jesus.' (p. 34) Overall, then,

> 'The sending of God creates drama, above all the drama of love and friendship in human existence in interplay with God, and potentially with "all things" and with "all people". John's Gospel might be seen as pedagogy for those who desire to take part in the theodrama[133] more fully and with deepening understanding and love.' (p. 30)

This developing picture of the dramatic mode stands in considerable contrast to that of the CLD. Within the CLD much attention is directed towards articulated future goals, and towards what must be done to attain them. The future is still relevant within a dramatic perspective, and can be imaginatively probed. However, the centre of gravity is much closer to the present, with the emphasis on *what-is-going-forward*. Moreover, Ford's rich depiction of 'ordinary Christian living' directs attention well beyond 'what is done', and even beyond 'the manner in which it is done', to highlight the importance of disposition, formation, relationship and

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[133] 'Theodrama' is a term originating in von Balthasar referring to God's unfolding drama.

attentiveness. Such emphases are by no means *requirements* of a dramatic mode *per se*. There is, however, much more scope for their highlighting within such a perspective.

I have argued that, within a broader narrative conception of church life, the metaphor of drama offers particular potency for our ecclesial understanding. I have commended the perspective offered by a correct understanding of our place in the broad drama (summarised as the Fourth act of Five). The particular understanding of a dramatic perspective, viewed from the spatial and temporal middle of the action, has further enriched the concept. But one important distinction within the dramatic metaphor remains to be specified. For this is not a drama with a full script. Rather, it is one which calls for faithful improvisation. Precisely what is meant by that term, however, deserves careful elucidation, to which I turn next.

The shift from drama to improvisation

I follow Wells in holding up *improvisation*, understood in a particular way, as the most helpful metaphor for the calling of the church, understood within a dramatic context[134]. How is improvisation, then, to be understood?

> 'When improvisers are trained to work in the theatre, they are schooled in the tradition so thoroughly that they learn to act from habit in ways appropriate to the circumstance.' (Wells, 2004, p. 65)

Such improvisation has several characteristics. First, it is not about always having to be original. This is the case both for theatrical improvisation in general, and for Christian improvisation in particular. Rather than being paralysed by the assumed need to be original, the church 'has permission to be obvious… Being obvious means trusting that the practices of discipleship, shaped by the Holy Spirit, are enough' (p. 67). Second, improvisation need not be about being clever or witty. It is not about 'outstandingly gifted individuals', but rather about 'nurturing a group of people to have such trust in one another that they have a high level of common understanding and take the same things for granted' (p. 68). This leads to relaxation, and 'the apparent effortlessness that is sensed when people genuinely and gleefully cooperate with one another'. Third, and relatedly, the improvisation in question is communal. In the present Fourth Act of the drama, 'one must seek in all ways to cooperate with the other members of the company, the communion of saints, rather than try to stand out from them as an isolated hero' (p. 68).

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[134] As alternatives to a primary metaphor of *improvisation*, Wells considers but rejects the concepts of *performance* and *rehearsal* (see pp. 59-65). In so doing, he engages with the work of Lash, Brueggemann, Vanhoozer and Craigo-Snell.

Wells also names two fears that may be associated with improvisation. One, which he links with an epic perspective, arises from a deep-seated fear of the unconscious. Whilst acknowledging that the unconscious, like the rest of life, is open to self-deception and sin, he also affirms that it too can be conformed to the service of God, and thus trusted as a gift of God (p. 68). The second is the fear that improvisation 'is trivial and self-indulgent', and not sufficiently serious or solemn. Wells highlights the joy and playfulness to be found throughout God's drama, and thus their proper place within Act Four.

> 'Free from the paralysis of being original, the pressure to be clever, the fear of the unconscious, and the demand to be solemn, the church can faithfully follow its Lord by improvising in the fourth act. Happy to be obvious, relaxed, open to the unconscious, and playful… no longer need Christian communities anxiously glance over their shoulder, lest they make a terrible mistake… Instead they can trust the practices and patterns of their common life and have confidence that God joins their faithful improvisation.' (p. 69)

The church in an unfolding drama

In this final subsection I address two main questions, both in the light of the metaphor of faithful improvisation within God's unfolding drama: what are the implications of this metaphor for a reconfigured ministerial discourse? And, first, what light does this metaphor shed on the CLD?

I begin by holding the CLD against Hegel and von Balthasar's three modes (epic, lyric and dramatic). I propose that the strongest resonance of the CLD is with the epic, with its thrust towards clarity, completeness and systematisation. To this, however, must be added at least something of the intensity of the lyric mode, though perhaps with the darker potentials of that mode somehow filtered out. Superficially, this combination of epic and lyric might be expected to resemble the dramatic mode (which I join the authors cited in commending). But I contend that the CLD differs from the dramatic in at least two important respects. The first is the CLD's lack of acknowledgement of its own situation 'in the middle', with all the limitation which that entails. The second is the way in which the CLD appears to combine the epic and the lyric. It seems very selective in its engagement with the lyric, focusing only on what appears positive and exciting. This is not a true integration. Rather, I suggest that the CLD aim is to harness what energy it can find in the lyric mode, and attach it, rather like an outboard motor, for extra propulsion towards its desired epic ends.

One of the foundational CLD assumptions seems to be that the only way to create momentum is by articulating vision and objectives. This assumption is highly significant for the shaping of

the discourse, but the notions of drama and improvisation perform the vital task of making clear that the assumption is wrong. As anyone who has ever read a good book or watched a compelling drama will testify, narrative momentum and dramatic tension can be very real indeed. Forward movement does not only happen when a precise endpoint has been specified in advance. The assumption that it does is an anomaly that needs to be very clearly identified as such. The metaphor of improvising within an unfolding drama acts as a clear counter-example, thus removing this ill-founded constraint[135]. Thus Ford describes the Bible as testifying to

> 'a real drama of love and freedom, and the most serious matters are at stake in the interactions of God, humanity, and creation. There is a sense neither of inevitability nor of purposelessness. There is no contradiction between divine purpose and initiative, on the one hand, and human freedom and responsibility, on the other… This is an ongoing, irreducibly dramatic reality, and living within it requires alertness to God, other people, oneself, creation, and whatever is happening now, always looking toward the future God is promising.' (D. Ford, 2011, p. 27)

But how would the CLD respond to the notion of improvisation? I suggest that, most obviously, an emphasis on improvisation goes very much against the CLD emphasis on methodical planning of logical steps towards a desired end. I do not recollect any CLD text using the word improvisation, or any synonym thereof. I suspect that improvisation, at first glance, would be seen as not taking sufficiently seriously the urgent task before the church. I propose, therefore, that the CLD may at times fall into the trap that Wells identifies of mistaking its own calling with that of Jesus, and assuming it is in Act Three, rather than trusting that the most important things have already been done[136]. If, however, improvisation is construed in terms of having some space for flexibility, the CLD may well be more accepting of it. The basic difference between the CLD approach and my own in this regard might be summarised as follows: for the CLD, the background texture of church life is to be determined by planning, and it is permitted to improvise within the context of planning; for myself, the background texture of church life is to be construed as faithful improvisation in God's unfolding drama, and it is good to engage in planning within the context of such improvisation[137]. The experienced difference between the two modes may be much more substantial than one might at first expect.

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[135] This issue will be considered further in the subsection on Energy within Section 5.2.

[136] In this context I am reminded of the dictum 'Pray as if everything depends on God; act as if everything depends on you', which I have encountered several times in broadly CLD contexts. This can sound convincing – but it is clearly unbalanced advice. Far better to both pray and act in line with the true nature of reality.

[137] Taking due account of the considerations of Section 5.3.

But is not planning a contradiction of improvisation? Not necessarily. Especially because the understanding of improvisation being offered is a corporate one, some degree of coordinated action and communication will often be appropriate, and this may indeed be mediated by plans. Improvisation can be understood to unfold on a timescale of months or years, not just seconds or minutes. Nevertheless, the fact that the plans are held within and subordinate to an improvisatory context means that they may often be held with lightness and provisionality.

Secondly then, if the background metaphor shifts to one of faithful improvisation within God's unfolding drama, what are the implications for a reconfigured ministerial discourse? Four broad points can be made. The first is to emphasise the vital importance of *formation*, of the development of Christian character and good habit. If our improvisation is to count as faithful and good within God's drama, then, by God's grace, our minds, hearts, imaginations and therefore actions need the ongoing transforming work of the Spirit. Wells cites the Duke of Wellington's comment on the Napoleonic Wars: "The Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton." (Wells, 2004, p. 73). The virtues and character required by the demanding circumstances of war could not simply be summoned at will, but were the fruit of a 'long period of preparation' (represented by Eton in Wellington's reflection). Wells links such a perspective to 'a revival of the understanding of virtue in Christian ethics' (p. 80) in recent decades. Here attention is not so much on the rights and wrongs of isolated decisions, but on the character of the person involved. It is about 'forming the life' of the person who acts[138]. Wells links this to the practice of experienced theatrical improvisers. In particular, he commends the 'state of readiness, the alertness that comes from years of disciplined preparation' describing this as a state of 'relaxed awareness' [139].

> 'In this state of awareness the actor senses no need to impose an order on the outside world or on the imagination; there is openness to both receiving and giving. The actor is at one with the whole context: self, other actors, audience, theatre space. It is like the condition of athletes at the height of their form and fitness, but added to that is an awareness of others and an openness to the unknown… There is trust and respect for oneself and the other actors. There is alertness and attention.… There is an understanding of narrative – of what is an end and what is a beginning of a scene or story. There is an ability to keep the narrative going and to explore a situation.' (p. 80)

Second, what is the environment in which such formation is most likely to flourish? Wells very clearly identifies worship as the 'principal form of discipleship training' (p. 82), not least because it is 'the time when the conventional rules of the fallen world are suspended'. Thus,

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[138] Some similar emphases can be seen in some of the books beyond the boundary of the CLD, such as those by Sadgrove (2008) and Runcorn (2011).

[139] Drawing on the work of Jacques Lecoq, whose original term is *la disponibilité*.

for instance, by intentionally gathering in God's presence 'the community develops the skill of wonder, the virtue of humility, and the notion of God's glory and faithfulness'. When Christians intercede, they 'develop the skill of distinguishing pain from sin, suffering from evil, need from want' (p. 83). Similarly, listening for God's Word in Scripture, coming before God in baptism, sharing the peace before sharing the bread, sharing the Eucharist with one another and being sent back out into the world, all offer rich scope for the gradual, deep, shaping of moral imagination and character (pp. 82-85)[140]. As well as the formational potential of corporate worship we might also wish to emphasise the role of individual prayer, study and reflection. Moreover, there can ideally be an ongoing beneficial dialogue between active service of God within and beyond the church, and the sort of prayerful reflection highlighted above. It is worth emphasising here the striking contrast between such a prioritisation of worship and the substantial lack of attention it receives within the CLD[141].

Jeff Astley offers insights germane to the core of this thesis in his 'The role of worship in Christian learning' (Astley, 1996). Whilst acknowledging that much Christian learning occurs through an intentional focus on cognitive knowledge, he emphasises the importance of the 'implicit catechesis' (p. 244) that takes place within worship. On the one hand, 'worship is not *for* anything' (p. 245) but on the other it not only expresses but also *evokes*, forms and reinforces 'attitude-virtues' and desirable Christian dispositions (Astley, 1996, p. 247, drawing on Evans, 1980). Astley calls for the valuing not only of 'verbal, cognitive, often analytical and critical "left lobe" ("western lobe")' formational activities, but also of those that are 'intuitive, aesthetic, imaginative and non-verbal "right lobe" ("eastern lobe")' (p. 249).

> 'The point is that the good health of Christian education is dependent upon the operation of both lobes of the brain, so that Christian truth is learned both affectively and cognitively. It is when reason and emotion are divorced that religion most rapidly loses its sense and its power for people.' (p. 250)

In the context of this thesis, one might add to these observations an emphasis on the need for connecting with the full range of the 'right lobe', rather than simply with a narrowed focus on excitement and the positive.

The third broad point to emphasise, following a shift to a metaphor of faithful improvisation, is the significant *change in disposition*. The 'relaxed awareness' to which skilled improvisers

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[140] Wells offers a more extended treatment of these issues in his *'How Common Worship Forms Local Character'*, (2002).

[141] There is, of course, an important balance to be maintained here. For worship to genuinely be worship it must not be undertaken primarily as a means to self-improvement, however desirable such transformation may be.

aspire sits in striking contrast to the focused determination often conjured up by the CLD. What this reconfigured approach holds out is a mode of existence, a way of being for the church that is qualitatively different from that of the CLD. The combination of relaxed trust, but also alert attentiveness, is a consequence of knowing what is our place within the drama. It arises from correctly discerning what is our responsibility, and what is not our responsibility. It is a consequence of *distinguishing clearly between influence* (which we will at times be able to offer) *and the control of outcomes* (which may often be beyond our reach). Such relaxed awareness is much more likely to be conducive to a proper attentiveness to others, to situations as they unfold, and to God.

Fourth and finally, how does the metaphor of faithful improvisation in God's unfolding drama relate to my framework of the Cartesian and the Gestalt? It should already be very evident that there is ample space for the Gestalt within this metaphor. Attention is directed to tone and poise, to mood and texture, to character and relationship. Human beings are seen as such, without the veiling of categorisation. Attention can shift easily and repeatedly between the overall contours of the drama and the detail of particular sub-plots. The purposefulness of God can be seen alongside the reality of human freedoms. The Gestalt, then, has ample space within this metaphor. But what about the Cartesian? It would be possible to have a drama in which the Cartesian was largely absent. Indeed, there may be aspects of the unfolding drama where that is properly the case. There is, however, no reason why the strengths of the Cartesian need not be harnessed within the unfolding drama. Indeed, I propose that this metaphor offers not a fully metric space, but rather a dramatic space within which a life-giving relationship between Cartesian and Gestalt might properly be improvised. The relaxed awareness and attentiveness of the Gestalt may hand over a particular area or issue to the Cartesian. The Cartesian brings to bear its considerable skills of analysis and detailed focus, and then hands back the fruit of its labour to the Gestalt. It is then the Gestalt which has the breadth of perspective and depth of wisdom to discern whether and how the fruits of the Cartesian analysis should be integrated into its understanding of the situation, thus influencing its ongoing improvising[142].

I have put the case throughout this section that the metaphor of God's unfolding drama offers a constructive and fruitful backdrop against which to understand the calling of the church. The

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[142] Although they do not use my terminology, I suggest that several of the books beyond the boundaries of the CLD can be seen broadly to follow such an approach, harnessing some detailed analysis within a broader narrative or dramatic framework. Examples would include Impey (2010), Rendle and Mann (2003), and Allison Hahn (1994).

next two sections will substantially enrich our sense of *the manner in which* faithful improvisation within God's drama should be conceived. In section 7.3 I will outline a quadrilateral of virtues aimed to counterbalance some of the emphases of the CLD. But first, in section 7.2, I turn to the ecclesiologist Stephen Pickard, and highlight four of the particularly relevant dimensions of church existence which he prioritises.

7.2   Pickard: Church energised and structured after God's own life

As its subtitle suggests, *Seeking the Church: An Introduction to Ecclesiology* is 'intended as a mini systematic ecclesiology' (Pickard, 2012, p. 30). Pickard acknowledges a particular debt to the late Daniel Hardy, his one-time supervisor and mentor. Much of what Pickard writes can be read as a very constructive (and rather more theoretical) alternative to the concerns and assumptions of the CLD. In this section, I will summarise, at least in broad brush strokes, four of Pickard's significant themes that are particularly relevant to my purpose. These themes are: connectedness and sociality; the ordered energy of God; the relationship between pace and presence; and a proper ecclesial modesty. Before turning to these constructive themes, however, I will first give some attention to his consideration of 'natural ecclesial heresies'[143].

Natural ecclesial heresies

It is striking that Pickard is interested not just in heresies of doctrine, but also in the outworking of such heresies in ecclesial practice. As he puts it simply, 'are there perennial issues that trip the church up?' (2012, p. 56). He contends that heresies of practice arise from failings in our doctrine of God, and that these very easily 'remain hidden and deeply embedded', and are thus 'all the more dangerous and distortive of the church's practice of the gospel' (p. 58). Pickard draws on Schleiermacher's analysis of heresy in his aim 'to understand the theological roots of a number of significant contemporary aberrations in the practice of being the church' (p. 61). One of the 'fundamental ecclesial heretical forms' he identifies is what he terms '*desacralized ecclesia* (the disappearing Church)'. The result of such a heresy is that

> 'the Church is left to its own devices to figure out how to act and order its life. Not surprisingly, the practices of such a church culture are deeply Pelagian and widespread in the contemporary churches of the West.' (p. 73)

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[143] He considers these in his third chapter, Natural Ecclesial Heresies: Some Implications for Practice (pp. 56-80).

Pickard sees the widespread anxiety characteristic of Western society as also having infected church life. Indeed, he discerns this heresy as being

> 'conducive to toxic forms of anxiety. A Church suffering the loss of its own inner transcendence is for the most part a Church left to its own devices, notwithstanding protestations to the contrary. Such a Church naturally defaults into behaviour and practices which are best identified as Pelagian in spirit and temper. This is expressed in discourses and practices that are focused on strategic planning, heavy emphasis on rationalising resources, obsession with efficient, cost effective processes, tight control via micro-management technique, and the achievement of measurable and successful outcomes. This Pelagian ethos is embedded in management and therapeutic models of ministry and leadership. In such an ecclesial system, the constant experience is dissipation of energy, loss of coherence and fleeting "success".' (p. 76)

Pickard's project in the rest of the book is to set out an ecclesiology that avoids 'the pitfalls and potential ravines' of such heresies. In seeking a better understanding of the Church, he describes 'a renewed sociality energised and structured after God's own life' (p. 79). My outlining of his project commences, next, with a focus on *sociality*.

Connectedness and sociality

Pickard sets out as foundational a correlation between our movement towards God and our movement towards each other (pp. 1-5). This correlation is neither simple nor straightforward, but is rather 'complex and rich and belongs to the deepest wonders of being a creature of God' (p. 1). For this reason, Pickard sees as belonging to the purpose of the church 'the search for viable, sustaining human society, which enhances quality of life' (p. 81). The first of his chapters setting out constructive ecclesiological themes is thus entitled 'A Renewed Sociality'[144]. He critiques the contemporary tendency to address questions of society 'principally by reference to a utilitarian philosophy based on a pragmatic assessment of what works best to maximise economic well-being of individuals' (p. 82). Rather, he sees the connectivity of *koinonia* as having significant ontological weight. Importantly,

> 'it involves a dynamic that can be traced in the first place to creation, before it becomes the subject of redemption. Furthermore, and not surprisingly, such connectivity finds its headwaters in the doctrine of God and its estuary in the doctrine of the church.' (p. 84)

This primary location of sociality in creation, rather than redemption, Pickard describes as 'Hardy's fundamental theological insight into the basis for human society' (p. 91). Thus the 'relationality we observe in creation - in the animal kingdom, human society and in the

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[144] Chapter 4, (pp. 81-100).

symbiotic life of the natural environment - is no accident or purely evolutionary surprise.' Rather, it is 'to be attributed to God's work of creation' (p. 89). Such sociality or connectivity is to be interpreted in terms of relation 'not simply *to other persons* but *to creation and all that this involves'* (p. 95, emphasis in the original). From such a perspective, a major part of the calling of the Church is to grow into a renewed and redeemed sociality, displaying the 'ecclesial bond in Christ', and seeking to work out its implications in its ongoing life. And yet that bond in Christ is mediated not only by obviously ecclesial practices (such as Scripture, sacraments, worship etc). Rather, Hardy identifies at least five intermediate categories through which sociality is made manifest in the world: place; polity (social organisation); economics; interpersonal relationships; communication (Hardy, 1989, pp. 44-47, quoted in Pickard, 2012, p. 96). All of the above can be seen as being deeply rooted in Trinitarian theology[145]. Furthermore, such emphases challenge the 'individualistic and atomistic thinking' (p. 102) frequently found in Western cultures.

Energy

In moving on to consider a second theme of Pickard, namely that of *energy*, I start by reiterating two of my concerns (and indeed puzzlements) regarding the CLD. One of these is precisely to do with how it relates to energy: the source of that energy, and the mode in which energy can be expected to operate. The CLD primarily identifies the *source* of energy as being the articulation of vision and objectives, coupled with the satisfaction of achieving the latter. The primary terms used to describe the *mode* of CLD energy are excitement, motivation and galvanising. My concern is not that any of these (sources or modes) should be declared illegitimate, but rather that both seem worryingly constrained and thin. My second concern relevant here is the apparent disjunction between what the CLD holds dear and the practice of worship. Pickard, in his writing on the 'ordered energy of God', offers a much richer, more holistic, and more satisfactory understanding, which more than addresses the shortcomings of the CLD in this area.

Pickard begins his reflection on 'Energy for the Journey'[146] by citing Daniel Hardy once more:

> 'there is an ordered energy that is perpetually self-generating and fully self-replenishing all the time. We use labels like "ordered energy", or "word in spirit", "Trinity", or "God", but these are not just labels for something that is there. They name that which of its nature is infinite, endless and expansive, to which the only

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[145] It is, however, worth noting that Pickard devotes most of chapter 6 to identifying and addressing shortcomings in the 'social doctrine of the Trinity'.
[146] Chapter Eight, (pp. 183-209).

possible response is not to name it but to follow it into the depths.' (Hardy, 2010, 46, quoted on Pickard, 183)

This ordered energy attracts, transforms, generates and renews. It is manifest in creation, in the powerful presence of Christ, in the resurrection, in the life of the early Church. There is a 'double energetic movement *from* and *towards* God' (p. 187), characterised by superabundance, holiness and glory. The Eastern Orthodox attention to divine energies suggests a

> 'sort of penumbra of glory, or a field of energy that surrounds the Trinitarian Godhead. In this way, the universe can be considered as lying within God's field of energy or "field of resonance", while at the same time remaining distinct from and contingent upon God's supra-essentiality. Within this penumbra or energy-field, there is a resonating and quickening of the natural, material universe, so that the material order is drawn into the experience – however we may understand "experience" – of God' (Reid, 1995, p. 133, quoted in Pickard, p. 186)

This energy of God is what forms the renewed sociality considered above. *Sociopoiesis* (the generation and shaping of relations) 'is always in the divine energy' (Hardy et al, 2010, p. 49, quoted in Pickard, p. 183). Within this account, the Church can be understood to be 'that body of people formed by and drawn towards God through the ordered energetics of God's own life' (Pickard, p. 184). The divine energy is, at least in part, mediated through specific structures, practices, and polities. Thus 'structure and energy are not antithetical to each other; indeed they are co-related, complementary and mutually involving'. Supremely, 'the plenitude of energy and wisdom' manifest in creation is 'concentrated in a structured energetic form in the incarnation' (p. 192). The 'structuring of the energy has a Christ-like form and the energetics of the structure are pneumatological'.

How is the ordered energy of God most frequently mediated and experienced? Pickard answers this question by focusing on worship:

> 'In worship, human beings are maximally opened toward the divine and each other… An energy transfer takes place through which life is orientated towards God and reconstituted by God. The change is ongoing and does not dissipate though it resists exact measure and close tracking.… In Christian theology, energy is neither content-less nor arbitrary in operation, but turns the body of Christ towards God and the world simultaneously.… Worship effects a holy and ordered release of infinite divine energy as worshippers are drawn into the orbit of God's presence through the action of the Spirit.' (p. 188)

Pickard goes on to explore in more detail the outworking of this energy transfer in the context of Word and Sacrament, praise and prayer. Importantly, those who are refreshed and reconstituted by the divine energy in worship, 'are continually directed beyond themselves

and into the world to serve as faithful disciples' (p. 205). So long as such service and witness remains rooted in and connected to God's ordered energy in worship, 'energy available for life, love and care increases and is replenished by entering into the pattern of Christ's life'.

Pickard, quite rightly, expects great things from worship. He is also alert to the potential pathologies associated with it. For instance, in considering the Word as one of the mediators of God's energy, he highlights the possibility that 'focal awareness shifts from God… to the determinate media[147]' (p. 197). When this happens, 'there is no longer replenishment and entropy occurs':

> 'The dynamic interplay between divine grace and human participation becomes skewed towards human preoccupation with their own engagements rather than upon the One, who energises and bestows wisdom. This is not just an issue for the word tradition in Christianity but also operates in the sacramental tradition.' (p. 197)

The lack of an obvious rich understanding of worship within the CLD, or of its integration with the primary concerns of the CLD, would seem to make this particular pathology an especially high risk.

As previously mentioned, writers within the CLD identify as the primary source of energy the articulation of targets and objectives. Such an identification may often be based on personal experience of the process they recommend. But in assigning the source of the energy to the articulation of targets, they are *interpreting* that experience. I suggest that Pickard's reflections on sociality and on energy can suggest an alternative interpretation. Imagine a setting where church members are gathered to reflect together on the life of the church, and what its priorities should be. Notwithstanding my reservations about aspects of process, there may well be rich and insightful conversation, both demonstrating and increasing a renewed sociality. That sociality, that desire to be oriented towards God and reconstituted by God, could offer a conducive space for the reception of divine energy[148]. People may well leave the discussion feeling energised[149]. Some may assume that it was the articulation of objectives that caused the energy. But perhaps at least some of its source was richer and deeper.

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[147] By 'determinate media' within the word tradition, he means 'Scripture, creed, doctrine, prayer, liturgical form, hymn' – to which we might add 'vision statement and objective', which are certainly seen as determinate.
[148] Note again the concept of the church as a space – in this case a conducive space in which relationships (probably of widely varying length and character), imagination, Cartesian clarity, desire and more are commingled in conversation, through which can flow the ordered energy of God.
[149] I expect that our reception of divine energy is not always in pure form, but may, for instance, be partially infected by a Pelagian anxious energy.

Pickard's conception of energy addresses the shortcomings of the CLD that I identified at the beginning of this subsection. God is clearly named as the source of energy, and the mediation of that energy is intimately interwoven with the practices of worship, service and witness. Moreover, the mode of expression of the divine energy is not artificially constrained to the realm of excitement and galvanisation, but is free to take on a much broader range of possible expressions. Pickard's acknowledgement of the relationship between the divine energy and the structures which might mediate it calls to mind my own terms *morphe* and *schema*, and suggests important new questions to be posed about them, and the relationship between them. For instance, how can the *schema* of the church best be constituted and ordered to encourage the maximal flow, and minimal interruption of, the divine energy? In what ways does the *morphe* of the church most need the re-energising and reshaping of God's ordered energy? In what ways is the divine energy already manifest within the *morphe* of the church?

In the Introduction to the thesis, I cited as problematic the fact that mission and ministry are frequently portrayed as if they were opposing polarities. In concluding this subsection, I want to emphasise that an approach such as Pickard's overwrites, indeed renders nonsensical any such clear dichotomy. The ordered energy of God seamlessly encompasses both mission and ministry, drawing all towards him, and simultaneously sending all out to be agents of his renewed sociality throughout creation. All who are drawn into, and open themselves to, 'God's field of energy', become both recipients and agents of his reparation and transformation. The renewed sociality that derives from God's very being constitutes the unified field that transcends any division between mission and ministry.

There is much about Pickard's discussion of the ordered energy of God that belongs most obviously in the realm of the Gestalt. Considerations of mediating structures, however, helpfully raise questions about the relationship between Cartesian and Gestalt. This is also the case for the topic to which I turn next, which can be considered as a particular aspect of the mediation of divine energy.

Pace and presence

The topic in question is the *pace* of church life (a substantially Cartesian concern), and in particular the relationship between *pace* and *presence*. To attend first to the question of pace, Pickard is candid about the possibility of churches whose pace is so slow that it has stopped,

calling this 'Fast-asleep Church'[150]. A common reaction to this phenomenon is for 'the Church and especially its leaders' to pull strongly in the opposite direction. This easily leads to an overreaction that 'succumbs to the values of the host culture' (p. 217), with a 'consumer, fast lane management approach, results and outcomes driven'. The ecclesiological consequence is what Pickard terms '*Frenetic Church*' (p. 216), leading to over-functioning and exhaustion.

In seeking a third way that is neither frenetic nor fast-asleep, Pickard makes the simple but vital observation that, in the case of pace, quantity and quality are mutually interdependent. As he puts it, *'pace and presence are co-related'* (p. 223, my emphasis), holding up for particular reflection the ministry of Jesus. Whilst noting the 'urgency and movement' of Jesus' ministry as portrayed in Mark's gospel, he describes Jesus as being purposeful whilst refusing to rush.

> 'More particularly Jesus walked. His was a peripatetic ministry - quite normal for the time and hardly worth commenting on, except for the fact that this mode of travel all over the land provided the space and rhythm for his ministry of saving presence.' (p. 221)

Thus '"Jesus slow" indicates a particular kind of pace and presence that enables transformation' (p. 222). Pickard cites Dan Hardy, who, in reflecting on the outworking of God's presence among us comments:

> 'we may not have been looking for so modest a way; as simple as the quality of Jesus' walking, the way people respond to him, the way he is present to them and the way they are deeply healed' (Hardy et al, 2010, p. 80, quoted in Pickard, p. 222)

For Pickard, 'nothing can be loved at speed', and 'good things take time' (p. 213).

> 'Good things require a 'longish moment'; long enough for individuals and communities to listen to their souls, to feel the deeper impulses and questions; long enough "for some of our demons to walk away" (Pickard, p. 81, quoting Williams, 2002, p. 81).

> 'Nurturing good-quality friendships, suffering with another in trouble or pain, working patiently to see a dream or vision for a community realised, taking time to celebrate and laugh, attending to the welcomes and farewells of life, planting and watering seeds of new ideas, living with conflict while trying to harness it for good, working with others to effect change in Church, society, politics all requires perseverance, energy and time.' (Pickard, p. 213)

The discovery of such a patient pace may help to enable the faithful improvisation considered in section 7.1. Conceiving of ministry and the Christian life as being undertaken at walking

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[150] To be precise, it is not that such a church has literally stopped, and thus does nothing at all. Rather, in what it does, 'permanence, fixity and constancy are prized above all else' (p. 216).

pace, rather than as if by motor-vehicle, makes improvised adjustments to our plans both more likely and more feasible. Pickard implies this:

> 'When the church moves out of the fast lane, leaves the motorways for the B roads, looks beyond the quick-fix consumer and entertainment models for religion, and begins to follow in the footsteps of Christ, it really has to be one step at a time.' (p. 213)

A slower speed enables a wiser course gradually to be discerned across challenging terrain. The general direction may be clear from the outset, or may only be revealed step-by-step. Expecting to need to improvise is likely to be realistic.

Such a move, towards what Pickard terms 'slow church', is strongly countercultural. Pickard cites the book *In Praise of Slowness* (Honore, 2005) which is subtitled *Challenging the Cult of Speed*. For its author, Carl Honore, fast and slow are 'shorthand for ways of being or philosophies of life' (p. 14); ways of being, indeed, that may have some considerable correlation with the Cartesian and Gestalt respectively. Paradoxically, 'slow does not always mean slow', as 'doing a task in a slow manner can often yield faster results'. The point is not to live at a snail's pace, or to turn the clock back with respect to technology, but rather, '*learning to live at a speed appropriate for the occasion*' (Pickard, p. 215, emphasis added)[151]. Such a pace was not invented by Honore in 2005. We have seen it with respect to Jesus' ministry. Pickard also links such appropriate pace to the deep wisdom of monasticism (p. 218), and to the word of God often providing just enough light for the next step (p. 214, discussing Psalm 119.105). Such a pace is not obviously commended within the CLD. Such a pace is linked to what Pickard describes as the 'slow release energy' of the Eucharist. Such a pace is indeed imbued with the restorative and transformative energy of God, but that energy may not often be released in dramatic, headline-grabbing ways. Rather, as with the slow pace of Jesus ministry, the whole is characterised by generous amounts of *modesty* – to a consideration of which I now turn.

Modesty

It can be very easy for those writing about the nature of the church to err on the side of the idealistic. This can be true of those within the CLD, for instance when they talk in terms of a 'fantastic organisation' (Richard Williams & Tanner, 2004, p. 3). It can also be very true of

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[151] The concept of 'walking pace ministry' on the one hand conveys a contrast to frenetic ministry, but on the other leaves space for variety and responsiveness. Within 'walking pace' there is space for short-term haste when appropriate, but also for sustainable pilgrimage, and indeed for pleasurable meandering at times. Thus there may be times when speed is appropriate, but constant hurry will not be conducive to meaningful presence.

those far from the CLD: Pickard, drawing on Peter Dula (2011), notes the idealising tendencies of the arguments of Milbank, Hauerwas, Cavanaugh and others (p. 226). The actual Church, including churches one might go to on a Sunday, 'does not seem capable of bearing the weight that is placed' (p. 227) upon it by their writings, with, for instance, their high expectation of community. Indeed, up to this point, the same might be suggested of the writing of Pickard himself.   In his final chapter, however, he takes particular care to address such a misconception. On the one hand there should be no limit to our vision and imagination concerning the depths and riches of God's energy and sociality. On the other hand, however, we must be free to be utterly truthful regarding the rather limited extent to which such energy and sociality have yet been incarnated amongst us. Though he does not put much emphasis on the concept himself, I want to underline the priority he implies for a proper *ecclesial modesty.*

Why is such ecclesial modesty important to emphasise? In part, to set us free from the culturally dominant paradigm of self-promotion that can make recognition of weakness or failure difficult, never mind its acknowledgement. In part, consequently, as an antidote to the inflated rhetoric of some parts of the CLD. And in part because of the gospel call to freedom from self-deception, and because of Christ's offer of liberation via truthfulness. Ecclesial modesty sets us free to acknowledge those times when we simply don't understand, or don't manage very well, or fall on our faces, or can't control the environment in which we live. To connect again to the work of Wells, such modesty sets us free to be saints rather than heroes, and thus to occupy the periphery of the story, rather than the centre (Wells, 2004, pp. 43, 68). Such modesty sits in some tension with ambitious vision statements and calls to dynamic leadership. It does, however, set us free to improvise together without fear of failure, knowing that the most significant things have already been done.

How might ecclesial modesty be manifest? Such humility will be seen in part in that which we choose to value. Such modesty will be characterised by attending to and treasuring the small and the slow, rather than just the dramatic, the readily quantifiable or the outwardly impressive. Pickard instances one specific example (again drawing on Dula) in turning his attention from community to companionship (p. 231). Companionship, he suggests, may be situated prior to communitarian emphases, and can provide 'seedlings for a renewed sociality'. Furthermore, he commends Dula's desire to 'slow us down on our rush to community' (Dula, p. 117, cited by Pickard, p. 232). The language and indeed rhetoric of community can too easily function to mask a distorted sociality, or to exercise 'new forms of control and suppression of

difference'. Slowing us down, therefore, to attend properly to the nature, the contours, the textures of *companionship*, will both increase our appreciation of companionship in and of itself, as well as enriching our understanding of the good community to which it, in part, contributes.

> 'It is the key features of companionship – acknowledgement of otherness;… appreciation of other selves and our humanness; recognising and welcoming difference; the joy of the bonds of affection – that are only what they are as time goes by, as we learn patience as persons, as we bump up against the imponderables, disappointments and failed expectations in relation to self and other selves. Companionship crafted in such circumstances of life in the world can't be rushed; rather it has an emergent gift-like character that continually surprises and lures us towards each other and God. Perhaps the slow Church coming will be the kind of Church which is formed and nurtured through intricate and complex webs of companionship. It will be a church which lives with a certain restraint regarding its claims and efforts at self-promotion. It may be that friendship/companionship is the inner power of ecclesial granulation; working below the surface of the wound, healing society from within.' (Pickard, pp. 232-233)

Conclusion

Pickard's emphasis on sociality and connectivity, and his inspiring vision of the ordered energy of God, rightly give great confidence that a church centred on God can fully trust in his equipping as it seeks to improvise faithfully in the unfolding drama of life. Pickard's co-relation of pace and presence teach us to value the quality and depth of God's being amongst us, and to free our focus from a fixation with the quantifiable. Furthermore, his highlighting of companionship and friendship as the vital initial strands from which community is woven gives an accessible first step to participating in the renewed sociality of God.

Overall, there is still important scope for clear-sighted, truthful, Cartesian questioning of church life within the framework that Pickard suggests. What are the practices that hinder or enable our receiving of divine energy, or the growth of Christian companionship? Does the pace of our church life 'make for the optimal instantiation of ecclesial presence'? And if not, how might it best be adjusted? These and other similar questions could fruitfully be pursued with the benefit of clear analytical insight. But I trust it is clear that, within Pickard's perception of ecclesial existence, such Cartesian viewpoints will always be in service of a broader, Gestalt understanding of what truly matters.

This second part of the chapter has indicated some characteristics of rich ecclesial existence, to be held in combination with the background context offered by the first part of the chapter. They put some initial flesh on what would count as faithful improvisation within the unfolding

drama of life: improvisation that increases connectedness and sociality; improvisation that is richly and creatively energised by the divine; improvisation that is freed from the rushing that can be the bane of our society, in order to be truly present to the other actors in the drama; and improvisation that is sufficiently secure in God's unshakeable love that it can happily occupy a modest, humble and peripheral role in the drama, constantly reinforcing and pointing to the centrality of God himself. From attending to these ecclesial characteristics, I now turn to focus on four personal virtues.

7.3   A quadrilateral of ministerial dispositions and virtues

This third section, then, describes and highlights four selected dispositions and virtues. These are desirable for all Christians, but especially so for those in positions of ministry and leadership. These are to increasingly characterise all our ministry and indeed all our living: what matters is not just *what* is done, but *the manner in which* it is done. These are to be the primary colourings of the Church's mode of existence; they are to be the texture of its way of being.

Fullness of vision - *pleriscope* born of attentiveness

The first virtue I wish to emphasise lies in the area of perception. I have demonstrated throughout this thesis that habits and emphases of perception play a highly significant, but often hidden, role in shaping our understanding of reality, and our interaction with it. It really matters what aspects of reality we perceive at all, which we consider worthy of further attention, and how we value what we perceive. One of my sustained criticisms of the CLD has been its tendency to focus on a reduced subset of reality, characterised principally by that which is measurable, that which can straightforwardly be categorised, that which could be implemented, and that which is positive or proactive. Some of these things are important, but they are far from the whole picture. In addressing this anomaly, I want to emphasise as a foundational virtue the habit, skill and art of perceiving with much greater sensitivity, range, depth and generosity. I could seek to harness the word *vision* in encapsulating such a virtue. I hesitate to do so, however, because, for many people, that word has effectively been colonised by Cartesian connotations. I offer instead a new term, *pleriscope*, meaning *fullness of vision*.

Within the CLD, a substantial proportion of the emphasis around vision is focused on its shaping, articulation and communication; its creation and subsequent transmission. With

pleriscope, I want the balance of emphasis to be biased towards receiving rather than transmitting[152]. With *pleriscope*, the starting point is genuine beholding, attending and contemplating. What is it that *pleriscope* is to behold? I begin to answer that question in the term offered by Louth, namely contemplating *the mystery*. *Pleriscope* is at no risk of thinking that the nature of God, his energy, grace and glory, can be satisfactorily summarised in PowerPoint format. Relatedly, *pleriscope* is clear that the humanity created in God's image transcends measurability and categorisation. Part of the virtue of *pleriscope* is its realisation of its own limits, and its modesty concerning its potential: it knows that its vantage point is 'from the middle' of the unfolding drama, rather than from some privileged, detached, all-seeing perspective. *Pleriscope* is not primarily instrumental: it may at times lead to action, but whether it does or not is a secondary consideration[153].

Pleriscope's starting point, then, is a growing fullness of vision of God: his transcendence and immanence, power and tenderness, creativity and patience, holiness, grace and passionate love. It extends to a holistic vision of people - going well beyond consideration of their instrumental potential. *Pleriscope* aims to give appropriate attention to the present, and also to a proper appreciation of the past. It is open to pain, frustration and lament, as well as to joy and hope. It can live with ambiguity and paradox. *Pleriscope* includes the imagining of future possibilities, and is wise to how these may fruitfully be invoked and explored in the present. *Pleriscope* fits well with, and indeed helps enable, faithful improvisation into God's generous, open, future.   I offer *pleriscope* as a necessary and foundational virtue. One consequence of a growing *pleriscope* is a clear-sighted recognition of the limits of our own control. Such a realisation leads directly to the question of where we will place our *trust*, to which I turn next.

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[152] John V. Taylor put it very well, more than 40 years ago: 'We have immeasurably extended our gift of sight, but not of insight. For that we have the same equipment as the eighth century prophets. Potentially the same, but actually far poorer, for while we have been so busy extending one aspect of the knowing and telling self, we have allowed other aspects to atrophy. *We have built ourselves up into powerful transmitting stations, but as receiving sets we are feeble.*' (Taylor, 1973, p. 69, emphasis added)

[153] Louth cites Iris Murdoch's consideration of 'one of the main problems of moral philosophy', namely how our natural selfishness can be reoriented. Her response to this 'is to explore the idea of contemplation, of attention, which releases in the soul "the capacity to love, that is to *see*"'. This liberates the individual into the freedom of 'the experience of *accurate vision which, when this becomes appropriate, occasions action*' (Louth, p. 142, quoting Murdoch, 1970, p. 66; emphasis added). My *pleriscope* is likely to have much in common with Murdoch's 'accurate vision'.

Trust

If the CLD has truly placed its trust in God, why then is it so essential, we must ask, to specify in measurable detail what God will have done, and by when? If the trust of the CLD is in God, why is it so important to articulate in advance the focused areas in which we will act? To be clear, it's not that I believe trusting God to be incompatible with stating a clear objective. However, the degree of control-in-advance prescribed by the CLD strikes me as being in need of very sharp theological examination. In what, exactly, does the CLD put its trust? One simple, but fairly obvious, reading would be that, since around the 1970s, trust has increasingly been placed in the methods and techniques outlined earlier in this thesis. A generous interpretation would be that the CLD's primary trust remains centred in God, with these methods and techniques held lightly as one of many possible ways through which God might work. Having examined the CLD extensively and carefully, however, to offer such generosity would in fact seem naive. If, as seems to be the case, these particular methods are held up as the only option, then surely it is these methods in which trust has been placed?

It was an invitation to run some workshops on the Bible and leadership that led to David Runcorn writing his book *Fear and Trust: God-Centred Leadership* (2011). He realised he was 'weary of the subject' (p. 3) of leadership, and found himself asking 'How did we come to believe that this [i.e. a focus on leadership] is what we need?' (p. 2). Preparation for the workshops led to him re-engaging with, and being gripped by, the narratives of 1 and 2 Samuel. He found striking parallels between the Israelite fixation on having their own king, like the nations around them, and contemporary 'preoccupation with "leadership" as a way of securing the future' (p. 3). The Israelite pursuit of a King, and also their dealings with the Ark of the covenant, are primarily instrumental attempts to conscript God to their own purposes (1 Samuel 4; Runcorn Chapter 4, pp. 27-34). Runcorn, drawing on Brueggemann, points out how easily the contemporary Western church, influenced by its host consumer culture, focuses on *usefulness*. 'Our strategies, programs and resources become the way we solve the problem and the God in whose name we are doing all this can be curiously bypassed.' (p. 33) Runcorn argues that what is needed, instead, is the challenging, vulnerable, but essential journey away from fear and anxiety, and towards trust in God.

'Trust is a concept of central theological importance in the Old Testament. It expresses that which is, or at least should be, central in people's relationship with God.' (Moberly, 1997, p. 644). The importance of trust is emphasised particularly throughout the Psalms and also in

Isaiah[154]. The narratives of Abraham, Moses and David repeatedly highlight the centrality of trust, in each case incorporating crucial periods of waiting and/or adversity. The story of the burning fiery furnace[155] portrays the nature of trust with sharp clarity. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego declare their expectation that God will deliver them. But perhaps most important are the words "But even if he does not"[156]:

> 'These [words] are crucial, for they recognise that although it is in the character of God to deliver those who trust in him, yet he may not do so (for reasons not given and so known only to himself). For the believer this should make no difference. Indeed, it is the logic of trust (and loyalty) that if it is genuine, then it should be shown when things go badly as well as when they go well. God may not deliver his people, but still they should trust him.' (Moberly, p. 649)

If trust in God is appropriate in the face of the fiery furnace, irrespective of whether God offers delivery from physical death, then trust in God remains appropriate today, irrespective of contemporary patterns of church attendance.

The centrality of trust continues into the New Testament. It is important to register that both Testaments repeatedly make clear that it can be very difficult to retain our trust in God, especially when he does not act according to prevailing cultural expectations. This is clearly evidenced both in the narratives of Jesus' immediate disciples, and even more so in the *volte face* of the crowd between Palm Sunday and Good Friday. Furthermore, Jesus' paradigmatic relationship with his heavenly Father is rooted in trust, which trust is tested to the limit in the garden of Gethsemane. Ford, earlier, focused our attention on Jesus' command, "Follow me" at the end of John's Gospel[157]. This command is a summons to open-ended obedient trust. Such trust does not mean inactivity, or remaining as Pickard's fast-asleep church. Rather, such trust can be based on the character of God, made clear in Acts 1-3 of salvation history, and continued through the current Act 4, prior to God bringing all things to their conclusion in the final Act 5[158]. Furthermore, our growing trust in God enables, and may be enabled by, the increase of trust between believers, as we learn to improvise together, with faithfulness, courage and creativity, trusting God to incorporate both our strengths and our weaknesses for good within his unfolding drama.

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[154] See for instance Psalms 22.4-5; 25.2; 28.7; 31.14; 115.9-11; Isaiah 26.3-4; 30.15.
[155] Daniel 3.
[156] Daniel 3.18. I believe the translation to be that of Moberly.
[157] John 20.22
[158] Drawing on Wells's typology summarised in section 7.1.

Wisdom

Like trust, *wisdom* is a virtue with roots clearly in the domain of the Gestalt, rather than the Cartesian. In and of itself, wisdom cannot be measured or mapped with any precision. It does not feature in the analyses or questionnaires of Jackson or Voas. Nor, I believe, is it invoked by Jackson (2002), or by Chew and Ireland (2009). It is not that matters of process in church life are unimportant. However, the attention of the CLD appears to have been so focused on asserting the necessity of particular *processes* that it overlooks almost entirely the virtues needed to shape the *content* of church life. The invisibility of wisdom within the CLD might therefore, perhaps, come as no surprise. And yet, this absence *should* seem truly remarkable. As Ford puts it,

> 'In most premodern cultures wisdom or its analogues had immense, pervasive and comprehensive importance. It was taken for granted as the crown of education, and as what is most to be desired in a parent, a leader, a counsellor, a teacher.' (D. Ford, 2007, p. 1)

Indeed, the very naming of our species as *homo sapiens* singles out wisdom as its defining characteristic[159]. Furthermore, not only is wisdom a scriptural theme of the first importance[160] but any leadership role in the contemporary church clearly needs 'to try to combine knowledge, understanding, good judgement and far-sighted decision-making' (D. Ford, 2007, p. 1). The third ministerial virtue I wish to commend is *wisdom*.

Growth in wisdom requires a deeper formation than the absorption of facts, techniques or statistics. Wisdom is not a 'competence'[161]. Drawing on and supplementing the work of Sadgrove (2008, focusing on both 'taught' and narrative wisdom of the Old Testament) and Ford, several distinct aspects of the need for wisdom are worth drawing out. The first is the necessity of the inward formation of the minister.

> 'Being wise as the prerequisite for helping others to become wise is utterly basic to Hebrew wisdom… [Such wisdom is] hard-won, the outcome of serious "heart work". Learning this *habitus* of wisdom seems to me to be an absolute priority for all ministers who are serious about their calling.' (Sadgrove, p. 9)

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[159] Defining, that is, in its potential, if not always in actuality. Many writers have suggested alternative names for the human species. Perhaps *homo methodicus*, methodical man, encapsulates the operant understanding within the CLD.

[160] David Ford's *Christian wisdom: desiring God and learning in love* (2007) is an excellent exploration and exposition of that fact. Its core wisdom text is the book of Job, but, for instance, it also rereads the gospel of Luke in the light of the Wisdom of Solomon, interprets Jesus in the light of Job, and explores the wisdom Christology of 1 Corinthians. Key themes include loving God for God's sake, and the deep interrelatedness of wisdom and love.

[161] See Ronald Barnett's *The limits of competence* (1994, especially pp. 140-153).

Second, particular wisdom, self-knowledge and integrity is required in living with the 'often difficult relationship between' the public and personal worlds of the minister (Sadgrove, p. 10). The narratives of David and Solomon in particular illustrate how easily disastrous consequences can ensue from failures in this area. Third, much wisdom is called for in the areas of leading and ministering. Such wisdom is needed both for decisions as to what should be done, but also very much for the manner in which actions are undertaken, or words spoken. Such wisdom is not surface pragmatism, but the fruit of rich, patient formation[162]. Such wisdom and discernment can readily be seen to include questions of pace and presence, and judgement as to which issues to raise, and when, in the life of a church[163].

Fourth, Sadgrove argues that, whereas many ordination services have as their Old Testament text the calling of the Prophet Isaiah, the implied analogy between ordained ministry today and prophetic ministry eight centuries before Christ is unhelpful. Instead, he proposes that a more helpful perspective on Christian ministry is 'to see it as the task of helping others to find this path of wisdom [that is, becoming wise in Christ] for themselves.' (Sadgrove, p. 7)[164]. Fifth, any mature Christian wisdom will include the capacity to read the signs of the times, including broad cultural tides, with discernment, and to sift that which might be appropriated into ministerial practice. As part of this, a primary argument of this thesis is that such wisdom must include the capacity to distinguish between the primarily Cartesian and the primarily Gestalt, and to avoid both inappropriate domination by the Cartesian, but also the exclusion of its contribution from the life of the church. Sixth and finally, much wisdom can be expressed in terms of the proper ordering of desires[165]. As Ford makes clear, not least drawing on the book of Job, Christians are called to desire God for God's sake, and above all else. Such desire for God, especially desire which has been dramatically tested, 'opens up a future in which others can be drawn into a life of gratuitous abundance. *The condition for this is loving God more than the abundance.*' (D. Ford, 2007) I venture to suggest that the CLD needs to tread very carefully to ensure that it resists the temptation to love 'the abundance' more than God.

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[162] As an example of a practical outworking of such wisdom, the fruit of deeper formation, Louth cites one instance of Gadamer's emphasis on practical wisdom, *phronesis*, namely eloquence. Eloquence, Gadamer argues 'means speaking well (eu legein) not just in the sense of rhetoric, but more significantly in the sense of knowing how to say the right thing in the right way at the right time.… To say the right thing is to say the truth… demanded by and appropriate to the particular situation. This requires not just knowledge of the truth, but sensitivity and discernment so that the truth is uttered in such a way that it is apprehended by those to whom it is uttered.' (Louth, p. 42).

[163] Such considerations are strongly resonant with the recommendations found in *Living Leadership (Binney, et al., 2005)*, mentioned in section 5.4 of this thesis, such as discerning how best to nudge forwards one step at a time.

[164] I have personally found this analogy resonant, helpful and suggestive.

[165] See, for instance, the account of Solomon's dream in 1 Kings 3.5-15.

For Ford, Christian wisdom and love are irreducibly interlinked[166]. He therefore describes as an appropriate 'summit' for the conclusion of a book on Christian wisdom, 'love, the love of God inextricable from the love of people':

> 'The richest wisdom has been found in God's love of creation for its own sake and a response of human love of God for God's sake and of other people for their own sake. Wise living before this God involves a faith that above all acknowledges being desired and loved by God, like Jesus at his baptism, and that in response desires and loves God. Within this relationship of desire and love, immersed in the challenges and risks of the drama of existence, there is a life of being affirmed and affirming, being instructed and instructing, being questioned and questioning, being surprised and exploring new possibilities' (D. Ford, 2007, pp. 380-381)

Love

What is a fitting virtue to complete the quadrilateral I highlight? I have no hesitation in pointing to that which the apostle Paul singled out as most important, and which Jesus identified not only as the greatest virtue, but as humankind's highest priority. The fourth and final virtue I commend is *love*.

It is not possible to *implement* love. And if one could conceive of an *objective* of love, it could not be framed according to SMART criteria. Love is not something highlighted by the business leadership models from which CLD approaches are derived. Within the terms of this thesis, love itself clearly belongs to the Gestalt rather than the Cartesian (though it will often have effects that are visible in the Cartesian spectrum). I noted earlier the pertinence of Erich Fromm's observation: the priorities of the CLD are more obviously geared towards making the Church appear successful, and thus attractive, rather than necessarily seeking to increase its capacity to love (Fromm, 1978, p. 9, quoted in Section 5.1).

The degree and quality of love present will make a significant and tangible difference to the *morphe* of a church. I reflected in chapter 3 on the CLD tendency to let human faces become veiled through an emphasis on categorisation. It does not make obvious sense to talk of loving a category of people. And yet one could realise that there are categories of humanity that one struggles to love. It is not at all that the Cartesian is irrelevant to the growth of love. It can

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[166] See in particular the subsection 'Christian theology as wisdom', (pp. 264-272).

helpfully ask probing questions. It may be harnessed in the shaping of a church *schema* to encourage the broader and deeper flourishing of love within the *morphe*[167].

Love for God, and for those within, beyond and around the penumbra of the current community of the church, is central to ministry. Love goes beyond 'what is done' (a Cartesian consideration) and irradiates our dispositions, the quality of our care and attentiveness (a Gestalt consideration). Thus Ford asks,

> 'How can we delight in what we have received from God and invite others to share it in appropriate ways without violating the spirit of that love by being insensitive, disrespectful, manipulative, or coercive?' (2011, pp. 61-62)

We cannot simply make love happen, although it does indeed require moral effort. We love because he first loved us. Louth offers the beautiful image of the love of God being like the *amniotic fluid* in which we live and move, and are gradually formed into his likeness (Louth, 1983). Within this metaphor, our entire life is, in one sense, within the environment of nurture, support and strengthening offered by the 'womb of God'.

Ford, again, captures it well: '*The church is an attempt to abide in God's love*.' (2011, p. 60). Love, he says, is that on which the health of the church and its mission depends. Our love for each other is 'rooted in God's initiating love revealed in Jesus'. This, in turn, is 'grounded in the ultimate affirmation: "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them"' (2011, p. 60, citing 1 John 4.16). The keyword, supporting love, is that of *menein*: abiding, dwelling, remaining, fasting, inhabiting, living in. Thus Jesus' disciples are invited and called to live in Jesus and his love with joy, as branches abide in the vine (D. Ford, 2011, p. 32; John 15.1-11).

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter so far I have considered a series of ecclesiological characteristics and ministerial virtues. By and large, I have focused on each one in turn, prioritising their individual analysis, and mentioning only rarely connections between them. My reason for doing so was to develop a rich, deep, portrait of each topic, by restricting my analysis to one thing at a time. Although most of the topics I have considered belong substantially in the domain of the Gestalt, my approach in considering them, as just described, has included a

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[167] I think, for example, of those within my current congregation who initiated a monthly Home Alone Lunch, when that varied group of people who would otherwise be having Sunday lunch on their own enjoy a meal out together.

considerable degree of Cartesian analysis, not least in the way that I have separated and divided one from another. I hope and trust that this Cartesian analysis has enabled greater appreciation of the individual subjects. Now, however, in keeping with the broad theme of this thesis, it is important to supplement such a Cartesian perspective with the broader viewpoint of the Gestalt. For the subjects I have considered in this chapter are indeed not fundamentally distinct from other, but rather deeply interrelated and organically connected[168], as I will attempt to describe:

One of the major characteristics of the unfolding *drama* of life is the fact that it has many actors within it. It is not only the actions within the drama that are of interest, but even more the quality of the *sociality*, between people, and between people and God. In particular, our calling is to make the giving and receiving of *love* the primary characteristic of all our sociality. Such love is not passive (though it may at times be characterised by the poised attentiveness of active waiting). Rather it is rooted in and enlivened by the ordered *energy* of God. This energy both empowers and guides in our ongoing *improvisation* into the open future of God's drama. Such improvisation is also shaped by the virtue of *wisdom*, for instance in discerning what *pace* of activity will enable the proper mediation of divine *presence*. Such discernments will not be ashamed of a certain *modesty*, as they will be wise to the limitations of people and circumstance, and of wisdom and love. Notwithstanding such limitations and such proper modesty, all such improvisation is increasingly offered in a spirit of *trust*. That trust is in God – that he has already done the most important things, and that he will continue to redeem and incorporate even our weakness and failure into his unfolding purposes. And that trust is also increasingly placed in each other – trusting that we all have our roles to play within the drama, and that God will work through any and each. As we seek to *improvise* together, the sharing and questioning of *wisdom* depends on and enhances *sociality*, *trust* and *love*. The particular responsibilities of leadership in such a Gestalt unfolding drama call for *pleriscope*, a growing fullness of vision, perceptiveness and attentiveness to people, to situations and to God.

A description of such Gestalt interconnectedness is more difficult to write (and probably to read) than the clearly delineated approach of the Cartesian. Nevertheless, it indicates at least something of the mutual dependence inherent in the picture I have been developing. No virtue is an island. Each one depends upon others, and enhances others. Furthermore, no

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[168] Reapplying one of Pickard's phrases, one might even think in terms of a *renewed sociality of virtues and ecclesiological themes*, emphasising their co-relatedness.

ecclesiological understanding exists in a vacuum. Rather, any such picture will imply the need for particular qualities, characteristics, and modes of relationship.

7.4   An outline of reconfigured ministerial practice

Having outlined some of the main strands of a potential reconfigured ministerial discourse, I conclude this chapter by putting a little more flesh on what such a discourse might look like in practice. I will not prescribe an alternative method or process, to be followed by all churches at all times. Rather, I will seek to gather together the more theoretical considerations of the chapter so far, and outline some of the range of ways in which such an approach might be made manifest. I will do so via five summary points.

First, I proposed in Section 1.4 that the dominant metaphor of the CLD is that of a pre-planned journey to a foreknown destination. I have argued that such a metaphor is insufficient. On its own, it will tend to lead to a valuing primarily of the endpoint and its achievement. Rather, the content of church corporate life must value even more highly the experiences, the people, the love, joy, solidarity, lessons, and memories along the way[169]. There are other types of journey within Christian pilgrimage, many of which cannot be pre-planned, or are to destinations as yet unknown. Furthermore, our calling to abide in Christ, and to be rooted in the love of God, is at least as important as any journey we may accomplish.

Second and relatedly, our calling to follow Christ step by step calls for much greater modesty in our advance predictions of what we will do by when. I do not rule out the possibility of SMART objectives in some circumstances, most likely when what is being planned is largely focused on inanimate objects. But objectives should only be formulated as SMART if there is very good reason to do so. Indeed objectives *per se* need only be formulated when they would clearly be helpful. At other times in church life, identifying a priority will be quite sufficient direction – for instance, the priority of exploring a possible way forward. At other times it will be appropriate to have a lightly held provisional plan. If we depend primarily upon the setting of the specific objective to generate energy and momentum, does it not suggest that the actual motivation for action is rather shallow? More positively, we can afford to put much more trust in the ordered energy of God, mediated both through the shared experience of worship and the word, and through corporate discernment as we seek to improvise together. The setting

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[169] What is truly valued will be manifest in a range of ways, for instance including the church notices, the sermons, the intercessions, and in conversations.

of objectives is designed to lead to a sense either of success or of failure, and to a focus on the endpoint more than on broader considerations. I recommend that, at least for much of the time, highlighting of particular *priorities*, rather than objectives, will yield all the necessary positives, but without the negatives.

Third, I have argued that vision statements will tend, by definition, to be both too small and also too static. Moreover, despite the best intentions of their creators, it is very easy for them to come to seem banal and dispiriting (or indeed to be so from the start). I have highlighted as problematic the degree to which they are linked with the setting of objectives within the CLD. One alternative can be the setting of temporary themes for a church. These could, for instance, be a theme for the year. This has been my own recent practice, with themes of *Giving Thanks*, and *Conversation*. These themes deliberately focus more on the *morphe* of church life than the *schema*. In each case, the theme has been highlighted in a range of ways, within and beyond services, over the course of a year. Any objectives behind the theme have been broad, but the fruit of such sustained reflection has been deep, diverse, and encouraging.

Fourth, I have criticised the CLD for reducing the shaping of church life to not much more than a mechanical process. This is not appropriate when dealing with human beings. Instead of such an algorithmic method, I commend a more challenging but richer approach, founded more fundamentally on *conversation* than on plans. Conversation offers an opportunity to grow in our wisdom, trust, fullness of vision and love. If listening and speaking are offered with modesty and truthfulness, sociality and connectedness will grow, and the best possible conditions will be enabled for wise discernment. The energy that can arise in the context of open, respectful and attentive conversation can be quite remarkable. In the context of a church seeking to discern the direction of its improvisation, wise discernment will be needed in the shaping of its corporate conversations. There is a balance to be struck between reflection on past, present and future. It may or may not be helpful to include an attempt at a systematic overview of church life, for in some situations this could be disheartening. Whilst there may not be a single algorithm to follow, it is wise to listen to the wisdom of others in shaping such conversations. As I have previously mentioned, authors who offer balanced reflection and suggestions in this area include Impey (2010), Allison Hahn (1994), and Rendle and Mann (2003).

Fifth and finally, the CLD does not appear to value much ministerial activity. The perspective developed in this chapter sees things very differently. In the terms offered by Arendt, described in Section 5.1, the regular work of leading worship, preparing and sharing sermons,

engaging with others via the 'occasional offices', presiding at the Eucharist, being present with those in trouble, possess many of the repetitive characteristics of her category of 'labour'. Such labour is at times denoted negatively as 'ministry', or even as 'maintenance'. But just as labour on the land and in the kitchen is what enables the provision of rich and sustaining nutrition, so ministerial labour is to be highly prized, as is its fruit. Chew and Ireland suggest that (in a church of a size where you can't necessarily be a friend of the vicar) it is that church's sense of purpose and focus that makes people want to belong (Chew & Ireland, p. 95). I beg to differ. Some, no doubt, are indeed excited by a landscape dominated by objectives and vision statements. But I expect that many more people do not come to church in order to find themselves being organised. Rather, they are looking ' for more hopeful, profound and transcendent forms of living' (Percy, 1998, p. 134). Yes, most people do not want a stagnant or fast asleep church. But what God calls us to is primarily relationship with him, engagement with his untameable, illimitable divine presence, transformation by his holiness, reorientation by his energy. Our calling, even in the midst of the repetitive labour of church life, is to be so filled with the fullness of God, so rooted in his love[170], that all present have a sense of God's renewed sociality, his ordered energy, and his love. Our calling is to be so growing in wisdom, in trust and trustworthiness, in *pleriscope*, that we may be privileged to lead others into the very presence of God, and to be able to set before them treasures old and new[171], food that will be deeply nourishing and sustaining in their pilgrimage and service. Such calling is indeed repetitive and thus, in a sense, routine. It is nevertheless a very high calling, both in its privilege, and in its importance.

Chapter conclusion

It has been the purpose of this chapter, primarily, to move from the critical mode of previous chapters, and to sketch at least in outline what a reconfigured ministerial discourse might look like. I began by proposing an alternative metaphor for the Church's 'background operating texture'. Drawing on von Balthasar via Wells, I put forward an understanding of church life (and indeed the life of the created order) in terms of an unfolding *drama*. Such a metaphor highlights the freedom and agency of multiple actors, the role of specific context, and the importance of appropriate responsiveness. I introduced a technical meaning of the term 'dramatic' that highlights the limitations of our knowledge, spatially and temporally. Within God's unfolding drama, the calling of the Church is to *improvise faithfully*, following Christ step

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[170] Ephesians 3.17.
[171] Matthew 13.52.

by step. The understanding of five Acts of salvation history proposed by Wells was seen as important, emphasising that God has already done the most significant things, and can be trusted to lead the drama to a fitting conclusion in his good time.

Such a background texture for life was then supplemented by highlighting several themes from the work of Pickard, beginning with his insight that heresies in the Christian life can be manifest at least as much in church practice as in church doctrine. In particular, some aspects of the CLD were seen as susceptible to his critique of Pelagianism. Constructively, Pickard's work highlighted first the *renewed sociality* that derives from the very nature of God, and is to be valued, prized, and shared. Whereas the CLD appears to place very little value or emphasis on worship *per se*, Pickard proposes that worship is a prime mediator of the *ordered energy of God* (not that this should lead worship to be treated in a utilitarian manner). Pickard's diagnosis of *frenetic church* was pertinent to the CLD, and to be avoided. Given that *pace and presence are co-related*, the walking-pace ministry of Jesus was seen as a countercultural incentive to model a pace of life that enables those good things that take a longish moment. My consideration of Pickard concluded by commending the *modesty* inherent in some of his conclusions, such as the value of companionship. Overall, and vitally, Pickard understands the very being of the church, its mode of existence, to be derived from and shaped according to the being of God himself.

From such ecclesial attributes I moved on to commend four more personal virtues. I introduced the term *pleriscope*, intending by this a fullness of vision, emphasising especially the need for sensitivity of perception when it comes to Gestalt attributes. Alongside such *pleriscope* I commended as essential *trust*, *wisdom* and *love*. Although I started by considering separately these four virtues, along with the four main themes from Pickard, I then went on to indicate the considerable connectivity between these virtues and themes. I concluded the chapter with a section sketching some of the ways in which such a reconfigured discourse might affect church practice.

It has not been my purpose in this chapter to offer a like-for-like replacement of the CLD. Having argued against the CLD's universal prescription of a pseudo-mechanical process, it would be wrong for me to prescribe one myself. Rather, whilst it is right and proper to learn from the wisdom and good ideas of others (and I have therefore cited some others whom I have found particularly helpful), I want to encourage ministers to have the confidence to improvise ways of shaping Church life that are appropriate in their particular setting. I have

repeatedly warned against the reductionist tendencies of some aspects of the CLD, by which our action and even our perception would become unhealthily narrow. Instead, I want to encourage a fullness of vision, both truthful and trusting, that is unafraid to improvise faithfully into the future of God's drama. I trust and believe that the reconfigured discourse outlined in this chapter both gives proper attention to the Gestalt domain, but also encourages an appropriate harnessing of the strengths of the Cartesian. It is when the fruits of Cartesian analysis are handed back for discernment and integration (if appropriate) by the Gestalt, that a life-giving balance is to be found.

Thesis Conclusion

Introduction

In the conclusion to this thesis, I will summarise its argument, highlight its main findings and conclusions, and indicate its potential, suggesting both further research that could follow within the current field, and also connections to other areas of work.

Summary

The focus of this thesis has been on the rise in recent decades of significant new terminology and practices within Christian ministry. Focused around leadership, such developments have included emphasis on vision statements, strategic plans, a sense of positive dynamic activity, and measurable objectives. Whereas some have welcomed such developments, others have responded with deep unease. In spite of these divergent reactions, constructive and articulate debate has not often been forthcoming. I begin by offering a concise summary of the whole thesis, before going on to attend to the content of each chapter in a little more detail.

My aim in this thesis has been to demonstrate three main things regarding these developments: their *interconnectedness*, their *pervasiveness*, and their *insufficiency* in a church context. My broad approach has involved a combination of three key moves. The first was to identify the significance of *discourse* as a subtle but powerful influence, shaping what is perceived, what is valued, and what is prescribed. In consequence, I have used the term Church Leadership Discourse (CLD) to refer to the literature substantially influenced by the new developments summarised above. My second key move was the construction of a heuristic framework against which to examine the CLD. Drawing principally on the work of McGilchrist and Louth, that framework consists of two approaches to reality, which I term the Cartesian and Gestalt. The Cartesian is the domain of detailed focus and clear-cut logical analysis, whereas the Gestalt is more attentive to context, flux, paradox and relationships. It is not that one is bad and the other good, but that the relationship between them is vital. The proposed proper ordering is that the clarity of the Cartesian should always be used in service of the broader wisdom of the Gestalt. The third key move, inspired by the work of Kuhn, was to recognise the importance of *anomalies* as potential indicators that an existing paradigm may be insufficient.

Overall, then, I have used the heuristic framework of Cartesian and Gestalt approaches to reality to examine the Church Leadership Discourse. In particular, I have examined the extent to which the CLD seems over-biased towards the Cartesian. In doing so, I have drawn attention to aspects of that approach which appear theologically anomalous. Using the framework of the Cartesian and Gestalt has helped to demonstrate the interconnectedness of a broad range of phenomena, alongside the pervasiveness of the over-influence of the Cartesian. The CLD's frequent lack of attention to the Gestalt domain has helped make clear ways in which CLD is either theologically insufficient, or at times straightforwardly inappropriate. The thesis, however, does not terminate with critique. I conclude, in the final chapter, by proposing in outline a reconfigured ministerial discourse, harnessing the best aspects of a Cartesian approach in service of a broader Gestalt understanding. Such, then, is an outline of the *shape* and conclusions of my argument. I now turn to summarise each chapter in a little more detail, giving more space to the *content* of my findings.

Part A of the thesis set the scene with two introductory chapters. *Discourse* was the primary theme of Chapter 1, commencing with an overview of discourse in general, which highlighted two things in particular. On the one hand, the assumptions and constraints of a given discourse can be remarkably powerful in shaping how users of that discourse perceive reality, value or reject different aspects of it, and respond to it. On the other hand, it is very easy to be entirely unaware of the extent of a discourse's influence. Such observations indicated the need for a clear-sighted reading of contemporary ministerial discourse. The chapter went on, first, to outline shifts in discourses of management and leadership in the last century or so of Western culture, before surveying the significant rise in emphasis on leadership in ministerial literature since around the 1970s. I offered the term Church Leadership Discourse (CLD) to refer to that literature focused around a particular and widespread construal of leadership, then engaged in an initial survey of the CLD via four representative texts. Striking features included the degree of emphasis on change, the assumed necessity of a universal method for leadership, the assertion of concise vision statements as part of that method, the lack of space for theological reflection, and, frequently, a strongly optimistic rhetoric. Overall, the metaphor of *an organised journey towards a pre-identified destination* was seen to lie behind much CLD thinking.

Chapter 2 formed the second, parallel, part of the introduction. Within it I set out the heuristic framework against which the CLD would subsequently be examined. The framework was formed by contrasting two distinct approaches to reality, which have been identified by a

number of writers, and which I term the Cartesian and the Gestalt. My construction of the framework drew particularly on the work of McGilchrist, connecting an understanding of brain hemispheres with the shaping of Western culture, and also on the work of Louth, commenting on theology, the sciences and the humanities. What are these two approaches? The Cartesian corresponds to the sciences, and the left brain hemisphere. It is characterised by a sense of clarity, of detailed analysis and focus, of instrumentality, and of bias towards the positive. The Gestalt has contrasting characteristics, attending more to a holistic overview than to isolated detail. Issues of particularity, context, flux and betweenness lie within its domain. Whereas the Cartesian attends primarily to what is done, the Gestalt registers the manner in which it is done. Whereas the Cartesian has an end in mind, the Gestalt is primarily attentive to what is, without needing to have an aim. Importantly, an ideal relationship between Cartesian and Gestalt is not simply one of balance. Both are needed, but the fruit of clear Cartesian analysis should always be handed over to the broader perspective of the Gestalt, for discernment and integration as appropriate.

The overall aim of part B of the thesis was to examine the CLD against the framework offered by the Cartesian and the Gestalt, examining in particular whether it was overly biased towards the Cartesian. Chapters 3 to 5 attended in turn to three broad strands within the CLD, in each case focusing on works that exemplified that strand, so that relevant characteristics could be identified clearly, and thus also recognised elsewhere. First, Chapter 3 examined the strand of statistic-focused rationality within the CLD, represented by Jackson's *Hope for the Church*, and by the recent Church Growth Research Programme of the Church of England. Both works were seeking to explore factors pertinent to the flourishing of local churches, not least in terms of numerical growth. A number of striking characteristics were identified, all sharing strong correlation with a Cartesian approach. For instance, causality was frequently assumed to be primarily linear and direct – what could be termed pseudo-mechanical. There was a strong thrust to identify 'the main factor' in several areas, reducing rich complexity to apparent, but misleading simplicity. Relationships between different factors remained, especially with Jackson, unexplored. Moreover, in both works, characteristics and features that cannot be straightforwardly categorised (such as virtue, the organic, the symbolic and the tacit) were essentially invisible. There was some variation between works, with the detailed report by Professor Voas showing most subtlety. Interestingly, in some places what was needed was heightened Cartesian analysis, rather than less of it.

Chapter 4 examined a central strand of the CLD, namely its recommended process for leading change, often referred to as Mission Action Planning. Here the articulation of a concise vision statement will lead to formulating objectives according to SMART criteria. From this a plan is to be produced, which can then be implemented. Again, a strong correlation with the Cartesian was found. This included strengths, such as clear-sighted analysis, and the identification of priorities deserving particular attention. Nevertheless, the 'totalising ambition' of the Cartesian was identified as problematic. Particular anomalies included: the degree of prioritisation of change *per se*; the biasing of attention towards those changes which can be implemented (thus excluding, for instance, love, worship, friendship and joy); the functioning of a Mission Action Plan as a simplified map of reality in an authoritative position in church life. The universal setting of measurable targets I identified as arguably the most problematic anomaly in the whole of the CLD. The pseudo-mechanical, context-independent nature of the whole process, and the disjunction with the normal worshipping life of the church, were further matters of concern.

The third strand of the CLD, examined in Chapter 5, was somewhat broader than the previous two, summarised by the notion of a 'positive planned journey'. This encompasses three interrelated themes: the emphasis on being *positive*, the notion of a particular form of *journey*, and the significant role of *plans* within both the metaphor and also church practice. As in Chapter 4, the CLD was found to offer some rich gifts to the church, not least in the area of planning. However, once again, the degree of Cartesian bias, and the lack of a broad range of options, were found to be problematic. The main anomalies identified in this chapter included: the extent to which promotional discourse has colonised the CLD; the degree of emphasis on being positive, at the cost of space for a broader emotional range; similarly, the exclusivity of emphasis on being proactive, thus downgrading attentiveness, responsiveness and the activity of thought, amongst other dispositions. The implied homogeneity of the dominant journey metaphor was seen as problematic, including its downgrading of the call to committed rootedness. The activity of planning, broadly understood, was seen as often appropriate, but not necessarily always leading to the production of a full strategic plan. The chapter concluded by considering issues of discourse performativity and discourse technologisation. Referring to clergy as leaders was expected to re-construe their relationship to a benefice, and some pernicious effects of the idealisation within the CLD were identified. Finally, the technologisation of discourse, for instance perceiving vision statements and targets as pseudo-mechanically causing certain effects, was seen as problematic.

Chapter 6, the last in Part B, took as its starting point that one needs to understand the *nature* of a group, prior to determining what form of leadership is appropriate for it. The CLD, however, gives very little attention to the nature of the church. Its ecclesiology is largely implicit, and in places substantially consumerist. If there is a dominant model of the nature of the church within the CLD, it is arguably that of an *adaptive objective-focused organisation*. It is not that there is no mention of more scripturally or theologically appropriate models, but what there is often appears to be interpreted as an aspect of such an organisation. The type of church conceived by the CLD was found, in essence, to be substantially Cartesian: with clear boundaries, and thus quantifiable; aiming towards objectives formulated in Cartesian terms; focused on the simplified map of reality offered by a vision statement and objectives; optimistic and positive in temperament; and guided by a methodology assumed to be universally applicable. I deemed such an approach to be that of an *ecclesiocracy*: church colonised by bureaucracy beyond the extent that could be helpful. Furthermore such ecclesiocracy is closely related to what I termed an *ecclesionomic* perspective: with primary attention paid to the numeric; a straightforward emphasis on unceasing growth; and a search for law-like generalisations regarding factors that can be relied upon to produce such growth. Such an ecclesionomic approach was evidenced in one specific question from the Church Growth Research Programme, and particularly in how responses were interpreted in the summary report *From Anecdote To Evidence*. Finally, I drew on Pure Mathematics to point beyond measurability. The mathematical concept of a topological, rather than a metric space, was offered as a starting point for seeing church in a rich variety of (rather less Cartesian) ways: space for worship, space for blessing, and so on. Indeed, conceiving of the church as a space in any sense was seen as theologically suggestive.

Part B concluded that there was some evidence of Gestalt considerations within the CLD. Furthermore, there were many instances where a Cartesian approach was helpful and appropriate, and indeed occasions when *greater* Cartesian clarity would have been helpful. That said, however, the dominant finding was of consistent substantial bias towards the Cartesian, and corresponding neglect of the rich contextualisation of the Gestalt. Moreover, such imbalance repeatedly led to a wide range of anomalies, as summarised above. My use of the heuristic framework developed in Chapter 2 achieved what I had hoped. The concept of an overly Cartesian approach was the common thread behind the *interconnectedness* of the anomalies in the CLD, and helped to highlight their *pervasiveness* across a range of literature and prescribed practice. Moreover, the repeated deficiency of attention to the Gestalt helped make clear the theological *insufficiency* of the CLD's approach. Overall, the accumulation of

anomalies made a pressing case for the approach of the CLD not just to be adjusted, but to be more fundamentally replaced, or at the least reconfigured on more theologically appropriate, and better balanced, foundations.

I had critiqued the CLD for the assumed universality of its prescribed method. What Chapter 7 offered, therefore, was not a single replacement method, but rather a highlighting of three sets of themes. The broad focus, unlike in the CLD, was not on what should be done, but more on what should be perceived and valued. The first set of themes aimed to shift the background operating texture of the church from being conceived in terms of objectives to be achieved, to be seen, rather, as God's unfolding drama. Such a metaphor highlighted the freedom and agency of multiple actors, the role of specific context, and the importance of appropriate responsiveness in time. This drama is not fully scripted, and so the calling of the Church is to improvise faithfully, from the middle of the drama. This improvisation is not about being witty or original, but being free to be obvious, formed by the Christian tradition, and learning to trust God together. I then turned to the work of Pickard, highlighting four themes to counterbalance the rather thin CLD ecclesiology: the value of a renewed sociality, deriving from the very nature of God; the ordered energy of God, experienced maximally in worship; the interrelation of pace and presence, and the model of the walking-pace ministry of Jesus, enabling those good things that take a longish moment; and an overall sense of modesty, for instance in the valuing of Christian companionship. Such a conception of the church stands in considerable contrast to an objective-focused organisation. Rather, its very being, its mode of existence, is to be derived from and shaped according to the being of God himself. The third set of themes emphasised were personal virtues. I introduced the term *pleriscope*, meaning fullness of vision, highlighting the need for sensitivity to the Gestalt in particular. Furthermore, trust, wisdom and love are fundamental, and must not be taken for granted. Finally, and briefly, I sketched some likely practical outworkings of such a reconfigured discourse: for instance arguing that SMART criteria should only be used when clearly necessary, and that a broader range of journey metaphors, and non-journey metaphors, should inform the Church's self-understanding.

Findings: implications and significance

The findings of this thesis, within the parameters I set for myself, are significant at several levels. The first level relates to my decision to explore contemporary church leadership writing as *a discourse*. I did not claim that this discourse, the CLD, could be defined with absolute

precision. Nevertheless, substantial coherence of vocabulary and assumption was identified across a range of writing. Consciously treating this domain as a discourse led to illuminating insight. It suggested useful questions: what does the discourse particularly highlight? What does it fail to perceive? On what sort of rationality are its assumptions based? Furthermore, viewing the material as a discourse helped engage critical insights from discourse-related academic fields: regarding hybrid part-promotional genres of discourse, discourse performativity, and the technologisation of discourse. Overall, the discourse-related insights offered by this thesis give very strong support to Fairclough's argument about the need for raising critical awareness of how language is being used (Fairclough, 2010, p. 100).

The second level of significance concerns the heuristic framework, based primarily on McGilchrist and Louth, against which I examined the CLD. Again, this framework has proven remarkably fruitful in the detailed analysis of a range of modes of writing and research. In the first instance, that fruitfulness has been demonstrated in perceiving more clearly the emphases or biases of the CLD. Such biases have frequently been doubly manifest: not only has there often been sustained prioritisation of Cartesian concerns, but this has also often been coupled with a low level of engagement with the Gestalt. Within such a general summary there is variety and nuancing. For instance, the work of Lawrence registered Gestalt concerns more than most of his fellow CLD authors, and the detailed church growth research report of Professor Voas comprised a more subtle and modest Cartesianism than the summary *FATE* report. In the first instance, then, the framework of Cartesian and Gestalt repeatedly enabled clearer perception of the CLD. Moreover, the proposed proper ordering of Cartesian and Gestalt has also proved helpful as a broad indication of a theologically more appropriate approach.

The third level of significance, then, concerns the core findings of the thesis: when one views the CLD through this heuristic framework, what is revealed? Throughout the chapters of Part B of the thesis, I identified a steady accumulation of anomalies. Some of these, particularly in the work of Jackson and Voas, were focused on how people are perceived. Human faces became veiled, and category members were assumed to be essentially equivalent. Other anomalies were in the area of method. Focus was substantially directed towards that which is susceptible to implementation, thus excluding vital dimensions of Christian life. Further anomalous bias was found both in the CLD disposition of targeted instrumentality, and also in the constrained assumptions behind the dominant metaphor of a planned journey to a pre-identified destination. Aspects of the discourse itself showed signs of colonisation by a

contemporary promotional culture, and several dimensions of the performativity of the discourse were seen to be problematic. In fact, the implied understanding of the very nature of the church within the CLD was itself substantially Cartesian, being very much a target-focused organisation, rather than a richer, more humane conception of the body of people defined by the gift of relatedness to God in Christ.

The fourth and final level of significance is found in my consideration of a more appropriate ministerial discourse. Here, the aim was not to eliminate the Cartesian (for it is certainly possible to have too little of that approach to reality), but to harness its strengths in the service of a richer Gestalt conception. Furthermore, my aim was to offer contours of a discourse more convincingly true to life, and arising from theological sources in a much more integrated manner. The concept of faithful improvisation within God's unfolding drama was found to be very promising, combining purposefulness and responsiveness, having clear space for planning but emphasising provisionality. Pickard's themes of sociality, energy, appropriate pace and modesty do not exhaust what can be helpfully said about the church, but helpfully highlight aspects of church life often overlooked by the CLD. And ministerial virtues of *pleriscope*, wisdom, trust and love again contributed to a richer, fuller, conception. Such an outline discourse leaves much to the wisdom and discernment of the members of the church. It cannot guarantee faithfulness or fruitfulness. But it offers a framework that I dare to claim is more closely aligned to the mode of existence of God, than does the CLD.

What are the implications of my findings? To the extent that they are found to be valid, they highlight a significant imbalance in much contemporary church leadership writing. They indicate that the CLD has been substantially colonised by an instrumental rationality that has become an increasingly dominant empire in Western culture. Moreover, they make clear that to describe such colonisation as consecrated pragmatism simply will not do. The approaches imbibed by, and recommended by, the CLD are far from being neutral tools to be harnessed in God's service, never mind the missing piece of the jigsaw, supplying what the church was lacking. There may indeed be individual aspects of the CLD that can appropriately contribute to church life, if situated and used with insight and wisdom. But taken as a whole, the manifest imbalance of the CLD renders it theologically unacceptable.

Further areas of exploration

A range of further areas of exploration, following on from this thesis, readily suggest themselves.

First, the focus of my attention throughout this work has been very much on the *literature* of the CLD. One significant and interesting area to explore concerns how that literature has been appropriated *in practice*. To what extent do clergy and churches follow the letter of what is recommended in books such as *How to Do Mission Action Planning*? When plans are produced, how are they held or situated within the life of a church? What authority are they given? When objectives are formulated, how frequently do they satisfy SMART criteria? To what extent do clergy already intuitively adjust the prescribed method along the lines of my own argument?

Second, the broad interdisciplinarity of this thesis has meant that the depth of my engagement in each area invoked has been relatively modest. As a consequence, there is considerable scope for useful work exploring particular interfaces with more depth and thoroughness. One such interface is that between organisation studies and ecclesiology. The brief attention I paid to this area within the Conclusion of Chapter 6 indicated considerable scope for further enriching conversation. Within this broad domain, the work of two major writers in particular merits more sustained attention. One of these is Jurgen Habermas, whose diagnosis of a one-dimensional instrumental rationality colonising the life world of Western society has been drawn upon by a number of authors whom I have cited.

The second is Max Weber, one of the founding creators of sociology, three of whose themes I mention here. First, one could explore the relevance within church leadership of his distinction between *instrumental rationality* on the one hand (seeking the most efficient means to achieve a particular end), and *substantive rationality* on the other (judging whether the end itself is rational). Second, alongside the benefits that flow from rationalisation, Weber noted the consequence of people substantially trapped in an *iron cage of rationality*. This notion could be explored in relation both to the rationality of the CLD, and also, in parallel, with McGilchrist's metaphor of the left hemisphere being unwilling to escape from the 'hall of mirrors' that it has itself constructed (McGilchrist, 2010, pp. 230, 438). It is particularly interesting to note what McGilchrist describes as potential escape routes from that hall of mirrors: alongside paying attention to the body, to nature, and to art, he highlights the

'exceptionally rich *mythos*' (p. 441) of Christianity[172]. The third area of further exploration arising from Weber relates to his concept of the *routinisation of charisma*. This, surely, is a remarkably prescient and precise encapsulation of the CLD recommended process: a *method* for producing an *inspiring vision* which can then be *implemented*. In parallel, it seems that leadership itself, remarkably, is viewed as substantially susceptible to routinisation.

Some recent strands within the area of Critical Leadership Studies have striking and intriguing similarities to the work of McGilchrist and my own proposals, which, again, could merit further investigation. I highlight two examples. First, the emerging discourse of the Eco-leader suggested by Western (2008, pp. 173-197, and referred to in Section 1.2 of this thesis), is characterised by connectivity, by emergent patterns rather than fixed plans, and by the 'confidence of not-knowing', which last has some resonance with my emphasis on trust. Second, a strand of recent organisational research and writing has focused on *virtue*[173]. Again, investigation of the interface between such work and this thesis could offer fruitful ways forward.

Moving on, a third set of areas relates to the heuristic framework of Cartesian and Gestalt approaches to reality constructed within this thesis, including its recommendation that the Cartesian should always be subservient to the Gestalt. First, my approach in *justifying* this framework and recommendation has primarily been by letting its fruit commend itself to the reader[174]. A more thorough and rigorous discussion of its theological appropriateness might be merited. Second, moving on, to the extent that it is found valid, this framework of Cartesian and Gestalt raises questions and offers insight, in a wide range of areas, including education and health. Furthermore, exploring the social sciences more generally in its light could generate useful insight.

Fourth, I find intriguing the degree of resonance between a Cartesian approach and much Evangelical theology and practice. For instance, and very concisely, Evangelical understanding of conversion is frequently clear-cut, and its portrayal of atonement can verge on the pseudo-mechanical. Even relationship can be portrayed as primarily functional. An exploration of the origins and extent of such resonance might well yield important conclusions.

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[172] That said, he regrets that the Western church has been 'active in undermining itself' (p. 441), not least in permitting the increasing dominance of the left hemisphere.

[173] See, for instance, *The Virtues of Leadership* (Rego, Cunha, & Clegg, 2012).

[174] This was supplemented by the more explicit support offered by Hardy and Ford's discussion of disorder, order and non-order, considered in Section 5.3.

Fifth, my Chapter 7 is very much an initial outline sketch of a reconfigured ministerial discourse. There is, therefore, considerable scope for its expansion and enrichment. Areas that could fruitfully benefit from much deeper consideration include: theological considerations of narrative and drama; ecclesiology; the motif of improvisation; exploration of virtue and character formation; and questions of underlying anthropology.

Sixth and finally, I began Chapter 2 by registering the fact that a broad range of writers have articulated, using different terms, the existence of two contrasting ways of approaching reality. Furthermore, initial indications were of considerable similarity in their respective delineations of these approaches. A deep and rich examination could be fascinating of the degree of commonality between the approaches of, for instance, McGilchrist, Habermas, Louth and Robinson.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined recent developments in British ministerial literature, focusing on what it terms the Church Leadership Discourse (CLD). Treating this material as a discourse, it has held against it a heuristic framework of Cartesian and Gestalt approaches to reality. This framework has proved fruitful not only in identifying a broad range of anomalies within the CLD, but also in establishing their interconnectedness, pervasiveness, and theological insufficiency. Taken together, these findings form a strong argument that the CLD arises from an approach to reality that is inappropriate and insufficient for a significant role within the Christian Church. The thesis concludes by offering an outline of a reconfigured ministerial discourse. Here, the calling of the Church is to improvise faithfully and trustingly within God's unfolding drama, in such a way that the mode of being of the Church is increasingly conformed to the very being of God.

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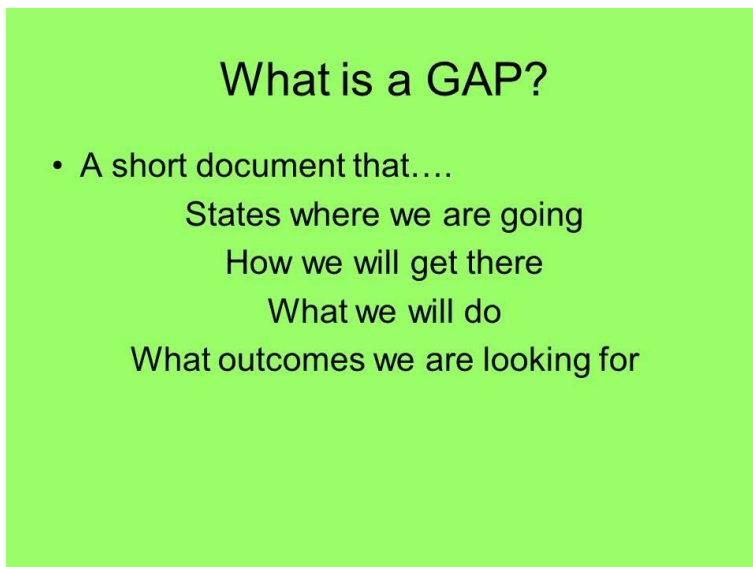
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1

Growth

Action

Plans

2

What is a GAP?

• A short document that….

States where we are going

How we will get there

What we will do

What outcomes we are looking for

3

Why GAP

Where to focus?

How to prioritise?

How to measure success?

4

How to GAP

5

Vision is vital because..

- It tells us where we are going
- It gets people excited
- It shapes our present

6

It tells us where we are going

7

It gets people excited!

8

Excited People

- Energy
- Commitment
- Fun
- Success

9

It sets our targets

10

It informs our planning

11

GAP's are a marriage of our vision with our actions
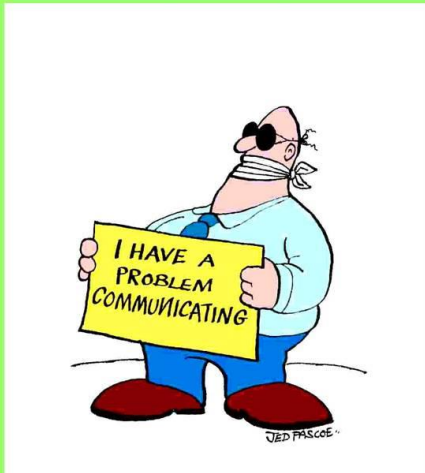
12

Creates unity

13

Release Resources

When the man with plan met the man with the money…..

The man with the money left with the plan and the man with the plan left with the money!

14

Communicate to the world

15

Creating a Gap
Where we are

- Deanery Plan

- Local history, practise and traditions

- What God is already doing in our place

Honest Audit

16

Receiving God's Vision

- Where is God calling our church to be in 5 years time?

Vision

17

What do we need to do for that vision to become reality?

- What
- Where
- When
- Who
- How

Plan

18

Vision, Plan, Act.

19

What a GAP may look like

Vision: We believe that God is calling our church to welcome new families

Plan: To create a vibrant children's work.

By November 2013 we will…
- Create a staffed crèche for Sunday mornings
- Invest in training for our Children's workers
- Recruit new children's workers

20

Process of Review

ACHIEVEMENT

21

GAPs are owned by the entire church

22

Germinate

23

Communicate

24

Dedicate

25

2 questions…

- In your church(es) how could a GAP be most helpful?
- Where is God calling your church to be in 5 years time?

Appendix 2 – Top 10 Tips for Church Growth

This is a list of actions and attitudes that researchers have found are linked to church growth. The list is far from exhaustive and is bound to miss out certain areas. However, it is a good way of introducing the principles of church growth as well as some actions that churches can take in order to promote growth in their situation.

1 Persistent prayer

Churches that pray for growth *persistently* tend to grow. Prayer can happen in a variety of ways; regular prayer meetings, house groups, nights of prayer and fasting, weeks of prayer. See http://uk.24-7prayer.com/ for some exciting ideas.

2 Willingness to change

Research shows that churches which undertake even modest changes grow. Churches that learn from change and are happy to experiment tend to attract new people. These changes do not need to large or scary. If your church is not used to change try introducing small changes for a set period (say 6months) to encourage people to experiment.

3 Children's work

Churches grow younger. If a church has excellent provision for children and their families they are far more likely to be growing.

4 Grow teams

Churches that identify, train and use the gifts of their members are more likely to grow. Growing teams by identifying individuals' gifts releases the talents within the church. Church members feel valued, happy and rooted in the life of the church when they are able to use their gifts within a team.

5 Discipleship course

Churches doing *well run* discipleship courses such as Alpha, Christianity Explored, Emmaus or Start are far more likely to grow. See
http://uk-england.alpha.org/
www.christianityexplored.org/
www.chpublishing.co.uk/category.asp?id=22601
www.start-cpas.org.uk/overview.htm

6 Inspiring worship services

Churches that have worshipers who describe their services as "inspiring" tend to grow. This does not favour one type of worship style against another but rather points to the positive experience of the worshipper.

7 Good small groups

Small groups are where people can make stronger relationships with each other and grow as disciples of Jesus. This could be a house group, men's breakfast, young mums group, Mothers Union, choir, youth group, prayer triplet. A good small group has accountability, learning and friendship at its core.

8 Community focused outreach

Shape your community outreach to the needs of your local area. Churches that understand their community before they seek to share the gospel of Jesus tend to be more successful. Many churches use community audits to assist them.

9 Loving relationships

Newcomers soon become aware of the special atmosphere of churches that love each other. Churches that grow not only love each other but have the ability to love the newcomer. The "Everybody Welcome Course" is a good resource to explore these issues.
www.everybodywelcome.org.uk/

10 Have a growth plan

Churches that have a specific growth action plan (GAP) are likely to be growing. A GAP helps churches communicate both with the community and with each other. They help churches plan and review their work and direction.
www.churchmaps.co.uk/stages/startingup.htm

Appendix 3 – Glossary of terms introduced within the thesis

Brief definitions or descriptions of terms introduced within the thesis, along with references to sections of the text where more details can be found.

Cartesian   The term by which I denote one of the two broad approaches to reality which form the primary heuristic framework of this thesis. A Cartesian approach is characterised by a sense of clarity, and of detailed analysis and focus. Its primary governing principle is that of division, for instance separating one category from another. Its disposition is instrumental, and its preference is for activity and novelty.   A Cartesian approach corresponds broadly to that of scientific method, and to the left brain hemisphere. For a brief summary, see page 50. For a full description, see Section 2.2, pages 60-71.

Ecclesiocracy   A deliberately sharp term, indicating an overly-bureaucratic approach to church life, in which focus on processes, outcomes and categories has led to the metaphorical veiling of human faces. This term functions as an ideal type. It may not actually exist in a pure form, but its influence may nevertheless be clearly discerned. See Section 6.2, pages 174-176.

Ecclesionomics   As with **Ecclesiocracy**, another deliberately sharp critical term. Ecclesionomics is intended to capture that approach to church life which is overly preoccupied by that which can be measured, and overly fixated with relentless short-term numerical growth. Again, this term functions as an ideal type, and as a sensitising concept. See Section 6.2, pages 174, 176-177 for a main introduction, and pages 178-181 for reflection on 'an ecclesionomic cameo'. Ecclesionomic considerations are closely bound up with the discussions of Section 6.3, and the extent to which it is helpful to see the church as a 'metric space'.

Gestalt   The term by which I denote the second of the two broad approaches to reality which form the primary heuristic framework of this thesis. A Gestalt approach attends more to a holistic overview than to focus on isolated details. It is more attuned to questions of depth, context and betweenness than is a **Cartesian** approach, and is also more at ease with ambiguity and paradox. Whereas the **Cartesian** is oriented towards instrumentality, the disposition of the Gestalt is one of attentive contemplation of that which lies before it. Broadly speaking, a Gestalt approach corresponds to that of the humanities, and to the right

brain hemisphere. For a brief summary, see page 50. A fuller description of the Gestalt is interwoven with that of the **Cartesian**: see Section 2.2, pages 60-71.

Hermeneutical filter(ing)   A metaphor to help clarify how a discourse can significantly influence perception of reality. The metaphor draws on the operation of filters used with telescopes. These can absorb light of particular wavelengths, thus hiding certain features, but also lead to the highlighting of other aspects of reality. See pages 21, 58, 68, 79 etc.

Morphe   I define this term to refer to those aspects of the life of a local church which correlate to a **Gestalt** approach. The *morphe* of a church can be thought of as its character, or inner nature. Included here can be particular virtues, moods, and tensions. There is scope for variety, complexity and flux. The concept of the *morphe* of a church contrasts with, and is complemented by, that of its *schema* (see below). I contend that the *morphe* of a church is more important than its *schema*, but that the two are interdependent, often in unpredictable ways. For my definition and initial reflection, see part of Section 3.2, pages 98-99. Find further references on pages 126, 207, 218 and 222.

Pleriscope   One of four ministerial virtues I commend in Section 7.3. As its name implies, I intend this term to denote 'fullness of vision'. In particular, the desired 'fullness' incorporates a **Gestalt** perspective, and not simply a **Cartesian**. This is vision understood primarily as receiving, rather than transmitting. The vision is to incorporate attention to God, human beings (individually and corporately), the created order, the past, the present, future possibilities, and the complex flux of relationships between all of these. See Section 7.3, pages 212-213.

Schema   I define this term to refer to those aspects of the life of a local church which a **Cartesian** perspective is best suited to perceiving, describing and analysing. These are likely to be attributes that can be summarised in a list or diagram, or that can be counted. The concept of the *schema* of a church contrasts with, and is complemented by, that of its *morphe* (see above). I contend that the *morphe* of a church is more important than its *schema*, but that the two are interdependent, often in unpredictable ways. For my definition and initial reflection, see part of Section 3.2, pages 98-99. Find further references on pages 126, 140, 207, 218 and 222.