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**From 'mission-shaped' to 'Jesus-shaped':
Locating the place of hospitality in the Church of England**

Susan Beverley Cross

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

York St John University

School of Humanities

May 2022

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to rehabilitate hospitality within Church of England discourse by positioning hospitality as more than ‘welcome’, or the evangelistic hospitality of the Alpha Course, or Messy Church. Such an endeavour is complicated by persistent racism within the Church, and calls for disestablishment, but this thesis seeks to demonstrate the relevance of hospitality, not only to mission, but also to ecclesiology, and social and ecological justice.

Chapters 1 and 2 discuss hospitality and eschatological hospitality in the Hebrew scriptures and New Testament from the respective perspectives of host and guest, to show the reversibility of guesting and hosting, and the *koinōnia* of the first believers (thus establishing hospitality as humble service and community). Chapter 3 considers inclusion, embodiment, and the body of Christ through the neurocognitive challenges of dementia, learning disability, and autism, to propose divine hospitality as the ultimate defence of personhood. Chapter 4 develops hospitality as an embodied sensory and social practice using previously identified components of hospitality: seeing, listening, storytelling, eating and feasting. Chapter 5 juxtaposes reports published by, and about, the Church of England to examine racism and problematic representations of hospitality, and suggest the potential for hospitable social action in church life. Chapter 6 questions existing use of hospitality in Alpha and Messy Church to claim that hospitality is not neutral. Before concluding with probable effects of pandemic COVID-19 on ministry, Chapter 7 explores *kenosis* and humility, tragedy and hospitality, and food and hunger, and discusses *perichoresis*, and praxis in the parish, Fresh Expression, and online and offline church. Inadequate conceptualisation of hospitality and ongoing revision of institutional strategies have led to the paradoxical situation of hospitality being simultaneously instrumentalised and undervalued within the Church of England, but this thesis argues that hospitality can be extricated from Anglican insularity, and redeemed.

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I must also thank those whose friendship has sustained me over the past few years of research and writing, in particular, Terry, Margaret, Polly, and fellow PGR Phil. I am grateful to Julia for generously giving me permission to share the recipe for her mum's acclaimed mint cake, which was a much-loved feature of many a church 'bring and share'.

Above all, none of my studies would have been possible without the prayers of Jonathan and Anne. I honour them for their wisdom and faithfulness, and I am deeply grateful for their friendship, counsel, encouragement, and hospitality: they know the part they have played over the past forty years in a discarded dream of academia becoming this present reality.

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Introduction

Setting the table

1. Mission, hospitality, and the Church of England

The 2004 Church of England report *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* sought to re-interpret church for a changing society, and to obviate the constraints imposed by inherited structure or architecture by endorsing new ways ‘to be and do church’¹ as part of the commission to proclaim the revealed faith ‘*afresh* in each generation’,² which is contained in the Preface to the Declaration of Assent made by Church of England ministers at their licensing.³ The emergence of so-called ‘fresh expressions of church’⁴ began in response to the generational shifts in family-structure and occupation, and consequent changes in patterns of working and habits of leisure that are outlined in the opening pages of the report.⁵ Significantly, the first mention of hospitality in the report does

¹ Church of England, Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context*, rev. ed., reprint, 2004 (London: Church House Publishing, 2009), 1.

² Church of England, Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 34, emphasis mine.

³ Church of England, “The Declaration of Assent.” <https://churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/ministry/declaration-assent>. The website notes the inclusion of material from The Archbishops’ Council, *Common Worship: Ordination Services* (London: Church House Publishing, 2007).

⁴ Church of England, Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 34, bold omitted. For ease of understanding, I refer throughout to ‘Fresh Expressions’ of church (except where I am following an author’s usage), although conventionally the capitals are reserved for the cross-denominational initiative that arose from the report, which started with an initial Anglican-Methodist partnership, and individual instances are usually denoted as a ‘fresh expression’ (fx) or ‘fresh expression of church’ (fxc), although the website itself is not consistent (fx, “Our Story,” para. 3. Fresh Expressions (website), accessed 18 October 2021, <https://freshexpressions.org.uk/our-story/>). *Mission-Shaped Church* is typeset in Franklin Gothic, a sans serif font, and the cover title, and chapter and section-headings are all printed in lower-case; so, it is difficult to impute intentionality with regard to the decision to refer to ‘fresh expressions of church’, as except for the derivation, no rationale, theological or otherwise, is given for the stylistic format of the term in the text. In my view, the omission of capital letters hinders comprehension, but it may be that capital letters were eschewed in order not to seem to be giving priority to ‘the new’ over the inherited parish-system. However, I consider my choice justified, as it is equally possible that a desire for fashionable consistency prevailed.

⁵ Church of England, Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 1–7. The rapidity of subsequent social and technological change is further highlighted by the mention of television as the sole source of entertainment, a capitalised reference to ‘the Internet’, and no acknowledgement whatsoever of the mobile ‘phone, a curious and unprophetic omission, even with the limited

not occur until page thirteen, after the statement: ‘The new is not necessarily better or more lasting’.⁶ Although it is not apparent in the text, the source for the quote which follows, on the need for ‘forms of community that are homes of generous hospitality, places of challenging reconciliation, and centres of attentiveness to the living God’, is an Anglican Franciscan.⁷ This monastic recuperation is not pursued elsewhere in the report, and is not taken up in the supposedly formative questions at the end of the chapter; so, except for a brief exposition of the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion,⁸ including the assertion that ‘a missionary church is relational’ and ‘characterized by welcome and hospitality’,⁹ and an undeveloped and uncited mention that ‘“Table church” has created a liturgy around a meal’,¹⁰ there is no actual explication of hospitality. Moreover, although *Mission-Shaped Church* prioritises listening in the proposed trajectory of a Fresh Expression, and community projects are mentioned as one of a number of forms,¹¹ listening and acts of service are not identified as constitutive characteristics of hospitality. By contrast, the literature of spirituality and community development overtly adopts the language of hospitality for these same actions,¹² hence the substantive claim of my thesis that underdetermined hospitality goes unrecognised and is undervalued. Therefore, my thesis takes *Mission-*

functionality that such devices then had (Church of England, Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 4, 5).

⁶ Church of England, Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 13.

⁷ Brother Samuel SSF, “Mission and Community,” *Transmission*, Spring 1998, 11, cited in Church of England, Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 13.

⁸ ‘The Five Marks of Mission:

The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth’ (Anglican Communion, “Marks of Mission.” Accessed 19 November 2020, <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx>).

⁹ Church of England, Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 82.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 57–59.

¹² See, for example, Ann Morisy, *Journeying Out: A New Approach to Christian Mission* (London: Continuum, 2004); Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999); Ann Morisy, *Beyond the Good Samaritan* (London: Mowbray, 1996); Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (London: Collins, 1976).

Shaped Church as the starting point to interrogate the priorities of the Church of England, and includes a number of other more recent reports, in order to consider hospitality not only in relation to mission, but also to discipleship, welcome, and racism, so as to reflect upon how these publications accord with the subsequent unhyphenated intent to be ‘Christ centred and Jesus shaped’ propounded by the Archbishop of York in 2020.¹³ Hospitality has been espoused by the ‘mission-shaped’ Church of England as a seemingly self-evident value, notwithstanding the fact that Church publications reduce hospitality either to woolly benevolence or quantification of ‘welcome’, as in the 2019 report *From Stranger to Friend: Changing the Culture and Practice of Welcome in the Church of England*.¹⁴ Similar imprecision occurs in *The Mixed Ecologists: Experiences of Mixed Ecology Ministry in the Church of England*: patent hospitality centred upon food is labelled as generosity (although acts of service do feature as hospitable, for once).¹⁵ As I will show in this thesis, there is an expanding corpus of reports, theological justification, stories and evidence about Fresh Expressions of church, and countervailing advocacy for parochial ministry, that invoke hospitality. Nevertheless, when writing in 1992 on racism in the Church of England, Root could make a sobering observation on cultural norms: ‘hospitality is highly valued in the New Testament, less valued in traditional English society but much more highly valued in the culture of many ethnic minorities in Britain. It does not figure largely in the Anglican selection criteria’.¹⁶ New criteria designed not to favour White,¹⁷ middle-class candidates were introduced in Autumn 2021,¹⁸ but in my

¹³ Stephen Cottrell, *A Vision for the Church of England in the 2020s: ‘Christ Centred and Jesus Shaped. Simpler, Humbler, Bolder’*, A commentary to accompany the picture (2020).

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media/22483>.

¹⁴ Church of England, The Archbishops’ Council, *From Stranger to Friend: Changing the Culture and Practice of Welcome in the Church of England*, Strategic Leadership Development Programme rept., by Jonathan Baker, et al. (London: Church of England, 2019). https://churchsupporthub.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/COFE_02809_StrangerToFriend-Report-AW.pdf.

¹⁵ Church of England, The Archbishops’ Council, *The Mixed Ecologists: Experiences of Mixed Ecology Ministry in the Church of England*, Focussed Study 2, by Ruth Perrin and Ed Olsworth-Peter, The Living Ministry Research Project (London: Church of England, 2021), 21–22. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/Focussed%20Study%20%20-%20The%20Mixed%20Ecologists.pdf>.

¹⁶ John Root, “Racism in the Church of England,” *Anvil* 9, no. 1 (1992): 14.

¹⁷ I have chosen to capitalise ‘White’ in order not to be complicit with conventions that assume

opinion, the Church is still experiencing the consequences not only of skewed recognition of vocation to ordained ministry a generation since, but also the conformation to the worldly ‘More tea, Vicar?’ stereotype of genteel hospitality, which was outmoded even then.¹⁹ The fact that participants in both the local and contextual ‘mixed economy’, and more latterly ‘mixed ecology’ of ecclesial forms within the Church of England,²⁰ now vigorously profess hospitality is indicative of how hospitality is implicitly positioned as synonymous with welcome for the curious or uninitiated.

Whiteness as the norm. Except where I am following an author’s usage, all references to race, ethnicity, and culture are capitalised.

¹⁸ Madeleine Davies, “New Selection Framework Seeks ‘Unseen-Called’,” *Church Times*, no. 8258 (25 June 2021): 3.

¹⁹ Although the Revd Mark Nam, who set up The Teahouse, a national network of Chinese-heritage clergy in the Church of England, uses the same allusion as the basis for a change of culture in the Church: ‘Tea is, of course, traditionally Chinese. It is also quintessentially British (“More tea, Vicar?”). I believe that the blending of these two cultures will create a new aroma in the Church’ (Mark Nam, “Heed the Voices of Chinese Clergy,” *Church Times*, no. 8267 (27 August 2021): 11). Nevertheless, the residual comedic potential of this hackneyed tea-drinking trope serves to obscure further the history of slavery, forced and indentured labour, and exploitation, which continues to this day, in the production of tea, coffee, and sugar, as compromised commodities. I cite only a representative sample of the relevant literature, see, for example, Jahn Bharadwaj, “Coolies, Tea Plantations and the Limits of Physical Violence in Colonial Assam: A Historiographical Note,” *Asian Ethnicity* 22, no. 4 (2021): 542–62. doi:10.1080/14631369.2019.1696666; Oana Burcu, et al., *EU Law. Global Impact.: A Report Considering the Potential Impact of Human Rights Due Diligence Laws on Labour Exploitation and Forced Labour* (London: Anti-Slavery International, 2021). https://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ASI_EUlaw_GlobalImpact_Report-FINAL.pdf; Kate Macdonald and Samantha Balaton-Chrimes, *Human Rights Grievance-Handling in the Indian Tea Sector*, Non-Judicial Redress Mechanisms Report Series, no. 6 (Corporate Accountability Research, 2016), Online. <https://corporateaccountabilityresearch.net/njm-report-vi-indiantea>; Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies 1623–1775*, reprint, 1974 (Kingston, Jamaica WI: Canoe Press, 1994); Rana P. Behal and Prabhu P. Mohapatra, “‘Tea and Money Versus Human Life’: The Rise and Fall of the Indenture System in the Assam Tea Plantations 1840–1908,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 19, no. 3–4, *Plantations, Proletarians and Peasants in Colonial Asia*, special issue (1992): 142–72. doi:10.1080/03066159208438491. In addition, France-Williams relates a disquieting story about the petty abuse of clerical power and the perpetration of a deceit on church members with regard to Fair Trade where personal preference overruled ethical concerns for the welfare of producers enmeshed in global supply chains (A. D. A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship: Institutional Racism and the Church of England* (London: SCM Press, 2020), 52–53, published under the author’s initials).

²⁰ Cf. Louise Nelstrop, “Mixed Economy or Ecclesial Reciprocity: Which Does the Church of England Really Want to Promote?” in *Evaluating Fresh Expressions: Explorations in Emerging Church, Responses to the Changing Face of Ecclesiology in the Church of England*, ed. Louise Nelstrop and Martyn Percy (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008), 187–203; Church of England, The Archbishops’ Council, *The Mixed Ecologists*. See Chapter 5, section 3, pp. 226–27 for discussion of the most recent announcement about priorities.

However, although hospitality is appealed to as an attractive and definitive quality for churches, it is rarely addressed beyond practical arrangements, or the summative claim for identity, and it is this conceptual deficit which I propose to address, but I will not be interacting with Derrida's philosophical conception of hospitality, nor with Levinas on the Other,²¹ as I am treating hospitality as an attribute of human identity derived from God, not as an ethical conundrum. I will argue that hospitable listening evidenced in social action and pastoral care, and intentional inclusion in community as an act of prophetic hospitality are both integral to contemporary mission. In this thesis, I adopt a temporal framing of hospitality that mirrors the trajectory of scripture in order to reflect on creation and embodiment, and ecology and eschatology as means to question injustice and structures of power. Accordingly, in this introduction, I prefigure my specific arguments by giving a brief summary of each chapter,²² and clarifying the limits of my research, before defining the nature of my contribution.

2. Overview and outline of chapters

In Chapter 1, I examine practices around sharing meals and offering accommodation in the Bible by touching on Abraham and Sarah, Jesus and the disciples, and Peter, Paul, and the early converts, to find differences and commonalities between hosting and hospitality in the Hebrew scriptures and the Christian New Testament. In Chapter 2, I look at strangers and guests, and food and feasting in the Bible to identify recipients of shelter and protection, and invitees and participants. Although I conclude my historical examination of hospitality with the writings of Paul, I am not bracketing the period between the events recorded in the New Testament and the present day as though intervening time can be compressed to

²¹ Somewhat incongruously, the requisite nod to both even occurs in an academic article that features cute stills from a documentary about the stray cats of Istanbul, although the author uses the film as a basis for articulating what she perceives as the need for a 'feral hospitality' that is external to the house (Sara Swain, "Feral Hospitality: Thinking Outside the House with *Kedi*," *Public* 31, no. 61 (December 2020): 90–109. doi:10.1386/public_00028_1).

²² I capitalise references to specific chapters in this thesis, so as to differentiate between my work and that of other authors.

produce an unmediated cultural equivalence between their experience and ours. From inclusion in the past, Chapter 3 then addresses hospitality as a means to augment inclusion nowadays. I enquire how hospitality can be used as a theological resource to redress exclusion and stigmatisation, and I raise issues surrounding personhood for those living with dementia, or other cognitive or sensory-processing challenges, to consider Trinitarian relationality as a means to secure dignity.²³ I develop the subject of inclusion in Chapter 4 by examining practices which potentiate hospitality and create accessible spaces and encounters of mutuality. I discuss how food and storytelling can promote social and liturgical inclusion, and I consider liturgical disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic, and hospitality at different scales. Writing this thesis as the pandemic followed its course has meant that considered expositions on the implications of lockdown and the virus are yet to come, but I entirely expect that future investigation of the liturgical improvisations during the pandemic period will uncover distinctive online expressions of hospitality.

In Chapter 5, I address the implicit question within the critique posed by Reddie,²⁴ whether racism in the Church invalidates any claim of hospitality, and ask whether hospitality and mission are incompatible by looking at institutional definitions and grass roots praxis. Chapter 6 considers evangelistic hospitality and discipleship, and I use the examples of the Alpha Course and Messy Church. They both originated in the Church of England, and have stood the test of time and proliferated, although it should be noted that the tone of *Mission-Shaped Church* with regard to Alpha (and other initiatives) can be best be characterised as ambivalent.²⁵ In

²³ In the rest of the thesis I explore understandings of the subjective experience of contemplation and communion with God. I use Holy Communion and Eucharist interchangeably in this thesis, although I am aware not only that the valence of these terms differs, but also that the former aligns more with an evangelical outlook, whereas the latter is usually favoured by churches in the sacramental tradition. Except where I am following an author's usage, communion has the connotations of spiritual and mystical communion with God, whereas Communion denotes the ritual celebration.

²⁴ See section 2.1, p. 8.

²⁵ 'After the 1990s' peak of interest in church planting there came a stream of other supposed solutions to mission ineffectiveness: Seeker Services, the Toronto blessing, the Alpha course, Cell church, Celtic Worship, Pensicola [sic] Revival and most recently the "Transforming Communities" videos. Many of these initiatives have been wrongly interpreted as offering a "quick fix" to the mission dilemma of the Church. Enthusiasm for these new options has perhaps diminished enthusiasm for exploring costly and

the course of this chapter I question whether hospitality becomes deformed if used purposefully.²⁶ Incontestably, the practice of hospitality cannot be judged from paper or online evidence, or protestations of welcome, but needs to be consistent and genuine, and perceived as such, by those who come into the orbit of projects, services, or communities of believers. Therefore, in the case of Alpha and Messy Church, I have intentionally looked at foundational principles using formative publications, including blogs, as well as external evaluation by outsiders, in order to generalise and consider dissonance between aims and implementation. My final questions, in Chapter 7, are whether underdetermined hospitality goes unrecognised, and how context shapes hospitality. I will pursue these by looking at food, hunger, and poverty; the place of humility; online and offline church; and Church policy and the probable effects of post-COVID retrenchment. As I make clear throughout this thesis, hospitality is not reducible to a repertoire of measurable behaviours, but I maintain that the continuity of hospitality extended by the Church of England can still provide a witness to a fragmented society despite internal dissension and moral failures.

2.1. Scope, terms, and terminology

This thesis will look therefore at the retrieval of hospitality in Christian life and mission, and consider whether this rediscovery has been manifested adequately by a ‘mission-shaped’ Church of England, and how this might be changed by the more recent intention to be a ‘Jesus-shaped’ Church. I propose to identify the theology, values, and practices which underlie missional hospitality in the context of Anglicanism in twenty-first century England. I will reflect on scriptural precedent, present innovation, and potential futures for the practice of Christian hospitality as it pertains to the outreach and identity of the Church of England; so, I will not be

prayerful ways of enabling church to grow and develop in non-church cultures and places’ (Church of England, Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 26). Cf. multiple mentions of Alpha elsewhere in the report (Church of England, Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 51–52, 56, 60, 118–19).

²⁶ Pohl in *Living into Community* talks of ‘complications and deformations’ of hospitality, but I arrived at this research question independently, before I had read this work (Christine D. Pohl, *Living Into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 166).

considering hospitality in relation to migration, ecumenism, or interfaith relations, as these negotiations usually take place at a different scale, although that is not to dismiss local initiatives.²⁷ At the outset, I need to acknowledge the enduring and shameful racism of the Church of England as an institution, which would preclude any unqualified claim of hospitality. In addition, the Church's protracted denial and reluctance to deal with issues of historic sexual abuse on the one hand, and human sexuality on the other, has been equally unjustifiable and lacking in compassion. However, without seeking to mitigate appalling institutional apathy, or justify discrimination, be it the abusive treatment of clergy of colour, the historic rebuff to those of the *Windrush* generation, or the re-traumatisation of survivors of abuse, these gross failures do not render hospitality an improper subject for enquiry.

Nevertheless, Black liberation theologian Anthony Reddie is rightly suspicious about the ubiquity of hospitality in Church discourse, so he writes approvingly in the Foreword to Barrett and Harley's *Being Interrupted: Reimagining the Church's Mission from the Outside, In*: 'Gone is the seemingly axiomatic trope of "hospitality" as the panacea for all ecclesial ills', and he excoriates the 'neo-colonial habitus' of the Church of England 'that has seen the Church assume for itself an indispensable position in God's gracious economy'.²⁸ I acknowledge that self-congratulatory

²⁷ Examples of the recruitment of hospitality for these purposes can be seen in the following selection of texts: Bhogal writes of his Sikh heritage, and relates the welcome given to him by the local Methodist church after his family relocated from Kenya during his childhood, and uses it to consider the expansiveness of hospitality. See Inderjit Bhogal, *A Table for All: A Challenge to Church and Nation*, rev. ed. (Sheffield: Penistone Publications, 2000). Within a context of a theology of religions, Yong proposes a pneumatological account of interreligious hospitality, which celebrates diversity of practice and charism as outworkings of the divided tongues of Pentecost. See Amos Yong, *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices and the Neighbor*, Faith Meets Faith (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008). Marshall advocates that Abraham be adopted as a role model by the faiths which look to him, stating, 'the hospitality ethic is equally relevant to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, so there is potential here for rapprochement' (Mary J. Marshall, "Jesus: Glutton and Drunkard?" *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 3, no. 1 (2005): 60. doi:10.1177/1476869005053865). A similar plea is made by Reynolds, see Thomas E. Reynolds, "Toward a Wider Hospitality: Rethinking Love of Neighbour in Religions of the Book," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (May 2010): 175–87. doi:10.1177/0021140009360497. This invitation to dialogue is taken up by Reaves, who concludes, 'it is truly in the shelter of each other that we live' (Jayme Reaves, *Safeguarding the Stranger: An Abrahamic Theology and Ethic of Protective Hospitality* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 243).

²⁸ Anthony Reddie, "Foreword," in *Being Interrupted: Reimagining the Church's Mission from the Outside, In*, Al Barrett and Ruth Harley (London: SCM Press, 2020), xii. During the writing of this

hospitality is a pernicious manifestation of the White privilege and entitlement that Reddie denounces repeatedly in his scholarship,²⁹ and the slowness to change of the Church of England shows a reluctance to renounce the comforts of past deference. Admittedly, Swinton does advocate hospitality as one of a number of ‘practices of resistance’ to confront evil, and to stand against ‘xeno-racism’ (racism shown towards strangers, particularly the refugee and asylum-seeking stranger, where displacement assumes more significance than skin-colour).³⁰ And yet, it remains a matter of shame that the Church of England drove away those post-war arrivals from the Caribbean who sought to continue practising their Anglican faith, and also continues to discriminate against its own long-suffering Black and Brown clergy, and members of its congregations, as France-Williams argues so eloquently in his 2020 book *Ghost Ship: Institutional Racism and the Church of England*.³¹ But, to engage with Reddie’s

thesis, Reddie was appointed one of the members of the Archbishops’ Racial Justice Commission, which is discussed in prospect in Chapter 5, section 2.1, pp. 220–23 (Anonymous, “Archbishops’ Racial Justice Commission Members Announced.” *News* (blog), written by a ‘member of the Independent Commission’, Church of England (website), 7 October 2021, <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/priorities/archbishops-commission-racial-justice/news/archbishops-racial-justice-commission-members>). Significantly, he and his fellow appointees are not called Commissioners, which suggests limits to their power to effect change, although it is to be hoped that this is merely a linguistic oversight. In his review of *From Lament to Action*, the report of the Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Taskforce, which preceded the establishment of the Commission, Isiorho is pessimistic about the likelihood of implementation of recommended changes, and writes: ‘But to whom is this report addressed? Presumably, those who have the power to change things. Who can tell in the strange world and culture of the Church of England?’, thus reinforcing Reddie’s assessment of peculiar privilege (David Isiorho, “*From Lament to Action*, The Report of the Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Taskforce,” review of *From Lament to Action: The Report of the Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Taskforce*, 2021, by Arun Arora, et al., *Black Theology* 19, no. 2 (2021): 182. doi:10.1080/14769948.2021.1954370). A paper for General Synod published in January 2022 reported on progress since the publication of *From Lament to Action*: lack of funding, and recommendations that fell outside the remit of NCIs (National Church Institutions) were cited repeatedly, although some progress has been made (Malcolm Brown and Sanjee Perera, *Racial Justice in the Church of England*, General Synod paper GS 2243 (2022), 1–12. <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/26417>).

²⁹ In *Theologising Brexit* he dissects the shameful intersection of English Christian identity, parochialism and nationalism. See Anthony G. Reddie, *Theologising Brexit: A Liberationist and Postcolonial Critique*, Routledge New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).

³⁰ John Swinton, *Raging with Compassion: Pastoral Responses to the Problem of Evil*, reprint, 2007 (London: SCM Press, 2018), 69–89, 232–43, here at 88.

³¹ Perhaps the most damning comment reported by France-Williams is that of a clergyman who sees diversity as antithetical to unity, and presumes to use the voice of God to back his own exclusionary agenda and validate his racism: ‘The spirit [sic] is saying that now is not the time for diversity, now is the time for unity’ (A. D. A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship*, 123).

evaluation, I argue that there is a difference between hospitality deployed in the service of ‘church growth’, and that which shares in the overflow of the life of God, and I develop this in the latter chapters of this thesis, after opening with the biblical warrant for hospitality in the first two main chapters.

As an ordained Anglican priest,³² Martyn Percy comments on the current top-down focus on recruitment and membership, and how this is a shift from an Anglican polity that ‘seeks to serve society as whole’, exemplified in the theological conviction expressed in the 1985 report *Faith in the City* which highlighted the causes behind unrest and disturbance in the inner cities, and ‘championed the poor’.³³ This moral fracture is mirrored in the paucity of reflection behind the deployment of hospitality in the aforementioned 2019 report *From Stranger to Friend*, which I discuss in Chapter 5.³⁴ I contend that the obligation to hospitality is inescapable for Christians, and that broadening the scope of hospitality from glib metaphor and a veneer of ‘welcome’ into precept and praxis provides a means of addressing injustice and exclusion through the simultaneous interrogation of self-proclaimed hospitality, and the recognition of implicit hospitality.

I write as a White woman, and a communicant member of the Church of England, but I have no remit to defend the indefensible, therefore Reddie’s opinion does not dismay me, despite the avowed intent of this thesis, because I adopt a theological anthropology of the interdependence of divine hospitality and creatureliness, which can only eventuate in humility; so I am not advocating a simplistic resort to pietistic or strategic hospitality, but undertaking a wider theorisation which moves beyond the insularity of church life, mission, and

³² Martyn Percy announced his decision to leave the Church of England in May 2022. See Martyn Percy, “Martyn Percy: Why I’m Leaving the Church of England,” *Prospect*, 11 May 2022. <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/society-and-culture/martyn-percy-why-im-leaving-the-church-of-england>. See Chapter 5, section 2, p. 214 n. 35 for the background to his departure.

³³ Martyn Percy, “Mission as Reception: Reframing Evangelism in the Church of England,” in *Changing the Church: Transformations of Christian Belief, Practice, and Life*, ed. Mark D. Chapman and Vladimir Latinovic, Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 139–42.

³⁴ Church of England, The Archbishops’ Council, *From Stranger to Friend*.

governance. As a consequence, although I consider the particular issue of disestablishment, I will not be considering ecclesiology specifically, but I aim to progress hospitality beyond a stratagem for procuring the viability of the Church, or nourishment and refreshments, into the areas of spiritual vitality, and a healthy relationship with the natural world. Chester advocates for evangelistic hospitality with the assertion: ‘Community and mission are more than meals, but it’s hard to conceive of them *without* meals’,³⁵ but in my view, inclusive hospitality extends beyond commensality to an awareness of creatureliness, and thence to the environment, thus enabling a pleasing circularity whereby an awareness of the ecology of food enriches discussion of meals. Although I will examine food and feasting, it must be emphasised that I am not advocating an alternative ‘table-shaped’ Church, as such literalism would limit hospitality merely to ingestion, whether it be at meals, or the Eucharist, rather than opening the concept of hospitality up to global application. Instead of an introverted focus on instrumental hospitality, I outline how being seen and heard are vital to hospitality. Accordingly, I use seeing, listening,³⁶ and storytelling, at a personal level, and social action and social justice at a community level, to define and discern hospitality and inclusion, as much as the presence, or absence, of eating at domestic, liturgical, or ritual meals. (And generous hospitality can be shown without food, as in the story of the woman at the house of Simon, who weeps over, and anoints, the feet of Jesus.)³⁷

³⁵ Tim Chester, *A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community & Mission Around the Table* (Nottingham: IVP, 2011), 15, emphasis in original.

³⁶ Sensory language has to be considered as potentially exclusionary, as theologian John Hull uncovers in his account of how sight-loss sensitised him to the use of darkness and blindness as biblical metaphors, but in the following discussions seeing and listening should be taken as synonymous with attentiveness, apprehension, and awareness, however mediated. See John M. Hull, *In the Beginning There Was Darkness: A Blind Person’s Conversations with the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 2001). Although, on a related point, Hickman identifies how the labour required to mediate sign-language interpretation, talking books, subtitles or transcripts is naturalised. See Louise Hickman, “Access Workers, Transcription Machines, and Other Intimate Colleagues: Disability, Technology and Labor Practices in the Production of Knowledge (1956-Present),” PhD dissertation (San Diego, CA: University of California, 2018).

³⁷ See Chapter 1, section 3. A postponed immersive installation by artist Chris Levine entitled ‘LIGHT’, which opened at Durham Cathedral in May 2021, offers a postmodern take on the practice. The experience intends to be ‘symbolic of the medieval tradition of footwashing as pilgrims reach their destination’: the footsore are virtually bathed in laser-light as they hear an accompanying soundtrack of

I am constructing hospitality both as an earthy virtue born of biological and social necessity, and enjoined by scripture, and as future consummation glimpsed through liturgy, sacrament, and *koinōnia*.³⁸ Therefore, I am developing a conception of hospitality directed towards social justice, which supports personhood, and convenes the creaturely in a recognition of the intersection of biology, ecology, and spirituality. I contend that hospitality provides an heuristic for interrogating church life, ritual, food, and the digital environment, and the relevance of such enquiry has become even more apparent during the rigours of COVID-19. As a consequence, I approach hospitality in this thesis not only in relation to food and shelter, but also to inclusion and belonging. I acknowledge that hegemonic inclusion that enforces normativity and seeks to maintain the status quo is problematic, but belonging is potentially passive without consideration of *how* people are included,³⁹ and so I will look at how the Church nationally and locally perpetrates exclusion. Brock is clear that ‘Christian theology offers a politics of *redeemed communion* that displaces the politics of both exclusion and inclusion’, but although I agree with him, attention has to be paid to the practicalities of inclusion, and the experience of direct and indirect exclusion has to be considered.⁴⁰

sacred choral music by The Sixteen (Durham Cathedral, “LIGHT at the End of the Tunnel - Chris Levine’s Art Installation Welcomes Visitors Back to Durham Cathedral.” 27 May 2021, <https://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/news/light-chris-levine>).

³⁸ The full context of Pauline usage and innovation in the use of *koinōnia* is provided by McDermott (Michael McDermott, “The Biblical Doctrine of KOINΩNIA,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 19, no. 1 (1975): 64–77; John Michael McDermott, “The Biblical Doctrine of KOINΩNIA (II. Part),” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 19, no. 2 (1975): 219–33, both by same author). The fundamental meaning of the noun *koinōnia* is “‘common share or participation in’, then ‘association’, ‘community’, and, most generally, almost any type of common relation among people or things’ (Michael McDermott, “The Biblical Doctrine of KOINΩNIA,” 65). It is usually translated as Christian fellowship, but see Chapter 7, section 3.2, p. 312 for a challenge to this interpretation.

³⁹ From their research with young people with disabilities and their families, Carter, Biggs, and Boehm distinguish between ‘being present’ and ‘having a presence’, and present a framework of ten connected dimensions of belonging: ‘Being present, noticed, welcomed, accepted, supported, cared for, known, befriended, needed, and loved may each contribute to an assurance that one matters within and is truly part of a particular community of faith’ (Erik W. Carter, Elizabeth E. Biggs, and Thomas L. Boehm, “Being Present Versus Having a Presence: Dimensions of Belonging for Young People with Disabilities and Their Families,” *Christian Education Journal* 3rd ser., 13, no. 1 (2016): 140). Cf. John Swinton, “From Inclusion to Belonging: A Practical Theology of Community, Disability and Humanness,” *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 16, no. 2 (2012): 184. doi:10.1080/15228967.2012.676243. See Chapter 3, section 6.2, p. 164.

⁴⁰ Brian Brock, *Wondrously Wounded: Theology, Disability, and the Body of Christ*, Studies in

With regard to hospitality as inclusion, Cherry draws on and adapts Isasi-Diaz, to suggest that ‘an attitude of kin-ness’ is ‘fundamental to discipleship’.⁴¹ He continues: ‘Kin-ness would be the attitude that we hold towards those who are like us *despite the fact that what we first notice about them is their unlikeness*’.⁴² Accordingly, in proposing hospitality as a means of surmounting physical and spiritual exclusion, I will consider the experience of those living with the social and cognitive challenges of dementia, autism, and learning disabilities in general, although I rely on textual analysis and reflection, rather than lived-experience of disability. Whilst I am aware of the limitations of such an approach, it is justified because those perspectives are necessary to establish the normality of difference, and identify barriers to accessing church. I have chosen to retain the term learning disabilities in preference to intellectual disability, as it would seem both logical and axiomatic that the simpler and more accessible term should be used if a designation is needed at all, which it is not in face-to-face encounter. To my mind, learning disabilities implies both a continuum and potential for development, whereas intellectual disabilities is more open to potential abuse as a means of denying rationality, and thence humanity. Obviously, people come before labels, and my use of the former term does not imply any disrespect. Having outlined the limits of my research, and reflected on my situatedness as a researcher, I now turn to specifying my usage of the terms Church and mission.

2.2. Defining Church and mission

Mission-Shaped Church defined so-called ‘double listening’ as a process of ‘listening to the culture where a church might be established, *and* to the inherited tradition of the gospel and the church’.⁴³ Grammatically, chronologically, and

Religion, Theology, and Disability (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019), 201, emphasis in original.

⁴¹ Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 88–92, cited in Stephen Cherry, “Relational Discipleship,” in *The Meanings of Discipleship: Being Disciples Then and Now*, ed. Andrew Hayes and Stephen Cherry (London: SCM Press, 2021), 160.

⁴² Cherry, “Relational Discipleship,” 160, emphasis in original.

⁴³ Church of England, Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 104, emphasis mine.

historically, this definition would seem to have specified three voices, although it is probably not politic to suggest that the tradition of the Church of England does not conform to the gospel tradition. As my thesis is looking at the place of hospitality in a church defined by mission and her Lord, neither is this the place to get into debates about the distinctions between kingdom and church, epitomised in the obligatory allusion by the would-be ecclesial renegade to variants of Loisy's dictum that 'Jesus foretold the kingdom, and it was the Church that came',⁴⁴ an assertion which can then be used to flagellate the institutional church.⁴⁵ This is not to deny the fact that, as Barrett states succinctly: 'Most of the problems of New Testament scholarship were posed by Loisy in [those] dozen words',⁴⁶ which is complemented by Bosch's equally pithy paraphrase of Aagaard: 'There is church because there is mission, not vice versa'.⁴⁷ Bretherton also makes a pertinent contribution to the wider debate:

To emphasise the person of Jesus and the kingdom of God as somehow *necessarily* in opposition to the history of the church is to fall into a kind of 'Jesuology': an attempt to escape history as if Christians can simply copy the primitive church or ask what would Jesus do and ignore two thousand years of church history.⁴⁸

In Tomlinson's opinion: 'One feature that has historically preserved the Church of England from confusing the Church with the kingdom is the notion of the parish',⁴⁹ but it needs to be asked whether the shift centrally from 'mission-shaped' to 'Jesus-shaped' (and 'Christ-centred') is an attempt to render the structures and processes of

⁴⁴ C. K. Barrett, *Jesus and the Gospel Tradition*, reprint, 1967 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 68.

⁴⁵ For example, Ward makes the customary reference in his influential deconstruction of prevailing understandings of the form of church. See Pete Ward, *Liquid Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), 8–10.

⁴⁶ C. K. Barrett, *Jesus and the Gospel Tradition*, 68.

⁴⁷ Anna Marie Aagaard, "Missio Dei in Katholischer Sicht," *Evangelische Theologie* 34 (1974): 423, cited in David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series, no. 16 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 390. This statement is cited in *Mission-Shaped Church*, but is attributed to Bosch. See Church of England, Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 85.

⁴⁸ Luke Bretherton, "Beyond the Emerging Church?" in *Remembering Our Future: Explorations in Deep Church*, ed. Andrew Walker and Luke Bretherton, Deep Church (London: Paternoster, 2007), 37, emphasis in original. In terms of spiritual formation and expression of faith, this desire by some is probably not helped by the lack, highlighted by Parry, of Trinitarian hymns and songs within contemporary charismatic worship. See Robin A. Parry, *Worshipping Trinity: Coming Back to the Heart of Worship*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2013).

⁴⁹ Dave Tomlinson, *Re-Enchanting Christianity: Faith in an Emerging Culture* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008), 134–35.

the Church less visible, and thus less open to internal and external critique. Indeed, it could be seen as an institutional iteration of problematic identification with Jesus by the privileged which features prominently in the aforementioned book by Barrett and Harley, wherein they chart an alternative mindset for mission in the Church of England.⁵⁰ Even if the suspicion of archiepiscopal prestidigitation is unwarranted, it will be noticeable in this thesis that I differentiate between the edicts of the structural entity of the Church of England, or the opinions of bishops and archbishops, and the activity of the parish or Fresh Expression, and the responses of other clergy and the laity.

I am confining discussion to the Hebrew scriptures, and examples of continuity and innovation in the New Testament, so except where I have followed the usage of the author I am discussing, I refer either to the *ekklēsia* or the early Church, but I do not consider the development of the Early Church *ad extra*.⁵¹ Otherwise, church is a general reference, and ‘the Church’ indicates either the universal Church, or the Church of England, as appropriate. More widely within theology, speculation on relations between the persons of the Trinity is used to theorise human sociality, or posit the nature of church, but although I make due reference to *perichoresis* (the interrelationship of the Persons of the Trinity, and their retention of distinctiveness) and *koinōnia*, I am mainly looking at the reasoning and assumptions behind why these concepts are thought to be useful, rather than their origins, or slippage in their usage

⁵⁰ Al Barrett and Ruth Harley, *Being Interrupted: Reimagining the Church’s Mission from the Outside*, In (London: SCM Press, 2020), 84, 138–39. See Chapter 5, section 5.1, p. 245.

⁵¹ Trebilco notes that ‘ἐκκλησία is used as a self-designation or label 114 times in the NT, with the meaning of “assembly”, “gathering” or “community”. It has often been argued that ἐκκλησία was first used a self-designation in Jerusalem by the Hellenists who are first referred to in Acts 6.1’ (Paul Trebilco, “Why Did the Early Christians Call Themselves ἡ ἐκκλησία?” *New Testament Studies* 57, no. 3 (July 2011): 440. doi:10.1017/S0028688511000087). He explains that the ‘Jerusalem “Hellenists” are best understood as Jewish Christians who spoke only Greek and understood little or no Aramaic, in contrast to the “Hebrews” who spoke Aramaic as their mother tongue as well as at least some Greek’ (Trebilco, “Why Did the Early Christians Call Themselves ἡ ἐκκλησία?” 440). He considers the probable reasoning behind the initial use for the Jerusalem assembly, and concludes that ‘the main alternative term, συναγωγή [synagogue], was already in public use’, but they could ‘use ἐκκλησία to claim theological continuity with the OT people of God, *without* thereby saying that other Jews were not the OT people of God’ (Trebilco, “Why Did the Early Christians Call Themselves ἡ ἐκκλησία?” 456, 458, emphasis in original).

over time.⁵² Indeed, Carson, Fairhurst, Rooms, and Withrow in their book on hospitality assert that *ekklēsia* is the diametric opposite of the shared God-given togetherness of *koinōnia*.⁵³ However, I maintain that Carson et al. are not arguing in good faith, as all but one of the authors are ordained, so they entertain this speculation while retaining the privilege afforded by ecclesial structure. Furthermore, although the experience represented in the New Testament is subjectively irrecoverable, to effectively invalidate all subsequent claims of fellowship because of the concretisation of a concept unknown to the first believers is self-defeating. Wolter could be seen as concurring with their argument, in that he sees a gradual loss of festive egalitarianism as Christianity was institutionalised and inculturated, but he exhorts: ‘we should never forget that Christianity started as a feast’, and this thesis takes that injunction to heart.⁵⁴ Having laid my themes and research questions on the table, defined the parameters of my enquiry, and reflected on my situatedness as a researcher, I will begin by looking at the necessity for the undertaking.

⁵² With regard to the former, this necessary task of outlining divergence from past doctrinal understandings is undertaken by Holmes, who states: ‘I see the twentieth-century [sic] renewal of Trinitarian theology as depending in large part on concepts and ideas that cannot be found in patristic, medieval, or Reformation accounts of the doctrine of the Trinity. In some cases, indeed, they are points explicitly and energetically repudiated as erroneous – even occasionally as formally heretical – by the earlier tradition. This is a historical judgement; it may be that recent writers are right in their accounts of the content and use of Trinitarian doctrine, but if so, we need to conclude that the majority of the Christian tradition has been wrong in what it has claimed about the eternal life of God’ (Stephen R. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity*, Christian Doctrines in Historical Perspective (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 2).

⁵³ Timothy Carson, et al., *Crossing Thresholds: A Practical Theology of Liminality* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2021), 26–27.

⁵⁴ Michael Wolter, “Primitive Christianity as a Feast,” in *Feasts and Festivals*, ed. Christopher Mark Tuckett, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, 53 (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 180–82, here at 182. He suggests that the feast in primitive Christianity constituted an alternate bounded social reality wherein a distinctive Christian identity was displayed and experienced, but that Paul expected the ethics of the feast to be coterminous with the conduct of daily life: ‘Among Christians the feast never ends’ (Wolter, “Primitive Christianity as a Feast,” 173, 179–80).

Hospitality
Background and reflections

1. In search of hospitality

Between 1999 and 2012 the Church Army Research Unit in Sheffield published the Encounters on the Edge series of booklets intended to highlight examples of innovative practice in a variety of contexts, and they are commended as resource in *Mission-Shaped Church*.¹ This initiative pre-dated *Mission-Shaped Church*, and was intended as encouragement that there was not a singular template for church growth. Obviously, these condensed reports reflect the perspective of the individual authors, and are concerned to record and disseminate noteworthy and innovative examples of mission and provision in order to promote evangelism, but their framing of hospitality, contemporaneous with the publication and adoption of the ‘mission-shaped’ strategy, is a useful source for my contention of the inadequacy of the conceptualisation of hospitality. In the vignettes contained in these fifty-six booklets, there are the remarks which might be expected on hospitality in the welcome given to the investigator, hospitality as a personal quality, or hospitality as a sign of spiritual maturity and self-knowledge.² There is mention of the ‘remedial hospitality’ offered by the Northumbria Community to those who have dropped out of church, and hospitality is also mentioned as a mark of maturity for their so-called ‘new monastic’ intentional community, which takes inspiration from the monastic hospitality of the past.³ Benedictine hospitality is alluded to in the booklet on the A Rocha communities built around conservation,⁴ but, as I develop in Chapter 4 on practices that contribute

¹ Church of England, Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 104, 107.

² George Lings, *Eternity: The Beginning*, Encounters on the Edge, no. 4 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 1999), 3; George Lings, *Across a Threshold: A Family of Rural Church Plants*, Encounters on the Edge, no. 42 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 2009), 3; George Lings, *Christ Church Bridlington: Mission-Shaped Thinking in a Larger Church*, Encounters on the Edge, no. 47 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 2010), 7; Claire Dalpra, *The Cost of Community: Issues of Maturity*, Encounters on the Edge, no. 38 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 2008), 4–7.

to hospitality, and Chapter 7 on potential futures for the Church, hospitality can also be sought through ecological awareness. A description is given of a network of ‘mini-churches’, which began from a Bible study for international students by former international students, that is based upon the questionable triad of the ‘three Rs: Rice, Relationships and Rescue’, which are seen as emblematic of hospitality.⁵ Importantly, the difficulties of domestic hospitality are adduced twice.⁶ More unambiguous mentions of meals come in the statement regarding ‘two symbiotic relationships of hospitality: genuine relationships and good food’,⁷ illustrated in the example from another booklet of the relationships between mothers who held a monthly ‘prayer breakfast’ which led to a school-based church.⁸ Lings also makes reference to the hospitality of a building,⁹ but this is more to do with ambience than disabled-access.

³ George Lings, *Northumbria Community: Matching Monastery and Mission*, Encounters on the Edge, no. 29 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 2006), 26; Claire Dalpra, *The Cost of Community*, 6–7.

⁴ George Lings, *A Rocha: Christians, Conservation and the Community*, Encounters on the Edge, no. 26 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 2005), 19.

⁵ George Lings, *DNA Networks: Open Community Centred on Jesus*, Encounters on the Edge, no. 51 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 2011), 7, italics omitted. ‘Rescue’ could be unabashed crucicentric evangelicalism, or simply aid with culture-shock, but it could also signal an internalised sense of cultural inferiority stemming from colonialism.

⁶ George Lings, *Rural Cell Church: A New Wayside Flower*, Encounters on the Edge, no. 28 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 2005), 23; George Lings, *Dynasty or Diversity? The HTB Family of Churches*, Encounters on the Edge, no. 15 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 2002), 14, 16.

⁷ George Lings, *OASIS: Work in Progress*, Encounters on the Edge, no. 24 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 2004), 25, bold omitted.

⁸ George Lings, *Thirst: Go to a Place Neither of You Have Been Before*, Encounters on the Edge, no. 55 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 2012), 7–8.

⁹ George Lings, *A Short Intermission: How Can Church Be Expressed Within the Arts?* Encounters on the Edge, no. 25 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 2005), 13, 25; George Lings, *Reading the Signs*, Encounters on the Edge, no. 21 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 2004), 20. Cf. Robitscher’s assertion: ‘The hospitality expressed in the architecture of sacred space is really a sacrament (outward sign) of the hospitality of the people who worship there’ (Jan B. Robitscher, “Through Glasses Darkly: Discovering a Liturgical Place,” in *Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Christian Practice*, ed. Nancy L. Eiesland and Don E. Saliers (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 148). For this to be true, there has to be cognisance of the reality of Garland-Thomson’s observation: ‘The built and arranged space through which we navigate our lives tends to offer fits to majority bodies and functioning and create misfits with minority forms of embodiment, such as people with disabilities’ (Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “Misfits: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept,” *Hypatia* 26, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 594. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.2011.01206.x). Thus, Jacobs is compelled to question the ‘rhetoric of hospitality’; she calls for the status quo to be questioned, and a complete rethink of worship spaces and practices, so that disabled people can be fully accommodated rather than being ‘permanent guests’ (Naomi Lawson Jacobs, “The Upside-Down Kingdom of God: A Disabilities Studies Perspective on Disabled People’s Experiences in Churches and Theologies of Disability,” PhD thesis (SOAS University of London, 2019), 98–100, 203. <http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/32204>).

In booklet 45, *The X Factor Within*, ‘“extravagant hospitality”’ in the context of a café is characterised as ‘“warmth, welcome, acceptance and service”’, which could be seen as hyperbolic, but does take in some of the qualities that I am seeking to promote.¹⁰ After a promising mention of Trinitarian hospitality, Lings proceeds to write about café church thus: ‘I do not believe that coffee makes it easier to follow Jesus, but café has a part to play in putting eating together firmly back into the pattern of discipleship’,¹¹ and this conjunction of food and Trinity begins to approach my conceptualisation of hospitality.¹² As far as discipleship goes, Kim identifies the dichotomy between ‘discipleship-as-spirituality’ and ‘discipleship-as-mission’, and in this thesis I show how hospitality can be present in both, and represent both understandings, although in this instance, Lings is obviously referring to the latter.¹³ Thus, in Lings’ view, the church that convenes as a café once a month, in place of the morning service, in order to serve the community by providing a free breakfast, is seen as offering ‘real hospitality’, because in his terms, it does not expect ‘middle class’ reciprocity.¹⁴ However, I contend that café can be a misnomer, because it suggests asynchronous paid-for eating, as in the example of another church which operates a café during the week, but also offers social activities and group-support.¹⁵ More restrainedly, Lings characterises the innovative Mass held in a supermarket before opening-hours, while intending shoppers breakfasted in the already-open café, merely as an example of ‘eucharistic hospitality’.¹⁶ Lings’ most imaginative conceptual leap, in a study of the redevelopment of the church-site and the development of town-wide community projects and services in a working-class

¹⁰ Richard Seel (no details given), cited in George Lings, *The X Factor Within: Rural Café Church*, Encounters on the Edge, no. 45 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 2010), 8.

¹¹ George Lings, *Living Proof: A New Way of Being Church?* Encounters on the Edge, no. 1 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 1999), 23, bold omitted.

¹² See George Lings, *Reproducing Churches* (Abingdon: BRF, 2017), 88. See section 1.2, p. 26.

¹³ Sebastian Kim, “Missionary Discipleship: Being Called and Being Sent,” in *The Meanings of Discipleship: Being Disciples Then and Now*, ed. Andrew Hayes and Stephen Cherry (London: SCM Press, 2021), 124.

¹⁴ George Lings, *Café Church 2: Double Jesus with Cream and Sugar?* Encounters on the Edge, no. 34 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 2007), 12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 17–18.

¹⁶ George Lings, *Mass Planting: Learning from Catholic Evangelism*, Encounters on the Edge, no. 16 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 2002), 11.

community, is to invoke the Cistercians in order to make two claims which draw upon hospitality as an ‘inherent monastic virtue’: the first, about redeeming the land, co-inheres with the second: ‘Liberation of people is within the best monastic tradition’.¹⁷

These scant mentions of hospitality serve merely to tantalise. Given the assumptions of many people when the word hospitality is mentioned in church circles, and despite some of the foregoing examples, it must be emphasised from the beginning that hospitality is more than coffee (even the refined option of cappuccino and labyrinths envisioned by Pete Ward in *Liquid Church* in 2002).¹⁸ Bradshaw attributes the provision of ‘watery instant coffee’ after services as a residual legacy of the Parish Communion movement of the early-twentieth century, which advocated the practice of fasting before Communion, so the serving of a parish breakfast supported abstinence before reception.¹⁹ Thus, the quest to move beyond the inevitable and exiguous coffee, even Fair Trade coffee, in the discussion of hospitality in church—valuable though the serving of refreshments during, or after services, in cafés or at coffee mornings, undoubtedly is—comes up against an inadequate understanding and articulation of hospitality. In a chapter of a book on re-imagining priesthood in the Church of England, and a section enticingly entitled ‘Refreshment’, Collins converses

¹⁷ Lings, *Christ Church Bridlington*, 11, bold omitted. I should declare an interest at this juncture, as Christ Church is my home church. I will examine the redemptive use of glebe and church land further in Chapter 7, section 2.2, pp. 302–3.

¹⁸ Pete Ward, *Liquid Church*, 97.

¹⁹ Paul F. Bradshaw, “Historical Research and Modern Anglican Worship,” in *Grasping the Heel of Heaven: Liturgy, Leadership and Ministry in Today’s Church*, ed. Aidan Platten (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2018), 42. The reaction against the tokenistic near-undrinkable hot drink is implicit in the following account from another Encounters on the Edge booklet: Lings is invited to the Antipodes, and the church he reports on sees the offer of ‘quality filter coffee and home made cakes’ after the service as important to hospitality (George Lings, *Simpler Church: Where Time is at a Premium*, Encounters on the Edge, no. 32 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 2006), 18). Even though Lings comments favourably on the preceding discussion which ‘modelled openness, honesty, and some vulnerability’, the fact that he fails to acknowledge this interaction as part of hospitality makes my overall point of a limited understanding of hospitality (Lings, *Simpler Church*, 18, bold omitted). (I have placed these examples in a footnote because they require noting, even though they fall outside the English examples I am using to establish a baseline.) Further to the quality of beverages and social intercourse, Lings observes in the booklet on Messy Church that ‘fellowship need not mean bad coffee and artificial conversations’ (George Lings, *Messy Church: Ideal for All Ages?* Encounters on the Edge, no. 46 (Sheffield: Church Army, The Sheffield Centre, 2010), 8). Messy Church is discussed at length in Chapter 6, so I make no further comment on content or presentation here.

with her fellow author about the ‘church together’ in a place functioning as a ‘kind of cultural pedagogy of formation’, citing practices of Christian pilgrimage and spirituality, and making reference to God’s abundance and environmental stewardship, and spiritual disciplines including listening, but without any overt mention of hospitality.²⁰ By contrast, in his book *Dethroning Mammon: Making Money Serve Grace*, Justin Welby shared the mission statement of a church he led before becoming the Archbishop of Canterbury: ‘more parties, less [sic] meetings’, but this commendable aspiration has found no correlate at the level of the national identity of the Church.²¹ Therefore, in the popular understanding, hospitality in mission is identified primarily with the Alpha Course and Messy Church, as though they hold the prerogative for being hospitable, thus obviating the need for more widespread reflection on hospitality as an ecclesial practice and virtue. Having clarified my usage of hospitality, and justified my investigation, I will now examine the conceptual underpinning for mentions of hospitality in the literature of missiology and spirituality.

1.1. Hospitality and evangelism

Mission-Shaped Church uses the tersely monosyllabic ‘IN . . . UP . . . OUT . . . OF’ to stand for the defining ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’ of the Nicene Creed, but importantly for my account of hospitality, Moynagh complicates this condensed formula thus:

However, the language is unfortunate. It is directional rather than relational. Worse, in terms of UP and OUT, it is unidirectional, whereas the relationships flow in two directions. The church does not only reach up to God, God reaches down to the church (if we can think

²⁰ Cheryl Collins and Jessica Martin, “The Priest Attends Seven Village Fetes: Multi-Parish Ministry,” in *For God’s Sake: Re-Imagining Priesthood and Prayer in a Changing Church*, ed. Jessica Martin and Sarah Coakley (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2016), 30.

²¹ Justin Welby, *Dethroning Mammon: Making Money Serve Grace* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 81. In a similar vein, speaking from within the Methodist church, Bhogal comments: ‘We’ve taken the fun out by focusing on meeting and not on eating’ (Inderjit Bhogal, *A Table for All: A Challenge to Church and Nation*, rev. ed. (Sheffield: Penistone Publications, 2000), 15). However, he cautions that God ‘will only prepare a table in order to celebrate where there is freedom from oppression, even if that means providing a table in the wilderness. There can be no party when there is oppression’ (Bhogal, *A Table for All*, 30).

in such terms). Nor does the church merely go out into the world. It also receives from the world.²²

Nevertheless, parallels can be seen with Nouwen's journey of inner transformation leading to outward engagement for the individual Christian,²³ or the spirituality of the missionary congregations foreseen by Robert Warren in 1995,²⁴ which anticipated and influenced the 'mission-shaped' agenda. Theologian Daniel Hardy describes the four credal 'marks' as '*practical norms*' which are 'performed through practices such as common worship, discipline, virtuous living, forgiveness and reconciliation, mutual compassion, care for the oppressed etc'.²⁵ Hospitality, as I am conceiving it, is included in many elements of these named practices, but also inheres in the normative assumptions of his et cetera, as is evident from his conclusion: 'Hence, *faith* in Jesus Christ takes the form of certain practices of inter-human life, which in turn constitute a distinctive kind of society whose missionary purpose is the fulfilment of all social life – in anticipation of the kingdom of God'.²⁶ As I will show through discussion of hospitality and lament, both spiritual and ecological, and hospitality as inclusion, hospitality is situated in the realities of life, but is inextricably linked with future consummation.

South African missiologist David Bosch identified the relational shift in postmodernity, but his seminal late-twentieth-century text on mission contains only one indexed reference to hospitality, which relates to Paul urging believers that they should show hospitality beyond the local *ekklēsia*,²⁷ whereas, within two decades, the neologistic 'missional' church in America would assert hospitality as a

²² Church of England, Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 99, bold omitted; Michael Moynagh, *Church in Life: Innovation, Mission and Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 2017), 241, capitals in original. As I will demonstrate in this thesis, my usage of hospitality explicitly addresses the deficiencies which Moynagh identifies.

²³ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*.

²⁴ Robert Warren, *Building Missionary Congregations: Towards a Post-Modern Way of Being Church*, GS Misc 446, Board of Mission Occasional Paper, no. 4 (London: Church Information Office, 1995).

²⁵ Daniel W. Hardy, *Finding the Church: The Dynamic Truth of Anglicanism* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 29, emphasis in original.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 166. Obviously, I realise that the scholarly apparatus is independent of the author's text, but the point I am making remains valid.

characteristic.²⁸ Thus, hospitality is now advocated as a communal and ecclesial practice in postmodernity as an alternative to traditional methods of evangelism by scholars, church leaders, and consultants.²⁹ Further to my characterisation of hospitality, Moynagh predicts that a ‘*serv-ing-first journey*’, which starts with listening, ‘is likely to become the missional method of choice for witnessing communities in the twenty-first century’.³⁰ In an alternative account of emerging evangelism in postmodernity, Finney puts forward the attractions of mystery and the ‘festive hospitality’ of God.³¹ This indirectly supports Drane on how the church embraced rationality and efficiency, and became ‘McDonaldized’ and distanced from society, although Drane calls for the recovery of embodied practices of worship and evangelism through dance and mime, as one response.³² Ironically, notwithstanding his over-ruling comparison between impersonal fast-food service and a sociofugal church, he fails to consider Christian hospitality, despite its meeting of bodily and spiritual needs. However, in 2008 he identified culturally-inclusive ‘intentional hospitality’ as a mark of maturity for Fresh Expressions.³³ So, in the same year, in an essay on the essence of the Church, Atkins asserts confidently: ‘Nearly all fresh expressions take seriously Christian hospitality as a defining practice’, without feeling

²⁸ Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church: What It is, Why It Matters, How to Become One*, Allelon Missional (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009).

²⁹ See, for example, Michael Moynagh, *Being Church, Doing Life: Creating Gospel Communities Where Life Happens* (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2014); Alan Kreider and Eleanor Kreider, *Worship and Mission After Christendom*, After Christendom (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2011); Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (London: SPCK, 2006); Stuart Murray, *Church After Christendom*, After Christendom (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004).

³⁰ Moynagh, *Being Church, Doing Life*, 147, emphasis in original. More recently, for would-be church planters and pioneers, the primacy of ‘serving-first’ has evolved into ‘loving-first’, which may be an attempt to deflect claims of paternalism, but that change does not invalidate the claim that I am making in this thesis about the demotion of hospitality (Church of England, *Greenhouse: Designing, Growing and Cultivating Fresh Expressions*, Summary for dioceses (London: Church of England, 2020), 2–3. https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/8pp%20Greenhouse%20Summary_Low%20Res.pdf).

³¹ John Finney, *Emerging Evangelism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004).

³² John William Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church: Spirituality, Creativity and the Future of the Church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000).

³³ John Drane, “What Does Maturity in the Emerging Church Look Like?” in *Mission-Shaped Questions: Defining Issues for Today’s Church*, ed. Steven Croft, Explorations (London: Church House Publishing, 2008), 98.

the need to provide further evidence.³⁴ A parallel development to the emergence of evangelistic hospitality has seen the doctrine of the Trinity used to give impetus to the mission of the Church, and it is divine hospitality that I discuss next.

1.2. Hospitality and Trinity

Thus, in 2002 Ward made the observation: ‘The idea of mission and worship as the Trinitarian dance of God is growing in popularity and significance in theological circles’, although he elsewhere draws on Healy’s notion of ‘“blueprint ecclesiologies” ’ which critique ‘ “ideal ecclesiology” ’.³⁵ Indeed, Harvey transposes that selfsame concept of *perichoresis* to the (then) ‘mixed economy’ of the Church of England to make a plea for the mission-potential of a playful celebration of the co-existence of Fresh Expressions and inherited church.³⁶ Mobsby and Berry, meanwhile, propose God as ‘humble community’ to declare: ‘The Trinity [i]s a radically mutual community, a community of the meal table, not the boardroom table!’, in their exploration of *perichoresis* as a basis for the new monastic community.³⁷ More substantively, in his recapitulation of monastic virtues, Mobsby uses Zizioulas from the Orthodox tradition, and the work of Volf to propound a perichoretic understanding of community and hospitality.³⁸ However, MacDougall prudently enjoins

³⁴ Martyn Atkins, “What is the Essence of the Church?” in *Mission-Shaped Questions: Defining Issues for Today’s Church*, ed. Steven Croft, Explorations (London: Church House Publishing, 2008), 27.

³⁵ Pete Ward, *Liquid Church*, 54; Pete Ward, “Blueprint Ecclesiology and the Lived: Normativity as a Perilous Faithfulness,” *Ecclesial Practices* 2, no. 1 (2015): 75. doi:10.1163/22144471-00201008. Although it may be generative, the metaphor of dance is a false etymology, as Vosloo points out (Robert Vosloo, “Identity, Otherness and the Triune God: Theological Groundwork for a Christian Ethic of Hospitality,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, no. 119 (July 2004): 85). Nevertheless, Herring even considers it appropriate to ‘liberate the term *perichoresis* into secular language’, as a means of understanding the internal reality of exchanges (and disagreements) within the community of an online religion newsgroup, where posters are known only through their messages, but have never met ‘in real life’ (Debbie Herring, “Perichoresis and Praxis in Usenet,” in *Visions of the Human in Science Fiction and Cyberpunk*, ed. Marcus Leaning and Birgit Pretzch (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 37–40, here at 40. doi:10.1163/9781904710165_004).

³⁶ Lincoln Harvey, “How Serious is It Really? The Mixed Economy and the Light-Hearted Long Haul,” in *Fresh Expressions of Church and the Kingdom of God*, ed. Graham Cray, Ian Mobsby, and Aaron Kennedy, Ancient Faith, Future Mission (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012), 95–105.

³⁷ Ian Mobsby and Mark Berry, *A New Monastic Handbook* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2014), 36, 37.

³⁸ Ian Mobsby, *God Unknown: The Trinity in Contemporary Spirituality and Mission*, originally published as *The Becoming of G–d* by YTC Press, 2008 (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012). See Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, Sacra Doctrina: Christian Theology for a Postmodern Age (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998); John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, Contemporary

‘eschatological reticence’,³⁹ and Vanhoozer cautions: ‘Many *communio* ecclesiologies give too thin an account both of what it means to participate in the Trinity and the Trinity itself’, and concludes that a weakness of focusing on community rather than kingdom is to ‘make *communio* into an idealized Platonic form that abstracts from the actual history of the church and distracts from the church’s present conflicts and ongoing mission’.⁴⁰ Indeed, Morris rejects social Trinitarianism as a foundation for re-contextualising church, and proposes that the relationality of ‘gift-exchange’ that ‘lies at the heart’ of the Pauline metaphor of the church as the body of Christ is to be preferred.⁴¹ Her thesis requires that she expend her efforts on sustaining and elaborating her own intentionally dissonant metaphor of the church as suspension bridge, to the detriment of any discussion of gift-giving as culturally shaped.⁴² The usefulness of both hermeneutical loci is preserved in my conception of hospitality because it encompasses not only the giving and receiving of gifts, but also physical embodiment, spiritual incorporation, and the constitution of the ecclesial body, as well as the nature of God. Further to the critiques of Vanhoozer and Morris, I make a different but related assertion, namely that it is easy for pioneers such as Mobsby to advance these claims because it enables them to disassociate themselves from the

Greek Theologians, no. 4 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985). The move to derive ecclesiology from the doctrine of the Trinity is addressed by Holmes who provides a summary of Zizioulas’ position, but notes that his followers contrive to ignore the particular hierarchical ecclesiology he propounds, which insists on the maleness of clergy (Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity*, 12). Holmes gives Volf as an exception, but Volf himself produces a rival ecclesiology which relocates power within the congregation, thereby posing a fundamental question about the legitimacy of such endeavours (Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity*, 12 n. 37, 26–28). As I have already stated, the merits of particular explanatory concepts or doctrines are not germane to my argument, in this section I am merely documenting the popular adoption of *perichoresis* as a shorthand for the desire for an otherwise inexpressible vitality in community-life, which is then mapped onto understandings of hospitality and mission.

³⁹ Scott MacDougall, *More Than Communion: Imagining an Eschatological Ecclesiology*, Ecclesiological Investigations, vol. 20 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 159.

⁴⁰ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Ecclesiology as a Dogmatic Discipline,” in *T&T Clark Handbook of Ecclesiology*, ed. Kimlyn J. Bender and D. Stephen Long (London: t&tclark, 2020), 296.

⁴¹ Helen D. Morris, *Flexible Church: Being the Church in the Contemporary World* (London: SCM Press, 2019), 14–17, 71, here at 71. Cf. Brian Brock, “Theologizing Inclusion: 1 Corinthians 12 and the Politics of the Body of Christ,” *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 15, no. 4 (2011): 360. doi:10.1080/15228967.2011.620389. See Chapter 3, section 6.1, p. 161.

⁴² Helen D. Morris, *Flexible Church*, 70–71. The cultural context for gift-giving in the New Testament will be discussed in Chapter 1, section 4.1, p. 66, section 5, and section 5.1.

perceived failings of the inherited modes of church and outreach by claiming a divine mandate for innovation.

Nevertheless, in a carefully phrased opinion, George Lings, former director of the Church Army Research Unit (CARU),⁴³ and the foremost researcher on Fresh Expressions, declares:

unless and until Church is deeply and effectively community-in-mission, we shall neither follow the example of the three persons of the one Trinity nor connect well with God's world and make much impression upon it. To live out being community-in-mission, with an identity reproduced from the Trinity, in limited human imitation of them, is the primary call of the Church.⁴⁴

Thus, it remains possible to say that hospitality as an earthly practice rooted in shared humanity is mirrored in the heart of God, and so *perichoresis* is also brought to bear by Swinton in his analysis of human personhood.⁴⁵ Such bids to preserve dignity and selfhood are analogous to the intent of Volf's exploration, from an emic perspective as a Croat, of the existential threat to life and identity, and how a rhetoric of 'othering' can be overcome through an understanding of the implications of 'perichoretic covenantal embrace'.⁴⁶ Supremely, Bretherton deems the renewal of communion between God and humanity through Christ's self-giving 'an exceptional act of radical hospitality'.⁴⁷ Morisy, meanwhile, deems hospitality as 'radical' because it allows for the essential autonomy of the other.⁴⁸ Thus, a combination of Volf and Morisy's understanding of respect for the other, coupled with Lings' view of the importance of the Church's vocation to community, can enable a non-oppressive offering of

⁴³ The Church Army was established in 1882, and arose from the vision of curate Wilson Carlile: he began training 'ordinary Christian men and women' to share the gospel with those most in need; he also 'started social action initiatives, initially focused on the slums of Westminster' (Church Army, "Our History - Since 1882," para. 5. Accessed 18 October 2021, <https://churcharmy.org/who-we-are/our-history/>). The incoming Chief Executive of the Church Army claims with some justification that 'it has always been part of a Church of England mixed ecology', even before the concept existed (Pat Ashworth, "Veteran of the Mixed Ecology," *Church Times*, no. 8274 (15 October 2021): 20).

⁴⁴ Lings, *Reproducing Churches*, 88.

⁴⁵ See Chapter 3, section 5, p. 152 for Swinton on the relationship between *perichoresis* and *imago Dei*.

⁴⁶ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996).

⁴⁷ Luke Bretherton, *Resurrecting Democracy: Faith, Citizenship, and the Politics of a Common Life*, Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion and Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 415 n. 161. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139343442.

⁴⁸ Morisy, *Journeying Out*, 215.

hospitality which does not aim to erase difference. Inclusion can otherwise be perceived as problematic assimilation, but I contend that an uncoercive hospitality proceeds from needs common to all: hunger, the need for security, and the need for recognition and affirmation. Having alluded to hospitality in missional praxis and divine relationship, I will now look at its representation in popular and academic literature.

2. Hospitality, past and present

The most frequently referenced authors for the present day practice of hospitality are Catholic priest Henri Nouwen and the American scholar Christine Pohl. The titles of their respective books indicate their particular stances: Nouwen's 1976 book *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* assumes hospitality is part of the faith-development of the individual believer,⁴⁹ whereas Pohl's declared aim two decades later in *Making Room: Recovering the Practice of Christian Hospitality* is a reinstitution of hospitality, and she commends a communal approach to meeting need, citing intentional communities and multiple households.⁵⁰ Nouwen essentially takes a maturational approach to spiritual development in that hospitality is shown through increased openness to others on their own spiritual journeys,⁵¹ while Pohl is aiming to convict believers and churches for the unnoticed omission of a scriptural practice. I have already adverted to the missional literature published in the intervening years since the publication of *Making Room* which can present the practice of Christian hospitality as self-evident; this assumption could point to the success of Pohl's endeavour, but is more likely to be conceptual laziness arising from cultural complacency. Pohl insists that hospitality should not be 'a means to another end', and that such instrumentality is 'antithetical to seeing it as a way of

⁴⁹ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*.

⁵⁰ Pohl, *Making Room*. A useful supplement to Pohl's descriptive and documentary work is provided by fellow American, Amy J. Oden, who has compiled a miscellany of historical practices and institutional responses to the biblical injunction to be hospitable. See Amy G. Oden, ed., *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001).

⁵¹ Cf. the final words of Richard's book on hospitality: 'In the Kingdom of God we are all adolescents, on the way' (Lucien Richard, *Living the Hospitality of God* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000), 79).

life'.⁵² Furthermore, in *Living into Community*, she talks of how hospitality cannot be a short-term 'strategy', particularly in the presence of 'significant social or cultural differences' between would-be hosts and potential guests, but is instead proved by 'fidelity over time',⁵³ and I give a heartening example of how that faithfulness is perceived in a deprived parish in Chapter 7. Unusually, Newman does discuss distortions of hospitality, and she inveighs against an 'aesthetic hospitality' which reduces diversity and 'otherness' to a consumer experience.⁵⁴ On the whole, however, the use of hospitality in mission is seen as unobjectionable, and questions of power and privilege are not raised, and I will address this deficit in Chapters 6 and 7.

The earliest of the widely cited modern articles on hospitality is written by Donald Riddle on the transmission of the gospel in the early Church: 'Observing early Christian hospitality, venturing to look into the early Christian household, one sees a very charming, as it was a very effective, aspect of early Christian life'.⁵⁵ This sentimental view of hospitality as an historical curiosity represents a superior attitude of distancing, not merely through chronological separation, but also a lens of what could be termed a cessationist approach to the practice, as opposed to near demise from lack of reinforcement, which is the position of Pohl. Further to the romanticisation of biblical hospitality, Wright finds that Koenig appeals to what she terms the ' "desert ideal" ' ⁵⁶ in his commonly referenced study *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission*.⁵⁷ Ashworth sees Koenig's concentration in this book on the life of Jesus, Luke-Acts and the teaching of Paul as a limitation, and he calls for more work on the other synoptic gospels and

⁵² Christine D. Pohl, "Hospitality, a Practice and a Way of Life," *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 42.

⁵³ Pohl, *Living Into Community*, 168.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Newman, *Untamed Hospitality: Welcoming God and Other Strangers*, The Christian Practice of Everyday Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 32.

⁵⁵ Donald Wayne Riddle, "Early Christian Hospitality: A Factor in the Gospel Transmission," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 57, no. 2 (June 1938): 154. doi:10.2307/3259745.

⁵⁶ Rebecca Abts Wright, "Establishing Hospitality in the Old Testament: Testing the Tool of Linguistic Pragmatics," PhD dissertation (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1989), 6, Microform, UMI 9012329.

⁵⁷ John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission*, Overtures to Biblical Theology, no. 17 (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985).

the gospel of John,⁵⁸ but it should be remembered that Koenig's book was written to fit the remit of the Overtures to Biblical Theology series, published by Fortress Press. Thus, his study is written from a North American perspective and addressed primarily to an interested, but non-specialist audience, which may partially account for the lapses into Orientalism deplored by Wright, and the anachronisms regretted by Hobbs.⁵⁹ Wright's discussion of the influence of 'travel account exegesis' on historical conceptions of what she termed Old Testament hospitality was published in 1989.⁶⁰ More than a decade after she wrote, scholars such as Rogers and Hobbs would still include accounts of the Bedouin (both citing the same quotation from 1961) to justify the importance or sacredness of their cultural norms for biblical hospitality (although Hobbs equivocates about their applicability to the ancient Israelites).⁶¹ Koenig himself reverts to the 'law of desert hospitality', and appealing to 'Bedouin tradition' in *Soul Banquets: How Meals Become Mission in the Local Congregation*.⁶² More particularly, Still identifies the recurrence of the idealised nomad in the discourse of hospitality, and notes additionally how such accounts 'exclude or repress' women.⁶³ The persistence of this latent Orientalising of hospitality is invidious.

Soul Banquets was written in 2005 while much of New Orleans was still underwater in the wake of Hurricane Katrina;⁶⁴ Koenig gives the example of St Paul's Chapel, adjacent to the site of the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New

⁵⁸ H. Mark Ashworth, "Hospitality as an Informing Image for the Christian Community: A Study in Theological Ethics," PhD dissertation (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 1997), 190–91, Microform, UMI 9734352.

⁵⁹ T. R. Hobbs, "Hospitality in the First Testament and the 'Teleological Fallacy'," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 26, no. 1 (September 2001): 21–22 n. 65. doi:10.1177/030908920102600101.

⁶⁰ Rebecca Abts Wright, "Establishing Hospitality in the Old Testament," 1–52.

⁶¹ Robert De Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1961), 10, cited in T. J. Rogers, "Shaking the Dust Off the Markan Mission Discourse," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27, no. 2 (December 2004): 171. doi:10.1177/0142064X0402700203; Robert De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, trans. J. McHugh (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), 10, cited in Hobbs, "Hospitality in the First Testament," 4. See also David B. Gowler, "Hospitality and Characterization in Luke 11:37–54: A Socio-Narratological Approach," *Semeia* 64 (1993): 228.

⁶² John Koenig, *Soul Banquets: How Meals Become Mission in the Local Congregation* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2007), 6, 53, 54.

⁶³ Judith Still, *Derrida and Hospitality: Theory and Practice* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 78–80.

⁶⁴ Koenig, *Soul Banquets*, 59.

York, which organised emergency feeding of rescue workers after 9/11, and held a simultaneous lunch-time Eucharist: ‘Everyday talk continued at food stations in the back of the church even as the liturgy proceeded up front around the altar’.⁶⁵ Thus in the midst of one disaster, Koenig identifies the operation of a ‘mission-meal synergy’ in response to the circumstances of another,⁶⁶ and tragically, the COVID-19 global pandemic has provided another instance for considering hospitality in relation to a catastrophic event; so, I touch upon meals in general in Chapter 3, explore the changes entailed for liturgy and established methods of mission in Chapters 4 and 6 respectively, and envisage how hospitality might be reconfigured in the future in Chapter 7.

Researchers have explored hospitality as a cultural practice in both testaments, and the influence of hospitality in antiquity on the early Church, and I will quote from these works in the forthcoming chapters, but for now, I give a brief survey of scriptural hospitality as a basis for that future retrospection. Brandner argues that the dialectic of host and guest offers an interpretive lens for the biblical narrative.⁶⁷ Hobbs is more cautious in his exposure of the ‘teleological fallacy’ in the hermeneutics of biblical hospitality: he primarily interacts with Janzen’s 1994 *Old Testament Ethics* to refute the justification for an expansion of the concept of hospitality as an ethical imperative, and he concludes that honour-based hospitality hosts the unknown traveller, but cannot be interpreted as ‘philanthropic’ action towards a generalised stranger.⁶⁸ Accordingly, Hobbs judges that ‘functional’ hospitality cannot be extrapolated into present-day ‘ethical’ and ‘romantic’ concerns for migrants which are more akin to sanctuary,⁶⁹ but this distinction cannot sensibly be sustained in reality; although except for mention of the consequences of Britain’s imperial past, I primarily discuss the stranger and familiarity, rather than the migrant

⁶⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁷ Tobias Brandner, “Hosts and Guests: Hospitality as an Emerging Paradigm in Mission,” *International Review of Mission* 102, no. 1 (April 2013): 95. doi:10.1111/irrom.12009.

⁶⁸ Hobbs, “Hospitality in the First Testament,” 7.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 7–8, 18.

and location.⁷⁰ Tellingly, the terminal biographical note to a subsequent article on hospitality by Janzen records that he ‘learned to value hospitality as a Christian practice during his refugee and immigrant years more than half a century ago, and has in recent years come to see it as a pervasive theme in the theology of both the Old and the New Testament’.⁷¹ Thus, studies of Hebraic hospitality encompass God hosting creation in Genesis, McNulty’s personification of Israel as hostess, and the fluidity of hospitality and estrangement in the life of Abraham.⁷² I will discuss in Chapters 1 and 2 how Abraham is presented as an exemplar of hospitality in the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament, but I turn now to position Jesus as the supreme example of hospitality, preparatory to discussing him as guest and host in the same two chapters.

2.1. Jesus and eating

For Byrne, ‘the whole mission of Jesus according to Luke can be summed up in the phrase “the hospitality of God”’, which he reads as the offer of acceptance and welcome.⁷³ Similarly, Hedges-Goettl asserts: ‘God went to great lengths to reveal that true holiness is hosting (creating) and gisting (receiving gratefully)’, and in Chapter 1 I will discuss the interplay of gratitude and ingratitude assumed by Jesus’ instructions to the disciples about receiving hospitality.⁷⁴ In Luke, Jesus says: ‘The

⁷⁰ Writing from a South African perspective, Louw arrestingly terms ecclesiologies centred on denominational preservation as ‘cathedral ecclesiologies’, and asks whether ecclesiologies should be ‘redesigned to feature as safe havens, shelters (xenodochia) for both fearful victims and displaced others’ (Daniël J. Louw, “On Becoming a ‘Streetwise Home-Church’ Within the Dynamics of Social Co-Existence: Reforming ‘Cathedral Ecclesiologies’ Within the Migrant Dilemma of Human Displacement,” in *The Human Dilemma of Displacement: Towards a Practical Theology and Ecclesiology of Home*, ed. Alfred R. Brunson (Cape Town: AOSIS, 2020), 2).

⁷¹ Walter Janzen, “Biblical Theology of Hospitality,” *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 15.

⁷² John Navone, “Divine and Human Hospitality,” *New Blackfriars* 85, no. 997 (May 2004): 329, 331. doi:10.1111/j.1741-2005.2004.00034.x; Janzen, “Biblical Theology of Hospitality,” 5; Tracy McNulty, *The Hostess: Hospitality, Femininity and the Expropriation of Identity* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007). McNulty identifies Abraham’s dual status in the Bible as the first-named stranger, and the first-named host (McNulty, *The Hostess*, 25).

⁷³ Brendan J. Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of St. Luke’s Gospel*, rev. ed. (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls, 2002), 61.

⁷⁴ Barbara J. Hedges-Goettl, “Thinking Theologically About Inclusion: Disability, Imago Dei and the Body of Christ,” *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 6, no. 4 (2002): 26. doi:10.1300/J095v06n04_02.

Son of Man has come eating and drinking’, and for his critics, the accusation of gluttony and drunkenness takes precedence over his questionable choice of table companions (Luke 7:34, cf. Matt. 11:19). Welton has shown extensively how it is not satiety and fullness that are censured in the Hebrew Bible, but the improper reception of Yahweh’s blessings, and consequent forgetfulness;⁷⁵ so, this reference to the law of the rebellious son (Deut. 21:18–21) should be read as an imputation of ‘deviant’ and idolatrous consumption, not in reference to excessive consumption of food and alcohol as a sin.⁷⁶ Taking Welton’s examination of diet into account, and given that, as Chester points out, Jesus epitomises the obedient son (who paradoxically dies the Deuteronomic death of the rebellious son),⁷⁷ Jesus’ petition for daily bread (Matt. 6:11; Luke 11:3) can then be viewed in a more informed manner.⁷⁸ By contrast, Jung writes on the rote saying of a blessing at table nowadays, and comments, in an inelegant rendering of the incarnation: ‘We are not conscious of God’s graciousness to us and the way Jesus Christ became an eater like us’.⁷⁹ Sawicki rightly points out that the proof of the kingdom which Jesus foretold lies in the hunger of the resurrected Jesus, as at the Last Supper he declares that he will not eat again until the coming of the kingdom.⁸⁰ Thus, I observe that in Revelation, the final book of the New Testament, the Christ in John’s vision promises to come in and eat with anyone who responds to him knocking on the door (Rev. 3:20). The significance of crossing the threshold within Greco-Roman hospitality will become clear in Chapter 1 through discussion of Jesus’ own teaching on hospitable reception, and Peter’s meeting with

⁷⁵ Rebekah Welton, *‘He is a Glutton and a Drunkard’: Deviant Consumption in the Hebrew Bible*, Biblical Interpretation Series, vol. 183 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 153–80.

⁷⁶ Welton, *‘He is a Glutton and a Drunkard’*, 289–92.

⁷⁷ Chester, *A Meal with Jesus*, 43.

⁷⁸ McGowan writes: ‘Most of the nutritional needs of most inhabitants of the ancient Roman world seem to have been met by cereal grains, usually in the form of bread, but also in pastes and porridges’ (Andrew McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists: Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 38).

⁷⁹ L. Shannon Jung, *Food for Life: The Spirituality and Ethics of Eating* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 11–12.

⁸⁰ Marianne Sawicki, ‘Recognizing the Risen Lord,’ *Theology Today* 44, no. 4 (January 1988): 447–48. doi:10.1177/004057368804400404.

the servants of Cornelius, and then with Cornelius and his wider household.⁸¹

Wright sees Jesus' 'symbolic praxis' of 'feasting with his followers, and of weaving stories around this practice' as evoking the anticipated Messianic banquet.⁸² Bretherton, meanwhile, interprets feasting and fasting as the 'sacramental enactment of hospitality' because 'feasting embodies a proleptic disclosure of the eschaton, while fasting ensures the eschatological tension is held'.⁸³ Eschatological hospitality in the presence of God will be a consummation of all the 'breakings of bread' which were a fragment and foreshadowing of the ultimate feast. According to Lucien Richard, hospitality is 'marked by eschatology. The Kingdom of God becomes a household for the strangers, where strangers, while still strangers, are no longer outcasts'.⁸⁴ The fact that Jesus dined with sinners should not therefore be used to categorise and define guests; Pohl calls for equality rather than condescension or objectification.⁸⁵ I argue in consequence that the corporate practice of Christian hospitality provides an interpretive heuristic to assess the practices of a Church that seeks to follow and emulate Jesus: in short, who is included, and who is excluded? It is through this necessary process of internal examination that I develop a more sustainable concept of hospitality than the cure-all derided by Reddie, which is insultingly insufficient to remedy endemic ills.

⁸¹ In 2020, the repeated extension of the seemingly interminable quarantine of lockdown and social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, beyond the nominative and suitably Lenten forty days, reconfigured hospitality into a suspended liminal state of *not* crossing a physical threshold. The occasion of lingual homage paid by Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa is an extraordinary aesthetic response to a usually unremarked spatial transition: 'Many years ago when visiting the DL James House in Carmel, California, designed by Charles and Henry Greene, I felt compelled to kneel and touch the delicately shining white marble threshold of the front door with my tongue' (Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, 3rd ed. (Chichester: Wiley, 2012), 63–64).

⁸² N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, rev. ed., reprint, 1996, Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 2 (London: SPCK, 2015), 532.

⁸³ Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness Amid Moral Diversity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2006), 144.

⁸⁴ Richard, *Living the Hospitality of God*, 37.

⁸⁵ Pohl, *Making Room*, 74.

3. Hospitality and justice

Accordingly, I propose that hospitality is deeply practical and deeply spiritual: acts of service, and inclusive feasting in the here and now earth the future heavenly feast in the creation of a site where memories are made, neighbours meet, and tears have their place, even as they are wiped away. Thus, hospitality becomes a matter of social justice which does not abdicate responsibility in the present by locating *all* resolution in a transcendent future. Eating inevitably has ethical repercussions, as Winter observes: ‘Putting a meal on the table can be a microcosmic reminder that a world waits to be fed’.⁸⁶ I argue that hospitality provides a means of community organisation, and cross-cultural, mixed ability, and intergenerational encounter; it can redress alienation and exclusion, and is shown through scalable practices of welcome which promote accessibility and participation. Hospitality today is not primarily a means of reinforcing status, or an obligation of the powerful, as in the culture which surrounded the early Church, and safeguarding of host and guest is more to the fore when considering hospitality. This need for protection can be deduced from Wroblewski’s *The Limits of Hospitality*, which is an oddly-pitched and exploitative amalgam of lengthy anecdotes, biography, and theological reflection on ill-considered personal hospitality and exemplary communal hospitality.⁸⁷ Therefore, Pohl’s views on safety and risk-reduction are no surprise: ‘Finding and creating threshold places is important for contemporary expressions of hospitality’.⁸⁸ Thus, she is of the opinion: ‘Meals shared together in church provide opportunities to sustain relationships and build new ones. They establish a space that is personal without being private, an excellent setting in which to begin friendships with strangers’.⁸⁹ For Pohl, corporate

⁸⁶ Miriam Therese Winter, *Eucharist with a Small ‘e’* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 123.

⁸⁷ Jessica Wroblewski, *The Limits of Hospitality* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012). Although she changes the names in her accounts, and reflects on her own shortcomings and naivety, she mentions identifiable locations, and depicts individuals in humiliating detail, which would seem to me to be an invasion of the privacy of those concerned, and to suggest the requirement for another limit within hospitality, that of appropriate confidentiality and respect. She seeks consent from organisations, but not from her apparently unwitting subjects (Wroblewski, *The Limits of Hospitality*, 8).

⁸⁸ Pohl, *Making Room*, 95.

⁸⁹ Pohl, “Hospitality, a Practice and a Way of Life,” 38.

Christian hospitality presupposes a church building, but it should be emphasised that hospitality is not only a welcome ‘into’ a space or place of relationality, but the believer actualising and remembering the welcome already received from God.

Within this process of meeting, listening, storytelling, and provision of space or sustenance as inclusive acts redefine the ‘other’ and value strangers and neighbours. Pohl talks of hospitable welcome involving ‘attentive listening and a mutual sharing of lives and life stories’.⁹⁰ Listening, attentiveness, and the hearing and telling of stories are also part of presence and outreach.⁹¹ In a disruption of hierarchy, Barrett and Harley envisage priests as ‘story-gatherers’,⁹² but this is a bid to give agency to the laity by valuing their testimony, rather than a recognition that eliciting and listening to stories is an hospitable act. Van Ommen, meanwhile, brings to the fore the need for the convergence of experience and the liturgy, so that our ‘small stories’ are incorporated in the greater re-telling.⁹³ Storytelling is intrinsic to biblical hospitality, as Peter’s multiple repetitions of his vision demonstrate,⁹⁴ but words are not necessarily required: the receipt of the Spirit precludes further discussion in the house of Cornelius, and the presence of God tells its own story, as in Jill Harshaw’s

⁹⁰ Pohl, *Making Room*, 13.

⁹¹ Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*; Al Barrett, “Interrupting the Church’s Flow: Hearing ‘Other’ Voices on an Outer Urban Estate,” *Practical Theology* 11, no. 1 (March 2018): 79–92. doi:10.1080/1756073X.2017.1416221; Cathy Ross, “Pioneering Missiologies: Seeing Afresh,” in *The Pioneer Gift: Explorations in Mission*, ed. Jonny Baker and Cathy Ross (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2014), 20–38; Catherine Duce, “Church-Based Work with the Homeless: A Theological Exploration of the Practices of Hospitality,” *Practical Theology* 6, no. 1 (April 2013): 87–103. doi:10.1179/prt.6.1.3477ln70443k05l8; Samuel Wells and Sarah Coakley, eds., *Praying for England: Priestly Presence in Contemporary Culture* (London: Continuum, 2008); Arthur Sutherland, *I Was a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006); Steven Croft, “Transforming Evangelism,” in *Evangelism in a Spiritual Age: Communicating Faith in a Changing Culture*, Steven Croft, et al., Explorations (London: Church House Publishing, 2005), 126–47; Morisy, *Journeying Out*; John William Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church*.

⁹² Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*, 163, subtitle, italics omitted.

⁹³ Gerard Lukken, *Rituals in Abundance: Critical Reflections on the Place, Form and Identity of Christian Ritual in Our Culture* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 337, cited in Armand Léon van Ommen, *Suffering in Worship: Anglican Liturgy in Relation to Stories of Suffering People*, Liturgy, Worship and Society (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 1, 122–23. These ‘small stories’ should be distinguished from the homiletic use of stories in Sedmak’s ‘little theologies’ (Clemens Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology: A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity*, Faith and Cultures (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 154–56).

⁹⁴ See Chapter 1, section 4.1.

poignant relation of episodes from the life of her non-verbal daughter, Rebecca.⁹⁵ In the context of discussing the development of craft-skills, Ingold talks of storytelling as the passing on of knowledge wherein the hearers can learn to recognise the eponymous ‘tell’.⁹⁶ Thus, Maud and van Ommen perform a deliberate reversal by highlighting the deficient welcome which results from the inability of the neurotypical to adequately read the facial expressions and body-language of those who are neurodivergent.⁹⁷ Yergeau expands upon autistic communication without words: ‘Disclosures are more than voluntary verbalizations; neuroqueer bodyminds can make themselves known with the flapping of hand, the averting of gaze, the limping of wrist’.⁹⁸ With regard to continuity of self and dementia, Garland-Thomson finds an applicable concept in the work of a medieval historian: ‘Bynum’s concept of shape carrying story introduces temporality into encounters between the body and the world, in a narrative that by definition connects moments in space into a coherent form that we call story’.⁹⁹ Every person therefore can be seen as a storied self, regardless of language ability, and in Chapter 4 I will discuss the importance of this understanding for those living with dementia. My proposal is that these individual and corporate acts of storying constitute hospitable ecclesial practice as the stigmatised, overlooked, and

⁹⁵ See Chapter 3, section 2, p. 137. There is truth in Swinton’s observation: ‘In a word-oriented theology, the wordless find it difficult to secure a place’ (John Swinton, “Foreword,” in *Kinship in the Household of God: Towards a Practical Theology of Belonging and Spiritual Care of People with Profound Autism*, Cynthia Tam (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2021), vii). Lees expands upon how this logocentrism plays out: ‘For the fluent interpreter in the wordy church speaking to the verbal society, Jesus as the central figure of the gospels is too often portrayed as one who comes to “restore speech to the speechless” rather than challenge the injustice of the ongoing oppression of those who struggle in and out of silence’ (Janet Lees, “Lazarus, Come Out! How Contextual Bible Study Can Empower the Disabled,” in *Disability, Society and Theology: Voices from Africa*, ed. Samuel Kabue, et al. (Limuru, Kenya: Zapf Chancery, 2011), 100).

⁹⁶ Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 110.

⁹⁷ Denise Maud and Armand Léon van Ommen, “The Lockdown of Faces: COVID-19, Autism and the Opportunity of New Social Constructions,” *Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal* 4, no. 2 (Summer 2020): 220. <https://www.scotland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2020-42-SEI-Journal-Summer.pdf>. Brock speaks of learning to ‘hear bodily gestures as spoken words’ (Brock, *Wondrously Wounded*, 52).

⁹⁸ Melanie Yergeau, *Authoring Autism: On Rhetoric and Neurological Queerness*, Thought in the Act (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 183. From an emic perspective, she earlier posits the potential of a repertoire of sound and movement as modes of communication: ‘Embodied communicative forms—including the echo, the tic, the stim, the rocking body, the twirl—represent linguistic and cultural motions that pose possibility for autistics’ (Yergeau, *Authoring Autism*, 181).

⁹⁹ Garland-Thomson, “Misfits,” 596.

those who usually go unheard are encountered informally, or liturgically.¹⁰⁰

Writing in 2002, from an American context, Weiss-Block draws upon Schillebeeckx to invite her readers to emulate Jesus and be ‘copious hosts’, and suggests the need for the church to go beyond legally mandated access and inclusion for disabled people.¹⁰¹ She defines this obligation to hosting and inclusion further: ‘We are called, through our baptism, to be his co-hosts. Co-hosting the party to bring about the kingdom of God, in the here and now is all about making room for the “other”’.¹⁰² However, her claim that baptism confers a vocation is inconsistent with her assumption of disability as ‘other’, and she thereby fails to recognise that people with disabilities can be welcomers themselves, and create a welcoming space by their very presence. Indeed, Memmott makes a plausible claim that there is a link between church growth and inclusivity, and while stating that it is not possible to be sure of the correlation, she asserts: ‘a church that is welcoming for autistic people is also welcoming for everyone else’.¹⁰³ From her own research into disabled people’s experience of church, Jacobs observes that individualistic approaches to disability-inclusion are insufficient, and often self-interested, and she argues for structural change:

When theologies of friendship and welcome do not also address the social contexts of exclusion experienced by disabled people, they, together with churches that draw on this theology, risk . . . simultaneous positive rhetoric and practical exclusion.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ As novelist and activist Arunhati Roy reminds us, in an aside: ‘(We know of course there’s really no such thing as the “voiceless”. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard.)’ (Arunhati Roy, “Peace & the New Corporate Liberation Theology,” 2004 City of Sydney Peace Prize Lecture in *CPACS Occasional Papers No. 04/2* (Sydney: The Centre for Peace & Conflict Studies, 2004), 1).

¹⁰¹ Jennie Weiss Block, *Copious Hosting: A Theology of Access for People with Disabilities* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 131, 137–38. More questionably, for those who are themselves marginalised, she looks to identification with the Holy Spirit as ‘the marginalized member of the Trinity’, which does not cohere with her argument for a ‘multivalent’ Spirit who acts as advocate (Weiss Block, *Copious Hosting*, 138–41, here at 139). Marginalisation is surely more evident in the prophecy of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53, traditionally applied to Jesus, and seen particularly in verse 3: ‘He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces / he was despised, and we held him of no account’ (NRSV). All quotations from the Bible, unless otherwise stated, are taken from The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

¹⁰² Weiss Block, *Copious Hosting*, 132.

¹⁰³ Ann Memmott, “Including People with Autism,” in *Making Church Accessible to All: Including*

With regard to visible change, Spies seeks recognition for people with disabilities in leadership; she is trenchant on the insufficiency of belonging for *all* people who experience marginalisation, and identifies how seeking change is perceived as a threat.¹⁰⁵

From a feminist perspective, Letty Russell construes hospitality as building community out of difference, and hence an expression of divine justice.¹⁰⁶ The discriminated-against are recognised through radical inclusion and power-reversal, which transcends gender or nationality. Russell rejects patriarchal images and structures to envision a liberative household:

To speak of ‘church in the round’ is to provide a metaphorical description of a church struggling to become a household of freedom, a community where walls have been broken down so that God’s welcome to those who hunger and thirst for justice is made clear. This unknown reality is described in terms that we have all experienced: gathering in the round, with or without tables, and experiencing the welcome of others.¹⁰⁷

She summarises: ‘*The critical principle of feminist ecclesiology is a table principle*’.¹⁰⁸ Sharing, reflection, and theology happen as ‘table talk’ around a ‘round table’; daily life takes place at the ‘kitchen table’, and those displaced by racism or other structures of exclusion are seated at the ‘welcome table’,¹⁰⁹ and can themselves welcome others. Her tabular gatherings foster connection and an embodied spirituality which reaches out to those on the margins. Womanist theologian Wil Gafney describes a ‘wild welcome table’,¹¹⁰ and Reynolds likens hospitality to

Disabled People in Church Life, Tony Phelps-Jones (Abingdon: BRF, 2013), 80.

¹⁰⁴ Jacobs, “The Upside-Down Kingdom of God,” 95–99, here at 99.

¹⁰⁵ Miriam Spies, “Making Space, Offering Voice: Leadership of People with Disabilities in God’s Mission,” *International Review of Mission* 108, no. 1 (June 2019): 35. doi:10.1111/irrom.12259.

¹⁰⁶ Letty M. Russell, *Just Hospitality: God’s Welcome in a World of Difference*, comp. and ed. J. S. Clarkson and K. S. Orr (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009).

¹⁰⁷ Letty M. Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 12.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 25, emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁹ Russell defines it thus: ‘The welcome table is part of the black church tradition. It symbolizes the communion table and every other gathering at table. At God’s welcome table those who have been denied access to the table of the rich white masters are welcomed and may welcome others as a foretaste of the final moment of full partnership with God’ (Russell, *Church in the Round*, 149).

¹¹⁰ Wil Gafney, “A Wild Welcome Table,” *Sojourners* 46, no. 8 (August 2017): 48.

jazz-improvisation,¹¹¹ but as celebratory and joyous, or exuberant and emancipatory, as these formulations of hospitality are, it should be remembered that they are hard-won and culturally-specific, arising as they do from the African-American experience of slavery, the continuing struggle for civil rights, and the ongoing fight against racism. There should be no surprise then, when the African-American scholar Arthur Sutherland asserts: ‘Hospitality is the practice by which the church stands or falls’.¹¹² Once again, Reddie diagnoses how national perceptions of the health of Christianity in Britain are distorted by ‘Whiteness’, and points out that Black churches are not in decline, adducing the comment of a friend: ‘I see many White churches now have messy church, cafe church, pub church, emerging church . . . Black people still have church church’.¹¹³ I suggest therefore, that the paucity of indigenous writing on hospitality, and the association of hospitality with evangelism within the Church of England arises not only from unacknowledged institutional racism and White privilege, but also the uneasy shame of how people are so easily excluded.

The shifting power dynamic within the host-guest relationship allows for a negotiation of identity, but the power relations within the identification and meeting of need are not without problems.¹¹⁴ Monge speaks hopefully of the ‘re-oriented gaze’

¹¹¹ Thomas E. Reynolds, “Improvising Together: Christian Solidarity and Hospitality as Jazz Performance,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 43, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 45–66. Reynolds dialogues with Begbie, who offers an illuminating account of improvisation in jazz music. The latter’s musicological exploration of structured spontaneity serves to substantiate Reynolds, as well as resourcing an understanding of embodiment, personhood and relationality, and opening up the possibility ‘for a Christology which would want to take the embodiedness of Jesus with due seriousness’ (Jeremy S. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 204–45, here at 230–31).

¹¹² Sutherland, *I Was a Stranger*, 83.

¹¹³ Anthony G. Reddie, “Now You See Me, Now You Don’t: Subjectivity, Blackness, and Difference in Practical Theology,” *Practical Theology* 11, no. 1 (March 2018): 4–5, here at 5, ellipsis in original. doi:10.1080/1756073X.2017.1404341. This cultural disparity is further highlighted by a comment made by speaker and activist Ben Lindsay in the course of a conversation with Robert Beckford. When talking of coming to faith through the Alpha Course, he noted that Black people ‘already know’ about God and the Bible (Robert Beckford, “Why Black History Matters,” University of Winchester (virtual), 19 October 2021, with Ben Lindsay).

¹¹⁴ Phyllis Tickle, “Changes and a Changeless Faith,” in *Fresh Expressions of Church and the Kingdom of God*, ed. Graham Cray, Ian Mobsby, and Aaron Kennedy, Ancient Faith, Future Mission (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012), 59–76; Morisy, *Journeying Out*, 25–27, 41, 83; Pete Ward, *Liquid Church*, 72–73; Pohl, *Making Room*, 74.

which turns away from self-centredness to the needs of the other;¹¹⁵ this should be contrasted with Walton's identification of the fact that within explications of *missio Dei*, seeing is a precursor to acting like Jesus, an identification which Barrett and Harley (after Harvey) consider to be problematic for those with power.¹¹⁶ However, after making due allowance for the prompting of conscience and compunction, there still remains a distinction between seeing and being seen: the experience of hypervisibility attested to by France-Williams, but also contained in Betcher's narrative of the abjection of the disabled body, demonstrate that the gaze needs to be purified.¹¹⁷

Hospitality therefore is not a neutral practice, and as the established Church, the Church of England is implicated with hegemonic power, which is why the endorsement of hospitality in published reports should be viewed with suspicion. Al Barrett, a vicar on an outer Birmingham estate, writing in 2018, enjoins the Church of England to interrupt the dominant discourse of mission from a position of privilege and be receptive to the voices and capacities of the marginalised, and he has subsequently elaborated this in *Being Interrupted*, co-authored with Ruth Harley.¹¹⁸ As already referenced, Henri Nouwen is much cited on hospitality; he sees listening and hospitality as part of a process of spiritual development which starts with the acceptance of individual aloneness, moves on to response to others, and culminates in the search for God.¹¹⁹ However, his writing cannot be disentangled from his own perspective as a Catholic priest, and the power inherent in that status. Indeed, Ogletree observes that undue elevation of the role of the host can perpetuate structural inequality, and without repentance and solidarity there is a danger of 'condescension

¹¹⁵ Claudio Monge, "Life Together: Lessons in Hospitality from Mamre," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 108. doi:10.3138/tjt.29.1.101.

¹¹⁶ Roger Walton, "Have We Got the *Missio Dei* Right?," *Epworth Review* 35, no. 3 (2008): 41; Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*, 84, 138–39. See Chapter 5, section 5.1, p. 245.

¹¹⁷ A. D. A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship*, 174; Sharon V. Betcher, *Spirit and the Politics of Disablement* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 93. For the latter, see Chapter 4, section 3, p. 191.

¹¹⁸ Al Barrett, "Interrupting the Church's Flow"; Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*.

¹¹⁹ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*.

and paternalism'.¹²⁰ According to Gittins, any would-be missionary must abdicate their status, renounce asymmetric power and seek 'reverse hospitality'.¹²¹ Morisy, in her work, shows how everyday mutuality and an unselfconscious 'oblique hospitality' enable reciprocity.¹²² Further to such exchanges, Bretherton argues that in a plural society reflexive self-conversion is part of the process of neighbourly encounter and civic engagement.¹²³ Reynolds concurs, as he speculates of encounters at the margins: 'Perhaps the centre is not "inside," but in between differences. . . . each converting to the other and becoming an other for the other'.¹²⁴ Having resettled power through renunciation of self-sufficient superiority in the encounter between human neighbours, I now transition to animals as fellow denizens of the planet.

3.1. Hospitality and ecology

In 1995 Bosch presciently proposed the importance of the environment to a future missiology of Western culture.¹²⁵ Responsibility to creation is also reiterated in the exposition of *missio Dei* and the church as 'communion-in-mission' by Bevans and Schroeder,¹²⁶ and a biblical theology of hospitality starts with Genesis for both Navone and Janzen.¹²⁷ So, Janzen characterises God as hosting all living creatures on earth by providing the trees and plants as food, and, in his opinion, the sin of Adam and Eve is a desire for unlimited control, seeking to usurp ownership rather than be guests.¹²⁸ Thus, Jennings declares: 'Racial existence came into being at the site of geographic enclosure', which relates back to the original sin of usurpation identified by Janzen, although it is only later in his argument that Jennings explicitly equates

¹²⁰ Thomas W. Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 6.

¹²¹ Anthony J. Gittins, "Beyond Hospitality? The Missionary Status and Role Revisited," *International Review of Mission* 83, no. 330 (July 1994): 413. doi:10.1111/j.1758-6631.1994.tb03413.x.

¹²² Morisy, *Journeying Out*.

¹²³ Luke Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 103.

¹²⁴ Thomas Reynolds, "A Rooted Openness: Hospitality as Christian 'Conversion' to the Other," *The Ecumenist* 46, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 16.

¹²⁵ David J. Bosch, *Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western Culture*, Christian Mission and Modern Culture (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press; Leominster: Gracewing, 1995).

¹²⁶ Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*, American Society of Missiology Series, no. 30 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).

¹²⁷ Navone, "Divine and Human Hospitality," 329, 331; Janzen, "Biblical Theology of Hospitality," 5.

¹²⁸ Janzen, "Biblical Theology of Hospitality," 5-6.

this alienation with commodification.¹²⁹ However, he proceeds to outline the ecological consequences of such a project: ‘In turn, geographic enclosure formed in us a geographic unconsciousness not only haunted by race, but also one that desensitizes us to place, to plants, animals and earth’.¹³⁰ More redemptively, McFague entertains the notion of a ‘wild space’ wherein ‘*all* really are invited to the banquet, that every creature deserves a place at table’, before expanding the household envisioned by Russell to ask a concluding question: ‘Could the wild space become the whole space—the household of planet earth where each of us takes only our share, cleans up after ourselves, and keeps the house in good repair for future dwellers?’¹³¹ In a move to prevent receipt of care being correlated with burden and stigma, Swinton sees receiving care as a created being as fulfilling the call in Genesis to care for creation.¹³² But, the current ecological and climatic crisis indicates that this interpretation may not secure the status of those requiring care, which is why Harshaw’s defence of her daughter by appeal to life within the Godhead is so important.¹³³

Drawing on Haar’s concept of ‘ecstatic dwelling’, Rigby sees in the story of Noah a ‘counter-utopian ethos of radical hospitality’ within a ‘community of more-than-human strangers dwelling together equitably in exile on the ark’.¹³⁴ Elsewhere, she summarises the precarity of this same ‘ecstatic hospitality’, in which ‘refuge is offered by a host whose own home too is unmoored and liable to be lost’.¹³⁵ I address the hospitality of the created order in Chapter 7, but Barad also envisions a dizzying prospect, far beyond the limits of this study: ‘Ethicality entails hospitality to the

¹²⁹ Willie James Jennings, “Reframing the World: Toward an Actual Christian Doctrine of Creation,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 21, no. 4 (October 2019): 390–91, here at 390.

doi:10.1111/ijst.12385.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 390.

¹³¹ Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 204, emphasis in original.

¹³² John Swinton, “What the Body Remembers: Theological Reflections on Dementia,” *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging* 26, no. 2–3 (2014): 170. doi:10.1080/15528030.2013.855966.

¹³³ See Chapter 3, section 2, p. 139, and section 3, pp. 144–45.

¹³⁴ Kate Rigby, “Noah’s Ark Revisited: (Counter-) Utopianism and (Eco-) Catastrophe,” *ARENA Journal* 31 (January 2008): 174 n. 45, 174–75.

¹³⁵ Kate Rigby, “Deep Sustainability: Ecopoetics, Enjoyment and Ecstatic Hospitality,” in *Literature and Sustainability: Concept, Text and Culture*, ed. Adeline Johns-Putra, John Parham, and Louise Squire (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 61.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1wn0s7q.10>.

stranger threaded through oneself and through all being and non/being'.¹³⁶ In his book on New Testament hospitality, Koenig expresses the opinion that 'it is surely noteworthy that the images of God's kingdom that predominate overwhelmingly in Jesus' teaching are those associated with the production of food and drink or home-like refuge for God's creatures'.¹³⁷ Given the use of 'non-human metaphors' for God,¹³⁸ Morris proposes a hopeful Trinitarian paradigm for such an inclusion:

If non-human animals might in some way be included in God's eschatological embrace alongside humans, as I have suggested, the doctrine of the Trinity provides a model for understanding the kind of existence that humans and non-humans might have together in God's presence and so provide a model for human existence on earth.¹³⁹

Arguably, therefore, hospitality as an expression of creaturely solidarity and submission to God can help redress the imperial 'Mission Christianity' of the past,¹⁴⁰ which subjected people and exploited environments,¹⁴¹ although it is not for me as a beneficiary of the existing settlement to expect others to be sanguine about the chances of ameliorating their own life-chances through a more capacious theorisation of hospitality. Having taken Reddie's contestation of hospitality as an incitement to reflect, and established the abiding relevance of hospitality for different domains of ecclesial life and Christian witness, I conclude these opening reflections by re-asserting the importance of my thesis.

4. Reconceptualising hospitality

Pun notwithstanding, hospitality is an accommodating concept that evades temporal and spatial restrictions by encompassing social and political relations; culture and cookery; ecology and eschatology; body, mind, soul and spirit; and which

¹³⁶ Karen Barad, "On Touching—the Inhuman That Therefore I Am," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 23, no. 3 (December 2012): 217. doi:10.1215/10407391-1892943.

¹³⁷ Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 27.

¹³⁸ Morris writes: 'For example, in the biblical tradition, Jesus is portrayed directly or indirectly as a "lamb" (John 1:36), or the "lion of Judah" (Rev. 5:5) or a "hen" (Matt. 23:37), while the Holy Spirit is portrayed as a "dove" (Matt. 3:16), to name just a few examples' (Wayne Morris, "I. Response to David Clough," in *Transforming Exclusion: Engaging Faith Perspectives*, ed. Hannah Bacon and Wayne Morris, with Steve Knowles (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 97).

¹³⁹ Wayne Morris, "Response to David Clough," 97–98.

¹⁴⁰ See, for example, Anthony G. Reddie, "Racial Justice for the Windrush Generation in Great Britain," *The Ecumenical Review* 72, no. 1, *Global Manifestations of Racism Today* (2020): 73–86. doi:10.1111/erev.12488.

¹⁴¹ See discussion of McLaren in Chapter 7, section 2.2, p. 303.

looks to the teleological fulfilment of ultimate communion. I intend this thesis as a provocation, but I am aware that however I position myself, or qualify my pronouncements, that it is not possible to escape implication with systemic sin or invisible cultural norms. Nevertheless, I aim to rescue hospitality from tokenism in the life of the Church through the exposure of hypocrisy and inconsistency in current usage, and through reconceptualisation of a more coherent hospitality. Indubitably, inclusive hospitality is better practised than preached or dissertated upon, but I contend that commensality is socially transformative; social relations are reconfigured through eating. Indeed, wise hospitality may be convincing in more ways than I can outline, given that the Hebrew scriptures describe how the Queen of Sheba, having heard of Solomon's wisdom, travels to meet him, and is convinced and astounded by his table, the appearance of his servants, their demeanour, and their service at table (1 Kings 10:5). In one sense, I am coming against institutional self-engrossment, and the simultaneous conceptual inanition and constriction of imagination and spirituality which impoverishes gathering and liturgy.¹⁴²

Accordingly, I am seeking to garner insights from a range of disciplines to develop an understanding of hospitality as a social, spatial, and cultural practice within and without different ecclesial configurations, and to come against reductive accounts of hospitality. I am not suggesting a regression to primitive hospitality, or hospitality as a peculiarly Anglican practice, merely searching for evidence of practices and beliefs which constitute the case for a generous definition of hospitality that moves beyond welcome or ingestion. It is my contention that there is a constellation of practices which contribute to the hospitable church, and I am proposing hospitality as an open-heartedness to God, creation, and others, which has a practical outworking in service and humility, as the stranger is renamed, and the broken-hearted and excluded are invited to play their part in the body of Christ.

¹⁴² I am thinking here particularly of the Church relying on examples from the private sector and charities to resource a renewed emphasis on welcome, without considering factors such as abuse of power, racism, and unacknowledged privilege that make the institutional Church an unwelcoming and unsafe space for many. See Chapter 5, section 2, pp. 214–17.

Ultimately, my proposal is that when hospitality is recognised and valorised it can mediate liminality, challenge discrimination and othering, and transform communities and environments. Starting from biblical precedent, my contribution is to broaden the theological and epistemological basis for discussion of hospitality in the Church beyond inherited cultural pieties evacuated of meaning, into the ethical, in order to make manifest the hospitality and inhospitality of the Church of England. This thesis, particularly in the final chapter, is searching for lodging-places in the Church where hospitality can be recognised in the giving and the receiving. The long-awaited responses to endemic racism in the Church of England recommended by the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce in *From Lament to Action*,¹⁴³ and reaction against triumphalist Christendom thinking are all fertile ground for a chastened missiology into which the pent-up desire for post-colonial connection can fit, and so my study of hospitality forms a timely and necessary intervention in debates around the future of the Church of England.

¹⁴³ Church of England, The Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce, *From Lament to Action: The Report of the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce*, by Arun Arora, et al. (Church of England, 2021), Online. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/FromLamentToAction-report.pdf>.

Chapter 1

Cultural hospitality in the Bible

Hosts, hospitality, and households

1. Hasting to welcome: Abraham and Zacchaeus (Gen. 18; Luke 19:1–10)

In this chapter I will trace the practices around offering and receiving food or shelter to find continuities and commonalities in the practice of hospitality in the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament; this is not intended as an exhaustive examination of the topic, and so I will touch only briefly on happenings in the exemplary life (and projected afterlife) of Abraham, and the lives of Jesus, the disciples and future apostles, and Paul. Mathews argues that Abraham would not voluntarily have left his homeland, his kin, and his father's house, except in obedience to God: this successive relinquishing of place, communal solidarity, and identity constituted a life-threatening separation.¹ Thus, it should be understood that the need of the traveller, and indeed the stranger, is existential rather than just a need for shelter and a meal.² However, God promises his life-giving blessing to Abraham, and to those who bless Abraham (Gen. 12:2–3a). Nevertheless, I contend that Abraham's awareness of the precarity of nomadic life is crucial to the interpretation of his hospitality in Genesis 18.

In the story of Abraham and Sarah and the three visitors, the language of haste is mentioned five times in the narrative.³ Following Rabbinic tradition, Cohen

¹ John Bell Mathews, "Hospitality and the New Testament Church: An Historical and Exegetical Study," ThD dissertation (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1965), 110–11, 111 n. 3. (I would like to thank Kate Skrebutenas, Reference Librarian, Princeton Theological Seminary for her assistance in enabling me to access this thesis.) The loss of identity entailed by his departure is also made clear by di Vito: 'Only the socially "embedded" self, identified by membership in a "father's house," is a morally intelligible agent' (Robert A. di Vito, "Old Testament Anthropology and the Construction of Personal Identity," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (April 1999): 225. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43723554>).

² Mathews, "Hospitality and the New Testament Church," 118.

³ Terence E. Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis," in *General & Old Testament Articles: Genesis; Exodus; Leviticus*, ed. Leander E. Keck, *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 463, cited in Andrew E. Arterbury, "Abraham's Hospitality

perceptively observes that given his advanced age and self-circumcision, but two days previously, his ‘agility’ in running to meet them is remarkable.⁴ The hottest part of the day is an unlikely time for travellers to appear, so his alacrity is doubly noteworthy. Zacchaeus, the hated chief toll-collector, is invited by Jesus to ‘hurry’ down from his vantage in a tree, he then hurries home, welcomes Jesus joyfully, and pledges to give money to the poor (Luke 19: 1–10).⁵ However, it is Jesus as self-invited guest, who incites his future host to descend. Nevertheless, such allusions to promptness would have set the scene for the hearers to associate Jesus’ commendation of Zacchaeus as a ‘son of Abraham’ with the latter’s hospitality.⁶ Moreover, Arterbury suggests that when Paul instructs the Roman Christians to ‘pursue hospitality’ (Rom. 12:13b), his perspective is that the ‘exemplary host’ does not wait for guests but pursues them, as Abraham is held to do by John Chrysostom and Rabbi Nathan.⁷

1.1. Abraham’s hospitality

Setting aside subsequent legendary elaboration of Abraham’s hospitality, opinions differ as to whether he knowingly entertained the Lord in this encounter in Genesis 18. For example, Bucur delineates how textual shifts in number and identity

Among Jewish and Early Christian Writers: A Tradition History of Gen 18: 1–16 and Its Relevance for the Study of New Testament,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 360.

⁴ Jeffrey M. Cohen, “Abraham’s Hospitality,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (September 2006): 69. Rabbinic tradition links this episode to the previous chapter, and has the Lord visiting Abraham on the third day after he, and all the males in his household have undergone circumcision as a sign of the covenant that he would be the father of many nations, and receive the land of Canaan. See Monge, “Life Together,” 110 n. 3. However, the timing is not clear, and this interpretation is not necessary to substantiate Abraham’s prompt welcome of the visitors.

⁵ For the distinction between tolls and taxes, and the regional differences in collection in place at the time, see Richard J. Cassidy, “Matthew 17:24–27—A Word on Civil Taxes,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (October 1979): 571–80. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43715608>. See Chapter 5, section 5.1, pp. 245–46 for the use of Zacchaeus as a contemporary exemplar.

⁶ In 2003 Arterbury asserted, ‘it would have been reasonable for Luke’s audience to surmise that Zacchaeus’s hospitable actions were responsible for making him a “son of Abraham” ’ (Arterbury, “Abraham’s Hospitality,” 374). However, he subsequently modified this stance: ‘Jesus announces “today” Zacchaeus is a “son of Abraham” ’ because the Lord, through Jesus, performs a ‘miraculous work’ in his life comparable to the conception of Isaac (Andrew E. Arterbury, “Zacchaeus: ‘A Son of Abraham?’” in *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels*, vol. 3: The Gospel of Luke, ed. Thomas R. Hatina, Library of New Testament Studies, vol. 376 (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 30–31).

⁷ Arterbury, “Abraham’s Hospitality,” 374. Safren gives further examples of rabbinic commentary on Abraham’s hospitality. See Jonathan D. Safren, “Hospitality Compared: Abraham and Lot as Hosts,” in *Universalism and Particularism at Sodom and Gomorrah: Essays in Memory of Ron Pirson*, ed. Diana Lipton, Ancient Israel and Its Literature, no. 11 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 160 n. 14.

function in the passage: ‘Thus from the “objective” perspective shared by the narrator and the reader, “the Lord appeared”; seen through the eyes of the patriarch, however, are three men whose sudden apparition is a test of hospitality’.⁸ By contrast, Safren contests a sudden arrival, as this would have alerted Abraham that they were divine beings.⁹ He maintains that Abraham had not been looking in their direction, and so needs to hastily intercept them.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Vogels highlights how the text does still indicate Abraham’s surprise, ‘“he lifted up his eyes, and he saw, and behold (*hinneh*) three men standing near him” (v. 2 [unspecified translation])’.¹¹

Abraham persuades them to partake of his hospitality with the conventional offer to ‘turn aside’ and wash their feet,¹² and the implicit understanding that he will not detain them (vv. 3, 4–5). The offer of ‘a little bread (*pat-lehem*)’¹³ (v. 5) obviates any sense of imposition on the part of the travellers, which then frees Abraham as host to lay out a choice banquet and slaughter a ‘fine’ calf (v. 7).¹⁴ Abraham instructs Sarah to prepare three measures of ‘fine’ flour or meal, which Chouraqui calculates as forty litres, a large quantity for three (v. 6).¹⁵ This is probably kneaded into ‘cakes’ of round, flat *pita* bread which are stone-baked in the ashes of a fire.¹⁶ In Safren’s opinion, these are more appetising than the unleavened bread subsequently offered by

⁸ Bogdan G. Bucur, “The Early Christian Reception of Genesis 18: From Theophany to Trinitarian Symbolism,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 245–46.

doi:10.1353/earl.2015.0020. Although he commends the integrity of the text, Bucur does highlight that it can also be legitimately read that Abraham is aware of a theophany. See Bucur, “The Early Christian Reception of Genesis 18,” 245 n. 1, 246 n. 3.

⁹ Safren, “Hospitality Compared,” 166.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Walter A. Vogels, “Hospitality in Biblical Perspective,” *Liturgical Ministry* 11 (Fall 2002): 164.

¹² Mathews, “Hospitality and the New Testament Church,” 35.

¹³ Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 62. King elsewhere notes that bread ‘may also designate food in general’ (Philip J. King, “Commensality in the Biblical World,” in *Hesed ve-Emet: Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs*, ed. Jodi Magness and Seymour Gitin, Brown Judaic Studies, no. 320 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998), 57).

¹⁴ Lee Roy Martin, “Old Testament Foundations for Christian Hospitality,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35, no. 1 (January 2014): 3. doi:10.4102/ve.v35i1.752.

¹⁵ André Chouraqui, trans. and ed., *Entête*, La Bible, vol. 1 (Paris: Jean-Claude Lattès, 1992), 138, cited in Still, *Derrida and Hospitality*, 70. Vogels works from an eight litre bushel to give twenty-four litres in total. He likewise considers this quantity of flour, and the calf, to be an ‘impressive’ amount of food for three (Walter A. Vogels, “Hospitality in Biblical Perspective,” *Liturgical Ministry* 11 (Fall 2002): 166).

¹⁶ Safren, “Hospitality Compared,” 171 n. 64; King, “Commensality in the Biblical World,” 57–58.

Lot.¹⁷ Gastronomic judgements aside, Wenham suggests that this time-consuming farinaceous offering ‘pre-empted the later provision of shewbread for Yahweh in His tabernacle’ because the recipe in Leviticus 24:5 requires ‘seahs of choice flour’, but this claim is a little tenuous.¹⁸ In addition, Mathews draws parallels between the roasted meat and bread cakes of sacrificial feasts and offerings and the ‘guest meal’, as meat was not part of the normal diet.¹⁹ He further discusses the importance of commensality in establishing guest-kinship, whether covenantal or transitory.²⁰ Visitors were not expected to reciprocate, but would customarily share news, a story, or a blessing after the meal; Abraham and Sarah are blessed with the promise of a son.²¹ The reiteration of an earlier promise from God notwithstanding, it is indisputable that Abraham’s offer of hospitality interrupts the angels’ mission of destruction, thus affording him the opportunity to intercede for Sodom with the Lord (Gen. 17:16–19; 18:16–33).

2. Raising up sons and daughters of Abraham

The textual correspondences and verbal transpositions between the stories of Abraham and Zacchaeus in Luke function to position Zacchaeus as a true descendant of the patriarch, according to Mitchell.²² The Lord appears to Abraham under the oak of Mamre; Zacchaeus ascends a sycamore tree. Abraham ‘looking up to see’ his visitors is paralleled by Jesus ‘looking up’ to Zacchaeus, and Zacchaeus trying ‘to see’ Jesus. Abraham also hopes the visitors will not ‘pass by’; Zacchaeus is waiting for Jesus to ‘pass by’. Lastly, both address their visitors as ‘Lord’, and hasten to make preparations.²³ Jesus declares that salvation has come to ‘this house’ even before

¹⁷ Safren, “Hospitality Compared,” 171 n. 64.

¹⁸ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1994), 32–53, cited in Annang Asumang, “‘And the Angels Waited on Him’ (Mark 1:13): Hospitality and Discipleship in Mark’s Gospel,” *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 8, no. 9 (September 2009): 7. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC28240>.

¹⁹ Mathews, “Hospitality and the New Testament Church,” 119–20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 122–27, 127 n. 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 81 n. 1; Vogels, “Hospitality in Biblical Perspective,” 166.

²² Alan C. Mitchell, “Zacchaeus Revisited: Luke 19,8 as a Defense,” *Biblica* 71, no. 2 (1990): 172. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42611101>. Although he adopts the minority position that Zacchaeus has already repented, but is being wrongly accused, and therefore needs to vindicate himself against false accusations. See Mitchell, “Zacchaeus Revisited,” 155–62.

²³ Mitchell presents these in tabular form, but I have made a selective summary, and omitted verse

Zacchaeus, the collaborator with Rome, has made the restitution required by the religious authorities (Luke 19:9).²⁴ Zacchaeus shows the fruits of repentance by the promise of supererogatory almsgiving and restitution; his hospitality is subsidiary to his disbursements (v. 8).²⁵ The trajectory of the story of Zacchaeus answers the question of the crowd in the preceding chapter, as they surround the rich young ruler whose riches are a hindrance to salvation. They asked, ‘ “Then who can be saved?” ’ (Luke 18:26), and Jesus answers (v. 27) with a reprise of the certainty given to Abraham, and to Mary, that ‘nothing is impossible with God’ (Gen. 18:14; Luke 1:37). This mirroring of the humanly impossible being divinely enabled in the lives of Abraham and Zacchaeus reinforces the designation of the latter as a ‘son of Abraham’ (Luke 19:9).²⁶

Arterbury separately instances the similarities identified by Mitchell, and supplements them with the facts that both are described as ‘rich’, and both ‘stand’ in the presence of their guests; he also associates both with justice and righteousness, but this is merely implied in the case of Zacchaeus, rather than explicitly stated (Luke 19:8).²⁷ Acting righteously and justly arises from Abraham’s being known by the Lord (Gen. 18:19). Puzzlingly, Arterbury attributes Abraham in this verse with ‘charg[ing] his children and household to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring about for Abraham what he has promised about him’.²⁸ The assignation of the speech to Abraham, rather than the Lord, inserts an

references for the sake of clarity. See Mitchell, “Zacchaeus Revisited,” 170. Cf. Arterbury, “Zacchaeus,” 26–27.

²⁴ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 2008), 182–83.

²⁵ Bailey thinks that onlookers would have understood Zacchaeus’ pledge to give half his goods to the poor, and repay fourfold any extorted money, as exaggeration to demonstrate his sincerity (depending on the extent of his rapacity, if Zacchaeus carried out the first condition, he would be unable to honour the second) (Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 181). Bailey compares the promise with the ill-fated exaggeration of the promise of Herod Antipas to Herodias’ daughter (Mark 6:21–29) (Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 181 n. 16).

²⁶ Lamb views it as Jesus ascribing a ‘technical title’ which elsewhere in Luke applies only to Jesus himself (Luke 3:23, 34; 19:9) (Gregory E. Lamb, “Sinfully Stereotyped: Jesus’s Desire to Correct Ancient Physiognomic Assumptions in the Gospel According to Luke,” *Word & World* 37, no. 2 (Spring 2017): 182).

²⁷ Arterbury, “Zacchaeus,” 26–27.

²⁸ Arterbury, “Zacchaeus,” 27. For an examination of Yahweh’s words in this verse, see Stuart A. Irvine, “‘Is Anything Too Hard for Yahweh?’ Fulfilment of Promise and Threat in Genesis 18–19,”

unnecessary note of self-interest, but this does not detract from Arterbury's overall argument that Jesus, not Zacchaeus, is the focal figure in the typological comparison with Abraham.²⁹ Thus, John the Baptist's challenge to the complacency of his hearers 'that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones' (Luke 3:8) is vindicated in Jesus' words to Zacchaeus, and also the woman healed on the Sabbath (Luke 13:10–16). Her value is greater than livestock, and her need is more pressing than permitted animal husbandry (v. 15); so Jesus denounces the hypocritical ruler of the synagogue, and affirms the woman as a 'daughter of Abraham' (vv. 15–16). After her healing, or restoration, the woman is restored as Israel will be in the end times; she is able to straighten up, and thus raise her head, which is the posture of expectancy to greet the coming of the Son of Man in Luke 21:28.³⁰ She can take her place within the renewed Israel, the many nations and descendants of Abraham. In a different sense, Zacchaeus is also 'raised up' from the social shame of his small stature (and despised social status) because Jesus first literally 'looks up to him'.³¹ Arterbury's earlier reading does not resolve the disparity between the woman as a 'daughter' of Abraham and Zacchaeus as a 'son', if the latter's Abrahamic descent is premised on the assumption of hospitality.³² It is clear therefore that Abraham's hospitality is an attribute of his righteousness, but showing hospitality is not a necessary condition for kinship with him. Having considered how Abraham is appealed to as an historical patriarch and host, in the next section I will look at him as an eschatological host.

Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 42, no. 3 (March 2018): 288, 290.

doi:10.1177/0309089216690381.

²⁹ Arterbury, "Zacchaeus," 28–31.

³⁰ M. Dennis Hamm, "The Freeing of the Bent Woman and the Restoration of Israel: Luke 13.10–17 as Narrative Theology," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 10, no. 31 (January 1987): 33.

doi:10.1177/0142064X8701003102.

³¹ Stephen Pattison, "Shame and the Unwanted Self," in *The Shame Factor: How Shame Shapes Society*, ed. Robert Jewett (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 27.

³² See section 1, p. 47 n. 6.

2.1. At table with Abraham: Lazarus the beggar (Luke 16:19–31)

As a son of Abraham, visited by salvation, Zacchaeus will ultimately join the patriarch at the end-time feast (Luke 13:28–29; Matt. 8:11–12), as Lazarus³³ does, by implication, in the parable. The fictional Lazarus receives the blessings promised in Luke 6:20–21, and the rich man the woes pronounced on those who have received their earthly consolation (vv. 24–25, Luke 16:25). The ethereal elevation of Lazarus by angels, and the perfunctory mention of the burial of the rich man serve to intensify the contrast between their respective fates.³⁴ Allusion to ‘Abraham’s bosom’³⁵ draws upon the expression of emotional or physical closeness, in a parental (not necessarily maternal) embrace of a child: O’Kane adduces instances of ‘arms’ and ‘bosom’ as biblical synonyms to supplement his argument for an intended sense of parental protection.³⁶ Somov further explores the cognitive schemas that function within the metaphor of being in ‘Abraham’s bosom’: these serve to express cultural understandings of honourable elevation, inclusion, and centrality, which are opposed to the humiliation of relegation, exclusion, and peripheralisation.³⁷ Thus, in the parable, Abraham’s earthly hospitality is the presumed precursor for an eternal hospitality wherein the injustice of selfish hospitality and exclusion is reversed. The hungry, suffering beggar Lazarus is rewarded after his death with rightful closeness

³³ Multiple meanings have been attached to this name, and much speculation surrounds its significance. See Reuben Bredenhof, “Looking for Lazarus: Assigning Meaning to the Poor Man in Luke 16.19–31,” *New Testament Studies* 66, no. 1 (January 2020): 56–67. doi:10.1017/S0028688519000328.

³⁴ The question of whether the parable casts any light on Jewish and Christian conceptions of the afterlife is considered by Somov, but my primary concern is with implied inhospitality, and the appearance of Abraham. See Alexey Somov, *Representations of the Afterlife in Luke-Acts*, International Studies on Christian Origins, Library of New Testament Studies, vol. 556 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017).

³⁵ Haupt considers ‘Abraham’s bosom’ a mistranslation and renders it Abraham’s ‘lap’, but he also invokes the composition of Michelangelo’s Pietà to substitute for the image of reclining at table (Paul Haupt, “Abraham’s Bosom,” *American Journal of Philology* 42, no. 2 (1921): 162–63, 167. doi:10.2307/289238). O’Kane concurs that the sense of intimacy is to be preferred, but concludes that proffered explanations remain unsatisfactory. See Martin O’Kane, “‘The Bosom of Abraham’ (Luke 16:22): Father Abraham in the Visual Imagination,” *Biblical Interpretation* 15, no. 4–5 (January 2007): 489–90. doi:10.1163/156851507X194242.

³⁶ O’Kane, “‘The Bosom of Abraham’,” 492–93.

³⁷ Somov, *Representations of the Afterlife in Luke-Acts*, 215–19.

to the patriarch.³⁸

I have argued previously that Zacchaeus' act of hospitality is not sufficient for the familial designation 'son' of Abraham, but it can nevertheless be surmised from this parable that failure to extend hospitality has eternal consequences. The parable is told to the Pharisees, 'who were lovers of money' (Luke 16:14), and who cite Moses and the prophets, but are as far from receiving the promises made to Abraham, as the rich man, separated by the chasm from the eschatological feast. Jesus tells these Pharisees that the law and the prophets were 'until John' (v. 16): John the Baptist warned the complacently self-satisfied who claimed Abraham as their father that their heritage was no defence against divine election (Luke 3:8). The rich man withheld hospitality (and patronage), and only entertained his friends. Bailey suggests that the wording 'feasting daily' implies that he elevated his stomach above Sabbath observance, and failed to give his over-worked servants a day of rest.³⁹ In the story, after his death he still presumes to command 'Father Abraham' (v. 24), and, by extension, Lazarus, to meet his needs, when in life he had failed to emulate the former's hospitality, or acknowledge the latter (even though, tellingly, he knows his name). Bailey further notes that the rich man is still addressed fondly and ruefully by Abraham, as his 'dear son' (*teknon*) (v. 25), rather than the neutral *huios*,⁴⁰ but his presumption of an inalienable birthright is abrogated. Throughout the story, Lazarus is voiceless, whereas now the rich man becomes the beggar; the spurned Lazarus is compensated with an afterlife of familiar hospitality.

³⁸ Pieter van der Horst, "Abraham's Bosom, the Place Where He Belonged: A Short Note on ἀπενεχθῆναι in Luke 16.22," *New Testament Studies* 52, no. 1 (January 2006): 142–44. doi: 10.1017/S0028688506000087.

³⁹ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 382. Lehtipuu contrasts him, and his lack of hospitality, with the practice of the disciples after the Resurrection, who daily break bread together with 'glad and generous hearts' (Acts 2:46) (Outi Lehtipuu, "Characterization and Persuasion: The Rich Man and the Poor Man in Luke 16.19–31," in *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism*, ed. David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, vol. 184 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 88).

⁴⁰ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 390.

3. Jesus, the forgiven woman, and footwashing at the house of Simon, the Pharisee (Luke 7:36–50)

As already discussed, Abraham persuasively offered water for their feet, and food, to passing angels. Having positioned him as an exemplar of hospitality, and a source of religious identity across both testaments, and in the hereafter, I now intend to concentrate on the life of Jesus to see how footwashing is shown as part of an hospitable welcome. Several commentators provide summaries of the iterations of the anointing of Jesus, but I am focusing on the Lukan version in order to consider how the elements of hospitality are reconfigured by a notorious, yet unnamed, woman.⁴¹

Jesus contrasts her perfumed oil and effusive tears and kisses with the lack of greeting, water for washing, and olive oil for anointing from Simon (vv. 44–46). Bailey points out the ubiquity of olive oil as a cleansing agent and culinary ingredient in the Middle East.⁴² This observation is in contrast with those who instance the paucity of biblical references for incidences of routine anointing of the head, and more particularly, the feet.⁴³ It is worth noting that in Psalm 141:5 the rebuke of a righteous man is likened to oil on the head, so in actuality, Jesus offers Simon the chance to accept a spiritual benefit which equates to the withheld welcome.

Jesus' response to the omission of the expected courtesies has been to ignore precedence and proceed to recline at table in the place of honour and seniority.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Susan E. Miller, *Women in Mark's Gospel*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, vol. 259 (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 128–29; Santiago Guijarro and Ana Rodríguez, "The 'Messianic' Anointing of Jesus (Mark 14:3–9)," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 41, no. 3 (August 2011): 133–35. doi:10.1177/0146107911413210.

⁴² Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 243 n. 8.

⁴³ Andrew E. Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in Its Mediterranean Setting*, New Testament Monographs, vol. 8 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), 90–91; Dorothea H. Bertschmann, "Hosting Jesus: Revisiting Luke's 'Sinful Woman' (Luke 7.36–50)," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 40, no. 1 (September 2017): 41–42. doi:10.1177/0142064X17723476. Cf. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Construction of Christian Origins*, new introduction, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 1995), xliii–xliv. From a Roman perspective, Potter offers a fascinating and nearly contemporary anecdote, which juxtaposes depravity and elite effeteness: 'Salvius Otho, briefly emperor in 69 C.E., shared his wife and many secrets with the emperor Nero (54–68 C.E.). The art of perfuming the soles of one's feet was one of them. These two men may be taken as representative of their time and class, and foot perfuming seems to have been popular with some—but others, including our source of information for this practice, thought it absurd' (David S. Potter, "Odor and Power in the Roman Empire," in *Constructions of the Classical Body*, Papers presented at the Conference of the International Association for Philosophy and Literature, University

Bailey surmises that the woman brought the perfume intending to anoint Jesus, but having observed Simon's discourtesy, being already present, she improvises, as she can only access Jesus' feet with any degree of propriety.⁴⁵ In his opinion, her letting down her hair in public is a sign of devotion, like a bride on her wedding night.⁴⁶ If she is a prostitute as commonly supposed,⁴⁷ such an enactment of a virginal scene could then be construed as evidence of her sexual transgressions, and her sins, having already been forgiven, as Jesus confirms.⁴⁸ To interpret her actions as flustered is to rob her of agency, and to see her gestures as disreputable is to detract from her heartfelt hospitality.

3.1. Jesus, the disciples, and footwashing (Mark 6:7–11; John 13:1–17)

Having used an example of the breach of customary courtesy by a host's omission of footwashing, I will now discuss the spiritual import of the washing of feet in the ministry of Jesus. Malina outlines the cultural process of the status-transformation whereby the outsider transitions from stranger to guest, either through the jousting of verbal testing, or a liminal phase where acceptance was usually signalled by the offering of water to wash the feet.⁴⁹ First-century Palestine was accustomed to pairs of travelling Jewish wisdom teachers.⁵⁰ Accordingly, when Jesus sends the disciples out in twos, his instruction to bless the homes they enter assumes

of California, Irvine, 1990, ed. James I. Porter, *The Body, in Theory: Histories of Cultural Materialism* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 175).

⁴⁴ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 243–44.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁴⁷ Bertschmann, "Hosting Jesus," 36. Cf. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 128–29.

⁴⁸ Opinion does differ on the connotations of unbound hair, and the chronology for her receipt of forgiveness, but the point at issue is the contrast between Simon's discourtesy and the extravagance of the woman's gestures. On the former topic, see Charles H. Cosgrove, "A Woman's Unbound Hair in the Greco-Roman World, with Special Reference to the Story of the 'Sinful Woman' in Luke 7:36–50," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 676–77. doi:10.2307/30041064; Bertschmann, "Hosting Jesus," 36, 36 n. 24. For the latter, see R. Alan Streett, *Subversive Meals: An Analysis of the Lord's Supper Under Roman Domination During the First Century* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2013), 144. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1p5flv5>. The use of the perfect tense leads Bailey to conclude that Jesus is affirming what the woman already knows (Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 257, 258 n. 42).

⁴⁹ Bruce J. Malina, "The Received View and What It Cannot Do: III John and Hospitality," *Semeia* 35 (1986): 184–85.

⁵⁰ Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 17.

that they will be offered hospitality.⁵¹ In the event of refusal, shaking the dust off their unwashed feet betokens lack of hospitality, rather than a prophetic action.⁵² It was customary to question a guest after the meal about his identity and journey, so an inhospitable response would appear even more untoward.⁵³ At the Last Supper, Jesus will quote Psalm 41:9 to identify his betrayer as one who had eaten bread with him (John 13:18), which in Hebrew is ‘the man of my peace (*shalom*)’.⁵⁴ The preaching of peace defined Jesus’ ministry, and in Peter’s later exposition of the gospel to Cornelius, it immediately precedes the declaration of the supreme identity of Jesus (Acts 10:36–37).⁵⁵ It is reasonable to conclude therefore, that the bestowal of peace upon a house, or the retraction of peace, was a significant act by the disciples sent out to seek a hospitable reception for themselves, and their message.

It is in this sense of normative footwashing that Peter misconstrues Jesus’ actions at the Last Supper as ‘mere hospitality’, rather than a transformative act offering ‘continued fellowship with Jesus, and a place in his community which ultimately results in uninterrupted residence in the Father’s house’.⁵⁶ The woman who wept over Jesus’ feet, offered in the eyes of the onlookers, transgressive hospitality. I

⁵¹ Mark 6: 7–11 (also Matt. 10: 5–15; and the seventy in Luke 10: 1–12).

⁵² Rogers, “Shaking the Dust Off,” 179–80, 182, 192. As Gittins observes wryly: ‘Those who would begrudge a welcome and a friendly ear would be likely to begrudge even their village dust; so let the stranger leave owing nothing and taking nothing from hosts, if they are impervious to need and to demand’ (Anthony J. Gittins, “Beyond Hospitality? The Missionary Status and Role Revisited,” *International Review of Mission* 83, no. 330 (July 1994): 411–12. doi:10.1111/j.1758–6631.1994.tb03413.x). Conversely, an analogy can be drawn between the honourable recognition of the messenger of the gospel of the kingdom, and the metonymic praise of the messenger bringing good tidings in Isaiah: ‘How beautiful upon the mountains / are the feet of the messenger who / announces peace, / who brings good news’ (Isa. 52:7a).

⁵³ Mathews, “Hospitality and the New Testament Church,” 226–27, 227 n. 1.

⁵⁴ Ernst Haenchen, *John 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 1–6*, trans. Robert W. Funk, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 113. Marshall relates this to the obligations of hospitality: ‘By his betrayal of a commensal, Judas clearly breached one of the fundamental laws of hospitality, and the dire punishment in store for him is indicated in Mark 14:21’ (Mary Jeanette Marshall, “Jesus and the Banquets: An Investigation of the Early Christian Tradition Concerning Jesus’ Presence at Banquets with Toll Collectors and Sinners,” PhD thesis (Perth: Murdoch University, 2002), 427).

⁵⁵ This emphasis is supported by Rowe’s translation of the Greek. See C. Kavin Rowe, “Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult: A Way Through the Conundrum?” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27, no. 3 (March 2005): 290–92, here at 290. doi:10.1177/0142064X05052507.

⁵⁶ John Christopher Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community*, originally published as *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, vol. 61 by Sheffield Academic Press, 1991 (T&T Clark, 2004), 94. Thomas points out the irony that Peter’s adamant refusal employs an emphatic formula used by Jesus, in John, of eternal life (John Christopher Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13*, 92).

am not suggesting, by including her in a catalogue of episodes of footwashing, that the status-incongruity which troubled Peter (John 13:6) is the interpretive key to Jesus washing the feet of his disciples.⁵⁷ For Schneiders, Jesus' footwashing is a 'prophetic action',⁵⁸ not an everyday act of hospitality; he is not signifying the circumscribed relationship or limited duration of earthly hospitality. In his table fellowship, and his parables, Jesus has already demonstrated the inclusivity of the eschatological feast; the repetition of his example of selfless love will welcome others into the Father's house, the ultimate dwelling. Jesus extends 'eschatological hospitality' on behalf of the Father because he and the Father 'are one (10:30; 17:11; cf. 14:9)'.⁵⁹ The disciples are now members of the household, but they will only cross the threshold of his Father's house in death; Jesus performs this act of self-giving friendship to prefigure his own death. Just as Jesus taught them to extend peace to a household, so he leaves his peace (14:27) with this earthly community on whom he has conferred membership of the household of God.

When Jesus rises from reclining at table (13:4), the same verb is often used in John's gospel of rising from the dead, so could be an intentional usage.⁶⁰ Jesus' socially disruptive actions of unclenching, kneeling, and washing the feet of the disciples would have been recognised as the bodily comportment of a slave by early Christians familiar with Roman dining practices.⁶¹ By so doing, Jesus upholds and

⁵⁷ Lindars notes, 'the words *you* and *my* are juxtaposed in the Greek, emphasizing the paradoxical reversal of roles' (Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), 450, italics substituted for bold in original).

⁵⁸ Schneiders elaborates thus: 'By "prophetic action" I mean an action which is presented as divinely inspired, revelatory in content, proleptic in structure, symbolic in form, and pedagogical in intent' (Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Foot Washing (John 13:1–20): An Experiment in Hermeneutics," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (January 1981): 81, 81 n. 21. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43715978>).

⁵⁹ Arland J. Hultgren, "The Johannine Footwashing (13: 1–11) as Symbol of Eschatological Hospitality," *New Testament Studies* 28, no. 4 (October 1982): 542. doi:10.1017/S0028688500010419.

⁶⁰ Bincy Mathew, *The Johannine Footwashing as the Sign of Perfect Love: An Exegetical Study of John 13:1–20*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 2, vol. 464 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 358, 358 n. 7.

⁶¹ Jennifer Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 50. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195328158.001.000. Interestingly, although not proof of first-century practice, Jewish midrash view footwashing as a duty for Gentile slaves; Jewish slaves could not be compelled to perform the task. See Rekha M. Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship as a Covenant*

subverts the norms of hospitality, despite not performing the ritual purification required by the Pharisees.⁶² Jesus ‘lays aside’ his garments (v. 4), and according to Edwards, this wording recalls the Good Shepherd who ‘lays down his life’ for the sheep in John 10:17–18,⁶³ and foreshadows his death. As the Shepherd can also ‘take up’ his life, so Jesus ‘takes up’ a linen towel and girds himself (v. 4).⁶⁴ Jesus’ actions also echo the messianic prophecy of the descendant of Jesse who would be girded with righteousness and faithfulness (Isa. 11:9).⁶⁵ Jesus acts with deliberative foreknowledge (John 13:1–4); this narrative is permeated by the earlier anointing for his burial, recorded in John 12 (vv. 3–8), which is evoked by the gesture of ‘wiping’ their feet.⁶⁶ After resuming his place and reclining again, Jesus asks the disciples if they know what he has done (v. 12). Bodily awareness, and psychic discomfort need to be succeeded by cognitive understanding and spiritual insight.⁶⁷ Unaware as they are of Jesus’ coming death, in the future these same disciples must show the hospitality of the kingdom, just as Jesus has done. In the next section, I will examine this evolving hospitality in more detail by looking at practical and spiritual inclusion in the early Church.

Relationship (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 91–92, 92 n. 10. Edwards clarifies that, although Jewish male slaves were exempt from washing the feet of guests, the duty of washing the feet of their master was seen as a suitable duty for all female slaves. See Ruth B. Edwards, “The Christological Basis of the Johannine Footwashing,” in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994), 368. She also mentions that rabbinic students might voluntarily serve their teachers thus, but provides no context or references to substantiate her claim (Edwards, “The Christological Basis of the Johannine Footwashing,” 369).

⁶² For more on the debates about handwashing in Mark 7:1–7, see Steven M. Bryan, *Jesus and Israel’s Traditions of Judgement and Restoration*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, vol. 117 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 164–68. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511487866.

⁶³ Edwards notes: ‘The simple, active τίθημι for a person taking off or laying aside a garment is very rare; there are no similar uses elsewhere in the NT or LXX . . . This must strengthen the case for a deliberate echo of the Good Shepherd laying down his life in John 10; cf. also John 15:13’ (Edwards, “The Christological Basis of the Johannine Footwashing,” 372 n. 14). Moreover, Culpepper observes: ‘In chapters 10 and 11 the same verb (*tithēsīn*, “laid aside”) was used for the Good Shepherd laying down his life (10:11, 15, 17, 18) and for the burial of Lazarus (11:34)’ (R. Alan Culpepper, “The Johannine *Hypodeigma*: A Reading of John 13,” *Semeia* 53 (1991): 137).

⁶⁴ Edwards, “The Christological Basis of the Johannine Footwashing,” 372, 372 n. 15.

⁶⁵ Mathew, *The Johannine Footwashing as the Sign of Perfect Love*, 360.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 373–74.

⁶⁷ Cf. Cornelis Bennema, “Mimesis in John 13: Cloning or Creative Articulation?” *Novum Testamentum* 56, no. 3 (2014): 265. doi:10.1163/15685365-12341465.

3.2. Widows, hospitality, and footwashing in the early Church (1 Tim. 5:10; Acts 6:1–7)

The next explicit mention of footwashing after Jesus' modelling of love, is in relation to the ministry of widows in the early Church. Formerly, Israel had demonstrated her 'covenant identity' by having compassion on widows, orphans, and strangers, those most vulnerable in kinship societies,⁶⁸ but within the community of those who follow Jesus, the widows themselves will become ministers of hospitality.⁶⁹ The 'habitual neglect' of Hellenistic⁷⁰ widows in the distribution of food in Acts 6:1 testifies to the continuing vulnerability of widows, and poses a threat to the unity of the church.⁷¹ Having highlighted Anna in the Temple, the widow of Nain, the persistent widow of the parable, and the widow with her mite in the gospels, Spencer considers that the group-anonymity of these overlooked widows in Acts has led to them being equally overlooked by exegesis.⁷² In the view of Green, Jesus 'exegetes his mission to the poor' in Luke 4:16–30 by identifying himself with Elijah's mission to the unnamed 'non-Israelite' widow in Zarephath, and Naaman, the leprous army commander, another 'non-Israelite'.⁷³ Jipp notes that it is equally acceptable to translate Jesus' proclamation of the 'year of the Lord's favour' as the year of the Lord's 'welcome', thus:

The programmatic function of Jesus's Nazareth sermon invites the reader to pay attention to the way in which the entirety of Jesus's ministry *and particularly his meals with strangers* enact divine hospitality to the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ William O'Neill, "'No Longer Strangers' (Ephesians 2:19): The Ethics of Migration," *Word & World* 29, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 229.

⁶⁹ McGowan traces the reception of John 13, and the conjectured and actual history of footwashing as an act of service, and ecclesial ritual, to make the reasonable suggestion from later evidence that these widows were caring for imprisoned fellow believers. See Andrew McGowan, "A Missing Sacrament? Foot-Washing, Gender, and Space in Early Christianity," *Archiv Für Religionsgeschichte* 18–19, no. 1 (2017): 109–14. doi:10.1515/arege-2016-0007.

⁷⁰ This is a contested term, but the majority view is that they are Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora, whereas for other commentators it connotes racial, cultural, or geographic distinctions. See Joseph B. Tyson, "Acts 6:1–7 and Dietary Regulations in Early Christianity," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1983): 155–57; F. Scott Spencer, "Neglected Widows in Acts 6:1–7," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (October 1994): 728. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43721791>.

⁷¹ Tyson, "Acts 6:1–7 and Dietary Regulations," 158.

⁷² Spencer, "Neglected Widows in Acts 6:1–7," 721–28, 733.

⁷³ Joel B. Green, "Good News to the Poor: A Lukan Leitmotif," *Review & Expositor* 111, no. 2 (May 2014): 176. doi:10.1177/0034637314524374.

⁷⁴ Joshua W. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans

Accordingly, the conjunction of Jesus' declaration of his calling with a reminder of succour given to the stigmatised and marginalised, including a widow, and the example of his hospitality are incompatible with the subsequent plight of these Hellenistic widows who are treated as outsiders. Schüssler Fiorenza makes the observation that poverty is not explicitly mentioned in the passage from Acts, and proposes that the situation could be a cultural misunderstanding. If, indeed, these Greco-Roman women expected to participate in 'eucharistic table sharing', and were not included, this would then amount to spiritual exclusion, as well as social exclusion.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the social shame of these widowed women is now corporate shame because the church has not looked after them in proper fashion.⁷⁶

Discussion of the ministry of widows in the early Church assumes their hospitality results from their dependence, and Friesen adjudges them to be living 'at or below' subsistence level.⁷⁷ Green notes that in the raising of the widow's son (Luke 7:11–17), Jesus has 'compassion on her' because of her vulnerability, not on the dead man.⁷⁸ Similarly, Spencer points out that Jesus 'restores him to her' (v. 15), thus reinstating a male provider in her life.⁷⁹ Countering this positioning, Hylén suggests that the qualities required of widows in 1 Timothy were conventional Roman virtues which connoted social standing, and influence, rather than passivity.⁸⁰ However, this

Publishing Company, 2017), 21, emphasis in original. See also Brendan J. Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, 61. See *Background and reflections*, section 2.1, p. 31.

⁷⁵ Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 165–66.

⁷⁶ S. Scott Bartchy, "Community of Goods in Acts: Idealization or Social Reality?" in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester*, ed. Birger A. Pearson, in collaboration with Thomas A. Kraabel and W. E. George (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 318.

⁷⁷ Riddle, "Early Christian Hospitality," 143–44; Frances Young, *God's Presence: A Contemporary Recapitulation of Early Christianity*, Current Issues in Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 323. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139814836. Friesen includes the widows in 1 Tim. 5: 3–16 only after cautioning about the reliability of sources for deriving the historical information upon which he bases his calculations. See Steven J. Friesen, "Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-Called New Consensus," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26, no. 3 (March 2004): 348 n. 79. doi:10.1177/0142064X0402600304.

⁷⁸ Joel B. Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 97. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139166683.

⁷⁹ Spencer, "Neglected Widows in Acts 6:1–7," 724.

⁸⁰ Susan E. Hylén, *A Modest Apostle: Thecla and the History of Women in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 64. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190243821.001.0001. Finger speculates that it would 'not be surprising' if the dissension in Acts 6 arose from women competing for 'the honor of organizing communal meals', as household management was one of the few outlets open

claim for status is limited to a restricted social group, and is the antithesis of Jesus' voluntary humiliation, unless those merits are viewed as a renunciation of any perceived privilege. As Seim intimates: 'The figure of a widow therefore carries an ambivalent connotation of exceptional need and exceptional freedom of agency'.⁸¹

Riddle suggests that hospitality in the early Church was 'a particular task of bishops and widows', and that such an office may have been a pragmatic response to the neediness of the latter.⁸² By their activities, the widows are 'ministers and even patrons of a sort', for Miller.⁸³ Comparable ambivalence about service can be discerned in comments about the disproportionate response to the problem of the neglect of the Hellenist widows, which focus on the supposed 'over-qualification' of the men appointed to serve tables.⁸⁴ With regard to gender, Tuohy does seek to

to them, but her interpretation places worldly status above Christian humility, and unhelpfully plays into the hands of male commentators who are ever ready to opine on female behaviour (Reta Halteman Finger, *Of Widows and Meals: Communal Meals in the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 94). In my opinion, Hylén's depiction would be truer of the society matrons who gave to Jesus 'out of their own resources' in Luke 8:1–3 (a typical 'benefaction formula', according to Pervo) (Richard I. Pervo, "Unnamed Women Who Provide for the Jesus Movement," in *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books and the New Testament*, ed. Carol Meyers, Toni Craven, and Ross S. Kraemer (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 442, cited in Amanda C. Miller, "Cut from the Same Cloth: A Study of Female Patrons in Luke-Acts and the Roman Empire," *Review & Expositor* 114, no. 2 (May 2017): 205. doi:10.1177/0034637317705104).

⁸¹ Turid Karlsen Seim, "Feminist Criticism," in *Methods for Luke*, ed. Joel B. Green, *Methods in Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 65. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511845048.003.

⁸² Riddle, "Early Christian Hospitality," 143–44. Riddle's approach has now dated badly. For him, early Christian hospitality was a means of transmission of the gospel which caused hospitality to be 'read back' into the life of Jesus; he treats hospitality as a peculiarity of the first century (Riddle, "Early Christian Hospitality," 154). See *Background and reflections*, section 2, p. 28. However, he fails to account for the co-existence of the hospitality given to apostles and teachers, and the implicit inhospitality shown to poorer members of the church in the household meetings.

⁸³ Amanda C. Miller, "Cut from the Same Cloth," 209.

⁸⁴ Alluded to without attribution in Tyson, "Acts 6:1–7 and Dietary Regulations," 159. Cf. Griffiths, who states that 'the gift of the Spirit influences the motivation, the administration and the atmosphere of these shared meals' (John D. Griffiths, "The Spirit as Gift: The Influence of the Gift of the Spirit on the Community Life as Described by the Summary Statements in Acts," PhD thesis (Adelaide: Flinders University, 2020), 179). However, he also maintains that it is important for his thesis that the administration is done by Spirit-filled, wise, reputable *men*, but without developing this claim; he subsequently discusses feminist scholarship on the gift of the Spirit and egalitarianism, but he fails to return to his earlier assertion. See Griffiths, "The Spirit as Gift," 178, 182–84, emphasis mine. Jipp references Johnson, and Smith on seeing an allusion to the parables in which Jesus 'promises to reward the faithful by "placing them over" his food and possessions (Luke 12:44)' (Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, vol. 39 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 201–4, cited in Joshua W. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and*

foreground all the women serving and preparing food in the ‘banquet communities’ of the early Church by arguing that, like Yahweh as ‘creation’s host’, and Jesus, they are equally ‘shepherds and hosts’.⁸⁵ Given Jesus’ exhortation to lowly service, the actions of the widows or the table-servers should be sufficient, irrespective of the condition, or gender of the one serving, or being served; this is exemplified in the life and martyrdom of Stephen, one of those chosen (Acts 6–7). Indeed, Sawicki argues that ‘the possibility of understanding resurrection comes through hunger’, and that Stephen’s privileged sight of ‘Jesus standing at the right hand of God’ (Acts 7:55) is a consequence of his recognition and alleviation of hunger, which is an important point for the disambiguation of hospitality in this thesis.⁸⁶ She also ties such vision to the import of 1 Corinthians 11: ‘failure to recognize the hungers of community members is failure to discern the body of Christ’.⁸⁷ Sutherland likewise is emphatic about the centrality of ‘seeing’ to a theology of hospitality: ‘It must be asserted, then, that in regard to hospitality the will to serve only comes after one is conditioned to seeing’.⁸⁸

4. Welcoming Gentiles: Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10)

Having considered the cultural place of footwashing, the proleptic function of the footwashing at the Last Supper, and the ministry of widows, I now intend to link the topic to Peter’s role in the expansion of the mission of the church. Spencer identifies an intermediate conversion for Peter, before his roof-top vision in Joppa, occurring after the collective decision of the apostles to relegate the feeding of widows to others, thus separating ministry of the word and works of service.⁸⁹ In

Hospitality (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 31 n. 42; Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 264, cited in Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 31 n. 42).

⁸⁵ Nicholas James Tuohy, “While They Were Eating: Lukan Mission Through Domestic Hospitality and Ministry as Table-Service, and Implications for the Contemporary Church,” MPhil thesis (Melbourne: Australian Catholic University, 2012), 129. doi:10.4226/66/ 5a962521c6881.

⁸⁶ Sawicki, “Recognizing the Risen Lord,” 448.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 448, footnote.

⁸⁸ Sutherland, *I Was a Stranger*, 78.

⁸⁹ Spencer, “Neglected Widows in Acts 6:1–7,” 730–31. Spencer comments pointedly on the manner of their decision: ‘the apostles manage to keep their distance in the widows’ dispute; they *lay* their hands on the seven appointed table servants as a gesture of support and solidarity (6:6), but because of their greater devotion to praying and to ministering the word they refuse to *lift* their hands personally to help the widows (6:2,4)’ (Spencer, “Neglected Widows in Acts 6:1–7,” 730, emphasis in original).

restoring Tabitha to the collective of grieving widows Peter combines prayer *and* service,⁹⁰ as did Tabitha herself,⁹¹ since she is named as a disciple, which presupposes evangelism,⁹² as well as the works of mercy attested to by her handiwork (Acts 9:36–43). It should be noticed that this miracle initiates a prolonged stay at Joppa, where Peter is subsequently located by the men sent by Cornelius in response to the directions given in his angelic vision (v. 43; 10:5–6). Meanwhile, the spiritual consequences of personal decisions are at stake when a hungry Peter falls into a trance: ‘faced with a sheet filled with “all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air” (Acts 10.11–12) and the command to “kill and eat”, [he] responds by protesting that he has never eaten anything that is profane or unclean (κοινὸν καὶ ἀκάθαρτον)’ (v. 14).⁹³ Bryan explains that Peter is rejecting not only defilement, but desecration, and the prospect of ‘compromising his holiness as a member of God’s elect people’.⁹⁴ Peter is told, ‘ “What God has made clean, you must not call profane” ’ (v. 15). The vision is repeated twice more, and then Peter is prompted by the Spirit that emissaries from Cornelius are seeking him. Peter is a guest in the house of Simon the tanner, but he invites Cornelius’ delegation in as host, and so his actions resemble those of Abraham (although Peter has prior knowledge of the identity of his visitors).⁹⁵ Matson and Brown interpret this invitation to Gentiles to share his lodgings as a sign of Peter’s ‘conversion’,⁹⁶ and so a narrative precursor to the conversion of Cornelius. On their return to Caesarea, Peter extrapolates from his vision that God is calling him not to regard any *people* as unclean.⁹⁷ Peter was corporately involved in resolving the problem of partiality shown to local Jewish

⁹⁰ Spencer, “Neglected Widows in Acts 6:1–7,” 731–32, emphasis mine.

⁹¹ Finger, *Of Widows and Meals*, 260.

⁹² Ivoni Richter Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles: A Feminist Liberation Perspective*, originally published as *Frauen in der Apostelgeschichte des Lukas: eine Feministisch-theologische Exegese* by Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1992, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 34, 54.

⁹³ Bryan, *Jesus and Israel’s Traditions*, 166.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Andrew E. Arterbury, “The Ancient Custom of Hospitality, the Greek Novels, and Acts 10:1–11:18,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 66.

⁹⁶ David Lertis Matson and Warren S. Brown, “Tuning the Faith: The Cornelius Story in Resonance Perspective,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 33, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 456.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 456–57, emphasis mine.

widows, and now declares that he perceives that ‘God shows no partiality’ (10:34). According to Mittelstadt, Cornelius is ready to hear from God, whereas Peter required a ‘triple vision’, as he had not yet realised the import of his words at Pentecost,⁹⁸ when he declared: ‘ “For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him” ’ (2:39). Joppa also marks the boundary of Jewish territory,⁹⁹ so when Peter responds to the summons to Caesarea this spatial transition fulfils part of the prophetic expansion foretold in Acts 1:8.¹⁰⁰

I do not recall reading any discussion of Peter’s responses to his visions, and the visitors, in terms of his resistance to Jesus’ washing his feet in the upper room. At first, Peter was disturbed, and upon being told he would understand afterwards (John 13:7), he became adamant that Jesus would never wash his feet (v. 8a). When told he could then have no part or share with Jesus, he veered to the opposite extreme (vv. 8b–9). His future comprehension cannot be assigned totally either to post-Crucifixion and Resurrection realisation, or to the revelation at Pentecost, as indicated above, although Neyrey attaches it to Jesus’ post-Resurrection prediction of the manner of Peter’s own death (21:18).¹⁰¹ The unprecedented situation that Peter now finds himself in with regard to ritual purity, is surely a further dimension of the promised insight. As an anthropologist, Douglas concludes that within the Mosaic food regulations the anomalous was ritually impure, so the preservation of taxonomic purity also stood for, and preserved, the wider social order.¹⁰² Peter’s worldview has

⁹⁸ Martin William Mittelstadt, “Eat, Drink, and Be Merry: A Theology of Hospitality in Luke-Acts,” *Word & World* 34, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 139. Peter denied Jesus three times, and was restored by a threefold question and commission, so such repetition is not unprecedented, and could rather be seen as divine emphasis.

⁹⁹ Martin Hengel, “Der Historiker Lukas und die Geographie Palästinas in der Apostelgeschichte,” *Zeitschrift Des Deutschen Palästinas-Vereins* 99 (1983): 171, cited in Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles*, 33.

¹⁰⁰ ‘ “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” ’ (Acts 1:8).

¹⁰¹ Jerome H. Neyrey, “The Footwashing in John 13:6–11: Transformation Ritual or Ceremony?” in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honour of Wayne A. Meeks*, ed. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 212.

¹⁰² Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal,” *Daedalus* 101, no. 1, *Myth, Symbol, and Culture*, themed issue (Winter 1972): 71–80. <https://jstor.org/stable/20024058>.

been ruptured by the supernatural; the purposes of the Father are greater than he has conceived hitherto.

4.1. Welcoming Gentiles: God and Cornelius

Peter's return with the men prompts Arterbury to find parallels with hospitality in Greek novels and Greco-Roman myth, with the essential difference that the hosts convert to the God of Peter, their guest, rather than the reverse. Thus, Luke shows his audience that the Christian God is the 'divine Host', 'the true God of hospitality'.¹⁰³ He does not come in disguise as a test like the Greek god of hospitality, Zeus Xenios, 'protector of suppliants and guests' and 'Patron of Strangers'.¹⁰⁴ Rowe insists on this uniqueness, arguing that Peter asserts: 'You know the word which he sent to the people of Israel preaching peace through Jesus Christ: *this one* is Lord of all'¹⁰⁵ (Acts 10:36); the making of such a declaration to a Roman centurion, in a city founded in honour of Augustus, thereby elevates Jesus above other gods, including the emperor.¹⁰⁶ Peter tells his hearers that he ate and drank with the Lord after he arose from the dead (v. 41b). During the course of his subsequent stay he then eats and drinks with his host and his guests (v. 48b; cf. 11:3). Such ground-breaking commensality underscores the integrity of his message of an all-powerful God who eats and drinks with mortals.

By his acceptance of hospitality Peter has become a 'friend of the household'; his subsequent advocacy to the Jerusalem church for the acceptance of Cornelius' household as believers reflects the obligation of representation within the relationship of reciprocal 'guest-friendship' (*xenia*) which ensues.¹⁰⁷ As the angel preceded Peter over the threshold (Acts 10:3), and the parties have been 'commended to each other

¹⁰³ Arterbury, "The Ancient Custom of Hospitality," 71; Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels*, 174.

¹⁰⁴ Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels*, 174; Kevin D. O'Gorman, "Dimensions of Hospitality: Exploring Ancient and Classical Origins," in *Hospitality: A Social Lens*, ed. Paul Lynch, Alison Morrison, and Conrad Lashley, *Advances in Tourism Research* (London: Routledge, 2007), 20, 25.

¹⁰⁵ Rowe, "Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult," 290, Rowe's translation, emphasis mine.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 291–92.

¹⁰⁷ Walter T. Wilson, "Urban Legends: Acts 10:1–18 and the Strategies of Greco-Roman Foundation Narratives," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 91–3. doi:10.2307/3268594.

by God', Peter can justify his actions as obedience to God's will.¹⁰⁸ The criticisms of the church in Jerusalem cease when they hear that the 'gift' of the Holy Spirit has fallen on the Gentiles (11:15–18). As Arterbury notes, under the customs of gift-giving within hospitality, 'it was clear that God had extended hospitality to the Gentiles. God had welcomed the Gentiles into God's household'.¹⁰⁹ O'Loughlin expands upon the significance of commensality: 'Eating together is seen as responding to the divine initiative and to establish a bond that is more profound than circumcision: indeed, eating ordinary food – for no food is uncommon or unclean – together forms the actual bond of the ecumenical community of the risen Christ'.¹¹⁰ Thus, the conversion of the Gentile household of Cornelius signifies 'the symbolic beginnings of Christianity's multiethnic self-perception', for Wilson.¹¹¹ These themes of inclusion, household and hospitality in the nascent Church are also evidenced in the following discussion of another encounter initiated by a vision.

4.2. A Welcoming Gentile: Lydia and Paul (Acts 16:6–15)

Paul and his companions are repeatedly constrained by the Holy Spirit on their journey; Paul receives a vision of a Macedonian man begging for help, and they then alter their course in response. Thus, the meeting of Paul and Lydia in Philippi, and her subsequent baptism with her household is a companion piece to the story of Peter's roof-top vision, and Cornelius' angelic visitation and subsequent conversion of his

¹⁰⁸ Chris A. Miller, "Did Peter's Vision in Acts 10 Pertain to Men or the Menu?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159, no. 635 (July-September 2002): 311–12; Wilson, "Urban Legends," 91–3. To pursue the theme of angelic precedence with regard to hospitality and discipleship further: Asumang argues that in Mark's gospel, the *diakoneō* (table service) of the angels who minister to Jesus in the wilderness is a prelude to others extending hospitality to Jesus (Asumang, "And the Angels Waited on Him").

¹⁰⁹ Arterbury, "The Ancient Custom of Hospitality," 71.

¹¹⁰ Thomas O'Loughlin, "Sharing Food and Breaking Boundaries: Reading of Acts 10–11: 18 as a Key to Luke's Ecumenical Agenda in Acts," *Transformation* 32, no. 1 (January 2015): 30. doi:10.1177/0265378814537757.

¹¹¹ Wilson, "Urban Legends," 79. Wilson proposes that Luke as an outsider, may have manipulated the themes of pagan storytelling in order to compose a history of 'institutional origins' which establishes the multicultural church as a successor to the nation of Israel (Wilson, "Urban Legends," 78). I am aware that the stories of Cornelius and Lydia have subsequently been co-opted to support what Schottroff identifies as the androcentric construction of a discrete 'anti-Judaistic', Eurocentric, 'Gentile Christianity'; she instances how this epochal narrative has overlooked the Ethiopian eunuch (Luise Schottroff, *Lydia's Impatient Sisters: A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity*, trans. Barbara Rumscheidt and Martin Rumscheidt (London: SCM Press, 1995), 11–16, 20–21). I am choosing these stories to show how hospitality, culture, and belief interrelate.

household. When Paul encounters Lydia, a purple-trader from the Lydian city of Thyatira,¹¹² at a river-side place of prayer on the Sabbath, she is described as ‘a worshiper of God’ (Acts 16:14).¹¹³ She first ‘listens’ to Paul’s message, and then ‘pays attention’, or listens ‘eagerly’ as the Lord opens her heart.¹¹⁴ Gillman makes the observation that in the text the ensuing baptism of Lydia and her household is dealt with cursorily, and subordinated to her offer of hospitality.¹¹⁵ When Lydia, as a Gentile woman, says to Paul: ‘If you have judged (*kekrikate*) me to be faithful (*pistên*) to the Lord, come and stay at my home’, her language reflects the transition in her belief, as Conzelmann notes.¹¹⁶ She is seeking to honour Paul, but Malina and Neyrey observe that as an independent woman who is not explicitly identified as a wife, she would have been an object of cultural suspicion.¹¹⁷ Blue however, does offer a range of possibilities for her marital and propertied status as a householder: she could be divorced, or widowed, and living in her own house; a married woman who owned the

¹¹² Graves uses archaeological and epigraphical evidence to argue that Lydia would have worked or traded in textiles dyed with both the more expensive Tyrian purple dye produced from murex shellfish, and the cheaper madder root (*rubia*) to cater for a range of clients, and that it is likely that she was a wealthy woman. See David E. Graves, “What is the Madder with Lydia’s Purple? A Reexamination of the *Purpurarii* in Thyatira and Philippi,” *Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin* 62 (2017): 3–29. Abel combines organic chemistry and narrative history in an article which contains a somewhat euphemistic description of sustainable and unsustainable dye-production: ‘The dye can be collected by poking the snail to cause irritation, collecting the secretion, then releasing the slug back into the sea. Sadly a less sustainable method involved crushing the slugs’ (A. Abel, “The History of Dyes and Pigments: From Natural Dyes to High Performance Pigments,” in *Colour Design*, 2nd ed., ed. Janet Best, Woodhead Publishing Series in Textiles (Duxford: Woodhead, 2012), 566. doi:10.1016/B978-0-08-101270-3.00024-2). Jacoby provides context and quantification: ‘Twelve thousand snails of *Murex brandiaris* yield no more than 1.4g of pure dye, enough to colour the trim of a single garment’ (David Jacoby, “Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World, and the Christian West,” *Dumbarton Oaks* 58 (2004): 210. doi:10.2307/3591386).

¹¹³ Related adjectives were sometimes applied to Jews, or proselytes, but this term is ‘regularly used’ for non-Jews who attended synagogue worship (John Gillman, “Hospitality in Acts 16,” *Louvain Studies* 17, no. 2–3 (Summer-Fall 1992): 186. doi:10.2143/LS.17.2.2013797). However, Murphy notes that Lydia’s use of molluscs as a dye-source would have made it impossible for her to convert to Judaism, as Levitical law considered contact with shellfish ‘detestable, the Hebrew term generally used to describe an idol’ (Rosalyn F. T. Murphy, “Gender Legacies: Black Women in the Early Church—an Ethno-Historical Reconstruction,” *Black Theology* 7, no. 1 (2009): 21–22. doi:10.1558/blth.v7i1.10).

¹¹⁴ Gillman, “Hospitality in Acts 16,” 187.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp, trans. A. Thomas Kraabel and James Limburg, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988), 130, cited in Gillman, “Hospitality in Acts 16,” 187.

¹¹⁷ Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, “Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 62.

principal house, or a widow living in a house that was bequeathed to her.¹¹⁸ Given her name and former status,¹¹⁹ her existence is disputed,¹²⁰ but her hospitality is not in doubt.

This story is replete with reversals, regardless of whether Lydia is viewed as an entrepreneurial merchant, or a migrant dyer and trader. The Brazilian, feminist liberation theologian Ivoni Richter Reimer is of the opinion that interpretations which portray Lydia as a purveyor of luxury goods, and thus a wealthy woman, are attempts by the wealthy West to co-opt the first ‘European’ convert.¹²¹ Using a Womanist perspective on the historical evidence, Murphy proposes that it is possible that Lydia was a ‘woman of colour’.¹²² There is also sympathetic speculation from Sutherland that she might be indelibly stained by her trade.¹²³ In her successful appeal to Paul, Lydia ‘strongly urged’ or ‘insisted’ (v. 15), and Blue footnotes the only other New Testament occurrence of such importunity as being when the two disciples on the Emmaus road constrain Jesus (Luke 24:29).¹²⁴ Miller adjudges Lydia’s demonstrative offer of ‘patronage and hospitality’ as an ‘effusive, and insistent, response to her conversion, in which God had taken a direct hand’.¹²⁵ For González, an implicit gender-change is also concealed within her entreaty, as her urging can be equated with the pleading of the visionary ‘man of Macedonia’ who had prompted Paul’s journey.¹²⁶ As a client who has received God’s favour, Lydia makes due public acknowledgement, and in then becoming a patron herself, she alters the usual flow of patronage.¹²⁷

¹¹⁸ Bradley B. Blue, “In Public and in Private: The Role of the House Church in Early Christianity,” PhD thesis (University of Aberdeen, 1989), 43.

¹¹⁹ The region of Lydia was renowned for textile-dyeing and wool-production; Lydia was an *ethnicon* given to slaves, and so her name indicates she had been a slave. See Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles*, 100, 108.

¹²⁰ Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles*, 128 n. 310.

¹²¹ Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles*, 102–5, 112–13.

¹²² Murphy, “Gender Legacies,” 20.

¹²³ Sutherland, *I Was a Stranger*, 48.

¹²⁴ Blue, “In Public and in Private,” 123, 123 n. 108.

¹²⁵ Amanda C. Miller, “Cut from the Same Cloth,” 208.

¹²⁶ Justo L. González, *Acts: The Gospel of the Spirit* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), 189–90, cited in Amanda C. Miller, “Cut from the Same Cloth,” 207.

¹²⁷ Amanda C. Miller, “Cut from the Same Cloth,” 208.

Abraham's first act as a 'subject of God's covenant' is the act of hospitality.¹²⁸ It is fitting, therefore, that having received the word of God, and become the first European convert, Lydia's first gesture is to offer hospitality. Finding common allegiance as sons of Abraham enabled Jews and Gentiles to enter the family of God: 'In effect, it turned the God of Israel, a tribal deity, into the God of all the nations (Rom. 3:28–30)'.¹²⁹ Elliott develops this international extension, by showing how the salvation of Israel and the posterity of the house of Abraham is realised in the household, not the Temple.¹³⁰ After Pentecost, the gospel spreads 'from house to house (Acts 20:20): from the households of Galilee, Jerusalem and Jericho' outwards;¹³¹ it penetrates households of the diaspora and the empire, across the Mediterranean and goes 'to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8). Ultimately, 'all the families of the earth shall be blessed', in accordance with the promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:3; cf. Gal. 3:14; Heb. 2:16).¹³² For Casalengo, Luke sets up a dialectic between the distanced ritual space of Temple observance and the immediate relationality of the home; these household communities are 'loyal' to the God who does not dwell in buildings made by human hands.¹³³ This loyalty is the due response to the gracious patronage of the Lord, and the household was the centre of such networks of obligation, as I have established. Contained within the historical and geographical sweep of the examples thus far has been an effective transition: the move from a narrative of individuals responding in faith to the promises of God, to

¹²⁸ McNulty, *The Hostess*, 7.

¹²⁹ David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 202.

¹³⁰ John H. Elliott, "Temple Versus Household in Luke-Acts: A Contrast in Social Institutions," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 236–37, 239.

¹³¹ Elliott continues this sentence by itemising further places, and giving accompanying scriptural references (Elliott, "Temple Versus Household in Luke-Acts," 226).

¹³² Although Dube notes: 'Matthew's intertextual use of the figure of Abraham has been read along the lines of "blessing to the nations" by Western scholars, without examining the power relations it advocates' (Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000), 138). I am looking primarily at hospitality as a domestic and ecclesial practice at a local level, rather than as a legitimation for coercion or control, and I consider how the victimised and stigmatised represent a challenge to the status quo, while bearing in mind the unequal distribution of power.

¹³³ Alberto Casalengo, *Gesu e Il Tempio: Studio Redazionale Di Luca-Atti* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1984), 146–47, 196–97, cited in Elliott, "Temple Versus Household in Luke-Acts," 215.

the emergence of households of believing converts. Having referenced patronage in passing with regard to this latter development, in the next section, I will seek to understand the cultural and linguistic underpinnings of this form of hospitality. Hitherto, in looking at hospitality in the lives of Abraham, Jesus, Peter, and Paul, I have mostly preserved chronology, but going forward I will adopt thematic consistency to structure my argument.

5. Patronage, hospitality, and belief

I have traced how ritualised adoptive kinship, which mitigated the threat posed to the host who offered shelter and sustenance to the unknown stranger, evolved over the centuries into the affiliated and potentially long-term relationship of patron and client. Patronage widens to include the bestowal of social and political favour, but the association with hospitality is retained, either through distribution of food baskets (*sportulae*), or the offering of invitations to dine or accommodation.¹³⁴ Patrons could offer protection and support, and had privileged access to scarce social, economic, and political resources that were not universally available.¹³⁵ In his influential work on patronage, Saller discusses the difficulty of constructing a definitive terminology of personal patronage under the Roman empire.¹³⁶ The pertinence of Paul's correspondence to this endeavour is put forward by Osiek:

If there is anything to the argument that Roman patronage and Greek benefaction are distinct, in Paul we have an Eastern Hellenized and Greek-speaking (Roman citizen?) of Judean extraction dealing with non-elite Greek speakers in Roman Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia. Paul's letters in general may be test cases not only for how patronage functioned in non-elite circles, but also for how it functioned in the absence of some of the expected terminology.¹³⁷

Literary and semantic inconsistencies notwithstanding, public benefaction and praise

¹³⁴ The term *sportulae* also applied to monetary payment given for attendance at the morning *salutatio*, or following in a patron's retinue (Peter Garnsey, et al., *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015), 176).

¹³⁵ Halvor Moxnes, "Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 242–45.

¹³⁶ Richard P. Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 7–29. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511583612.

¹³⁷ Carolyn Osiek, "The Politics of Patronage and the Politics of Kinship: The Meeting of the Ways," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 39, no. 3 (August 2009): 147. doi:10.117/0146107909106758.

of the emperor or other prominent figures would have made the language of grace, salvation, and deliverance commonplace for converts to Christianity.¹³⁸

Powerful and prestigious public figures were expected to show particularity to family, friends, and clients, and gained honour through their benefactions. The obligation was mutual and long-lasting despite the inequality of power, and clients would express loyalty through deference and praise. DeSilva identifies how the constellation of words associated with belief, such as faith (*fides* in Latin; *pistis* in Greek) and grace (*charis*) are all embedded in the language of commitment, loyalty and gratitude which marked patronal relationships.¹³⁹ The client had to keep faith with the patron by remaining loyal, and trusting that the patron would keep their promises. However, it was understood that giving should be for the sake of giving, and not in expectation of return. Recipients were expected to value the ongoing relationship with their patron more than the gift, a gift created a binding relationship of reciprocity. A reputation for being properly grateful in these social exchanges was analogous to a present day credit rating in financial transactions. Furthermore, deSilva notes that grace was used to characterise both sides of the relationship: grace was evidenced in the favour shown by a gift, and evinced due gratitude.

Montserrat explains that status could take precedence over gender,¹⁴⁰ and so Greco-Roman women were acknowledged as public patrons and benefactors; their Christian counterparts were enjoined in 1 Tim. 5:16 to support widows in need.¹⁴¹ *Paterfamilias* denoted property-ownership, so could be applied equally to women and men, as Saller clarifies.¹⁴² The aforementioned Lydia, and possibly Euodia and

¹³⁸ deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 122.

¹³⁹ Here and for the following I am relying on deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 115, 105–8, 122, 126. See also Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198724148.001.0001.

¹⁴⁰ Dominic Montserrat, “Reading Gender in the Roman World,” in *Experiencing Rome: Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire*, ed. Janet Huskinson (London; Milton Keynes: Routledge; The Open University, 2000), 164–65.

¹⁴¹ Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald, with Janet H. Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 194–219, here at 302 n. 85.

¹⁴² Richard P. Saller, “*Pater Familias, Mater Familias*, and the Gendered Semantics of the Roman Household,” *Classical Philology* 94, no. 2 (April 1999): 182–97. doi:10.1086/449430.

Syntyche in Philippi,¹⁴³ the mother of John Mark in Jerusalem, Nympha of Colossae, and the mobile Phoebe from Cenchreae, all host house churches and appear to be householders in their own right, and Lydia offers hospitality to Paul as a patron would.¹⁴⁴ In return, Paul formally accords patronal status to Phoebe as his *prostatis* (Rom. 16:2), but he also recommends her, as the assumed bearer of his letter, in a reversal of that relationship; Osiek speculates that these gestures operate as ‘mutual flattery’,¹⁴⁵ but it is unnecessary to go beyond noting their submission to each other, as her interpretation detracts from any understanding of Christianity as countercultural.

5.1. Jesus, God and patronage

Augustus officially acquired the title *pater patriae* in 2 BCE, the empire and the inhabitants of the Mediterranean world were thus constructed as his *familia*, his clients.¹⁴⁶ Such imperial representation coupled with an emperor’s mediation between the gods and the populace, if he was appointed *pontifex maximus*,¹⁴⁷ made Jesus’ own claims of patronage and heavenly mediation dangerous propositions.¹⁴⁸ Neyrey clarifies Jesus’ position vis-à-vis patronage:

God, the heavenly benefactor, has bestowed on us all benefaction through Jesus (e.g. Eph. 1.3-10). . . . Jesus, then, mediates the heavenly

¹⁴³ Marchal discusses the speculation aroused by their names that these two women could be freed slaves. See Joseph A. Marchal, “Slaves as Wo/Men and Unmen: Reflecting Upon Euodia, Syntyche, and Epaphroditus in Philippi,” in *The People Beside Paul: The Philippian Assembly and History from Below*, ed. Joseph A. Marchal, Early Christianity and Its Literature, no. 17 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015), 144–46.

¹⁴⁴ Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman’s Place*, 157–58.

¹⁴⁵ Osiek, “The Politics of Patronage,” 148–50.

¹⁴⁶ Mary Rose D’Angelo, “Abba and ‘Father’: Imperial Theology and the Jesus Traditions,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 623. doi:10.2307/3267435.

¹⁴⁷ W. K. Lacey, “*Patria Potestas*,” in *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives*, ed. Beryl Rawson, reprint, 1986 (London: Routledge, 1992), 126–28, 139.

¹⁴⁸ D’Angelo, “Abba and ‘Father,’” 623; Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman’s Place*, 211. The presence and importance of an ‘imperial cult’ is debated by Petersen, who finds that although Paul advocated non-conformity with the prevailing *mores*, he did not see citizenship of heaven as incompatible with citizenship under an emperor (Anders Klostergaard Petersen, “Imperial Politics in Paul: Scholarly Phantom or Actual Textual Phenomenon?” in *People Under Power: Early Jewish and Christian Responses to the Roman Power Empire*, ed. Michael Labahn and Outi Lehtipuu (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 120–25). Paul himself receives friendship or protection from numerous Roman functionaries during his travels. See Drew W. Billings, *Acts of the Apostles and the Rhetoric of Roman Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 4–5. doi:10.1017/9781316946251.

patronage of God to us, even as he functions to mediate earthly petition and praise to the heavenly patron.¹⁴⁹

Significantly, Luke's summary of Jesus' ministry that 'he went about doing good (*euergetōn*) and healing', uses the verb form for of the noun for a benefactor (Acts 10:38).¹⁵⁰ Gowler explains that the accusation that Jesus is a 'friend' of toll-collectors and sinners actually frames them as his clients,¹⁵¹ and this relationship is explained by deSilva, who observes that Jesus acquires his own *clientela*, or entourage, as a result of his virtuous deeds (*aretai*).¹⁵² Nevertheless, Jesus is cognisant of those who would join themselves to him for free food, rather than spiritual nourishment (John 6:26–27).¹⁵³ However, when his disciples assume that they should regulate access to Jesus, he reframes the intermediary role of brokerage by appointing the weak and powerless as his brokers.¹⁵⁴ At the Last Supper, Jesus calls his disciples friends (*philoī*), not slaves (*douloi*) (John 15:15). This naming leads Osiek and Balch to conclude: 'Discipleship, then, brings about an emancipation, a transformation of status from metaphorical slavery to clientage under the rubric of friendship'.¹⁵⁵

Summers is dubious about this friendship being patron-client terminology because no benefit would accrue to the disciples from a patron who is, in the eyes of the world, without influence.¹⁵⁶ However, advancing his thesis on friendship causes

¹⁴⁹ Jerome H. Neyrey, "God, Benefactor and Patron: The Major Cultural Model for Interpreting the Deity in Greco-Roman Antiquity," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27, no. 4 (June 2005): 476. doi:10.1177/0142064X05055749.

¹⁵⁰ deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 133–4. He also notes that healers were also seen as a particular type of benefactor (deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 134 n. 29).

¹⁵¹ David B. Gowler, "'You Shall Love the Alien as Yourself': Hope, Hospitality, and the Love of the Stranger in the Teachings of Jesus," *Religions* 10, no. 220, *Hope in Dark Times*, special issue (2019): 9. doi:10.3390/rel10030220. Overt use of the term client came to be seen as degrading, and so gradations of friendship were substituted. See Saller, *Personal Patronage*, 9–12.

¹⁵² deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 135. DeSilva references Matt. 4:25 and Luke 5:15.

¹⁵³ ' "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you" ' (John 6: 26–27).

¹⁵⁴ Moxnes, "Patron-Client Relations," 258–59; deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 134–35, 138.

¹⁵⁵ Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches*, The Family, Religion, and Culture (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 189.

¹⁵⁶ Stephen Bruce Summers, "With Reference to Christ's Description; 'You Are My Friends' in St. John 15.15, What Are the Implications of Friendship for the Church in Postmodernity?" PhD thesis (University of Chichester, 2008), 22.

him to lose sight of the constitution of Jesus' unworldly kingdom. Citing Keener, Summers informs us that the Jewish slave could not inherit unless they received their freedom in the same will that named the bequest.¹⁵⁷ He then fails to follow this fact through to its logical conclusion, namely that Jesus is leaving his disciples, and so he is liberating them into a new relationship wherein they can inherit all the blessings of the Father's house (cf. John 8:36).¹⁵⁸ In Colossians, slaves are promised that they will receive the reward of inheritance (3:24), but Summers contrasts slavish obedience and knowing obedience, and restricts friendship to the latter condition,¹⁵⁹ which disregards the significance of Jesus' declaration in the context of the eschatological hospitality that the footwashing prefigures.¹⁶⁰ Abraham was called the friend of God, and God did not hide what he intended from him (Isa. 41:8; 2 Chron. 20:7; Gen. 18:17, 20–21). God also spoke to Moses face-to-face, as to a friend (Exod. 33:11, Num. 12:8a; Deut. 34:10), so Jesus' words marking a transition to friendship can be seen in part, as a recapitulation of those relationships.¹⁶¹ Subsequent proof of friendship is evident in the threefold exchange of questions between the risen Jesus and a repentant and humbled Peter (John 21:15–17). The latter consistently uses the language of friendship, and he is given a pastoral charge, in recognition of his corresponding readiness and preparedness to lay down his life for Jesus' sheep, as a friend would for a friend (cf. John 13:36–38; John 15:13).¹⁶²

As Green asserts, Jesus offered a way of circumventing the stratified 'gift-and-obligation system that tied together every person—slave or free, male or female, emperor or child—into an intricate web of reciprocal relations'.¹⁶³ When Jesus taught

¹⁵⁷ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 1013, cited in Summers, "You Are My Friends," 20.

¹⁵⁸ "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

¹⁵⁹ Summers, "You Are My Friends," 27.

¹⁶⁰ See section 3.1, pp. 56–57.

¹⁶¹ Cf. John 3:29. John the Baptist may be less than the 'least' in the kingdom of God, despite his greatness as a prophet (Luke 7:28), but he is led to describe himself as the joyful friend of the bridegroom.

¹⁶² Eldho Puthenkandathil, *Philos: A Designation for the Jesus-Disciple Relationship: An Exegetico-Theological Investigation of the Term in the Fourth Gospel*, Europäische Hochschulschriften, Series 23, Theology, vol. 475 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993), 308–14, 315–19.

¹⁶³ Joel B. Green, "We Had to Celebrate and Rejoice!": Happiness in the Topsy-Turvy World of Luke-Acts," in *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness: What the Old and New Testaments Teach Us About*

the disciples to pray and ‘forgive debts’, they are being instructed not to hold ‘obligations for praise and esteem’ over their debtors as a patron would.¹⁶⁴ Jesus’ followers are to treat one another as family, and give without distinction of status, as they would in their kinship group.¹⁶⁵ In the Jerusalem church of the book of Acts, honour was accorded to divestment as benefactors (in the non-technical sense of donors) and beneficiaries united before God their mutual benefactor.¹⁶⁶ Having ‘all things in common’ (Acts 4:32–35) references the *topoi* of friendship as a Greco-Roman philosophical ideal of fellowship (*philia koinōnia*) between like-minded ‘partners’ (*koinōnoi*), resembling the mutuality of brothers (*philadelphia*).¹⁶⁷ DeSilva expounds how, as in the later relations between churches in different provinces, this circulation of resources is seen as God’s provision.¹⁶⁸ The obligation to repay is met by rendering thanks to God; the givers are remembered in prayer, which perpetuates the flow of grace. Just as formal benefactions were made to *collegia* or cities, so with the church under the patronage of God. Paul gives thanks to God for the generosity, growth in maturity, and the works of the churches he writes to, which he sees as a result of God’s grace, and so worthy of his thanksgiving. The churches have been blessed corporately, but the sanctification of individual believers is shown as they duly love, forgive, and share. The gifts of God are to be stewarded wisely through sharing so that the praise of God may increase; the fear of persecution, public shame, or economic loss should not make them disloyal to God.

Worldly patronage pertains to physical gifts and benefits which require due acknowledgement; Paul discourses on spiritual gifts that are received through being in

the Good Life, ed. Brent A. Strawn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 178.

doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199795734.003.0007.

¹⁶⁴ Joel B. Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 115. However, a social construction of indebtedness should not be seen as dematerialising debt.

¹⁶⁵ Joel B. Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 16.

¹⁶⁶ In worldly terms, clients derived implied status from the importance of their patron, but that vertical relationship between patron and client worked against communal solidarity between similarly placed recipients, according to Eisenstadt and Roniger. See S. N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 48–49. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511557743.

¹⁶⁷ Luke Timothy Johnson, “Making Connections: The Material Expression of Friendship in the New Testament,” *Interpretation* 58, no. 2 (April 2004): 159–60. doi:10.1177/002096430405800205.

¹⁶⁸ Here, and for the following, I am relying on deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 121–56.

spiritual relationship, but for which the recipient is likewise accountable. Malina elucidates: ‘In the Pauline tradition . . . *charis*, God’s readiness to be Patron, is shown to all, while *charisma*, actual favor or patronage, “come to those in Christ Jesus”’.¹⁶⁹ As when Cornelius’ household receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, so gift-giving occurs in the household assemblies; convivial eating and the manifestation of these God-given gifts are all part of their meeting together.¹⁷⁰ Sharing in the body and blood of Christ creates fellowship (*koinōnia*) among those gathered;¹⁷¹ this is analysed ritually as ‘unity-creating intentionality’ by Gruenwald,¹⁷² and as group solidarity through ceremonial commensality by Neyrey.¹⁷³ Paul’s admonitions about unworthy eating, and his exhortations about the exercise of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 11:17–22; 12:1–31; 14:1–40), take on added resonance when consciously located within the practice of banquet-hospitality, and gift-giving as kin-inclusion. For example, Mathews finds a deeper significance in the symbolic gift-exchange within hospitality, ‘since all that belongs to a man is penetrated by his being, and physical contact with his possessions brings communion with the owner’.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, on a physical level, food as a form

¹⁶⁹ Bruce J. Malina, “Patron and Client: The Analogy Behind Synoptic Theology,” *Forum Old Series*, 4, no. 1 (March 1988): 5–6 n. 7.

¹⁷⁰ For the purposes of this thesis, I am not distinguishing between the communal meal and the Lord’s Supper, as hospitality is equally relevant to physical consumption and to spiritual communion. Exegeting Acts 2:41–47 on the intentional community of the Jerusalem church, Finger envisages that the sound of their meetings would have been attractive: ‘Many neighbors would have overheard activity around a communal meal in a small room or an open courtyard that was characterized by great joy (singing? laughter?). In the midst of the urban chaos and misery that characterized every ancient Mediterranean city, such a gathering must have sounded inviting indeed’ (Finger, *Of Widows and Meals*, 242). Cf. Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman’s Place*, 67. See section 6, p. 81.

¹⁷¹ Feeley-Harnik adduces Richardson on the number of neologistic ‘*syn*-compounds’ in Early Christian writing, such as ‘fellow prisoner’, ‘fellow servant’, and so on, and she repeats his suggestion that they indicate ‘“the newness and uniqueness of this Christian fellowship”’ (Alan Richardson, *A Theological Word Book of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 82–83, cited in Gillian Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord’s Table: Eucharist and Passover in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 152. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv4v3175>).

¹⁷² Ithamar Gruenwald, *Rituals and Ritual Theory in Ancient Israel*, The Brill Reference Library of Judaism (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 257. Gruenwald expands on this process thus: ‘the Lord’s Supper . . . involves a preliminary stage of annihilation (the breaking of the bread), before re-generation becomes possible (creating the totality of the community that shares in the bread and is consequently reunited by and through the ritually reassembled pieces of the bread)’ (Gruenwald, *Rituals and Ritual Theory in Ancient Israel*, 249).

¹⁷³ Jerome H. Neyrey, “Ceremonies in Luke-Acts: The Case of Meals and Table-Fellowship,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 375.

¹⁷⁴ Mathews, “Hospitality and the New Testament Church,” 129.

of gift-exchange literally ‘internalizes the debt to the other’,¹⁷⁵ a reputation for hospitality is circulated through bodily memory of consumption.

6. Household hospitality?

Respective domestic provision and dining habits are encapsulated in Dexter’s pithy phrase: ‘The rich ate in, the poor ate out’.¹⁷⁶ Despite Adams inferring that another venue, such as a rented dining room, was used by the Corinthians this does not preclude a chronology where the wealthy could, and did, dine early (1 Cor. 11:21–22, 33–34).¹⁷⁷ Such temporal distinctions go some way to explaining the dependence of poorer members on the ritual meals of the early Christian community, if the poor and slaves would arrive later bringing only limited food.¹⁷⁸ In Smith’s deconstruction of community formation and hospitality in the early Church an inclusive invitation preceded gathering.¹⁷⁹ The small domestic dining groupings for which he argues, enable the production of communal identity through proximity, and observance of banqueting ritual.¹⁸⁰ In opposition to Murphy-O’Connor,¹⁸¹ Smith focuses on typical domestic features and their function, as opposed to compositing and peopling a typical house.¹⁸² Calculations for the possibility of larger assemblies which arise from these

¹⁷⁵ Nathan MacDonald, *Not by Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 74. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199546527.001.0001. Cf. Mathews, who notes the correlation between the length of time food was believed to stay in the stomach and the duration of the period of hospitality offered to the stranger in the ancient Near East. See Mathews, “Hospitality and the New Testament Church,” 67 n. 3.

¹⁷⁶ Caroline Dexter (no details given), cited in Carolyn Osiek, “The Family in Early Christianity,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (January 1996): 12. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43722568>.

¹⁷⁷ Edward Adams, *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places: Almost Exclusively Houses?* rev. ed., reprint, 2013, Library of New Testament Studies, vol. 450 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 205–6; Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 199–201.

¹⁷⁸ With specific regard to the Lord’s Supper, Gruenwald notes that the ‘life-enhancing qualities’ of food as sustenance are ‘intensified by the sacrificial dimensions’ of the ritual (Gruenwald, *Rituals and Ritual Theory in Ancient Israel*, 252).

¹⁷⁹ Dennis E. Smith, “Hospitality, the House Church, and Early Christian Identity,” in *Mahl und Religiöse Identität Im Frühen Christentum / Meals and Religious Identity in Early Christianity*, ed. Matthias Klinghardt and Hal Taussig (Tübingen: Francke, 2012), 112.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 108–10.

¹⁸¹ See n. 183.

¹⁸² Dennis E. Smith, “The House Church as Social Environment,” in *Text, Image, and Christians in the Graeco-Roman World: A Festschrift in Honor of David Lee Balch*, ed. Aliou Cissé Niang and Carolyn Osiek, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, no. 176 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 7.

imaginative scenarios are ingenious,¹⁸³ but Adams has subsequently advanced a range of venues other than the private house, thus changing the parameters of the debate,¹⁸⁴ although my discussion of hospitality obviously relates more to social arrangements.

Paul's acknowledgement of Gaius' hospitality to the 'whole church' (Rom. 16:23) has been used as justification in arguments about household capacity,¹⁸⁵ but Adams shows that the majority view remains that Paul was commending his ready hospitality.¹⁸⁶ In 2017, Kloppenborg made a plausible argument that the weight of evidence is for *xenos* to be rendered as guest (not the aberrant reading of host).¹⁸⁷ In addition, he highlighted the peculiarity of Paul referring to Gaius by his effectively indistinguishable *praenomen*, if he is indeed unknown to the recipients of the letter.¹⁸⁸ With this reversal, Paul is then requiring future reciprocal hospitality from the Romans, for Phoebe and himself, in return for the hospitality which has been accorded to Gaius, who is known to them.¹⁸⁹ Even if massed gatherings are admitted as a possibility, sociality and *koinōnia* would still have occurred with those close at hand, whether reclining, seated, or standing;¹⁹⁰ this communal sharing is the essence of hospitality. Regardless of proximity to the patron, or titular host, those present are hosted by Jesus at the table of the Lord (1 Cor. 10:21).

Undoubtedly, patronage was central to the self-presentation of the Roman elite; Roman architecture was socially-shaped, and the characteristic *atrium* developed

¹⁸³ See, for example, the convoluted formulæ adopted in the sources collated in Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 201–3.

¹⁸⁴ Taking up Horrell's phrase, Adams writes robustly: 'Envisioning various non-house space-types as Christian meeting space requires a large degree of "disciplined imagination", but the same goes for envisioning Christian meetings in residential space' (Adams, *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places*, 12, 12 n. 73). See also Chapter 4, section 1.1, p. 170.

¹⁸⁵ Friesen, "Poverty in Pauline Studies," 356; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 268. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780192853424.001.0001.

¹⁸⁶ Adams provides a useful summary of earlier views. See Edward Adams, "Placing the Corinthian Communal Meal," in *Text, Image, and Christians in the Graeco-Roman World: A Festschrift in Honor of David Lee Balch*, ed. Aliou Cissé Niang and Carolyn Osiek, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, no. 176 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 26–28.

¹⁸⁷ John S. Kloppenborg, "Gaius the Roman Guest," *New Testament Studies* 63, no. 4 (October 2017): 534–39. doi:10.1017/S0028688517000078.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 545–48.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 544.

¹⁹⁰ For a discussion of the permutations of the dining posture of guests, see Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman's Place*, 10–11, 160–61. For how this might have worked in practice, see Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 210.

as the place for the patron to receive their clients.¹⁹¹ Nevertheless, as *oikos* could indicate a tenement apartment (*insula*), as well as a peristyle *domus*, it cannot be assumed that patrons of house churches were correspondingly wealthy. Given that Paul reminds the Corinthians that by worldly standards, when they were called, not many of them were wise, physically able, or of high standing (1 Cor. 1:26), the settings for their meetings were more likely to be modest. However, as Lopez and Penner indicate, a problematic ideology of spatial separation functions to define the early Church within the academy: ‘Without the category of “house” and “private space,” it would be difficult to envision “Christianness” as a category’.¹⁹²

Although domestic piety was the Roman norm,¹⁹³ Meek observes that *kat’*

¹⁹¹ Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, “Patronage in Roman Society: From Republic to Empire,” in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, Leicester-Nottingham Studies in Ancient Society, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 1989), 63–64; J. J. Coulton, Geddes-Harrower Lectures, University of Aberdeen, 1989, cited in Blue, “In Public and in Private,” 152 n. 14. My focus is on patronage, but Lauritsen problematises prevailing theoretical models of ‘a largely empty space’ which arose from earlier archaeological practice and resulted in an emphasis on the display of status, and a vista through the property (M. Taylor Lauritsen, “Doors in Domestic Space at Pompeii and Herculaneum: A Preliminary Study,” in *Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Oxford, 2010*, ed. Dragana Mladenović and Ben Russell (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2011), 59; M. Taylor Lauritsen, “The Form and Function of Boundaries in the Campanian House,” in *Privata Luxuria: Towards an Archaeology of Intimacy: Pompeii and Beyond*, Papers presented at the International Workshop Center for Advanced Studies, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München, 24–25 March 2011, ed. Anna Anguissola, Münchner Studien Zur Alten Welt, vol. 8 (München: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2012), 106–11). He writes that it ‘remains unclear’ whether the design of the atrium was ‘based upon display rather than function’, but he considers that the ‘defining feature’ of the *domus* was that ‘it was a structure designed for the purposes of control, particularly in the direction of outside to in’ (Lauritsen, “Doors in Domestic Space at Pompeii and Herculaneum,” 73; M. Taylor Lauritsen, “Ornamental Painting on Campanian House Façades,” in *Principles of Decoration in the Roman World*, ed. Annette Haug and M. Taylor Lauritsen, *Decor: Decorative Principles in Late Republican and Early Imperial Italy*, vol. 2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 137). Carucci also qualifies putative openness to the public gaze: ‘spatial articulation was employed to send visual cues establishing the power dynamics of access or seclusion within the domestic building’, thus encoding ‘the principle of selective exposure’ (Margherita Carucci, “Visualising Ancient Privacy in the Roman House,” in *Revealing Privacy: Debating the Understandings of Privacy*, ed. Margherita Carucci (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), 56, 59). With regard to power and access, some property-owners even raised their threshold as a sign of status, which impeded the passage of pedestrians. See Jeremy Hartnett, “The Power of Nuisances on the Roman Street,” in *Rome, Ostia, Pompeii: Movement and Space*, ed. Ray Laurence and David J. Newsome (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 156, 156, fig. 5.9, 158.

¹⁹² Davina C. Lopez and Todd Penner, “‘Houses Made with Hands’: The Triumph of the Private in New Testament Scholarship,” in *Text, Image, and Christians in the Graeco-Roman World: A Festschrift in Honor of David Lee Balch*, ed. Aliou Cissé Niang and Carolyn Osiek, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, no. 176 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 92.

¹⁹³ Lacey, “*Patria Potestas*,” 128–30; James B. Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, Blackwell Ancient Religions (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 118–22; John R. Clarke, “Constructing the Spaces of Epiphany in Ancient Greek and Roman Visual Culture,” in *Text, Image, and Christians in the Graeco-Roman World: A Festschrift in Honor of David Lee Balch*, ed. Aliou Cissé Niang and

oikon ekklēsia was not ‘coterminous’ with the household; the church could include converts, and the household might be headed by a non-believer.¹⁹⁴ In characterising this ambiguous overlap between *ekklēsia* and *oikos*, the ‘church-in-house’, Barton claims that meetings were ‘in some sense *public gatherings which assembled in private space*’.¹⁹⁵ As archaeologists, Allison and Ellis problematise imposed readings of space, access, and privilege: Allison questions masculinist interpretations of separate activity-spaces as normative within the Roman house, and Ellis highlights the shortcomings of attempts to systematise circulation patterns.¹⁹⁶ In a discussion of how these mutable and questionable distinctions operated, Osiek states: ‘The house . . . was not the place to be free of a public role but the place to enhance that role by hospitality’.¹⁹⁷ Schüssler Fiorenza refines this distinction:

The public sphere of the Christian community was *in* the house and not outside of the household. The community was ‘in her house.’ Therefore, it seems that the *domina* of the house, where the ecclesia gathered, had primary responsibility for the community *and* its gathering in the house church.¹⁹⁸

Osiek and MacDonald posit ‘a world of sisterhood, conversation, and exchange among women on issues of hospitality, childcare, service and allegiance to Christ under the authority of a (sometimes pagan) *paterfamilias* as a wife, daughter, or slave’.¹⁹⁹ Their earthy speculative soundscape for a house church includes the overheard cries of a female slave in labour, and the noisy presence of nursing infants and playing children, thus belying any presumption of internal spatial segregation.²⁰⁰

Carolyn Osiek, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, no. 176 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 274–77.

¹⁹⁴ Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 75–76. Adams provides a brief summary of the contexts for Paul’s usage of household language. See Adams, *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places*, 21–24.

¹⁹⁵ Stephen C. Barton, “Paul’s Sense of Place: An Anthropological Approach to Community Formation in Corinth,” *New Testament Studies* 32, no. 2 (April 1986): 232, emphasis in original. doi:10.1017/S0028688500013072.

¹⁹⁶ Penelope M. Allison, “Roman Households: An Archaeological Perspective,” in *Roman Urbanism: Beyond the Consumer City*, ed. Helen M. Parkins (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997), 117–21, 143; Simon P. Ellis, *Roman Housing* (London: Duckworth, 2000), 166–70.

¹⁹⁷ Osiek, “The Family in Early Christianity,” 12.

¹⁹⁸ Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 176. This is in contrast with the public visibility of elite men and their clients as they converged on the forum and the baths during the day. See Ray Laurence, *Roman Pompeii: Space and Society* (London: Routledge, 1994), 122–32.

¹⁹⁹ Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman’s Place*, 19.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.

Taking Rome as her example, Betts proposes the utility of a multisensory approach to understanding spatial dichotomies.²⁰¹ In addition, perceptions of the intersection of honour with public and private space function to give the apostle Paul ‘voice’ as he preaches ‘in public and from house to house’ (Acts 20:20).²⁰² Adams points out that a ‘semi-public space such as a partially walled garden could perhaps help to explain Paul’s prohibition of women’s speech in 1 Cor. 14.43-45, if these verses genuinely came from him’.²⁰³ The importance of these perceived categories can be seen from Kobel’s observation: ‘Roman authorities were suspicious of any kind of gathering of people that did not take place in plain public sight, regardless of the activity its members performed’.²⁰⁴ Writing to counter modern assumptions about privacy, Osiek and Balch argue for differing definitions according to venue. If meetings were conducted in *insulae* they would have been within earshot and oversight of other users and inhabitants of the tenement block.²⁰⁵ Using Vitruvius’ much-cited architectural treatise for support, they construct privacy in the *domus* in terms of differential spatial access for the curious, but uninvited Corinthian ‘outsider’ (1 Cor. 14:16).²⁰⁶ Smith refutes this understanding of this particular verse by

²⁰¹ Eleanor Betts, “Towards a Multisensory Experience of Movement in the City of Rome,” in *Rome, Ostia, Pompeii: Movement and Space*, ed. Ray Laurence and David J. Newsome (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 126.

²⁰² Jerome H. Neyrey, “‘Teaching You in Public and from House to House’ (Acts 20:20): Unpacking a Cultural Stereotype,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26, no. 1 (September 2003): 69–102. doi:10.1177/0142064X0302600105. Cf. Jesus’ assertion to Annas, the high priest, that he has ‘spoken publicly (*parrésiai*) in synagogue and temple and has not spoken in private (*en kruptôi*)’ (John 18:20) (Jerome H. Neyrey, “Spaces and Places, Whence and Whither, Homes and Rooms: ‘Territoriality’ in the Fourth Gospel,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 32, no. 2 (May 2002): 64–65. doi:10.1177/014610790203200205).

²⁰³ Adams, *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places*, 206. See also Cornelia Cyss Crocker, *Reading 1 Corinthians in the Twenty-First Century* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 153, whom he cites in support.

²⁰⁴ Esther Kobel, *Dining with John: Communal Meals and Identity Formation in the Fourth Gospel and Its Historical and Cultural Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 282.

²⁰⁵ Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 34–35.

²⁰⁶ Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 17. In a typical Roman house the vestibule, atrium, and peristyle were open to all; Vitruvius distinguishes between spaces reserved for ‘uninvited and invited’ visitors’ (Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 45, 47, cited in Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 24, their emphasis). See also Speksnijder on visibility and accessibility, and the distinction between spaces that were *communia* and *propria* (Simon A. Speksnijder, “Beyond ‘Public’ and ‘Private’: Accessibility and Visibility During *Salutationes*,” in *Public and Private in the Roman House and Society*, ed. Kaius Tuori and Laura Nissin, JRA Supplementary Series, no. 102 (Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2015), 97–99).

translating *idiōtēs* not as outsider, but as uninitiated, in line with the comparable practice of other associations towards non-members.²⁰⁷ Couper’s preferred rendering of *idiōtēs* as ‘uninformed’ takes more account of subjective experience in the context of uninterpreted tongues, but is not fundamentally incompatible with Smith’s stance on precedence and placement.²⁰⁸ In Chapter 2, I will consider how these early Jesus-followers reinforce their identity as believers through the sensory aspects of eating a shared meal.

6.1. The context of New Testament hospitality

Having considered the intersecting language of faith and patronage, and the spatial and social dimensions of hospitality in the household assembly, I am now in a position to look specifically at the language of hospitality, and set New Testament hospitality in an imperial context. Disputing interpretations of the kingdom of God in the gospels as the ‘reign’ of God, Aalen avers, ‘the kingdom of God is a house’, an enclosed community of those in fellowship with God, Jesus, and each other.²⁰⁹ This can be set against the background of the complexity of the Roman household:

Domus was used with regard to household and kinship to mean the physical house, the household including family and slaves, the broad kinship group including agnates and cognates, ancestors and descendants, and the patrimony.²¹⁰

Meek clarifies the social bonds within this social and economic establishment:

‘Family’ is defined not first by kinship but by the relationship of dependence and subordination. The head of a substantial household was thus responsible for—and expected a degree of obedience from—not only his immediate family but also his slaves, former slaves who were now clients, hired laborers, and sometimes business associates and tenants.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ Dennis E. Smith, “In the Beginning Was the House, Part Two: The Exegetical Data,” *Forum* 3rd ser., 7, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 86–87. Schüssler Fiorenza sees the *collegia* and cultic associations as providing an egalitarian model of community for early Christians. See Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 183.

²⁰⁸ Jonathan Couper, *58 A.D.: A Study of 1 Corinthians* (Malton: Gilead Books Publishing, 2014), 251–52.

²⁰⁹ Sverre Aalen, “‘Reign’ and ‘House’ in the Kingdom of God in the Gospels,” *New Testament Studies* 8, no. 3 (April 1962): 228–29, here at 229. doi:10.1017/S0028688500004665.

²¹⁰ Richard P. Saller, “*Familia, Domus*, and the Roman Conception of the Family,” *Phoenix* 38, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 342. doi:10.2307/1088380.

²¹¹ Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 30. Further to earlier discussion in section 4.1, in Acts 10:24 Cornelius has called together his relatives and close friends, as well as his household to await Peter.

Just as Caesar was the father of the nation, so the household represented the state in microcosm.²¹² Guijarro sees this inseparability of the political and the domestic as crucial to Jesus' mission: 'If the household was the basic cell of society, Jesus could not omit it from his plan to make the good news reach everyone. Recreating the household was the best way to recreate society from its roots'.²¹³ Accordingly, the 'male' space of the patriarchal household replicated external social structures, but Jesus called his followers into the unsettled 'queer' space of the 'kingdom household'; the household of God transcended the earthly household or kingdom.²¹⁴

Koenig defends the premise contained in the title of his book, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission* thus:

The noun *xenos* denotes simultaneously a guest, host, or a stranger, while the verb *xenizein* means "receive as a guest" but also "surprise" and hence "present someone or something as strange." Correspondingly, *philoxenia*, the term used in the New Testament, refers literally not to a love of strangers per se but to a delight in the whole guest-host relationship, in the mysterious reversals and gains for all parties which may take place.²¹⁵

In the context of pneumatic mission, Koenig expands his usage of partnership, and his definition of strangers, by claiming that as potential 'mediators of God's presence' even the familiar become ' "strange" in the best sense'.²¹⁶ From a standpoint of present day praxis, Hoad critiques Koenig's definition of Christian hospitality as 'partnership with strangers' as perhaps owing more to the strategic alliances of the Greek symposium, and proposes 'companionship with strangers' as more befitting a

²¹² Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 221–22.

²¹³ Santiago Guijarro, "The Family in the Jesus Movement," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 34, no. 3 (August 2004): 119. doi:10.1177/01461079040340030401.

²¹⁴ Halvor Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 104–5, emphasis in original. He writes additionally: 'Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God not in imperial pictures, but with images from households, with God as housefather' (Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in His Place*, 157).

²¹⁵ Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 8. Contemporary missiologist Cathy Ross echoes this perception: 'Hospitality is one of my favourite metaphors for mission. It is such a rich metaphor for mission because it incorporates all the fundamentally important virtues in mission of reciprocity, mutuality, surprise, welcome, eating together and receiving from the other' (Cathy Ross, "Pioneering Missiologies: Seeing Afresh," in *The Pioneer Gift: Explorations in Mission*, ed. Jonny Baker and Cathy Ross (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2014), 27).

²¹⁶ Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 9.

Christian relationship.²¹⁷ However, I maintain that any rejection of partnership as showing insufficient fellow-feeling should be nuanced by remembrance of Greco-Roman friendship as a nexus of meaning, which I alluded to in discussion of patronage and slavery earlier. Nevertheless, the experience of hospitality is inseparable from the language used to describe the communal experience of the believers.

According to Elliott, in Luke-Acts, the household is ‘the typical location of the gospel’s reception and the church’s growth’, and the subject for teaching about discipleship and how to live in God’s household.²¹⁸ Koenig proceeds to draw out how household metaphors set the scene for hospitality: the believers themselves are part of the household of God; they enter and have ‘access’ through Christ (Eph. 2:18).²¹⁹ He notes Paul’s use ‘of the verb *oikodomein* (“build up a dwelling”) to describe what believers do for one another in giving and receiving their spiritual gifts’ (1 Cor. 14:4, 17), and he proceeds to argue that ‘everyday hospitality’ facilitates ‘gift-exchange’, ‘mutual, charismatic strengthening’, and testimony.²²⁰ Nevertheless, despite such domestic accounts of spiritual formation, believers were not immune to conformity with the prevailing secular norms of the Greco-Roman household. In Osiek and Balch’s opinion, this had ‘both advantages for mission and disadvantages for eschatological ethics’; they do not expand on this judgement, but presumably they are highlighting the benefits of inculturation and the dangers of syncretism.²²¹

²¹⁷ Rosemary Hoad, “Open House in Luke’s Gospel and Today: Encountering Jesus Through Food and Hospitality,” MA thesis (Lampeter: University of Wales, 2005), 68. I would like to thank Revd Rosemary Hoad for graciously allowing me access to her digital copy of her thesis, and Jayne Downey, Director of Learning Resources at Sarum College, Salisbury, for her assistance.

²¹⁸ Elliott, “Temple Versus Household in Luke-Acts,” 225, 227, here at 225. He earlier explains and enumerates Luke’s usage of the term: ‘In Luke-Acts the “house” (*oikia*) and “Household” (*oikos*), comprise family and kin, personnel and property. They play a prominent, if not dominant, role in the narrative. The term *oikia* appears twenty-five times in Luke and twelve times in Acts; *oikos*, another thirty-four times in Luke and twenty-five times in Acts’ (Ibid., 225, capitals in original).

²¹⁹ Koenig states, without specifying, that the Greek word for ‘access’ literally means ‘entranceway to a hall’ (Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 58).

²²⁰ Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 59.

²²¹ Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 178, 179. For the latter condition, they refer to Peter’s inconsistent dining practice (Gal. 2:11–21).

Nasrallah exposes the discursive formation of early Christian hospitality to travellers by reversing scholarly perspective, and looking at the communities of reception which welcomed and sheltered apostles. She writes: ‘The *ekklēsiai* to which Paul wrote—and Paul, too—seem to have been experimenting with hospitality and financial exchange that paradoxically overflowed out of their lack and need’.²²² The requisitioning of labour, goods and hospitality by travelling Roman officials could potentially dispossess villagers situated on well-traversed routes, as an inscription from Galatia recording an Imperial appeal almost contemporaneous with Paul’s letter to those in the region, implies.²²³ So, even the hospitality extended to those who travelled in the name of Christ, rather than the emperor, had to be delimited by the churches.²²⁴ Ensuing internal tensions between ‘itinerant’ and ‘residential’ Christians arise from the priority given to mission over service, which leads to the expectation of the former that they will be served by the latter.²²⁵ This dynamic is also seen in the subordination of unmarried female prophets to missionary wives, conjectured by Wire.²²⁶ However, this distinction is not clear-cut, as Priscilla and Aquila are peripatetic missionaries who also serially host house churches.²²⁷ Nevertheless, Nasrallah’s shift in focus from the prevailing heroic narrative of the suffering and difficulties of itinerant apostles (2 Cor. 11:23–33) foregrounds an embodied hospitality negotiated in the exigencies and materiality of life,²²⁸ as evidenced in discontent and disputes over equity at the Lord’s Supper.²²⁹

²²² Laura S. Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 139. doi:10.1093/oso/9780199699674.001.0001.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 98–9.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

²²⁵ Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 102.

²²⁶ Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction Through Paul’s Rhetoric*, reprint, 1990 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 102–3.

²²⁷ Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman’s Place*, 30–33.

²²⁸ Further context can be found in Hardwick’s discussion of military metaphor and the language of heroism in the New Testament. See Lorna Hardwick, “Concepts of Peace,” in *Experiencing Rome: Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire*, ed. Janet Huskinson (London; Milton Keynes: Routledge; The Open University, 2000), 364–66.

²²⁹ Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul*, Ch. 4, n.p., n. 59.

6.2. Hospitality and brotherly and sisterly love

Mathews argues that the incidental nature of the mentions of hospitality in the Pauline epistles serve to confirm the centrality of the practice attested to in Luke-Acts.²³⁰ He is of the opinion that the exhortations ‘not to neglect to show hospitality to strangers’ (Heb. 13:2), and to practise hospitality ‘ungrudgingly’ (1 Pet. 4:9), reflect the demands placed upon local congregations in circumstances of suffering and persecution, as the first generation of Christians is succeeded by the next.²³¹ After assessing the severity of the hardships endured by those tasked with spreading the gospel (1 Cor. 1:13), he concludes that their plight more resembled the dire need of the fugitive than that of the passing stranger; this evaluation provides a useful perspective from the Hebrew Bible to superimpose on Nasrallah’s analysis.²³² In the New Testament, hospitality is frequently evidenced as one of the foremost examples of brotherly and sisterly love (Rom. 12:10–13; Heb. 13:1–3).²³³ In 1 Peter, uncomplaining hospitality is given as an example of the love which covers a ‘multitude of sins’ (4:8–9). Osiek calculates that Paul uses sibling language ‘at least 122 times’, which contemporaries would have understood as promoting ‘unity and harmony’ not, as might be supposed today, equality.²³⁴ DeSilva proposes that this language of *philadelphia* ‘facilitates the adoption of a sibling ethic in Christianity.’²³⁵ In Hebrews, after Paul’s appeal not to forget to practise hospitality, he asks his hearers to perform a conceptual leap, and to remember the prisoners, not only as though they

²³⁰ Mathews, “Hospitality and the New Testament Church,” 192 n. 1.

²³¹ Mathews, “Hospitality and the New Testament Church,” 202, 320–21.

²³² Mathews, “Hospitality and the New Testament Church,” 293.

²³³ The language of fictive kinship was not unique to Christianity, but was a feature of religious associations, synagogues, cultic settings and trade guilds. See Philip A. Harland, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians: Associations, Judeans, and Cultural Minorities* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 61–96.

²³⁴ Osiek, “The Politics of Patronage,” 146–47. By contrast, marriage was ‘primarily understood as a social contract between two families for the production of legitimate offspring and the legal transfer of property, though certainly deep and intimate personal relationships did often exist between husbands and wives’ (Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 216).

²³⁵ deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 213. DeSilva notes that by cultural standards, when James and John seek eschatological precedence by requesting the right to sit on either side of Jesus in glory (Mark 10:37), they are acting as brothers ought to by co-operating (deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 220–21).

were themselves chained, but ‘as being yourselves in their skin’ (Heb. 13:3).²³⁶ He transitions from practical hospitality to an imagined, embodied hosting by the imprisoned sisters or brothers.

7. Conclusion

I have shown that the conjunction of hospitality and faith persisted across the centuries. The hospitality offered by Abraham, through the extension of domestic space, was appropriate to a tented, nomadic, tribal culture, just as first-century Greco-Roman domestic hospitality was the product of an urbanised culture supported by a social structure of patronage. Nevertheless, discernible continuities remain over the millennia; so, in this chapter, I have identified common practices of welcome derived from recollections of the Bronze Age, and the life of Jesus, by juxtaposing depictions of eager and open-hearted hospitality with portrayals of defaulting hosts and unwelcoming households. Abraham offered refreshment in the shelter of a shady tree, and in the next chapter, I will look at how the *al fresco* meals which Jesus hosted and provided presage the Messianic age of plenty. Jesus showed the kingdom-hospitality of the household of God in his table fellowship, and through demonstrating humble service by washing the feet of his disciples. This survey has been intertwined with a narrative of hospitable Abraham as the welcomer of angels and the fictional Lazarus, as the forefather of Israel, then the nation of Israel, and thence, in the eyes of Christians, the Church. Being acknowledged as Abraham’s descendants marked the restoration of Zacchaeus, and the woman with the spinal deformity; subsequently, the claim of kinship with Abraham enabled Jews and Gentiles to integrate in the assemblies of the followers of Jesus. This assimilation was reinforced by the fictive kin relationship of *philadelphia* which structured behaviour, and provided a means of naming and relating to fellow believers, whether local, or known only through letters and recommendations.

²³⁶ deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 223, deSilva’s translation.

Hospitality evolves from temporary cohabitation for the clanless isolate, whereby adoption as fictive kin was a bid to avert threat, to later implication with the social and spatial display of power in patronal relationships. By contrast, but existing in parallel with the latter, the ministry of hospitality gave widows an honoured place among believers. Although any discussion of the practicalities of hospitality necessarily centres around the host or patron, my argument has been that it is the collective experience of kinship-*koinōnia* which defines hospitality in the *ekklēsiai*. Hospitality was as necessary for the travelling missionary, or the fellow believer, as for the household meetings, or larger assemblies; the names and status of particular hosts may have been questioned subsequently, as in the cases of Lydia and Gaius, but hospitality was a constant. In the following chapter I will look more closely at meal-time mutuality through the lens of Pattison’s work on social shame.²³⁷ However, hospitality within the early Christian community was not just a culturally inflected practice; the gift of hospitality could also be qualitatively charismatic (1 Pet. 4:9–10). Conversely, the peremptory dismissal attributed to the inhospitable in James is a parody of the act of hospitality: this formula of empty words indicates the lack of customary nourishment, shelter and blessing by reversing their temporal order, as the hapless conjured hearer is bid ‘ “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill” ’ (James 2:16).

²³⁷ Stephen Pattison, *Saving Face: Enfacement, Shame, Theology*, Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

Chapter 2

Feasting the stranger, the hungry, and all people

Communal, covenantal, and eschatological hospitality in the Bible

1. Feasting and hospitality

Having looked at hosts and household hospitality in Chapter 1, in this chapter I will be reversing perspective and considering the recipients of hospitality, the provision of food as a replication of divine providence, and the place of feasting in the heavenly economy and the life of the church. Dietler and Hayden define feasts broadly as ‘the communal consumption of food and/or drink’, but differentiate such occasions from ‘everyday domestic meals and from the simple exchange of food without communal consumption’.¹ Hayden authored a book on the ‘power of feasting’ from an ethnoarchaeological perspective, and he writes, on festal dynamics: ‘Participating in feasts elevates people from mundane everyday affairs, it panders to the senses, immerses the individual in social intercourse, animates ritual, and fosters fond memories’.² I quibble with the negative connotations of pander, even the Corinthians who failed to discern the body of the Lord by persisting in greedy and exclusive eating habits were heedless, rather than sensualists. However, I insist that embodied eating is sensational because, as Classen maintains: ‘We experience our bodies – and the world – *through* our senses’.³ Accordingly, I shall argue that sensory apprehension of self, others, and God is part of ritual eating and feasting, but Hayden’s summary nevertheless provides a useful framework for setting out the themes of this chapter. The elevated sociality of *koinōnia* has already been alluded to Chapter 1, and will be

¹ Michael Dietler and Brian Hayden, “Digesting the Feast: Good to Eat, Good to Drink, Good to Think: An Introduction,” in *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on Food, Politics and Power*, ed. Michael Dietler and Brian Hayden (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 3.

² Brian Hayden, *The Power of Feasts: From Prehistory to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 4. doi:10.1017/CBO9781107337688.

³ Constance Classen, “Foundations for an Anthropology of the Senses,” *International Social Science Journal* 49, no. 153 (September 1997): 402, emphasis in original. doi:10.1111/j.1468–2451.1997.tb00032.x.

encountered again in this chapter. Immersive sensation and ritual, and eschatological meals as a future hope will be approached through defining the stranger (גֵר, *ger*) in Hebrew scripture, and then examining how calendrical festivity and retrospective memory serve to incorporate the גֵר into the Deuteronomic community. I shall move on to consider eschatological meals in Jesus' teaching and ministry, whether the prospect of the consummation of the Messianic banquet, or the earthly culmination of the Last Supper. The theme of feasting for the hungry multitudes through Jesus' miraculous feedings, will be interwoven with the quest of the Gentile mother from Syro-Phoenicia that anticipates the feasting of all people on the mountain in Isaiah 25:6–8. Through a detailed examination of the menu, and situating this feast as eschatological meal, Messianic banquet, and marital celebration, I will argue that the sensory aspects of feasting, including seeing the face of God, take sensory apprehension beyond appetite or festivity to communion, both divine and human. Finally, I will consider invocations of Isaiah 25:6–8 in the present, compare biblical abundance with restriction, and look in general at how exclusion, instead of inclusive hospitality, operates within rituals of Communion.

2. Feasting the גֵר

The singular noun גֵר, a technical term denoting legal status, and thus masculine, occurs eighty-one times in the Hebrew scriptures,⁴ mostly within legal texts, and has the meaning of stranger.⁵ This legal standing is to be distinguished from cultural understandings of divine protection by the gods, or the conventions of

⁴ Usage mine, Ramírez Kidd uses Old Testament.

⁵ José E. Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel: The גֵר in the Old Testament*, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, vol. 283 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999), 15–18, 28, 32–33. The plural form גֵרִים (*gerim*) is only found on eleven occasions, in post-exilic references occurring in 'non-legal contexts or in the motive clauses of legal texts', such as Exod. 23:9b, 'because you were strangers in the Land of Egypt' (Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel*, 30, 30, nn. 110, 111). A Talmudic comment attributed to Rabbi Eliezer states that 'stranger' occurs thirty-six times in the Torah, but the Talmud adds that others say forty-six times (Fred Morgan, "'For You Were Strangers in the Land of Egypt': Caring for the Stranger in Judaism," *Phronema* 15 (2000): 56). Morgan resolves this discrepancy by suggesting that the matter is not about enumeration but 'symbolic significance': 'We know, following the rules of *Gematria* (according to which letters have numerical values) that the Hebrew word *chay*, meaning "life", totals eighteen. "Loving the stranger", then, is equivalent to bringing two lives (*chay*) together, the "homeborn" and the stranger, as a sum of thirty-six' (Morgan, "'For You Were Strangers'," 56).

hospitality in oriental societies: ‘unlike the surrounding cultures, *alterity* in Israel did not necessarily imply *hostility*’.⁶ Houston points out the essential insularity of a ‘lineage-based agrarian society’: ‘the immigrant from another tribe or even the next village is just as much of an outsider’.⁷ The גר is a settled immigrant whose provenance is never mentioned, whereas the motifs of exile and return, or temporary sojourning are used of the Israelite who departs Israel as an emigrant.⁸ Accordingly, the גר is seen from the perspective of the Israelites; most occurrences of the noun are given spatial or territorial locality.⁹ However, it should be remembered that the גר could not own land (Deut. 24:14–15),¹⁰ and so was excluded from the agricultural economy.¹¹ Levine specifies those to whom the term applied:

The *ger* referred to in the Bible was most often a foreign merchant or craftsman or a mercenary soldier. This term never refers to the prior inhabitants of the land; those are identified by ethnological groupings, such as Canaanites and Amorites, or by other specific terms of reference.¹²

The precarity of alienness in antiquity can be deduced from the popular etymology deriving *egens* (needy) from *ex-gens* (apart from the clan) noted by Stählin.¹³ The stranger is separated from the kin-community which sustains his life,¹⁴ and so exists

⁶ Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel*, 114, 116, emphasis in original.

⁷ Walter J. Houston, *Contending for Justice: Ideologies and Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament*, rev. ed., reprint, 2006 (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 108.

⁸ Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel*, 20–22.

⁹ Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel*, 32, 66.

¹⁰ ‘You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns. You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt’ (Deut. 24:14–15).

¹¹ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1416–17, cited in Aaron White, “Reading Inclusion Backwards: Considering the Apostolic Decree Again in Fresh Context,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 48, no. 4 (November 2018): 207. doi:10.1177/0146107918801514.

¹² Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, The JPS Torah Commentary, vol. 3 (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 134. Pitkänen uses the lens of settler colonialism to examine the categories of alien and foreigner in the Pentateuch. See Pekka Pitkänen, “Ancient Israelite Population Economy: *Ger*, *Toshav*, *Nakhri* and *Karat* as Settler Colonial Categories,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 42, no. 2 (December 2017): 139–53. doi:10.1177/0309089216677665.

¹³ Gustav Stählin, “ζένοϛ,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 5, originally published as *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 3 n. 14.

¹⁴ Mathews, “Hospitality and the New Testament Church,” 107–8.

in ‘social limbo’.¹⁵

Glanville encapsulates the Deuteronomic remedy for ‘displacement’ thus: ‘the gēr. . . ultimately becomes grafted into the kinship group of the household, of the clan, and of the nation’.¹⁶ Cross neatly summarises the legal expedient whereby ‘individuals or groups were grafted onto the genealogies and fictive kinship became kinship of the flesh or blood. In a word, kinship-in-law became kinship-in-flesh’.¹⁷ Following Turner on *communitas*, Glanville argues for the relationship between fictive kinship and communal eating in Deuteronomy: the conjunction of the joyful imperative ‘Feast!’ with the household list¹⁸ ‘fosters inclusion within a household’.¹⁹ Altmann unfolds the ‘Deuteronomic vision of sacred consumption’, whereby if the ‘envisioned “Israelites” ’ followed the ‘given ordinances related to festive meat consumption’ when they came to worship, they could become ‘recipients of the divinely-provided blessing, celebrating Yhwh’s rich feast like the one imagined in the significantly later text of Isa 25:6’.²⁰ The menu of the meaty mountain celebration in Isaiah will be discussed subsequently, as will a wider-ranging inclusion, which these meals foreshadow. Further to the motif of inclusion, I contend that the inclusive pilgrimage festivals which Glanville discusses in detail,²¹ also permit the נא the therapeutic experience of a journey that is not defined by indeterminacy, unlike their original excursion. From the perspective of the ‘joy of the feast’,²² Braulik also considers fraternity to be a ‘structural principle’:

¹⁵ Johannes Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture*, vols. I–II (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 390, cited in Mathews, “Hospitality and the New Testament Church,” 108 n. 4; Mathews, “Hospitality and the New Testament Church,” 107–9; Mark Richard Glanville, “Family for the Displaced: A New Paradigm for the Gēr in Deuteronomy,” PhD thesis (University of Bristol, 2016), 22.

¹⁶ Mark Richard Glanville, “Family for the Displaced,” 69.

¹⁷ Frank Moore Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 7.

¹⁸ He references Deut. 16:11, 14 as an example.

¹⁹ Mark Richard Glanville, “Family for the Displaced,” 68.

²⁰ Peter Altmann, *Festive Meals in Ancient Israel: Deuteronomy’s Identity Politics in Their Ancient Near Eastern Context*, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, vol. 424 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 131–32, ProQuest. He specifically references Deut. 12:13–19.

²¹ The Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles are referenced in Deut. 16:16–17.

²² Georg Braulik, “The Joy of the Feast,” in *The Theology of Deuteronomy: Collected Essays of Georg Braulik*, trans. Ulrika Lindblad (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 1994), 27, chapter title.

The theory of Deuteronomy is that the feast liberates people from existential anguish and abolishes class barriers so that all may rejoice before YHWH. . . .

The brotherliness of YHWH's family is not merely proclaimed by Deuteronomy; it is also intended to be experienced. Its most effective symbol is the liturgical meal which follows on the animal sacrifices (12:7, 18; 14:23, 26; 27:7). . . . The feast is a result of the meal and of the sacrificial communion.²³

Braulik proceeds to draw parallels with the *koinōnia* of the first Christians who were 'united in heart and soul' (Acts 4:32), and had no one in need among them (v. 34). He sees this as the fulfilment of Deuteronomy 15:4: 'Indeed, there ought to be no poor among you'.²⁴

2.1. Loving God and the גר

Having looked at the reception and inclusion of the גר, I am now going to explore the intertwining of land, love, estrangement, and memory in the collective Israelite identity. Tzoref states that 'a key element of the patriarchal narratives in the book of Genesis is that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their households were themselves *gērîm* (described as "wandering Arameans" in Deut 26:5)'.²⁵ Before the Israelites come into the promised land, God reminds them, 'for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants (Lev. 25:23); God reaffirms the Israelites' dependence on him as the owner of the land using distinctions between degrees of permanence.²⁶ Crucially, Yahweh declares their identity is as strangers with *him*, not as strangers within a *land*.²⁷ Yahweh demonstrates love for strangers in Deuteronomy 10:18 'by giving them food and water' in Bosman's translation; Israel is called to emulate Yahweh's care for strangers.²⁸ The implications for a theology of hospitality are shown by the New Testament parallel with the coming of the Son of Man when

²³ Braulik, "The Theology of Deuteronomy," 58.

²⁴ Braulik, "The Theology of Deuteronomy," 65, translation not specified.

²⁵ Shani Tzoref, "Knowing the Heart of the Stranger: Empathy, Remembrance, and Narrative in Jewish Reception of Exodus 22:21, Deuteronomy 10:19, and Parallels," *Interpretation* 72, no. 2 (April 2018): 122. doi:10.1177/0020964317749540.

²⁶ Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel*, 100 n. 8.

²⁷ Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel*, 102, emphasis mine.

²⁸ Tiana Bosman, "Biblical Hebrew Lexicology and Cognitive Semantics: A Study of Lexemes of Affection," PhD thesis (University of Stellenbosch, 2011), 195, emphasis in original.

the bemused righteous will ask the Lord when they saw him hungry, thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, and ministered to him (Matt. 25:31–40).

The injunction to ‘love the גֵר’ occurs twice in the Hebrew scriptures (Lev. 19:34; Deut. 10:19), as does the commandment to ‘love Yahweh’ (Deut. 6:5; 11:1), with a solitary reference to ‘love’ of the fellow Israelite as neighbour (Lev. 19:18).²⁹ Lupton highlights how lexical and phonological similarity serve to decrease any perceived distance between the stranger and the resident Israelites:

Leviticus 19:34 institutes the rule of neighbor-love in a related play on estrangement and dwelling: ‘The stranger [*ha-ger*] that dwelleth [*haggār*] with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers [*gerim*] in the land of Egypt’.³⁰

Ellman argues that an holistic, committed love is demanded: ‘The reciprocity implied by the juxtaposition of the commandment in 6:5 to Deut. 6:4 confirms this: just as Yahweh is indivisible, the loving self must be indivisible. In other words, the entirety of the self is involved’.³¹ Moran notes that cognates of the Hebrew word *’āhēb* translated as ‘love’ or ‘befriend’, denote the reciprocal relationship of suzerain to vassal in the diplomatic vocabulary of ancient Near East treaties.³² Two vassals could also be in a triadic relationship with a greater king; Israel as Yahweh’s people would therefore be expected to enter into adoptive kinship with ‘the *gēr*, Yahweh’s “friend”’.³³

²⁹ Ramírez Kidd observes economically: ‘the precept “to love” is in itself unusual. The two commands to love the גֵר found in the Old Testament are matched only by the two commands to love Yahweh (!)’ (Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel*, 81, 81 nn. 71, 73).

³⁰ Julia Reinhard Lupton, “Dwelling,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Religion*, ed. Susan M. Felch, Cambridge Companions to Literature (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 87–88, square brackets in original. doi:10.1017/CCO9781316160954.007. Tzoref is less sanguine: ‘The Hebrew root *gwr* means simply “to dwell,” but there might be some relationship between this root and homonyms meaning “to attack” or “to be afraid”’ (Tzoref, “Knowing the Heart of the Stranger,” 121).

³¹ Barat Ellman, *Memory and Covenant: The Role of Israel’s and God’s Memory in Sustaining the Deuteronomic and Priestly Covenants*, Emerging Scholars (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 78 n. 11. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt22nm8hx>.

³² William Moran, “The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25, no. 1, *Anniversary issue: Old Testament* (January 1963): 77–87. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43711394>.

³³ Mark R. Glanville, “‘Festive Kinship’: Solidarity, Responsibility, and Identity Formation in Deuteronomy,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 44, no. 1 (September 2019): 139, 140, fig. 1. doi:10.1177/0309089218778582.

2.2. Remembering being גרים

Having considered the difficulty of translating loving ‘with all your heart (*nepeš*)’,³⁴ Ellman adjudges that memory ‘provides the epistemological and psychological basis from which to carry out this obligation’.³⁵ He finds that the continuous devotion required of Deuteronomic covenantal love has ‘cognitive, emotional and performative’ aspects, hence recitation aids internalisation and integration of collective memory.³⁶ Glanville identifies how divine blessing is discerned through the repetitions of the gleaning laws: ‘The law is liturgical in form, through mnemonic affect arousing compassion for the *gēr* and reshaping the worldview of the hearer/reader’.³⁷ MacDonald reflects on the Deuteronomic theology of hospitality as a ‘theology of memory’, whereby the Israelites are called to remember their redemption from slavery in Egypt by God, rather than seek to regulate their behaviour through identification with the aliens among them, as in the book of Exodus.³⁸ He implies that whereas Sabbath observance had formerly recalled creation, and mirrored divine rest on the seventh day, in Deuteronomy the perspective is foreshortened, and remembrance of the Exodus displaces recollection of creation.³⁹

In the Deuteronomic code the ‘גרים-orphan-widow’ triad forms a collective subject as *personae miserae*.⁴⁰ The syntagm occurs eleven times, of which eight instances are to do with food.⁴¹ When Ruth, as a Moabitess, comes into Israel she does not describe herself as a גר because as a legal status it only applied to men.⁴² However, as a widow, she comes within these provisions when she gleans in the fields

³⁴ Ellman writes: ‘In a great number of times, the word seems to mean “personality” or “emotive center,” i.e., individuality and cognitive-emotional capacity. The word “selfhood” combines those two meanings, both of which are implied by Deut. 6:5’ (Ellman, *Memory and Covenant*, 77 n. 10).

³⁵ Ellman, *Memory and Covenant*, 77–78.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 77, 78 n. 11, 82.

³⁷ Mark Richard Glanville, “Family for the Displaced,” 116.

³⁸ MacDonald, *Not by Bread Alone*, 92. Nevertheless, Kelly claims lexicographic and semantic continuity with the Septuagint for his rendering of Exodus 23:9: ‘Indeed, you know the psychological experience of the גר’ (Kelly, “The Ethics of Inclusion,” 162, 163 n. 31). For an historical survey of Jewish reception of Exodus 23:9, see Tzoref, “Knowing the Heart of the Stranger”.

³⁹ MacDonald, *Not by Bread Alone*, Ch. 3, n.p., n. 60.

⁴⁰ Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel*, 35.

⁴¹ Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel*, 40–42.

⁴² Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel*, 24.

(Ruth 2:2–3; Deut. 24:19). In Deuteronomy 10:19, the גֵר is definitely a foreigner, and the focus is not on his physical welfare, but his integration within the community through an appeal to communal remembrance.⁴³ It is likely, in the view of Ramírez Kidd, that as a post-exilic conjunction of command with motive, this precept is intended not only to encourage acceptance of the foreigner, but also to facilitate the return of the Jewish diaspora to Palestine, amidst a culture of wariness and exclusive nationalism.⁴⁴ Milgrom observes that ‘the *gēr* is completely equivalent to the Israelite in civil law’, but is ‘held to a more lenient regime’ under religious law, as they had to obey only the negative commandments and prohibitions of the Torah,⁴⁵ those intended to preserve ‘the unity, order, and cleanliness of the land of Israel before the holiness of the Lord’.⁴⁶ Thus, there is a necessary distinction between the easily assimilable individual and the threat of idolatry posed by contiguous foreign nations.⁴⁷ After the exile, other nations were viewed as political rivals, but the inclusion of the גֵר was regarded as a Messianic portent,⁴⁸ and in the next section I will consider the guises of the portended Messianic banquet in the New Testament.

3. Feasting the hungry: Meals of the kingdom

The only miracle account which appears in all four gospels is the so-called feeding of the five thousand (Matt. 1:13–21; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:11–17; John 6:5–13). Standhartinger draws comparisons between imperial mass-feedings, civic banquets, and this multiplication of food, but observes that the deserted location is more reminiscent of catering during military campaigns.⁴⁹ She proceeds to specify the characteristics which make this occasion a feast, and not a picnic:

⁴³ Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel*, 82–83.

⁴⁴ Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel*, 83–84.

⁴⁵ Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1417, cited in Aaron White, “Reading Inclusion Backwards,” 208.

⁴⁶ Aaron White, “Reading Inclusion Backwards,” 208.

⁴⁷ Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel*, 62.

⁴⁸ Antonin Causse, *Israël et la Vision de l’Humanité*, Études d’Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses, vol. 8 (Strasbourg: Librairie Istra, 1924), 62, cited in Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel*, 76.

⁴⁹ Angela Standhartinger, “‘And All Ate and Were Filled’ (Mark 6.42 par.): The Feeding Narratives in the Context of Hellenistic-Roman Banquet Culture,” in *Decisive Meals: Table Politics in Biblical Literature*, ed. Kathy Ehrensperger, Nathan MacDonald, and Luzia Sutter Rehmann, trans. Martin Rumscheidt, Library of New Testament Studies, vol. 449 (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 63–67, 68–73, 74–75.

Mk 6.39–40 says, ‘he ordered them to get all the people to recline symposion by symposion on the green grass. And they reclined garden-plot by garden-plot in groups of hundreds and fifties.’

Symposion (literally, drinking together) refers to a formal meal that is followed by a drinking session celebrated on dining couches (triclina). The social form of the symposium itself as well as ‘reclining-at-table’ (ἀνακλίναι) is a status symbol as well as a sign of luxury. Thus, a symposium is a *cena recta*, a proper banquet, and not merely a distribution of sportulae, small bread baskets.⁵⁰

She queries the lack of the requisite wine, which she ascribes to the greater familiarity of the story-tellers with food-distribution than symposia,⁵¹ but it should be remembered that Jesus has already provided copious wine at the wedding at Cana (John 2:1–11), and that first miracle signalled the commencement of the Messianic banquet for Asumang.⁵² Batten looks at the similarities of terminology between this meal and the preceding feast at Herod’s palace (Mark 6:21–28).⁵³ This outdoor meal can rightly be seen therefore as feasting, rather than the time-honoured but more utilitarian references to feeding. Chester suggests that the parallels with the story of Elisha, Elijah’s successor, telling his servant to feed a company of prophets with twenty loaves, might have caused the crowd to see Jesus as the new Elijah, which would further indicate that the feeding here is a spiritual sign of the Messianic banquet.⁵⁴ Yamasaki demurs in his discussion of the Matthean version, arguing that this story would be insufficiently familiar, but he does still see the passage as ‘depicting Jesus as Messiah providing a foretaste of the messianic kingdom to these hungry thousands’.⁵⁵ The excess of food, dining posture, and the element of service

⁵⁰ Ibid., 76–77, here at 76.

⁵¹ Ibid., 79, 81.

⁵² Annang Asumang, “Be Filled with the Spirit and not with Wine: Echoes of the Messianic Banquet in the Antithesis of Ephesians 5:18,” *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 5, no. 3 (January 2008): 29. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/AJA19968167_46.

⁵³ Batten points out the similarity of vocabulary between this occasion and the account of Herod’s birthday feast, which precedes it in Mark: ‘At both gatherings, people “recline” (*synanakeimenois* [Mark 6:22]; *anaklinai* [Mark 6:39]; *anepesan* [Mark 6: 40]) and the same verb (*epetaxen*) appears both when Herod commands the soldier to bring the head of John the Baptist and when Jesus instructs the crowd to sit down (Mark 6:27, 39)’ (Alicia J. Batten, “Fish Tales,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 47, no. 1 (February 2017): 11, square brackets in original. doi:10.1177/0146107916682196). Batten goes on to suggest that, ‘without downplaying the eschatological significance of the scene’, the juxtaposition of the two accounts also serves to contrast the horror of Herod’s palatial banquet, where John the Baptist’s severed head is brought in, with the simplicity of this outdoor banquet of poor Galileans (Batten, “Fish Tales,” 11).

⁵⁴ Chester, *A Meal with Jesus*, 62.

⁵⁵ Gary Yamasaki, *Insights from Filmmaking for Analyzing Biblical Narrative*, Reading the Bible in the

cause Poon to eulogise this miracle as ‘*superabundant table fellowship*’.⁵⁶ This meal is an eschatological meal which foreshadows the Messianic banquet for Streett, who views it as ‘an enacted parable to demonstrate and teach what the kingdom will be like. It will be a time of abundance, healing, and equality for all’.⁵⁷ Poon sees it as part of the joy of God’s provision, and he points to the conjunction of joy and physical satiety in the Magnificat, before concluding with a reference to the passage which is central to my subsequent argument: ‘On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things (Isaiah 25:6f, [RSV])’.⁵⁸ Smit meanwhile, links eschatological meals with ‘utopian nutritional abundance’;⁵⁹ the satiation of the crowd after miraculous feedings is referenced three times in Matthew, which suggests to him that Jesus is presented as the righteous king who provides ‘foodstuffs’ for the hungry, unlike Herod.⁶⁰ However, until the kingdom comes when God himself will provide, as in the foretold banquet of Isaiah 25:6–8, in the interim, the ‘needs of the poor are to be met through *hospitality* and *commensality*’ by the followers of Jesus, according to Marshall.⁶¹ She draws a salutary conclusion on what she terms ‘the justice of the banquet’: ‘at the *eschaton*, all will be judged according to the fundamental mores applicable to banqueting, viz. the hospitality/inhospitality dichotomy’.⁶²

21st Century: Insights (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016), 128, 148.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1c84g7x>.

⁵⁶ Wilson C. K. Poon, “Superabundant Table Fellowship in the Kingdom: The Feeding of the Five Thousand and the Meal Motif in Luke,” *Expository Times* 114, no. 7 (April 1993): 226, emphasis in original. doi:10.1177/001452460311400703.

⁵⁷ Streett, *Subversive Meals*, 168–69.

⁵⁸ Poon, “Superabundant Table Fellowship,” 227.

⁵⁹ Peter-Ben Smit, *Fellowship and Food in the Kingdom: Eschatological Meals and Scenes of Utopian Abundance in the New Testament*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 2, vol. 234 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 201.

⁶⁰ Smit, *Fellowship and Food in the Kingdom*, 210. Ruth eating until she is satisfied, at the urging of Boaz, is the only exception to God as provider of food that satisfies (Hubbard (no details given), cited in Peter Altmann, “Everyday Meals for Extraordinary People: Eating and Assimilation in the Book of Ruth,” in *Decisive Meals: Table Politics in Biblical Literature*, ed. Kathy Ehrensperger, Nathan MacDonald, and Luzia Sutter Rehmann, Library of New Testament Studies, vol. 449 (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 22 n. 19).

⁶¹ Mary Jeanette Marshall, “Jesus and the Banquets,” 410–11, emphasis in original.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 437.

3.1. Feeding the outsider: Jesus and the Syrophenician woman (Matt. 15:21–28, Mark 7:25–29)

Positioned after the feeding of the five thousand, the story of Jesus and the Syrophenician woman is discussed here as a precursor to the story of Peter and Cornelius in Acts, the subsequent feeding of the four thousand, and for its relation to the Messianic banquet. Jesus has secluded himself in a house, so as not to attract notice. To the consternation of the disciples, he is sought out by an importunate Gentile woman who implores him for mercy using the Messianic ascription, Son of David.⁶³ Wilkinson suggests that it is implicit in the Markan narrative that, as a presumed polytheist, she has tried other gods and is resorting to the God of Israel; Jesus' fame has already spread to her region (Mark 3:8), and so she appeals to him.⁶⁴ Mark locates the woman as Greek (*hellenis*), which has implications of urbanity,⁶⁵ and hailing from Syro-Phoenicia (7:26),⁶⁶ whereas Matthew brands her with the 'archaic term' Canaanite (15:22), which 'reminds the reader of Israel's long struggle

⁶³ Lyons-Pardue notes that many English translations of Mark overstate her request as begging, whereas the verb ἐρωτάω is used elsewhere, in situations of 'mere asking or inquiry', such as Mark 4:10 (Kara J. Lyons-Pardue, "A Syrophenician Becomes a Canaanite: Jesus Exegetes the Canaanite Woman in Matthew," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 13, no. 2 (4 November 2019): 240, 240 nn. 18, 19. doi:10.5325/jtheointe.13.2.0235).

⁶⁴ Jennifer Wilkinson, "Mark and His Gentile Audience: A Traditio-Historical and Socio-Cultural Investigation of Mk 4.35–9.29 and Its Interface with Gentile Polytheism in the Roman Near East," PhD thesis (Durham University, 2012), 173–74. <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/4428/>.

⁶⁵ Elizabeth T. Vasko, *Beyond Apathy: A Theology for Bystanders* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 164. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9m0vv4>.

⁶⁶ D'Angelo points out that if Mark *was* written in Syria, she would have been a 'triple insider' for an audience who were mostly linguistically and culturally Greek, and themselves Gentiles (Mary Rose D'Angelo, "(Re)Presentations of Women in the Gospels: John and Mark," in *Women & Christian Origins*, ed. Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 139, emphasis mine). D'Angelo notes that this contradicts Schüssler Fiorenza's characterisation of her as a 'triple outsider' because of her gender, ethnicity, and religious-cultural affiliation (D'Angelo, "(Re)Presentations of Women in the Gospels," 148 n. 3). D'Angelo's stance is also at variance with Rhoads, who argues that Galilean resentment about being the 'breadbasket' for Tyre, and Tyrian reprisals against the Jews during the subsequent Jewish War, made this story of a wealthy woman function for its eventual hearers like the story of the good Samaritan (David Rhoads, "Jesus and the Syrophenician Woman in Mark: A Narrative-Critical Study," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 370. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1465270>). For her wealth, Rhoads footnotes Theissen on the fact that the daughter's bed is referred to as a *klinē* (couch), rather than the *krabbatos* (mattress) used by a peasant (Rhoads, "Jesus and the Syrophenician Woman," 370 n. 5). For the semantic implications of the furniture, see discussion of Cadwallader in section 3.2, pp. 106–7.

with Canaan's cultic heritage', in Schüssler Fiorenza's opinion.⁶⁷ Donahue and Harrington further suggest that Markan syntax could imply the woman's social status as a 'lady'.⁶⁸ Jackson delineates how Matthew structures the story to show her passing the first-century rabbinic test of conversion derived from the book of Ruth, of threefold rejection, and one-time acceptance.⁶⁹ Starr's reading of Ruth enables an identification for Gentile hearers, but also allows me to draw out similarities between the two women: 'Ruth acts as a type for the largely Gentile Church traveling to the House of Bread, where Boaz, her redeemer and future husband, invites her to dip her morsel of bread into the wine (2:14)'.⁷⁰ For Altmann, by this action Ruth enters into community through ritualised commensality, she is no longer an outsider;⁷¹ it follows therefore, that incorporation into community is not dependent on the occasion or the quantity of food, although she does then eat until she is satisfied (Ruth 2:14).⁷² So, this Syro-Phoenician woman, a Gentile, comes to the house (Mark 7:24) where Jesus

⁶⁷ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Changing Horizons: Explorations in Feminist Interpretation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 266. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt22nm7t3>. Drawing on Derrett and Roure, Sankamo points out the coincidence of the words 'under the table' in Mark 7:28 and Judges 1:7, and betraying his own stance on the woman, he notes, 'in both texts the poor person submitting to his/her fate is a Canaanite/Phoenician' (Juho Sankamo, "Jesus and the Gentiles," PhD thesis (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University, 2012), 149–50 n. 430). Furthermore, and interestingly for this discussion, MacDonald indicates that the name of the now submissive Adoni-bezeq, whose maimed vassals had been forced to scuffle for crumbs under his royal table, could be an intentional misspelling of Adon-zedek, 'intended to make a pun on *bzq*, "pebble" or "fragment" ' (Nathan MacDonald, "'The Eyes of All Look to You': The Generosity of the Divine King," in *Decisive Meals: Table Politics in Biblical Literature*, ed. Kathy Ehrensperger, Nathan MacDonald, and Luzia Sutter Rehmann, Library of New Testament Studies, vol. 449 (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 11–12). Perkinson, meanwhile, discerns intentionality, rather than ethnocentric anachronism in Matthew's wording: 'The erasure of the Canaanite presence in Israelite history was part of the mode of constructing the national identity. But here, the erased begins to reappear like a palimpsest' (Jim Perkinson, "A Canaanitic Word in the Logos of Christ; Or the Difference the Syro-Phoenician Woman Makes to Jesus," *Semeia* 75 (1996): 79). Moore would concur with Perkinson's assessment, and states in his summation, 'polytheism self-deconstructs spontaneously in this scene in the face of a Christian mission from the future that invades the woman's present and rewrites the mythic past' (Stephen D. Moore, "The Dog-Woman of Canaan and Other Animal Tales from the Gospel of Matthew," in *Soundings in Cultural Criticism: Perspectives and Methods in Culture, Power, and Identity in the New Testament*, ed. Francisco Lozada, Jr. and Greg Carey (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 58. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt22nm7dw.9>).

⁶⁸ Christopher E. Alt, "The Dynamic of Humility and Wisdom: The Syro-Phoenician Woman and Jesus in Mark 7:24–31a," *Lumen et Vita* 2, no. 1 (2012): 4. doi:10.6017/lv.v2i1.1901.

⁶⁹ Glenna S. Jackson, "Enemies of Israel: Ruth and the Canaanite Woman," *HTS Theologisches Studien/Theological Studies* 59, no. 3 (2003): 779–82. doi:10.10520/EJC35743.

⁷⁰ John Starr, "A Theology of Daughterhood: The Challenges of Modern Biology to Theology Today," *Theology in Scotland* 23, no. 1 (2015): 15.

⁷¹ Altmann, "Everyday Meals for Extraordinary People," 21–22, 24–25.

⁷² See section 3, p. 98 n. 60.

is, the self-proclaimed bread of life and living bread (John 6:35, 48, 51), and declares that even crumbs will suffice for her need. Thiering also sees a further possible allusion to Ruth, the Gentile foremother of Jesus, ‘who picked up the left-overs of grain in the harvest-field of the Jew Boaz’.⁷³ Additionally, Ruth’s story covers the period between the start of the barley harvest (Ruth 1:22), and the end of the wheat harvest (2:23), from the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Feast of Weeks (which would become Pentecost for the Christian church), and so it is proleptic of the future mission to the Gentiles.⁷⁴ Gullotta also draws out the similarities with the story of Rahab, the Canaanite sex worker, who sheltered the Israelite spies:

Her proclamation of Jesus as ‘Lord [κύριε]’ and ‘son of David’ (Matt 15:22) is comparable to Rahab’s acknowledgment of the traditions of Israel and confession of faith to the god of Israel (Josh 2:9–11). Other parallels include that both women take the initiative and ask for mercy on behalf of their families (Josh 2:12–13; cf. Matt 15:22) and that both receive what they ask for (Josh 6:22–25; cf. Matt 15:28).⁷⁵

Moreover, the woman locates Jesus despite his ‘covert entry’ to the house, which Wilkinson sees as Mark signalling to his readers that the gospel cannot be concealed from the Gentiles.⁷⁶

Lyons-Pardue suggests that when Jesus says, ‘“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” ’ (Matt. 15:24), he could be addressing the disciples, and

⁷³ B. E. Thiering, “‘Breaking of Bread’ and ‘Harvest’ in Marks [sic] Gospel,” *Novum Testamentum* 12, no. 1 (January 1970): 2 n. 1. doi:10.2307/1560183.

⁷⁴ Thiering, “‘Breaking of Bread’,” 5, 5 n. 1; Eric M. Meyers and John Rogerson, “The World of the Hebrew Bible,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Bible*, 2nd ed., gen. ed. Bruce Chilton, ed. Howard Clark Kee, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 87. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139167376.003.

⁷⁵ Daniel N. Gullotta, “Among Dogs and Disciples: An Examination of the Story of the Canaanite Woman (Matthew 15:21–28) and the Question of the Gentile Mission Within the Matthean Community,” *Neotestamentica* 48, no. 2 (2014): 331, square brackets in original. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43926993>. Although this parallel should be tempered by Dube’s postcolonial critique of Rahab as a type of those who submit to colonisation: ‘For the victims of imperialism, Rahab reminds us of our own stories—stories written about us, not for us, stories that are a nightmare to read’ (Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000), 80). However, she elsewhere uses her to issue a call for a reorientation: ‘We need spies from the enemy camp to hear Rahab’s negotiation and to read her red ribbon as a text that calls out to a different course: the course to defend life and justice despite our differences’ (Musa W. Dube, “Rahab is Hanging Out a Red Ribbon: One African Woman’s Perspective on the Future of Feminist New Testament Scholarship,” in *Feminist New Testament Studies: Global and Future Perspectives*, ed. Kathleen O’Brien Wicker, Althea Spencer Miller, and Musa W. Dube, Religion/Culture/Critique (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 192).

⁷⁶ Jennifer Wilkinson, “Mark and His Gentile Audience,” 181.

not the woman, and that he is correcting their assumptions about her identity:

the term the disciples utilize in their demand that Jesus “send away” (ἀπολύω)—an alternate form of the term Jesus uses to describe the sheep for which he was sent: “lost” (ἀπόλλυμι)—may imply that the readers are to find a connection. Perhaps readers have the space to wonder whether the inconvenient woman the disciples wish would “get lost” is, in fact, just that: a *lost* sheep from the house of Israel.⁷⁷

The woman persists in asking for help and stoops reverently at his feet. Jesus responds to her entreaty to heal her daughter by telling her that ‘the children’ (v. 27), that is the Jews, the children of Israel, must eat first, and that it is not fair to take their food (literally ‘loaf’, v. 27b),⁷⁸ and throw it outside (*balein*) to the dogs (Mark 7:27).⁷⁹ Rhoads observes that she verbally matches Jesus’ overture by countering that even the ‘little dogs’ under the table eat the crumbs dropped by ‘the little ones’.⁸⁰ Matthew preserves distance by omitting the children and having the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from ‘their masters’ table’ (Matt. 15:27).⁸¹ Nevertheless, the woman’s response may have been proverbial, as ‘acting like a dog that feeds on the scraps fallen from a dinner’, is quoted in Philostratus.⁸² In response to Rhoads, Wilkinson acknowledges Mark’s fondness for diminutive forms, and Perkinson particularises an emergent ‘“politics of diminutives”’ which leads to ‘“solidarity in littleness”’.⁸³ This patterning of the interchange is suggestive of the woman taking and using verbal ‘crumbs’ as cues. Indeed, Cutler suggests that Jesus acknowledges the woman as an equal sparring-partner in a philosophic exchange.⁸⁴ It is evident that she does not need

⁷⁷ Lyons-Pardue, “A Syrophenician Becomes a Canaanite,” 241, emphasis in original.

⁷⁸ Andrew Benjamin Salzmann, ““Do You Still not Understand?” Mark 8:21 and the Mission to the Gentiles,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 39, no. 3 (August 2009): 131. doi:10.1177/0146107909106756.

⁷⁹ Francis Dufton, “The Syrophenician Woman and Her Dogs,” *Expository Times* 100, no. 11 (August 1989): 417. doi:10.1177/001452468910001105.

⁸⁰ Rhoads, “Jesus and the Syrophenician Woman,” 357–58.

⁸¹ Dufton appeals to Greek fondness for dogs, and summons a patriarchal household where a seated-apart husband feeds ‘tit-bits’ to the expectant domestic dogs at the table (Dufton, “The Syrophenician Woman and Her Dogs,” 417).

⁸² Christopher P. Jones, ed. and trans., *Philostratus: Apollonius of Tyana*, vol 1, Life of Apollonius of Tyana, Books 1–4, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 16 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 76–77, cited in Jennifer Wilkinson, “Mark and His Gentile Audience,” 186–87.

⁸³ Jennifer Wilkinson, “Mark and His Gentile Audience,” 184; Perkinson, “A Canaanitic Word in the Logos of Christ,” 75–76.

⁸⁴ Ian Cutler, “A Tale of Two Cynics: The Philosophic Duel Between Jesus and the Woman from Syrophenicia,” *Philosophical Forum* 41, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 377. doi:10.1111/j.1467–9191.2010.00369.x.

to ask Jesus to explain (unlike the repeated incomprehension of the disciples in response to the parabolic).

3.2. Discrimination or agency?

Tellingly, alongside positioning Jesus as an ambivalent figure, commentators also indulge in canine word play which reduces the woman to a stereotypic cipher.⁸⁵ Ringe identifies the imputation of exclusionary ethnocentrism as serving Christian anti-Judaism, but remains ‘perplexed’ by the passage, and argues for the necessity of a diversity of readers, having revised her own earlier opinion.⁸⁶ Being mindful that Dube adjudges even Schüssler Fiorenza’s feminist rereading as insufficiently suspicious of a ‘*kyriarchal* ideology of subordination’, so that ‘the reading becomes a debate between white Western Christian women and white Western Christian men seeking to share in the power of dominating the whole world’,⁸⁷ I am aware that to insert myself in this debate is problematic.⁸⁸ Given that Dube announces that ‘white Western women of the One-Third World are today implicated in the oppression of Two-Thirds World women’,⁸⁹ I should make it clear that my interpretation is intended

⁸⁵ I do not have space to rehearse the debates about ethnocentrism, but the vituperative use of dog is epitomised by Burkill’s notorious ‘little bitch’, and Skinner’s ‘mongrels’; the latter also talks of her ‘dogged cleverness’ to save her child’ (T. A. Burkill, “The Historical Development of the Story of the Syrophoenician Woman (Mark vii: 24–31),” *Novum Testamentum* 9, no. 3 (July 1967): 173. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1560006>; Matthew L. Skinner, “‘She Departed to Her House’: Another Dimension of the Syrophoenician Mother’s Faith in Mark 7:24–30,” *Word & World* 26, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 17. A few examples of those who take up the canine theme will have to serve, Lapidus Lerner elaborates with multiple variations: she calls Jesus ‘dogmatic’ and observes that the woman does ‘not retreat like a dog with her tail between her legs’, but ‘is willing to be a lowly hound if that’s what it takes to save her child’ (Anne Lapidus Lerner, “A Dogmatic Jesus,” in *Soundings in the Religion of Jesus: Perspectives and Methods in Jewish and Christian Scholarship*, ed. Bruce Chilton, Anthony Le Donne, and Jacob Neusner (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), title, 48. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt22nm9fc.8>). At least when Moore terms her the ‘dog-woman of Canaan’, and Cutler, a ‘Cynic’, they do have intellectual justification (Stephen D. Moore, “The Dog-Woman of Canaan”; Cutler, “A Tale of Two Cynics”).

⁸⁶ Sharon H. Ringe, “A Gentile Woman’s Story, Revisited: Rereading Mark 7.24–31a,” in *A Feminist Companion to Mark*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine, with Marianne Blickenstaff, Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings, vol. 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 99. Cf. Sharon H. Ringe, “A Gentile Woman’s Story,” in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty M. Russell (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1985), 65–72.

⁸⁷ Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 37–38, emphasis in original.

⁸⁸ Starr illustrates how to approach this text reflexively from a position of privilege. See Rachel Starr, “Borderline: Reading Mark 7.24–30 as a White Woman,” *Practical Theology* 15, no. 1–2, *Critical White Theology: Dismantling Whiteness?* special issue (2022): 10–22. doi:10.1080/1756073X.2021.2023960.

⁸⁹ Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 122, capitals in original.

to restore agency to this particular woman, not deprive other women of their autonomy. But even if we allow that the woman's obeisance is involuntary,⁹⁰ her unwilling compliance places her on a mental and bodily par with her daughter who is colonised by a demon. I argue therefore, that if her daughter's oppression is not in the picture, her motherhood becomes incidental to her gender and ethnicity, and her words are used to make her a mouthpiece for the subaltern, rather than a successful advocate who is instrumental in her daughter's deliverance. This encounter on the far side of the lake occurs in the context of Jesus having told the Pharisees and scribes who travelled from Jerusalem that defilement comes from within, not without (Mark 7:1–23). Both dogs and pigs are unclean for Jews, and Jesus had earlier enjoined Jewish hearers: ‘ “Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you” ’ (Matt. 7:6). Pigs are notoriously indiscriminate in their eating habits, and will not perceive what is of value. Jesus could be seen as employing a similar figure of speech which takes the woman's cultural background into account: he noticeably does not mention holiness, and so does not foreground her pollution, unlike Vasko who judges her to be ‘triple polluted’.⁹¹ The woman kneels to worship him (*prosekynei autō*)⁹² (Matt. 15:25), an acknowledgement of holiness which thus annuls her dog-likeness, and she sees through Jesus' words with her mind and heart, to discern Jesus himself as the bread of life for her child (Matt. 15:25; cf. John 6:35, 48, 51). Her metaphorical moderation of appetite in soliciting only crumbs, and her verbal restraint also stand against any imputation of imperceptive, greedy, or revengeful swinishness.

Arguably, Jesus recognises her reply not merely as a riposte, but as the prompt to extend his calling from the lost sheep of Israel to Gentiles. Lyons-Pardue suggests similarities with the widow of Zarephath, another Canaanite woman without a male protector may have caused Jesus to look on her favourably.⁹³ If Lyons-Pardue's

⁹⁰ Ibid., 164.

⁹¹ Vasko, *Beyond Apathy*, 165, 190.

⁹² Stephen D. Moore, “The Dog-Woman of Canaan,” 58.

⁹³ Lyons-Pardue, “A Syrophenician Becomes a Canaanite,” 249–50.

comparison is followed through and developed, it should be recalled that Jesus mentions the widow, Elijah, and the famine in the land, in the synagogue at the start of his ministry (Luke 4:25–26), which counterpoints this woman's request for crumbs. It should also be remembered that after sending the disciples ahead, Jesus has spent the previous night in prayer to his Father, before walking on the water of the lake which bounded Jewish territory to rejoin them. Liu speculates that Jesus chose to venture to Tyre to reinforce the point that the feasting of 'all peoples' at the banquet of the Messiah in Isaiah 25 could still include Tyre, and hence all Gentiles, despite the preceding judgement of the city of Tyre in Isaiah 23.⁹⁴ This is a retrospective interpretation, as it is arguable that Jesus only realises the extension of his calling during this encounter with the unnamed mother, but his nocturnal prayerfulness could have played a part in this realisation. Jesus declared of his mission: ' "for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me" ' (John 6:38). This would mean that he hears divine truth in what the woman says; deSilva couches Jesus' response in terms of the extension of patronage, and graciously not limiting or restricting favour.⁹⁵

Nevertheless, priority in eating causes Miller to recall Exodus 23:11 where the poor receive the surplus of the crops, the vineyard, and the olive grove, before the wild animals, and so actively throwing food to the dogs 'has connotations of wastefulness'.⁹⁶ On this understanding, there is a necessary sequence of provision and consumption, although Cadwallader prefers 'hierarchy of feeding'.⁹⁷ The woman asks firstly for mercy for herself, then healing for her daughter, but Jesus interprets her request in terms of Jews and Gentiles sharing a meal.⁹⁸ And yet, it is the woman who domesticates and civilises the exchange by introducing a table. Jesus has to instruct

⁹⁴ Rebekah Liu, "A Dog Under the Table at the Messianic Banquet: A Study of Mark 7:24–30," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 48, no. 2 (Autumn 2010): 253. See also Sankamo, "Jesus and the Gentiles," 165–66.

⁹⁵ deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 135–36.

⁹⁶ Susan E. Miller, *Women in Mark's Gospel*, 98.

⁹⁷ Alan H. Cadwallader, "When a Woman is a Dog: Ancient and Modern Ethology Meet the Syrophoenician Women," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 1, no. 4 (2005): 35.6. doi:10.2104/bc050035.

⁹⁸ Susan E. Miller, *Women in Mark's Gospel*, 104.

the lawyers and Pharisees not to take the place of honour at banquets (Luke 14:7–8), whereas the woman is satisfied with crumbs and, in the opinion of some interpreters, degradation and humiliation.⁹⁹ She argues for a narrowing of the space between the children and the opportunistic dogs. Archaeological discovery of a large dog cemetery in Ashkelon, which found more than a thousand dogs buried on their sides with ‘their tails arranged to curl toward the feet’, testifies to the links between this woman’s people and semi-feral canines.¹⁰⁰

Cadwallader discourses on ‘the dissonance of beast and logos in the same person’, and declares: ‘Animals are the antithesis of *logos*’,¹⁰¹ and yet Jesus himself is proclaimed the Lamb of God by John the Baptist in John 1:29. Pokorný extends the animal analogy, having analysed the semantic centrality of the ‘little pagan girl’ as ‘the absent and passive actant who still caused all the actions and statements’, and how she becomes part of the Lord’s household, ‘where the unclean spirits are powerless’.¹⁰² He concludes: ‘This is the good news of this story: the puppy became a child’.¹⁰³ Cadwallader makes a sustained attempt to redress the naturalisation of the child’s invisibility, which, paradoxically, occurs even within feminist scholarship.¹⁰⁴ He disputes the standard translation of ‘lying’ or ‘thrown’ onto the bed, and plausibly proposes reclining on a dining couch; he has the child placing herself ‘*at the table*’.¹⁰⁵ Given also that Jesus says that the demon has gone from her daughter before the

⁹⁹ Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 164; Ringe, “A Gentile Woman’s Story, Revisited,” 99; Skinner, “‘She Departed to Her House’,” 17 n. 7; Vasko, *Beyond Apathy*, 188.

¹⁰⁰ Darcy F. Morey, “Burying Key Evidence: The Social Bonds Between Dogs and People,” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 33, no. 2 (February 2006): 163, fig. 2, 164, 165. doi:10.1016/j.jas.2005.07.009. By correlating places visited by Phoenician traders with indigenous breeds of dog, Smith argues for a commercial purpose, instead of presuming religious significance, as Stager, the leader of the expedition which uncovered the burials, tentatively did. Cf. Anne Marie Smith, “The Ashkelon Dog Cemetery Conundrum,” *Journal for Semitics* 24, no. 1 (2015): 93–108; Lawrence E. Stager, “Why Were Hundreds of Dogs Buried at Ashkelon? Part 2 of 3,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17, no. 3 (May/June 1991): 26–32, 38–42.

¹⁰¹ Cadwallader, “When a Woman is a Dog,” 35.2, subheading, 35.2, emphasis in original.

¹⁰² P. Pokorný, “From a Puppy to the Child: Some Problems of Contemporary Biblical Exegesis Demonstrated from Mark 7.24–30/Matt 15.21–8,” *New Testament Studies* 41, no. 3 (July 1995): 337. doi:10.1017/S0028688500021512.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Cadwallader, “When a Woman is a Dog,” 35.10.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 35.11–35.12, emphasis in original.

mother ‘departed for her house’¹⁰⁶ (Mark 7:30), I add that for her be found still lying down does not accord with the chronology, or the fact that, according to Rhoads, it was only a ‘little demon’.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, it should be recalled that after the earlier healing of Jairus’ daughter, Jesus had told the parents to give her something to eat (Mark 5:43; Luke 8:55). On this occasion, the mother *herself* achieves the deliverance through her *logos*, at least in Mark’s telling (7:29).¹⁰⁸ Thus, in being at table *and* expecting her own food, I contend that this child is indisputably her mother’s daughter, as she lays claim to her own materiality, in the face of Cadwallader’s initial claims of her textual spectrality.

The centurion in Capernaum (Luke 7:1–10) had his brokers and advocates, whereas the solitary woman is labelled by the disciples because of her importunity; nevertheless, the centurion’s faith that Jesus can heal at a distance is implicitly matched by the woman (Matt. 15:28). Furthermore, the space-time compression of Jesus’ declaration that her daughter is healed mirrors the closeness the woman conjures up between the children and the dogs. For Jews, dogs were unclean, outdoor scavengers, whereas for the woman they are accorded respect in death, so it might be expected that they are valued in life, whether as protectors or totems. With Jesus’ spatial dismissal of the representative woman to her home, her people are no longer outsiders, but are perceived to be recipients of the kingdom alongside the house of Israel. Earlier, Jesus had declared that when he cast out demons, the kingdom of God (*basileia*) had come upon those present (Matt. 12:28); the daughter is delivered from an unclean spirit, and so *basileia* breaks in. Subsequently, Gentile crowds will be healed, will praise the ‘God of Israel’, and will eat and be satisfied at the feeding of the four thousand (Matt. 15:31–38). Jesus will then, before his death, tell his disciples that, before the end comes, ‘“the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations” ’

¹⁰⁶ Skinner, “‘She Departed to Her House,’” 19–20, Skinner’s translation.

¹⁰⁷ Rhoads, “Jesus and the Syrophenician Woman,” 366.

¹⁰⁸ Cadwallader draws attention to ‘the perfect tense of *exerchomai* in Mark 7:29, 30 – an exceptional use in the gospel’ (Cadwallader, “When a Woman is a Dog,” 35.11).

(Mark 13:10), which recalls the inclusive shift precipitated by the desperation, persistence, and ready rejoinder of this nameless mother.

4. Feasting all people: Feasts, suppers, and banquets

As will be examined subsequently, Isaiah 25:6–10a is frequently alluded to by those who are advocates for the practice of hospitality, or who theorise social or moral redress through ethical action. For interpreters of the New Testament, it is implicated with the concept of the Messianic banquet, but I intend to restrict consideration of the Isaiah text to supreme or salvific hospitality, rather than considering dating, or measuring apocalyptic tendencies. Subsequent invocation of this banquet is more important for my thesis than determining mythological or historical precedents, or the type of meal.¹⁰⁹ Priest reserves the appellation Messianic banquet for meals explicitly hosted by the Messiah, and eschatological banquet for other meals in the future age (but uses the former for convenience).¹¹⁰ Shipp makes the point that the Messiah is not mentioned, but that Mount Zion, the mountain of the house of the Lord, was the city of the Davidic king.¹¹¹ He draws parallels with Jeremiah 31:10–14 which similarly mentions feasting, and the covenant with David and Zion.¹¹² Hagelia offers the intriguing suggestion that there is a relation in the Hebrew between ‘the veil that is spread’ (v. 7b), and the ‘outpouring’ of a drink-offering or libation, to give substance to his classification of this banquet as a covenant meal.¹¹³ Pedersen argues for a

¹⁰⁹ Polaski provides a useful list of proponents of each position. See Donald C. Polaski, *Authorizing an End: The Isaiah Apocalypse and Intertextuality* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 164 n. 71. Hays sees the types overlapping: ‘When the subjects of a ruler sit down to his feast, they ally themselves to him (covenant), they celebrate his success (victory), and they acknowledge his rule (enthronement)’ (Christopher B. Hays, *The Origins of Isaiah 24–27: Josiah’s Festival Scroll for the Fall of Assyria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 55 n. 13. doi:10.1017/9781108582360). By contrast, Pauw refers to the meal bathetically as a ‘multicultural picnic’ (Amy Plantinga Pauw, “Hell and Hospitality,” *Word & World* 31, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 13).

¹¹⁰ J. Priest, “A Note on the Messianic Banquet,” in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, Proceedings of the First Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins, Princeton Theological Seminary, October 1987, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 222.

¹¹¹ R. Mark Shipp, “Royal Meals, Covenant Meals, the Messianic Banquet, and the Lord’s Supper,” *Christian Studies* 30 (2018): 51.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Hallvard Hagelia, “Meal on Mount Zion—Does Isa 25:6–8 Describe a Covenant Meal?” *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 68 (2003): 91.

connection between ‘covenant’ (*b^erīth*) and the verb ‘to eat’ (*bārā*).¹¹⁴ Accordingly, I will discuss the feast of Isaiah 25 as the consummation of foregoing covenantal meals. Moreover, Abernethy uses cultural anthropologist David Sutton’s concept of ‘prospective memory’ in relation to eating, to suggest that anticipation of this eschatological feast enables a summoning of hope for the day when the oppressed Israelites will be saved ‘insiders’.¹¹⁵

4.1. Feasting outsiders: The parable of the great feast and the Messianic banquet

In this section I will look at how the parable of the great feast anticipates the messianic banquet, and how the Last Supper is overlaid with references to that end-time gathering. In the Lukan introduction to the parable of the great feast (Luke 14:15–24; also Matt. 22:1–10), one of Jesus’ table-companions declares that those who will ‘eat bread’ in the kingdom of God are ‘blessed’ (v. 15); Balch simply parallels this with the request for bread in the Lord’s Prayer.¹¹⁶ Jesus’ table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners may be ‘regarded as an enacted parable whose meaning is captured in the parable of the great banquet’, in the opinion of Bryan.¹¹⁷ Wilson agrees, and draws attention to the recurrent metaphorical connection in Matthew between healing and eating: ‘There is little doubt that Jesus intended his association with such “sick” people (Matt. 9:12) to be interpreted as a symbolic act, one that prophetically anticipated the inclusivity of the coming messianic banquet and the healing it would bring’.¹¹⁸ The shift from storytelling to the personal, when Jesus addresses his audience, and asserts that none of fictional invitees who claimed compelling reasons to refuse will ‘taste of *my* banquet’ (Luke 14:24), suggests a

¹¹⁴ Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, 2 vols, reprint, 1926 (London: G. Cumberledge; Oxford University Press, 1940), 2:306 n.1, cited in Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord’s Table*, 85.

¹¹⁵ Andrew T. Abernethy, “Feasts and Taboo Eating in Isaiah: Anthropology as a Stimulant for the Exegete’s Imagination,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 80, no. 3 (July 2018): 400.

¹¹⁶ David L. Balch, “Rich and Poor, Proud and Humble in Luke-Acts,” in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honour of Wayne A. Meeks*, ed. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 216.

¹¹⁷ Bryan, *Jesus and Israel’s Traditions*, 80.

¹¹⁸ Walter T. Wilson, *Healing in the Gospel of Matthew: Reflections on Method and Ministry* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 62, 62 n. 26. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9m0tsq>.

reference to the Messianic feast to Priest.¹¹⁹ Moreover, Jesus has already explicitly prophesied exclusion from the eschatological banquet for those religious leaders who think they have priority:

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrown out. Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God (Luke 13:28–29; also Matt. 8:11–12).¹²⁰

MacDonald suggests throughout Chapter 7 of his book on ‘the uses of food in the Old Testament’, that the table is the locus for divine judgement and vindication in the Hebrew scriptures.¹²¹ In Koenig’s memorable, if odd image, the ‘kingdom of God is like a movable feast, a roving banquet hall that seeks the people of Israel as guests and hosts’.¹²² Having identified a semantic connection between being called as a disciple, and being summoned, or invited to a feast, Smit approaches the meal praxis of the Matthean community as a partial and proleptic enactment of eschatological judgement, ‘in the sense that the (non-)acceptance of the invitations (or call to) the earthly meal is to a certain extent a microcosmic and proleptic representation – not unlike the calling of the Twelve – of the grand dynamic of the heavenly banquet’.¹²³ Marshall concurs, considering that the ‘thrust of the parable’ of rejected invitations, and extension of the guest-list, is consistent with the universality of Isaiah 25:6–8: ‘ultimately all will have *received* an invitation to the banquet’.¹²⁴

Luke records the promise to the disciples at the Last Supper that they will eat and drink at Jesus’ table in the kingdom (Luke 22:30), and O’Gorman links the Passover and the Last Supper with the future eschatological feast:

¹¹⁹ Priest, “A Note on the Messianic Banquet,” 231, emphasis in original.

¹²⁰ Pitre observes that a gathering assembling from ‘east to west’ is used ‘repeatedly in the Old Testament and ancient Jewish literature to refer to the eschatological restoration of *Israel*’; the Gentile nations coming in pilgrimage from ‘north and south’ is referenced in Isaiah 43:5–9, and Zechariah 8:7–8, 20–23 (Brant Pitre, “Jesus, the Messianic Banquet, and the Kingdom of God,” in *Liturgy and Empire: Faith in Exile and Political Theology*, ed. Scott Hahn, Letter & Spirit, vol. 5 (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2009), 134–35, emphasis in original).

¹²¹ MacDonald, *Not by Bread Alone*, 167–96.

¹²² Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 43.

¹²³ Peter-Ben Smit, “The Invitation to the Eschatological Banquet and the Call to Follow Christ – a Note on Mt. 22:14,” *Revue Biblique* 120, no. 1 (January 2013): 82–84, here at 83.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44092186>.

¹²⁴ Mary Jeanette Marshall, “Jesus and the Banquets,” 425, emphasis in original.

Jesus associated his body with the bread of affliction, which was offered to all who were hungry and needy, and he associated his blood with the third cup of wine, the cup of redemption. Moreover, by halting the meal, before the traditional fourth cup, Jesus anticipates his role as eschatological host, when he will drink again at the messianic banquet, celebrating the consummation of the kingdom of God.¹²⁵

Pitre sees Jesus as inaugurating an eschatological feast, but makes the further claim that Jesus' reference to himself as the Son of Man is a messianic reference, which performance, makes the Last Supper a messianic meal; the disciples participate in the Kingdom as a heavenly reality 'by means of the sacrificial messianic banquet'.¹²⁶ Wilson brings the Last Supper into discussion of 'old and new', and draws a comparison between the rending of the veil of the temple at Jesus' death, and the ripping away of the patch from the proverbial garment, as the overturning of the old order (Matt. 27:51; Matt. 9:16).¹²⁷ He points out the lexical similarities between the Matthean bridegroom who is 'taken away' (like Jesus), and the 'tearing away' of the fabric, and is led to conclude that 'the eschatological power he [Jesus] embodies [is] in essence tearing the world apart'.¹²⁸ Conversely, 'when new wine is put into fresh (*kanous*) wineskins, both are "preserved" (9:17)'.¹²⁹ Wilson interprets this as an 'anticipation of Jesus' promise to the disciples at the Last Supper that he will drink the fruit of the vine "afresh" (*kainon*) with them in his Father's kingdom (26:29), another reference to the messianic banquet'.¹³⁰ Long sees both metaphors, of the need for fresh wedding garments, and sufficient wine to celebrate, as reinforcing the wedding theme.¹³¹ Jesus entreats the disciples to abide in him, the True Vine, and bear much fruit (John 15: 1, 4, 7-8), and so the wine can also be understood as the works

¹²⁵ Kevin D. O'Gorman, *The Origins of Hospitality and Tourism* (Woodeaton, Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers, 2008), 45. He concludes this passage with the following references: Luke 14:15; cf. Isaiah 25:6; Matt. 8:11; Rev. 19:9.

¹²⁶ Pitre, "Jesus, the Messianic Banquet, and the Kingdom of God," 150.

¹²⁷ Wilson, *Healing in the Gospel of Matthew*, 188-89.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 189.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹³⁰ Wilson, *Healing in the Gospel of Matthew*, 192.

¹³¹ Phillip J. Long, "The Origin of the Eschatological Feast as a Wedding Banquet in the Synoptic Gospels: An Intertextual Study," PhD dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2012), 317.

of kingdom.¹³²

4.2. Weddings, marriage, and the Messianic banquet

I will now draw out associations between weddings, marriage and the Messianic banquet, and their relation to bountiful provision. John the Baptist's declaration of unworthiness to untie Jesus' sandal, in the singular (John 1:27), references the provisions of levirate marriage, as enacted in the story of Ruth (Ruth 4:6–8). John is the historical forerunner, but he cannot infringe the rights of Jesus, the bridegroom of the coming age.¹³³ In Revelation, the invitation to the Lukan banquet of the kingdom 'undergoes a dizzying intensification' to become an invitation to the Lamb's wedding feast.¹³⁴ Huber points out the linguistic similarity between revelatory 'unveiling' (ἀποκάλυψις), and the lifting of the veil of a Roman bride (ἀνακάλυψις).¹³⁵ For Asumang, the wine at the wedding at Cana is one of the signs of the inauguration of the Messianic banquet.¹³⁶ He contrasts the continuous present tense of the injunction, in Ephesians, to 'keep being filled with the Spirit' (Eph. 5:18) with the never-failing new wine of the Messianic banquet which 'drips from the mountains' (Joel 3:18).¹³⁷ Asumang suggests that the Messianic banquet is implicit within Paul's thought in Ephesians, and having included an earthly bridal feast in his exposition, he concludes with the repeated meals which prefigure the final celebration: 'In continually being filled with God's Spirit, believers and the church alike are enacting the Messianic banquet, and so hastening the Lord's return to consummate His marriage with the church'.¹³⁸ Wright writes: '[Jesus] spoke of

¹³² See the discussion of John 15:1–17 in Puthenkandathil, *Philos*, 156–207.

¹³³ Annalisa Guida, "From *Parabolē* to *Sēmeion*: The Nuptial Imagery in Mark and John," in *Between Author and Audience in Mark: Narration, Characterization, Interpretation*, ed. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, New Testament Monographs, vol. 23 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 107 n. 10.

¹³⁴ Ugo Vanni, "The Apocalypse and the Gospel of Luke," in *Luke and Acts*, ed. Gerald O'Collins and Gilberto Marconi (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), 22, cited in Tuohy, "While They Were Eating," 129 n. 431.

¹³⁵ Lynn R. Huber, "Unveiling the Bride: Revelation 19.1–8 and Roman Social Discourse," in *Feminist Companion to the Apocalypse of John*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine, with Maria Mayo Robbins, *Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings*, vol. 13 (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 159.

¹³⁶ Asumang, "Be Filled with the Spirit and not with Wine," 29.

¹³⁷ Asumang, "Be Filled with the Spirit and not with Wine," 33.

¹³⁸ Asumang, "Be Filled with the Spirit and not with Wine," 37.

himself as the bridegroom. His kingdom-banquets were foretastes of the messianic banquet, but also of the great feast that YHWH and Israel would celebrate together once more, following the new wilderness wooing'.¹³⁹ In his thesis, Long concurs with the marital theme: 'Jesus claims that his ministry was an ongoing wedding celebration signaling the end of the Exile and the restoration of Israel to her position as the Lord's beloved wife'.¹⁴⁰

Having referenced the covenantal meal of the elders in Exodus 24, Doyle argues that the metaphor of wedding as covenant is operating within the Isaiah 25:6–8 text.¹⁴¹ He suggests that there is a word-play between *bl* 'to swallow', and *b'l* 'to marry', or 'be lord over'; it might be expected that death would consume humanity, but YHWH has swallowed death, and thus restored the marital relationship with Zion.¹⁴² His husbandly care is shown in the provision of the banquet on 'this mountain' of their marital home, and in how he 'consoles' and 'dignifies' his people (tears and shame are associated with widowhood).¹⁴³ In his study on ritual behaviour in the Hebrew scriptures, Anderson found that public ritual actions, such as joyful anointing with oil, and putting on fresh garments, precipitated 'emotional transformation'.¹⁴⁴ As a consequence, I argue that the divine removal of 'the veil of

¹³⁹ N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 645.

¹⁴⁰ Long, "The Origin of the Eschatological Feast as a Wedding Banquet," 3.

¹⁴¹ Brian Doyle, "How do Single Isotopes Meet? 'Lord it' (*b'l*) or 'Eat it' (*bl*): A Rare Word Play Metaphor in Isaiah 25," in *The Bible Through Metaphor and Translation: A Cognitive Semantic Perspective*, Proceedings from 25th LAUD Symposium, 'Metaphor and Religion', Schloss Krickenbeck, 1997, and 'Meaning, Metaphor & Religion': Cognitive Semantics and the Bible Symposium, University of Leuven, July 1998, ed. Kurt Feyaerts, *Religions and Discourse*, vol. 15 (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2003), 172–73, 173 n. 33.

¹⁴² Doyle, "How Do Single Isotopes Meet?" 176–77.

¹⁴³ Doyle, "How Do Single Isotopes Meet?" 176–77 n. 42, 177–78.

¹⁴⁴ Gary A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, a Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 96, cited in Jacqueline E. Lapsley, "Feeling Our Way: Love for God in Deuteronomy," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (July 2003): 356–57. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43725006>. Cf. 'The Spirit of the LORD GOD is upon me . . . to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them . . . the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit' (Isa. 61:1a, 3). Mirguet also notes the lack of differentiation between emotion, feeling, physical sensation, and sensory perception in the Hebrew Bible and observes that 'emotions' do not have a cognitive or affective component, but are 'socially experienced' (Françoise Mirguet, "What is an 'Emotion' in the Hebrew Bible? An Experience That Exceeds Most Contemporary Concepts," *Emotions in Ancient Jewish Literature: Definitions and Approaches Issue*, *Biblical Interpretation* 24, no. 4–5 (November 2016): 442–65. doi:10.1163/15685152-02445P02).

death, that tegument which has become a kind of second skin',¹⁴⁵ could legitimately be seen as a ritual re-clothing in wedding garments.¹⁴⁶

4.3. Isaiah 25 and visio Dei

Having said during the course of the Last Supper, that he 'will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes' (Luke 22:18), Jesus then declares the Passover cup of wine the 'new covenant' in his blood (Luke 22:20). In arguing for the Last Supper as a messianic banquet, Pitre sees Jesus' action as a conscious allusion to Moses in Exodus 24, and thus '*the liturgical prelude to a heavenly banquet*'.¹⁴⁷ Pitre writes in conclusion:

Just as it was the blood of the covenant that enabled Moses and the elders of Israel to partake of the heavenly banquet atop Mount Sinai, so now it is the new blood of the covenant—offered in the liturgy of the Last Supper—that enables the disciples to partake of the banquet of the Kingdom of God present now in heaven and revealed in the last days.¹⁴⁸

In order to develop this theme, I now intend to consider the association between particular covenantal and commemorative meals and *visio Dei*. Nakamura establishes a coherent thesis which compares that same theophanic covenant meal of Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the accompanying representative seventy elders¹⁴⁹ (Exod. 24:9–11) who see God's glory (*kābôd*) and live (because God withholds his metonymic hand),¹⁵⁰ with the totality of *all* people (Isa. 25:7),¹⁵¹ who can both see God and live under his hand of blessing,¹⁵² because the obscuring veil and death itself has been consumed. Pitre claims that the feast of Isaiah 25 is an international 'liturgical banquet' because 'fat things' and 'wine on the lees' are sacrificial offerings of fat and drink offerings for the Temple cult (Deut. 32:37–38), and yet this feast is

¹⁴⁵ Daniel Berrigan, "The Marvelous Design: Isaiah 25: A Song of Ecstasy and Truth," *Sojourners* 18, no. 11 (December 1989): 26.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Matt. 22:11–14 on the necessity for this as a prelude to celebration of a marriage. In the parable the man without a wedding garment is bound and ejected from the wedding feast into outer darkness.

¹⁴⁷ Pitre, "Jesus, the Messianic Banquet, and the Kingdom of God," 149, emphasis in original.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁴⁹ Catherine Lynn Nakamura, "Monarch, Mountain, and Meal: The Eschatological Banquet of Isaiah 24:21–23; 25:6–10a," PhD dissertation (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1992), 170 n. 37, 177–80, Microform, UMI 9229022.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 270–2.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 180–81, emphasis mine.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 207–8.

for ‘all peoples’.¹⁵³ In my opinion, his view should be supplemented with the instruction to the Israelites in Leviticus: ‘All fat is the LORD’S’. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, in all your settlements: you must not eat any fat or any blood’ (Lev. 3:16b-17). The guests at this meal on a mountain are no longer subject to the passage of time and death, or cultural enclosure, and nationality is transcended.

Nakamura makes the pertinent observation that Isaiah 25:6–10a are the only verses in the Hebrew scriptures where an anthropomorphised YHWH consumes by eating in the course of a meal.¹⁵⁴ She argues persuasively that the swallowed veil and covering belong to tabernacle-temple observance: ‘A communio is thus established between YHWH and worshipers by YHWH’S direct participation in the meal; YHWH’S portion being those things that have previously prevented communio and caused death’.¹⁵⁵ From the opposite historical perspective, Pattison in his study *Saving Face*, associates the rending of the veil of the Temple at the moment of Jesus’ death with the collective uncovering in Isaiah 25; heaven is opened, and it is possible to share mutual face-to-face fellowship with God.¹⁵⁶ He unites the *visio Dei* with a sociological understanding of how the followers of Jesus became a community through ‘enfacement’, speculating of the communities known to Paul that,

in this community, if they discerned aright, when they met to celebrate the messianic feast, like Paul, they could see the face of Christ, the *kabhod* shining in their midst and lighting up the faces of those around them, fellow-bearers of the image of God. This seeing and experiencing made their citizenship of the Kingdom of God a reality.¹⁵⁷

The Isaian mountain banquet, and New Testament and early Christian eucharistic celebrations as ‘proleptic participation’ in the ‘messianic/eschatological banquet’ (in

¹⁵³ Pitre, “Jesus, the Messianic Banquet, and the Kingdom of God,” 128.

¹⁵⁴ Nakamura, “Monarch, Mountain, and Meal,” 213.

¹⁵⁵ Nakamura, “Monarch, Mountain, and Meal,” 251. Cf. Roberts, who advances the view that these are a burial shroud and face-covering. See J. T. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah: A Commentary*, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 223. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvgs0919.39>.

¹⁵⁶ Pattison, *Saving Face*, 102–7. Pattison acknowledges that he draws on Barker’s speculative reconstruction of Temple worship, which emphasises visibility, to advance his thesis. See Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 2004).

¹⁵⁷ Pattison, *Saving Face*, 110–11.

Priest's terms),¹⁵⁸ can usefully be compared with the near-sufficiency of the multisensory rites performed inside the Tabernacle to encompass all human need:

The incense provides for the sense of smell, the lamps for the sense of sight, while the loaves of bread are a symbol of the need for food. The bells attract the sense of hearing, the stones on the ephod and the breastpiece awaken the 'sense' of memory, and the diadem on the high priest's forehead evokes the 'sense' of grace (for even these last two qualities could be conceived by the ancients, as manifestations of spiritual or 'sensorial' activity).¹⁵⁹

For Pattison, Jesus' death achieved the restoration of the Edenic vision of the face of God, which was experienced in timeless banquets that fulfilled and transcended earlier observance:

In his lifetime he created a new, purified Temple, the reign or Kingdom of God. This was manifest in a body of people who experienced the vanquishing of demons, participation in messianic feasts and the presence of the glory of God in Jesus' own face as Son of God.¹⁶⁰

In the present, Ford considers how the time and space afforded by the relaxation of feasting can be used to expand sensory apprehension: 'Are there also possibilities of transformed sensing which see with "the eyes of the heart", hear with "the inner ear", smell "the odour of holiness", savour "the sweetness of the Lord" or feel "the touch of the Spirit"?'¹⁶¹

Pattison's understanding of Jesus' ministry as redistributing honour, thus enabling the shamed to gain face, attempts to reconstruct the experience of being without shame and 'enfaced' in a dyadic society. At Pentecost Peter urged his hearers: 'Repent . . . and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord' (Acts 3:19–20a). Koenig thinks it probable that 'these times of refreshing are thought to be available in the banquetlike gatherings of the church',¹⁶² which accords with Pattison. This first-century ingestion

¹⁵⁸ Priest, "A Note on the Messianic Banquet," 237–38.

¹⁵⁹ Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry Into Biblical Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School*, rev. ed., reprint, 1985 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 216.

¹⁶⁰ Pattison, *Saving Face*, 102.

¹⁶¹ David F. Ford, *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 267.

¹⁶² Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 116.

of the corporate meal internalised the ‘values and vision’ of another world;¹⁶³ re-cognition, joy, and hospitality are implicit within Pattison’s evocation of the *koinōnia* of these early believers, despite intervening centuries and cultural differences. Isherwood retrospectively concurs with the potential for affectivity and counter-cultural transformation at the meal table:

[The Eucharistic table] has become rather sterile with its metaphysical overlay, but was once a radical space of sensuous engagement and commitment. It was here that the exchange model of a patriarchal society was challenged by sharing bread and wine and declaring that the fullness of divine/human incarnation was enfleshed through radical praxis – eating together!¹⁶⁴

4.4. Death at the feast

Abernethy expresses surprise at interpretive neglect of eating in the book of Isaiah, and goes on to identify recurrent structural themes which circulate around food and drink.¹⁶⁵ Those that apply to Isaiah 25:6–8 include divine sovereignty, which is bound up with the destiny of Zion and geo-political peace; kingly provision of food and drink for the obedient; and joy for the faithful.¹⁶⁶ Cho and Fu suggest that the cultural paradigm of ravenous death would cause a mishearing,¹⁶⁷ mirroring the fear of the feasters at the presence of death, which is overcome by the relief of deliverance (and realisation by the reader, and their audience).¹⁶⁸ The prepared food awaits, but the participants have been accompanied by death, the devourer, the uninvited guest.¹⁶⁹ For the ancient Israelites, death was not merely the ending of life, but a diminishing of the fullness of individual and corporate life, and an interference with human or divine

¹⁶³ Hal E. Taussig, *In the Beginning Was the Meal: Social Experimentation and Early Christian Identity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 54, cited in Soham Al-Suadi, “The Power of an Invitation: Early Christian Meals in Their Cultural Context,” in *Decisive Meals: Table Politics in Biblical Literature*, ed. Kathy Ehrensperger, Nathan MacDonald, and Luzia Sutter Rehmann, Library of New Testament Studies, vol. 449 (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 134 n. 2.

¹⁶⁴ Lisa Isherwood, “I. Response to Hannah Bacon,” in *Transforming Exclusion: Engaging Faith Perspectives*, ed. Hannah Bacon and Wayne Morris, with Steve Knowles (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 116.

¹⁶⁵ Andrew T. Abernethy, *Eating in Isaiah: Approaching the Role of Food and Drink in Isaiah’s Structure and Message*, Biblical Interpretation Series, vol. 131 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 83–4, 89–90, 93, 184, 186–89.

¹⁶⁷ They refer specifically to Isaiah 25:8aa.

¹⁶⁸ Paul Kang-Kul Cho and Janling Fu, “Death and Feasting in the Isaiah Apocalypse (Isaiah 25:6–8),” in *Formation and Intertextuality in Isaiah 24–27*, ed. J. Todd Hibbard and Hyun Chul Paul Kim, *Ancient Israel and Its Literature*, no. 17 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 124.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

relationships: ‘ “any weakness in life is a form of death” ’.¹⁷⁰ Hays also conceives of death as historical military oppression: ‘Foreign domination of Judah has been like a living death for so many years, but now Yahweh has turned the tables on Death, the mighty mythological swallower, and has Himself swallowed up Death’.¹⁷¹ Prosaically, Hays sees Isaiah 24–27 as typical ‘royal propaganda’ from the ancient Near East, which ‘describes and constructs a hoped-for reality’ of the restoration of prosperity and order, and aims to create ‘fictive kinship through political ritual’.¹⁷² MacDonald reflects on how such ‘table ideology’, the royal table as microcosm, a table for the world, is taken up in Isaiah 25:6–8 where YHWH’s bountiful reign negates human kingship.¹⁷³ If, as Cho and Fu also point out, greed and violence were associated with personified death,¹⁷⁴ it might reasonably be expected that plenty and peace would then ensue, as death is destroyed. For Hosch, this swallowing up of death, and ‘the end of tears caused by guilt, grief, and calamity and the end of the reproach heaped upon YHWH’s people represent cumulatively the celebratory substance of the feast’.¹⁷⁵ Maier concurs that the removal of shame is the high point of the banquet, and this is signalled by a ‘striking’ syntactical inversion.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, the removal of Judah’s reproach signifies the ending of exile, and the inauguration of the new age, for Johnson.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁰ Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, originally published as *Jesaja, Kapitel 13–27*, by Neukirchener Verlag, Neukirchen-Vluyn, Biblischer Kommentar series, 1978, trans. Thomas H. Trapp, Continental Commentary (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press), 533, cited in Cho and Fu, “Death and Feasting in the Isaiah Apocalypse,” 130; Aubrey R. Johnson, “Jonah 2,3–20. A Study in Cultic Phantasy,” in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy: Presented to Professor Theodore H. Robinson by the Society for Old Testament Study*, ed. Harold H. Rowley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1950), 90, cited in Nicholas J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament*, *Biblica et Orientalia*, no. 21 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 129.

¹⁷¹ Hays, *The Origins of Isaiah 24–27*, 263–64.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 52, 66.

¹⁷³ MacDonald, “‘The Eyes of All Look to You’,” 13.

¹⁷⁴ Cho and Fu, “Death and Feasting in the Isaiah Apocalypse,” 122–23.

¹⁷⁵ Harold E. Hosch, “A Textlinguistic Analysis of Isaiah 25,” *Hebrew Studies* 47 (2006): 59. doi:10.1353/hbr.2006.0001.

¹⁷⁶ Michael P. Maier, “Festbankett oder Henkersmahl? Die Zwei Gesichter von Jes 25:6–8,” trans. Christine Blackmore, *Vetus Testamentum* 64, no. 3 (July 2014): 449. doi:10.1163/15685330-12341156.

¹⁷⁷ Dan G. Johnson, *From Chaos to Restoration: An Integrative Reading of Isaiah 24–27*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series*, no. 61 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 66.

In Isaiah 24, unproductive vines, the consequent lack of new wine, and the social effects of scarcity are used as a metaphor for the results of universal divine judgement, whereas in the following chapter, matured wine is provided to all.¹⁷⁸ With the destruction of death, none are hindered by the end of mortal existence because all peoples and nations live, and eat. The rich food and aged wine eaten by all people in verse 6, are contrasted with Yahweh's consumption of the coverings, and swallowing of death in verses 7–8;¹⁷⁹ 'the rich fare and wines are more than food; they are symbols of life'.¹⁸⁰ Williamson discerns the relationship between 'sound and sense' through the use of assonance, possible vocal consonance, and unusual word forms for 'alliterative effect' in verses 6 and 7.¹⁸¹ Citing Wheelock, Watson highlights the 'enargeic function' of alliteration 'to focus the reader's attention, vividly and suddenly on the physical details of an object, a person or an event';¹⁸² here, the menu of the banquet becomes more immediate. Barker suggests that the rare word forms used to sustain alliteration parallel the rarity of food and wine of such quality.¹⁸³ Rich foods (שְׁמָנִים, *šēmānîm*) served with oil are counterposed with wine aged on the lees (שְׁמָרִים, (*šēmārîm*); these oily foods are also seasoned with marrow (מֶמְחַיִּים, *měmuhāyîm*), and the wine is filtered (מֶזְזֻקָּאִים, *mězquqāqîm*) to remove the sediment.¹⁸⁴ The alliterative and rhyming nature of these patterned couplets serve to emphasise and redouble the sensory richness of the savoury repast, and the flavour of the filtered wine, in the view of Cho and Fu.¹⁸⁵ Altmann's rendering of the main ingredients intensifies the lubricious pleasure (in the non-sexual sense) of eating: 'mištēh šēmānîm: literally "a feast of fat" and mištēh mēmuḥîm: a feast of sucked

¹⁷⁸ William D. Barker, *Isaiah's Kingship Polemic: An Exegetical Study in Isaiah 24–27*, *Forschungen Zum Alten Testament 2*, vol. 70 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 69–70.

¹⁷⁹ J. T. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 323.

¹⁸⁰ A. S. Herbert, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, *The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 152.

¹⁸¹ H. G. M. Williamson, "Sound, Sense and Language in Isaiah 24–27," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 46, no. 1–2 (Spring-Autumn 1995): 5–6. doi:10.18647/1785/JJS-1995.

¹⁸² J. T. S. Wheelock, "Alliterative Functions in the Divina Commedia," *Lingua e Stile* 13 (1978): 379–389, cited in Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*, rev. ed., reprint, 1984, T&T Clark Biblical Languages (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 228.

¹⁸³ Barker, *Isaiah's Kingship Polemic*, 74.

¹⁸⁴ J. T. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 322, Robert's transliteration.

¹⁸⁵ Cho and Fu, "Death and Feasting in the Isaiah Apocalypse," 135–36.

marrow'.¹⁸⁶ Following Wildberger, Maier looks more to preparation with oil, and proposes food 'baked in vegetable fat, fried vegetables or pastries'.¹⁸⁷ He even sees grounds for the Septuagintal reading of cosmetic anointing, which thus eliminates food from the equation, and leads him to challenge the choice of 'marrow', but this is a minority position.¹⁸⁸ Long points out that the word for the filtering of the wine is usually used for the refining of gold or silver, with the implication that such painstaking purification is needed to make it fit for the Lord's banquet.¹⁸⁹ He adduces Hagelia on the reiterated superlative quality of the banquet to vitiate any claim of a doom-laden dinner of judgement.¹⁹⁰

If Maier's speculation is discounted, then the banquet stands as an inversion of ancient Near Eastern and royal norms, where the choicest and fattiest cuts were reserved for the king.¹⁹¹ Here the king provides the best to everyone; the meat of the slaughtered animals is tender and marbled with fat.¹⁹² The wine has fermented on its lees, but is clarified by straining the sediment, so that the bitter dregs (a sign of judgement) are removed.¹⁹³ Barker interprets this as 'the establishment of a new cosmic order: no longer are both the blessing and the curse a choice for Israel (e.g. Deut. 11:26; Josh. 8:34)';¹⁹⁴ life replaces death and judgement. Thus, the banquet is 'looking forward to an eschatological restoration rather than an apocalyptic judgement'.¹⁹⁵ The removal of the death-shroud over the nations, leads Oswalt to a similar conclusion: 'As with Israel, so with the nations; God's purpose in judgment is

¹⁸⁶ Altmann, *Festive Meals in Ancient Israel*, 132. Cf. Barthes on the 'spirit' of food (Roland Barthes, "Towards a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption," in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, reprint, 1961 (New York: Routledge, 2012), 26).

¹⁸⁷ Maier, "Festbankett oder Henkersmahl?" 452.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 452–53.

¹⁸⁹ Long, "The Origin of the Eschatological Feast as a Wedding Banquet," 100.

¹⁹⁰ Hallvard Hagelia, *Coram Deo: Spirituality in the Book of Isaiah, with Particular Attention to Faith in Yahweh*, Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament Series, vol. 49 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2001), 198, cited in Long, "The Origin of the Eschatological Feast as a Wedding Banquet," 100. Cf. Maier, "Festbankett oder Henkersmahl?"

¹⁹¹ Barker, *Isaiah's Kingship Polemic*, 78–79.

¹⁹² Hays, *The Origins of Isaiah 24–27*, 16.

¹⁹³ Barker, *Isaiah's Kingship Polemic*, 82–84.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

not extermination, but restoration'.¹⁹⁶ Life becomes available to all, not just Israel (with the preacherly proviso that future hope is always earthed by present realities, and the need for right choices).¹⁹⁷ Johnson notes:

The catholicity of 'all peoples', 'all nations', 'all faces', and 'all the earth', is interchanged with the particular notions of 'this mountain', 'his people', and 'our God'. The effect is such that it suggests that Yahweh's actions on behalf of his particular people will result in universal salvation.¹⁹⁸

Fittingly, this meal as the blessing of all nations is a fulfilment of the promise to hospitable Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3; 18:18–19).

Unlike the restricted guest-list of Mount Sinai, or the custom of the ancient Near East of showing particular favour, divine provision and favour is universal in Isaiah 25:6–8, according to Barker.¹⁹⁹ Such divine providence connotes blessing, which extends beyond cultic sacrificial communion, or restoration of fertility, to 'a higher level of sustenance', and an eschatological hope, in Steiner's opinion.²⁰⁰ For Polaski, this polysemous celebration is the culmination of history and sociality: 'The meal on Zion, the banquet of YHWH which is an imperial fete, a coronation ritual, a covenant meal and a sacrifice, is the future of all YHWH's people, indeed all the peoples on the earth'.²⁰¹ Steiner's concurrence is more affective: 'the banquet of all nations demonstrates that vitality and communion with the victorious God will be available to all in the eschaton'.²⁰² As Steiner points out, 'the gathering of the nations (v. 9), God as shelter (v. 15), the satisfaction of the hungry (v. 16), and the wiping of tears from eyes (v. 17)' recur in Revelation (7:9–17).²⁰³ Sweeney derives *ûmāḥâ* ('and

¹⁹⁶ John N. Oswalt, *The Holy One of Israel: Studies in the Book of Isaiah* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2014), 99.

¹⁹⁷ John N. Oswalt, "Isaiah 24–27: Songs in the Night," Lecture given at the Calvin Symposium on Worship and the Arts, Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, January 2004, *Calvin Theological Journal* 40, no. 1 (April 2005): 80–81.

¹⁹⁸ Dan G. Johnson, *From Chaos to Restoration*, 63.

¹⁹⁹ Barker, *Isaiah's Kingship Polemic*, 76.

²⁰⁰ Beth Steiner, "A Discussion of the Canaanite Mythological Background to the Israelite Concept of Eschatological Hope in Isaiah 24–27," PhD thesis (University of Oxford, 2013), 144.

²⁰¹ Polaski, *Authorizing an End*, 191–92.

²⁰² Beth Steiner, "Food of the Gods: Canaanite Myths of Divine Banquets and Gardens in Connection with Isaiah 25:6," in *Formation and Intertextuality in Isaiah 24–27*, ed. J. Todd Hibbard and Hyun Chul Paul Kim, *Ancient Israel and Its Literature*, no. 17 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 115.

²⁰³ Steiner, "A Discussion of the Canaanite Mythological Background," 72.

he shall wipe’) in verse 8 and *mēmuhāyīm* (smeared) in verse 6 from the same root,²⁰⁴ which leads Polaski to suggest the possible presence of a pun where the provision of food at the banquet of ‘smeared’ fat is ‘intimately linked to YHWH’s healing activity’.²⁰⁵

There is a projection of consumption as ‘the image of the table is transported into the eschatological future’ in Isaiah 25.²⁰⁶ Hiers re-renders Jesus’ prophecy about the unfruitful fig tree, and compares it with his vow about refraining from drinking wine until the kingdom comes.²⁰⁷ He then invites recall that ‘in the OT the vine and fig tree together represent the blessings of life in the messianic age’: continuous fruit-bearing and harvest.²⁰⁸ Creativity and technology are inherent within the creation mandate for Chester, and so he finds the promise of their redemption in the continuance of ‘cooking, brewing [surely vinification] and fermenting’²⁰⁹ in Isaiah 25; increased natural fertility and abundance undergoes culinary transformation into the delectable and palatable.

5. Festal freedom, healthy eating, and healing meals

In answer to his own question, ‘What are the Christian community’s meals for?’, Chester makes a bold teleological assertion in the concluding words of his book, *A Meal with Jesus*:

God created the world that we might eat with him. The food we consume, the table around which we sit and the companions gathered with us have as their end our communion with one another and with God. The Israelites were redeemed to eat together with God on the mountain, and we’re redeemed for the great messianic banquet that we anticipate when we eat together as a Christian community. We proclaim Christ in mission so that others might hear the invitation to join the feast.

²⁰⁴ Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39 with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature*, The Forms of the Old Testament Literature, vol. XVI (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 334–35.

²⁰⁵ Polaski, *Authorizing an End*, 168 n. 78.

²⁰⁶ MacDonald, *Not by Bread Alone*, 15.

²⁰⁷ Richard A. Hiers, “‘Not the Season for Figs’,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 87, no. 4 (December 1968): 397. doi:10.2307/3263300.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 395, 397–98.

²⁰⁹ Chester, *A Meal with Jesus*, 73–74, 135. More generally, Ford also celebrates the ‘accumulated wisdom of traditions of cookery, wine-making and brewing’, as part of the ‘requirements for full feasting which draw us deeper into appreciation of our embodiment’ (Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 267). See my proposal in Chapter 7, section 2.2, p. 301.

Creation, redemption and mission all exist so that this meal can take place.²¹⁰

Bretherton, in *Hospitality as Holiness*, similarly looks toward the eschatological banquet, but envisions an earthly foretaste of innovative, anarchic social transformation:

To be drawn into the messianic feast, anticipated now in the feasting of the church, every area of life and every person must be transfigured. However, no new totality is created. There can be no overview or single principle that orders the feast. The myriad of conversations, encounters and exchanges, which in turn generate surplus to be exchanged, cannot be contained or directed. Neither is there a single pattern to conform to: each person has a gift, and each exchange takes place between distinct and unique persons whose particularity is established and enhanced through these exchanges. Thus, feasts and festivals are ways to anticipate and respond to the in-breaking messianic age that initiates true freedom and generates transfigured patterns of human sociality.²¹¹

Here the communal meals of those early Christian communities who ‘turned the world upside down’ (Acts 17:6) by disrupting the social order are re-imagined, not as Pattison’s sensory re-cognition, but as social reconfiguration. Bacon is explicit about eating as a ‘*transformative praxis*’: ‘we literally become what we eat – we *become* the body of Christ, the restored, redeemed community of God through the act of eating’.²¹² In her opinion, ‘the Eucharist communicates . . . that food in itself is a source of life, and life in abundance, because it *expands* our relationships with one another and *expands* our relationship with God. It leads to “fullness” ’.²¹³ She then contrasts this social and spiritual extensity with the bodily regulation of dieting and diminishment.²¹⁴

²¹⁰ Chester, *A Meal with Jesus*, 149, 150.

²¹¹ Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, 144. In *Religion for Atheists*, de Botton proposes the promotion of social cohesion through ‘Agape restaurants’ as a place for strangers to meet, in encounters facilitated by the use of prescribed questions that reach beyond conventional enquiry; in my opinion, it is therefore all the more incumbent on the Church, as the prototype for his proposal, to engage creatively and sympathetically with those who are sisters and brothers in the faith. See Alain de Botton, *Religion for Atheists: A Non-Believer’s Guide to the Uses of Religion* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 43–44, 46, 48, 50.

²¹² Hannah Bacon, “Does Size Really Matter? A Feminist Theological Response to Secular Dieting and Weight Loss,” in *Transforming Exclusion: Engaging Faith Perspectives*, ed. Hannah Bacon and Wayne Morris, with Steve Knowles (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 112–13, emphasis in original.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 113, emphasis in original.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 113.

Having considered the place of mystic and missional communal eating, I shall now look at how dynamics of abnormal consumption, abuse, or exclusion, can be healed through bodily reconfiguration which draws on the Eucharist as a foretaste of the abundant welcome of the heavenly banquet. Jackson proposes viewing eating disorders as a ‘false covenant’ with the disease, in which the goodness of creation needs to be re-learned through contemplation on the Trinity.²¹⁵ Hence, partaking in the ‘anorexic portions’ of the eucharist becomes ‘a prophetic resistance to excluding oneself from participating in life’:

The economic Trinity is experienced at the meal collectively as participants gather as Christ’s body across time and space, as one body. It is a practice geared toward healing the broken body of Jesus.²¹⁶

Feminist, liberation and body theologian Lisa Isherwood links bodily disconnection and the search for meaning through disordered eating, as being ‘adrift from our “guts” [which is where the gospels tell us the true Christian life happens, metanoia the word for conversion meaning a turning over of one’s guts]’.²¹⁷ She has conflated repentant *metanoia* (literally change of mind) with compassion,²¹⁸ but her error may be nearer the truth than definitional exactitude. Peter Levine, in his scientific and clinical findings on trauma and dissociation, discovered that connection with the gut through vocalisation enabled the discharge of emotion frozen in the body; the individual was then freer to initiate social contact because they were no longer trapped in self-preservation mode.²¹⁹ His repeated observation and documentation of this transition

²¹⁵ Jillian Jackson, “Re-Ordering Desires: A Trinitarian Lens on Eating Disorders,” *Anglican Theological Review* 99, no. 2 (March 2017): 255–74. doi:10.1177/000332861709900204.

²¹⁶ Pamela Fickenscher, “From Catherine to Katniss: Disordered Eating, Resistance, and the Eucharist,” *Word & World* 33, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 359, cited in Jillian Jackson, “Re-Ordering Desires,” 272; Jillian Jackson, “Re-Ordering Desires,” 273.

²¹⁷ Lisa Isherwood, “The Fat Jesus: Feminist Explorations in Fleshy Christologies,” *Feminist Theology* 19, no. 1 (September 2010): 33, square brackets in original. doi:10.1177/0966735010372166.

²¹⁸ Wessel references Lampe with regard to compassion: ‘The Greek word the Gospels often use in this context [of Jesus’ healings], “splanchnizomai”, is derived from the noun “splanchna”, meaning “guts” or “entrails”. While most of the internal organs were designated, together and separately, by the word “splanchna”, its meaning was extended metaphorically to indicate the seat of the feelings, emotions, and affections’ (G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 1249, cited in Susan Wessel, *Passion and Compassion in Early Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 17. doi:10.1017/CBO9781316408841).

²¹⁹ Peter A. Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books; Lyons, CO: ERGOS Institute Press, 2010).

permits an interesting juxtaposition of Pattison, ecstatic speech, and Glancy's contention about the prevalence of the sexual abuse of female household slaves,²²⁰ to allow consideration of the therapeutic potential of divine and human encounter in the fellowship meals of the early Church.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Smith sees these meals as the place of Christian formation,²²¹ and so, of course, there is potential today to explore meals as a socialisation into practices of belief, and as healing encounters, one with another. Navone envisages a sacramental community centred around 'God's Wisdom-Word, Jesus Christ', where 'the Eucharist is the sacrament of the messianic banquet of the universal reign of God'.²²² Also in the present, Isherwood calls for an holistic, sensuous praxis:

As followers of Jesus we are 'sensuous revolutionaries' living our deepest passions and connections in order that our free and full embodiment may sing of abundant incarnation. It is the sensuous revolutionary Christ who calls to us and is in a true sense himself a sensuous hedonist empowering revolution through the skin and enabling abundant embodied living that is the counter to the worst excesses of our genocidal and disconnected world.²²³

Tuohy likewise identifies how hospitality is spiritualised and divorced from everyday meals: the 'common tendency to move analysis and discussion concerning food and hospitality to the Eucharist embeds and reinforces . . . clergy-centric practice'.²²⁴ It is not essential to my thesis to consider sacramental figurations of the simple meal and model of service initiated by Jesus, but Zizioulas writes incisively on the nullity of an exclusive eucharist:

A eucharist which discriminates between races, ages, professions, social classes etc. violates not certain ethical principles but its eschatological nature. For that reason such a eucharist is not a 'bad'—i.e. morally deficient—eucharist but no eucharist at all.²²⁵

Similarly, in disavowing liberalism, and advancing their reclamation of inclusive

²²⁰ Pattison, *Saving Face*, 102–7, 110–11. See section 4.3, pp. 115–16; Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge*, 62–66.

²²¹ Dennis E. Smith, "Hospitality, the House Church, and Early Christian Identity."

²²² John Navone, "The Messianic Banquet of Wisdom," *The Bible Today* 42, no. 5 (September-October 2004): 302, 300.

²²³ Isherwood, "The Fat Jesus," 34.

²²⁴ Tuohy, "While They Were Eating," 21.

²²⁵ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 255 n. 11.

theology and an inclusive God, for an inclusive church, Anglican clerics Steven Shakespeare and Hugh Rayment-Pickard lament how the Eucharist is deployed to preserve distinctions between insiders and outsiders:

The pity is that the Eucharist is the test of our hospitality, of our faithfulness to the radical hospitality of God in Christ. And when set against that standard, a fairly sorry situation is revealed, in which the Eucharist is tamed, domesticated, and made subservient to an agenda not its own.²²⁶

They argue against exclusionary individualist salvation and point out that the only people not included at the eschatological feast are the self-excluded: those who have neglected their needy neighbours.²²⁷ Moreover, they see the transformative potential of undifferentiated participation:

The feast set out on God's mountain for all people is an image of the Eucharist fulfilling its prophetic universalism. Every celebration looks to the coming of Christ, and to the time when the fruit of the vine will be drunk in the kingdom. In the meantime, the Eucharist becomes a missionary act: a joyous, compassionate, open table of hope for the world.²²⁸

Nevertheless, as Hoad perceptively discerns, the non-ritual need of the hungry outsider necessitates interim everyday service and hospitality:

The bread at Emmaus, given to those who had not been at the Last Supper, and the fish in the Upper Room, given by those who had, are the ingredients not of Communion, but of the feeding of multitudes outside.²²⁹

Conclusion

This chapter started with the ַג as one bereft of home but who is incorporated into community through feasting, and who is loved and provided for because Yahweh himself loves and provides for the stranger. It then moved on to the hungry multitudes

²²⁶ Steven Shakespeare and Hugh Rayment-Pickard, *The Inclusive God: Reclaiming Theology for an Inclusive Church* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2006), 93.

²²⁷ Shakespeare and Rayment-Pickard, *The Inclusive God*, 59. In similar vein, Byrne considers how the respective fates of the five surviving brothers of the rich man who had feasted on earth, and the resentful elder brother who refuses to join the festivities for his brother's return are left unresolved, with 'permanent exclusion threatening' (Brendan Byrne, "Forceful Stewardship and Neglectful Wealth: A Contemporary Reading of Luke 16," *Pacifica* 1, no. 1 (February 1988): 9. doi:10.1177/1030570X8800100102). Ford characterises the excluded as those, who like the aforementioned older brother, 'cannot bear God's generosity and will not imitate it' (Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 269).

²²⁸ Shakespeare and Rayment-Pickard, *The Inclusive God*, 99.

²²⁹ Hoad, "Open House in Luke's Gospel and Today," 44.

who are to be provided for by the followers of Jesus, whether from Marshall's interpretive standpoint, or from Hoad's viewpoint of praxis. In the course of this discussion, I have also considered the metaphorical hospitality extended to the Gentile mother from Syro-Phoenicia, and argued for her formerly demonised daughter's assertion of dining privileges. I have intimated that commentators fail to see the psychological similarities between this story and Peter's vision (discussed in Chapter 1), as a call to move beyond cultural boundaries, because they fixate on language rather than meaning. I examined the meal on the mountain in Isaiah 25:6–8 as an inclusive banquet which meets bodily, spiritual, and emotional needs through feasting, and affords the unhindered sight of God through the destruction of death, and the wiping away of the tears which blur the vision, and grieve the heart. The sensory integration of Pattison's application of the concept of the Messianic banquet to the fellowship meals of the early Church, led me to consider how such holism can resource today's feasters. I showed how the image of the Messianic banquet is deployed to instigate hospitality and social renewal, and demonstrated the healing which can be brought about by the embodied experience of communal eating, and the ritual of Communion. Thus, my discussion moved from the journeyings of the fatherless stranger, and the outsider, and between spaces and places of eating, whether Jerusalem, Sinai, or Zion, mountain-top or desert, household, or indeed a church, to conclude with the continuing truth of Hoad's insight that outside is wherever those who are hungry are found.

Chapter 3

Reflections on cognition and corporeal and divine hospitality

From social exclusion to spiritual inclusion

1. Overcoming exclusion

Having debated hospitable inclusion as the transcending of ethnic and national identities in Chapter 2, and related it to the *koinōnia* of the early Church, and inclusive Communion, in this chapter I will consider those excluded by ‘hypercognitive’ philosophical accounts of personhood,¹ first brought to notice by Post in his writing about Alzheimer’s disease, but which also disadvantage those with learning disabilities. In Chapter 1, I wrote about the hospitable reception of the stranger, and in this chapter I intend to look at the estrangement and isolation of those with cognitive and sensory-processing challenges, and the utility of hospitality as a means of recognising the substance and intention of interactions. I will draw out how the preservation of personhood in dementia and learning disability is overshadowed by divine relationship, and consider whether the hospitality of the Trinity can inform an understanding of hospitality. Accordingly, the social and physical body will be paralleled through thematic recursion in a spiral around divine communication: exclusion of the socially-situated individual will be the starting point, proceeding through sensation, embodiment, the ‘holding’ of personhood, and joy, into revelation; similarly, bodily hospitality will lead into spiritual communion and *perichoresis*, joy, the *eschaton* and the eschatological body, before concluding with the ecclesial body endowed with gifts, and a prescription for the church as an inclusive body.

Although some mention will be made of physical disability, it is not my primary focus, as I am looking principally at the social construction of dementia and attitudes towards people with learning disabilities. In the attempt to show how

¹ Stephen G. Post, *The Moral Challenge of Alzheimer Disease* (Baltimore, MD; London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), cited in Stephen G. Post, “*Respectare*: Moral Respect for the Lives of the Deeply Forgetful,” in *Dementia: Mind, Meaning and the Person*, ed. Julian C. Hughes, Stephen J. Louw, and Steven R. Sabat, *International Perspectives in Philosophy and Psychiatry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 231.

exclusion and inclusion operate, this chapter will necessarily rely on published accounts, both case studies and the anecdotal. I am aware that what I am writing is open to criticism, in that I am theorising about the subjective reality of other people's lived experience, but I hope that it is not unreflexive. Birch acknowledges that no one is unimpaired in reflecting the image of God, or he ruefully admits, as a biblical scholar, in the interpretation of scripture, as he reflects on being brought to awareness of the dissonance between his theological formation, and his experience of being the father of a daughter with developmental disabilities.² I am not claiming any proxy representation, or seeking to displace the views of those portrayed, and have no wish to advance my own agenda at the expense of others by objectifying their lives. In particular, when I note a person's condition or disability, but also profession and/or parental status, it is neither to diminish their wider abilities, nor to identify them solely by their condition, vocation, or progeny, but to position their work. It is important to stress that I am neither imposing homogeneity, nor claiming equivalence between congenital and acquired conditions, but seeking to find commonalities. Equally, there is no intention to deny dignity or uniqueness by using a collective term. Denominational affiliation is given where appropriate, when it has been recorded by the author in relation to their approach to the issue under discussion in their writing.

Before proceeding, I wish to record a couple of seemingly recondite observations deriving from studies of dementia and learning disability, but which pertain to hosting, eating, and social inclusion. First, the persistence of the courtesies of hospitality in those whose dementia has progressed, but who attempt to make sense of their disorientation by acting as host, should be acknowledged.³ These actions speak to the deep-seated nature of hospitality as a human impulse to reciprocal care.

² Bruce C. Birch, "Impairment as a Condition in Biblical Scholarship," in *Thisabled Body: Re-Thinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies*, ed. Hector Avalos, Sarah J. Melcher, and Jeremy Schipper, Semeia Studies, no. 55 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 185–86.

³ Örvulv illustrates how the need to make sense of situations when experiencing disorientation can elicit a repertoire of responses, including the assumption of the role of host. See Linda Örvulv, "The Subjectivity of Disorientation: Moral Stakes and Concerns," in *Beyond Loss: Dementia, Identity, Personhood*, ed. Lars-Christer Hydén, Hilde Lindemann, and Jens Brockmeier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 192–208. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199969265.003.0013.

Secondly, the important function of meals in social integration can be inferred from the effect problems with chewing have on people with learning disabilities: missing dentition is thought to contribute to impacted earwax and consequent hearing loss.⁴ In particular, individuals with Down's syndrome have 'anatomically distinct narrow ear canals and this frequently causes a build-up of earwax (cerumen)';⁵ auditory problems may be exacerbated by difficulties with mastication, if they have superimposed dementia.⁶ Although commensality will be addressed again, categorisation by cognitive ability is not the focus of this chapter, as I seek rather to see where hospitality as a metaphor can provide illumination when applied to the circulation of discourse around personhood and spirituality, which has relevance for dementia and beyond, and so it is with dementia that I begin.

1.1. Value and valorisation

On publication in 1997, Kitwood's *Dementia Reconsidered: The Person Comes First* made a lasting contribution to nomenclature and the valuing of those with dementia. His titular assertion of priority was visually reinforced by typography in the first chapter of the book: 'Our frame of reference should no longer be 'person-with-DEMENTIA' but PERSON-with-dementia'.⁷ Nevertheless, Hughes and Williamson writing in 2019, note the lag until 'relatively recently', in pejorative naming in dementia when, for example, it had largely been eliminated from the field of learning disability, or other cognitive impairments.⁸ Moreover, as a psychiatrist, Hughes rejects the concept of 'dementia', preferring 'acquired diffuse neurocognitive

⁴ Denny Fransman, "Can Removal of Back Teeth Contribute to Chronic Earwax Obstruction?" *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 34, no. 1 (March 2006): 36–41. doi:10.1111/j.1468–3156.2005.00351.x.

⁵ Ian Peate and Debra Fearn, *Caring for People with Learning Disabilities* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), 135.

⁶ Diana Kerr, *Understanding Learning Disability and Dementia: Developing Effective Interventions* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007), 122.

⁷ Tom Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered: The Person Comes First*, Rethinking Ageing (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997), 7.

⁸ Julian C. Hughes and Toby Williamson, *The Dementia Manifesto: Putting Values-Based Practice to Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 54. doi:10.1017/9781316336229.

dysfunction’;⁹ he reiterated the inutility of dementia as a concept in the declaration: ‘Dementia is dead, long live ageing!’¹⁰ As an assertion it lessens stigma by elevating life-course over diagnosis, but it does not resolve the need either for public education, or funding of specialist services.

I now move from evolving psychiatric labelling, to the application of managerial terminology as provision for people with learning disabilities has moved to the community. Mee writes as a practitioner and lecturer in learning disability nursing about the reification of concepts such as ‘value’, whether used at a policy level, or of services for people with learning disabilities, concluding that they are evacuated of meaning by their repetition.¹¹ He identifies honesty as necessary to acknowledge how devaluing representations and stereotypes interact, before they can be overcome consciously, through reflective practice.¹² He also queries whether historic segregation and forced exclusion have been replaced by ‘forced inclusion’, such as a routine of ‘normal’ activities, regardless of preference.¹³ For Wendell, if inclusion presumes conformity to social norms such as independence and autonomy, it negates the possibility of the majority learning ways of knowing which value dependence and interdependence.¹⁴ However, in line with Morris, I argue that Mee is identifying examples of oppressive integration. From his experience of working with the Deaf community, Morris argues that inclusivity is a ‘coming alongside’, not a forcible conformity to the norms and ways of life of the hearing majority.¹⁵ Thus, it

⁹ Julian C. Hughes, *Thinking Through Dementia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), cited in Julian C. Hughes, *How We Think About Dementia: Personhood, Rights, Ethics, the Arts and What They Mean for Care* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2014), 11. Subsequently, the 2013 fifth revision of the definitive American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5) retained dementia as a familiar term, but suggested that dementias should come under the over-arching term of ‘neurocognitive disorders’ (Hughes, *How We Think About Dementia*, 11).

¹⁰ Julian C. Hughes, “Dementia is Dead, Long Live Ageing: Philosophy and Practice in Connection with ‘Dementia’,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Psychiatry*, ed. K. W. M. Fulford, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 835. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199579563.013.0049.

¹¹ Steve Mee, *Valuing People with a Learning Disability* (Keswick: M&K Publishing, 2012), 5–7.

¹² *Ibid.*, 84.

¹³ Mee, *Valuing People with a Learning Disability*, 125, 107–9, 170.

¹⁴ Susan Wendell, *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 74–75.

¹⁵ Wayne Morris, “Transforming Tyrannies: Disability and Christian Theologies of Salvation,” in *Transforming Exclusion: Engaging Faith Perspectives*, ed. Hannah Bacon and Wayne Morris, with

can be seen that language, ideology and attitudes are not always aligned in the discourse(s) surrounding inclusion.

Having instanced community care and the agency of those in the Deaf community as divergent examples of inclusion, I now transition to individual agency in the experience of living with dementia. In outlining how societal norms and values worked against people with dementia, Kitwood adopted Goffman's play on words, 'excolluded'.¹⁶ Although Phinney partially attributes the emerging valuation of the experiences of those with dementia since then to postmodern relativity,¹⁷ such contingency would seem to further erode the subjectivity of the person living with dementia. By way of comparison, Hacking observed in 2009, that a language for autistic experience did not exist twenty-five years previously.¹⁸ With a similar awareness in mind, Bartlett and O'Connor propose a continuum of knowledge-production from specialist knowledge to self-expertise; the individual is the expert of their own experience in line with Freire's 'critical pedagogy of the oppressed'.¹⁹ Such a spectrum allows for co-created reciprocity and more egalitarian knowledge-exchange by not privileging biomedical diagnosis, or rendering the person with dementia powerless. Moreover, in Jaworska's view, the person with dementia needs to be seen as a 'valuer' whose own values need to be taken into account.²⁰

Further to the expression of choice, Bartlett and O'Connor argue that a psychosocial conception of personhood has limited ability to overcome inequality, suggesting that social citizenship could be explored as 'something individuals achieve

Steve Knowles (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 138–40. In Christian belief the Holy Spirit would be seen as coming alongside the believer, although Morris does not make this connection.

¹⁶ Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), cited in Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, 41.

¹⁷ Alison Phinney, "As the Body Speaks: Creative Expression in Dementia," in *Beyond Loss: Dementia, Identity, Personhood*, ed. Lars-Christer Hydén, Hilde Lindemann, and Jens Brockmeier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 123. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199969265.003.0009.

¹⁸ Ian Hacking, "How We Have Been Learning to Talk About Autism: A Role for Stories," *Metaphilosophy* 40, no. 3–4, *Cognitive Disability and its Challenge to Moral Philosophy*, special issue (July 2009): 503. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9973.2009.01607.x.

¹⁹ Ruth Bartlett and Deborah O'Connor, *Broadening the Dementia Debate: Towards Social Citizenship, Ageing and the Lifecourse* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2010), 81, 117.

²⁰ Agnieszka Jaworska, "Respecting the Margins of Agency: Alzheimer's Patients and the Capacity to Value," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 28, no. 2 (April 1999): 105–38. doi:10.1111/j.1088-4963.1999.00105.x.

for themselves, through the power dynamics of everyday talk and practice’, so that the person with dementia is regarded as an empowered social actor with status and agency, instead of needy client, or passive welfare recipient.²¹ They conclude that, despite individualised approaches, there is a lack of consideration of how individual aetiology interacts with aspects of social location such as gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, and socio-economic status to affect the experience of dementia;²² homogeneity is imposed on difference.²³ Significantly, Bartlett and O’Connor fail to mention religious belief; Benland condenses materialist oversight into the polemic ‘more than body, brain and breath’.²⁴ However, breath cannot be dismissed merely as respiration: breathing is connective, and a carrier of spiritual significance, and this inspirational aspect will be explored subsequently. The person with dementia is thus acknowledged as valued and valuing, as a political actor and a spiritual being.

Having mentioned the external imposition of labels, considered briefly how norms and structures act as constraints, and identified different knowledges and ways of valuing, I will extend the exploration to hospitality and attitudes to disability in wider society. I alluded to Newman in my opening reflections, and she identifies distortions of hospitality including indiscriminate inclusivity: ‘A hospitality that focuses on a generic “openness” to the other is a kind of aesthetic hospitality, where

²¹ Ruth Bartlett and Deborah O’Connor, “From Personhood to Citizenship: Broadening the Lens for Dementia Practice and Research,” *Journal of Aging Studies* 21, no. 2 (April 2007): 109. doi:10.1016/j.jaging.2006.09.002; Bartlett and O’Connor, *Broadening the Dementia Debate*, 128–29. Subsequent to the writing of this chapter, Swinton has written on how Bartlett and O’Connor’s thinking on social citizenship ‘opens the way for a *politically informed spirituality*’ that assumes equality and seeks justice in society: ‘Whilst inclusion emphasises the importance of *rights*, belonging takes seriously the importance of *duties*’ (John Swinton, “Re-Imagining Personhood; Dementia, Culture and Citizenship,” *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging* 33, no. 2 (2021): 179, 180, emphasis in original. doi:10.1080/15528030.2020.1845278).

²² Bartlett and O’Connor, “From Personhood to Citizenship,” 109.

²³ Bartlett and O’Connor, *Broadening the Dementia Debate*, 6–7.

²⁴ In her acknowledgements, Shamy thanks Benland for permission to use her words as the subtitle of her book (Catherine Benland, *The S-Factor: Taha Wairua – the Dimension of the Human Spirit*, Submission to the Royal Commission on Social Policy (New Zealand, 1988), cited in Eileen Shamy, *A Guide to the Spiritual Dimension of Care for People with Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementia: More Than Body, Brain and Breath*, originally published as *More Than Body, Brain and Breath: A Guide to the Spiritual Dimension of Care for People with Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementia* by ColCom Press, 1997 (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2003), 10).

“otherness” is celebrated, exchanged, and consumed’.²⁵ This epicurean hospitality can usefully be compared with Wendell’s subjective identification of the treatment of difference in people with disabilities as ‘a curiosity’, or ‘exotic’, and ‘interesting’, and difference will be considered further with regard to storytelling in Chapter 4.²⁶

Newman is exposing an experiential insatiability, whereas the hospitality I am seeking to expound is one of humility and restraint. Pailin suggests that consciousness of happenstance, and the contingency of capacity and opportunity should preclude presumptive judgement of others.²⁷ Further to the acquisition of such self-knowledge, Hill makes an observation deriving from her work with adults with a learning disability:

When we find ourselves in the company of people who are not capable of contributing to our consumer culture in the normative sense, we attempt to ensure that they become acculturated . . . And while there is merit to be found in job satisfaction and skill acquisition, ultimately each of us wishes not to be judged by our intellectual capabilities, earnings or looks but by our capacity to transcend from ordinary to extraordinary through acceptance.²⁸

Here, she is writing about the outcome of a group therapy project which provided a non-judgemental space for peer support, honest disclosure and confrontation.

Similarly, ethicist Stephen Post seeks to disembed people with dementia from Western capitalist norms:

The fitting response to the increasing prevalence of dementia in our ageing society is to enlarge our sense of human worth to counter an exclusionary emphasis on rationality, efficient use of time and energy, ability to control distracting impulses, thrift, economic success, self-reliance, ‘language advantage’ and the like.²⁹

Neither assertion should be seen as condoning an exemplary exceptionalism which merely palliates dis-ease in wider society by confirming pre-existing privilege. Such

²⁵ Newman, *Untamed Hospitality*, 32.

²⁶ Wendell, *The Rejected Body*, 66–67.

²⁷ David A. Pailin, *A Gentle Touch: From a Theology of Handicap to a Theology of Human Being* (London: SPCK, 1992), 59, cited in John Swinton and Esther McIntosh, “Persons in Relation: The Care of Persons with Learning Disabilities,” *Theology Today* 57, no. 2 (July 2000): 181. doi:10.1177/004057360005700203.

²⁸ Jennifer Hill, *Authentic Dialogue with Persons Who Are Developmentally Disabled: Sad Without Tears* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2009), 123.

²⁹ Post, “*Respectare*,” 233.

statements can be contrasted with a superficially similar quote from Debbie Everett, a Canadian hospital chaplain, who likens people with dementia to ‘magic mirrors where I have seen my human condition and have repudiated the commonly held societal values of power and prestige that are unreal and shallow’.³⁰ Such fairy tale overtones infantilise the de-faced individuals who become a mythic catalyst for the betterment of the reflected looker/speaker.

2. Movement, touch, and ‘holding’

Having seen the societal dysfunction surfaced by dementia and learning disability, and how people are made passive exemplars, I will now look positively at relationality through touch and movement. Writing from a background of dual-qualification in psychiatric and learning disability nursing, John Swinton attempts to counter the biomedical deficit model of dementia by proposing a relational definition of the person living with dementia. He summarises the philosopher John Macmurray’s position on the development of the agential self formed through ‘tactile resistance’.³¹ Likewise, Pia Kontos, a research scientist working in rehabilitation, with a background in medical anthropology, gerontology, and public health sciences,³² also positions ‘embodied selfhood’ and the persistence of habituated bodily knowledge through gesture and movement, as a challenge to ‘presumed loss of personhood’ and intentionality perpetuated by a dualistic model of cognitive impairment.³³ In accord with her embodied development of Bourdieu’s cultural capital, Bartlett and O’Connor highlight ‘the importance of finding ways to recognise narrative agency among people

³⁰ Debbie Everett, *Forget Me Not: The Spiritual Care of People with Alzheimer’s Disease* (Edmonton, Alta: Inkwell Press, 1996), 167, cited in John Killick and Kate Allan, *Communication and the Care of People with Dementia* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001), 38.

³¹ John Swinton, “Forgetting Whose We Are: Theological Reflections on Personhood, Faith and Dementia,” *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 11, no. 1 (2007): 46–47.
doi:10.1300/J095v11n01_04.

³² Murna Downs and Barbara Bowers, eds., *Excellence in Dementia Care: Research Into Practice*, 2nd ed. (Maidenhead: Open University Press; McGraw-Hill Education, 2014), xviii.

³³ Pia C. Kontos, “Selfhood and the Body in Dementia Care,” in *Excellence in Dementia Care: Research Into Practice*, 2nd ed., ed. Murna Downs and Barbara Bowers (Maidenhead: Open University Press; McGraw-Hill Education, 2014), 122–31.

with dementia that moves beyond spoken language'.³⁴ Dance/movement therapists Lia Shustik and Tria Thompson appeal to the intangible in furtherance of this aim: 'Each person's soul is expressed in her/his movement vocabulary'.³⁵ An understandable sentiment perhaps, but one which extends beyond their sphere of competence, or indeed the knowable, containing as it does the potential for dangerously subjective judgements; Barad's observation that touch is not innocent of cultural implication also holds true in evaluating a motive grammar.³⁶

More intimately, the violation of what Wade terms 'privacy of body' is inescapable for many;³⁷ the potential for touch to be coercive and invasive needs to be acknowledged, but I am exploring how the thickness of expressive touch, or in Puig de la Bellacasa's term, 'tactful' touch,³⁸ can inform an understanding of embodiment. Her respectful touch has similarities with Kitwood's novel portmanteau word timalation, from 'timao (I honor, and hence I do not violate personal or moral boundaries) and stimulation (with its connotations of sensory arousal)'.³⁹ Killick describes 'mirroring' a person with dementia to establish contact;⁴⁰ this attunement can be intensified by matching breathing and using respiration to pace the rhythm of

³⁴ Bartlett and O'Connor, *Broadening the Dementia Debate*, 88. Cf. Yergeau, *Authoring Autism*, 181, 183. See *Background and reflections*, section 3, p. 36, 36 n. 99.

³⁵ Liat R. Shustik and Thompson Tria, "Dance/Movement Therapy: Partners in Personhood," in *Healing Arts Therapies and Person-Centered Dementia Care*, ed. Anthea Innes and Karen Hatfield, Bradford Dementia Group Good Practice Guides (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2001), 49.

³⁶ Barad, "On Touching," 215, 219–20 n. 2.

³⁷ Cheryl Marie Wade, "It Ain't Exactly Sexy," in *The Ragged Edge: The Disability Experience from the Pages of the First Fifteen Years of the Disability Rag*, ed. Barrett Shaw (Louisville, KY: Advocado Press, 1994, article originally published in 1991), 89, cited in Wendell, *The Rejected Body*, 147.

³⁸ María Puig de la Bellacasa, "Touching Technologies, Touching Visions. The Reclaiming of Sensorial Experience and the Politics of Speculative Thinking," *Subjectivity* 28 (2009): 312. doi:10.1057/sub.2009.17.

³⁹ Tom Kitwood, "Toward a Theory of Dementia Care: Ethics and Interaction," *Journal of Clinical Ethics* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 28.

⁴⁰ Kate Allan and John Killick, "Communicating with People with Dementia," in *Supportive Care for the Person with Dementia*, ed. Julian Hughes, Mari Lloyd-Williams, and Greg Sachs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 224. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199554133.003.0023. Demmons reports on mirroring without touch: she started to copy the gestures of a man with physical and intellectual disabilities, and established a relationship, over repeated visits, through making circles and shapes in the air. See Tracy A. Demmons, "Embodied Encounter Through Imagination and the Arts: Towards a (Barthian) Theology and Praxis of Pastoral Care and Counselling for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities," *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 12, no. 4 (2008): 370. doi:10.1080/15228960802515642.

pressure, touch, speech, or song.⁴¹ Hayes terms such accompaniment ‘kinaesthetic empathy’.⁴² Notably, Maclaren claims sensational interpenetration for tactility: ‘Touch, I claim, is a foundational form of affective interpersonal intimacy, and it is no mere coincidence that we speak of an intimate gesture as “touching” or say that we have been deeply “touched” by another’s life’.⁴³ In the foregoing examples, therapeutic touch or inspired gesture combine to enable connection in a way which does not privilege unimpaired cognition, in what might be termed haptic hospitality. However, the incommensurability of dementia as an acquired disability, with even profound intellectual disability, is illustrated by Harshaw’s personal account of never having held the hand of her severely autistic daughter, except when she is in ‘the throes of a seizure which renders her oblivious to my touch’.⁴⁴ But, in accord with the latter part of Maclaren’s observation, Harshaw relates how, during a hospital stay, the palpable sense of love surrounding her daughter, as friends and family sat continually by her bedside, was commented on by fellow patients.⁴⁵

Having considered communication and reassurance through breath, touch and presence, I will now look at memorable holding, and the holding of space in relation to bodily and spiritual hospitality. Starting with being held as a baby, Hayes describes how security is mediated through life: ‘As we grow older this holding becomes metaphorical; from being held by the loving gaze of another, we move to being held by the belief that another has in us, or by the memory of the other’.⁴⁶ Elements of this idea have already been encountered in Chapter 2, with regard to Pattison’s description of the community of believers meeting to eat together in remembrance of Christ. Hayes, a dance movement psychotherapist, then proceeds to outline how purposeful

⁴¹ Jill Hayes, with Sarah Povey, *The Creative Arts in Dementia Care: Practical Person-Centred Approaches and Ideas* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2011), 48.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Kym Maclaren, “Touching Matters: Embodiments of Intimacy,” *Emotion, Space and Society* 13, *Intimacy and Embodiment*, special issue (November 2014): 96. doi:10.1016/j.emospa.2013.12.004.

⁴⁴ Jill Harshaw, “Autism and Love: Learning What Love Looks Like—a Response,” *Practical Theology* 5, no. 3 (December 2012): 285. doi:10.1558/prth.v5i3.279.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 285–86.

⁴⁶ Hayes and Povey, *The Creative Arts in Dementia Care*, 51.

‘physical, emotional and mindful presence’ can hold the person with dementia.⁴⁷ She draws the analogy with the principle of ‘containment’ to soothe anxiety, where ‘the mother [or other care-giver presumably] of the baby or child acts as a kind of skin, holding and organising experiences’.⁴⁸ Again, it is not too much of a conceptual leap to recall deSilva’s apposite rendering of Paul’s conjoined call not to neglect hospitality, and to remember those in prison (Heb. 13:2–3),⁴⁹ ‘being yourselves in their skin’,⁵⁰ which was alluded to in Chapter 1 as the culmination of discussion on the closeness of sibling bonds. It is unsurprising, therefore, that Brock claims significance for the apostle’s use of body imagery in 1 Corinthians, chapters 6, 7, and 11: ‘The [i.e. Paul’s] human body provides its bearers with a communicative surface by which individuals are present to one another . . . Paul’s body is primarily one composed of skin (with its embedded senses and its locomotive capacities) and nerves: the communicative body’.⁵¹ Indeed, Ahmed and Stacey argue: ‘“Thinking through the skin” is a thinking that reflects, not on the body as the lost object of thought, but on inter-embodiment, on the mode of being-with and being-for, where one touches and is touched by others’.⁵²

Such organic trans-membraneous speculation can conceive of hospitality beyond ingestion, or enacted inclusion within the body of Christ, to human hospitality as a metaphorical cutaneous enfolding of the other, and thence the interrelation of divine *perichoresis*. The maternal physical safeguarding of Ruddick’s ‘preservative love’ was extended by Lindemann into an obligation of moral protection; the person is held in personhood, and not treated solely as a body.⁵³ Swinton punningly

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Hayes and Povey, *The Creative Arts in Dementia Care*, 51, 52.

⁴⁹ ‘Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured [footnote: Gk ‘were in the body’]’ (Heb. 13: 2–3).

⁵⁰ deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 223, deSilva’s translation.

⁵¹ Brock, “Theologizing Inclusion,” 360–61.

⁵² Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey, eds., *Thinking Through the Skin*, Transformations: Thinking Through Feminism (London: Routledge, 2001), 1.

⁵³ Hilde Lindemann, “Second Nature and the Tragedy of Alzheimer’s,” in *Beyond Loss: Dementia, Identity, Personhood*, ed. Lars-Christer Hydén, Hilde Lindemann, and Jens Brockmeier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 20. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199969265.003.0002.

incorporates Bonhoeffer's Christology into a perichoretic Trinitarian understanding of protective relationship:

As in faith, the person experiencing dementia is held and sustained within the affirming boundaries of human and divine relationships, they are *re-membered*. To re-member something is to bring back together that which has been fragmented. To re-member a person with dementia is to offer them the kind of relational environment which mirrors God's loving, remembrance and unchanging embrace and in so doing, draws back together the wholeness of the person whose life has been fragmented by the experience of dementia. Such a relationship both *re-members* the person and *remembers* for them.⁵⁴

However, Harshaw challenges Yong, and Swinton et al., who argue for a dignity conferred by dependence, and a relationship with God facilitated by others for those with severe learning disabilities.⁵⁵ In *From Bedlam to Shalom*, Swinton does point out that such schema need the transcendent to supplement any lack in relationship, and allows for the possibility of the Holy Spirit relating to the human spirit in ways not dependent on consciousness,⁵⁶ but Harshaw does not reference this particular book. She advances the possibility of an unmediated spirituality for people with profound intellectual disabilities, and I will outline her case subsequently.

Arguing for an insufficient focus on embodiment in theological anthropology, Kaniaru seeks to expand Lindemann further, by following Reinders, and advancing friendship as an example of 'society-to-person holding' that extends beyond provision of health or social care: 'It is to love and "hold" the neighbour as a friend with a history and a community, as an individual with an identity, as one who, like oneself, was by God's grace and power made "image of God" in the flesh and who in the flesh may depend on God's grace and future'.⁵⁷ There are condensed hints of the Hebrew scriptures in this penultimate assertion, prior to the culmination of his argument for

⁵⁴ Swinton, "Forgetting Whose We Are," 52 -56, here at 59.

⁵⁵ Jill Harshaw, *God Beyond Words: Christian Theology and the Spiritual Experiences of People with Profound Intellectual Disabilities*, Studies in Religion and Theology (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2016), 46.

⁵⁶ John Swinton, *From Bedlam to Shalom: Towards a Practical Theology of Human Nature, Interpersonal Relationships, and Mental Health Care*, Pastoral Theology, vol. 1 (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 30–32, 37 n. 56.

⁵⁷ Antony Kaniaru, "Rethinking Relationality: Theological Anthropology in Light of Profound Cognitive Impairment, Relationality, Embodiment and Personhood," PhD thesis (Durham University, 2012), 21, 221–22, 231. <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/6921/>.

the centrality of embodiment to humanity and the Christian calling: ‘And finally to love the neighbour is to live in the flesh according to the Spirit, to glorify God in the body’.⁵⁸ The similarities with Swinton in the preceding sentence are obvious, but this terminal sentence of his thesis lacks clarity. Kaniaru has earlier argued that compassion towards those with cognitive impairments then enables a more inclusive neighbourliness, but if the glorification is enacted by the neighbour-lovers, the cognitively impaired as a locus for rehearsal are instrumentalised along with the additional vulnerable ‘neighbours’⁵⁹ who form his eventual constituency. This inadvertence is contrary to his overall project of defending these vulnerable neighbours against the proposals of philosopher Jeff McMahan, where threshold takes on a chilling meaning,⁶⁰ but it makes Harshaw’s reliance upon divine immediacy the more necessary as a corrective.⁶¹ Such availability is coupled with valorisation of the body in Kissell’s development of a perichoretic ‘dancing theology’ which draws upon African ritual dance: ‘All bodies, even those considered dis-abled or resting in a coma, are bodies moving and are therefore part of life and part of the Trinitarian dance, for a biological dance within them still exists’.⁶² Thus, the way she sees divine activity reflected in ineluctable cellular motility obviates criticism of perichoresis as imperialistic divinising of external social structures, and extends Harshaw’s privy

⁵⁸ Ibid., 231.

⁵⁹ He gives a list which derives ultimately from McMahan (Jeff McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), vii, cited in Kaniaru, “Rethinking Relationality,” 142), but which omits animals, and amends terminology to remove reference to retardation: ‘Only then can we learn to be a good “neighbour” to human embryos and fetuses, newborn infants, anencephalic infants, congenitally severely intellectually impaired, those who have suffered severe brain damage or dementia, human beings who have become irreversibly comatose, those who are injured, vulnerable, and all those who are at the so called margins of human life’ (Kaniaru, “Rethinking Relationality,” 162).

⁶⁰ Kaniaru, “Rethinking Relationality,” 3.

⁶¹ See section 3.

⁶² Kristin Kissell, “Dancing Theology: A Construction of a Pneumatology of the Body,” MA thesis (Los Angeles, CA: Loyola Marymount University, 2020), 16.

communication into sustained correspondence.⁶³

2.1. Joy, sound, smells, and silence

In this section I will turn from bodily constitution, tactility and vitality, and upholding personhood through literal or metaphorical holding, to other sensory modes and cues. As a consultant in old age psychiatry, Hughes argues for a purposive understanding of creativity and the possibilities of interaction by acknowledging the person with dementia as an ‘aesthetic being’: ‘*our approach to dementia should be a matter of looking for joy*’.⁶⁴ Indeed, Phinney belatedly came to realise the significance of the delight expressed by creative artists who were able to continue their creative practice after developing dementia.⁶⁵ Poetry, music, nature,⁶⁶ and pets can all contribute to meaning-making.⁶⁷ Teacher Eileen Shamy relates how two young pupils gave her a jar containing two captured frogs to help her mother ‘find her memory’; the escapee frogs animated a residential home lounge, and reminded the assembled and previously impassive women of their country childhoods.⁶⁸ She also narrates how the

⁶³ Any hermeneutic which appeals to the Godhead should not automatically be assumed to be benign or protective. Doak demonstrates how, in Catholic doctrine, principles of harmony derived from Trinitarian relationship are used to suppress anger at the concealment of the rape of children, subordinate women, and enforce obedience to the hierarchy. See Mary Doak, “Power, Protest, and *Perichoresis*: On Being Church in a Troubled World,” in *Christianity, Democracy, and the Shadow of Constantine*, ed. George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou, Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Thought (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 86.

⁶⁴ Hughes, *How We Think About Dementia*, 221, 219, emphasis in original. This is in contrast to approaches which, for example, reduce mealtimes, or scripture of personal significance to therapy, rather than life-giving physical and spiritual nourishment, respectively. See Grethe Berg, *The Importance of Food and Mealtimes in Dementia Care: The Table is Set*, originally published as *Til Dekket Bord* by Nasjonalt Kompetansesenter for Aldersdemens, 2002, trans. Margoth Lindsey (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2006); Hani Raoul Khouzam, Charles E. Smith, and Bruce Bissett, “Bible Therapy: A Treatment of Agitation in Elderly Patients with Alzheimer’s Disease,” *Clinical Gerontologist* 15, no. 2 (1994): 71–74.

⁶⁵ Phinney, “As the Body Speaks,” 132–33.

⁶⁶ Shamy tells the story of an elderly lady with dementia and an inoperable cancer who found solace in sitting beneath the trees in the local park before her death, and Goldsmith reminisces about the box of snow taken by a colleague on a hospital pastoral visit to a lady with dementia. See Shamy, *A Guide to the Spiritual Dimension of Care*, 81–83; Malcolm Goldsmith, *In a Strange Land . . . People with Dementia and the Local Church* (Southwell: 4M Publications, 2004), 166.

⁶⁷ Peter Gilbert, *Guidelines on Spirituality for Staff in Acute Care Settings* (Stoke-on-Trent: National Institute of Mental Health Excellence, Staffordshire University, 2003). http://coventry.gov.uk/scelf/download/downloads/id/244/spirituality_booklet.pdf, cited in Polly Kaiser, “Spirituality, Religion and Life Story Work,” in *Life Story Work with People with Dementia: Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary People*, ed. Polly Kaiser and Ruth Eley (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017), 180, fig. 14.1 Accessed 3 May 2022, page not found.

⁶⁸ Shamy, *A Guide to the Spiritual Dimension of Care*, 120–22.

scent of a bunch of lilies of the valley aroused a man who had not spoken for many months to temporary loquacity.⁶⁹

Researchers Bartlett and O'Connor speculate on the unfulfilled potential of 'positive soundscapes' and memorable environmental sounds to provide accessible means of generating insight and data from participants with dementia.⁷⁰ Lucy Winkett, a priest in the Church of England who trained as a soprano, combines writing about sound as an expression of vulnerability, and anthropogenic noise in her book, *Our Sound is Our Wound*.⁷¹ The invasiveness of the latter is made explicit by Gunaratnam's writing on the place of physical force in the science of hearing and touch: 'To hear is to be literally touched and to take impressions of others into our bodies whether we like it or not'.⁷² These perspectives, and Winkett's call for contemplative listening, can be contrasted with Staley's estimation of impoverishment in the sensory culture of Protestant churches, which she sees as particularly disadvantaging those with intellectual disabilities; she writes about the focus on auditory, and hence verbal, comprehension, which leads to a presumption that attentive listening is evidenced in silence and bodily control.⁷³ Her accounts of the monitoring of individual behaviour should be contrasted with Macaskill's exposure of corporate thoughtlessness, and the potentially overwhelming effect on the autistic of imperfectly amplified sound, lighting which flickers, and the miasma of artificial scent from toiletries.⁷⁴

From the ambivalence of sound, I turn to silence. John Gillibrand, an Anglican priest, and father of Adam, who is autistic and has learning disabilities, examines the linguistic turn in twentieth-century philosophy by orienting it around his

⁶⁹ Ibid., 75–76.

⁷⁰ Bartlett and O'Connor, *Broadening the Dementia Debate*, 107.

⁷¹ Lucy Winkett, *Our Sound is Our Wound: Contemplative Listening to a Noisy World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).

⁷² Yasmin Gunaratnam, "Auditory Space, Ethics and Hospitality: 'Noise', Alterity and Care at the End of Life," *Body & Society* 15, no. 4 (December 2009): 5. doi:10.1177/1357034X09337781.

⁷³ Erinn Staley, "Sensing Exclusions: Disability and the Protestant Worship Environment," in *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*, ed. Sally M. Promey (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 431–32.

⁷⁴ Grant Macaskill, *Autism and the Church: Bible, Theology and Community* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019), 117–18, 121–22, 124, ProQuest.

son, who is non-verbal. As a scholar of Derrida, he sees Adam as mirroring Derridean aporia, but more crucially, as catalysing professional discourse.⁷⁵ Gillibrand's wider programme requires boundary-crossing apophatic spirituality, if Anglican theology is to be reformed and political structures transformed;⁷⁶ he rightly adjudges both society and Church to be 'disabled' in their ability to care for those who are different.⁷⁷

Gillibrand compares Job's silence before God in the aftermath of overwhelming tragedy (Job 1:3–21; 40:1–7) with his son's 'non-elective silence', suggesting that such wordlessness is 'very close to the most fundamental, the most primordial response to the challenges which the created world offers to us'.⁷⁸ Swinton, in his reflections on disability also draws on the apophatic tradition of negation in approaching God: 'The God who is Spirit and who is truth (John 4:20–24) comes to us in our helplessness and reveals something of himself in the midst of our cloud of unknowing'.⁷⁹

I now counterbalance emic spiritual unknowing with acknowledgement of uncertain knowing. Thus, Goldsmith was encouraged to write his book on people with dementia and the local church by McKee's impassioned reproach: 'if there is the slightest possibility that a kernel of tranquillity persists at the heart of the chaos of dementia, then we have been culpable in the past of a hideous sin; that of denying humanity to those who, in their vulnerability, are perhaps most human'.⁸⁰ Indeed, Post entitled an essay on dementia, *Respectare*, to enlist his readers in looking again at

⁷⁵ John Gillibrand, *Disabled Church – Disabled Society: The Implications of Autism for Philosophy, Theology and Politics* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2010), 81, 91, 97–100.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, title.

⁷⁸ Gillibrand, *Disabled Church*, 110.

⁷⁹ John Swinton, "Known by God," in *The Paradox of Disability: Responses to Jean Vanier and L'Arche Communities from Theology and the Sciences*, ed. Hans S. Reinders (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 147. However, Betcher, discussing feminist and postcolonial apophysis of gender and the body, from the perspective of her own experience of disability, cautions against indiscriminating extension: 'Apophatic unknowing could further suppress that which culture holds abject. Rather, I might dare suggest that all might be invited to recognize themselves as "flesh of my flesh"' (Sharon V. Betcher, "Becoming Flesh of My Flesh: Feminist and Disability Theologies on the Edge of Posthumanist Discourse," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 115. doi:10.2979/fsr.2010.26.2.107).

⁸⁰ Kevin J. McKee, "This is Your Life: Paradigms in Dementia Care," in *Dementia Care: Developing Partnerships in Practice*, ed. Trevor Adams and Charlotte L. Clarke (London: Balliere Tindall, 1999), cited in Goldsmith, *In a Strange Land* . . . , 201–2.

people with dementia, in response.⁸¹ Nevertheless, despite such calls for reconsideration, Harshaw rightly questions whether the desire to impute a voice to people with profound and complex intellectual disabilities is a projection of theological anxiety: ‘Is there a latent fear that their physical silence means spiritual inertness? If we cannot make them speak, do we fear that God might not be able to speak to them?’⁸² Obviously, there remains a difference between the losses and deficits of dementia, and the delayed, or unachieved, milestones of learning disability, but Karen MacKinlay gives the example of ‘Catherine’ who had come to know God after the onset of dementia,⁸³ which supports God-initiated revelation to those whose spiritual life may be in question.

3. Peter’s vision redux

Harshaw uses Peter’s perplexity at his vision (discussed extensively in Chapter 1), and the Spirit falling upon Cornelius’ household before Peter finishes his exposition, to call into question the over-intellectualisation of coming to faith. She asks provocatively:

Could the spiritual experience of people who cannot access this revelation through accepted cognitive processes be an issue in which settled interpretations of the conditions for human beings’ spiritual relationship with God might face a divinely-instituted challenge?⁸⁴

She concludes that if spiritual experience is seen as being precluded by cognitive deficit, then it implies a ‘parallel deficit in God’s capacity or desire to circumvent *or even use* it in order to reach into their lives’, and she posits an unconditional supernatural relationality of ‘divine self-disclosure, potentially through mystical perception’ independent of intellectual capacity.⁸⁵ Harshaw further develops her

⁸¹ Post, “*Respectare*,” 223.

⁸² Jill Ruth Harshaw, “God Beyond Words: Towards a New Perspective on the Spiritual Experience of People with Profound and Complex Intellectual Difficulties,” PhD thesis (Belfast: Queen’s University, 2015), 113.

⁸³ Karen MacKinlay, “Listening to People with Dementia: A Pastoral Care Perspective,” *Journal of Religious Gerontology* 13, no. 3–4 (2002): 98–99. doi:10.1300/J078v13n03_07.

⁸⁴ Jill Harshaw, *God Beyond Words*, 136.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 175, emphasis in original.

examination of divine accommodation by considering the mystery of God,⁸⁶ whereas Gordon seeks to apply the principle to the church:

Acknowledging the difference and particularity of each person will only be possible if a community seeks to model its practices and principles of encounter on a form of *kenotic* accommodation, a disciplined habit of sympathetic, considerate, and self-effacing hospitality.⁸⁷

The revisiting of hospitality as a divinely instituted crossing of bodily boundaries, mirroring Peter's repeated literal and figurative threshold moments, and the proposal of a submissive ecclesial hospitality, shows the availability of hospitality to theorisation. Harshaw's thesis of divine disclosure and embodied prophetic declaration to the church, and Gillibrand's assertion of inciting prophetic silence can usefully be set against Coakley's complementary view of contemplation. Coakley writes: 'Contemplation engenders courage to *give voice*, but in a changed, prophetic key',⁸⁸ and 'fosters what the early Christian fathers called *leitourgia* ('liturgy', public service) in the best theological sense, as service to the world in humility and hope'.⁸⁹ Puig de la Bellacasa's question: 'Aren't anxiety, sorrow and grief unavoidable affects in efforts of paying serious mental attention, of thinking with care, in dislocated worlds?', speaks of a similar attentiveness.⁹⁰ Hospitality is thus present in the attending to the presence of God in self, and others, and in resultant acts of service; inclusion is achieved through social, spiritual, and personal transformation.

A hospitality not only of service and inclusion, but also commensality, in response to the existential suffering of those within the multipartite body of the church who have experienced exclusion, is perhaps opened up by Browning Helsel's response to the sociologist Kai Erikson's observation of traumatised communities.

⁸⁶ Jill Harshaw, "Finding Accommodation: Spirituality and People with Profound Intellectual Disabilities," *Journal of Disability & Religion* 20, no. 3 (2016): 140–53. doi:10.1080/23312521.2016.1203694.

⁸⁷ James Gordon, "Is a Sense of Self Essential to Spirituality?" *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 13, no. 1 (2009): 61, emphasis in original. doi:10.1080/15228960802581438.

⁸⁸ Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay 'on the Trinity'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 85. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139048958.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁹⁰ María Puig de la Bellacasa, "'Nothing Comes Without Its World': Thinking with Care," *The Sociological Review* 60, no. 2 (May 2012): 212. doi:10.1111/j.1467-954X.2012.02070.x.

Browning Hesel combines Erikson, and psychologist John Wilson on the breaking of the human spirit, in a paraphrase: ‘When a group has faced a collective trauma, this broken-spiritedness extends beyond individuals to impact the tissue of the social body’.⁹¹ Using Qoheleth, Browning Hesel then argues for the place of shared pleasure to address spiritual brokenness and social disintegration, citing Lee on the reclamation of ritual feasting as a means of dealing with traumatic rupture.⁹² Such restoration can be compared with the occulted trauma posited by Glancy,⁹³ of the female slaves who would have participated in the meals of the first-century Christian community, and the future erasure of tears and grief in the *eschaton*, alluded to in Chapter 2. Although his initial context is the impact of disasters on localities, when extrapolated to those who have been systematically excluded, devalued, and stigmatised, a rhythm of commensality could help redress systemic deprivation. With regard to the former, Koenig describes ‘soul banquets’ taking place in the aftermath of the death and destruction of terrorism and natural disaster.⁹⁴ As a prospective illustration of countering exclusion, Staley instances an existing ‘dinner church’ and envisages the potential for people with intellectual disabilities to join in shared cooking and eating, attendant on preaching and praying, in a multisensory act of worship, as part of the ‘just’ hospitality advocated by feminist theologian Letty Russell.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Philip Browning Hesel, “Shared Pleasure to Soothe the Broken Spirit: Collective Trauma and Qoheleth,” in *Bible Through the Lens of Trauma*, ed. Elizabeth Boase and Christopher G. Frechette, Semeia Studies, no. 76 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2016), 85, 93.

⁹² Euny P. Lee, *The Vitality of Enjoyment in Qoheleth's Theological Rhetoric*, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, vol. 353 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 49, 62, 64–65, 129, 138. doi:10.1515/9783110923063, cited in Browning Hesel, “Shared Pleasure to Soothe the Broken Spirit,” 96–98.

⁹³ Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge*, 62–66.

⁹⁴ Koenig, *Soul Banquets See Background and reflections*, section 2, pp. 29–30, for one example.

⁹⁵ Erinn Marie Staley, “Many Minds, One Body: Intellectual Disability, Humanity and the Church,” PhD dissertation (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2013), 242–44, 253–54, 287. See Russell, *Just Hospitality*. Drawing on Barth, and Polanyi’s ‘tacit’ knowledge, Demmons also suggests a place for the arts: ‘the role of the Church is to facilitate and support persons with intellectual disabilities in co-humanity so that the Spirit of God might be made real and present. To this end, music, art, dance and narrative might have a considerable role to play’ (Tracy A. Demmons, “Tacit and Tactile Knowledge of God: Toward a Theology of Revelation for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities,” *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 11, no. 4 (2008): 18). doi:10.1300/J095v11n04_02).

I do not want to be seen as advocating feasting as a means to palliate the injustice and suffering of this age, but the act of retrojection proposed by Butler-Bass in a blog-post is indicative of a possible hermeneutic. She acknowledges the same acceleration and desire for resolution in the remembrance of the events of Holy Week as Rambo,⁹⁶ and she likewise arrests that momentum, by asking a question which suggests a salvific and eschatological telos for hospitality:

We always read the dinner table from the cross. But what if we read the story the other way and understood the cross through the experience of the table?

What if the story starts on Thursday? The Last Supper is the final meal of the age that is (the age of injustice, oppression, debt and sin) and the First Feast of the “age to come” (the age of God’s reign of peace and justice).⁹⁷

This chapter is being written in the time of COVID-19, and the ongoing exposure of existing social cleavages and disadvantage during the pandemic demands attention to social justice. Thus, the context for future gathering extends beyond the specific restriction of this chapter to those discriminated against by a ‘hypercognitive’ society.⁹⁸ Browning Helsel is careful to observe that the ritual process does not negate previous harm, even as he sees enjoyment as beneficial in helping to overcome isolation.⁹⁹ So, having considered supernatural intervention, and a hoped-for reflexive and extensive hospitality on the part of the church, I now enter into the materiality of the physical body to examine how bodily openness to the other has parallels in the divine economy.

4. Bodily hospitality: Mary and Jesus

Stuart’s essay on the body as a site of hospitality was the only one I located which fully credits the encounter between Mary and Gabriel, the angelic stranger, as

⁹⁶ See “Witnessing Holy Saturday” in Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 45–80.

⁹⁷ Diana Butler-Bass, “‘Doubting Thomas’ Story is About Gratitude, not Doubt,” paras. 15–16. Religion News Service, posted 11 April 2018, <https://religionnews.com/2018/04/11/doubting-thomas-story-is-about-gratitude-not-doubt/>.

⁹⁸ Stephen G. Post, *The Moral Challenge of Alzheimer Disease* (Baltimore, MD; London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), cited in Post, “*Respectare*,” 231.

⁹⁹ Browning Helsel, “Shared Pleasure to Soothe the Broken Spirit,” 96.

an act of hospitality, as she ‘consents to his request to receive an altogether more troubling stranger’ and becomes the ‘chief hospitaller’.¹⁰⁰ Abraham’s angels do not identify themselves, whereas Gabriel names himself to Mary, but he is still a stranger, so it is surprising that the conventions of hospitality have not ordinarily been discerned in this encounter. This oversight may be attributable to a cerebral approach to scripture which reads the text with after-knowledge to find confirmation for subsequent doctrine, and so fails to sympathise with Mary, in which case there is no need to find a domestic metaphor for this incomprehensible incursion into her life. Stuart proceeds to talk about the need to preserve individual bodily and social boundaries in a self-aware hospitality which looks to ‘the Church’ as ‘the community of friends called to be the body of Christ and nourished by him’.¹⁰¹ In her view, this Church ‘can afford to be recklessly hospitable and should be so’, whereas individuals ‘cannot and should not be expected to’.¹⁰² Ultimately, she uses the metaphor of hospitality, and hospitality as a practice, to proselytise for an extension of sexual ethics in accord with her avowed aim, from the outset, of subversion of social norms.¹⁰³ Although his book is entitled *The Missiological Spirit*, Pentecostal scholar Amos Yong (here with Tony Richie) discourses at length about Jesus as guest and host, including Jesus’ birth (and death):

Jesus himself can be understood both as the paradigmatic host of God’s hospitality, and as the exemplary recipient of hospitality. From his conception in Mary’s womb (by the Holy Spirit) to his birth in a manger through to his burial (in a tomb of Joseph of Arimathea), Jesus was dependent on the welcome and hospitality of others. As ‘the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head’ (Luke 9:58), he relied on the goodwill of many, staying in their homes and receiving whatever they served. But it is in his role as guest that Jesus also announces and enacts the hospitality of God. Empowered by the Spirit, he heals the

¹⁰⁰ Elizabeth Stuart, “The Kindness of Strangers: The Body as a Site of Hospitality,” in *Theology and the Body: Gender, Text and Ideology*, ed. Robert Hannaford and J’annine Jobling (Leominster: Gracewing, 1999), 69. Although Bailey does see a renewed openness to relationship and thus, being ‘hospitable’, in the ability of a woman recovering from anorexia to enjoy being pregnant. See Lesley Anne Bailey, “From Anorexia to Celebration: Sickness and Healing in the Parish Church and the Community of Moreton,” PhD thesis (University of Birmingham, 2013), 279–80.

¹⁰¹ Stuart, “The Kindness of Strangers,” 78.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 62.

sick, casts out demons, and declares the arrival of the reign of God in the midst of the downtrodden, the oppressed, and the marginalized.¹⁰⁴

Yong and Richie do acknowledge Mary, but somewhat abstractly, as there is a lacuna between conception and Jesus' 'birth' in 'a manger', which erases pregnancy and childbirth. The provision of a tomb in death (or 'goodwill') are hardly comparable, and it is tempting to attribute this effacement of gestation and labour to androcentric theology. And the Spirit-empowered guesthood they describe is that declared by Mary at the annunciation, so this redoubles Mary's hiddenness in their narrative of hospitality and silences her prophetic voice.

By contrast, Winter interacts with Luke 11:27–28,¹⁰⁵ and centuries of Catholic Marian spirituality, as she advances Mary's bodily hospitality as a precursor to Jesus' own hospitality:

Mary was the source of this holy man's first most formative meals. For nine months her placenta provided all the nourishment needed for the developing fetus. After her child was delivered, for twice nine months and then some, Mary's breast milk nurtured and satisfied her developing baby. No one but his mother was with him at the welcome table during those first meals.¹⁰⁶

Winter also adopts a uniquely feminist take on the words of institution at the Last Supper, which she hears as an echo of Mary's own wonder during her pregnancy:

'The first person to utter the words we associate with Jesus must have been his mother. For nine months they were one body, Mary and her child. Like any mother, surely she said of the new life taking form within her: this is my body!'¹⁰⁷

Furthermore, Winter does not confine food-elicited memory to the ritualised eucharistic recall of Jesus' subsequent words, 'do this in remembrance of me', in her relation of how routine consumption can bring to mind dead, or absent, loved ones.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Amos Yong and Tony Richie, "Missiology and the Interreligious Encounter," in *The Missiological Spirit: Christian Mission Theology in the Third Millennium Global Context*, by Amos Yong (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 116.

¹⁰⁵ 'A woman in the crowd surrounding Jesus cried out to him with a loud voice. Blessed is the womb that bore you! Blessed are the breasts that nursed you! Jesus responded. Blessed are those who hear and obey the word of God! (Lk 11:27–28)' (Winter, *Eucharist with a Small 'e'*, 77, italics omitted).

Winter's own rendering based on the NRSV. See Winter, *Eucharist with a Small 'e'*, 13.

¹⁰⁶ Winter, *Eucharist with a Small 'e'*, 77.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 148.

Thus, for Winter, hospitality replicates physiological sustenance, and cumulative care and nurture, which although illuminating, is potentially exclusionary for those who experienced childhood abuse or neglect.

5. *Perichoresis* and hospitality

Having already broached the topic of contemplation, and sympathetically reflected on Mary's receptivity, and the imprint of her hospitality on Jesus' ministry, I shall now essay a reversal: how divine relationality can foster human hospitality. While acknowledging the parallel with the medieval portrayal of a personified, and on occasion, lactating *ecclesia*, as the body of Christ,¹⁰⁹ and a spirituality which by extension saw Christ as mother,¹¹⁰ I will instead venture into the realms of the Trinity. Fiddes points out the overlap between 'the Christian concept of body as engaging in the "wide space" of the Trinity', and the thought of Merleau-Ponty, where 'bodiliness is about touching and being touched, about being "enfolding" in a kind of embrace that has no horizons, and where the divisions between our body and that of others collapse'.¹¹¹ Moreover, Vosloo asserts,

If we describe hospitality as the openness to, or welcoming of, the other and otherness it does seem indeed the case that trinitarian discourse can offer rich possibilities for a creative rethinking of an ethic of hospitality – an ethic which celebrates otherness without forfeiting identity.¹¹²

Indeed, Volf argues more expansively that the Trinity should be seen as the 'ultimate normative end to which all social programs should strive'.¹¹³ But Vosloo is less prescriptive in his unfolding of a hospitality of festal love:

A trinitarian framework that incorporates in a qualified manner the notion of perichoresis indeed seems to be promising for a Christian ethic of hospitality. It depicts the triune God as a hospitable and welcoming communion of love. The triune God is the self-giving and

¹⁰⁹ Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg," *Renaissance Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (Autumn 1986): 414–17. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/2862038>.

¹¹⁰ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982).

¹¹¹ Paul S. Fiddes, "Ecclesiology and Ethnography: Two Disciplines, Two Worlds?" in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Pete Ward (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 33.

¹¹² Vosloo, "Identity, Otherness and the Triune God," 78.

¹¹³ Miroslav Volf, "'The Trinity is Our Social Program': The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement," *Modern Theology* 14, no. 3 (July 1998): 406. doi:10.1111/1468-0025.00072.

other-receiving Host. Through the sacrificial giving in Christ, a gift of hospitality par excellence, humans (and the rest of creation) are invited and enabled to participate in the Triune feast of love. In Christ and through the Spirit, it becomes possible to embody what can be called perichoretic hospitality.¹¹⁴

However, he is careful to point out that although the Patristic pun on ‘dancing around’ is ‘evocative’ as a creative spatial metaphor, it is a false derivation.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, it is excusable for Savage, as a former professional dancer, to envision the assumption of Jesus’ suffering into the relationship of the Trinity thus: ‘Into the dance of the Trinity is subsumed the experience, the scars, the memory, the burden of Jesus’ human experience’.¹¹⁶ But, as a result of similar appeals, Kilby is driven to express her reservations about the projection of culturally conditioned ideals of community onto the social Trinity, with consequent potential for reinscription as a regime, and she comments that *perichoresis* was originally intended to express divine unity.¹¹⁷ However, increasing resort to divine relationality as a source of inspiration for ecclesial innovation, which I identified in my opening reflections,¹¹⁸ even if misguided and theologically illiterate in Kilby’s opinion, merely proves the need for a thicker understanding of the human dimensions of hospitality. This is evidenced by Wirzba’s suggestion of food as a practical, if imperfect, means to begin to apprehend the mystery of Trinitarian relationality,¹¹⁹ and Moore’s preoccupation with the cleanliness of the toilet facilities at Messy Church as a demonstration of congruence

¹¹⁴ Vosloo, “Identity, Otherness and the Triune God,” 89.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹¹⁶ Sara B. Savage, “Through Dance: Fully Human, Fully Alive,” in *Beholding the Glory: Incarnation Through the Arts*, ed. Jeremy Begbie (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 76. Savage concludes her essay with a description of choreographing a work for male and female able-bodied and wheelchair-using dancers. See Sara B. Savage, “Through Dance: Fully Human, Fully Alive,” 78–80.

¹¹⁷ Karen Kilby, “Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity,” *New Blackfriars* 81, no. 957 (November 2000): 432–45. doi:10.1111/j.1741-2005.2000.tb06456.x. There is an earlier more technical article from Gresham, unreferenced by Kilby, which also recognises the shortcomings of basing a model on an analogy, but proposes that a revised social model could complement ontological understandings of the Godhead. See John L. Gresham, “The Social Model of the Trinity and Its Critics,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 46, no. 3 (1993): 325–43. doi:10.1017/S0036930600044859.

¹¹⁸ See *Background and reflections*, section 1.2.

¹¹⁹ Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 291. doi:10.1017/9781108631846. See Chapter 4, section 2, p. 183.

between praxis and belief in a Trinitarian God.¹²⁰ Harshaw concerns herself more with *imago dei*, and so makes no reference to the much-cited Kilby, but quotes a possibly unpublished article by Orye on relationality and ‘bad relations’, apparently because Orye writes from a place of similar maternal experience.¹²¹ The damaging pitfalls of equating love and relationality are also identified by Swinton in his reflections on the ‘double mindblindness’ of neurotypical and autistic mutual incomprehension; he observes that love may feel different to autistic people, and so be expressed differently.¹²² Elsewhere, Swinton looks to ultimate derivation rather than the proximate, and draws on Moltmann’s understanding of the social Trinity to reflect on relationality and imaging God:

Within such a conception of God the creation of humanity is understood as the product of the overspill of this divine perichoretic love. Thus it can be seen that human beings are created *from* and *in* loving relationships, *for* loving relationships. It is within this transcendent relational dynamic that the *imago Dei* finds its origins, its identity and its direction.¹²³

5.1. Trinitarian communion

In an essay on presence as an (Anglican) ecclesial and human vocation, Quash sums up Trinitarian life in a declarative two-word sentence: ‘Perfect presence’.¹²⁴ Hospitality as presence to the other will now be considered further. Reynolds writes reflectively and autobiographically about parenting his son Chris, who has diagnoses of Tourette’s syndrome, bipolar disorder, and Asperger’s syndrome.¹²⁵ He looks back

¹²⁰ Lucy Moore, *Messy Hospitality: Changing Communities Through Fun, Food, Friendship and Faith* (Abingdon: BRF, 2016), 41. See Chapter 6, section 5.2, p. 276.

¹²¹ Lieve Orye, “Experience, Biography, Autism, Love & Christian Hope,” unpublished paper (2014), 1.

https://www.academia.edu/7452224/Experience_biography_autism_love_and_Christian_hope, cited in Jill Harshaw, *God Beyond Words*, 48.

¹²² John Swinton, “Reflections on Autistic Love: What Does Love Look Like?” *Practical Theology* 5, no. 3 (December 2012): 272–77. doi:10.1558/prth.v5i3.259.

¹²³ Swinton, *From Bedlam to Shalom*, 41, emphasis in original. He notes: ‘The concept of perichoresis as it applies on a number of levels, will be an implicit but constant theme running throughout this study’ (Swinton, *From Bedlam to Shalom*, 50 n. 8). Swinton draws on Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God* (London: SCM Press, 1993), 174 ff., and Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985).

¹²⁴ Ben Quash, “The Anglican Church as a Polity of Presence,” in *Anglicanism: The Answer to Modernity*, ed. Duncan Dormor, Jack McDonald, and Jeremy Caddick (London: Continuum, 2003), 41.

¹²⁵ Thomas E. Reynolds, “Love Without Boundaries: Theological Reflections on Parenting a Child with Disabilities,” *Theology Today* 62, no. 2 (July 2005): 194–96. doi:10.1177/004057360506200205.

on growth in their relationship:

communion involves self-transcendence, a liberating release from the deadness of fear-based individual isolation into a life-giving mutuality of vulnerability and empowerment. The result is a conversion of self to an other in relationship. Chris has taught me how to love him. And, in this, he also has grown.¹²⁶

As with Swinton, his conclusion is: ‘Communion is the inborn potential of human life’.¹²⁷ Similarly, Newell, who juxtaposes his own bipolar disorder and his teenage daughter’s autism in his consideration of ‘disabled theologies’, makes the case that the closest analogy for their dependence on each other is derived from Trinitarian relationality. He writes of following her lead in negotiating a shopping centre:

Her disability is my disability but her disability enables us to arrive together, well and full and, very often, flourishingly happy. The theological insight which comes closest to this real and vivid experience is one which attempts to describe the nature of our communicating and relating in radical Trinitarian language, focusing not on the doctrine of God, though persons in communion is the foundational theology, but on who we are in relation to each other.¹²⁸

This understanding of mutual need is shared by Reynolds’ moral call for ‘the *acknowledgement* and *taking up* of vulnerable interdependency’,¹²⁹ which can be viewed as a necessary outworking of Gordon’s aforementioned ‘kenotic accommodation’.¹³⁰ Moreover, Whitt, as the father of a daughter with profound intellectual disabilities, sees ontological dependence as ‘constitutive of human being’, and asserts: ‘Persons with disabilities that necessitate their lifelong dependence upon others are not outliers in their need; they are instead representative of what it means to be human for all people’.¹³¹ Nevertheless, Harshaw is concerned that argumentation from humanness is still constructing an implicit hierarchy: ‘Genuine inclusion’ for people with profound intellectual disabilities, ‘means recognizing and valuing their

¹²⁶ Ibid., 202.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 208.

¹²⁸ Christopher Newell, “Disabled Theologies and the Journeys of Liberation to Where Our Names Appear,” *Feminist Theology* 15, no. 3 (May 2007): 339. doi:10.1177/0966735006076170.

¹²⁹ Thomas E. Reynolds, “Theology and Disability: Changing the Conversation,” *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 16, no. 1 (2012): 40, emphasis in original. doi:10.1080/15228967.2012.645612.

¹³⁰ Gordon, “Is a Sense of Self Essential to Spirituality?” 61, italics omitted. See section 3, p. 145.

¹³¹ Jason D. Whitt, “In the Image of God: Receiving Children with Special Needs,” *Review & Expositor* 113, no. 2 (May 2016): 212. doi:10.1177/0034637316638244.

relationships not only with *us* but with *God*.¹³² By placing the impetus with God, Harshaw thereby includes those whose quality of relationships with others cannot be guaranteed. Equally, there is value to emphasising human interchange and mutual dependence, from a position of humility, as illustrated by Reynolds and Newell.

6. Inclusion and transformation

Having presented hospitality and inclusion as available presence, whether God to us, or one to another, in this section I will consider disability in relation to ultimate and conditional inclusion. In the Hebrew scriptures, after wrestling with God, the formerly deceitful Jacob was renamed Israel (literally Prince with God) because he had ‘striven with God and with humans, and . . . prevailed’ (Gen. 32:28). Jacob limped after this encounter, and so when his descendants took the name of Israel they were identifying themselves with his bodily, spiritual, and moral transformation. Significantly, for the wider context of communal eating in this thesis, the children of Israel change their eating practices of their own volition: ‘Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the hip socket, because he struck Jacob on the hip socket at the thigh muscle’ (Gen. 32:32). This modification of food practices through collective identification and memorialised abstention is overlooked, even by commentators using the story of Jacob to reflect on Christianity and disability, such as McCloughry and Morris.¹³³ It is possible that this oversight is because self-imposed dietary restriction does not carry the same weight as divine edict, and exegesis has tended to concentrate on Jacob, but it could also be another example of ethnocentrism.

This is not to say that lameness was revered subsequently, as the history of Mephibosheth who was accidentally lamed in both feet when he fell from his nurse’s arms, as they fled from the Philistines who had killed his father, uncles, and grandfather shows (2 Sam. 4:4). Thomas uses the story as an eschatological portent,

¹³² Jill Harshaw, *God Beyond Words*, 50, emphasis in original.

¹³³ Roy McCloughry and Wayne Morris, *Making a World of Difference: Christian Reflections on Disability* (London: SPCK, 2002), 45–46.

and contrasts the perfections of the new heavens and new earth with the multiple disadvantages of Mephibosheth, including his ‘compromised motor function’:

Moreover, he was fearful and beset by low self-esteem (2 Sam 9:7–8). He lived in Lo Debar (2 Sam 9:5), a place associated with alienation and negation (cf. Am 6:13). However, he was invited to the king’s table, treated as one of his sons, and allowed to dwell in the royal city (2 Sam 9:10–13), blessings which neither compensated for, nor eradicated, his disability (2 Sam 9:13).¹³⁴

Despite the besetting psychological anachronism of this depiction, Thomas then adroitly resolves the issue of disability and recognition in the *eschaton*, in a move reminiscent of Macaskill,¹³⁵ but less explicit:

Thus Mephibosheth’s story may be read as illustrative of the eschatological situation of people with disabilities. Although received as a child of God at the eschatological banquet—as any other believer—their physical condition may remain. However, their new context means that it will not be regarded as disability.¹³⁶

Yong, on the other hand, seeks to narrow the existential gap by arguing that the hoped-for ‘divine and cosmic justice’ of the parable of the eschatological banquet (Luke 14:1–24), where the blind, lame and deaf are included ‘in a sense as they are’, should have ethical consequences in the now: ‘such notions of justice and inclusion should also guide our present efforts’.¹³⁷ This is reinforced by Macaskill’s argument that the call to ‘truthfulness’ in Psalms and Proverbs, and within the New Testament, is often overlooked: he sees it as crucial to the integration within the church of autistic people, in their voicing of discomfiting challenges to social hypocrisies.¹³⁸

Furthermore, in his study of ‘autistic cognition’, Rapley rejects conditional inclusion, and states that ‘welcome’ involves ‘embracing the distinctive perspectives offered by autistic worshippers’.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Philip Thomas, “The Relational-Revelational Image: A Reflection on the Image of God in the Light of Disability and on Disability in the Light of the Image of God,” *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 16, no. 2 (2012): 150. doi:10.1080/15228967.2012.673083. Cf. McCloughry and Morris, *Making a World of Difference*, 48–50.

¹³⁵ See p. 156.

¹³⁶ Philip Thomas, “The Relational-Revelational Image,” 150.

¹³⁷ Amos Yong, “Disability and the Love of Wisdom: De-Forming, Re-Forming, and Per-Forming Philosophy of Religion,” *Ars Disputandi* 9, no. 1 (2009): 70. doi:10.1080/15665399.2009.10819997.

¹³⁸ Macaskill, *Autism and the Church*, 113–17.

¹³⁹ Stewart Rapley, *Autistic Thinking in the Life of the Church* (London: SCM Press, 2021), 3, 161. His book considers differing images of God; interpretations of the Bible; approaches to prayer; responses to creeds, liturgy, hymns and songs; and makes recommendations for how churches can increase

Bearing in mind Mitchell and Snyder's assessment: 'Disabled bodies are marked bodies, fully socialized, and over-analyzed in their significance to the destiny of nations, monarchies, communities, families, individuals, and corporealities',¹⁴⁰ I do not intend to enter into the intensely personal theological debate about the transformation of heavenly bodies (and minds) where healing is set against current perceptions of identity and recognition.¹⁴¹ I will merely look at how experience is reframed by various commentators, starting with Macaskill. Indeed, Macaskill refutes Eiesland in *The Disabled God*, by suggesting that paying particular attention to joy would not require a reconception of God, but an understanding of a 'Holy God who can resource creatures (all creatures, not just those who are disabled) in their frailties'.¹⁴² In arguing against a deficit model of autism, he takes a stance for 'neurodiversity' and paradoxical biblical joy to disrupt normalcy:

If the concept of joy is properly understood as something that re-values present circumstances by relating them to the economy and presence of God, the possibility that these circumstances and conditions will extend into the eschaton actually ceases to be unthinkable.¹⁴³

Macaskill is concerned primarily with autism, whereas Yong argues more generally, that 'the religious epistemology of people with intellectual disabilities will be more focused instead on affective and embodied aspects of that which is good, beautiful, and even true'.¹⁴⁴ In this truncated paraphrase of Philippians 4:8, Yong is not perpetuating the stereotype of holy innocence, so deplored by Newell, which

'cognitive engagement' by autistic worshippers (Rapley, *Autistic Thinking in the Life of the Church*, 150–57).

¹⁴⁰ David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, "'Jesus Thrown Everything Off Balance': Disability and Redemption in Biblical Literature," in *This Aabled Body: Re-Thinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies*, ed. Hector Avalos, Sarah J. Melcher, and Jeremy Schipper, Semeia Studies, no. 55 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 174.

¹⁴¹ For example, Eiesland writes of the deleterious effects of such speculation: 'having been disabled from birth, I came to believe that in heaven I would be absolutely unknown to myself and perhaps to God' (Nancy Eiesland, "Liberation, Inclusion, and Justice: A Faith Response to Persons with Disabilities," *Impact* 14, no. 3, *Faith Communities and People with Developmental Disabilities*, feature issue (Winter 2001/2002): 2). For a survey of positions on healing, see James Barton Gould, "The Hope of Heavenly Healing and Disability Part 1: Theological Issues," *Journal of Disability & Religion* 20, no. 4 (2016): 317–34. doi:10.1080/23312521.2016.1239153.

¹⁴² Grant Macaskill, "Joy and Autism: Biblical, Theological and Practical Perspectives," *Journal of Disability & Religion* 24, no. 3, *Joy*, special issue (2020): 8. doi:10.1080/23312521.2020.1750535.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁴⁴ Yong, "Disability and the Love of Wisdom," 65.

contributes to people with learning disabilities being marginalised even within the wider Disability movement,¹⁴⁵ but offering a heuristic for analysing spirituality. From her reading of Barth, Demmons does see gladness, and the joyful response of people with intellectual disabilities as a wordless Christ-likeness,¹⁴⁶ but this is tantamount to affective exclusion of the impassive. Harshaw is more realistic in the perceptual shift that she effects by her suggestion that ‘life in all its fullness’ for her severely disabled daughter resides in her lack of inhibition and unfeigned being of herself.¹⁴⁷

6.1. Gifts to the body

John Hull, a theologian who became unsighted in adulthood, writes ‘from a disabled point of view’: ‘part of the mission of disabled people is to become apostles of inclusion, witnesses of vulnerability and partners in pain’.¹⁴⁸ Cohen suggests vocation for all comes from encounter with the God who was a stranger in the person of Jesus:

The *imago dei* within us all, whether mentally able or disabled, reveals itself as vocation. . . . The mentally disabled [sic] reflect the soul of God, and our conversation with God is greatly enhanced if we not only converse internally with the *gēr* within ourselves, but also externally, with those mentally disabled beyond ourselves. In the same way Israel was called to just such a “conversation” with the *gērim*.¹⁴⁹

Cohen estranges the experience of the majority, in this explanatory summary from Young, of an unpublished paper:

Cohen suggests that as love between Israelite and *ger* springs from a shared ‘soul’, so love between able-bodied and the disabled cannot be based on our need for someone to help. We have to pass over into the ‘foreign land’ in which they dwell, and find something of our identity there, though there we will always be resident aliens.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Newell, “Disabled Theologies,” 340.

¹⁴⁶ Demmons, “Tacit and Tactile Knowledge of God,” 13–14.

¹⁴⁷ Jill Harshaw, “Autism and Love,” 286.

¹⁴⁸ John M. Hull, “The Broken Body in a Broken World: A Contribution to a Christian Doctrine of the Person from a Disabled Point of View,” *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 7, no. 4 (2004): 22. doi:10.1300/J095v07n04_02.

¹⁴⁹ Ian Cohen, “A ‘Strange’ Vocation,” in *Encounter with Mystery: Reflections on L’Arche and Living with Disability*, ed. Frances Young (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1997), 155–57, 166, here at 166.

¹⁵⁰ Ian Cohen, unpublished paper presented at Pastoral Studies Spring Conference, ‘Mental Handicap, Theology and Pastoral Care’, University of Birmingham, 1986, cited in Frances Young, *Face to Face: A Narrative Essay in the Theology of Suffering*, originally published as *Face to Face with Assistance From Arthur* by Epworth Press, 1986 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 184–85, here at 185.

Thus, Harshaw, whose daughter Rebecca has complex physical and intellectual disabilities, views her (and others like her) as prophetic:

Primarily her and her fellow-prophets' embodied message consists of what it is to be authentically human and highlights how subtly the prevailing culture has infiltrated the consciousness of the Church with its falsehoods about what constitutes true humanity—a culture which elevates normalcy and conformity; which equates health, prosperity, autonomy, self-sufficiency, economic productiveness, intellectual achievement, freedom, and power with what is good.¹⁵¹

Her judgement is in accord with the societal evaluations of Hill and Post quoted earlier, but expects a paradigm shift within the Church, in the same way that Macaskill interrogates complacency and entitlement in his depiction of the challenge posed by the autistic. Furthermore, Thomas, father to a son who has cerebral palsy and epilepsy, is alert to the possible depersonalisation of the individual with a disability into a prophetic '*gift*' to the church community, with the concomitant risk of a failure to conceive of their participation in other ministries.¹⁵² He suggests: 'To relegate people with disabilities to a merely prophetic role is, perhaps, evidence that their challenging prophetic message remains unheard'.¹⁵³ Sadly, and more pointedly, it also speaks to the continuing need to desire prophecy *and* demonstrate love, first preached to the Corinthians by the apostle Paul. McCloughry and Morris also caution against the relegation of people with disabilities to examples: 'This can pander to a false patronage'.¹⁵⁴

McCloughry and Morris construct the dialectic between challenge and change in terms of Sabbath, rather than looking to a model: 'Those whose own contribution to the community is through relationship and "being" need others to rest so that they can

¹⁵¹ Jill Harshaw, "Prophetic Voices, Silent Words: The Prophetic Role of Persons with Profound Intellectual Disabilities in Contemporary Christianity," *Practical Theology* 3, no. 3 (December 2010): 319. doi:10.1558/prth.v3i3.311.

¹⁵² Philip Thomas, "The Relational-Revelational Image," 148, emphasis in original. He discusses this possibility, and the potential for oppressive coercion of the disabled minority to 'stay in their place', at greater length in his thesis of the same name. See Philip Thomas, "The Relational-Revelational Image: A Reflection on the Image of God in the Light of Disability and on Disability in the Light of the Image of God," MA thesis (University of Bristol, 2011), 14–17, Online. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241747679>, uploaded by author.

¹⁵³ Philip Thomas, "The Relational-Revelational Image," 148.

¹⁵⁴ McCloughry and Morris, *Making a World of Difference*, 30.

minister and restore a more balanced perspective'.¹⁵⁵ DeVries takes a more global view, connecting the doctrine of creation and the work all are called to do 'while it is day' (John 9:4);¹⁵⁶ for her, recognition of difference, and sustaining a relationship with God does not require equating sin and disability, except at a structural level, and it still allows for reconciliation with all created beings and future perfection.¹⁵⁷

Meanwhile, Swinton links the 'creaturely' and hospitality, as he appeals to divine love and common humanity in his rejection of the sufficiency of personhood to defend the rights of people with dementia:

If we are kin then we are creatures. If we are creatures then we are dependant and loved before we even begin our creaturely journeys. If God's prevenient love is the basis for our love of neighbour and the motivation for our practices of hospitality towards strangers, then our capacities are not what make us who we are. We are not our memories or any other thing that we are able to do. We are who we are as God relates to us. God's modes of relating are not dependant on what we can do; they are gifted to us because of what we are: *creatures and kin*.¹⁵⁸

This is a recapitulation of hospitality at its most primordial, and its most expansive.

Further to Swinton's universal bestowal of love as a prelude to hospitality, Hely foresees the postmodern church as a community which transforms itself by recognising people with disabilities as part of the catholicity of the church (not as those who need to be included). Thus, they demonstrate 'hospitality as a sign and a sacrament' in the household of God.¹⁵⁹ Such a prophetic manifestation could be viewed as a theological variant of people with disabilities being cast as an inspiration, or a resource, were it not for his proposal of their disability as an intersectional condition of marginality which crosses 'boundaries of culture, creed and colour. As

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 29.

¹⁵⁶ Jesus said: ' "We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work" ' (John 9:4).

¹⁵⁷ Dawn DeVries, "Creation, Handicappism, and the Community of Differing Abilities," in *Reconstructing Christian Theology: A Liberating Pedagogy*, ed. Rebecca S. Chopp and Mark Lewis Taylor (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 138–39.

¹⁵⁸ John Swinton, "What's in a Name? Why People with Dementia Might Be Better Off Without the Language of Personhood," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 18, no. 2 (December 2014): 244–45, emphasis in original. doi:10.1515/ijpt-2014-0017.

¹⁵⁹ Jack Hely, "Hospitality as a Sign and Sacrament," *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 6, no. 4 (2002): 73. doi:10.1300/J095v06n04_05.

such, they are available to make “space” for God in the world today and to provide “a sense of a people” to become visible in the fabric of life’.¹⁶⁰ Yong concurs with inclusive welcome, but emphasises the charismatic aspect of hospitality:

in the postmodern, post-denominational, and even post-Christian world of the twenty-first century, the church is fully the charismatic fellowship of the Spirit only insofar as she is an inclusive community of hospitality wherein the disabled and nondisabled *together* welcome, befriend and embrace the stranger, the marginalized and the disenfranchised.¹⁶¹

He specifies that ‘the inclusive hospitality of the Spirit liberally dispenses the charisms of ministry to all people—the “weak” and the “strong” alike—so that the “disabled” and nondisabled are equally instruments of God’s reconciling and transforming power’.¹⁶²

Having given a positive overview of ecclesial inclusion as hospitality, I will now look at shortcomings in practice, the language of gifting, and the church as the body of Christ. It should be remembered that New Testament language about gifts is to do with grace and dependence on God. In solidarity with parents of children with a disability, Reinders inveighs against the hypocritical and unthinking who tell them that their child is a gift from God, without offering practical or spiritual support.¹⁶³

Volck, a paediatrician, uses the same scenario, but states that ‘all children arrive as strangers to their parents’,¹⁶⁴ thereby linking hospitality to accountability and ecclesial conformation:

To see a disabled child as burden or blessing for her parents but not for us is to misconstrue what the church is. The disabled child, as with all children, is burden, blessing, and personal responsibility for all those gathered in Christ. For the church the practice of hospitality is not a matter of duty. It is a matter of identity.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 79.

¹⁶¹ Amos Yong, *Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 225, emphasis mine.

¹⁶² Ibid., 225.

¹⁶³ Hans S. Reinders, “Being Thankful: Parenting the Mentally Disabled,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 428–29.

¹⁶⁴ Brian Volck, “Silent Communion: The Prophetic Witness of the Profoundly Disabled,” *Journal of Disability & Religion* 22, no. 2, *Models of Disability from Religious Tradition*, special issue (April 2018): 214. doi:10.1080/23312521.2018.1447625.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

For him, hospitality in the church is definitive; support from the church is needed for the upbringing of all children, and cannot be abdicated through self-serving labelling. Whitt, as a Baptist minister and parent of a child with special needs, asserts his opinion on the insufficiency of inclusion: ‘Churches fully embrace [all members of the body] when they believe that intellectually disabled persons have gifts for the good of the whole community—gifts that the church needs to flourish’.¹⁶⁶ Similarly, Jennifer Bute, a retired general practitioner, is able to speak personally of her own dementia as a ‘gift’, and see it as ‘a *glorious* opportunity to demonstrate God’s love for the whole body of Christ’.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Brock rejects any static or restrictive notion of gift in his discussion of Pauline body imagery:

Enacted works of service must not only benefit the body, but must be continually circulating for there to be a body at all. The body of Christ *is* a circulator of divine gifts, and if there is such a body it is because each member serves in a temporally extended manner the giving of the Trinitarian God to the church via each member.¹⁶⁸

6.2. The church as a body

Having instanced the misapplication of the language of spiritual gifts, and the necessity of gifts to the church as the body of Christ, I am now going to dissect Paul’s ‘body’ language. Swinton’s vision of ‘a church for strangers’ uses Paul’s imagery of the parts of the body to include those the world deems weakest; the body is incomplete if it does not include those who have been segregated or stigmatised.¹⁶⁹ Being indissolubly parts of the same body is a different order of relationship from being deemed fictive kin in a taxonomy of hospitality (as considered in Chapter 1). Thus, in talking of his friend Stephen, Swinton says, ‘*He doesn’t simply have Down’s syndrome, the Body of Christ has Down’s syndrome*’.¹⁷⁰ Swinton later re-uses his

¹⁶⁶ Whitt, “In the Image of God,” 215.

¹⁶⁷ Jennifer Bute, “My Glorious Opportunity: How My Dementia Has Been a Gift,” *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging* 28, no. 1–2 (2016): title, 23, emphasis in original. doi:10.1080/15528030.2015.1047295.

¹⁶⁸ Brock, “Theologizing Inclusion,” 360, emphasis in original.

¹⁶⁹ John Swinton, “Building a Church for Strangers,” *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 4, no. 4 (2001): 25–63. doi:10.1300/J095v04n04_03.

¹⁷⁰ Swinton, “Building a Church for Strangers,” 47, emphasis in original. Cf. Jipp’s call to the North American church to recover its vocation to hospitality to the outcast and ‘embrace a stigmatized

image of a chromosomally conditioned church without overt reference to being the author, in a survey article illustrating the popularity of ‘disabling’ either God, or the church as the body of Christ.¹⁷¹ Theological empowerment through identification started with Eiesland’s influential 1994 book *The Disabled God*. She impairs the scarred post-Resurrection Jesus, and also records her revelation of God confined (I use the word advisedly) to a breath-controlled ‘sip-puff wheelchair’.¹⁷² However, Swinton quotes an observation by Lynch that impairment makes sense in the context of the Crucifixion, but is more problematic in terms of Jesus’ resurrection body,¹⁷³ to which I add that the resurrected Jesus passes through secured doors (John 20:19), and so has supernatural abilities. Similarly, in Genesis the breath or wind (*ruach*) from God moves freely across the face of the waters, and Ezekiel has a vision of the Lord seated on a wheeled throne which can move in many dimensions, so the implied or imposed restrictions on the God in Eiesland’s singular images serve her purpose, but do not cohere with scripture.

In his article on theologizing inclusion from 1 Corinthians 12, Brock points out that the humorous trope, to us, of organs addressing one another was a known political analogy in the ancient world.¹⁷⁴ However, he observes that Paul is not reproducing Greek thought, but reiterating the covenantal relationship which was constitutive of Israel’s political identity.¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, from the perspective of Black and Womanist theology, Troupe queries: ‘Could it be said that, as well as encouraging unity, this passage could be used to promote an acceptance of the status quo in regards to social and economic marginalization and injustice?’, and proceeds to

identity’, which starts from renunciation rather than identification, and so has a different inflection (Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 18–19).

¹⁷¹ John Swinton, “Who is the God We Worship? Theologies of Disability; Challenges and New Possibilities,” research rept., *International Journal of Practical Theology* 14, no. 2 (2010): 283–84. doi:10.1515/IJPT.2011.020.

¹⁷² Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 89.

¹⁷³ Elizabeth Lynch (no details given), cited in Swinton, “Who is the God We Worship?” 284–85, 285 n. 48.

¹⁷⁴ Brock, “Theologizing Inclusion,” 361.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 363.

ask who benefits locally and globally from the current distribution of power.¹⁷⁶ Brock does puncture the innate condescension which lies in the inability of the church to discern, let alone receive, the gift of the marginalised other, by linking the oversight back to the ethnocentrism of interpretations of the story of the Syrophenician woman. In his paraphrase of Jennings, he positions the church in her stead:

‘ “Colonialism” names what happens when the church forgets that it as a whole lives off the crumbs from Israel’s table, choosing instead to think “we” are the basic entity to which others must be joined and made to fit’.¹⁷⁷ His ultimate conclusion is a realisation of the salvific unsettling of identity: ‘But thanks to the work of Jesus Christ, the church is that community learning what it means that our genetic, national and religious status is not all there is to us’.¹⁷⁸ Hospitality has once more been unearthed, in this instance as the antidote to denial and offensive privilege, in a reconstrual of a perhaps over-familiar text.

So, having started this section with the re-known body in the *eschaton*, before looking at the context for Paul’s writing on the body, and Brock’s voicing of discrimination, deformation, and reformation, I will finish with the functioning of the church body. My analysis of interactions and practice from the field of dementia studies shows how there is a need to validate the person with dementia, through touch, acknowledgement of emotional states, and elicitation of their stories. The first and last of this therapeutic triad can be seen to parallel the responses of the welcoming host, discussed in Chapter 1. The middle and last reflect Paul’s teaching about the functioning of the body of Christ, which suffers with the suffering, weeps with the sorrowful and rejoices with the joyful (1 Cor. 12:26; Rom. 12:15). Conversely, such emotional identification is also shown in the remembrance that touch and gaze are problematic for some, though not all, autistic people; Macaskill observes how the

¹⁷⁶ Carol Troupe, “One Body, Many Parts: A Reading of 1 Corinthians 12:12–27,” *Black Theology* 6, no. 1 (2008): 39–44. doi:10.1558/blth2008v6i1.32.

¹⁷⁷ Brock, “Theologizing Inclusion,” 373 n. 12.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 372.

concrete aspect of the New Testament images of the church can be overtaken by an unquestioned performative identity:

Where a unity that is constituted by the dynamics of social interactions—body language, eye contact, social signs—may be baffling to someone who struggles to participate in such social signification, the image of the church as a temple made up of many stones or a body made up of many organs may be readily accessible.¹⁷⁹

Highlighting the demonstration of social capital as exclusionary may seem to contradict my emphasis in earlier chapters on the behaviour of the early believers, but my underlying contention is that welcome is a recognition of the God-given gift which the other brings, and so is sensitive to their contribution to the wholeness of the body of Christ. Macaskill is careful to emphasise that practices do not produce solidarity, but enact pre-existent belonging,¹⁸⁰ hence belonging is not dependent on sanctioned inclusion. Thus, Swinton’s development of the thinking of the since posthumously disgraced Jean Vanier, in an incisive comment on inclusion: ‘*To be included you just need to be present. To belong you need to be missed*’,¹⁸¹ is a fitting summation to this chapter.

7. Conclusion

Although from some of the foregoing examples, it could be alleged that I am using hospitality as a synonym for social acceptance, or spiritual discernment, I am arguing that hospitality is a more nuanced concept which encompasses body, soul, and spirit, with the potential to transform social injustice and cultural indifference. Deploying the concept of hospitality moves conversation on the lived experience of dementia, learning disability, or autism beyond a medicalised discourse of brains, cognition, genes and chromosomes, or sensory-processing. The structuring of this chapter has enabled the conceptual juxtaposition of the economic and civic person with Paul’s transformed body politic; the somatic with the spiritual; worldly values in the church, with the church in the world; and earthly and divine communion. The

¹⁷⁹ Macaskill, *Autism and the Church*, 106.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁸¹ Swinton, “From Inclusion to Belonging,” 184, emphasis in original.

shifting of paradigms has been implicit in changing terminology and attitudes, and more overt in the strategy of disabling God or the church. Many parents, carers, and scholars have exhorted the church as the body of Christ to countercultural inclusion and respectful ‘bodily’ encounter. From their accounts, joyful or caring presence is both indicated and contested, but the need for humility, whether intellectual, spiritual, or in the case of the church, corporate, in the reception of people and their gifts, is recurrent, and is shown most prominently in the recapitulation of the stories of Peter and the Syrophenician woman.

I propose inclusive hospitality neither as a condescending palliative, nor a concession towards exceptional integration, but as a resource for thinking about relationships and practices. Despite Kilby’s critique of ill-founded metaphysical speculation, *perichoresis* is nevertheless evocative of interdependence and the ineffable, and hence paradoxically, of ways of being and relating which transcend the cognitive to subvert ‘hypercognitive’ personhood and affirm inclusion. The identification of Israel with Jacob who was disabled in a spiritual encounter, can thus be compared with the divine spiritual en-abling of profoundly disabled individuals promoted by Harshaw, which overturns cerebral supremacy. In accord with Harshaw, divine revelation is a continuing possibility, but while acknowledging her particular rejection of prosthetic spirituality, and notwithstanding my reservations with Kaniaru’s neighbourliness, I argue that mundane hospitality on the part of the church, as a prelude to the ultimate welcome of the Messianic banquet, can bridge the ecstatic and the pragmatic, even as coercive or totalising inclusion must remain suspect. Browning Helsel’s proposal of post-traumatic commensality establishes togetherness, even in the midst of continuing disadvantage, and could take tangible form in Staley’s multisensory liturgical meals. Christian inclusion also has a supernatural dimension, extending beyond removal of barriers to access; believers are not just simultaneously part of a local church and the worldwide church, but are encouraged by the cloud of witnesses, those saints who have gone before, and are ministered to by the angels who stand before the face of God, and may even entertain them unwittingly when

hospitality is practised. However, as will be outlined in the next chapter, the aim of hospitality is not to receive angels, but to serve those in whom Jesus is to be seen, and this intention is as relevant to inclusion, and the recognition of embodied personhood, as to a more limited, traditional definition of hospitality as the entertaining of strangers.

Chapter 4

Seeing and hearing, food and stories

Complicating elements of hospitality

1. Enacting hospitality

Having looked in previous chapters at the reversibility of the guest-host relationship, in this chapter I will investigate food, meeting and eating, and the telling and hearing of stories as features of hospitality, but from unusual perspectives. In Chapter 3, I considered the social exclusion of people with disabilities and their incorporation in the body of Christ, and the possibilities of imaginative meals in church settings. In this chapter, I will develop hospitality beyond embodied eating by contrasting the practices of the early Church with performative eating, particularly virtual eating; liturgical innovations attracted criticism during the COVID-19 pandemic, and so virtual Communion, and the constitution of the worshipping community will also be discussed, in a technological reprise of the household worship of Chapter 1. Additionally, having repeatedly addressed the communion of the Messianic banquet, in this chapter I will look at how food itself incites speculation about communion, and so further develop the spiritual aspect of hospitality. Food has a particular place in Christian hospitality, and I suggested that it can consolidate inclusion in the last chapter, but the space to hear and tell stories is also part of hospitable welcome. Historically, storytelling and the traveller's tale are attested to in the myths and texts of antiquity,¹ as part of the provision of hospitality; storytelling was obviously a significant part of Jesus' ministry, and often took place at the meal-table. Therefore, storytelling will be considered theologically and practically, in an exploration of the effects of the suppression of stories, and the inscription of stories on brains and bodies, as well as the imaginative potential and healing power of stories, and the place of storytelling in achieving political inclusion. Specifically, I will show the place of stories and storytelling in preserving the identity and social

¹ Andrew E. Arterbury, "The Custom of Hospitality in Antiquity and Its Importance for Interpreting Acts 9:43–11:18," PhD dissertation (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2003).

competence of people living with dementia, and valuing the lives of those with learning disabilities, further to the emphasis on personhood and inclusion in the previous chapter. In addition, stories as the outcome of social engagement, and their value in community-building will be considered, alongside storytelling in mission. Finally, a renewed focus on seeing and listening as the precursor to hospitality and social transformation revisits discussion of sensory input and re-cognition from Chapter 3, and sets the scene for application of these insights to the Church of England in subsequent chapters.

1.1. Spiritual hospitality: Ministry and food

In this section, I will consider missional hospitality, how the practice of hospitality has been submerged by Christian tradition and hermeneutics, and the possibilities opened up by technology for connecting food and ritual. Writing in 2007, Koenig, whose earlier book on New Testament hospitality is frequently cited, expresses the view that churches underestimate the place of eating, and talks of a ‘mission-meal synergy’.² A chapter entitled ‘Fresh Expressions: What they are and what they are not’, in a 2012 book for pioneer ministers, itemises positive indicators derived from Luke 2:42–47 which include community, prayer, service, and creativity. The listing ends thus: ‘Hospitality is a key value and many Fresh Expressions gather around food’.³ Writing in 2014, Michael Moynagh is more pragmatic: ‘Food-based church fits into what people already have to do, which is to eat’.⁴ In an earlier book, Moynagh seeks to forecast the shape of the church in September 2020, a date coincident with the writing of this chapter, in a time of unforeseen pandemic-‘siliconization’ of church, to adopt Radner’s term.⁵ Looking to the future from the year 2001, and aided by an unnamed student, Moynagh foresees churches segmented

² Koenig, *Soul Banquets*, 9.

³ Andrew Roberts, “Fresh Expressions: What They Are and What They Are Not,” in *Fresh! An Introduction to Fresh Expressions of Church and Pioneer Ministry*, by David Goodhew, Andrew Roberts, and Michael Volland (London: SCM Press, 2012), 71.

⁴ Moynagh, *Being Church, Doing Life*, 174.

⁵ Ephraim Radner, “Should We Live-Stream Worship? Maybe Not,” para. 7. Living Church (website), posted 20 March 2020, <https://livingchurch.org/covenant/2020/03/20/should-we-live-stream-worship-maybe-not/>.

by age, venue, timing, and interests, but interlinked through video diaries, and thereby united in concern for each other and prayer,⁶ in a manner, to my mind, similar to the pastoral intent of the apostolic epistles. Allied to this sociologically informed speculation, he acknowledges the appeal of parties, and proposes a sensory approach to evangelism through a ‘festive lifestyle’.⁷ An unattributed thematic quote emblazoned across the top of a page in a 2013 report on Fresh Expressions of church amongst young adults, declares somewhat triumphantly: ‘Food is the new Sunday service’.⁸ By contrast, the only mentions of hospitality in *Mission-Shaped Youth* are of pizza as an additional inducement to attend events, and the ethos of the Boiler Room communities inspired by the monastic tradition, which combine ‘a rhythm of prayer and a heart for justice with hospitality, creativity and mission, particularly to the poor’.⁹ However, Finger cautions that social practices from the past cannot be transposed into today’s culture, but she does concede: ‘Nevertheless, food, meals, and eating together continue to convey strong symbolism’.¹⁰ She continues, by asking thoughtfully: ‘If theology is communicated through meals, what kind of theology is the church communicating today?’¹¹ She concludes with a provocative question, having proposed an approximation with the history of the Early Church: ‘Church potlucks,¹² and picnics, . . . with social equals, are the closest we come to agape meals

⁶ Michael Moynagh, *Changing World, Changing Church: New Forms of Church, Out-of-the-Pew Thinking, Initiatives That Work* (London: Monarch Books, 2001), 100–106.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 61–63.

⁸ Beth Keith, *Authentic Faith: Fresh Expressions of Church Amongst Young Adults*, report, Church Army and Fresh Expressions (Fresh Expressions, 2013), 23, Online. <https://freshexpressions.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/authenticfaith.pdf>.

⁹ Tim Sudworth, with Graham Cray, and Chris Russell, *Mission-Shaped Youth: Rethinking Young People and Church*, Mission-Shaped (London: Church House Publishing, 2007), 75, 83–85.

Coincidentally, in his *cri-de-cœur* about the place of the poor in Fresh Expressions of church, Worsley references students of his, who somewhat arbitrarily, used the inability to afford a pizza, and social exclusion, as a marker of poverty (it is unclear whether it was at his behest, or on their own initiative). See Howard Worsley, “Afterword: What’s in It for the Poor?” in *emergingchurch.intro*, by Michael Moynagh (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2004), 247.

¹⁰ Finger, *Of Widows and Meals*, 280.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Bomberger gives a vivid idealised account of the American potluck, which also mentions the humorist Garrison Keillor, and the ‘tuna casserole’ served by the Lutherans of the fictional Lake Wobegon (Rachel Bomberger, “Hot Dish Heaven,” paras. 10–11. *The Lutheran Witness*, posted 15 March 2019, <https://witness.lcms.org/2019/hot-dish-heaven>). There is no equivalent encomium to the joys of the ‘bring and share’, the usual British equivalent; and so, to make up for this omission, I offer, with her daughter Julia’s permission, Ann’s recipe for ‘mint cake’, or ‘peppermint slice’, which may be

of the past—and how many of us view an all-you-can-eat church potluck meal as a sacrament?’¹³ To build upon her question, I argue that the contribution of comestibles for such collaborative meals, whether cooked, baked, or bought, are an edible analogy for the different functions and spiritual giftings within the body which Paul delineates in 1 Corinthians 12, and that such occasions deserve due recognition. Jipp is explicit about the significance of such meals today: ‘The church’s hospitality meals testify that *the defining marker of the church is that they are the recipients of God’s hospitality and nothing else*’.¹⁴

Bradley Blue, whose work was encountered in Chapter 1, commends the logic of household meetings in the early Church, given that kitchen facilities and space for dining (and accommodation, if needed) were at hand.¹⁵ More recent work by Adams suggests a variety of possible meeting places, including shops, inns, warehouses, or even stables, but the ubiquity of the rented workshop (*taberna*) also makes it a likely venue: he sees Priscilla and Aquila as candidates for the hosting of such an assembly, given their (and Paul’s) occupation of tent-making.¹⁶ However, I argue that it is probable that the similarities which Torjesen sees between the supervisory duties of

found in the *Appendix*. As it was the subject of much fond recollection, Julia served this contribution to many a church buffet after her mother’s funeral. She thinks that her mother probably made up the recipe, and this supposition is supported by the different systems for measuring quantities in the recipe, and the imprecision of the method, but I can attest to the deliciousness of the end results. For his part, Chester parodies ‘potlucks’ as taking place in ‘draughty church halls’, and confesses his own reaction of dismay to the setting; he advocates missional picnics, barbecues, and curry nights instead (Chester, *A Meal with Jesus*, 79–81, 97, here at 97). Hershberger meanwhile, is of the view that a sit-down meal entails greater commitment and intimacy than a buffet party. See Michele Hershberger, *A Christian View of Hospitality: Expecting Surprises* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999), 103.

¹³ Finger, *Of Widows and Meals*, 280. ‘All-you-can-eat’ does bespeak an American consumerist culture of excess and entitlement, but it is perhaps not so far removed from the eating habits of the more recalcitrant Corinthians. Streett would concur with the church potluck as the nearest approach to Greco-Roman *koinōnia*. See Streett, *Subversive Meals*, 24 n. 86.

¹⁴ Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 37, emphasis in original. He subsequently endorses the potluck: ‘If we believe that the risen Jesus continues to share his presence through Jesus-like meals, then I suggest that we as the church should engage in some intentional reflection and take some creative risk to continue the witness of Jesus’s table-fellowship. This may simply take the form of looking for opportunities to institute times of shared meals or potlucks as part of the church’s communal life where Jesus’s own table practices are remembered and embodied’ (Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 37).

¹⁵ Blue, “In Public and in Private,” 85.

¹⁶ Edward Adams, “The Shape of the Pauline Churches,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology*, ed. Paul Avis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 122, 139–41. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199645831.013.25. He goes into the subject in greater detail in Adams, *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places*.

leaders in the early Church, and women's household responsibilities,¹⁷ have been largely unacknowledged not only because of gendered interpretations, but also because of continued scholarly attention to settings, rather than the management of the space. In my opinion, just as this similitude has been further obscured by subsequent ritualisation, so the reality of hospitality and a *koinōnia* of fictive kin relationships and collective distribution (Acts 2:42–47a) brought out by Finger,¹⁸ has been spiritualised or dismissed in like manner by being regarded simultaneously as (ir)retrievable attainment, or a transient, febrile episode.

From attempts to reconstruct the past from physical evidence, I now turn to the claim of a suppressed history of Christian hospitality. In 1973 Mary Douglas wrote thus on the materiality and efficacy of food:

Food is not only a metaphor or vehicle of communication; a meal is a physical event. . . . Food may be symbolic, but it is also as efficacious for feeding as roofs are for shelter, as powerful for including as gates and doors. Added over time, gifts of food are flows of life-giving substance, but long before life-saving is an issue the flows have created the conditions for social life. More effective than flags or red carpets which merely say welcome, food actually delivers good fellowship.¹⁹

In accord with her assertion of the social vitality of food, Nicholas Tuohy, a former chef, and now ordained minister, seeks to make food-preparation and service, and the women displaced from the gospel narrative, visible and valued in his account of Lukan mission. In rejecting a restrictive definition of ministry, he asks provocatively why the Christian church does not ordain 'cooks and good hosts' given the primacy of hospitality in Luke-Acts.²⁰ Deriving inspiration from Weil's mystical transubstantive impartation of self into prepared food through life-giving labour and physical transfer, and Heldke's conjunction of ' "bodily knowledge" ' and ' "emotional attachment" ' to

¹⁷ Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 76–80, cited in Finger, *Of Widows and Meals*, 208.

¹⁸ Finger, *Of Widows and Meals*, 224–42.

¹⁹ Mary Douglas, "Standard Social Uses of Food: Introduction," in *Food in the Social Order: Studies of Food and Festivities in Three American Communities*, ed. Mary Douglas, reprint, 1973, Mary Douglas: Collected Works, vol. IX (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), 12.

²⁰ Tuohy, "While They Were Eating," 153.

people, tools, and the dish in question,²¹ he adjudges that cooks, chefs, and servers are effectively ‘priests and ministers’.²² Thus, his crediting of the undervalued hidden labour, often performed by women, concealed in the *koinōnia* and feasting of the early Church allows for the possibility of revitalising attenuated inherited ritual.

In *Food and Faith*, Wirzba foregrounds the embodied nature of eating and relations between Christians:

It is the time when we honor, nurture, and celebrate membership. When we eat well, with Christ in mind, heart, and stomach, we recognize the grace and the blessing and the mercy of these memberships, thereby (hopefully) becoming more graceful, grateful, and merciful ourselves.²³

With such awareness in mind, Koenig’s suggestion of taking the term chief steward (*architriklinos*), used to describe the master of ceremonies at the wedding at Cana (John 2:9), and applying it metaphorically to designate church members to act like ‘toastmasters during church meals’,²⁴ is an interesting adjunct to Tuohy’s clericised cooks. Koenig envisages these trained individuals paying ‘special attention to the spiritual flow’ and encouraging ‘soul banquet behavior on the part of guests’.²⁵ Paul himself had to admonish some of the richer church members in Corinth, and so alertness to the behavioural dimensions of congregation around food is not necessarily a hindrance to spiritual spontaneity, but should be distinguished from Newman’s hospitality as ‘entertainment’ which ‘requires a “religion of civility”’.²⁶

Further to courteous commensality, Wirzba conjoins ‘Eucharistic table manners’ and ‘eating towards communion’ in a chapter heading.²⁷ More specifically, he shows how prevailing views on the practices of the church in Acts as inaccessible

²¹ Alec Irwin, “Devoured by God: Cannibalism, Mysticism, and Ethics in Simone Weil,” *CrossCurrents* 51, no. 2, *A Hell in Heaven’s Despite: Collisions of Religion and Violence*, special issue (Summer 2001): 266–67, cited in Tuohy, “While They Were Eating,” 155; Lisa M. Heldke, “Foodmaking as a Thoughtful Practice,” in *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food*, ed. Deane W. Curtin and Lisa M. Heldke (Bloomington, IN; Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 218, cited in Tuohy, “While They Were Eating,” 156.

²² Tuohy, “While They Were Eating,” 155–56.

²³ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 289.

²⁴ Koenig, *Soul Banquets*, 80.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Newman, *Untamed Hospitality*, 27, emphasis in original.

²⁷ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 194–235.

could be transformed if the Eucharist is approached as a place of formation for hospitable eating:

At the Eucharist we receive the nurture and training we need to become people who participate in his healing and reconciling ways with the world. Eating Jesus is the ritual act that has the potential to transform eating in general so that it can be hospitable at its core and lead to a communion of life.²⁸

He further argues that it was such imbibing of fellowship from being with Jesus, which finally enabled the disciples from the Emmaus road to recognise their risen Lord in the breaking of bread.²⁹ The liberative potential of this realisation for a just hospitality can be fully apprehended if Sawicki, on seeing hunger and seeing Jesus,³⁰ is re-introduced and combined with the stance of Bieler and Schottroff on bread:

‘Sacramental worship embraces a permeability in which the bread we consume at our kitchen tables, the bread we steal from the poor, and the bread that is consecrated and consumed during Holy Communion are related’.³¹ Schottroff develops such feminist mutuality into social justice and ecological activism in the concluding paragraph of her book, *Lydia’s Impatient Sisters*:

Eating together is the place of the communion of Christ’s disciples, who take responsibility for the bread and who do not permit the earth in which the grain grows to be poisoned. It does not permit the women and men who labor brought forth the bread to be turned into second-class citizens. The living source of justice for all creation and for mutuality among human beings was and is the mutuality between women and men and the God who is before them.³²

Finger likewise is fond of suggesting a conditional recognition of Jesus, first of all in an essay for a book on Christian spirituality and justice: ‘We too may not recognize Jesus until we break bread with those with whom he most closely identifies, those our society has deemed to be of least value’.³³ Secondly, at the conclusion of her 2007 book, *Of Widows and Meals: Communal Meals in the Book of Acts*, she re-works this

²⁸ Ibid., 200.

²⁹ Ibid., 288.

³⁰ Sawicki, “Recognizing the Risen Lord,” 448. See Chapter 1, section 3.2, p. 62.

³¹ Andrea Bieler and Luise Schottroff, *The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread & Resurrection* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 5.

³² Schottroff, *Lydia’s Impatient Sisters*, 223.

³³ Reta Halteman Finger, “Table Fellowship: The Spirituality of Eating Together,” in *Vital Christianity: Spirituality, Justice, and Christian Practice*, ed. David L. Weaver-Zercher and William H. Willimon (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 199.

sentiment as an appeal to contemporary commensality and equity: ‘We too may not recognize Jesus unless we break bread with each other until all are satisfied and none are in need’.³⁴ Having considered hospitality, the interrelation of food and equality, and the creation of community through spiritual formation, I now assess the presence of hospitality in liturgy and gesture, and start by giving an example of the persistence of such conformation.

1.2. Spiritual hospitality (and inhospitality): Actions and gestures

Interestingly, Kevern uses Oliver Sacks’ story of Jimmie’s decorous reception of the sacrament to propose the co-presence of engrained gestures and mystical absorption in dementia; Kevern’s conjunction of the timeless with dementia and time-loss adds another facet to the divine presence vouchsafed, in Harshaw’s theorisation from the last chapter, to those with profound learning disabilities.³⁵ Following Hauerwas, Swinton also sees the church more generally as a place of ‘implicit, precognitive and *subtly* physical’ gestural formation.³⁶ Webb-Mitchell likewise describes the practical actions and the corporate development of empathetic connections necessary for ‘crafting Christians into the gestures of the Body of Christ’.³⁷ Ultimately, these accounts of positive shaping derive from Jesus’ commission to the disciples to emulate his example of humble service. Thus, for Hauerwas, the church is a corporate gesture:

Liturgy *is* social action. Through liturgy we are shaped to live rightly the story of God, to become part of that story, and are thus able to recognize and respond to the saints in our midst. Once we recognize that the church is a social ethic, an ethic that is to be sure but a gesture, then we can appreciate how every activity of the church is a means and an opportunity for faithful service to and for the world. We believe that the gesture that is the church is nothing less than the sign of God's salvation of the world.³⁸

³⁴ Finger, *Of Widows and Meals*, 286.

³⁵ Peter Kevern, “Community Without Memory? In Search of an Ecclesiology of Liberation in the Company of People with Dementia,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 12, no. 1 (2012): 49–50. doi:10.1080/1474225X.2011.598347.

³⁶ Swinton, “What’s in a Name?” 162–63, emphasis in original.

³⁷ Brett Webb-Mitchell, “Crafting Christians Into the Gestures of the Body of Christ,” in *Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Christian Practice*, ed. Nancy L. Eiesland and Don E. Saliers (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), title, 267–80.

³⁸ Stanley Hauerwas, “The Gesture of a Truthful Story,” *Theology Today* 42, no. 2 (July 1985): 187, emphasis in original. doi:10.1177/004057368504200204.

In the light of the focus on the inclusive body of Christ from Chapter 3, it is not difficult to see how the practice of hospitality fits within this understanding.

Writing in the context of diversified and multiplying eucharistic practice, although surely a statement with wider applicability, Ford states: ‘It makes sense that a vision of the Kingdom of God seen in terms of inexhaustible feasting should be anticipated by a wealth of diverse forms of celebration’.³⁹ A paradoxical lack of diversity amidst unanticipated diversity of form, arising from the legal requirement to stay at home during the first wave of pandemic SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus in the Spring of 2020 will be considered next. Anderson challenges the default assumptions of online service-leaders and liturgists,⁴⁰ and writes acerbically about the self-directed gesture, offered as a concession to the solitary in the course of online worship during lockdown, of which offering the peace to a pet in the absence of a fellow human, is perhaps the most egregious.⁴¹ She dismisses a supposed reversion to authentic household worship during the pandemic, which references the early Church, but assumes the modern nuclear family as the norm.⁴² She writes with finality about virtual liturgies which overlook the single-person household, and the incoherent ‘ritual logic’ of enjoined acts, which in their ‘autonomous self sufficiency’ are efficaciously the opposite:

But a church that is designed around the domestic worship of the family, and which asks the rest of us to take our own communion, wash our own feet, and pass the peace to ourselves, is honestly not a church that I can imagine myself as part of at all. And for me, that is an even more urgent problem than whether a pixelated image on a screen can confect a valid eucharist.⁴³

Similarly, as an onlooker, MacDougall worries about the viewed church service as ‘a one-way mirror’,⁴⁴ which recalls the solipsism of Everett’s magically mirrored self

³⁹ David F. Ford, “What Happens in the Eucharist?” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 48, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 365. doi:10.1017/S0036930600036802.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Anderson, “‘Wash Your Own Feet’: On Singleness and the Domestic Church.” *Earth & Altar*, posted 22 May 2020, <https://earthandaltarmag.com/posts/wash-your-own-feet-on-singleness-and-the-domestic-church>.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, para. 4.

⁴² *Ibid.*, para. 3.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, final para.

⁴⁴ Scott MacDougall, “Common Discernment About Common Prayer During Lockdown,” para. 11.

released from cultural imperatives.⁴⁵ At least the latter could extricate herself from the surrounding culture, albeit by dubious means, but Anderson fears the self-regarding projection of the broadcast family (with pets) as normative. In this regard, MacDougall's insistence that Holy Communion 'is not meant to be *watched*. It is meant to be *ingested*', is palpable.⁴⁶

In the course of her argument, Anderson relates the failure to take into account those living alone, or those for whom their homes are not safe places, to Paul's plea for the Corinthians to wait for one another (1 Cor. 11:33).⁴⁷ Brittain marshals arguments that the lockdown furore around 'virtual Communion' is symptomatic of individualism, because traditionally, the physical gathering of the church as a community has been seen as essential.⁴⁸ Elsewhere, Brittain also uses the same passage from 1 Corinthians as Anderson, to make clear that, for so long as it remains unsafe or impractical for many, eventual meeting together is similarly divisive and exclusionary, and any celebration of Holy Communion would be encouraging participation in an 'unworthy manner' (1 Cor. 11:29).⁴⁹ He observes pointedly, that historically, Christians are known for their service during times of crisis, not their persistence in eucharistic practice.⁵⁰ The initial statement from the Church of England after the lockdown was announced in March 2020 gave the impression of being more concerned with order, and delimiting Holy Communion than pastoral concern, although the imminence of Holy Week in less than a fortnight obviously required clarity. Rather than endorsing widespread adoption of the communal *agape* meal

Church Divinity School of the Pacific, accessed 10 June 2020, <https://cdsp.edu/2020/04/common-discernment-about-common-prayer-during-lockdown/>.

⁴⁵ Debbie Everett, *Forget Me Not: The Spiritual Care of People with Alzheimer's Disease* (Edmonton, Alta: Inkwell Press, 1996), 167, cited in Killick and Allan, *Communication and the Care of People with Dementia*, 38. See Chapter 3, section 1.1, 135.

⁴⁶ MacDougall, "Common Discernment About Common Prayer During Lockdown," para. 13, bold omitted, emphasis in original.

⁴⁷ Anderson, "'Wash Your Own Feet': On Singleness and the Domestic Church," para. 14.

⁴⁸ Christopher Craig Brittain, "On Virtual Communion: A Tract for These COVID-19 Times (Part II)," para. 16, para. 18. *Anglican Journal*, 25 May 2020, <https://www.anglicanjournal.com/on-virtual-communion-a-tract-for-these-covid-19-times-ii/>.

⁴⁹ Christopher Craig Brittain, "The Eucharist and Coming Out of Lockdown: A Tract for These COVID-19 Times," para. 10. *Anglican Journal*, 14 May 2020, <https://www.anglicanjournal.com/the-eucharist-and-coming-out-of-lockdown-a-tract-for-these-covid-19-times/>.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 12.

shared by some churches on Maundy Thursday evening, it stated: ‘It should be emphasised, . . . that such meals, whether conducted online or in the home, are distinct from the celebration of Holy Communion, which must be presided over by a priest’.⁵¹ It was acknowledged under the subsequent heading ‘Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday and Easter Day’, that some ‘may choose to abstain from celebration of the sacrament of Holy Communion for such time as this is not physically accessible to lay people. They may choose to follow this course of action intentionally for the duration of the present emergency’.⁵² Amidst encouraging such solidarity and advocating the practice of spiritual communion, the statement also contained the following:

Participants in a streamed service of Holy Communion should not be encouraged to place bread and wine before their screens. Joining together to share in the one bread and the one cup as those physically present to one another is integral to the service of Holy Communion; this is not possible under the current restrictions, and it is not helpful to suggest otherwise. Any idea of the ‘remote consecration’ of the bread and wine should be avoided.⁵³

However, advice issued in June by the Recovery Group of the House of Bishops had to concede that some had taken matters into their own hands (literally):

We recognise a real desire of many for some physical engagement during the online celebration of Holy Communion. In some cases, participants in online services have consumed bread and wine in their own homes during the service. Whilst we recognize [sic] that this practice may have value for some, participants should not be encouraged to believe that any bread and wine brought before screens during online Holy Communion has been ‘remotely consecrated’. However, we commend the questions raised by this practice for further theological reflection.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Church of England, “Holy Week and Easter in 2020.” Accessed 19 October 2020, <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches/holy-week-and-easter-2020>. Subsequent guidance issued in June of the same year to reflect changes in legal restrictions endorsed *agape* meals more generally, but with a clarification to the proviso that they were to be distinguished from Holy Communion, which now read that they ‘must be presided over by a bishop or a priest’ (as if the former did not assume the latter) (Church of England, The House of Bishops Recovery Group, “Covid-19 Advice on the Administration of Holy Communion,” version 1, issued 9 June 2020, 6, section 9).

⁵² Church of England, “Holy Week and Easter in 2020.”

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Church of England, The House of Bishops Recovery Group, “Covid-19 Advice,” 6, Appendix. I would like to thank Revd Dr Mark Betson from the national offices of the Church of England for his assistance in supplying a version log of the various iterations of this advice, and clarifying that version 1.3 was the first published version (third draft), and that the subsequent jump in numbering to version 4 reflected the change to a format that included version information in a box at the head of the document.

Indeed, Anglican priest and theologian Richard A. Burrige now asks in 2022: ‘How *do* we hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches?’, as he advocates for the validity of online Communion.⁵⁵ His book is essentially a disguised apologia for his personal celebration of Communion on Zoom during the pandemic with a select group of academics, ecclesiastics, and other worthies;⁵⁶ he describes his own disbelief at the eventual scope of ‘what began as a “bit of fun” experiment’ on 25th March 2020⁵⁷ (the day after the first lockdown began in the United Kingdom).⁵⁸ He argues at one point for the possibilities of simultaneous concelebration, but acknowledges the need for the full participation of the laity;⁵⁹ the fact therefore that Loveday Alexander, one of the authors of the official June advice quoted above, took part in his services, which involved participants intentionally placing their own bread and wine so as to be visible on camera,⁶⁰ is an example of rank hypocrisy.⁶¹ Legislation that came into force on 26th March 2020 permitted the broadcast of an act of worship, but the Church forbade broadcasting or livestreaming from churches;⁶² the Archbishop of Canterbury has since stated: ‘ “If I had the time again, I would be more cautious about closing the churches” ’.⁶³ I suggest that the enforced move online gave grounds for revisiting the spirit and intent of Paul’s instructions, as everyone could have

⁵⁵ . Richard Burrige, “Is a Zoom Rite a Valid Form of Communion?” *Church Times*, no. 8288 (21 January 2022): 14, emphasis in original; Madeleine Davies, “Communion Online is Valid, Says Burrige,” *Church Times*, no. 8288 (21 January 2022): 7; Richard A. Burrige, *Holy Communion in Contagious Times: Celebrating the Eucharist in the Everyday and Online Worlds* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2022) He takes his title from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, but it is not strictly accurate, as coronavirus is not spread by touch. See Richard A. Burrige, *Holy Communion in Contagious Times*, 25, 35.

⁵⁶ See list, Richard A. Burrige, *Holy Communion in Contagious Times*, xi.

⁵⁷ Richard A. Burrige, *Holy Communion in Contagious Times*, x.

⁵⁸ Boris Johnson, “Prime Minister’s Statement on Coronavirus (COVID-19): 23 March 2020.” GOV.UK (official website), 23 March 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-address-to-the-nation-on-coronavirus-23-march-2020>.

⁵⁹ Richard A. Burrige, *Holy Communion in Contagious Times*, 60–69, here at 69.

⁶⁰ See Richard A. Burrige, *Holy Communion in Contagious Times*, screenshot [unnumbered], 253.

There is a screenshot of Alexander herself presiding on the following page.

⁶¹ Burrige is careful to state that any bishops attending did not communicate ‘in order to respect the current official position’ (Richard A. Burrige, *Holy Communion in Contagious Times: Celebrating the Eucharist in the Everyday and Online Worlds* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2022), 254).

⁶² Richard A. Burrige, *Holy Communion in Contagious Times*, 2–7.

⁶³ Paul Wilkinson, “Welby: Church Closures not My Decision Alone,” *Church Times*, no. 8292 (18 February 2022): 6.

communicated at home, if not prohibited. Such a concession would have meant that as restrictions eased, provision would have existed for those who did not feel safe to gather in-person, or were unable to do so.

Burridge's wording, the participation of Alexander, and at least one bishop (other senior clerics were aware of the proceedings, although it is not entirely clear at what point from Burridge's account), merely serve to illustrate clerical impunity and privilege, when the laity were implicitly discouraged from a spontaneous equivalent practice of consuming their own bread and wine in front of a screen.⁶⁴ The report *British Ritual Innovation under COVID-19* published in September 2021 reflected broadly on religions and pandemic ritual but, with regard to the Church of England, it found:

For whatever reason, C of E clergy seem less aware of or attuned to the experiences that their worshippers have had during this pandemic than others. We would suggest that this experiential disconnect, even if mended by a resumption of 'ordinary,' in-person services, is likely to affect the relationship between C of E clergy and laity going forward.⁶⁵

This observation is backed up by McKenna's analysis of data from the *Coronavirus, Church & You* survey conducted by Village and Francis in 2020: lay people described the experience of having to watch clergy receive communion while they themselves were expected to make a spiritual communion as 'alienating', 'hurtful', or the cause of 'enormous resentment'.⁶⁶ I contend that the pandemic offered the scope for the

⁶⁴ Research conducted during the pandemic by Francis and Village asked clergy and laity whether it was 'right for people at home to receive communion from their own bread and wine as part of an online communion service'. They split respondents into Anglo-Catholic, Broad Church and Evangelical; responses obviously differed according to tradition, and laity were more in favour than clergy (the range of those agreeing with the statement went from 18% of Anglo-Catholic clergy to 62% of Evangelical laity) (Leslie J. Francis and Andrew Village, "This Blessed Sacrament of Unity? Holy Communion, the Pandemic, and the Church of England," *Journal of Empirical Theology* 34, no. 1 (2021): 92–93, Tables 2, 3. doi:10.1163/15709256–12341420). However, 12% of Anglo-Catholic laity, 12% of Broad Church, and 26% of Evangelicals had actually been invited to take communion at home with their own bread and wine (Francis and Village, "This Blessed Sacrament of Unity?" 97, Table 4).

⁶⁵ Joshua Edelman, et al., *British Ritual Innovation Under COVID-19*, Final report of the project Social Distance, Digital Congregation: British Ritual Innovation Under COVID-19 (BRIC-19), with Katja Stuerzenhofecker, et al. (Manchester Metropolitan University; University of Chester, 2021), 21. <https://bric19.mmu.ac.uk>.

⁶⁶ Ursula McKenna, "Adapting to and Assessing Online Worship: Listening to Rural Church of England Lay People," *Rural Theology* 20, no. 1 (2022): 9. doi:10.1080/14704994.2022.2048538. McKenna cites an article by Village and Francis on their findings, but does not give a citation for the source of her data. See Andrew Village and Leslie J. Francis, "Faith in Lockdown: Experiences of Rural

recovery of the ‘ascetic eucharists’ of bread and water which McGowan documents in early Christianity, as these elements are commonly ready to hand, and this reinvestiture for the duration of the restrictions on meetings would have given a sense of historical continuity, but also marked the anomalous nature of the celebration under abnormal circumstances.⁶⁷

2. Feasting, facing, and eating

Having considered differential access to sacraments and liturgical inhospitality, I now intend to revert to consideration of eucharistic hospitality through the lens of holistic spiritual feasting, which necessarily involves the transcendent, and so is focused on the sight of God, or the awareness of the presence of God in fellow feasters. In his book *Self and Salvation* David F. Ford delineates, in one magisterial sentence, a Christianity of en faced facial encounter, humility and hospitality:

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 in each human face, with all the faces in our heart related to the presence of the face of Christ; having an ethic of gentleness (*praütes*) 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, with endless surprises for both Christians and others.⁶⁸

Ford continues: ‘This salvation, or health, is about full hospitality and full worship. The facing is fulfilled in feasting’, and he qualifies this with the first of several cautions, ‘but for the joy of that celebration to be holy it needs to have come by way of sharing food with the hungry’.⁶⁹ I have earlier reflected on a *koinōnia* of enfacement in the early Christian community in the work of Pattison,⁷⁰ a hospitality of

Church of England Clergy and Laity During the Covid-19 Pandemic,” *Rural Theology* 18, no. 2 (2020): 79–86. doi:10.1080/14704994.2020.1818385.

⁶⁷ McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists*. Access to a bottle of wine should not be assumed, as cost and availability may prohibit some from taking part, even if it were permitted.

⁶⁸ Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 25.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Pattison, *Saving Face*, 110–11. See Chapter 2, section 4.3, pp. 115–16.

surprises in Koenig (and Ross),⁷¹ and the feeding of the hungry in Hoad.⁷² However, for Ford, facing God-ward must be understood as literally confrontational: ‘The story is of one who while facing his disciples commands a practice which will be continued in face to face meals and looks towards the ultimate confrontation when “he comes” (1. Cor. 11.26) or “it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God” (Luke.22.16) [sic]’.⁷³

Ford expands on his sense of the kingdom of God in relation to the eucharist: ‘a glorious ecology of blessing is the climactic vision of the Kingdom of God. . . . The eucharist generates a habitus of blessing and offers a hospitality which incorporates people and the material world by blessing’.⁷⁴ While emphasising the necessary obedience of the participant ‘eucharistic self’, Ford sees in the repeated occasion, ‘one’s ordinary life taken up into the drama of God’s hospitable participation in the world’.⁷⁵ He differs from Pattison in being more anamnestic and less prospective, calling for an ‘unrepressed sense of death through celebrating “the Lord’s death until he comes” ’.⁷⁶ From a visionary perspective, Winter speculates, as a Catholic, on the constitutive elements of life and an extensive eucharistic hospitality:

Life exists through processes that are similar to a meal. To nourish and be nourished, consume and be consumed, feed and be fed are fundamental to the universe. The fiery forces in outer space feed into the birth of new and expanding galaxies. Wind feeds and fans the flame, rain reinvigorates the barren ground, sunlight sustains vegetation, giving energy for seeds to form and flower in a cycle of life that never ends, vegetation sustains other species, and life within other species is maintained by feeding oneself and one another. The universe is really one gigantic sacramental meal, a cosmic eucharist. To those who have eyes to see it as such, signs and symbols abound, encouraging us to reconsider our own place and our own role at this universal table.⁷⁷

It is only the sheer illimitability of the food web and the hospitality that she conjures which sustains her comparison of the mundane, the galactic, and the mystic.⁷⁸ As a

⁷¹ Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 8. See Chapter 1, section 6.1, p. 83; Ross, “Pioneering Missiologies,” 27. See Chapter 1, p. 83 n. 215.

⁷² Hoad, “Open House in Luke’s Gospel and Today,” 44. See Chapter 2, section 5, p. 126.

⁷³ Ford, “What Happens in the Eucharist?” 366–67.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 376.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 379.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 381.

⁷⁷ Winter, *Eucharist with a Small ‘e’*, 125.

⁷⁸ She is not unique in her approach, although she is more lyrical and more explicit than Irwin, who proposes a post-Vatican II liturgical theology of the Eucharist comprising ten models, which all depend

charismatic evangelical, it is perhaps predictable that Stibbe's invitational hospitality should expand into a paradigm of revival, but for it to culminate not only with transformation of society, but also transformation 'of the environment, of the planet', is more unexpected.⁷⁹ Thus, within these spiritual perspectives of creation and redemption, hospitality is intrinsic to Life (not just human life).

Wirzba is more grounded in his views, but also sees the Eucharist as microcosmic participation, in his extension of hosting to the non-human world, and rejection of the careless consumption of foodstuffs without thanksgiving:

eaters of Jesus are invited to extend his ministries of attention and welcome, feeding and forgiving, and healing and reconciliation. These are ministries that require us to remember others and keep them in our hearts and minds. *Remembering Jesus*, in other words, *inspires us to remember others*. Eaters of Jesus thus become hosts to the world who consider, respect, and serve the integrity of those who co-abide with them.⁸⁰

This has some similarities with Probyn, who, despite concentrating on carnal appetites, makes the suggestion that eating 'can be a mundane exposition of the visceral nature of our connectedness and distance from each other, from ourselves and from our social environment'.⁸¹ Furthermore, Wirzba implies that listening needs to

upon his first model, the 'Cosmic Mass'. He writes that this model emphasises the ' "earthiness" of every act of liturgy', rather than a spiritualised sacrality as a retreat from the secular and profane, and he is clear that this vision of sacramental liturgy is 'not particular to Roman Catholicism' (Kevin W. Irwin, *Models of the Eucharist* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 39–66, here at 39–41). He clarifies his description thus: 'the use "cosmic" is meant to be a continual reminder that every act of liturgy—especially that of the Eucharist—is an expression and experience of that which is most sacred . . . through that which is most available to us (the things on and of this good earth)' (Irwin, *Models of the Eucharist*, 40). These perspectives provide support for my integration of the immediacy and the extensivity of hospitality, but they must be sharply differentiated from the superficially similar yearning expressed by Bruteau: 'I want to perceive Earth as a Eucharistic Planet, a Good Gift planet, which is structured as mutual feeding, as intimate self-sharing'; her intent is to divinise the planet and depersonalise God (Beatrice Bruteau, "Eucharistic Ecology and Ecological Spirituality," *Cross Currents* 40, no. 4, *Desire* (Winter 1990–91): 501, capitals in original. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24459780>). Morris bases her own Trinitarian ecclesiology on the use of the body of Christ metaphor in the Pauline epistles, in order to avoid pantheism, arguing that the Church's ability to give to God 'is, itself a gift from God', which is why her failure to consider gift-giving, as alluded to earlier, is the more surprising (Helen D. Morris, *Flexible Church*, 75, 83, here at 83). See *Background and reflections*, section 1.2, p. 25.

⁷⁹ Mark Stibbe and Andrew Williams, *Breakout: One Church's Amazing Story of Growth Through Mission-Shaped Communities* (Milton Keynes: Authentic, 2008), 233–37, here at 237.

⁸⁰ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 209, emphasis in original.

⁸¹ Elspeth Probyn, *Carnal Appetites: FoodSexIdentities* (London: Routledge, 2000), 13, cited in Anna Lavis, "Food Porn, Pro-Anorexia and the Viscerality of Virtual Affect: Exploring Eating in Cyberspace," *Geoforum* 84 (August 2017): 199. doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2015.05.014.

extend to creation, and intimates that if we silence the psalmic praise of the non-human created order, then it will witness against us for our mismanagement of the earth's resources.⁸² For Wirzba, 'eating is a sharing in the primordial, eternal hospitality that is a mark of God's Triune life',⁸³ and these themes of hospitality and divine identity can be seen as reiterating themes from previous chapters of the interplay between commensality and communion. He is drawn to wonder:

Would it go too far to suggest that in our eating we have the invitation and the opportunity to learn the art of Trinitarian donation? Though the eating characteristic of creaturely life is hardly a perfect realization of Triune giving and receiving, eating may nonetheless be one of our most practical entry points into what the full measure of life is all about.⁸⁴

His unexpected question offers another perspective on the perichoretic hospitality of Chapter 3, and disrupts the short-sighted cultural contingency identified by Kilby in her critique of accounts of the social Trinity.⁸⁵ Wirzba unites the early Church and creation in a definition of hospitality as supreme care and realisation of God-given life and identity:

In this account [Acts 2:42] we can see that breaking bread together is far more than a fueling event. It can be a radical, prophetic act of hospitality that is founded upon God's primordial and sustaining hospitality whereby the whole world is created, nurtured, and given the freedom to be itself.⁸⁶

His sentiments echo those of McDowell on Eucharistic 'feasting in the future of God', wherein David F. Ford's 'radical' activity of the Holy Spirit 'in a world plagued by multiple hungers and ir-respons-ible satieties', has been conjoined with Schmemmann's vision that 'the whole creation becomes what it always was to be and yet failed to be'.⁸⁷ Wells writes similarly to Wirzba, but from a solely human perspective, on

⁸² Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 229, 229 n. 73.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 291.

⁸⁵ Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection."

⁸⁶ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 220.

⁸⁷ David F. Ford, "What Happens in the Eucharist?" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 48, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 365. doi:10.1017/S0036930600036802, cited in John C. McDowell, *Theology and the Globalized Present: Feasting in the Future of God*, Dispatches (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 2019), 116. doi:10.2307/j.ctv9b2wp8; Alexander Schmemmann, *The World as Sacrament* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 44, cited in McDowell, *Theology and the Globalized Present*, 116, emphasis in original.

Communion and communion, and of the duly forgiven, reconciled, and instructed, gathered church:

God's purpose has been fully communicated to his people and it has been fully embodied in their life. The veil between earth and heaven is being drawn aside, and the simple actions of sharing food anticipate the beautiful simplicity of life with God forever. This is a moment of revelation, for the true life of the saints is 'hidden with Christ in God' (Colossians 3:3), and now it is made plain. Christ is being revealed through the taking, breaking and sharing of bread and wine, and 'When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory' (Colossians 3:4).⁸⁸

The preceding perspectives all serve to illustrate the centrality of hospitality in the economy of God, and the meal as telos, further demonstrating the relevance of this enquiry, and the need for a fuller exposition of hospitality in the life and mission of the Church of England. Moving away from the awestruck and grateful communicant, I will now consider selfish eating.

2.1. Sacred and secular savouring

Christian eating, whether meal or liturgy, proclaims an alternative regime of ingestion and consumption through re-minding, sensory regulation, recollection and prospective celebration, and does not forget gratitude, or redistribution. It is precisely because the shared meals of the early Christians do not equate with Claude Grignon's present day 'segregative commensality' of secretive, exclusive indulgence, whereby a 'group shows itself so freely to itself only because it is out of sight of strangers – what part of the memorable pleasure that the participants get from the meeting is due to the feeling of the deprivation of the "others" (who do not even know "what they are missing")',⁸⁹ that those believers experienced *koinōnia*. With regard to unawareness

⁸⁸ Samuel Wells, *God's Companions: Reimagining Christian Ethics*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 197.

⁸⁹ Claude Grignon, "Commensality and Social Morphology: An Essay of Typology," in *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe Since the Middle Ages*, ed. Peter Scholliers, trans. Martin Bruegel and Michael Visser (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 29. The parties that went on in Downing Street during the pandemic in breach of the laws then in force on social distancing, many taking place even as people were prohibited from attending funerals, or visiting dying relatives, and social gatherings were banned, are a case in point. The Metropolitan Police has issued fixed penalty notices with regard to a 'bring your own booze' garden party, a 56th birthday party for the Prime Minister, a karaoke party, and a Christmas cheese and wine party, among others. See Martin Evans and Ben Riley-Smith, "Downing Street is the Most Fined Address in the Country for Covid Breaches." *Daily Telegraph*, 12 May 2022, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2022/05/12/fresh-partygate-fines->

of deprivation, feminist geographers Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy investigate the intersection of the materiality of food and ideology, and discuss how proponents of Slow Food, or indeed oppressed groups, might find ‘ways of motivating new *visceral* political imaginaries that engage not just intellectual but also corporeal, molecular commitment to food alternatives’, so as to recognise there are alternatives to the corporate-industrial food system.⁹⁰ Accordingly they argue for a reclamation of taste through resistance, mobilisation, and interdisciplinarity,⁹¹ which can be compared with the observations of Goodman, Johnston, and Cairns, in their overview of the intersection of capitalism and mediated food landscapes, food as ‘eater-tainment’, and the production of a ‘visceral’ biopolitics from the discourses around the regulation of eating.⁹² Hence, the foregoing focus of Christian eating and hospitality on immanent sociality, ecological awareness, meeting need, and transcendent relationality can be seen as disengaging church feasting from performative eating and alienated food.

In her thesis on the Slow Food movement, Bentia explores the training of taste and attention, and she comes up with the phrase ‘sensory pageantry’ to mean ‘a pattern of sensuous perceptual activity which lends the relation between people and food an agentive character through heightened forms of stimulation’.⁹³ Her eagerness

met-police-downing-street-parties/. The official report by senior civil servant Sue Gray supplies extracts from the regulations and guidance in force on the relevant date, and appends an account of each gathering, using excerpts from emails, WhatsApp messages, and photographs as evidence; there are repeated mentions of excessive alcohol consumption, but it is the verbatim message from the then Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, Martin Reynolds, to a special advisor, after the infamous garden party, which best illustrates my contention: ‘ “Best of luck – a complete non story [sic] but better than them focusing on our drinks (which we seem to have got away with).” ’ (Sue Gray, *Findings of Second Permanent Secretary’s Investigation Into Alleged Gatherings on Government Premises During Covid Restrictions*, 25 May 2022 (London: Cabinet Office), 13, 16, 31, 35, here at 13. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1078404/2022-05-](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1078404/2022-05-25_FINAL_FINDINGS_OF_SECOND_PERMANENT_SECRETARY_INTO_ALLEGED_GATHERINGS.pdf)

25_FINAL_FINDINGS_OF_SECOND_PERMANENT_SECRETARY_INTO_ALLEGED_GATHERINGS.pdf).

⁹⁰ Allison Hayes-Conroy and Jessica Hayes-Conroy, “Taking Back Taste: Feminism, Food and Visceral Politics,” *Gender, Place and Culture* 15, no. 5 (2008): 468, emphasis in original.

doi:10.1080/09663690802300803.

⁹¹ See Chapter 7, section 2.2 for a discussion of food practices and food-production.

⁹² Michael K. Goodman, Josée Johnston, and Kate Cairns, “Editorial,” *Geoforum* 84, *Food, Media And Space: The Mediated Biopolitics of Eating*, themed issue (August 2017): 161–68.

doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2017.06.017.

⁹³ Daniela C. Bentia, “Training Tastes: A Relational Approach to Food, Taste, and the Senses,” PhD thesis (Lancaster University, 2010), 99–100.

to claim significance through a neologism leads to an incoherence between the essential simplicity of Slow Food and the elaborateness of pageantry. Nevertheless, Wirzba cherishes delight in his defence of the conviviality of Slow Food against recurrent charges of elitism.⁹⁴ However, Brabazon rightly sees Slow Food as ‘a symptom and a proxy for our need to address – rather than market and fetishize – the injustices in the international food regime’.⁹⁵ But, there remains an essential spiritual difference between elaborated eating and the humble thankfulness and acknowledgement of ecological interdependence advocated by Wirzba. In his journalistic take on the commercialisation of food-based mass-gatherings, and the adulation of celebrity chefs, Poole draws an analogy between food-culture and the culture of rock music in the coinage ‘festival’,⁹⁶ thus showing how the derivation of festival from the Latin *festus* (feast) has been obscured. Such commercialised diversity notwithstanding, Ford is inclusive in his theological defence of embodied enjoyment through food traditions and bodily practices: ‘Anything that heals and enhances savouring the world through our senses may feed into a salvation that culminates in feasting’.⁹⁷ His promotion of sensorial savouring can be contrasted with Lavis’ exploration of so-called ‘food porn’ and eating in cyberspace, wherein she quotes Gohar who describes food porn as ‘salvation for those hungry at their desks’.⁹⁸ Hence the ‘linguistic and corporeal slippage from “salvation” to “satiating”’ outlined by Lavis, as the imaginings of ‘salivating bodies’ substitute for actual ingestion and fullness.⁹⁹ So having moved from sensuality to deprivation, and thence from eating to inanition, I now intend to consider digital food further.

⁹⁴ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 243–45.

⁹⁵ Tara Brabazon, “Time for Timbits? Fast Food, Slow Food, Class and Culinary Communication,” *Fast Capitalism* 10, no. 1 (2013): 33. doi:10.32855/fcapital.201301.003.

⁹⁶ Steven Poole, “Let’s Start the Foodie Backlash,” *The Guardian*, Friday 28 September 2012. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/sep/28/lets-start-foodie-backlash>.

⁹⁷ Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 267.

⁹⁸ Laila Gohar, “Top 5: Food Porn Specialists,” subtitle. Food Republic (website), 14 November 2011, <https://www.foodrepublic.com/2011/11/14/top-5-food-porn-specialists>, cited in Lavis, “Food Porn,” 207.

⁹⁹ Lavis, “Food Porn,” 201.

Any discussion of the sensory, particularly when written during a pandemic, needs to consider internet connectivity: the debates which arose about online consecration and synchronised self-service communion were alluded to earlier,¹⁰⁰ but the differences between online and offline Church will be considered in Chapter 7. In discussing virtuality, materiality and eschatology in 2002, Ward pointed out the essential amorality of cyberspace in its perpetuation of the social inequalities hidden behind ‘infinite, frictionless surfing through light’.¹⁰¹ Quoting the poet Yeats, he sees it as providing ‘an artifice of eternity’, which he termed ‘virtuality without virtue’.¹⁰² Such streamlined encounter and the concealment of digital exclusion can be contrasted with, on the one hand, the quest to levitate food acoustically for ‘entertainment’ and to promote ‘wellbeing’,¹⁰³ when on the other hand, increasing numbers of people in the United Kingdom have to rely routinely on foodbanks for unsuspected basic foodstuffs.¹⁰⁴ The intensified reality within the multisensorial experience of eating advanced by both Pattison and Ford, and implied in Isaiah 25:6–8, as discussed at length in Chapter 2, comes from divine encounter, not a human-computer interface, but I discuss the screen as portal in Chapter 7. In their description

¹⁰⁰ See section 1.2.

¹⁰¹ Graham Ward, “Between Virtue and Virtuality,” *Theology Today* 59, no. 1 (April 2002): 65. doi:10.1177/004057360205900105.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 65, 66.

¹⁰³ Chi Thanh Vi, et al., “LeviSense: A Platform for the Multisensory Integration in Levitating Food and Insights Into Its Effect on Flavour Perception,” *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies* 139 (July 2020): 12. doi:10.1016/j.ijhcs.2020.102428.

¹⁰⁴ The Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) has calculated that there are at least 2,565 Trussell Trust and independent food banks operating in the UK, a figure which does not include food banks ‘run from Salvation Army centres or food banks run from schools, universities or hospitals. In addition, we estimate that there are more than 3,500 independent food aid providers operating outside of the food bank model’ (IFAN, “Mapping the UK’s Independent Food Banks,” paras. 3, 4, bold omitted. Accessed 5 March 2022, <https://www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/independent-food-banks-map>). In research for the House of Commons reflecting the impact of the pandemic, IFAN reported a ‘175% increase in the number of food parcels distributed by independent food banks across the UK comparing April 2019 to April 2020’ (Gloria Tyler, *Food Banks in the UK*, Briefing paper, Number 8585, 14 July 2021 (London: House of Commons Library, 2021), 12. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8939.pdf>). Similarly, for the same period, the Trussell Trust reported a ‘107% increase in the number of children needing support from a food bank’ (Tyler, *Food Banks in the UK*, 11). It should be noted that the Trussell Trust and some other providers operate a referral or voucher system, which may deter some potential recipients, and there may be restrictions on repeated use, so these figures are not an accurate reflection of the extent of the need (Tyler, *Food Banks in the UK*, 18–19).

of ‘visual hunger’ in a digital world, Spence et al. consider the physiological and behavioural elicitation of ‘eating with our eyes’.¹⁰⁵ To utilise Adema’s words on television cookery, this is ‘vicarious consumption’ by ‘food voyeurs’,¹⁰⁶ but such optic insatiability is at variance with the facial engagement of the gathered early believers depicted by Pattison. Therefore, his intercepted gaze should be distinguished from the asymmetry implicit in MacDougall’s concern about online Communion services during the pandemic threatening to overturn the ‘liturgical reforms that ended the practice of ocular communion because it disempowers the laity and insults the priesthood of all believers’.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, medieval avidity for efficacious ritual can fruitfully be compared with the digitally-absorbed in their craving for online connection, and I will conclude this section with a consideration of food and digital attention.

In 2019 Spence, Mancini, and Huisman investigated ‘digital commensality’, or ‘eating in the company of technology’: digitally-mediated dining ranges from generic ‘tele-dining’ or platform-specific ‘Skeating’ (both equally infelicitous terms), to the trend in Asia for watching, or emulating, the Korean phenomenon of Mukbang, or broadcast (binge-)eating.¹⁰⁸ In addition to digitally-facilitated eating, there are also the screen-engrossed who, as distracted digital diners,¹⁰⁹ can once more be contrasted with Pattison’s sensorily-engaged believers experiencing spiritual revelation.

Revelation afforded by engaged self-giving is also evoked by Moltmann:

*The presence of eternity comes about in the wholly and entirely lived moment through undivided presence in the present. If I am wholly there – if I give myself wholly – if I expose myself wholly – if I am able to linger wholly – then I experience present eternity.*¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Charles Spence, et al., “Eating with Our Eyes: From Visual Hunger to Digital Satiation,” *Brain and Cognition* 110 (December 2016): 53–58. doi:10.1016/j.bandc.2015.08.006.

¹⁰⁶ Pauline Adema, “Vicarious Consumption: Food, Television and the Ambiguity of Modernity,” *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures* 23, no. 3 (Fall 2000): title, 116.

¹⁰⁷ MacDougall, “Common Discernment About Common Prayer During Lockdown,” para. 14.

¹⁰⁸ Charles Spence, Maurizio Mancini, and Gijs Huisman, “Digital Commensality: Eating and Drinking in the Company of Technology,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (2019): 2, 2, fig. 1. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02252.

¹⁰⁹ See Spence, Mancini, and Huisman, “Digital Commensality”.

¹¹⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1996), 291, emphasis in original.

Moltmann resists the routinisation of encounter through attentiveness, and this can usefully be considered in conjunction with the earlier discussion of the Slow Food movement, which rejects commercialisation and seeks to enrich the experience of food and dining. I will now consider attentive listening and self-exposure through storytelling.

3. Life stories

Having taken food and divine revelation from the first century to the twenty-first, and from the table, to the environment, and the cosmos, with a detour through the excesses and the ethereality of the worldwide web, I now make the shift to another form of orality with the story. Jesus often taught through stories, and the hearing, and bearing of stories is a necessary part of the hospitable inclusion advocated in Chapter 3, as is so poignantly illustrated by John Killick, whose work will be discussed subsequently. Stories are an element of hospitable welcome, and so figuratively cross the threshold of personhood, in their representations of self and others. For instance, Kearney writes on the importance of stories for identity and social engagement:

our life becomes an answer to the question, ‘who?’ – usually addressed to us by another – in so far as we tell our life-story to ourselves and to others. This telling furnishes each of us with a sense of being a ‘subject’ capable of acting and committing ourselves to others.¹¹¹

Accordingly, I will explore stories as revelations of agency and identity, and as a means of achieving political representation. Gerdson addresses the context for stories, and quotes the poet Pádraig Ó Tuama, before musing on spacious hospitality, exposure, and interdependence:

‘It is in the shelter of each other that the people live. It is also in the shadow of each other that the people live’ . . . Sharing a meal in someone’s home, asking questions and *really* listening for the heartfelt response, being unafraid of discomfort, silence, or pain. Radical hospitality means whoever you are there is space. It is about presence and listening, noticing and invitation. It asks us to keep opening ourselves a little wider and at the same time drawing closer. Shadow and shelter, we need each other.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Richard Kearney, *On Stories*, Thinking in Action (London: Routledge, 2002), 151.

¹¹² Jane Gerdson, “Hospitality in the Shelter and the Shadow: Church as a Place of Radical Hospitality

Catholic priest Henri Nouwen stresses that ‘every human being is called upon to be a healer’, and he relates this to listening to the stories of strangers.¹¹³ For him, healing means firstly, ‘allowing strangers to become sensitive and obedient to their own stories’:

In the telling of their stories, strangers befriend not only their host but also their own past. So healing is the receiving and full understanding of the story so that strangers can recognize in the eyes of their host their own unique way that leads them to the present and suggests the direction in which to go.¹¹⁴

For Nouwen listening is vocational for listener, and ultimately for the guest, but Ashworth critiques Nouwen, and others, for writing from the dominant position of host,¹¹⁵ despite Nouwen’s declaration of a universal commission. Pohl explains the consequences of unexamined status:

The normative practice of hospitality, which in addition to providing food and shelter to strangers also includes recognition, community, and the possibility of transcending social difference, requires hosts who are in some way marginal to prevailing social structures and meanings. Without this marginal dimension, the relation between hosts and guests often serves the more conservative function of reinforcing existing social relations and hierarchies.¹¹⁶

Furthermore, Gittins critiques the notion of ‘extending’ hospitality in mission as a self-centred retention of power and control: ‘It is in the role of outsider, recipient, listener and itinerant, quite as much as from the position of the insider, donor, speaker and settler, that Jesus creates and undertakes his ministry, and commissions others to do likewise’.¹¹⁷ Writing on the missionary and conversion, but in a statement with general application, Gittins cautions against any sense of superior wisdom:

We are sent, moreover, to be in relation (*communio, koinonia*) with people who are not merely receptive ears and willing re-actors, but speakers of words of life and conversations, capable initiators

and Community Dialogue,” final para., ellipsis and emphasis in original. *Earth & Altar*, posted 27 May 2020, <https://earthandaltarmag.com/posts/hospitality-in-the-shelter-and-the-shadow-church-as-a-place-of-radical-hospitality-and-community-dialogue>.

¹¹³ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 86.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹¹⁵ H. Mark Ashworth, “Hospitality as an Informing Image for the Christian Community,” 5–7.

¹¹⁶ Christine D. Pohl, “Hospitality from the Edge: The Significance of Marginality in the Practice of Welcome,” *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 15 (1995): 124.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23559674>.

¹¹⁷ Gittins, “Beyond Hospitality?” 398, 400.

themselves, and ultimately agents under God, of our own ongoing conversion.¹¹⁸

Given such reciprocity, Ruddick similarly concludes that ‘the vulnerability of encounter’ is destabilising and ‘prevents paternalism’: ‘In this way it offers the hope of creating genuine community cohesion in which the personhood of each individual is affirmed while the challenge of difference enables us all to change’.¹¹⁹

From a subaltern position, Betcher describes how the disabled and their ‘socially abjected bodies’ are frequently cast in the involuntary role of confessor to a culture which denies mortality.¹²⁰ This maps onto Jones’ formulation of the body in medicine and culture as ‘specimen and spectacle’.¹²¹ As a woman with an acquired disability, Betcher speculates about being the object for the vicarious rehearsal of story: ‘Does that offensive gaze also, underneath it all, ask the question, How do you do it?’¹²² She suggests that ‘the wisdom of an abject authority’ enables the onlooker to ‘try on’ a superimposed narrative.¹²³ Her perspective can be compared with Swinton’s characterisation of stigma as ‘a way of stealing someone’s story and forcing them to accept a false identity’.¹²⁴ Thus, having discovered the story as a bridge to a healing understanding and the disabling story, I will now consider how these intersect in the experience of dementia, as a means of presenting storytelling as more than anecdote,

¹¹⁸ Gittins, “Beyond Hospitality?” 399. In a footnote, he references Orlando Costas, “Conversion as a Complex Experience: A Personal Case Study,” in *Down to Earth: Studies in Christianity and Culture*, Papers of the Lausanne Consultation on Gospel and Culture, ed. Robert B. Coote and John R. W. Stott (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1980) and Anthony Gittins, *Bread for the Journey: The Mission of Transformation and the Transformation of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 36–52. A 2022 report on lay church planters identifies how hospitality underlies this interdependence: ‘the lone planter benefits from their solitary position. Their reliance on the Lord and the hospitality of the local community, allows them to form a new worshipping community that is authentic and contextualised’ (Myriad, *Listening to the Voice of the Lay Planters*, January 2022 (London: Centre for Church Multiplication), 38).

¹¹⁹ Anna Ruddick, *From the Ground up: Creating Community Cohesion Through Incarnational Mission*, Temple Tracts: Issue 1, vol. 3 (William Temple Foundation, 2017), 24.
<https://williamtemplefoundation.org.uk/temple-tracts/>.

¹²⁰ Betcher, *Spirit and the Politics of Disablement*, 87, 90–91.

¹²¹ Nora L. Jones, “Embodied Ethics: From the Body as Specimen and Spectacle to the Body as Patient,” in *A Companion to the Anthropology of the Body and Embodiment*, ed. Frances Mascia-Less, Blackwell Companions to Anthropology (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), title.

¹²² Betcher, *Spirit and the Politics of Disablement*, 93.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Swinton, “From Inclusion to Belonging,” 176.

or superfluous activity, but as a deeply creative spiritual practice, integral to life, not merely hospitality.

3.1. Stories, reality, and the storied self

Countering Platonic metaphysics, Kevern evolves a definition of personhood in dementia as ‘the story of a life lived in history. In other words, the “person” is constituted and communicated not as some faculty of self-awareness, but as a narrative in which choices made in the past have consequences in the future’.¹²⁵ This formulation is amply illustrated by Stokes: he relates how a characteristic act of sympathetic generosity vindicated a man when his capacity to write a valid will was brought into question after his death.¹²⁶ However, a self consequent on choice, still privileges the pre-existent ability to choose without taking into account structural restrictions which may exist.¹²⁷ Spirituality is also acknowledged as an important element of life story work,¹²⁸ and can be broadly defined by as ‘the search for that which gives zest, energy, meaning and identity to a person’s life, in relation to all other people, and to the wider world’.¹²⁹ This quest can be contrasted with Randall’s proposal of resilience in older age as ‘a function of narrative openness’: ‘It’s a

¹²⁵ Peter Kevern, “Sharing the Mind of Christ: Preliminary Thoughts on Dementia and the Cross,” *New Blackfriars* 91, no. 1034 (July 2010): 419. doi:10.1111/j.1741-2005.2009.01317.x.

¹²⁶ Graham Stokes, “A Man and His Legacy,” in *And Still the Music Plays: Stories of Hearing the Person with Dementia*, by Graham Stokes (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2011), 20–35.

¹²⁷ For example, early-onset dementia can occur in people with Down’s syndrome who have a chromosomal trisomy. See Eleonore Bayen [sic], et al., “Prevalence of Aging, Dementia, and Multimorbidity in Older Adults with Down Syndrome,” *JAMA Neurology* 75, no. 11 (November 2018): 1399–1406. doi:10.1001/jamaneurol.2018.2210. Their opportunity to exercise prior choice may therefore have been limited by social or environmental factors because of the nature of societal provision for people with learning disabilities. Young and Garrard cite Atkinson et al. to draw attention to the fragmented and unrecorded nature of the lives of people with learning disabilities, and so lack of continuity may also be a limiting factor. See Dorothy Atkinson, Mark Jackson, and Jan Walmsley, *Forgotten Lives: Exploring the History of Learning Disability* (Kidderminster: BILD, 1997), cited in Hannah Young and Brenda Garrard, “Bereavement and Loss: Developing a Memory Box to Support a Young Woman with Profound Learning Disabilities,” *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 44, no. 1 (March 2016): 83. doi:10.1111/bld.12129.

¹²⁸ Life story work is not exclusive to people with dementia but has been used widely. See Bob Woods and Ponnusamy Subramaniam, “The Evidence Base for Life Story Work So Far,” in *Life Story Work with People with Dementia: Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary People*, ed. Polly Kaiser and Ruth Eley (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017), 83–94.

¹²⁹ Alison Froggatt and Laraine Moffitt, “Spiritual Needs and Religious Practice in Dementia Care,” in *State of the Art in Dementia Care*, ed. Mary Marshall (London: Centre for Policy on Ageing, 1997), 225.

function of *a good strong story*, a story of oneself and one's world that has a healthy strain of irony running through it'.¹³⁰ His construction is problematic, because it implies a universal value to a philosophy of distanced observation, which he tries to soften with the phrase 'affectionate detachment',¹³¹ whilst also assuming that strength, however conceived,¹³² is a desirable quality. By contrast, MacKinlay frames humour more positively as a means to achieve self-transcendence in later life.¹³³ Moreover, MacKinlay and Brain use Paul's analogy of treasure in clay vessels (2 Cor. 4:7) to propose stories as a means of exchanging a wisdom of weakness between the generations,¹³⁴ which further extends Kevern's historied self, and supplements discussion of personhood from Chapter 3.

From stories and existential meaning, I turn to meaning-making through stories. Adopting Morton's illuminating phrase, Nakashima Brock alludes to the finding of meaning as being overtaken by 'fantastic coherence': 'our experience pivots into coherence from incoherence, such insight arrives as a gift, a breakthrough erupting from heretofore scattered fragments under the power of new connections, both to ourselves and to others'.¹³⁵ There is a stark contrast between such associative felicity, and those with dementia who are 'narratively dispossessed' by an insistence on linear storylines,¹³⁶ and I will now look at strategies to capture the threads of story. Baldwin relates the dangerous consequences when 'narrative dispossession' is

¹³⁰ William L. Randall, "The Importance of Being Ironic: Narrative Openness and Personal Resilience in Later Life," *The Gerontologist* 53, no. 1 (February 2012): 9, emphasis in original.

doi:10.1093/geront/gns048.

¹³¹ Ibid., 10.

¹³² Ibid., 13.

¹³³ Elizabeth MacKinlay, "Humour: A Way to Transcendence in Later Life?" *Journal of Religious Gerontology* 16, no. 3/4 (2004): 43–58. doi:10.1300/J078v16n03_04.

¹³⁴ Elizabeth MacKinlay and Matthew Brain, "Treasure in Jars of Clay: The Promise of Weakness as Point of Contact Between the Generations," *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging* 26, no. 2–3 (2014): 136–47. doi:10.1080/15528030.2013.823586.

¹³⁵ Rita Nakashima Brock, "Living It Out: Fantastic Coherence," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 155. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25002526>.

¹³⁶ Clive Baldwin, "The Narrative Dispossession of People Living with Dementia: Thinking About the Theory and Method of Narrative," in *Narrative, Memory & Knowledge: Representations, Aesthetics, Contexts*, Papers presented at the 'Narrative, Memory and Life Transitions' Conference, University of Huddersfield, April 2001, ed. Kate Milnes, et al. (Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield, 2006), 101–9. <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/4907/>.

confronted by ‘narrative illiteracy’.¹³⁷ For him, ‘narrative agency’ is part of shaping an emergent plot in a values-driven process of defining life trajectory after a diagnosis of dementia.¹³⁸ Thus, self-told stories interlink with those of others, organisations and meta-narratives in a ‘narrative web’; stories are superimposed, selectively re-told, or submerged as some narratives are privileged,¹³⁹ but ‘narrative literacy’ in sensitive hearers produces a quilted narrative where ‘narrative is the very essence of the quilt’.¹⁴⁰ This sense of crafting narrative comes to the fore again in an example of a story-stimulus given by Buse and Twigg, who show how texture, fabric, and clothing, whether kept or discarded, can ‘materialise’ a biography and enable continuity of identity.¹⁴¹ The place of ‘mundane creativity’, seen in humour, or neologisms as a means of surmounting word-finding difficulties, is emphasised by Bellass et al.¹⁴²

Despite such collaborative storying, Kitwood and Bredin caution against the false assumption of an objective ‘reality’, which invalidates the experiences of those who are cognitively challenged, and they show instead how differing priorities direct our attention.¹⁴³ Later in the same book they commend attention to the feelings behind the ‘reality’ of hallucinations and delusions.¹⁴⁴ As a professional storyteller, Kotai-Ewers frames this process as ‘embracing the irrational’ and venturing into the

¹³⁷ Citing himself in Clive Baldwin, “Narrative, Supportive Care, and Dementia: A Preliminary Exploration,” in *Supportive Care for the Person with Dementia*, ed. Julian Hughes, Mari Lloyd-Williams, and Greg Sachs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 247. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199554133.003.0026. Baldwin references the conference paper cited in published form in n. 136 above. The phrase ‘narrative illiteracy’ does not appear in the published version.

¹³⁸ Baldwin, “Narrative, Supportive Care, and Dementia,” 249.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 250.

¹⁴⁰ Baldwin, “Narrative, Supportive Care, and Dementia,” 252; Linda A. Moore and Boyd Davis, “Quilting Narrative: Using Repetition Techniques to Help Elderly Communicators,” *Geriatric Nursing* 23, no. 5 (September-October 2002): 262–66. doi:10.1067/mgn.2002.128786; Jayne Clapton, *A Transformatory Ethic of Inclusion: Rupturing Concepts of Disability and Inclusion* (Boston, MA: Sense Publishers, 2009), 31 n. 140.

¹⁴¹ Christina Buse and Julia Twigg, “Materialising Memories: Exploring the Stories of People with Dementia Through Dress,” *Ageing & Society* 36, no. 6 (July 2016): 1115–35. doi:10.1017/S0144686X15000185.

¹⁴² Sue Bellass, et al., “Broadening the Debate on Creativity and Dementia: A Critical Approach,” *Dementia* 18, no. 7–8 (November 2019): 2801. doi:10.1177/1471301218760906.

¹⁴³ Tom Kitwood and Kathleen Bredin, *Person to Person: A Guide to the Care of Those with Failing Mental Powers*, 2nd ed. (Loughton: Gale Centre Publications, 1992), 16–17.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 50–51.

‘labyrinth of story’.¹⁴⁵ Crisp argues, insightfully, for the realisation that for the person with dementia ‘past and present, fact and fantasy tend to get jumbled up together, much as happens in dreams, and yet — again, just as in dreams — can seem completely real’, and she suggests that thinking of their stories as ‘waking dreams’ may help make them seem ‘less strange and even suggest ways of understanding them better’.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, Kitwood calls for ‘a kind of poetic awareness; that is to look for the significance of metaphor and allusion rather than pursuing meaning with a kind of relentless tunnel vision’.¹⁴⁷ Less positively, in a book seeking to re-imagine dementia, Hydén writes of the ‘broken’ stories in which listeners become ‘*entangled*’;¹⁴⁸ his description duplicates the characteristic brain-changes of amyloid plaques and neurofibrillary tangles (whether consciously or not). By thus succumbing to pathetic fallacy, he stigmatises the person with dementia, even as he supposedly advocates storytelling as a ‘relevant’ activity.¹⁴⁹

3.2. The power of stories

Given the otherwise remorseless stress on logic and presence, there is an element of self-excusing hypocrisy in the process identified by Kitwood and Bredin, of distancing those with dementia who ‘very largely live in the present’, from ‘us’ in our distractibility.¹⁵⁰ Such pervasive cognitive dissonance makes dementia a difficult topic to confront. Moreover, John Killick has shown through his work of listening and transcription of the words of those with the condition that awareness can be painful for them.¹⁵¹ He subsequently acknowledged the toll that the holding and recording of

¹⁴⁵ Trisha Kotai-Ewers, “Story Matters in Dementia Care,” in *Creative Approaches in Dementia Care*, ed. Hilary Lee and Trevor Adams (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 169–70.

¹⁴⁶ Jane Crisp, “Making Sense of the Stories That People with Alzheimer’s Tell: A Journey with My Mother,” *Nursing Inquiry* 2, no. 3 (September 1995): 133. doi:10.1111/j.1440-1800.1995.tb00163.x.

¹⁴⁷ Tom Kitwood, “Psychotherapy and Dementia,” *Newsletter of the Psychotherapy Section of the British Psychological Society*, no. 8 (1990): 51, cited in Malcolm Goldsmith, *Hearing the Voice of People with Dementia: Opportunities and Obstacles* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2002), 78.

¹⁴⁸ Lars-Christer Hydén, *Entangled Narratives: Collaborative Storytelling and the Re-Imagining of Dementia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 5, emphasis in original. doi:10.1093/oso/9780199391578.001.0001.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵⁰ Tom Kitwood and Kathleen Bredin, “Towards a Theory of Dementia Care: Personhood and Well-Being,” *Ageing & Society* 12, no. 3 (September 1992): 273–74. doi:10.1017/S0144686X0000502X.

¹⁵¹ John Killick and Claire Craig, *Creativity and Communication in Persons with Dementia: A Practical Guide* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2012), 46–47. Here Killick comments on

unresolved memories and feelings had on him.¹⁵² Nevertheless, Karen MacKinlay in her article on listening to people with dementia, relates how she was told by a woman with dementia that being listened to made her ‘feel more human’.¹⁵³ Furthermore, Kitwood offers reassurance to those eliciting stories:

As we discover the person who has dementia we also discover something of ourselves. For what we ultimately have to offer is not technical expertise but ordinary faculties raised to a higher level; our power to feel, to give, to stand in the shoes of another through the use of our imagination.¹⁵⁴

Such empathic projection and extension of the self is to be distinguished from the self-centred repudiation of cultural norms evinced by Everett and discussed in Chapter 3.¹⁵⁵ Composer and academic June Boyce-Tillman uses a performance piece to contrast the willing repetition of motherese in language-acquisition, with how repetition is begrudged in the face of memory loss,¹⁵⁶ so much depends on the interlocutor. The members of the Bristol Collaborative Writing Group achieve a sympathetic visual representation of memory loss in a poignant collaborative piece which claims the persistence of story. They evoke ‘memory and forgettory’¹⁵⁷ by interspersing their prose and poetry with elongated repetitions of consonants and vowels which mimic the struggle to capture elusive thoughts:

‘rrreemmemmbbbberrriiiiinnnggggffffoorrrrggeettiiinnngg’;¹⁵⁸ variants of this distorted syllable salad recur at intervals in the text, including the truncated ‘Rrreemmbberrngforgettiinng’, where syllabic omission tells its own tale.¹⁵⁹ The

samples of transcription poetry which use the words of those with dementia. He has produced several compilations published by Hawker: *You are Words* (1997) and *Openings* (2000).

¹⁵² Killick and Allan, *Communication and the Care of People with Dementia*, 301.

¹⁵³ Karen MacKinlay, “Listening to People with Dementia,” 91, abstract.

¹⁵⁴ Tom Kitwood, “Discover the Person not the Disease,” *Journal of Dementia Care* 1, no. 1 (November/December 1993): 17.

¹⁵⁵ Debbie Everett, *Forget Me Not: The Spiritual Care of People with Alzheimer’s Disease* (Edmonton, Alta: Inkwell Press, 1996), 167, cited in Killick and Allan, *Communication and the Care of People with Dementia*, 38. See Chapter 3, section 1.1, p. 135.

¹⁵⁶ June Boyce-Tillman, “When I Grow Down – Music, Spirituality and Memory Loss: A Performative Lecture on Aging,” *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging* 31, no. 2 (2019): 224. doi:10.1080/15528030.2018.1550734.

¹⁵⁷ Viv Martin, Nell Bridges, et al., “Remembering and Forgetting with Sue: Some Stories of Hanging on in There,” *Emotion, Space and Society* 4, no. 2 (May 2011): 122. doi:10.1016/j.emospa.2011.02.001.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

concluding sentence of the article defiantly asserts that stories are ‘there’ regardless of the ability to remember them.¹⁶⁰

Alienation from the stories that are told can arise just as much in the lives of people with learning disabilities, as in dementia. Swinton et al. alert their readers that people with ‘profound intellectual disabilities can easily become the victims of constructions of their stories that they do not own’,¹⁶¹ and they conceive of the theological possibilities of the ‘counterstory’ to challenge dominant narratives.¹⁶² Even so, Harshaw asks trenchantly, of a non-verbal man with learning disabilities, known only through the tender, but secondary report of his mother: ‘Who owns the copyright to Brian?’¹⁶³ Challengingly, even to my thesis, which relies on previously published material, Donnison proposes representation within policy debates as vital: ‘When people tell their own stories they begin to gain some control over the use made of their pain and are less likely to be treated as case studies in someone else’s news story or research report’.¹⁶⁴ An alternative form of liberation through story is recorded by Demmons in her account of her meetings with a woman with intellectual disabilities living in an institution, who was able to bestow ongoing worldwide adventures on an imaginary dog, despite her own confinement.¹⁶⁵ Demmons

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 125.

¹⁶¹ John Swinton, Harriet Mowat, and Susannah Baines, “Whose Story Am I? Redescribing Profound Intellectual Disability in the Kingdom of God,” *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 15, no. 1 (2011): 6. doi:10.1080/15228967.2011.539337.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Jill Ruth Harshaw, “Towards a New Perspective on the Spiritual Experience of People with Profound and Complex Intellectual Difficulties,” 93. She repeats her championing of Brian’s cause in her book, but this particular quote does not appear therein. See Jill Harshaw, *God Beyond Words*, 71–72.

¹⁶⁴ David Donnison, *Policies for a Just Society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 173, cited in Lisa Curtice, “The Social and Spiritual Inclusion of People with Learning Disabilities: A Liberating Challenge?” *Practical Theology* 136, no. 1, *Contact*, special issue (2001): 17. doi:10.1080/13520806.2001.11758926. An Editorial in the *British Journal of Learning Disability* marking the fiftieth year of publication in 2022 notes the actions that will be taken as a result of consultations with self-advocates: increased use of video abstracts; a project to involve people with learning disabilities in reviewing articles; commissioning work on the use of icons to identify article topics; involving people with learning disabilities on the editorial board; crediting participants in research; and encouraging authors to explain their decision if they did not include the perspectives of those with learning disabilities (Melanie Nind, “A Proud Moment in Publishing About the Lives of People with Learning Disabilities,” editorial, *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 50, no. 1 (March 2022): 2. doi:10.1111/bld.12451).

¹⁶⁵ Demmons, “Tacit and Tactile Knowledge of God,” 19–20.

characterises this experience of vicarious freedom as ‘tacit’ knowledge of God through the exercise of creativity.¹⁶⁶ The importance of moving beyond a patronising ‘welcome’, and also the necessity for coupling church meals with active listening and storytelling is illustrated starkly by Walsh’s retelling of an account of modern slavery in America that took place ‘for the better part of 35 years’:

Most challengingly for me, perhaps all of us, is the fact that these exploited men with intellectual and developmental disabilities did indeed attend church services and sit next to pastors and congregants at church suppers through the years, while visibly showing signs of their mistreatment and sometimes complaining gently about their plight. But they were ‘welcomed’ at the church.¹⁶⁷

I have earlier portrayed storytelling as generative, in providing opportunities not only for self-expression, but also representation, visibility, and valorisation in the wider culture, and thereby contributing to the inclusion promulgated in Chapter 3, but this example shows how stories have to be heard and received for them to be liberative. Savage’s concise expression of the value of being heard, included in a volume on changing ecclesiology and Fresh Expressions, is unarguable: ‘The experience of being listened to is so close to the experience of being loved as to be indistinguishable’.¹⁶⁸

4. Telling stories: an interlude

Having touched upon the pathologised story, the therapeutic power of storying, and the ignored story, I will now transition into the gospel story, by way of a story about a paradoxical lack of story. John Drane relates a moving midnight encounter with a gang of youths in Dunblane after the horrific shooting of sixteen young children and their teacher in 1996. Having brought sixteen small candles, and one larger candle, to the school gates, and lit them with their cigarette butts, the youths are at a loss for words, until they recognise that the nearby Drane is a minister.¹⁶⁹ They invite him to join them and he prays through his own tears.¹⁷⁰ Before leaving, some

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Mary Beth Walsh, “Autism, Culture, Church: From Disruption to Hope,” *Journal of Disability & Religion* 20, no. 4 (2016): 350. doi:10.1080/23312521.2016.1239916.

¹⁶⁸ Sara Savage, “The Psychological Gains and Risks,” in *Evaluating Fresh Expressions: Explorations in Emerging Church, Responses to the Changing Face of Ecclesiology in the Church of England*, ed. Louise Nelstrop and Martyn Percy (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008), 55–70. Also cited in Moynagh, *Being Church, Doing Life*, 129.

expressed either, a need to change, a wish to be able to trust God, or a desire for hope, as they abandoned a knife and a bike chain amidst the floral tributes of the day.¹⁷¹

Drane makes the comparison between this inarticulate, instinctive, symbolic repentance and a Church ‘in love with words, doctrines, rational arguments and statements about faith’.¹⁷² He proceeds to ask: ‘Could it be that we Christians are somehow imprisoned in a kind of cognitive captivity?’,¹⁷³ which casts an interesting sidelight on Post’s assessment of a ‘hypercognitive’ society.¹⁷⁴ However, I contend that Drane’s comment cannot be generalised to the present, given the diversity of approaches to presentation of the gospel which follow. Drane places effective evangelism in the intersection between personal stories of vulnerability, God’s story, and Bible stories,¹⁷⁵ which will be shown in the next section to overlap with Morisy’s enrichment of experience and capacity, so further disrupting his assessment of monolithic intellectualism.

4.1. Telling stories

Having discussed the efficacy of story in contributing to identity, and proposed story as a challenge to dogmatic rigidity, in this section I will look at the importance of stories in mission, and as part of hospitality, starting with the open-endedness of evangelistic story. Cross describes storytellers in Scottish culture as ‘tradition bearers’, and talks of a ‘held limitless space’ initiated by the narrator as they feel the atmosphere of the ‘story space’, which is then sustained by the audience.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, for Amerding ‘story exegesis’ of the Old Testament creates the listener, is

¹⁶⁹ John William Drane, *Faith in a Changing Culture: Creating Churches for the Next Century*, originally published as *Evangelism for a New Age* by Marshall Pickering, 1994, revised ed. (London: Marshall Pickering, 1997), 29–30.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁷³ John William Drane, *Faith in a Changing Culture*, 31. Cf. Jill Harshaw, *God Beyond Words*, 136. See Chapter 3, section 3, 144.

¹⁷⁴ Stephen G. Post, *The Moral Challenge of Alzheimer Disease* (Baltimore, MD; London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), cited in Post, “*Respectare*,” 231.

¹⁷⁵ John William Drane, *Faith in a Changing Culture*, 67–68.

¹⁷⁶ Beth Cross, “Feeling My Way Into Story Space: Lessons for Research from Storyteller Duncan Williamson,” *Emotion, Space and Society* 2, no. 2 (December 2009): 101. doi:10.1016/j.emospa.2009.07.001.

participative, encourages emotional response, and addresses ‘the spiritual hunger of our day’ through coherent and engaging narrative.¹⁷⁷ Anglican priest and proponent of Fresh Expressions of church, Ian Mobsby, missionary to the Moot community, advocates an open-ended discipleship of ‘wonderment exploration’ which uses image and story and draws upon Berryman’s Godly Play and Walter Brueggemann’s ‘prophetic imagination’.¹⁷⁸ Ruddick explores and develops Gerkin’s idea of ‘hermeneutical play’ to characterise ‘missional pastoral care’ where proximity allows interactions with ‘others’ which foster mutual relationship and change.¹⁷⁹ *Stories for the Soul* is the incarnation of Godly Play for older adults, and so people with dementia are neither excluded from, nor demeaned by this activity, as this description of a session, in terms of a respectful receipt of hospitality, and an expectation of wisdom rather than deficit, demonstrates: ‘In *Stories for the Soul* an environment is created that belongs to the circle of elders – we are coming into the care setting as guests’.¹⁸⁰ The Godly Play rubric invites wondering on which parts of the story could be left out, while still having ‘all the story we need’;¹⁸¹ such an invitation to distil the narrative is simultaneously bittersweet and empowering, when earlier commentary on dementia and ‘broken’ stories is taken into account.

Although Morisy is describing the outcomes and benefits of community ministry in *Beyond the Good Samaritan*, her comments also speak to the activity of storytelling as meaningful:

In our atomistic society there is a need to be part of something which provides a ‘story’ or framework that enables one to be part of a purposeful activity, rather than the passive recipient of the random and arbitrary behaviour of others. Self-esteem, and even a sense of identity, can develop as a result of being party to, or even contributing to, events

¹⁷⁷ Carl E. Amerding, “Faith and Method in Old Testament Study: Story Exegesis,” in *A Pathway Into the Holy Scripture*, ed. Philip E. Satterthwaite and David F. Wright (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 46–49.

¹⁷⁸ Ian Mobsby (no details given), cited in Andrew Roberts, “Fresh Expressions: What They Are,” 127.

¹⁷⁹ Ruddick, *From the Ground Up*, 8–12.

¹⁸⁰ Godly Play, “Stories for the Soul,” para. 4. Godly Play UK (website), last accessed 3 July 2020, <https://www.godlyplay.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Stories-for-the-Soul-and-the-Benefits-to-People-living-with-Dementia.pdf>.

¹⁸¹ Jerome W. Berryman, *How to Lead Godly Play Lessons*, *The Complete Guide to Godly Play*, vol. 1 (New York: Church Publishing, 2002), 15, 107.

of human significance which are the raw material of stories worth sharing.¹⁸²

In her later book, *Journeying Out*, Morisy sees storytelling as integral to opening up opportunities for change: ‘This potency of stories is essential to holistic mission. By enabling people to achieve a story-rich life an oblique route is found by which to influence their values, shape their character and inform the priorities and decisions they make in the future’.¹⁸³ Nouwen also sees Christian hospitality as an arena, a space of transformation and self-discovery through creativity:

Hospitality, therefore, means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. . . . The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness, not a fearful emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves as created free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free also to leave and follow their own vocations.¹⁸⁴

Both Morisy and Nouwen are advocating a permissive time-limited hospitality which does not bind individuals into dependence; the story as a proxy for distress will be considered next.

4.2. Telling broken stories

Beth Cross gives the example from her own life of people who were homeless, or at risk of homelessness, struggling to tell narratives which would garner respect, and their telling of ‘damaged’ stories which showed ‘wear and tear’ from repetition.¹⁸⁵ She notes sympathetically that stories were sometimes ‘the one possession that stayed with them’.¹⁸⁶ Her awareness of ‘the ghosts of other listeners’ who may overshadow the narrative as the past is summoned by retelling, hints at the power of stories.¹⁸⁷ Similarly, Swinton sees mental health problems as causing a ‘rupture’ in personal

¹⁸² Morisy, *Beyond the Good Samaritan*, 44. Her contention is supported by the example from Barrett of hitherto unacknowledged community ‘heroes’ (Al Barrett, “Community Building as Spiritual Practice,” *Journal of Missional Practice*, no. 5, *Experiment and Innovation* (Winter 2015): 2. <http://journalofmissionalpractice.com/community-building-as-spiritual-practice>). See section 4.3, p. 203.

¹⁸³ Morisy, *Journeying Out*, 70.

¹⁸⁴ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 69.

¹⁸⁵ Beth Cross, “Feeling My Way Into Story Space,” 99.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

stories, consequently he constructs ecclesial hospitality as the ability to be ‘*guests*’ in such stories of difference and ill-health.¹⁸⁸ In *The Wounded Healer*,¹⁸⁹ Nouwen talks of the mutual sharing of stories of brokenness. The effects of individual ‘brokenness’ within church communities can complicate hospitality and need to be approached carefully, as Pohl illustrates in a book on practices that sustain community. She talks of the need for discernment and the combination of ‘fidelity, truthfulness, gratitude, and hospitality’ needed to recognise the ‘gifts that come to us in broken people’.¹⁹⁰ In her view, these communal qualities enabled a particular individual to ‘move towards healing’ without allowing that ‘brokenness to become abusive’.¹⁹¹ Writing on Jesus’ command to love your enemy, Wells expresses parallel thoughts on the threatening ‘gifts’ brought by an ‘enemy’ as a test of dependence on God in depending on that stranger, ‘and the need to focus the discernment of the community on what this stranger is bringing that may be given hospitality’.¹⁹²

Monge meanwhile, advocates selectivity in sharing, and the honouring of essential selfhood:

In a true community, each person preserves the profound secret of his or her own being: not everything can be placed in common as a rule of life together, because sharing must be a free gift and a spontaneous movement into which each feels invited’.¹⁹³

From a psychotherapeutic stance, Nguyen discusses the possibilities of ‘re-traumatization’ through the requirement to verify trauma, and also demonstrates how the desire for a neat resolution militates against dealing with the pain of those who have been abused or tortured.¹⁹⁴ Her account of the bravery imputed to professionals interacting with victims echoes Betcher’s experience of disability, cited

¹⁸⁸ Swinton, “From Inclusion to Belonging,” 173, 178, emphasis in original.

¹⁸⁹ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*, reprint, 1972 (New York: Doubleday, 1979).

¹⁹⁰ Pohl, *Living Into Community*, 40–42.

¹⁹¹ Pohl, *Living Into Community*, 41.

¹⁹² Samuel Wells, *God’s Companions*, 110–11.

¹⁹³ Monge, “Life Together,” 106.

¹⁹⁴ Leanh Nguyen, “The Ethics of Trauma: Re-Traumatization in Society’s Approach to the Traumatized Subject,” *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy* 61, no. 1 (2011): 27–47. doi:10.1521/ijgp.2011.61.1.26.

earlier.¹⁹⁵ Even at a more mundane level, Monge’s prudential wisdom, and the ethical dilemma posed by Nguyen should foreclose the careless or inquisitive enquiry, or the obtrusive performance of ‘care’, and point to the sacredness of being entrusted with another’s story, and the dangers of requiring proof of worthiness for receipt of services. I have already alluded to Ashworth’s framing of Nouwen as hierarchical, but this perspective is complicated by the latter’s use of the language of gifts: ‘Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the lifestyle of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own’.¹⁹⁶ The admixture of motives in missional hospitality with regard to moral obligation, or the ostensibly ‘free gift’, will be discussed in Chapter 5, as will the extent to which Fresh Expressions of church use quantification of need or incapacity to justify ministry.

4.3. Telling unheard stories

By way of contrast with a focus on calculable need, vicar Al Barrett laconically describes how his church deployed storytelling and hospitality to build community and reinforce pre-existent assets, following his arrival in an inner-city parish:

we invited local people to nominate their neighbours, and people who worked in our neighbourhoods, our local ‘unsung heroes’ – and we put on a big party, with lots of food and drink, and we told something of their stories, and we got The Lord Mayor to give them nice cut-glass awards, and there was lots of clapping, and a few tears too.¹⁹⁷

He goes on to liken the process to the monastic rule of Benedict: ‘we must be constantly open to being surprised, changed, taught by the place and the people around us (conversion); and that we must learn to listen, deeply, to each other (obedience)’.¹⁹⁸ He distinguishes this process of recognition and celebration from a deficit-based model of asserting deprivation. Barrett’s particular advocacy of *kenosis*, and hence not emphasising being the provider, or asserting ownership,¹⁹⁹ recalls

¹⁹⁵ Betcher, *Spirit and the Politics of Disablement*, 93. See Chapter 4, section 3, p. 191.

¹⁹⁶ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 69.

¹⁹⁷ Al Barrett, “Community Building as Spiritual Practice,” 2, capitals in original.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Gordon's 'kenotic accommodation' and hospitality from Chapter 3,²⁰⁰ and is evident in his attitude to hospitality and 'limitless celebration': 'Every moment is an excuse for a party. Anywhere and everywhere. And if it's not our place to throw a party, then we can encourage our neighbours to host one, and come along as guests, or gate-crashers, celebrating the abundant gifts around us'.²⁰¹ Such circulation of hospitality is consistent with his account of recognising the presence of God and 'building "home" ' with others, whether believers or not.²⁰² His approach of uncovering and celebrating what is already present complements Morisy's endowing with story.

Similarly, Young and Quibell see stories as cultural participation with the potential to transform social relations: 'This understanding of peoples' stories is how justice is achieved. By sharing a story, we may "do justice" to one another'.²⁰³ Reading and speaking from a place of marginality can prophetically challenge established understandings, as shown by Cornwall and Nixon's account of Bible study with people experiencing homelessness, or in insecure accommodation.²⁰⁴ Fletcher likewise describes witnessing 'the theopraxis of homeless and formerly homeless people . . . where the Church created non-cerebral Bible studies through painting, pictures and music', and how this birthed vocations to leadership.²⁰⁵ Speaking in a debate in 2020 during the pandemic, Habib exposed the traumatising effects on people with experience of the criminal-justice system, of a supposedly unifying national narrative of lockdown in the United Kingdom, wherein the language of imprisonment

²⁰⁰ Gordon, "Is a Sense of Self Essential to Spirituality?" 61, italics omitted. See Chapter 3, section 3, p. 145.

²⁰¹ Al Barrett, "Community Building as Spiritual Practice," 4.

²⁰² Al Barrett, "Community Building as Spiritual Practice," 5. Cf. Miles. See Chapter 5, section 3.1, p. 228 n. 103.

²⁰³ Damon A. Young and Ruth Quibell, "Why Rights Are Never Enough: Rights, Intellectual Disability and Understanding," *Disability & Society* 15, no. 5 (2000): 760. doi:10.1080/713661998.

²⁰⁴ Susannah Cornwall and David Nixon, "Readings from the Road: Contextual Bible Study with a Group of Homeless and Vulnerably-Housed People," *Expository Times* 123, no. 1 (October 2011): 12–19. doi:10.1177/0014524611417668.

²⁰⁵ Shemara J. J. Fletcher, "'The Intentional Integration of Homeless and Formally [sic] Homeless Communities Radically Transforms the Life of Our Church'," in *Young, Woke and Christian: Words from a Missing Generation*, ed. Victoria Turner (London: SCM Press, 2022), 133.

was applied to enforced physical confinement.²⁰⁶ Thereafter, she raised the need for under-served and marginalised groups to hear their stories represented in the national conversation.²⁰⁷ Thus, Bretherton asserts the importance of listening and political representation: ‘As a constitutive dimension of hospitality, listening trusts and gives space and time to those who are excluded from the determination of space and time by the existing hegemony’.²⁰⁸ Pohl counters with the prophetic potential of grass roots activism:

Hospitality resists boundaries that endanger persons by denying their humanness. It saves others from the invisibility that comes from social abandonment. Sometimes, by that very acting out of welcome, a vision for a whole society is offered, a small evidence that transformed relations are possible.²⁰⁹

Likewise, Tashjian concludes his study of variant readings of selected parables of Jesus which problematise divine hospitality, by summarising thus: ‘the kingdom of God demands a life of peaceful resistance to oppressive structures in order to befriend the disenfranchised’.²¹⁰ However, this becomes problematic when the institution of the Church of England is itself cast in the role of the oppressor, as will be seen in the following chapter and Chapter 7, but that should not discredit the work presently done by individuals, in churches, and in local parishes. Accordingly, I have shown how welcome and self-discovery exist amidst story, lack of story, and in the presence of the wordless or withheld story, and that stories are just as necessary to present day ecclesial hospitality and social justice, as they were to the hospitality portrayed in the Bible.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that practices around food-preparation, the potentiation of real and virtual food, and the potential disaggregation of the body of

²⁰⁶ Jan-Jonathan Bock, “Togetherness in Times of Crisis,” Cumberland Lodge webinar, with Mattia Diletti, Jude Habib, and Sarah Farquhar, *Dialogue & Debate*, 22:10–22:59. 16 April 2020, <https://www.cumberlandlodge.ac.uk/whats-on/togetherness-times-crisis>.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 23:00–24:27.

²⁰⁸ Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 215.

²⁰⁹ Pohl, *Making Room*, 64.

²¹⁰ Jirair S. Tashjian, “Friendship and Hospitality in the Parables of Jesus,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 86. <https://wtsociety.com/wtj/volume/42,1>.

Christ if reception of Communion is restricted, complicate consumption and social engagement. I have discussed the politics of secular eating, and transitioned from the visceral into the vitiated ‘consumption’ of food online. Mindful consumption is advocated in the natural by proponents of Slow Food, and as a spiritual practice by Ford, Finger, Schottroff, and Wirzba in their awareness of judgement, and the need for justice. Such equitable meeting and eating recalls the coupling of Russell’s ‘just hospitality’ with Staley’s inspiration for multisensory commensality from the last chapter, but this chapter considered thoughtless eating in relation to virtuality and lockdown, and concomitant assumptions about digital connectivity, and household composition, which masked literal dis-connection. I contrasted digital inhospitality and lack of self-reflection with exhortations to recognise Jesus in the sharing of hospitality with the disadvantaged. The historic demotion of hospitality and the elevation of the priesthood is brought to the fore by Tuohy in his call for re-ordering ecclesial ministry, and Anderson and MacDougall address a technological iteration of a similar process of disenfranchisement. Nevertheless, I opened up the ecological, universal and eschatological dimensions of eating and Communion, through the work of Wirzba, Winter, and Stibbe.

I demonstrated how stories can enact justice, and advanced stories as a means of redressing inequality, irrespective of circumstance, and I considered storytelling as an enabling medium through the co-construction of story, and through Morisy’s call to provide enriching experiences worth retelling. In the previous chapter, I gave the example of how Harshaw counters a narrative of incapacity with divine favour, and in this chapter I have similarly countered medical discourse with the everyday disclosure of humanity, whether seen practically in Stokes, or in the theorisation of Swinton, and Young and Quibell. Obviously, the discourses around dementia, and the examples of storytelling from daily life can be perceived as separate from church, but without an awareness of the unique history of church members, or guest-attendees, and their hinterland, then encounter is just superficial, rather than the enfaced and enstoried hospitality which could be possible, given sufficient accommodation to varying needs,

as seen in the examples of Stories for the Soul, or Bible study with people experiencing homelessness. I showed the redemptive power of storytelling, by juxtaposing the supposedly ‘broken’ stories of dementia, or the over-repeated stories told by homeless tellers with ‘strong’ and weak stories, and imaginative tales of canine voyaging. Nevertheless, as Drane, Pohl, and Nguyen illustrate, in different ways, without the ability to acknowledge trauma, it is impossible to be open-hearted, but hospitality also requires restraint, as Swinton, Monge, and Gittins all intimate. Having, in this, and the preceding chapters, looked at hosting, celebration, inclusion, food, and storytelling in relation to social justice, and hospitality and inhospitality, I have now laid the groundwork to consider not only the institutional narratives, but the particular hospitality, ministry, and self-identity of parishes and Fresh Expressions of church within the Church of England.

Chapter 5

Mission-shaped Church, mission-shaped hospitality?

1. Reporting on welcome, humility, and service

Having considered, in general, how hospitality is offered or denied, and received or rejected, and introduced spiritual, social, and digital exclusion over the course of successive chapters, I will now ask whether the Church of England historically, and currently, is hospitable; I will look specifically at contemporary purposeful use of hospitality in mission at a national and local level. In Chapter 4, I showed hospitality variously as earth-bound, heavenly, and cosmic, and in this chapter I will examine how a denominational (*pace* Avis)¹ focus on mission draws upon these dimensions of identity. The preceding chapters have intentionally pendulated between individual and community, and personal embodiment and the corporeality of believers as part of the church locally as the body of Christ, but I now turn to the particular structural challenges faced by the institutional Church of England in the twenty-first century, although my inquiry is confined to their salience to hospitality, and does not address institutional survival, re-organisation, or the sequelæ of COVID-19 *per se*. Neither do I intend to adjudicate between parochial ministry and Fresh Expressions, but rather to explore the divergence and convergence of views on hospitality, the coherence of the principles adopted in different settings, and the use of explicit and implicit appeals to hospitality. To this end, I will structure the first two-thirds of this chapter around recent reports about the Church of England: first, the 2019 *From Stranger to Friend* report;² secondly, the paired reports, *Vision for the Church of*

¹ Avis considers denomination a sociological term inappropriate for theological use, but I am using it pragmatically here. He observes of the Church of England that ‘its history, national mission and its diocesan and parochial structure: these are not conducive to a denominational description’. Having diagnosed latent congregationalist leanings in some parishes, he also considers the unconcern of Fresh Expressions with denominational issues as perhaps presenting a ‘countervailing trend’ (Paul Avis, “Denomination: An Anglican Appraisal,” in *Denomination: Assessing an Ecclesiological Category*, ed.

England in the 2020s,³ and a *Theological Reflection on our Emerging Vision and Priorities*,⁴ both published in November 2020; and thirdly, from the same month, *Growing Good: Growth, Social Action and Discipleship in the Church of England*,⁵ a report from the Theos think tank, in conjunction with the Church Urban Fund, presenting the findings of the three-year GRA:CE Project.⁶ I will use this sequence of reports as a basis for discussing welcome, discipleship and social action. In particular, I will interrogate a discordant image from the first on the list to uncover an embedded racialised narrative; I will then use Azariah France-Williams' 2020 book *Ghost Ship*:

Paul M. Collins and Barry Ensign-George (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 32).

² Church of England, The Archbishops' Council, *From Stranger to Friend*.

³ Cottrell, *A Vision for the Church of England in the 2020s*.

⁴ Steven Croft, *A Theological Reflection on Our Emerging Vision and Priorities: 'Salt for the Earth, Light for the World'*, A Vision for the Church of England in the 2020s (2020), Online.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media>.

⁵ Hannah Rich, *Growing Good: Growth, Social Action and Discipleship in the Church of England*, Final report of the GRA:CE Project (London: Theos, 2020).

<https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/GRACE-CUF-v10-combined.pdf>.

⁶ In July 1983 Robert Runcie set up the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on the Urban Priority Areas (ACUPA) following the civil unrest in Brixton, Handsworth in Birmingham, Chapeltown in Leeds, Moss Side in Manchester, and Toxteth in Liverpool in 1981. (Given their differing connotations in popular and political usage I am purposely not using riot or uprising, except to note social location as a factor in the choice of terms.) See Lambeth Palace Library, "'We Have Found Faith in the City': The Records of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on the Urban Priority Areas (ACUPA)." *A Monument of Fame* (blog), 8 January 2016,

<https://lambethpalacelibrary.wordpress.com/2016/01/08/we-have-found-faith-in-the-city-the-records-of-the-archbishop-of-canterburys-commission-on-urban-priority-areas-acupa/>; Tim Newburn, Paul Lewis, and Josephine Metcalf, "A New Kind of Riot? From Brixton 1981 to Tottenham 2011," *The Guardian*, Friday 9 December 2011. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/dec/09/riots-1981-2011-differences>.

One of the recommendations of the Commission's 1985 report *Faith in the City: A Call for Action by Church and Nation* was the setting up of a Church Urban Fund (the report made sixty-one recommendations, the only one not acted upon was a Commission for Black Anglican Concerns). See A. D. A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship*, 98–104. The Church Urban Fund (CUF) was launched in 1987 as a grant-making trust, but following consultation, proposals for organisational change were put forward in 2005, when the Chief Executive wrote: 'Our main objective is to be a Christian organisation that makes a significant and lasting difference in the lives of individuals and communities blighted by enduring poverty' (Fran Beckett, *The Church Urban Fund – A New Future*, General Synod paper GS 1579 (2005), 1, 3, bold omitted. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/g1579-the-church-urban-fund%3A-a-new-future.pdf>). Two of the changes to better achieve that end were: 'Gather evidence, share learning' with 'more emphasis upon professional research based on grass roots experience', and 'Tell the Story - celebrating and advocating for the contribution of the Church' (Beckett, *The Church Urban Fund*, 5, bold omitted). *Growing Good* falls within that remit, but no explanation is given for the name of the GRA:CE Project itself, presumably a signification of the grace of God, but with the visual insertion of the Church (of) England. It is strange that the title of the terminal report should come from a quotation taken from George Eliot's *Middlemarch* rather than a participant: the peculiar relationship between the Church of England and English literature will be explored further in this chapter through the writing of George Orwell in section 2.1, p. 219, and the poetry of Rudyard Kipling in section 4, pp. 238–39.

Institutional Racism and the Church of England,⁷ and *From Lament to Action*,⁸ the report of the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce published in April 2021, to explore racism and discrimination further.

Despite falling attendance figures, Rich, as the author of the final report on the GRA:CE Project, finds that social action, shown in presence, and through perseverance, hospitality, generosity and adaptability, 'can be a route to church growth, in both numerical and spiritual terms'.⁹ Taking up the qualities she identifies, I will look firstly at presence in terms of persistence, spatiality, and obtrusion into discourse, and then, in accord with my aims at the outset of this thesis, I shall consider hospitality in relation to social action. (Generosity will recur in many guises throughout this chapter, but I will reserve discussion of adaptability until Chapter 7.) The report treats social action, discipleship, and growth as related (anecdotally people often come to faith through community projects),¹⁰ although, for the purposes of this thesis, I am dividing discussion of social action and discipleship between this chapter and Chapter 6, and I will give specific examples of the former in Chapter 7. In the course of this chapter I will also investigate whether the overt deployment of hospitality in mission is detrimental, and hospitality as an antidote to a centripetal understanding of mission.

2. Welcome: Serving or self-serving?

In September 2019 the Church of England published a report entitled *From Stranger to Friend: Changing the Culture and Practice of Welcome in the Church of England*. One of the stated aims was to 'reflect on the theme of costly hospitality as an essential part of discipleship for every Christian and in every church'.¹¹ The inept misspelling of Ann Morisy's surname *and* her Christian name, while endorsing her contrast between an 'economy of scarcity' and 'God's economy of abundance' as

⁷ A. D. A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship*.

⁸ Church of England, The Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce, *From Lament to Action*.

⁹ Rich, *Growing Good*, 12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18–19.

¹¹ Church of England, The Archbishops' Council, *From Stranger to Friend*, 4.

underpinning the ‘generous open welcome which reflects the generous love of God’ which it hopes to model, is not reassuring.¹² Furthermore, despite talking of ‘the need to open hearts and homes to enable the stranger to become a friend’, the outlined theological basis restricts estrangement solely to a relationship with God,¹³ and makes no mention of the concomitant obligations to the stranger in the Hebrew scriptures. Abram and Sara (an unsupported variant spelling, noticeable to the general reader this time) are introduced as exemplars of journeying, but perversely not of hospitality.¹⁴ Accordingly, the Report proclaims that the name of the enterprise ‘reflects this journey of faith for each of us, as well as the task of engaging with those who find themselves as strangers to church’.¹⁵ Aside from the curious ascription of inadvertence in this latter aim, the difficulty of reconciling these insider/outsider aspects means an inevitable and unimaginative assessment of ‘welcome’ on the social and functional aspects of greeting, orientation, and physical and psychic discomfort, which predictably reduces improvement to ‘better’ noticeboards, signposts, and leaflets, or increased social engagement, and offering an invitation to after-service refreshments.¹⁶ And, as Alison Gilchrist observes from experience, after a service spent trying to corral lively toddlers single-handed, the supposedly welcoming invitation to coffee can merely be an unattractive invitation to prolongation of stress.¹⁷

This reluctance to linger holds true for people other than parents, and the hot beverage cannot be the be-all and end-all of showing or constructing an hospitable welcome. Indeed, Ireland asks, with some merit, whether the practice of transitioning to coffee-time ‘blunt[s] the missionary moment’ at the conclusion of the liturgy,¹⁸ but he contradicts himself, given that he subsequently offers his own practice of shifting the Peace to the end of the service, and encouraging the sharing of peace with

¹² Ibid., 5.

¹³ Ibid., 4–5.

¹⁴ Ibid., 5.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 8.

¹⁷ Alison Gilchrist, *Creating a Culture of Welcome in the Local Church*, Grove Evangelism Series, no. 66 (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2004), 3.

¹⁸ Mark Ireland, “Sending,” in *Journey*, ed. Stephen Burns, *Renewing the Eucharist*, vol. 1 (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008), 103.

someone not known, and taking them to coffee.¹⁹ Hence, the propriety of a mindful, but thirsty exit is complicated by the need to welcome and retain newcomers, as he has earlier cited research about people not returning to church if they do not begin to form relationships with at least six people over the course of six weeks.²⁰ Fairly obviously, his particular strategy only works in larger churches, and might create a sense of being targeted, or competed over, and there is the alternative possibility of being overlooked in the confusion of circulating bodies. Conversely, but with thematic commonality, in her development of maternal imagery for priestly ministry, Emma Percy points out that it is equally important to create structures to ‘cherish’ the regulars so that people feel valued.²¹ Welcome, therefore, should not be reducible to a formulaic check-list, but responsive to need and circumstance, and can exist on a continuum, as I will show subsequently from the findings of the GRA:CE Project, and in the suggestion of Barrett and Harley that it should be sought outside the perimeter of the gathered church.

In a section of their book on post-Christendom worship and mission entitled ‘Hospitality: A task for all Christians’, Kreider and Kreider predict: ‘In post-Christendom, welcome becomes critical to the church’s future’.²² In the Foreword to *Mission-Shaped Parish*, the then Bishop of London, Richard Chartres advocates self-examination in response to the contents of the book. Deploring a pervasive lack of congregational insight, he declares:

I have never, in more than a decade of being a bishop, visited a church where parishioners were not prepared to say something like ‘we are a very welcoming church’. Yet more than a few churches in my experience are virtually un-joinable and are even so lacking in awareness that they blame this state of affairs on those who come once and never again.²³

Taking into account the observations about damaging clericalism from the

¹⁹ Ibid., 103–4.

²⁰ Ibid., 83–84.

²¹ Emma Percy, *What Clergy Do: Especially When It Looks Like Nothing* (London: SPCK, 2014), 45.

²² Kreider and Kreider, *Worship and Mission After Christendom*, 244.

²³ Richard Chartres, “Foreword,” in *Mission-Shaped Parish: Traditional Church in a Changing Context*, in *Mission-Shaped Parish*, Church of England, The Archbishops’ Council, by Paul Bayes, et al., *Mission-Shaped* (London: Church House Publishing, 2006), vii.

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) in their October 2020 report,²⁴ it should be reiterated forcefully that a bishop may receive an unduly fulsome and unrepresentative welcome; it is the trepidatious visitor unacquainted with church-going who can truly evaluate the quality of welcome. Although a twice-repeated figure of 100% is statistically suspect, cognitive dissonance is inherent in Millar’s claim in *From Stranger to Friend* that ‘100% of people say their church is welcoming and 100% of people say they’ve experienced a church that isn’t welcoming’.²⁵ Such perceptions from relative insiders are nonetheless indicative, hence, any claim of ‘friendliness’ requires outside corroboration. The need for external validation is redoubled when applied to discussion from Chapters 3 and 4 about inclusion. For example, the Church at a structural level has a part to play in helping create dementia friendly communities,²⁶ but Kate Swaffer, an advocate for living well with dementia, critiques initiatives to develop ‘dementia friendly’ communities if people with dementia are not involved in evaluation.²⁷

Hearteningly, in reflecting on a pilot scheme, *From Stranger to Friend* acknowledges the need to regularly audit welcome for different ages and abilities, and the urgency of drawing on the experience of newcomers who are not yet established in the decision-making process.²⁸ Nevertheless, the report-writers do not appear to have considered that being asked to complete a questionnaire could be perceived as threatening in itself; there is a default assumption of functional literacy, which circles back indirectly to Drane’s ‘cognitive captivity’,²⁹ thus prompting the unworthy vision of the disciples conducting a survey after the feeding of the five thousand. Even

²⁴ Independent Inquiry on Child Sexual Abuse, *The Anglican Church: Safeguarding in the Church of England and the Church in Wales*, Investigation rept., by Alexis Jay, et al. (Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 2020), B.6.2.: 4.1. <https://iicsa.org.uk/publications>. See also Ian Paul on the ‘culture of deference’ in the Church of England in Ian Paul, “Should Clergy Expect Deference?” *Psephizo* (blog), 15 July 2019, <https://www.psephizo.com/life-ministry/should-clergy-expect-deference/>.

²⁵ Church of England, The Archbishops’ Council, *From Stranger to Friend*, 13.

²⁶ Cathy Henwood and Murna Downs, “Dementia-Friendly Communities,” in *Excellence in Dementia Care: Research Into Practice*, 2nd ed., ed. Murna Downs and Barbara Bowers (Maidenhead: Open University Press; McGraw-Hill Education, 2014), 20–35.

²⁷ Kate Swaffer, “Dementia: Stigma, Language and Dementia-Friendly,” *Dementia* 13, no. 6 (November 2014): 709–16. doi:10.1177/1471301214548143.

²⁸ Church of England, The Archbishops’ Council, *From Stranger to Friend*, 17.

²⁹ John William Drane, *Faith in a Changing Culture*, 30–31. See Chapter 4, section 4, p. 199.

though the survey is anonymous, depending on the size of the church, the fact of being singled-out as a newcomer may mean that respondents will feel justifiable concern that their comments will be identifiable. (The QR code option³⁰ may feel safer in this respect, but is obviously limited to those with a smartphone, or who have brought a tablet with them, as the rubric to the questionnaire is careful to specify.)³¹ And yet, the necessity in a church context for advocacy of the accompanying ‘helpful mantra’: ‘see, smile and say hello’,³² is cause for dismay; common courtesy, never mind Christian hospitality, should render it redundant.

Jonathan Baker, one of the authors of the report, evaluates a range of existing measures of welcome and observes that they are frequently dated and limited,³³ and that welcome can be seen as ‘a means to an end (church growth) rather than as a gospel quality in its own right’.³⁴ It is perplexing therefore that in the attempt to find ‘good’ practice and address barriers to access, the report then looks to secular marketing, this latter sentiment notwithstanding.³⁵ This material is found, perhaps with a degree of envy, to have the qualities of concision, consistency, clarity and integrity, coupled with emotive and engaging messaging, and knowledge about the target ‘audience’.³⁶ Nevertheless, the choice of Park Run, the National Trust, and

³⁰ Church of England, The Archbishops’ Council, *From Stranger to Friend*, 22.

³¹ Church of England, The Archbishops’ Council, *From Stranger to Friend*, 22.

³² Church of England, The Archbishops’ Council, *From Stranger to Friend*, 20.

³³ *Ibid.*, 30–33.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

³⁵ The authors are not unique in this regard, as Gilchrist also references commercial ‘customer service models’, but intends them more as a provocation (Gilchrist, *Creating a Culture of Welcome*, 7–8). In his call for renewal of the Church through humility, Percy justifiably points out the failure to learn lessons from the superior practices of the corporate sector with regard to equality and diversity, or ‘human resource-management’ more generally (Martyn Percy, *The Humble Church: Renewing the Body of Christ* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2021), 9). In line with that desire for professionalisation, he also seeks for safeguarding to be outsourced, so that the Church is accountable to an external body. See Martyn Percy, *The Humble Church*, 86. Understandably, he makes no reference to his personal circumstances, including his investigation and exoneration by the Church of England over his handling of historic safeguarding allegations, his suspension as Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, and an allegation of sexual harassment, which he denied. He has since stepped down from his position after a settlement was reached in the protracted dispute, and subsequently announced his decision to leave the Church of England in May 2022; his statement reiterated his call for an independent regulatory body. See Harriet Sherwood, “Oxford College Dean Steps Down After Settlement Reached in Three-Year Dispute,” *The Guardian*, Friday 4 February 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/feb/04/oxford-college-dean-steps-down-after-settlement-reached-in-three-year-dispute>; Martyn Percy, “Why I’m Leaving the Church of England”.

³⁶ Church of England, The Archbishops’ Council, *From Stranger to Friend*, 40.

Premier Inns as analysed examples sits uneasily with Hull's identification of retreat from the prophetic in the stance towards the poor in *Mission-Shaped Church*.³⁷ More particularly, the National Trust, despite attracting political opprobrium³⁸ for their commendable self-examination with regard to the legacy of colonialism and links with slavery,³⁹ inescapably exudes a certain Englishness which is mirrored in anachronistic appeals to a vanished past which reference the Church of England, as I will show subsequently.⁴⁰ Notwithstanding the underlying racism and re-inscription of class inherent in 'authorized/ing heritage discourses' (AHD) identified by Smith,⁴¹ not only the National Trust, but also the event and the hotel-chain are unlikely to be within the purview of those on a low income or in ill-health; lessons derived from leisure and cultural pursuits, and discretionary spending are unlikely to be relevant to

³⁷ John M. Hull, *Mission-Shaped Church: A Theological Response* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 31–33.

³⁸ The controversy is summarised by an historian of twentieth-century Britain in an invited essay on the UCL Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slave-Ownership site. See Charlotte Lydia Riley, "Culture Wars in Country Houses: What the National Trust Controversy Tells Us About British History Today." *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership Project* (blog), Centre for the Study of the Legacies of Slavery, UCL, 17 February 2021, <https://lbsatucl.wordpress.com/2021/02/17/culture-wars-in-country-houses-what-the-national-trust-controversy-tells-us-about-british-history-today/>.

³⁹ Sally-Anne Huxtable, et al., *Interim Report on the Connections Between Colonialism and Properties Now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery* (Swindon: National Trust, 2020). <https://nt.global.ssl.fastly.net/documents/colonialism-and-historic-slavery-report.pdf> [sic]. It should also be remembered that heritage includes landscapes, but natural heritage organisations and the environmental sector are White-dominated, so Khatwa describes not only a culture of tokenism, but also the challenges of racism in the countryside in her catchily titled article. See Anjana Khatwa, "Black and Brown Faces in Green Spaces." (blog), Heritage Fund, 19 August 2020, <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/blogs/black-and-brown-faces-green-spaces>.

⁴⁰ Reddie is justifiably bitter in his account of the racialisation that ensures 'the pristine, purity of White Anglo-Saxon Britain and its pastoral, pastel-green serenity is not broken' (Anthony Reddie, "Politics of Black Entry Into Britain: Reflections on Being a Black British Person Returning to the UK," *Political Theology* 8, no. 1 (2007): 85. doi:10.1558/poth.2007.8.1.83; Anthonie G. Reddie [sic], "Encountering the Self and the Other: Black Christian Education as Inter-Ethnic and Anti-Racist Discourse," in *Religious Education as Encounter: A Tribute to John M. Hull*, ed. Siebren Miedema, Religious Diversity and Education in Europe, vol. 14 (Münster: Waxmann, 2009), 66). This description is repeated word-for-word in both sources, including the comma after 'pristine', but the latter does not hyphenate 'pastel-green'. See also Gilroy's diagnosis of reactionary 'geo-piety' (Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 114). Given such misplaced nostalgia, it is entirely to be expected that an article in the *Daily Telegraph* instances the National Trust and the Church of England as organisations that have 'forgotten their purpose' and 'hate their most loyal supporters' (Madeline Grant, "Britain is Plagued by Organisations That Hate Their Most Loyal Supporters," Comment, *The Daily Telegraph*, Wednesday 17 November 2021. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/11/17/britain-plagued-organisations-hate-loyal-supporters/>).

⁴¹ Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006). See, in particular, the chapter 'The "Manored" Past: The Banality of Grandiloquence', 115–61.

reaching the spiritually needy.

Writing in 2002, Croft punned on the almost unnoticed appropriation by business of the theological language of ‘vision’, and how ‘*prophets*’ have been replaced by ‘*profits*’, and was critical of how the bastardised insights re-imported by the Church use continual growth as a metric.⁴² On the one hand, he calls into question the transplantation of ‘franchise’ models of church which are insufficiently contextual,⁴³ and on the other, the risk of the contextual being insufficiently non-conformist and counter-cultural.⁴⁴ Furthermore, he is critical of treating churches as a ‘unit of production’ outputting disciples,⁴⁵ and so is appreciative of Hodgson and Warren’s criteria for evaluation which assess ‘health’ rather than ‘growth’.⁴⁶ However, in agreement with Hull, and in a way not dissimilar to Ward’s claim from the same year of ‘solid’ church defining and policing spiritual need,⁴⁷ he identifies how, in their measure, fulfilment in ministry takes precedence over meeting the needs of the poor (who are not mentioned explicitly), and he searches in vain for the place of suffering and renunciation.⁴⁸ These priorities and this lacuna now read differently, as churches have not only had to reconfigure their ministry in response to COVID-19, but alleviation of the effects of poverty has become even more necessary. Even if growth is subsidiary to welcome in the approach being developed in *From Stranger to Friend*, applying second-hand lessons from corporate culture, even the charitable sector, or fitness-culture, still makes many unexamined assumptions about access. For example, in the latter case there is no consideration of hindrances to improving health, whether stigma, underlying medical conditions or disability, time, transport, or childcare. The universalising of conclusions from their sampled case studies are essentially offensive to those who cannot participate through poverty or lack of

⁴² Steven Croft, *Transforming Communities: Re-Imagining the Church for the 21st Century* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2002), 38, emphasis in original, 39–41.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 55–58.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 62–63.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 61–62.

⁴⁷ Pete Ward, *Liquid Church*, 72–73. See section 3.2, p. 234.

⁴⁸ Croft, *Transforming Communities*, 61–62.

opportunity, and also excludes those who draw upon different cultural resources. Approaches indebted to secular ‘good’ practice are likely to re-create and solidify existing social cleavages and inequalities, and adoption may simply confirm an internal complacency within Church and congregations.

More to the point spiritually, with regard to intentionality, is Koenig’s identification of humility as foundational for unassuming hospitality:

This is the core of repentance: to see ourselves before God as unworthy servants, but at the same time as guests and children of a Monarch who yearns for our company. Insofar as we envision ourselves in this way (1 Cor. 11:31), we become capable of welcoming one another. In fact when repentance takes on the character of a daily discipline, it becomes the basis for ‘natural’ hospitality to strangers.⁴⁹

Hospitality as a contrivance will be examined in due course, using the research of Rooms, but hospitality also needs appropriate monitoring as Roberts highlights. Recollecting the situation of sexual and spiritual abuse which developed in Sheffield in the 1990s at the ill-fated Nine O’Clock Service,⁵⁰ he calls for discernment, and

⁴⁹ Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 143.

⁵⁰ For a journalistic account of the background to the scandal, see Roland Howard, *The Rise and Fall of the Nine O’Clock Service: A Cult Within the Church?* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996). The Nine O’Clock Service (NOS) originated at St Thomas’, Crookes (now known as STC Sheffield) in 1986 as a service relevant to club culture headed by Chris Brain, a rock musician supported by a group of friends living in community. The service grew in popularity, and Brain was fast-tracked for ordination, whereupon the service moved to Ponds Forge, a local sports complex, but the spatial shift away from the hosting church was matched by a theological shift away from the influence of John Wimber’s ‘signs and wonders’, to Jürgen Moltmann and an emphasis on social justice, and eventually to the ‘Creation Spirituality’ of the controversial Matthew Fox, expelled from the Dominicans for his unorthodox views. See J. W. Rogerson, “‘The Lord is Here’: The Nine o’Clock Service,” in *Why Liberal Churches Are Growing*, ed. Ian S. Markham and Martyn Percy (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 45–52. Guest locates the problem in the authoritarian power structures of NOS, rather than the content of the worship, and Rogerson talks of ‘psychological control and manipulation’, but insofar as it is possible to reconstruct events surrounding the secretive inner circle, moral and doctrinal laxity seem to have gone hand-in-hand, with devastating consequences (Mathew Guest, “‘Alternative’ Worship: Challenging the Boundaries of the Christian Faith,” in *Theorizing Faith: The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Ritual*, ed. Elizabeth Arweck and Martin D. Stringer (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2002), 38; Rogerson, “‘The Lord is Here’,” 51). Rogerson, as a renowned Old Testament scholar, has a dual perspective on NOS, as he was a relatively regular member for several years before its demise, and preached at services. He observes that it was the only church that ever required him to rehearse his sermon (Rogerson, “‘The Lord is Here’,” 49). Lyons offers an analysis of the afterlife of one of Rogerson’s surviving sermons, a sermon on risk-taking included in a compilation published in 2002, a questionable decision in itself, and a text which reads uneasily in retrospect given subsequent knowledge. See William John Lyons, “Preaching at the Nine O’Clock Service: A Study of Shifting Meaning in a Published Sermon,” in *Delivering the Word: Preaching and Exegesis in the Western Christian Tradition*, ed. William John Lyons and Isabella Sandwell, reprint, 2012 (London: Routledge, 2014), 231–45. Although not an academic at the time, sometime member Rupert Till, a musicologist and DJ, gives exhaustive technical detail of how the ten tons of equipment that went into producing

concludes: ‘The holiness as well as the hospitality of God is crucial’.⁵¹ Koenig speaks to personal spiritual disciplines, and Roberts to corporate ecclesial discernment and oversight, but within the protections afforded by this framework, I propose hospitality as analogous to the receipt of that divine comfort which enables the concatenated showing of comfort to others.⁵² Therefore, I am arguing in this thesis, that hospitality, properly conceived, offers a means of advocating not only for social justice, but also for creation, without being patronising, in the former case, or anthropocentric, in the latter. However, endorsing an unrepentant strategy of superficial smiles, surveys, and tick-boxes instrumentalises hospitality, and risks meretriciousness.

2.1. Racism and the Church of England

With regard to repentance, the presentation of *From Stranger to Friend* is deeply problematic on a number of counts. The cover illustration, the largest in the report, shows an anonymous smiling be-hatted Black woman of maturer years turning obliquely from a non-domestic kitchen-sink. First, there are no acknowledgements, pictorial credits, or permissions for reproduction in the report, so her identity and the context are unknown. Secondly, there is the blatant hypocrisy of using such an image after the racism encountered by the Windrush generation when they arrived in the ‘Mother Country’ expecting to attend the local church and be welcomed as brothers

NOS services were deployed to create the immersive rave-like visual and aural effects. See Rupert Till, “The Nine O’Clock Service: Mixing Club Culture and Postmodern Christianity,” *Culture and Religion* 7, no. 1 (2006): 93–110. doi:10.1080/01438300600625648. It is telling that Robert Warren, the vicar of St Thomas’, considered it ‘a compliment’ to say that NOS was ‘very well organized, and run much more like a business than a church’ (Robert Warren, *In the Crucible: The Testing and Growth of a Local Church* (Crowborough: Highland Books, 1989), 225, cited in Lucy Robinson and Chris Warne, “‘Embracing Divine Chaos’: Transcending the Sacred-Secular Divide in the 1990s British Rave Church Movement,” in *Exploring the Spiritual in Popular Music: Beatified Beats*, ed. Georgina Gregory and Mike Dines, Bloomsbury Studies in Religion and Popular Music (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 98). The fact that Brain never served a curacy, the lack of oversight, and the failure to investigate the initial complaint against him, taken in conjunction with Warren’s comment, are illustrative of the Church of England’s abiding problems of obsession with success, and inability to take allegations of abuse seriously, whether it be sexual, spiritual, or racial.

⁵¹ Andrew Roberts, “Fresh Expressions: What They Are,” 131.

⁵² ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God’ (2 Cor. 1:3–4).

and sisters in the faith.⁵³ Damningly, France-Williams relates the pain of invisibility and the requirement to smile compliantly in a bid to receive recognition and acceptance, even today.⁵⁴ Thirdly, the history of the representation of Black bodies engaged in ‘cheerful’ labour makes this a racist positioning, particularly when juxtaposed with the title *From Stranger to Friend*, as it summons the imperial privilege of the metropole.⁵⁵ Although he was using it of Britain vis-à-vis Europe,⁵⁶ John Major’s much-mocked invocation,⁵⁷ as Prime Minister, of George Orwell’s ‘old maids biking to Holy Communion through the mists of the autumn morning’⁵⁸ speaks volumes about the residual place of the Church of England in the English imaginary.⁵⁹

⁵³ France-Williams justifiably challenges the Archbishop of Canterbury’s use in print of a quotation from Samuel Smiles to shape a narrative of historic welcome: ‘ “The large and liberal spirit of the English church, and the glorious asylum which England has in all times given to foreigners flying for refuge against oppression and tyranny ” ’ (Justin Welby, *Reimagining Britain: Foundations for Hope* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 199, cited in A. D. A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship*, xx). The irony is that those immigrants on the SS *Empire Windrush*—a riverine name that, for the believer, collapses religion and empire in the echoes of Pentecost—came in response to the need of the former oppressor. Once again their labour was extracted, although they themselves were rebuffed, and their qualifications rejected. For statistics, see Tony Sewell, *Keep on Moving: The Windrush Legacy* (London: Voice Enterprises, 1998), 35, cited in Babatunde Aderemi Adebisi, “African and Caribbean Pentecostalism in Britain,” in *Pentecostals and Charismatics in Britain: An Anthology*, ed. Joe Aldred (London: SCM Press, 2019), 29.

⁵⁴ A. D. A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship*, 3.

⁵⁵ Reddie traces the persistence of ‘constructions of the Black body as other’ in the body politic and churches in a line back from Brexit, through the Windrush deportations to ‘Mission Christianity’ and the ‘White hegemonic power’ of Empire (Anthony G. Reddie, “Racial Justice for the Windrush Generation in Great Britain,” *The Ecumenical Review* 72, no. 1, *Global Manifestations of Racism Today* (2020): 76–80, 83–86. doi:10.1111/erev.12488).

⁵⁶ John Major, “Mr Major’s Speech to Conservative Group for Europe.” The Rt. Hon. Sir John Major KG CH (official website), 22 April 1993, <https://johnmajorarchive.org.uk/1993/04/22/mr-major-s-speech-to-conservative-group-for-europe-22-april-1993/>.

⁵⁷ Anonymous, “What a Lot of Tosh,” Leading article, *The Independent*, Saturday 24 April 1993. <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/leading-article-what-a-lot-of-tosh-1457335.html>.

⁵⁸ George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius*, reprint, 1941, Penguin Modern Classics (London: Penguin Books, 2018), 4.

⁵⁹ More recently, in another instance of the symbolic availability of the Church for political purposes, Prime Minister Boris Johnson, in his keynote speech to the Conservative Party Conference in October 2021, took inspiration from Gray’s poem ‘An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard’. He asserted, ‘we will get on with our job of uniting and levelling up across the UK’, before proceeding to contrast the injustices of the past, which had prompted the eighteenth-century cleric to lament ‘the wasted talents of those buried around him’, with the present affluence of Stoke Poges (Boris Johnson, “Boris Johnson’s Keynote Speech – We’re Getting on with the Job | CPC21 Speeches.” Conservatives (official website), 6 October 2021, <https://www.conservatives.com/news/2021/boris-johnson-s-keynote-speech--we-re-getting-on-with-the-job>). The various historical positions on the relationship between the nation and the Church of England are succinctly outlined by Bretherton in his account of Anglican political theology. See chapter on ‘Anglicanism’ in Luke Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life: Political Theology and the Case for Democracy* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019), 177–98.

(This is, of course, to disregard not only the misogyny of Orwell's description, but also the patriarchy which continued, after the slaughter of the First World War, to brand this generation, 'surplus' or 'superfluous' women, as with their sisters co-opted into the imperial project in the previous century as servants, governesses, or missionaries.)⁶⁰ Bereaved by a struggle between imperial powers, the very rubber of their bicycle tyres transports these spinsters into the humid heart of the horrors of the global colonial economy,⁶¹ belying Major's cosy conjuration of misty, timeless Englishness and the soul of Keats. However, in this context, it should be remembered that Major reanimates those whose comfort was assured and modesty preserved, in the decade following the 1941 publication of Orwell's *The Lion and the Unicorn*, by the Church of England's paternalistic and racist attitudes towards incoming Caribbean Christians (not least in the presumption of sexual incontinence).⁶²

In February 2020 the General Synod expressed 'lament' and apologised for the 'conscious and unconscious racism experienced by countless black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) Anglicans in 1948 and subsequent years, when seeking to find a spiritual home in their local Church of England parish churches'.⁶³ Four months later the House of Bishops agreed to the creation of a Taskforce and an eventual Commission: the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce published *From Lament to Action* on 22nd April 2021,⁶⁴ to coincide with Stephen Lawrence Day.⁶⁵ The report

⁶⁰ Amy M. Froide, "Single Women," in *Seton-Zia*, ed. Bonnie G. Smith, The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History, vol. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 48.

⁶¹ Tim Harford, "The Horrific Consequences of Rubber's Toxic Past." BBC News (website), posted 24 July 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-48533964>. N.B. This article is prefaced with a warning that it contains an image which readers may find distressing.

⁶² Robert Beckford, *Jesus is Dread* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1998), 11, cited in R. David Muir, "The Windrush Generation: History, Memory and Racial Reconciliation", *The Bible in Transmission, Reconciliation*, themed issue (2018), 30; Joe Aldred, "Pentecostalism in Britain Today: Making up for Failures of the Past," 2. *Religion and Global Society* (blog), LSE, 25 November 2016, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/76443/>; Muir, *The Windrush Generation*, 29.

⁶³ Church of England, "General Synod Votes to Apologise Over Racism," section a. 11 February 2020, <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/general-synod-votes-apologise-over-racism>.

⁶⁴ The Dedication of the report reads thus:

' "But God has put the body together...so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it"

1 Corinthians 12:24-26

scrutinised twenty-five previous reports relating to racial justice presented to Synod over the course of thirty-six years; from more than 160 past recommendations it identified forty-seven specific actions across five priority areas: participation (including appointments), education, training and mentoring, young people and structures and governance.⁶⁶ Three days before publication, the BBC broadcast a programme entitled *Is the Church Racist?* which revealed the use of non-disclosure agreements by the Church of England to resolve complaints of racism.⁶⁷ This included an incident where a young Black man filed a grievance about the receipt of an image of a banana with his face superimposed, and labelled ‘Bananaman’; inexplicably, this was not held to be racist.⁶⁸ Ordinands, curates, vicars, and currently unemployed priests were interviewed about their experiences of racism. Several reported having been reduced to tears, or were visibly close to tears, at continued rejection and criticism of them and their ministry.

This report is dedicated to the loving memory of Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry and their families. “Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” Amos 5:24’ (Church of England, The Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Taskforce, *From Lament to Action*, 2, ellipsis in original). (I have reproduced the layout to show the significance accorded to the Bible verses by their placement.) Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman, the daughters of the Ven. Wilhelmina (Mina) Smallman, the first female archdeacon of colour in the Church of England (she retired as the Archdeacon of Southend in 2016), were murdered in a London park in 2020, but their deaths were not initially given much publicity. See Abigail Frymann Rouch, “Implement Race Proposals or Lose Trust, Says Smallman,” *Church Times*, no. 8250 (30 April 2021): 7. The subsequent killing of Sarah Everard, a young White woman in another London park in 2021 attracted far more national media attention. See BBC, “Mina Smallman: ‘I Know What Sarah Everard’s Parents Are Experiencing’.” *Today BBC Radio 4* (video), BBC News (website), Broadcast 26 March 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-56450969>.

⁶⁵ Stephen, a young Black teenager who wanted to be an architect, was murdered at a ‘bus stop in 1993 in an unprovoked attack. The Macpherson Report into the mishandling of the case by the Metropolitan Police identified ‘institutional racism’ in the Police Service as a whole. See William Macpherson, *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*, Report of an Inquiry by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, Cm 4262-1 (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1999). At a memorial service to celebrate Stephen’s life on the 25th anniversary of his death, the then Prime Minister Theresa May announced the holding of an annual national commemoration on 22 April. See Stephen Lawrence Research Centre, “Stephen Lawrence: A Legacy of Hope.” De Montfort University, accessed 28 April 2021, <https://www.dmu.ac.uk/research/centres-institutes/stephen-lawrence-research-centre/a-challenge-to-conscience-a-legacy-of-hope.aspx>. In the previously cited article by Reddie, he also expresses his views on the racialised assumptions of police and press exposed by the case. See Anthony G. Reddie, “Racial Justice for the Windrush Generation,” 82–83.

⁶⁶ Church of England, The Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Taskforce, *From Lament to Action*, 9, 17, 20–50.

⁶⁷ Ruhi Hamid, *Is the Church Racist?* Broadcast 19 April 2021, Clive Myrie, Panorama (BBC One). I would like to thank Professor Robert Beckford for his assistance with regard to this programme.

⁶⁸ Hamid, *Is the Church Racist?* 16:37–17:25.

The Church of England had offered an apology for the part it played in the slave trade in 2006, but mention of the necessary ‘white heroes’ of abolitionism diluted the impact for France-Williams.⁶⁹ The equally necessary and needful corollary of making reparations for benefiting from those circuits of slavery has not been forthcoming, despite Rowan Williams, the then Archbishop of Canterbury urging the church to consider reparations when speaking on a radio programme in the following year.⁷⁰ As insiders to the Church of England, Barrett as an incumbent, and Harley as a trainee-priest use their status and White privilege rightfully to require a rethinking of priorities:

It is important to consider, we would suggest, why the Church of England has decided to ‘free up’ millions of pounds of its own assets to ‘invest in the future’ (focused on the numerical growth of Church of England congregations), but has so far been unwilling to contemplate financial reparations for its past’.⁷¹

Such corporate spiritualising of a man-made (I use the term deliberately) agenda is a wilful refusal to confront past sin and present injustice with repentance. I suggest that the blessing and favour of God follows righteous obedience, not strategies;⁷² statistics can be misleading, and spiritual growth cannot be measured in numerical terms, as Rich illustrates. The denial of brotherhood evidenced in the past is reprised by France-Williams who likens lack of divestiture to Cain’s murder of Abel.⁷³ The advance-preparation of the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland ‘Hong-Kong Ready Churches’ initiative⁷⁴ after the government offered an immigration route for British

⁶⁹ A. D. A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship*, 90–91 n. 1.

⁷⁰ Mark Oliver and Agencies, “Archbishop Urges Church to Consider Slavery Reparations,” *The Guardian*, Monday 26 March 2007. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/mar/26/religion.race>.

⁷¹ Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*, 182.

⁷² If Micah 6:8 is followed, humility and justice are inseparable: ‘and what does the LORD require of you / but to do justice, and to love kindness, / and to walk humbly with your God?’ (Micah 6:8). Barrett and Harley are writing before the publication of *Lament to Action*, and in the Introduction to the report the authors reflect on the past forty years of inaction, and are remarkably restrained in their observations: ‘This report is intentionally different in our focus on action. With 47 recommendations, some of which require funding and investment, there will inevitably be suggestions that this work is too big an ask or unrealistic in its aims and ambitions. While there will be a cost to implementing these recommendations, there will be a greater cost in failing to do so’ (Church of England, The Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Taskforce, *From Lament to Action*, 17).

⁷³ A. D. A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship*, 61–62.

⁷⁴ Web Editor, “Hong Kong Ready Churches – 28 January 2021.” Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (website), 6 January 2021, <https://ctbi.org.uk/hong-kong-ready-churches-28-january-2021/>.

nationals (overseas) in the wake of the imposition of new national security legislation by China,⁷⁵ does indicate that collective lessons have been learned. Troublingly, despite this joint-endeavour, if the Church of England does not take steps to address structural racism, this scheme could nonetheless re-inscribe the racial taxonomy of Empire in the person of the ‘good’ (post)colonial subject. Nam has also pointed out the lack of East Asian representation on the Archbishop’s Anti-Racism Taskforce.⁷⁶ Institutional racism is epitomised in the disgraceful capitulation of the hierarchy of the Church of England with regard to the suspension of the Revd Jarel Robinson-Brown.⁷⁷ The latter received racist and homophobic abuse and death-threats following his prophetic exposure of the nationalist discourse around British virtues, after the death from coronavirus of Captain Sir Tom Moore, centenarian fund-raiser⁷⁸ for NHS Charities Together in the first lockdown. The Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Taskforce issued a heartfelt statement in support of Robinson-Brown: ‘The description of his treatment as a “social media lynching” held deep resonance for many of us’.⁷⁹ So having looked at institutional construction of the stranger, and stories of rejection, I now turn to the question of the future direction and priorities of the Church of England, and whether its prelates and priests still choose to see it as ‘mission-shaped’.

3. Untidy Anglicanism

The words of Michael Ramsey bear repeating, even today, in discussions of the Church of England:

⁷⁵ Melanie Gower and Esme Kirk-Wade, *Hong Kong British National (Overseas) Visa*, Briefing Paper Number CBP 8939, 5 May 2021 (London: House of Commons Library, 2021).

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8939.pdf>.

⁷⁶ Nam, “Heed the Voices of Chinese Clergy,” 11.

⁷⁷ Harriet Sherwood, “‘Church Aided Pile-On’ of Curate’s Captain Tom Tweet,” *The Observer*, Sunday 7 February 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/07/church-aided-the-pile-on-of-curates-captain-tom-tweet>.

⁷⁸ Although uttered in a context of talking about spies, traitors, treachery and patriotism, Alan Bennett’s oft-quoted dictum about longevity and the patronising expectations of the English is not wholly irrelevant to adulation for the military veteran: ‘In England you only have to be able to eat a boiled egg at ninety and they think you deserve the Nobel prize’ (This is Theatre, “The Old Country.” thisistheatre.com (website), updated 1 November 2021, para. 4, <https://www.thisistheatre.com/londonshows/oldcountry.html>).

⁷⁹ Anti-Racism Taskforce, “Statement from the Anti-Racism Taskforce.” Church of England (website), press release, 8 February 2021, <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements-anti-racism-taskforce>.

For while the Anglican church is vindicated by its place in history, with a strikingly balanced witness to Gospel and Church and sound learning, its greater vindication lies in its pointing through its own history to something of which it is a fragment. Its credentials are its incompleteness, with the tension and the travail in its soul. It is clumsy and untidy, it baffles neatness and logic. For it is sent not to commend itself as ‘the best type of Christianity’, but by its very brokenness to point to the universal Church wherein all have died.⁸⁰

That Ramsey could make such an observation, and still become successively, the Archbishop of York and then Canterbury, speaks to an essential self-deprecation within historic Anglicanism. Although it is a forced comparison, it is interesting to juxtapose his allusions to fragmentation and brokenness, with on the one hand, the ‘broken’ stories of individuals from Chapter 4, and the restorative proposition from Wells that I discuss subsequently.⁸¹ I made the suggestion in Chapter 3 that the church was incomplete if it failed to recognise and incorporate those with disabilities, and so the lack of wholeness identified by Ramsey has its correlate in a fallen world (not, I must emphasise, in the minds or bodies of others). However, in recent decades institutional ‘soul’-searching by the Church of England has been confined to gender and sexuality,⁸² and the belated response to the emerging scandal of the historic concealment of sexual and spiritual abuse by clergy, alongside an ever-present narrative of decline.⁸³ Percy memorably refers to the ‘institutional narcolepsy’⁸⁴ which

⁸⁰ Michael Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, reprint, 1936 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 188. Avis sees this justly famous quotation as ‘an aspiration for Anglicanism rather than a description of how it is’, but it is striking that he omits the last four words without any explanation in his primer on Anglican self-understanding (Paul Avis, *The Anglican Understanding of the Church: An Introduction*, rev. ed., reprint, 2000 (London: SPCK, 2013), 2–3, here at 2).

⁸¹ See section 4.1, p. 240.

⁸² After protracted discussions and deliberations, 2020 also saw the publication of *Living in Love and Faith: Christian Teaching and Learning about Identity, Sexuality, Relationships and Marriage*, a report commissioned and ‘commended for study’ by the House of Bishops (Church of England, House of Bishops, *Living in Love and Faith: Christian Teaching and Learning About Identity, Sexuality, Relationships and Marriage* (London: Church House Publishing, 2020), copyright page).

⁸³ Hance has written on public perceptions of the Church of England and its leaders, and the sense that some have that it is ‘not for “PLU” [people like us]’ (Stephen Hance, *Seeing Ourselves as Others See Us: Perceptions of the Church of England*, Grove Mission & Evangelism Series, no. 135 (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2021), 7). As I have done, he also stresses the importance of social action and the mission potential of church buildings, and that the Church should also aim to be a partner in community action, and not insist on being host (Hance, *Seeing Ourselves as Others See Us*, 12–13). Finally, he asks how factors such as the decline in nominal Anglicanism, lack of diversity in the Church, and regional disparities will impact the Church in the next decade (Hance, *Seeing Ourselves as Others See Us*, 22–25).

⁸⁴ Martyn Percy, *The Humble Church*, 77.

delayed proper investigation of generations of clerical abuse: in a literally well-turned phrase, he talks of the propensity of leadership for projection of their own impotence onto survivors of abuse, while being, themselves, ‘unhealed wounders’ (an unacknowledged inversion of Nouwen).⁸⁵ I am not seeking to minimise the trauma or injustice suffered, and still suffered, by many, which has been exacerbated by manifest *inhospitality* and lack of charity, but my enquiry is principally concerned to advance a theoretical and situational understanding of hospitality. Accordingly, the following section will look at some of the guiding virtues to which the Church of England is committed in the second decade of this century.

Speaking to the General Synod of the Church of England in 2016, Justin Welby, the current Archbishop of Canterbury, was emphatically clear in his opening remarks: ‘a commitment to evangelism and witness comes out of love, not out of fear. It comes out of obedience to Christ, not out of a concern at the latest figures on church attendance. It is a sign of our discipleship, not a church growth strategy or a survival technique’.⁸⁶ Speaking to the same assembly in the previous year about the fact that ‘instead of joy and delight, evangelism and witness bring nervousness, uncertainty and guilt’, he proceeded to parody his own background in business:

The strategic response to this is clearly for a long-term, iterative and interactive, metric-based, evidence generated development of competencies across the widest possible range of stakeholders in order to achieve maximum acceleration of disciple input with the highest possible return on effort and capital employed.⁸⁷

Worryingly, he felt the need to add that his last utterance was ‘complete rubbish’⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Martyn Percy, *The Humble Church*, 78–79, 80. Cf. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*.

⁸⁶ General Synod, *Report of Proceedings* 47, no. 1 (February Group of Sessions 2016): 87.

[https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/RoP%20Feb%202016%20%28formatted%20and%20indexed%29.pdf)

10/RoP%20Feb%202016%20%28formatted%20and%20indexed%29.pdf. It is unfortunate that his official website records the second sentence in the above quotation thus: ‘It comes out of obedience to Chris’ (Justin Welby, ‘Evangelism is ‘Our Duty, Privilege and Joy’, Archbishop Tells Synod.’

Archbishop of Canterbury’s official website, 16 March 2016,

<https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-and-writing/speeches/evangelism-our-duty-privilege-and-joy-archbishop-tells-synod>).

⁸⁷ General Synod, *Report of Proceedings* 46, no. 1 (February Group of Sessions 2015): 18.

[https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/RoP%20Feb%202015%20%28final%20indexed%20version%29.pdf)

10/RoP%20Feb%202015%20%28final%20indexed%20version%29.pdf.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

(unlike Hansard, laughter is not recorded in the Report of the Proceedings of the General Synod, so it difficult to assess whether his remarks had been taken seriously up to this point). Nevertheless, Hackwood is suspicious of the rise of a restrictive notion of discipleship, that is driving policy, and which has become ‘coupled to funding’:

During the past few years, we have seen the C of E’s purpose shift to a very specific and narrow understanding of discipleship which is very Protestant, highly confessional, confident, metropolitan, and self-perpetuating. Sociologically, it comes from a place that is both wealthy and privileged.⁸⁹

His words are obviously aimed at Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) and the Alpha Course, which I discuss in the next chapter. With a welcome lack of grandiosity, the *Vision for the Church of England in the 2020s* published in November 2020 looks realistically to a ‘simpler, humbler, bolder church’ which seeks to follow the example of elsewhere in the Anglican Communion by viewing the Five Marks of Mission⁹⁰ not as church-centred, but Christ-oriented.⁹¹ The first strategic aim, of three, states: ‘we believe that God might be calling us to be much more a church of missionary disciples’.⁹² Despite the circumspection of the language, this suggests mobility rather than stasis, and a focus on equipping believers rather than a defensive preservation of existing structures, notwithstanding Hackwood’s reservations. The next aim moves on from the sometimes oppositional binaries of the ‘mixed economy’ of parish and Fresh Expression in *Mission-Shaped Church* to developing a ‘mixed ecology’ of parish, chaplaincy, online presence, and new forms of Christian community.⁹³ It justifies the usage by affirming that ‘Every church was planted once’, and happily for my theme of hospitality, the explication proceeds to mix metaphors in a tautological allusion to food, referring to the ‘diverse smorgasbord of different cultures and contexts which we serve’.⁹⁴ The third aim is diversity of age, colour, ethnicity, ability, and sexuality;

⁸⁹ Paul Hackwood, “C of E’s Crisis is About More Than Money,” *Church Times*, no. 8285 (31 December 2021): 10, 22.

⁹⁰ See *Introduction*, section 1, p. 2 n. 8.

⁹¹ Cottrell, *A Vision for the Church of England in the 2020s*, 1.

⁹² Cottrell, *A Vision for the Church of England in the 2020s*, 2, bold omitted.

⁹³ Cottrell, *A Vision for the Church of England in the 2020s*, 2–3.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

the report then declares: ‘By growing congregations of missionary disciples that are younger and more diverse, we will better serve the breadth and diversity of our nation by becoming the church of the networks of [sic] 21st century as well as it [sic] neighbourhoods’.⁹⁵ The ruinous consequences of the retreat from the racial diversity promised a generation since in 1985 after the *Faith in the City* report,⁹⁶ and the resultant loss to ministry, liturgy, and social renewal are graphically outlined by France-Williams.⁹⁷

In his theological reflections on these aims, Bishop Steven Croft writes: ‘To centre our life again on Christ is the key to the renewal of the life of the Church and in God’s mission’.⁹⁸ He adds, in a gnomic footnote: ‘In more technical language: our Christology needs to shape our missiology which needs in turn to shape our ecclesiology’.⁹⁹ Helpfully, he proceeds to unpack this in the text:

Through Christ we are drawn into the mystery of God the Trinity. Christ is the one who shows us the Father and sends upon us the life giving Holy Spirit. Christ is the one through whom creation comes into being and is sustained and the one who shapes the life and character of the Church. Christ is the one who through his Spirit, brings fruit: the harvest of justice; the harvest of new disciples and the harvest of a Christ like character.¹⁰⁰

I have already connected hospitality with creation and the Trinity in previous chapters, but the theme is not overt here; instead, divine initiative and the language of harvest serve to deflect accusations of obsessive focus on growth in numbers. Having so far encountered Koenig’s desired personal humility as a precursor to hospitality, and humility as an intended ecclesial characteristic, this quality will be discussed further in Chapter 7, when I consider Martyn Percy’s 2021 book *The Humble Church*. I now turn from a theorised aspirational hospitality, to one of the characteristics of hospitality I identified in the *Introduction*: social action.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁹⁶ See section 1, p. 209 n. 6.

⁹⁷ A. D. A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship*, 95–114.

⁹⁸ Croft, *A Theological Reflection on Our Emerging Vision and Priorities*, 3.

⁹⁹ Croft, *A Theological Reflection on Our Emerging Vision and Priorities*, 3 n. 2

¹⁰⁰ Croft, *A Theological Reflection on Our Emerging Vision and Priorities*, 3.

3.1. The GRA:CE Project: Presence and service(s)

The grammatical abomination and consequent visual irresolution of the trendily punctuated name of the initiative aside, as the subtitle promises, *Growing Good*, the final report on the GRA:CE Project, explores the relationship between social action, church growth, and discipleship in the Church of England. The report links perseverance to presence: Rich gives examples of how the church can provide continuity in the community amidst staff-turnover in schools, councils, and community work.¹⁰¹ However, she also identifies how growth needs to be considered more holistically, citing churches which serve refugees before resettlement, who then move on, but the sense of safety conferred by hospitality is carried with them as a legacy to other settings and churches.¹⁰² Rich graphically portrays inclusion and hospitality at various ‘tables of fellowship’ in the course of the same week: ‘a communion table, a congregational bring-and-share, a community café and a night shelter meal for rough sleepers’, and in a call for holism, rather than statistical reductionism, she argues that ‘in a church where the three aspects of growth, relationship and action were well integrated, these tables and what they represent would start to become indistinguishable from each other’.¹⁰³ This normalising of commensality and sacrality is at the heart of what I am arguing.

As far as the place and perception of the church in society is concerned, Pohl observes the near-uniqueness of the church in regard to mediating institutional safety:

¹⁰¹ Rich, *Growing Good*, 74–75.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 82–83.

¹⁰³ Rich, *Growing Good*, 88–89. Similarly, Giles presents his vision of meeting together for worship in an initial hospitable ‘gathering place’ that has a view into the ‘liturgical space’; the former will bear silent witness to the social action that the community is involved in, and have tables laid ready with some food for later (Richard Giles, “Gathering,” in *Journey*, ed. Stephen Burns, *Renewing the Eucharist*, vol. 1 (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008), 32–33). In a further example, Emma Miles, a lay church planter expresses her desire for a church on a council estate to create ‘home around the person of Jesus’ (Emma Miles, *Listening to the Voice of the Lay Planters*, Film to accompany launch of *Listening to the Voice of the Lay Planters* Report, February 2022 (CCX (Centre for Church Multiplication)), 10:10–10:11. <https://ccx.org.uk/content/listening-lay-report-launch>). There is a weekday breakfast, and she describes evening worship as ‘discussion around a meal, about Jesus, and about hope, and about God . . . a family meal together’; she also observes that church members and members of the community serve at a local food-bank (Miles, *Listening to the Voice of the Lay Planters*, 14:30–14:39, 16:30–16:45).

‘Few institutions provide the needed “threshold” or city gate for an initial encounter with strangers that could make them slightly more familiar’.¹⁰⁴ Fortuitously, for the shape of my argument, but unsurprisingly, presence is the first of the qualities identified by Rich. Indeed, Quash argues persuasively for the Anglican church as ‘a polity of presence’: ‘Our calling is not to withhold our presence from those around us’.¹⁰⁵ He uses the example of how, when tragedy strikes a community, the parish priest, in common with the local newspaper, is a ‘describer of the locality’; he is talking about embedded presence articulated through a recognised inheritance of place. The fiduciary duty which follows from legislated ubiquity is expounded by Wells:

[Covenant is] the spirit in which the establishment of the church – not entitlement to privilege, but the vocation to be present and receptive and a blessing in every community in the country – makes sense. This is the asset that needs to be built upon and deepened.¹⁰⁶

He speaks of the need to gradually turn the trusted security of ‘contracts’ into ‘covenants’: ‘Contracts can give us security and trust, but only covenants can bring joy and delight’.¹⁰⁷ Within the wider context of his paper, this transition can be read as moving from transacting the occasional offices of baptisms, weddings, and funerals to a wider service of the community, hence it can be seen as according with my expansive hospitality, and his affective language also permits the covenantal inclusion of Isaiah 25, discussed in Chapter 2. In addition, his contrast between contract and covenant allows assent to Morisy’s interrogation of motive: ‘Hospitality has to be offered generously and with an open hand if it is to carry the possibility of transformation. If the potential for transformation is addressed head-on hospitality loses this capacity, in fact it ceases to be hospitality’.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Pohl, *Making Room*, 57.

¹⁰⁵ Quash, “The Anglican Church as a Polity of Presence,” title, 38.

¹⁰⁶ Samuel Wells, *A Future That’s Bigger Than the Past: Renewal and Reform in the Church of England*, Renewal and Reform background paper (Church of England, 2018), 6.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-01/A%20Future%20that%E2%80%99s%20Bigger%20than%20the%20Past%20-%20Renewal%20and%20Reform%20in%20the%20Church%20of%20England.pdf>.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Morisy, *Journeying Out*, 174.

Thus, in the case of christenings and marriages, the implied relationship is not reducible to nominal attendance in pursuit of requisite certification for entry to church schools, or a photogenic (in some cases) backdrop, but encompasses ongoing support in married life, and with the upbringing, and spiritual nurture of children. Of course, in all encounters with parents, couples, or the bereaved at times of life-transition, there is the possibility of realisation of a previously unrecognised spiritual dimension to life, but with the exception of parents witnessing, and being witnessed by, the congregation at baptisms, eliciting such a response may be dependent on the perspicacity of the vicar, or celebrant. Indeed, in rejecting a misguided emphasis on the quantifiably successful, Emma Percy points out that sensitive ministry and appropriate services can often draw extended family and those on the periphery of these life-events into the ongoing life of the church.¹⁰⁹

Apart from a patrimony of draughty, inconvenient, and frequently inaccessible buildings, historical legacy has enabled a particular form of spatial hospitality in the offering of cathedrals as vaccination venues during the pandemic (other faiths with large buildings have also responded), but I am interested in how this usage is framed in terms of hospitality. For example, the Dean of Blackburn, the Very Revd Peter Howell-Jones, said:

At the heart of the Christian faith is love and hospitality, and a God that cares for all people. It is only right we offer our building as a safe and accessible space for this exciting inoculation plan and be prepared to serve the nation in these times of deep uncertainty and fear.¹¹⁰

In another instance, Guildford Cathedral was the venue for a drive-in clinic for influenza immunisation, and offered their space similarly in anticipation of a COVID-19 vaccination. The Dean, the Very Revd Dianna Gwilliams said: ‘Something as

¹⁰⁹ Emma Percy, *What Clergy Do*, 156–57. Martyn Percy (her husband, coincidentally) queries the Church’s monopoly on truth and trust in God. He gives an example (from Australia) of letting God speak through the ‘outsider’ in baptism services. The priest involved considers that a message coming from an outsider to church, but a family ‘insider’, is more memorable than the preaching of a ‘church insider’, and so the family is guided into voicing their aspirations for, and commitment to, the child at baptism (Martyn Percy, *The Humble Church*, 127–28).

¹¹⁰ Hattie Williams, “Cathedrals Prepare Space for Covid-19 Vaccination Centres,” *Church Times*, 12 November 2020, para. 8. <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2020/13-november/news/uk/cathedrals-prepare-space-for-covid-19-vaccination-centres>.

simple and basic as hospitality adds huge value to our community, especially at a time of uncertainty. For all cathedrals this hospitality demonstrates our place as places of hope and light for the nation'.¹¹¹ There is a notable difference in scale between the former seeing it firstly as a contribution to the nation, whereas the latter looks to the local community before adverting secondly to institutional identity and visibility. The contrast between architectural solidity and permanence embedded in heritage discourses on the one hand, and the vanished industries which once defined communities, and the nation on the other, is obscured; in those places of local and regional decline, churches are left as the last redoubt in communities that may have lost all other facilities and amenities (as Rich outlines in her report).¹¹² Thus, there is a fundamental dissonance between this crystallisation of Major's idyll, and the reality of ministry at the margins, and so it is necessary to look at how change can be effected.

3.2. Presence and politics

Having considered the establishment of the Church of England, and historical contingency, I will now look further at the intersection of politics and faith. Fancourt uses the Americans Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, and Anglican priests, Ian Mobsby, and the aforementioned Martyn Percy,¹¹³ as his dialogue partners, in his exploration of emerging church and Fresh Expressions, and he observes that their focus on missiology, or ecclesiology, tends respectively, to the 'superficial, sycophantic or scathing'.¹¹⁴ (Percy's particular views will be encountered again in Chapter 6, and in this instance I have to agree with Fancourt's assessment.) He also interacts less successfully with Pete Ward and his 'liquid church', to provide a bold critique of Ward's reading of cultural and postmodern theory as ill-digested.¹¹⁵ However, I am more concerned with the popularity of the latter's invocation of *perichoresis*, and

¹¹¹ Ibid., para. 9.

¹¹² Rich, *Growing Good*, 73.

¹¹³ As noted earlier, Percy has since announced his intention to leave the Church of England.

¹¹⁴ Graeme Fancourt, "The Participative Self: An Enquiry Into the Merits and Limits of a Theological and Postmodern Anthropology," PhD thesis (Durham University, 2010), 6, subtitle, 9–10, 13–16.

<http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/774/>.

¹¹⁵ Fancourt, "The Participative Self," 40–42, 125–26.

placing it in the context of understandings of hospitality in the Church of England (as he will also appear in the following chapter in the guise of an intellectual progenitor of Messy Church), so this preamble merely serves to situate Fancourt's own proposal of the participative self, which is nevertheless itself susceptible to Kilby's critique.¹¹⁶ Fancourt cites Kilby in his bibliography, but makes no actual reference to her article in his thesis; I have included his work to show an example of how hospitality can become abstracted. Fancourt reflects on social engagement and political action thus: 'the church is made up of those who explicitly attend to the *perichoresis* of God in themselves, their neighbours, and the world, so demonstrating the depth of participative selfhood'.¹¹⁷ For him, this is shown in believers' priestly celebration or lament,¹¹⁸ and 'a participation in Christ's invitation to the world to "Feast" ' by paying 'attention to God's *perichoresis* in the political sphere of social life, from attention to the dynamics of a family and locality, to serving the common Good within the complexities and ambivalencies of the liberal democratic state'.¹¹⁹ His thesis takes on unintended resonance when read in a time of a rising death-toll, lockdown, and restricted festivities, and his proposal of ecclesial praxis provides a rhetorical counterpart to Browning Helsel's scriptural re-institution of feasting from Chapter 3. He fails to cite Bretherton, who makes a cognate observation in his description of the distinctive pneumatic, prophetic hospitality of the church:

As an eschatological social practice, Christian hospitality is inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit, who enables the church to host the life of its neighbours without the church being assimilated to, colonized by, or having to withdraw from its neighbours.¹²⁰

Fancourt justifies his own argument by appealing to the past, but, by contrast with Bretherton, adopts the perspective of the church as influential guest:

Throughout its history, the Christian tradition has followed the pattern of being hosted at, and being hospitable to, many tables around the

¹¹⁶ Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection". See Chapter 3, section 5, p. 151.

¹¹⁷ Fancourt, "The Participative Self," 135.

¹¹⁸ Although his grammatical construction and agreement are suspect: 'the church can be seen to have a priestly role, offering celebration or lament for *oneself*, and also those unable to do so' (Fancourt, "The Participative Self," 132, emphasis mine).

¹¹⁹ Fancourt, "The Participative Self," 135, capitals in original.

¹²⁰ Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, 143.

world. In doing so, the Body of Christ has sat at both the small tables of marginalised people, as well as in palaces with the powerful. This is not the hypocrisy it might seem, but is the necessary outworking of the church's public attention to the perichoresis of God.¹²¹

His argument is not convincing, as such duality necessitates the identification of the inherent tension between negotiating the seductions of post-Constantinian accommodation, and the prophetic upholding of the poor and excluded, identified by Hull, and alluded to earlier.¹²² Barrett and Harley rightly identify the Church of England's attachment to 'the trappings of power' and assumption of a 'guaranteed seat at the tables where decisions are made'.¹²³ Fancourt is also unreliable in his transcription of an interview which mentions hospitality, where reference is made to Christine Pohl's book *Making Room*, as he transcribes her name as Pole,¹²⁴ which suggests unfamiliarity with a core text on Christian hospitality, thus exposing the limits of his methodological engagement with hospitality, despite its centrality for his interviewees.

Therefore, following on from Fancourt, and the particular example of vaccine-sites, the extension of hospitality in churches today could nevertheless be enlarged to include the brokering of relationships with health authorities, or those in local government, on behalf of the disenfranchised and discriminated-against, as illustrated by Smith.¹²⁵ Bringing together these sentiments, and those of Wells earlier, Roxburgh et al. write during the pandemic on the vocation of the church to restore the body politic, by moving from 'host to neighbour': 'In writing this new chapter the church is called upon to uphold and defend local institutions with whom it has built a relationship of trust – in defiance of capital recouping its losses and the state administering the debris'.¹²⁶ The resultant potential for conflicted value-clashes in

¹²¹ Fancourt, "The Participative Self," 134.

¹²² Hull, *A Theological Response*, 31–33. See section 2, pp. 214–17.

¹²³ Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*, 71–72.

¹²⁴ Fancourt, "The Participative Self," 240.

¹²⁵ Greg Smith, *Faith, Progressive Localism and the Hol(e)y Welfare Safety Net*, Temple Tracts: Issue 1, vol. 1 (William Temple Foundation, 2015). <https://williamtemplefoundation.org.uk/temple-tracts/>.

¹²⁶ Alan Roxburgh, et al., "The Plague and the Parish: An Invitation to the Churches. First Letter," *Journal of Missional Practice*, no. 12, *What's Next?* (Summer 2020): 5. <http://journalofmissionalpractice.com/plague-and-the-parish/>.

acting as a go-between is characterised by Reader as ‘entangled fidelity’.¹²⁷ Hence, for Reader and his co-author Atherton, ‘faithful action’ is one of the domains which ‘needs to be grasped afresh in what might be seen as developing a therapeutics of faithful dissent’.¹²⁸ Moreover, Hardy expresses the dangers of captivity to capitalist construction for the Church if it presumes to meet the needs of ‘the world’ as a supplier, or else concentrates on particular ‘personal’ need in a ‘a world of indefinite need’, rather than modelling freedom.¹²⁹ This is not unlike Ward’s cynicism about the structural shaping and meeting of spiritual need, in what he terms ‘solid’ church:

Solid church has found a place for itself in world [sic] by setting out to meet people’s need for God ... Need in this sense has been prescribed and anticipated; it is related to a paternalistic authority that knows best. Need is limited, bounded, part of a common human condition that can be met and satisfied. Spiritual need is taught and policed in heavy church.¹³⁰

Ward seems to be implying that an inchoate limitless need is circumscribed and reduced to the manageable (however, if Percy is followed, the same could equally be argued of the targeted interventions of a Fresh Expression, except that need is more differentiated).¹³¹ My position is that any church, whether inherited, freshly-expressed, or aspirant to liquefaction, does not need to defend itself in the sometimes strident tones adopted by proponents and antagonists. The Spirit blows where it will, and by definition, inclusive hospitality cannot be the exclusive preserve of any one form or tradition, but if a move of God is not looked for, or anticipated, then it is unlikely to be recognised, or indeed celebrated. I am now going to look at the respective proprietorial and territorial claims, and counterclaims, to missional

¹²⁷ John Reader and John Atherton, *Mapping the Material: Religious Practices in Changing Times*, Temple Tracts: Issue 2, vol. 1 (William Temple Foundation, 2015), 7.

<https://williamtemplefoundation.org.uk/temple-tracts/>.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹²⁹ Hardy, *Finding the Church*, 39.

¹³⁰ Pete Ward, *Liquid Church*, 72–73.

¹³¹ Martyn Percy, “Old Tricks for New Dogs? A Critique of Fresh Expressions,” in *Evaluating Fresh Expressions: Explorations in Emerging Church, Responses to the Changing Face of Ecclesiology in the Church of England*, ed. Louise Nelstrop and Martyn Percy (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008), 33–35.

efficacy, starting with the titularly self-evident in a 2010 book from Andrew Davison and Alison Milbank.

4. The parish and the Fresh Expression

In *For the Parish* Davison and Milbank assert:

To be a Christian is to exist in the Church: this communion of ‘abiding’, in which we are ‘sent’ as we open out to hospitality for others. We can go on enjoying hang-gliding or car maintenance but even our personal choices of enjoyment are opened up to hospitality and the eucharistic action of engagement and mediation of the stuff of the universe.¹³²

This statement of identity is immediately preceded by a citation of de Lubac on the Church, that God loves us ‘individually but not separately’, and so their ‘we’ is consistent with their defence of a traditional understanding of the Church and mission. However, even though hang-gliding literally offers another perspective, it is somewhat bathetic to see it as engagement with ‘the stuff of the universe’. Although they invoke the same aethereal drama as Winter,¹³³ the mystical corporate church they espouse is potentially passive, pursuit of personal hobbies notwithstanding. Further to the latter, I suggest that it is possible that the inspiration for the aerial comparison may have come from the recollection of a cartoon by Regan in Moynagh’s 2004 book *emergingchurch.intro*.¹³⁴ Hence, if my surmise is correct, their examples are intended as biting commentary, rather than illustrative. A weakness of their position is the assumption of social and cultural capital, which can be set against circumstantial or innate creativity as the *sine qua non* of the Fresh Expression (although Fancourt seeks to move beyond ‘patronising evaluation of originality and relevance’ by re-emphasising Christological distinctiveness).¹³⁵ Whilst I acknowledge that Davison

¹³² Andrew Davison and Alison Milbank, *For the Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions* (London: SCM Press, 2010), 166–67.

¹³³ Winter, *Eucharist with a Small ‘e’*, 125. See Chapter 4, section 2, p. 181.

¹³⁴ Michael Moynagh, *emergingchurch.intro* (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2004), 71. A subsequent coincidental mention comes in a 2017 chapter from Martyn Percy, citing an Australian book entitled *The Suicidal Church* (a reference to evangelistic reticence rather than daredevil hobbies): ‘Hang-gliding clubs are full of people who discuss hang-gliding. Rotarians discuss rotary; football fans bore others to death with discussion of their fancy. Christians, however, do not discuss Christianity’ (Caroline Miley, *The Suicidal Church: Can Anglicanism Be Saved?* (Sydney, NSW: Pluto Press, 2002), 7, cited in Martyn Percy, ‘The Household of Faith: Anglican Obliquity and the Lambeth Conference,’ in *The Lambeth Conference: History, Polity and Purpose*, ed. Paul Avis and Benjamin M. Guyer (London:

and Milbank are taking a stand against the perceived capitulation of Fresh Expressions to the culture of individualism with their high view of the Church, I contend that the hospitableness of dispersed church members is inherent to their Christian calling, rather than particular outward avocations. By contrast, Roberts argues for diversity and humility: ‘What is needed across the mixed economy of fresh expressions and inherited churches is a humble view of the local church and a high view of catholicity’.¹³⁶ Rowan Williams, who endorsed Fresh Expressions as Archbishop of Canterbury, addresses claims of collusion with a culture of consumerism. He sees mission as transitioning from unintended exclusivity into serious encounter with the ‘*strangeness*’ of the world,¹³⁷ unsurprisingly, this purposive unsettling is absent from Davison and Milbank.

In *Transforming Communities*, Croft sees the necessity for hospitality to be a ‘bridge’ as well as a ‘bond’, if fellowship is to turn outwards from maintenance towards mission.¹³⁸ This statement can fruitfully be compared with Hardy’s take on this dynamic:

On the one hand, the Church needs continually to be *moved* by God to *be* the Church through its critical reappropriation of the implications of God’s Trinitarian self-determination for its life. That is the mission of the Church to *itself*. On the other hand, the Church needs to be moved by God toward the world with which it inevitably lives. That is the mission of the Church *ad extra*.¹³⁹

Hardy later distinguishes the former as ‘worship-constituted’ catholicity, and the latter as ‘mission-constituted’ apostolicity,¹⁴⁰ but it is unhelpful for apologists to arrogate either direction. Croft compares the congregation and the small communities within the local church which come together for prayer, study, or social action; he sees the former as being ‘open, hospitable to all’,¹⁴¹ and identifies that the larger dimension is

Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 331).

¹³⁵ Fancourt, “The Participative Self,” 138.

¹³⁶ Andrew Roberts, “Fresh Expressions: What They Are,” 91.

¹³⁷ Rowan Williams, “Fresh Expressions, the Cross and the Kingdom,” in *Fresh Expressions of Church and the Kingdom of God*, ed. Graham Cray, Ian Mobsby, and Aaron Kennedy, Ancient Faith, Future Mission (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012), 2, emphasis in original.

¹³⁸ Croft, *Transforming Communities*, 174.

¹³⁹ Hardy, *Finding the Church*, 34–35, emphasis in original.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁴¹ Croft, *Transforming Communities*, 79, table 2.

a necessary corrective to the dynamics of a small group. He writes sardonically of the ‘small group which becomes introverted and quickly sees itself near the heart of the purposes of God, if not the centre of the spiritual drama of the universe’.¹⁴² Consistent with my outlining of the scriptural and cultural background of hospitality in Chapters 1 and 2, Croft comes against an imperfect sense of history and divine purpose in the assertion: ‘The Christian Church needs to understand and relearn in every generation that God’s call of a people to himself does not begin with Jesus or the Acts of the Apostles but with Abraham’.¹⁴³ So long as this statement is not taken as endorsing supersessionism, a truly humble and properly millennial perspective would militate against the hubristic difference he discerns between ‘attempting to shape the life of the church as a semi-failing institution . . . and finding a way forward with God for the people of God’.¹⁴⁴ In my view, centralised initiatives are often undertaken from a metaphorical place of mourning, whether of supposed past glories, or present insufficiency (as Croft implies), and such distorted vision leads to perceptual failures, such as mandating a template of ‘success’, or employing discriminatory metrics which measure numerical growth, in preference to spiritual formation and faith-development, as documented by Rich, and articulated by Emma Percy.

For his part, Martyn Percy is similarly sceptical about sustaining the social and spiritual capital of the Church of England if there is a short-sighted collusion with what he perceives as a post-institutional agenda in the support for Fresh Expressions.¹⁴⁵ Despite holding varying positions on Fresh Expressions, Martyn Percy, John Milbank and John Drane all predictably play with antonymic ‘staleness’: increasing novelty is the outcome of the loss of freshness for the first, greater managerialism for the second, and a decrease in innovation for the third.¹⁴⁶ In order to

¹⁴² Ibid., 78.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 112.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 119.

¹⁴⁵ Martyn Percy, “Old Tricks for New Dogs?” 27–28.

¹⁴⁶ Martyn Percy, “Old Tricks for New Dogs?” 36; John Milbank, “Stale Expressions: The Management-Shaped Church,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 21, no. 1 (April 2008): 117–28. doi:10.1177/0953946808089730; John William Drane, “Resisting McDonaldization: Will ‘Fresh Expressions’ of Church Inevitably Go Stale?” in *Walk Humbly with the Lord: Church and Mission*

assist practitioners, the Church of England has now introduced an initiative called Greenhouse to support Fresh Expressions,¹⁴⁷ however, the negative associations with ‘hothousing’ on the one hand, and the ecological colouring of ‘green’ on the other, muddy the intention to connote sheltered growth. (I trust that I am correct in assuming that the primary intention is nurture rather than intensity.) I am aware that economy and ecology both derive from the same root (pun not intended), but I am suspicious that the shift from the former to the latter in Church communications (as referenced earlier),¹⁴⁸ is intended to connote flourishing and organic growth, rather than numerical increase and cost-cutting.

Moreover, and in the light of the discussion of historic attitudes toward immigration earlier,¹⁴⁹ perceptions of blindness to racism are not helped by the prominent placement of an emboldened line from Kipling’s ‘The Glory of the Garden’ (since removed) on the Greenhouse page, with author acknowledgement only, but no life dates, source, or context, and seemingly chosen at random because it mentions gardening and effort.¹⁵⁰ However verdant the prospect, the broken dinner knives repurposed in the poem as gardening tools are not miniaturised ploughshares; Kipling intends the shameful scene to provoke the governing class into manly activity, whether colonial administration or global conquest. Kipling’s imperial implication

Engaging Plurality, ed. Viggo Mortensen and Andreas Østerlund (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 150–66.

¹⁴⁷ Church of England, “What is Greenhouse?” Last accessed 5 March 2021, since updated, <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/fresh-expressions/what-greenhouse>.

¹⁴⁸ Cottrell, *A Vision for the Church of England in the 2020s*, 2–3. See section 3, p. 226.

¹⁴⁹ See section 2.1.

¹⁵⁰ The abstracted line is ‘Gardens are not made by singing “Oh, how beautiful”, and sitting in the shade’, and I support my contention in the text from the lines immediately following: ‘While better men than we go out and start their working lives / At grubbing weeds from gravel-paths with broken dinner knives’. Incidentally, Ricketts numbers ‘And the Glory of the Garden it shall not pass away!’ among Kipling’s ‘more adhesive’ lines, but as a sentiment it is hardly congruent with the biblical understanding of the fate of nations, or indeed the vineyard as analogous to both (Harry Ricketts, “‘Nine and Sixty Ways’: Kipling, Ventriloquist Poet,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Rudyard Kipling*, ed. Howard J. Booth, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 111–12. doi:10.1017/CCOL9780521199728.009). Regardless of whether the line was incorporated on the website knowingly, or unknowingly, it is equally troubling. It is no coincidence that Bateman’s in East Sussex, Kipling’s home from 1902 until his death, is included in the aforementioned National Trust report, because ‘the British Empire was a central theme and context of his literary output’ (Huxtable, et al., *Interim Report*, 69).

should rule out casual quotation, and it is unsurprising therefore that Stotesbury equates garden and empire in this poem.¹⁵¹ In this thesis, I am summoning cutlery eirenicly to argue for missional hospitality, in preference to cultivating mission through exhortation or tainted horticultural metaphors. For the Church of England to liken mission to horticulture is permissible, but for the established church to still hearken uncritically to voices from the imperial past is problematic. Additionally, an introverted concentration on cultivating the garden of church growth can serve to deflect attention from other structural issues, including intersectional inequity, as I will evidence subsequently. The Church of England website also has resources for pioneer ministry, but the permutations of context and gifting in the Pioneer Charism Discernment Tool approach algebraic complexity,¹⁵² which of itself, is more than sufficient justification for my contention that hospitality is a crucial value and practice: beyond ‘mere’ welcome, it unites meals and sacraments, and values people and places. Rather than automatically adopting and ordaining the quasi-colonial perspective and persona of the pioneering expressionist, it might be more fruitful to consider the subjective experience of the tentative quester after God (this is surely the intent of *From Stranger to Friend*, despite its ecclesiocentric shortcomings). But, having identified stances on the structural spectrum, I now turn to agency, first with regard to renewal of church, and secondly, renewal of community through social action.

4.1. Rejection and renewal

In considering how renewal will come about, Wells writes with conviction and revelatory perception in a 2018 paper for the Church of England’s ‘Renewal & Reform’¹⁵³ programme:

¹⁵¹ John A. Stotesbury, “Rudyard Kipling and His Imperial Verse: Critical Dilemmas,” *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 1, no. 2 (1995): 40–41.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41273895>.

¹⁵² Downloadable from <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/The%20Pioneer%20Charism%20Discernment%20Tool%20%28hive%29%20%281%29.docx> via Church of England, “Pioneer Resources.” Accessed 2 September 2020,

<https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/vocations/vocations-pioneer-ministry/pioneer>.

¹⁵³ ‘Renewal & Reform is an ambitious programme of work, which seeks to provide a narrative of hope

Prophetic ministry is not about condescendingly making welcome alienated strangers. It means seeking out the rejected precisely because they are the energy and the life-force that will transform us all. If we're looking for where the future church is coming from, we need to look at what the church and society has so blithely rejected.¹⁵⁴

He refers to Peter's quotation of Psalm 118, and the stone which the builders rejected becoming the cornerstone, but more apposite in my view is Isaiah 61, where the broken who have been healed, freed, comforted, and beautified are those who rebuild the ancient ruins. Wells describes the malformation of mission through multiple exclusions, although he only identifies class, race, and gender, but he does specifically mention 'immigrants from the Caribbean in the fifties and sixties' as an example, by contrast with the obliviousness to appearances I detailed in the previous section.¹⁵⁵ Conversely, France-Williams questions whether there is a need for what he terms 'holy devastation' by people of colour in the Church of England.¹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Wells' take on decentred corporate transformation is a more than sufficient rejoinder to the fears of decay and desiccation reported earlier,¹⁵⁷ which locate initiative in practices, rather than people. Furthermore, an expectation of divinely-empowered contribution takes and transmutes the 'broken' stories discussed in the previous chapter, so that those who are spiritually restored effect social change, and are the

to the Church of England in the 21st century. It is rooted in a sense of Biblical hope and an understanding of Christ's call to us to pray that the Lord of the harvest will send out workers into the harvest field. It aims to build on the quinquennial goals of the General Synod to:

Contribute as the national Church to the common good

Facilitate the growth of the Church in numbers and depth of discipleship

Re-imagine the Church's ministry' (Church of England, "Renewal & Reform: Helping Us Become a Growing Church for All People and for All Places." Last accessed 2 September 2020, <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/renewal-reform>).

¹⁵⁴ Samuel Wells, *A Future That's Bigger Than the Past*, 5. A more colloquial take on this is offered by Stibbe: 'What we have come to learn is the paradox that a strong MSC is full of muppets' (in response to a stated preference to 'be in an MSC without any muppets!') (Stibbe and Williams, *Breakout*, 198). His mention of MSC should not be confused with *Mission-Shaped Church*, here it refers to lay-led Mid-Sized Missional Communities as part of the mission strategy of a local church. See Stibbe and Williams, *Breakout*, 49, 66–67.

¹⁵⁵ Samuel Wells, *A Future That's Bigger Than the Past*, 3. Commenting on the passage I quoted at the head of this paragraph, Barrett and Harley supplement his exclusions with 'sexuality, dis/ability and age' (Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*, 165).

¹⁵⁶ A. D. A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship*, 171.

¹⁵⁷ Martyn Percy, "Old Tricks for New Dogs?" 36; Milbank, "Stale Expressions"; John William Drane, "Resisting McDonaldization". See section 4, p. 237.

agents who metaphorically revitalise tradition. This is not about propping up a moribund institution, as feared by Croft,¹⁵⁸ but, in the terms of Chapter 3, corporeal inclusion. To fully realise and develop the force of Wells' argument, I contend that if coupled to my thesis of indiscriminate inclusion, such embodied vitality entirely confutes Everett's self-centred spiritual advancement from Chapter 3,¹⁵⁹ and Drane's assessment of 'cognitive captivity',¹⁶⁰ from Chapter 4. Nevertheless, to return to the rejected envisioned by Wells, there is the need to bear in mind Pohl's reminder that the restoration of people in community requires watchful support in some cases,¹⁶¹ as Wells himself acknowledges elsewhere,¹⁶² but his non-judgemental approach challenges cultural insularity, racism, ableism, and class-bound perceptions of privilege and entitlement.

Pre-dating any debate around Fresh Expressions of Church as valid church, and in the context of positing an ecclesial lack of vision or willingness to respond to God, Hardy writes in a not dissimilar vein in 2001:

For another thing, other societies may find the social vitality that derives from God without knowing that they do, and may be willing to live in this vitality. Thus, a 'pre-church' – as we might call those who find social vitality from God – may be closer to God than a 'church' might be.¹⁶³

In response to Hardy, I am not arguing that the initiative for hospitality resides with the church (whether traditional or emergent), or the believer, or can only be manifest by them. To illustrate: France-Williams relates how, while waiting his turn on a visit to the barber, he belatedly recognised *koinōnia* in the safe space the shop afforded men of Caribbean heritage to discuss their concerns, and eucharist in the impromptu offer of tropical juice and rum.¹⁶⁴ (A public-health initiative which trains hairdressers

¹⁵⁸ Croft, *Transforming Communities*, 119. See section 4, p. 237.

¹⁵⁹ Debbie Everett, *Forget Me Not: The Spiritual Care of People with Alzheimer's Disease* (Edmonton, Alta: Inkwell Press, 1996), 167, cited in Killick and Allan, *Communication and the Care of People with Dementia*, 38. See Chapter 3, section 1.1, p. 135.

¹⁶⁰ John William Drane, *Faith in a Changing Culture*, 31. See Chapter 4, section 4, p. 199.

¹⁶¹ Pohl, *Living Into Community*, 40–41.

¹⁶² Samuel Wells, *God's Companions*, 110–11.

¹⁶³ Hardy, *Finding the Church*, 40.

¹⁶⁴ Azariah France-Williams, "Raging Against Institutional Injustice," *How to Rage: Theology, Activism and the Church* (SCM Press (virtual), 30 January 2021). Hurvin Anderson, Turner Prize 2017 nominee, also repeatedly celebrates this setting in his paintings. See Tate, "Turner Prize 2017: Hurvin

as advocates to counter misinformation about organ-donation in minoritised communities capitalises on the selfsame trust and intimacy engendered in these settings.)¹⁶⁵ Accordingly, I maintain that recognising hospitality provides one means of expanding Hardy's response to ecclesial apathy, but implicit in Wells' inciting scenario is the discomfiture of insiders and the establishment. This same hope should also be summoned by the subaltern voices of Black and Brown clergy in the stories entrusted to France-Williams, but he records their despair at inertia and indifference. By contrast with the daughter of the Syrophoenician woman from Chapter 2, made visible by her mother, he talks of the people of colour in the Church of England who are 'dead to the system and we know it not. We are the ghosts. We can haunt the system, but we have demonstrated that we cannot heal the system, or even hurt the system'.¹⁶⁶ And so, with due acknowledgement of ambivalence, I turn from the transposition of hospitality into communities, into analysis of hospitality in society.

5. Hospitality as service and social action

Having considered catalytic incursion by the rejected, I now venture to provide a philosophical underpinning for inclusion and social action by conjoining hospitality as a Christian practice with the embedding of hospitality in community. Adverting to the foregrounding of deficit and divisive segmentation, Ruddick challenges needs-based service-delivery which ignores the community as a resource:

It defines people by their problems, ignoring their capacities. It relies on processes and programmes rather than relationships in order to address these problems and it divides communities according to need, age and stage; for example day centres for isolated elderly people or self-help groups for people with mental health problems. The consequence of this is the neglect of the whole person, all of us a combination of needs and strengths, creating dependency and poverty of identity.¹⁶⁷

For Pohl, a holistic response comes paying attention and slowing down: 'It means that

Anderson." Accessed 30 January 2021, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/hurvin-anderson-12583/turner-prize-2017-biography>.

¹⁶⁵ Hannah Partos, "Lifesaving Small Talk: The Hairdressers Trained to Chat About Organ Donation," *Positive News*, 12 February 2021, <https://www.positive.news/lifestyle/health/the-bame-hairdressers-trained-to-chat-about-organ-donation/>.

¹⁶⁶ A. D. A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship*, 196.

¹⁶⁷ Ruddick, *From the Ground Up*, 6.

we view individuals as human beings rather than as embodied needs or interruptions'.¹⁶⁸ By contrast with a bureaucratic impetus to professionalise services, and a 'needs-meeting perspective',¹⁶⁹ Morisy talks of the 'graceful possibilities associated with informality and being alongside *without power*' in amateur volunteering.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, she is wary of the routinisation of supposedly compassionate service:

episodic approaches to social action do not carry the same risk of drifting into 'needs meeting'. It remains something special rather than routine, and retains an essential 'I-Thou' relationship more effectively than regular provision, where over time the 'I-It' relationship that talks of clients and users is hard to resist.¹⁷¹

Indeed, Tickle calls these acts of 'inhumane kindness', saying, 'we have acted out of the I/them or us/them mindset that is the chasm between morally laudable action and a one-in-Christ action that unites both pieces of a fair exchange'.¹⁷² Unsurprisingly, Morisy herself is adamant about hospitality as reciprocal and permissive: 'Allowing autonomy is an essential characteristic of hospitality and it is why hospitality is a radical rather than puny or condescending act'.¹⁷³ Morisy further suggests that discussion of mission (and indeed church), might be better allowed to remain in the subsidiary awareness of Polanyi's 'tacit' knowledge, rather than brought to an inhibiting 'focal' awareness.¹⁷⁴ She concludes that 'effective mission is something that emerges as a result of looking and journeying outward rather than by means of a self-conscious and self-regarding process'.¹⁷⁵

In her thoughts about the surprising success of Fresh Expressions in rural areas, Martin suggests limits to 'specialness' if discipleship is to be encouraged, but still expresses the need for reciprocity. She declares faithfulness to be a needed response, because 'if "specialness" has become ordinary currency, it delays that

¹⁶⁸ Pohl, "Hospitality, a Practice and a Way of Life," 40.

¹⁶⁹ Morisy, *Journeying Out*, 26, sub-heading.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 31, emphasis in original.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁷² Tickle, "Changes and a Changeless Faith," 68.

¹⁷³ Morisy, *Journeying Out*, 215.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 15, 20 n. 19.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

moment of realization in the churchgoer that they need to make a quotidian commitment – with their presence and personal gifts (including financial commitment)’.¹⁷⁶ In another pertinent article, Rooms problematises the giving of food, or other ‘“free”’ gifts, by churches as part of their outreach, as a perversion of mission.¹⁷⁷ Citing Walter, he evidences how ‘“pathologies of gift-exchange result in acts of misrecognition”’ which, in a by now familiar refrain, occur ‘“when a person comes to be only a recipient and is never empowered as a giver”’.¹⁷⁸ With similarities to the arguments of Barrett and Harley, which I will explore next, Rooms proceeds to argue for a conscientisation which refuses comparison with God as giver, and looks instead to the agency of the other to give in their turn: ‘there is so much more that we could be discovering in the other were we to allow them in as co-recipients of the promise’.¹⁷⁹ Demonstrating this reframing, and writing on pastoral care from a priestly perspective, Wells is clear: ‘The stranger is not the harbinger of scarcity but the sacrament of abundance – not the drainer of resources but the bringer of gifts’.¹⁸⁰ Further to the recognition of largesse, Wells writes of his perception of the ministry of the church in a deprived community: ‘the role of the local church was to be a *‘community of imagination’*: an understanding enhanced by Barrett and Harley’s conception of the priest as ‘story-gatherer’, rather than provider of instruction.¹⁸¹ The literal resourcefulness of Wells’ outlook complements that of Barrett, previously encountered as Chapter 4’s party-throwing rector, and gate-crasher of celebrations. I will discuss Barrett and Harley’s co-authored 2020 book in the ensuing paragraphs, beginning with an examination of power and privilege.

¹⁷⁶ Collins and Martin, “The Priest Attends Seven Village Fetes,” 18–19.

¹⁷⁷ Nigel Rooms, “Missional Gift-Giving: A Practical Theology Investigation Into What Happens When Churches Give Away ‘Free’ Gifts for the Sake of Mission,” *Practical Theology* 8, no. 2 (June 2015): 99–111. doi:10.1179/1756074815Y.0000000006.

¹⁷⁸ Gregory Walter, *Being Promised: Theology, Gift, Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 71–2, cited in Rooms, “Missional Gift-Giving,” 106.

¹⁷⁹ Rooms, “Missional Gift-Giving,” 107.

¹⁸⁰ Samuel Wells, *God’s Companions*, 107; Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*, 163.

¹⁸¹ Samuel Wells, *God’s Companions*, 7, emphasis in original.

5.1. *Being Interrupted*

Barrett, as a parish priest, and Harley, as an ordinand, issue a challenge to the Church of England, and their readers, to change priorities and perspective in a book entitled *Being Interrupted: Reimagining the Church's Mission from the Outside, In*.¹⁸² They celebrate openness to the unexpected (including casting daleks and a dancing triceratops in a nativity play),¹⁸³ and model the process of being open to exposure of privilege. To apply their writing to one of the commonalities I identified in my *Introduction*, Barrett and Harley remind those of us with power and privilege, that beyond the seeing-eye of hospitality there is the difficult and penitential realisation of seeing ourselves through the eyes of the other. In a call to greater acuity of vision and hearing, France-Williams remembers as ‘terror art’ the popular wall-plaque installing Christ ‘the Head of this House’, and asks who the ‘unseen guests’ and the ‘silent listeners’ are in the Church of England.¹⁸⁴ He also cites Pattison’s work on shame to identify how the chronically shamed adopt the ‘oppressor’s point of view’ and see themselves with contempt.¹⁸⁵ In previous chapters I have identified the reversal and overlap of guesting and hosting in the life of Jesus, and also in the life of the church, but Barrett references Jennifer Harvey: ‘identifying with the divine is about the last thing that a white person whose life is embedded in white-supremacist structures should be doing’, and describes his own moment of painful realisation.¹⁸⁶ Further to

¹⁸² Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 115–16.

¹⁸⁴ A. D. A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship*, 32–33. Robinson-Brown recalls that the living room of every house he lived in growing up had a Bible open to Psalm 23: ‘Somewhere between the Good Shepherd who “maketh me to lie down in green pastures and leadeth me beside the still waters” was White Jesus whose eternal threat was embroidered into some random gift from Jamaica which told us, or reminded us, that “Christ is the Head of this House, the unseen Guest at every meal, the silent listener to every conversation”. In other words Jesus is “Massa”, watching your every move’ (Jarel Robinson-Brown, *Black, Gay, British, Christian, Queer: The Church and the Famine of Grace* (London: SCM Press, 2021), 7). Such objects acquire a wider cultural context in the study of similar decorations by anthropologist Daniel Miller. See Daniel Miller, “Migration, Material Culture and Tragedy: Four Moments in Caribbean Migration,” *Mobilities* 3, no. 3, *Migrant Worlds, Material Cultures*, special issue (2008): 397–413. doi:10.1080/17450100802376712.

¹⁸⁵ Stephen Pattison, *Shame, Theory, Theology, and Therapy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 105, cited in A. D. A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship*, 181.

¹⁸⁶ Jennifer Harvey, “What Would Zacchaeus Do? The Case for *Disidentifying* with Jesus,” in *Christology and Whiteness: What Would Jesus Do?* ed. George Yancy (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 94–95, cited in Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*, 79.

the ongoing discussion of hospitality (and of Zacchaeus in Chapter 1), Harvey recommends instead identification with the person of Zacchaeus as an oppressor and collaborator with ‘death-dealing’ imperial power-structures.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, in making a biblical and theological case for reparations, Reddie considers that ‘the example of Zacchaeus is a classic example for us to consider as we look at the whole question of reparations in light of Black Atlantic chattel slavery’.¹⁸⁸ He continues: ‘Jesus offers forgiveness by way of accepting his hospitality in the form of a meal, which some have seen as Eucharistic’.¹⁸⁹ Zacchaeus makes extravagant recompense for his extortion: such a reading once more complicates any naive reading of hospitality and inclusion, which does not require repentance, and an unsettling of power and resources from the Church of England. The foregoing calls to abdication of privilege go beyond the provider-mentality decried by Pohl and Morisy, to repentance, self-evaluation, and restitution, although the sufficiency of the call to corporate humility written into the Church of England’s vision and strategy for the coming decade is moot, as I intimate in this chapter.

The sedimentation of the power interpret and exclude within the institution is evidenced by the coming together in 2021 of MoSAIC, the Movement of Supporting Anglicans for an Inclusive Church, a disparate coalition which plans to work in dioceses ‘ “to give voice to the silent majority” ’.¹⁹⁰ MoSAIC brings together campaigns on issues of race, ability, sexuality, gender, and gender identity, which agree on their own lack of voice and representation in the life of the Church, but may not necessarily agree on all other matters of belief.¹⁹¹ However, partisan but justifiable

¹⁸⁷ Jennifer Harvey, “What Would Zacchaeus Do? The Case for *Disidentifying* with Jesus,” in *Christology and Whiteness: What Would Jesus Do?* ed. George Yancy (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 98–99.

¹⁸⁸ Anthony G. Reddie, *Working Against the Grain: Re-Imaging Black Theology in the 21st Century*, reprint, 2008, Cross Cultural Theologies (London: Routledge, 2014), 163.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Paul Handley, “‘Inclusive’ Coalition Formed for Greater Clout in Dioceses,” *Church Times*, no. 8241 (26 February 2021): 6.

¹⁹¹ Paul Handley, “New Coalition Seeks Greater ‘Inclusive’ Clout in Church of England Dioceses,” *Church Times*, 20 February 2021, Q & A, § 5. <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/26-february/news/uk/new-coalition-seeks-greater-inclusive-clout-in-church-of-england-dioceses>.

criticism has been levelled at it as a clergy-led initiative with no UKME representation on the Steering Group, an unpardonable omission given the stated aims, however accountable the members declare themselves to be to local diocesan convenors, and their self-chosen patrons.¹⁹² The website does not give any biographies, or reasons for participation, so intersectional identity is equally invisible in the constitution of the campaign. This notable lack of information is itself a manifestation of privilege, as an expression of the belief in the sufficiency of clerical identity. If it is indeed the case that only clergy can precipitate institutional change, then it points to the unhealthiness of the structures of the Church. Nevertheless, when the Archbishop of York spoke to the inaugural MoSAIC in the North Conference, he invoked the ‘scandalous hospitality’ of God,¹⁹³ which provides some justification not only for hope, but also for my thesis, although Reddie’s warranted scepticism towards such protestations, with which I began this thesis, needs to be accorded respect.

But to return to Barrett and Harley, and the devolution of power: they problematise a binarised ecology of hosting by looking to the peripheries and the marginalised, and explicate it in their description of the fluid centripetal hospitality of collective celebration at a street-party with an indeterminate host.¹⁹⁴ However, this directionality is complicated by France-Williams’ account of Black and Brown clergy consigned to an eccentric orbit within the Church.¹⁹⁵ Given institutional racism and systematic exclusion in the Church of England, he concludes, with a implicit nod to Audre Lorde,¹⁹⁶ that global majority Anglicans ‘cannot wait for the system to

¹⁹² Baker identifies all the Steering Group, and seven out of eight patrons as ordained, and only one member of the latter as being from an ‘ethnic minority group’ (David Baker, “What You Should Know About Mosaic, the New C of E Group for ‘Inclusion’,” para. 9. *Christian Today*, posted 2 March 2021, <https://christiantoday.com/article/what.you.should.know.about.mosaic.the.new.c.of.e.group.for.inclusion/136448>). See Mosaic Anglican, “MOSAIC Home: A Church for ALL England.” Accessed 22 February 2021, <https://mosaic-anglicans.org>.

¹⁹³ Stephen Cottrell, “Theology of Diversity,” keynote address, MoSAIC in the North Conference (virtual), 13 May 2021.

¹⁹⁴ Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*, 141.

¹⁹⁵ A. D. A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship*, xv.

¹⁹⁶ See Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” Comments at ‘The Personal and Political’ Panel, 30th Anniversary of the publication of *The Second Sex* Conference, Institute for Humanities, New York, 29 September 1979 in *Your Silence Will not Protect You* (London: Silver Press, 2017), 89–93.

dismantle itself. We have to do it ourselves. We need a hinterland'.¹⁹⁷ In their own quest to decentre, Barrett and Harley describe the edge places, or in technical language, the 'ecotone', the tension held between home, household, or habitat, expressed in boundaries and intermingling.¹⁹⁸ They thus expand the official usage of ecology encountered earlier, into potential imaginative encounter with the 'more-than human world'.¹⁹⁹ Following Coles, they argue for truth becoming enfleshed through the porosity of encounter across divisions of 'gender, race, class, age, geography, species, and more', in a move from the bounded 'body of Christ' to the extensive 'flesh of Jesus'.²⁰⁰ Thus, ecotone is a parallel term for the status-changing of liminality, and is descriptive of ecclesial encounter with the world at the borders, as a corrective to centralised activity and the 'missionary gaze', which sees only lack.²⁰¹ In contrast to the un-seeing of discrimination and exclusion, Barrett and Harley speak of 'looking together', and use Coles' "intercorporeal illumination" to instance how 'shared seeing will take our breath away. Often these moments will move us to tears'.²⁰² Once again, this has similarities with Pattison's account of affective worship, but here seeing is a continuing practice of attention to the presence of God: 'We see God's glory in the flesh of God's creatures, and we see God's glory *as* the fleshy creatures that we are, together, in the edge-places of our encounters with each other'.²⁰³ Thus, Barrett and Harley talk of gathering around the communion table, but they then transition to quotidian meeting and eating:

How can the 'foretaste of heaven' we enjoy in church whet our appetite for the heavenly banquets of many other dishes that are served up in kitchens and community centres, in mosques and gudwaras, on bus journeys and at school break-times, in picnics in the park and around the drinks machine at work?²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁷ A. D. A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship*, 138.

¹⁹⁸ Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*, 142, emphasis in original.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.

²⁰⁰ Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*, 147–49; Romand Coles, "The Pregnant Reticence of Rowan Williams: Letter of February 27, 2006, and May 2007," in *Christianity, Democracy, and the Radical Ordinary: Conversations Between a Radical Democrat and a Christian*, Stanley Hauerwas and Romand Coles (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2008), 191–92, cited in Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*, 149.

²⁰¹ Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*, 149.

²⁰² Romand Coles, "The Pregnant Reticence of Rowan Williams," n.p., cited in Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*, 150; Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*, 150.

²⁰³ Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*, 150.

This reciprocal hospitality and comprehensive receptivity is in line with Rooms,²⁰⁵ and complements Bretherton's vision,²⁰⁶ but is at odds with Chester's purposive picnics encountered in Chapter 4.²⁰⁷ As Barrett and Harley identify, such a dynamic reverses the hierarchical empowering of the laity to go out, implicit in the language of the Communion service,²⁰⁸ and looks beyond increasing either attendance, or the contents of the collection plate, to celebrate encounter and service.²⁰⁹ These qualities are also articulated by Wells, in his descriptive ecclesial ethics of the practices of the local church, wherein he characterises the people of God as God's 'table companions', those with whom he shares bread,²¹⁰ which recalls the many instances of bread being baked, broken, shared or solicited in earlier chapters, and is thus a suitable coda to this chapter.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at welcome and lack of welcome, and the place of the Church of England in the national consciousness, and its own estimation, through the lenses of presence and absence. The pastoral disjuncture between Emma Percy's elaborated metaphor of priestly mothering, and historical spiritual rejection in the 'Mother Country' by the 'Mother Church' is not to be dismissed lightly. The question of whether a Church that has in the past refused welcome on the grounds of race, and still treats badly the people of colour who serve her, can, in all conscience claim to be welcoming to others, is not easily answered. With regard to mission, Koenig and Rooms identify artificial hospitality, Roberts addresses institutional safeguarding, and Barrett and Harley tackle personal accountability. However, the Church of England remains an unsafe and exclusionary environment, as shown by the experiences of France-Williams, his informants, Robinson-Brown, and the participants in the

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 158.

²⁰⁵ Rooms, "Missional Gift-Giving," 107. See section 5, p. 244.

²⁰⁶ Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 103. See *Background and reflections*, section 3, p. 41.

²⁰⁷ Chester, *A Meal with Jesus*, 79–81. See Chapter 4, section 1.1, pp. 169–70 n. 12.

²⁰⁸ Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*, 74–76.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 63–68.

²¹⁰ Samuel Wells, *God's Companions*, 11–12.

Panorama programme, and further demonstrated by the necessity for the formation of the MoSAIC coalition. Despite the Archbishop of York's enthusiastic endorsement of the 'scandalous hospitality' of God as a model, the lack of reparations and institutional reconsideration give credence to the claim from Reddie, with which I began, of hospitality as ecclesial panacea. The Church will be judged on whether it expedites the recommendations contained in *From Lament to Action*. If the ecclesial inheritors of advantage fail to renounce privilege, then it is premature to expect the national wound of racism to cicatrise. To be more than a sop, hospitality in this context has to recognise the constant border-crossing of those displaced from their rightful occupation of space by exclusionary practices, and promote their voices and ministries through a genuine re-ordering of priorities. On a small scale, Rooms recapitulates Pohl and Morisy on ethical parity between giver and receiver, but this condition also applies to institutional power, and the duty of care to clergy and worshippers alike.

I commenced by assessing the advocated new strategy for welcome to be symptomatic of the unhelpful orientation towards growth identified repeatedly, whether by Percy in his denunciation of Fresh Expressions, or by Barrett and Harley in their defiance of a myopic focus on statistics, and the magnetic pull of a particular construction of church. Barrett and Harley outline a different perspective on being 'mission-shaped' by looking to the margins, and so their hospitality is shaped by encounter, as in Williams' inciting call at the outset of the 'mission-shaped' strategy to seek out '*strangeness*'.²¹¹ Although, if diversity is too unsettling to be tolerated internally, then the legitimacy of the quest is brought into question. In common with France-Williams, Barrett and Harley also find the converse, that the familiar can be found in unexpected places. Ruddick, and Barrett and Harley draw upon the capacity, resourcefulness, and giftedness of communities, which is echoed explicitly in the language of the individual as gift used by Wells and Rooms, and implied in the

²¹¹ Rowan Williams, "Fresh Expressions, the Cross and the Kingdom," 2, emphasis in original. See section 4, p. 236.

quotations from Pohl, but explicit in her wider writing on hospitality. Pohl, and Barrett and Harley all celebrate interruptions, but in the case of the latter, this also includes the rupturing of complacency. Nevertheless, the thoughtful hospitality and service propounded by Pohl and Morisy, the individual recognition of privilege advocated by Barrett and Harley, and the change of mind-set proposed by Wells, all seek to locate hospitality in community, not as response to an institutional initiative promoting welcome. The need for selectivity in taking from the practices of business is shown in the contrast between uncritical adoption in *From Stranger to Friend*, and the failure of emulation on matters of safeguarding and diversity bemoaned by Percy. I used a number of sources to position the Church as initiator or potential partner in post-COVID dialogue with external agencies, but to escape charges of consolidation of power, equal hearing needs to be given to those on the inside whose voice is suppressed. The localised presence described by Quash, and depicted by Rich, can then acquire added depth, and the vision for the Church of England in the 2020s become more than a strategic desire for representative diversity.

Having in this chapter surveyed how hospitality has been defined by the Church of England (even in the refusal of hospitality), in the penultimate chapter I will investigate the uses and abuses of hospitality in evangelism. With regard to foretold diversity, the pandemic shift to online ministry will be covered across the next two chapters, and Chapter 6 will also examine the effects of privilege on representation. As well as considering the particular implications of the pandemic for people with disabilities, and older members of the church, Chapter 7 will ask whether the atrophied hospitality implied by the remedial strategies of *From Stranger to Friend* is borne out in practice.

Chapter 6

Meal-shaped mission?

The Alpha Course and Messy Church

1. Food and discipleship

In this chapter, I discuss two widely replicated models of evangelistic hospitality, both of which have their origins in the Church of England, but are now international and transdenominational. The wider uptake of the Alpha Course predated the *Mission-Shaped Church* report, and the inception of Messy Church was virtually contemporaneous with its publication, but it has subsequently been acknowledged in the literature as a distinct and legitimate form of Fresh Expression.¹ Understanding this context enables a differential understanding of their claims to identity, and their respective recruitment of hospitality. Messy Church makes a nominative claim to ecclesial self-definition, whereas Alpha has been forced to deny being a church (or a faction within the Church of England), amidst claims from insiders of institutional subversion,² or charismatic infiltration,³ and in the face of

¹ The Church Army Research Unit report *Messy Church Maturity* notes that Messy Church began the year that *Mission-Shaped Church* was published, and except for cursory mentions in the literature, Croft was the first to recognise Messy Church as a type of Fresh Expression in 2008 (Church Army Research Unit, *Messy Church Maturity* (Sheffield: Church Army, 2019), 1–2). See Steven Croft, ed., *Mission-Shaped Questions: Defining Issues for Today's Church*, Explorations (London: Church House Publishing, 2008), 12.

² Ward, who was then the Archbishop of Canterbury's Adviser in Youth Ministry, writes: 'Alpha is a work of God, but it is also a religious cultural industry offering product to consumers. Such an arrangement introduces significant new elements into the life of the Church of England. This is a dynamic where power has shifted away from episcopal hierarchies and bureaucratic synodical government towards the market' (Pete Ward, "Alpha – the McDonaldization of Religion?" *Arvil* 15, no. 4 (1998): 286). In a subsequent interview, Ward states, 'if I were to write the article again, there are four paragraphs at the end of the piece saying: "The implications about this are..... Alpha might be superficial, or it might be....blah, blah, blah." If I re-wrote it again, I wouldn't write those bits' (Stephen Frederick Brian, "The Alpha Course: An Analysis of Its Claim to Offer an Educational Course on 'the Meaning of Life'," PhD thesis (University of Surrey, 2003), 273, ellipses in original). Ward's meaning is unclear, and he is obviously speaking from memory, as there are five numbered points at the end of the article. The above quotation is taken from the conclusion, and so it could be included in his recantation, depending on the intended cut-off point. However, his critique is worth revisiting to show the range of perceptions of the Alpha Course, not merely because of the controversy it aroused.

³ Stephen Hunt, "The Alpha Program: Charismatic Evangelism for the Contemporary Age," *Pneuma* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 74, 78–79. doi:10.1163/157007405774270329. Watling is more measured in coming to broadly similar conclusions, but Ward is unique in his claim of a power shift (n. 2 above). See Tony Watling, "'Experiencing' Alpha: Finding and Embodying the Spirit and Being Transformed—Empowerment and Control in a ('Charismatic') Christian Worldview," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 20, no. 1 (2005): 91–108. doi:10.1080/1353790052000313927.

external sneering or bemusement.⁴ I intend to evaluate the Alpha Course insofar as the claims and defences made for it relate to hospitality, but I am not concerned with the merits of Alpha as a means of evangelism. Similarly, I will concentrate on menus and communal eating in Messy Church in order to demonstrate how particular norms and beliefs complicate the practice of hospitality in the context of outreach.

From a beginning as an internal introduction to apologetics at Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB), designed for church-going Christians, Alpha is now synonymous with hospitality in the minds of many believers. The course at HTB evolved from a recognisable household hospitality into larger venues, and despite Brookes ascribing the initial hospitality merely to ‘local custom’ rather than deliberate strategy,⁵ I do wonder whether the meal, although indubitably hospitable, originated in the pragmatic recognition by a church located in central London that their constituency comprised commuting city-workers. I am not seeking to impugn the success of the Alpha Course (by whatever metric), but it is my contention that its ubiquity, along with the annual autumnal launch, as a now accepted part of the church calendar,⁶ has led to the unspoken consignment of hospitality to the service of evangelism. Accordingly, I will assess the coherence of the hospitality deployed by Holy Trinity Brompton in relation to the Alpha Course, and the consistency of hospitality across courses elsewhere. I will also consider the arguments of those who deem the offered hospitality excessive, or deficient, and I will suggest that the particular hospitality showcased by HTB has fallen short by exhibiting sexist and ableist attitudes. The Archbishop of Canterbury’s justification for discipleship in the Church of England was discussed in the last chapter, and both Alpha and Messy Church seek to encourage discipleship, so I will evaluate their respective conceptualisations of hospitality, Trinitarian hospitality, and

⁴ Charles Foster, “From Knightsbridge to the Nations: The Alpha Movement and the Future of Christendom,” *Contemporary Review* 288, no. 1682 (Autumn 2006): 320–21; Jon Ronson, “Catch Me If You Can,” *The Guardian: Weekend*, Saturday 21 October 2000, 10.

⁵ Andrew Brookes, “Holy Trinity Brompton and the Formation of Alpha,” in *The Alpha Phenomenon: Theology, Praxis and Challenges for Mission and Church Today*, ed. Andrew Brookes (London: Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2007), 20 n. 12.

⁶ For example, a recommendation that a new welcome strategy should follow the Autumn launch of Alpha. See Church of England, The Archbishops’ Council, *From Stranger to Friend*, 17.

the place of Holy Communion, in achieving this aim. I will also consider the move online necessitated by the pandemic, but I commence with Alpha's modest claim to be a means of proclamation.

2. Publishing the good news?

On the Alpha UK website, a highlighted quote from a Global Impact Study, commissioned from the US-based Barna Group in 2016, inaccurately asserts of those surveyed that '93% of churches said Alpha is an effective tool for evangelism'.⁷ As a course coming out of the evangelical tradition, I take the wording of the prompt 'effective tool' to signify human inadequacy, as conversion is supremely the work of the Holy Spirit (a point reiterated by Tomlin and Millar in their insider-evaluation of the course).⁸ Given the sometimes virulent criticism directed towards Alpha and HTB, the phrasing seemingly also functions to allay fears of ulterior motives. This assertion of intermediation rather than recruitment is reiterated in an article in *The Spectator*: '“The Alpha course is for people who don't go to church,” explains Mark Elsdon-Dew, a former *Express* news editor who runs the PR operation. “But it's not a church. It's a publishing company. It's a resource for churches to use, to introduce people to Christianity”'.⁹ I have reproduced this quote in context to show how the statement is juxtaposed with the professional background in journalism of the speaker, although for readers predisposed to scepticism, with no ecclesial understanding, this statement might well be equated with the denial of being a cult. Similarly, Heard quotes Nicky Gumbel, former curate of HTB, and now its vicar, and the evangelist who fronts most Alpha presentations, who developed Alpha into its current form, as saying

⁷ Alpha, “Global Impact Study.” Alpha UK (website), Accessed 20 October 2020, <https://alpha.org.uk/global-impact-study>. This claim confuses two separate statistics, as 93% of 'promoters' of the course (i.e. church leaders and course administrators) would 'recommend or encourage another organization to run Alpha', but only 69% thought it 'very effective' as 'a tool' for 'evangelization'. Whereas, for the other options of 'Discipleship' and 'Building community', the same top-banding was selected by 61% and 72% of respondents respectively. See the summary of results, downloadable from the same page. The Alpha website describes Alpha as 'a tool built for local churches based on hospitality, sharing and open conversation' (Alpha, What is Alpha? Alpha (website), Accessed 20 October 2020, <https://alpha.org/home>).

⁸ See section 3.

⁹ Matthew Bell, “Alpha Rising,” *The Spectator*, 30 November 2013, para. 4. Last accessed 21 October 2020, <https://life.spectator.co.uk/articles/alpha-rising/>.

disarmingly: ‘We found something that works and we’ve been trying to find out why it works’.¹⁰ If the suspicious are to be believed, this is a feigned diffidence, but given the iterative development of Alpha his reluctance to speculate is consistent with a *post hoc* theologising of the proffered hospitality (the theological rationale of Tomlin and Millar will be examined subsequently).¹¹ Notwithstanding HTB’s internal commitment to hospitality as part of church life,¹² such comments, whether intended as indirect repudiation of allegations of indoctrination (see Hunt below), or not, may have the inadvertent effect of instrumentalising the hospitality component of the course, as I will now show.

2.1. Alpha and its critics

The Alpha Course, an introduction to Christian faith in the context of weekly meals, started at Holy Trinity Brompton in London, and has since extended beyond the Church of England, and is now found worldwide, including improbably, the Malaysian prison system.¹³ This latter fact of cross-cultural transposition to a carceral setting of an initially *ad hoc* course for church members unintentionally renders Hunt’s statement in *The Alpha Enterprise* the more concerning: ‘It could be argued that Alpha takes people out of their natural environment, plies them with food and personal attention, and then subjects them to systematic indoctrination over a period of weeks’.¹⁴ Despite this tendentious statement, Hunt does acknowledge subsequently that people can drop out at any point: the terminal words of the book are ‘undue coercion remains a possibility, but there is a great danger in overstating the case’.¹⁵ Tomlin and Millar give an emic view: ‘So, the real centre of Alpha is not the talk

¹⁰ Nicky Gumbel, “Introduction to Alpha,” College Lecture (Ridley Hall, Cambridge, 23 February, 2006), cited in James Heard, *Inside Alpha: Explorations in Evangelism*, reprint, 2009 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 26.

¹¹ See section 3.

¹² Brookes, “Holy Trinity Brompton,” 11–12.

¹³ See Alpha Malaysia, “Share Life, Faith, Hope, and Jesus at Alpha.” Accessed 3 May 2022, <https://malaysia.alpha.org/what-is-alpha>. This page has a section that states: ‘In churches, cafes, prisons, schools, at home, anywhere people can gather, Alpha can run’, but an earlier page, which juxtaposed a high-security fence and a testimony has been taken down (Alpha Malaysia, last accessed 20 October 2020, <https://malaysia.alpha.org/prisons/>).

¹⁴ Stephen Hunt, *The Alpha Enterprise: Evangelism in a Post-Christian Era* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 245.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 246.

scheme but the experience it gives of church and Christian community'.¹⁶ The most controversial part of the course is the optional weekend away, on the topic of the Holy Spirit, which, in Hunt's opinion, 'constitutes, in many respects the crowning point of the programme'.¹⁷ Some participants are nervous about the prospect of 'brainwashing', or think they have signed up for a 'brainwashing cult'.¹⁸

If proven, the detractors' view that Alpha hospitality connives at a psychic assault on unwitting participants, would essentially challenge part of my argument in Chapter 3 that multi-faceted hospitality can reinforce dignity and personhood when spiritual and intellectual capacity is brought into question, but the facts of self-enrolment on Alpha, and subsequent attrition over the duration of the course,¹⁹ render such claims implausible. From an etic perspective, Hunt references Ritzer's McDonaldization theory to judge the meal as formulaic: 'The meal is calculated to be a common experience and likely to enhance the conditions in which people will begin to integrate into the Alpha group'.²⁰ Furthermore, Hunt cynically attributes emergent segmentation by mode of delivery, or audience, to the pursuit of McGavran's 'homogeneous unit principle' of evangelism²¹ (in essence a colonialist justification for caste-differentiated mission predicated on 'like attracting like'). Martyn Percy welcomes the opportunity to recast an earlier 'mischievous, tongue-in-cheek and waspish swipe' at Alpha for the Foreword of Hunt's book,²² and then proceeds to lampoon the 'Knightsbridge accent' of Alpha, by conjuring imaginary participants

¹⁶ Graham Tomlin and Sandy Millar, "Assessing Aspects of the Theology of Alpha Courses," *International Review of Mission* 96, no. 382–383 (July–October 2007): 259. doi:10.1111/j.1758–6631.2007.tb00606.x.

¹⁷ Hunt, *The Alpha Enterprise*, 50.

¹⁸ Brian, "The Alpha Course," 64, 178; Ronson, "Catch Me If You Can," 21. McBey discounts claims of brainwashing, but compares the Alpha Course with Network Direct Selling Organisations to arrive at a conclusion that Alpha offers differentiated forms of community according to people's need. See David McBey, "Co-Opting Community: An Ethnographic Study of Alpha's Attempts to Foster Urban Religious Belonging," PhD thesis (University of Aberdeen, 2017).

¹⁹ Estimated at 30 per cent by HTB (Hunt, *The Alpha Enterprise*, 184).

²⁰ Stephen Hunt, "The Alpha Program: Some Tentative Observations of State of the Art Evangelism in the UK," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 18, no. 1 (2003): 82. doi:10.1080/13537900305491.

²¹ Hunt, *The Alpha Enterprise*, 37. Although he wrongly attributes this concept to John Wimber, in support of his claim of Wimber's influence on HTB.

²² Martyn Percy, "Foreword," in *The Alpha Enterprise: Evangelism in a Post-Christian Era*, Stephen Hunt (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), xv.

named Sophie and Thomas.²³ (It is presumably not unintentional that their names represent the twin poles of biblical wisdom and doubt.) Percy duly opines: ‘Whether you are a consumer or a critic, Alpha’s friendly and bathetic form of hegemony deserves some respect’,²⁴ and yet this grudging admission is nullified by his barely-concealed distaste.

It is at this juncture that criticism of the imposition of a non-indigenous model of middle-class supper parties would have most force,²⁵ were it not for the fact that Alpha has now spread all across the world to countries with very different food cultures and social structures. Hunt rightly raises the possibility that ‘eating in public . . . [and] a feeling of being obliged to engage in conversation with strangers brings a sense of intimidation’ for some,²⁶ although Richards argues that the distraction afforded by eating can mitigate any anxiety.²⁷ Brian is wary that the meal creates a sense of obligation: ‘To refuse the meal would seem impolite, but to accept it is to accept what lay [sic] behind it’,²⁸ but Heard is more concerned with the influence of group-dynamics on the vulnerable in the subsequent discussion-groups, or during times of prayer.²⁹ Social conventions and social pressure aside, Richards is of the opinion that the meal is both benign and paramount: ‘Rather than being simply a matter of function, the meal is perhaps *the* evangelising influence, beyond which the testimonies, videos and talks are (perhaps literally) the icing on the cake’.³⁰ Indeed, she suggests that focus on the message and delivery of the visible evangelist misses the service of those ‘Marthas’ who provide the food and create the atmosphere,³¹ and

²³ Martyn Percy, “Foreword,” xv–xvi.

²⁴ Martyn Percy, “Foreword,” xvi.

²⁵ Martyn Percy, “‘Join-the-Dots’ Christianity: Assessing Alpha,” *Reviews in Religion & Theology* 4, no. 3 (August 2007): 16. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9418.1997.tb00091.x.

²⁶ Hunt, *The Alpha Enterprise*, 59.

²⁷ Anne Richards, “Eating Alpha,” in *The Alpha Phenomenon: Theology, Praxis and Challenges for Mission and Church Today*, ed. Andrew Brookes (London: Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2007), 333.

²⁸ Brian, “The Alpha Course,” 54.

²⁹ Heard, *Inside Alpha*, 147, 159, 172–73, 174–75.

³⁰ Richards, “Eating Alpha,” 339.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 337.

it is to consideration of those helpers, and the construction of welcome and inclusion that I turn next.

2.2. A woman's place . . .

The Alpha Course has attracted a lot of media coverage in its lifetime, and I will argue that a newspaper article reveals more than was intended by the interviewee, so allowing me to construct a more nuanced account of the milieu which originated Alpha's famed hospitality. Mark Elsdon-Dew, described as a press officer by Jon Ronson in *The Guardian* in 2000, and now Alpha Communications Director, is quoted thus: "Nicky [Gumbel] bought standard lamps back in 1991," says Mark later that afternoon. "He took an interest in the food. There are flowers. Young, quite-pretty girls welcome you at the door".³² The breath-takingly casual rating of female appearance coupled with intentional deployment at the entrance is overtly sexist, and raises a wider moral issue, which falls short of the need for safeguarding, but does amount to pandering to the male gaze. (I take his inappropriate use of the designation 'girls' to be of a piece with his objectification of these young women.) His asides imply that food became secondary to the ambience once settings became larger and more impersonal, but such relegation to being on a par with the décor raises the question of the place of women in HTB. Heard describes it as being 'commonly known among staff at HTB, that he [Nicky Gumbel] ensures his Alpha group are "hand picked" to include an assortment of young, bright and high-achieving non-churchgoers',³³ which is another potential matter of concern, and an abuse of power.

In the 2007 book, *The Alpha Phenomenon*, Brookes describes an HTB staff team that did not have any female clergy (this more than a decade after the ordination of women in the Church of England).³⁴ By contrast, there are now ten women on the leadership team, not counting transient ordinands: seven curates, an associate vicar,

³² Ronson, "Catch Me If You Can," 19.

³³ Heard, *Inside Alpha*, 54.

³⁴ Brookes, "Holy Trinity Brompton," 8.

and two licensed lay ministers, which suggests a more accommodating stance towards the ministry of women in recent years.³⁵ However, this seeming softening toward female-leadership has to be considered alongside Nicky Gumbel's reasoning behind the lack of a residential weekend on the Morning Alpha courses: 'The main difference in the organisation and timing is the absence of the weekend away as we feel on the whole it is not practical for women to be separated from their families at the weekend'.³⁶ This modification exhibits stereotypical gendered assumptions about childcare, as the participation of men is never questioned. It also presumes that a day-time course facilitates the looking-after of children, while discounting the wider possibility that shift work, or family life, might prevent *anyone* from taking part in a scheduled ten-week course, let alone a particular weekend (for example, Hunt reports complaints of the course being too long and tiring).³⁷

In my view, such sentiments, coupled with the disparagement of nubile women helpers, are indicative of a prevailing attitude in HTB towards the unmarried. It is notable that of the suite of other courses also produced by HTB, that the five-session Pre-Marriage Course started in 1985, the seven-session Marriage Course in 1996 (both come under the same banner of The Marriage Course), whereas the Singleness Conversations did not occur until 2019, and consist merely of two downloadable audio talks, in contrast to video and in-person options for the other courses.³⁸ The married male co-presenter of the Singleness Conversations admits candidly that marriage and family life is often used to validate speakers when they are introduced in services, in a way which subtly disadvantages the single person³⁹ (in a not unrelated observation, participants in Brian's research on the Alpha Course

³⁵ Holy Trinity Brompton, "Leadership Team." Accessed 3 May 2022, <https://www.htb.org/leadership-team>.

³⁶ Brian, "The *Alpha* Course," 90.

³⁷ Hunt, *The Alpha Enterprise*, 179, 185.

³⁸ The Marriage Course, "About the Marriage Course." Accessed 3 May 2022, <https://the-marriage-courses-global.squarespace.com/about>.

³⁹ Will Van Der Hart and Jo Rice, "Session 1," 20 January 2019, The Singleness Conversations (London), here at 46:10–47:11. <https://soundcloud.com/htbaudio/singleness-conversations-week-1-20-january-2019/s-8GtFv>. Downloadable from <https://www.htb.org/singleness>.

highlight the adoring looks exchanged on film by the Gumbels as mirth-inducing, but also a possible hindrance to some).⁴⁰ In churches more generally, the up-front positioning of family life could lead to newcomers with more chaotic upbringings, or difficult domestic circumstances, feeling excluded, or a failure. Welcome, as an element of hospitality, should not reinforce gender inequality (implicit in the regrettable and patronising remarks quoted earlier), or imply the primacy of marriage, as apparently reflected in the chronology of the pastoral and educational priorities of HTB. Undeniably, the impetus behind this sequencing of courses is the damaging effects of relationship-breakdown and divorce, especially on children, but it does suggest that the apostle Paul's preferred option of singleness has been culturally suppressed, or in Christian terms, insufficiently honoured, perhaps because of the particular sociological background in which Alpha arose.

I have alluded to the ambiguous status of women and the unmarried, and another distortion of hospitality arising from an occurrence of problematic language, comes in the reported use of the profoundly offensive term 'moron', in the relation of an anecdote in an Alpha video-presentation. Nicky Gumbel tells a story, which in Hunt's opinion could be true or made-up, in which a woman uses the word 'moron' as a pejorative term for someone who has a family tradition of membership in a denomination not her own. Hunt concludes: 'The apparent moral of this story was that all those who do not have the ecumenical spirit, and by the way of argument, a particular view of the Holy Spirit, are dogmatic and ignorant'.⁴¹ This gratuitous insult is recorded by Hunt as occurring during the teaching on the Holy Spirit weekend,⁴² although without a specific reference, it is correspondingly difficult to substantiate, or indeed ascertain whether this has since been omitted from subsequent reissues of the

⁴⁰ Brian, "The *Alpha* Course," 183, 261.

⁴¹ Hunt, *The Alpha Enterprise*, 238

⁴² 'The Holy Spirit weekend is in many respects the centrepiece of the Alpha programme. It has two principal functions: firstly, to bring a greater integration to the Alpha group which is attempted through a round of pre-organized activities; secondly, to provide a series of teachings on the Holy Spirit which emphasize the charismatic core of the Alpha course' (Stephen Hunt, *The Alpha Enterprise: Evangelism in a Post-Christian Era* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 233).

teaching material. Hunt himself registers the word as a calumny, but does not seem to recognise the import of the term, and is more concerned about sectarianism, and the context in which it arises. But, by the time this material was recorded and distributed, it is arguable that even a non-professional should have been sufficiently sensitive to the negative connotations of the word not to have repeated it, even anecdotally as reported speech, as Gumbel is said to have done. (As I referenced in Chapter 3, Hughes and Williamson are of the opinion that by comparison with the subject of dementia, the field of learning disability has been more progressive in eliminating pejorative terminology.)⁴³ Invented in 1910 by H. H. Goddard, an American advocate of eugenics, the term did not appear in contemporary British legislation, but the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites usage by the posthumously discredited educational psychologist Cyril Burt in 1937.⁴⁴ The word is an obsolete linguistic relic of an horrific and shameful past, usage of which can neither be justified, nor condoned. The use of dehumanising language entrenches stigma and enforces exclusion, and so is even more inappropriate in a context of proclaimed hospitality.

3. The significance of hospitality on the Alpha Course

An article by Graham Tomlin and Sandy Millar (former vicar of HTB, under whose oversight Nicky Gumbel refined and developed the pre-existent Alpha Course during his curacy), advances an edible apologia for the course: ‘Alpha gives a guest a bite-size experience of life in the Christian community, and they are invited to try it themselves’.⁴⁵ The catechetical model of the course looks to the initiatory practices of

⁴³ Hughes and Williamson, *The Dementia Manifesto*, 54.

⁴⁴ See Oxford English Dictionary, moron, n.2 (and adj.), 1. OED (website), updated March 2022, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/122316>. Further to the question of categorisation, Davis notes: ‘The word “normal” as “constituting, conforming to, not deviating or different from, the common type or standard, regular, usual” only enters the English language around 1840’ (Lennard J. Davis, “Introduction: Disability, Normality and Power,” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, 5th ed., ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2017), 2). He observes that there was ‘a burst of interest in statistics during the 1830s’ in England, and he shows how this intersected with eugenics and evolutionary theory to produce the category of physical and mental ‘defect’ as deviation from a ‘norm’ within a population (Davis, “Introduction,” 3–4).

⁴⁵ Tomlin and Millar, “Assessing Aspects of the Theology of Alpha Courses,” 260.

the early Church, and rejects the merely propositional for the experiential.⁴⁶ Accordingly, they pose the question, albeit awkwardly worded: ‘How does Alpha help indwell the Christian faith as a way of life?’,⁴⁷ and turn firstly to the Trinity for an answer. They define their ontological destination thus: ‘At the heart of the universe there is not an individual, nor random diverse chaos but a community that is different and yet completely at one. This means that ultimate reality is relational’.⁴⁸ This statement is entirely orthodox, but in its proximity to their advocacy of hospitality it accords with my proposition of hospitality as an expression of inclusion which reflects the divine nature.

In their theological reflections, Tomlin and Millar turn secondly to the Incarnation, and adverting to the practice of Jesus, they conclude: ‘Questions are a vital part of incarnational mission’.⁴⁹ In my opinion, in this instance, Tomlin and Millar have missed an opportunity to reiterate hospitality as the context for much of Jesus’ ministry and teaching, and hence the profoundly embodied nature of the questions and dialogue that arise in a meal-setting (cf. Moore on Messy Church),⁵⁰ or even the table as referent, as in the case of the Syrophenician woman, but thence as an actuality for her daughter after her remote deliverance, as I put forward in Chapter 2. Instead, they position the Alpha meal as a foretaste of the heavenly banquet and the ultimate welcome of God, and view the ecumenical adoption of the Alpha Course in the light of that inclusion.⁵¹ Accordingly, in seeking to locate the place of hospitality in the ‘mission-shaped’ Church of England, it would seem that part of the answer lies in the ‘gift’ of the Alpha Course to the wider church, although consideration of the dissemination and reception of the format is beyond my present remit. However, despite Tomlin and Millar’s categorisation of the meal as prospective, Brookes notes: ‘The Ascension is hardly mentioned and not explained.

⁴⁶ Graham Tomlin, “Evangelism as Catechesis, Hospitality and Anticipation: A Study of the Alpha Course,” *Christian Education Journal* 3rd ser., 10, Supplement (Fall 2013): S93–94, S96.

⁴⁷ Tomlin and Millar, “Assessing Aspects of the Theology of Alpha Courses,” 260.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁵⁰ Lucy Moore, *Messy Hospitality*, 79. See section 5.2, p. 278.

⁵¹ Tomlin and Millar, “Assessing Aspects of the Theology of Alpha Courses,” 262.

Little mention is made of Heaven (or Hell) or the after life, Christ's Second Coming and the resurrection of the dead, the New Heaven and New Earth'.⁵² This might seem to be incoherent, given their (and my) connection of earthly eating and heavenly welcome, but it is understandable given the need to impose limits on a basic introduction to Christianity, and keep it relevant and accessible.

3.1. Deficient hospitality?

Moreover, with regard to the import of hospitality, Brookes points out that it should be understood not only as intrinsic to the experience of Alpha, but also integral to the pastoral support offered to church members by Holy Trinity Brompton through 'pastorates', which meet fortnightly for Bible study and a meal.⁵³ Brookes comments that not all external course-organisers are alert to the familial dynamic which pertains after the voluntary transition from a guest-host relationship.⁵⁴ Even with such awareness, it is possible that similar hospitality is unlikely to be replicated beyond the duration of the course, as claimed by Ward in the article previously cited,⁵⁵ a claim which I will examine in due course. I noted in my opening reflections that 'welcome' and after-service refreshments, and the Alpha Course (where known) are the default recourse when the topic of hospitality is broached in church circles. However, the very fact that Alpha is associated with hospitality speaks to the rarity of gathering together for a meal beyond the immediate household in a non-commercial setting, and so, if comparable hospitality is insufficiently incorporated into any experience of church subsequent to Alpha, it might then be argued justly of the courses that devolve on a local church that hospitality is merely a temporary expedient.

Hitherto, in describing current eucharistic practice, I have deliberately not distinguished between the elements of the meal practised by the early Christians, but

⁵² Andrew Brookes, "The Content of Alpha," in *The Alpha Phenomenon: Theology, Praxis and Challenges for Mission and Church Today*, ed. Andrew Brookes (London: Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2007), 63, capitals in original. Hunt supplies a list of the topics for each week of the course. See Hunt, *The Alpha Enterprise*, 67–68.

⁵³ Brookes, "Holy Trinity Brompton," 11–12.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁵ Pete Ward, "Alpha," 286. See section 4, p. 270.

Bishop Lindsay Urwin writing on the place of the sacramental ministry in Fresh Expressions of Church, sees Alpha as being deficient: ‘*Alpha* missed a trick, no not a trick, a grace, by not leading people on from the joy of eating supper together to the meal. It led some to want to keep on experiencing *Alpha*, but who did not make the journey to the altar’.⁵⁶ (Here altar is not synonymous with repentance and conversion, as it might be in some forms of evangelical Protestant piety.) He proceeds to argue that ‘a fresh expression of the Church which loads up tables with cakes and goodies to entice the punter and indeed practises hospitality, is not enough of a [Messianic] sign’.⁵⁷ His wording in this sentence is disrespectful to recipients and providers alike, and vilifies cake as much as any governmental advice, or dietitian urging moderation. The succeeding sentence is unimpeachable in its approach to poverty, but does not cohere with his overall argument on the importance of the sacraments: ‘It is not a true foretaste of the messianic banquet, for there are tables that are empty and some have none’.⁵⁸ This becomes clear in the minatory final sentences of his essay which limit hospitality to the sacramental: ‘Jesus has food to give and only he can provide it. We are his providers, and if we fail to feed in his name, we will answer’.⁵⁹ The complacency of his episcopal ‘we’ has to be questioned, because it claims inclusivity, and he once more appears to conflate eucharistic distribution with Matthean feeding of the hungry and needy.⁶⁰

Urwin’s disfavour towards Alpha course-repeaters takes a slightly different form to the implied criticism of the Alpha-enthusiasts identified by Hunt, who will be encountered subsequently, but given that the Corinthians welcomed two categories of non-members according to Smith,⁶¹ repetition, or in Urwin’s terms, eucharistic non-

⁵⁶ Lindsay Urwin, “What is the Role of Sacramental Ministry in Fresh Expressions of Church?” in *Mission-Shaped Questions: Defining Issues for Today’s Church*, ed. Steven Croft, Mission-Shaped (London: Church House Publishing, 2008), 40, emphasis in original.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶⁰ This is the commonly understood reading of this passage, but Paul offers an alternative interpretation. See Ian Paul, “The ‘Parable’ of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25.” *Psephizo* (blog), 18 November 2020, <https://www.psephizo.com/biblical-studies/the-parable-of-the-sheep-and-the-goats-in-matthew-25/>.

⁶¹ Dennis E. Smith, “In the Beginning Was the House,” 85–87.

participation, is insufficient grounds for criticism. Indeed, in apparent efforts to be completist in their induction, Holy Trinity Brompton include a service of Holy Communion as part of the Holy Spirit weekend,⁶² which partially belies Urwin's contention, as it is a ritual curiosity in the light of Section B15A of the canons of the Church of England (7th edition), which do not, with certain exceptions, permit the unconfirmed to communicate.⁶³ Heard characterises Alpha as having a 'minimalist theology of the Old Testament, Trinity, ecclesiology, sacraments, creation and social justice'.⁶⁴ Percy, and Ireland and Booker come to broadly similar conclusions on content and omissions; the latter suggest including 'more on the Trinity, the person of God the Father, the sacraments of the Church and the pursuit of social justice, and shorter more balanced sections on the Holy Spirit and healing', although Brookes notes approvingly that God is consistently presented as loving Father.⁶⁵ The claim of omission with regard to the sacraments is unfair, because the Alpha Course deliberately eschews topics on which there is confessional divergence, so as not to undermine ecumenism.⁶⁶ Matters of ecclesial constitution and practice notwithstanding, their other reservations, and Urwin's starting point of the Messianic banquet, do indicate the need for supplementation of the Trinitarian hospitality marshalled by Tomlin and Millar in their theological justification, whence my overall contention of inadequate conceptualisation and communication of an holistic Christian hospitality, one that recognises relationality and inclusion, not just being

⁶² Hunt reproduces a suggested timetable for the weekend. See Hunt, *The Alpha Enterprise*, 69–70.

⁶³ See Church of England, "Section B." Updated February 2021, <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/legal-services/canons-church-england/section-b>. (It is of momentary interest that these were previously listed under 'Policy and Thinking' when accessed in November 2020.) However, Heard quotes Gumbel as inviting those who ' "know and love Jesus Christ" ' to receive Communion (James Heard, *Inside Alpha: Explorations in Evangelism*, reprint, 2009 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 50). Gumbel describes the 'informal communion service' as the ' "the climax of the whole course" ' (Heard, *Inside Alpha*, 50). Heard observes that it is 'in the fashion of the "self-service" sacrament, where people pass a loaf one to another', but it remains an oddity nonetheless (Heard, *Inside Alpha*, 50).

⁶⁴ Heard, *Inside Alpha*, 46, 53, here at 46.

⁶⁵ Mark Ireland and Mike Booker, *Making New Disciples: Exploring the Paradoxes of Evangelism* (London: SPCK, 2015), 75; Brookes, "The Content of Alpha," 51.

⁶⁶ Nicky Gumbel, interview, Broadcast 9 September 1998, News at Ten (ITV), cited in Brian, "The Alpha Course," 88.

hospitable in the provision of food and drink. And so, from reception by differing traditions within the Church of England, I now turn to a broader evaluation of the merits of the Alpha Course.

3.2. The attractions of Alpha's hospitality

Heard somewhat inelegantly points to the Janus-faced ambiguity arising from Alpha's heritage: 'From Alpha's mutation from a discipleship course to aiming at both mission *and* spiritual formation, Alpha stumbled upon, and is perhaps a return to, the traditional means of communicating the faith in the Anglican tradition'.⁶⁷ Here he is acknowledging Alpha's recognition of conversion as more likely to be a process, rather than a crisis decision, particularly in a society less acquainted with Christian beliefs. In similar vein, Tomlin couches the hospitality in Alpha as a preparedness to listen, and not close down questions, and concludes:

Alpha at its best is an example of evangelism that seeks to extend hospitality to guests, to mirror God's welcome to a broken world. Hospitality by its very nature does not force itself upon people. In some ways it is a healthy sign if some people coming on Alpha Courses do not end up as Christians or part of a church.⁶⁸

This is further reminiscent of Nouwen's guests going their own way,⁶⁹ but the converse, whereby 'graduates' are incorporated as future hosts for the course,⁷⁰ is self-perpetuating and risks casting hospitality as introverted, and defined only in the context of the course.

In *The Alpha Enterprise* Hunt makes an observation based on the sociological research he conducted: 'We have also noted that Alpha offers the material and psychological benefits of company and companionship, therapy, and free meals'.⁷¹ Furthermore, from his nationwide survey he identifies a 'handful of individuals who apparently were pragmatically taking advantage of an Alpha course in order to embrace its hospitality or for company': 'From this group were drawn the so-called

⁶⁷ Heard, *Inside Alpha*, 30.

⁶⁸ Tomlin, "Evangelism as Catechesis, Hospitality and Anticipation," S96–S98.

⁶⁹ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 69. See Chapter 4, section 4.1, p. 201.

⁷⁰ Heard, *Inside Alpha*, 27; see also Lucy Moore, *Messy Church 2: Ideas for Discipling a Christ-Centred Community* (Abingdon: BRF, 2008), 48. See Chapter 6, section 5, p. 271 n. 89.

⁷¹ Hunt, *The Alpha Enterprise*, 117.

“Alphaholics” – people who would repeatedly sign up for the course. Hospitality and a free meal are not without appeal’.⁷² This slighting description and laconic assessment is a recurrence, as Hunt has earlier used the selfsame term for returnees ‘attracted by human company, personal attention and pastoral care’,⁷³ but he fails to give a provenance.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, it is an insensitive and offensive designation which unthinkingly minimises the pain of addiction and alcoholism. Whether the pathologised ‘Alphaholics’ are unconsciously perceived as failures (by exhibiting need and not being converted in a timely fashion), or as opportunists, would speak to the motivation of those offering a conditional hospitality in actuality and retrospect. (The seasoned response of HTB to would-be returners is to recruit them as helpers,⁷⁵ as the Alpha Course itself is intended for first-time guests.) I interpret the epithet as a narrative of concealed judgement which treats supposed ‘guests’ as mere consumers, rather than truly welcome guests. Furthermore, as an apparent ‘insider’ judgement on frequent attenders, it bespeaks a simultaneous lack of charity and insight as to why people might come repeatedly. This inhospitality on the part of host churches notwithstanding, the circumstance indirectly demonstrates the attractiveness and the scarcity of hospitality (and perhaps the prevalence of hunger and food insecurity).⁷⁶ In stark contrast, I now turn to a telling account of the Alpha experience from a course-organiser.

A blog on the Alpha website, by the Balham Vineyard, on each week of the Alpha Course, gushes enthusiastically in the manner of gossip magazines granted

⁷² Ibid., 182.

⁷³ Ibid., 150.

⁷⁴ Bayes refers proprietorially to ‘our Alphaholics’, which suggests that the term is in common parlance; he applies it casually to serial attenders without a second thought, but sees their motivation as a continued need to ask ‘Why?’, which he commends as a childlike willingness to keep asking questions (Paul Bayes, “Messy Theology,” in *Messy Church Theology: Exploring the Significance of Messy Church for the Wider Church*, 2nd ed., ed. George Lings, reprint, 2013 (Abingdon: BRF, 2017), 102).

⁷⁵ Andrew Brookes, “The Method of Alpha,” in *The Alpha Phenomenon: Theology, Praxis and Challenges for Mission and Church Today*, ed. Andrew Brookes (London: Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2007), 102.

⁷⁶ ‘Food insecurity’ was only added to the *Oxford English Dictionary* as a new sub-entry in October 2021, which is indicative of the effects of the pandemic on the economy and public discourse. See Oxford English Dictionary, “New Words List October 2021.” OED (website), <https://public.oed.com/updates/new-words-list-october-2021>.

‘intimate’ access to celebrities: ‘We liked seeing Nicky and Pippa [Gumbel] and hearing about their story (especially watching Nicky learn to chop asparagus!) and likening it to a relationship with God’.⁷⁷ This confirms a blithe unawareness of the expense, and the likely unavailability of fresh asparagus to a number of viewers, first by the Gumbels, secondly by the film-makers, and lastly by these enamoured watchers. The truly bathetic comparison of vegetable-preparation with intercourse with the divine is beyond parody in its lack of insight (although the mental image of Alan Bennett’s vicar in *Beyond the Fringe* coupled with a staple of middle-class cuisine, after the manner of his clerical musings on Esau, life, and a tin of sardines is irresistible).⁷⁸

4. The future of Alpha

Having considered how ill-chosen words, or the very act of welcome, may reflect unsurfaced norms or unconsidered prejudice, and so inadvertently undermine hospitality, and the perceived place of food and hospitality within the Alpha Course, I will now examine specifically the evolution of hospitality arising from the advent of coronavirus and the move to online presentations. In a video from ‘Alpha Global Comms’ entitled ‘Running Alpha in 2020’, Nicky Gumbel proclaims his astonishment at the successful transition:

Alpha online has totally, totally astonished me. I was not interested in Alpha online. I always said, you know, why would anyone want to do Alpha online, this is about, you know, having a meal together, and so I would have had no interest in it at all. To my amazement it worked so well online.⁷⁹

His urbane tones are contrasted with a narrated voice-over by a male speaker who

⁷⁷ Balham Vineyard Church, “Balham Vineyard Church,” Week 4, para. 6. *Alpha Film Series* (blog), Alpha UK (website), accessed 21 October 2020, <https://alpha.org.uk/afs-blog/balham-vineyard-church>.

⁷⁸ Ulrich uses the references in that selfsame sermon from the 1960 satirical revue presented as part of the official programme for the Edinburgh International Festival, as the opening illustration to a scholarly article on texts, authority, and revelation, so I feel justified in making the connection in this context. See Eugene Ulrich, “From Literature to Scripture: Reflections on the Growth of a Text’s Authoritativeness,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 10, no. 1, *Authorizing Texts, Interpretations and Laws at Qumran* (2003): 3. doi:10.1163/15685170360584137. For the circumstances of the performance, see Angela Bartie, *The Edinburgh Festivals: Culture and Society in Post-War Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 78. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt3fgrj8.9>.

⁷⁹ Alpha Global Comms, *Running Alpha in 2020* (Alpha, 2020), here at 00:43–01:01. Accessed 20 October 2020, <https://vimeo.com/445258508>.

speaks with glottal stops and drops his aitches, which may prove disconcerting for non-native speakers of English. In light of persistent criticisms of Holy Trinity, Brompton as elitist, the differential social class positioning signalled by their juxtaposed vocal delivery is interesting, and presumably an intentional attempt at diversity. It is notable that Gumbel is not identified by any caption, presumably because he is held to be instantly recognisable to the Alpha constituency.

Obviously, this more recent claim of successful online hospitality is more difficult to quantify or substantiate from the perspective of participants. Online hospitality is limited to fostering inclusion in a sensorily-deprived setting with distorted, or absent social cues, such as eye-contact, with no pleasurable anticipation of a meal (or smell of food). Under ‘Top Tips’ the Alpha website encourages: ‘Even though groups are meeting online, churches can still put a strong emphasis on hospitality’.⁸⁰ ‘Heavier’ email communication through weekly summaries is advocated, as is asking for thoughts, and the instruction: ‘Make sure to check-in if someone missed a night’.⁸¹ It also recommends ‘saying hello, asking questions, telling jokes’,⁸² which last seems insensitive in the context of a global pandemic, particularly with participants in unknown circumstances. However, this mode of delivery does enable the synchronous layering of teaching and discussion with written responses, and queries, and could be said to offer a digitally-facilitated welcome. Alpha does provide subtitled videos, and so it is possible that beyond pandemic necessity, this belated transition to the internet could offer advantages to those who might struggle to hear in crowded venues. In addition, for example, the online format might well suit those with sensory-processing difficulties or anxiety, who can find proximity and social interaction overwhelming at the best of times. It would seem therefore that it is theoretically possible to offer a pixelated welcome through video-conferencing software tools for neurodivergent enquirers about Christianity, despite the manifest

⁸⁰ Alpha, “Alpha Online.” Accessed 20 October 2020, <https://alpha.org/alpha-online/>.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

inadequacies of such media for Communion services, or as a proxy for the physically-gathered church (as investigated in Chapter 4). Obviously, the opportunities for socialisation afforded by a sit-down meal are absent, and so, such presentations do present the chance to refute the claims of those who view the meal with cynicism, as an evangelistic ploy.

Overall, Alpha does provide a forum for discussion (albeit tightly-controlled in the opinion of critics), and the creation of such a space accords, to whatever degree, with the exploration of vocation through hospitality proposed by Nouwen.⁸³ Brookes notes the holistic appeal of Alpha, but considers it deficient in not addressing social, ecological, or global issues.⁸⁴ Clearly, as alluded to earlier with regard to doctrinal comprehensiveness, choices have to be made about topics in a short course, but such issues have become ever more pressing since Brookes wrote in 2007. In a piece written when he was the Archbishop of Canterbury's Youth Advisor, Ward attracted much press attention for his provocative critique of Alpha as an example of postmodern 'McDonaldization':

What Baudrillard calls simulacrum, the copy of a copy for which there is no original. Alpha offers those from outside of the Church an experience of the faith which has a measure of unreality. Membership of a local church, regular Sunday worship and so on are simply not like Alpha.⁸⁵

Ward's claim of incommensurability holds true, if Brookes' caveat about the enmeshed nature of hospitality in HTB subsequent to Alpha is not taken into account by local course organisers, but the contrast is equally true of any other special event, as Martin makes clear in her description of the need to transition to discipleship.⁸⁶ However, I consider that the strongest case for sustainable outreach and authentic

⁸³ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 69. See Chapter 4, section 4.1, p. 201.

⁸⁴ Andrew Brookes, "The Principles Behind Alpha," in *The Alpha Phenomenon: Theology, Praxis and Challenges for Mission and Church Today*, ed. Andrew Brookes (London: Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2007), 77, 81.

⁸⁵ Pete Ward, "Alpha," 286.

⁸⁶ Collins and Martin, "The Priest Attends Seven Village Fetes," 18–19. See Chapter 5, section 5, pp. 243–44. Cf. Laurence on 'unexciting regularity' (Trevor Laurence, "Addressed by the Voice of God: The Opening of Worship," para. 7. *Director's Desk* (blog), Catechesia Institute, 29 January 2021, <https://catechesia.com/2021/01/29/addressed-by-the-voice-of-god-the-opening-of-worship/>). See Chapter 7, section 5.1, p. 326.

church lies in a context of a continuum of hospitality, whether or not that includes the Alpha Course. While acknowledging a ‘work of God’,⁸⁷ Ward worries about Alpha suppressing evangelistic innovation,⁸⁸ and so it may be that Messy Church’s promotion of creativity holds a mirror to unfavourable accounts of programmatic evangelism. Accordingly, I will now consider ‘messy’ hospitality.

5. Messy Church and ‘messy hospitality’

In Chapter 5 I recalled Ramsey’s ‘untidy’ Anglican church, and I now turn to Messy Church, an all-age⁸⁹ format which seeks to be Christ-centred, and to uphold the values of creativity, celebration, and hospitality by providing intergenerational creative activities with a worship-slot and a catered meal, usually on a monthly basis.⁹⁰ Messy Church was started by Lucy Moore, in her husband’s then parish, but has since been adopted widely, and is now under the auspices of the Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF). Moore derived inspiration from Ward’s liquid church with ‘fuzzy

⁸⁷ Pete Ward, “Alpha,” 286.

⁸⁸ Pete Ward, “Alpha,” 285.

⁸⁹ In order to overcome any devaluing perception of Messy Church as ‘just for children’ it deems itself to be all-age, but it is significant that the downloadable logo for this value shows a stylised scaled line-up ranging from a seated baby in nappies on the left, to a standing adult and child in the middle, and finally, an adult wheelchair-user on the right (their seated height falls between the previous figures). See Messy Church, “What Messy Church is and Isn’t.” Accessed 19 November 2020, <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/what-messy-church-and-isnt>; Messy Church, “Messay Church Values Images.” Accessed 19 November 2020, <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/resource/messy-church-values-images>. Not only does this representation apparently conflate age and disability, but all-age is also a signifier for family (single adults unaccompanied by children are not permitted for obvious safeguarding reasons, and because Moore fears confusion with official helpers). See Lucy Moore, *Messy Church 2*, 47. The age-range of helpers may also be significantly skewed towards retirees unless, as Moore recommends, maturing teenagers are co-opted into leadership: ‘We whisk them on to the leadership team as soon as they show an aptitude and yearning’ (Lucy Moore, *Messy Church 2: Ideas for Discipling a Christ-Centred Community* (Abingdon: BRF, 2008), 48). Like the incorporation of Alpha-graduates as a means of retention and formation, this action could be seen as pragmatic, as families may stop coming once a child reaches a certain age if they perceive Messy Church as being primarily for children. The pandemic created online opportunities for younger leaders: ‘The first steps were made towards young Messy leaders developing their own international leadership community with support from the network’, which is a hopeful sign for future collaboration, and securing the youthful diversity desired by the Church of England (Lucy Moore, “Introduction,” in *Messy Discipleship: Messy Church Perspectives on Growing Faith*, ed. Lucy Moore (Abingdon: BRF, 2021), 8).

⁹⁰ Lucy Moore, *Messy Church: Fresh Ideas for Building a Christ-Centred Community* (Abingdon: BRF, 2006), 21. Moore reports that George Lings, then Director of the Church Army Research Unit, ‘tongue-in-cheekily suggested’ an alternative series of descriptors starting with ‘C’: ‘Chill . . . Create . . . Celebrate . . . Chew (or chomp)’ (Moore, *Messy Church 2*, 22–23).

edges'⁹¹ (a chemical impossibility), and Murray's forecast: 'Post-Christendom churches will be messy communities where belonging, believing and behaving are in process rather than neatly integrated'.⁹² This melding of ideas shows that her vision is about inclusion rather than exclusion, but to the unsuspecting visitor a 'messy' church is more likely to signify a lack of internal behavioural strictures, rather than a diffuse boundary between inside and outside, or attendance and acceptance. As I will examine next, Moore's focus is resolutely on discipleship, despite her avowal of indeterminacy, whereas on the basis of the name, those who come may simply expect curated activities in a permissive spiritual atmosphere.

5.1. Messy Church?

Alpha is keen to stress that it is not a church, whereas Messy Church openly proclaims that it is a '“form of church” . . . “primarily for people who don't already belong to another form of church”'.⁹³ However, as Dalpra shows, employing the four marks of church used in *Mission-Shaped Church*, not all instances of Messy Church actually constitute a church.⁹⁴ Accordingly, Moore is protective of the balance between ecclesiality and a proprietary concept:

Let's say right at the start that we have a delicate balance to keep between the two extremes of 'You can only call it Messy Church if you adhere exactly to our prescribed formula' and 'Oh, just slap the name Messy Church on anything involving a child, glue or a sausage'.⁹⁵

Furthermore, she declares: 'we call it Messy Church up front, so that people have no

⁹¹ Pete Ward, *Liquid Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), 47–48, cited in Lucy Moore, *Messy Church*, 14.

⁹² Stuart Murray, *Church After Christendom*, After Christendom (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), 35, cited in Lucy Moore, *Messy Church*, 16. Moore also reflects in retrospect on the etymology of 'mess' in Old French as a portion of food, from the same Latin word as mission (Lucy Moore, *Messy Hospitality: Changing Communities Through Fun, Food, Friendship and Faith* (Abingdon: BRF, 2016), 8–9).

⁹³ Messy Church, "What Messy Church is and Isn't."

⁹⁴ Clare Dalpra, "When is Messy Church 'Church'?" in *Messy Church Theology: Exploring the Significance of Messy Church for the Wider Church*, 2nd ed., ed. George Lings, reprint, 2013 (Abingdon: BRF, 2017), 12–30. 'The four classic marks of the Church, enshrined in the Nicene Creed as "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic", remind the Church of its true nature and calling' (Church of England, Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context*, rev. ed., reprint, 2004 (London: Church House Publishing, 2009), 96–99, here at 96).

⁹⁵ Lucy Moore, "Mini Messy Church," para. 2. *Messy Church* (blog), 29 June 2018, <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/messy-blog/mini-messy-church>.

illusions that it's just a social club'⁹⁶ (although that presumes that church itself is not viewed by outsiders as a social club). However, her statement that when Messy Church started the celebration was held after the food, but some people left early,⁹⁷ supports a dual-awareness by the recusants, rather than her binary choice, in that they opted-out of what they perceived as the 'church' element tacked onto a social event. Thereafter, the meal was re-positioned to come last, 'to give everyone every excuse to make space for worship in their busy lives',⁹⁸ she claims artfully.

Regardless of strategic withdrawal, or church-refusal, by those first attendees, Aspland undertook an assessment purporting to ascertain whether the ethos of Messy Church attracted certain personality-types under-represented in 'traditional' churches. She claims that the following two hypotheses were supported in the case of women, but not men:

The all-age format of activities and a meal promotes social interaction which attracts those with a preference for extraversion . . . The Messy Church value of hospitality facilitates interpersonal values and relational belonging which attracts those with a preference for feeling.⁹⁹

However, it is more likely that participants see Messy Church as a family-friendly activity with opportunities for socialisation, and so it would be more meaningful to consider the temperament of the children. Nevertheless, Aspland cites Drane in her claim that Messy Church 'has potential, through its distinct values, to offer a learning space grounded in more humane qualities which resonate more clearly with post-modern sensibilities, such as "embodiment, interaction, mutuality, playfulness and story" '.¹⁰⁰ These accord with my application of hospitality to disability in Chapters 3 and 4, and further vindication comes from Hahn's account of how kinaesthetic

⁹⁶ Lucy Moore, *Messy Church*, 12.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁹⁸ Lucy Moore, *Messy Church*, 30. For another perspective on this, see Steve Hollinghurst, "When is Messy Church 'not Church'?" in *Messy Church Theology: Exploring the Significance of Messy Church for the Wider Church*, 2nd ed., ed. George Lings, reprint, 2013 (Abingdon: BRF, 2017), 36–37.

⁹⁹ Amanda Dawn Aspland, "Unless You Become Like a Child: Psychological Type and Christian Becoming at Messy Church," PhD thesis (University of Leeds, 2016), 72, 174–75.

¹⁰⁰ Aspland, "Unless You Become Like a Child," 129; John Drane, "Messy Disciples," in *Messy Church Theology: Exploring the Significance of Messy Church for the Wider Church*, ed. George Lings (Abingdon: BRF, 2013), 121, cited in Aspland, "Unless You Become Like a Child," 129.

learning and the Messy Church ethos enables families with a child with a disability the opportunity for all siblings to share a common activity.¹⁰¹ Here hospitality exhibited in non-judgemental facilitation overcomes segregation, and personality is irrelevant.

I argue, therefore, that Aspland's linkage of hospitality to personality-type is unduly limiting, and her claim that hospitality was significantly predicted by extraversion, and an orientation towards the promotion of socialisation, and child-led learning, confines hospitality solely to the ability to accommodate a child's perceptions (in line with her focus on developmental learning).¹⁰² Furthermore, her typological assumptions risk dichotomising a 'messy meal' as a shared meal for extroverts, and Communion as a shared meal for liturgically-inclined introverts, despite the fact that she is primarily considering hospitality, and hence openness to experience, as being conducive to *learning*. Conversely, Hollinghurst wonders why worship was prioritised over hospitality, or the other Messy values.¹⁰³ Interestingly, Aspland in her investigation charts a changing definition within Moore's work, from the potentially off-putting 'worship', to the more culturally acceptable 'celebration'.¹⁰⁴ Aspland suggests that this transition may unintentionally have shifted the emphasis 'from God as the object of worship, to the event itself as something joyful and pleasurable'¹⁰⁵ (although the two are not mutually exclusive).

Nevertheless, the restructuring undertaken by Moore, and these changes in terminology, suggest that similarities between the meal and the 'celebration' are not necessarily apparent to participants, and in the light of her other comments, Moore's imposition of a revised timetable is an equation of discipleship with worship. Despite Moore and Leadbetter openly admitting their agenda, it is apparent that internal intent

¹⁰¹ Trish Hahn, "Case Study: Messy Church Special Educational Needs," in *Messy Church Theology: Exploring the Significance of Messy Church for the Wider Church*, 2nd ed., ed. George Lings, reprint, 2013 (Abingdon: BRF, 2017), 48–51.

¹⁰² Aspland, "Unless You Become Like a Child," iv.

¹⁰³ Hollinghurst, "When is Messy Church 'not Church'?" 42.

¹⁰⁴ Aspland, "Unless You Become Like a Child," 75–76.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

and external perception are still potentially at odds: ‘The way you go about making disciples may involve horrifying amounts of icing sugar and glitter glue ... we’re here to make disciples, not to try to get people coming to our church service or to give them a Nice Time’.¹⁰⁶ The following encomium written in 2015 by then BRF Team Member, Martyn Payne, plots this progress and contradicts a narrow definition of worship:

Messy Church is reminding us that Christian nurture in the faith is not primarily about the liturgy or the lectionary, nor about the sacrament or the sermon, nor even solely about personal Bible reading and private prayer, but rather about being and becoming Christians together: putting the communion back into the Eucharist; the conversation back into our worship; the community back into our conversion; the serving back into our services; and putting the shared experience of our friendship with Jesus and each other into true discipleship.¹⁰⁷

From the carefully composed alliterative pairings at the beginning, this description then becomes additive and prescriptive to provide a neat summation of much intellectual argument about the rediscovery of hospitality and *communitas* within the Christian experience, while utilising an evangelical perspective. Thus, in the final chapter of *Messy Discipleship*, Moore overtly declares that ‘the most pressing concern’ of Messy Church is ‘the salvation of each new generation’; she concludes the book prayerfully: ‘we long, by God’s grace and in the power of the Holy Spirit, to become ever-more [sic] centred around Jesus and shaped by him’.¹⁰⁸ Although being Christ-centred is the primary Messy value,¹⁰⁹ it is interesting to speculate whether her wording consciously echoes that of the Archbishop of York and his vision for the Church of England, as a means of asserting the validity of Messy Church as church (in an earlier paragraph she refers to ‘churchmanship that dismisses Messy Church as

¹⁰⁶ Lucy Moore and Jane Leadbetter, *Starting Your Messy Church: A Beginner’s Guide for Churches* (Abingdon: BRF, 2012), 13, initial capitals in original.

¹⁰⁷ Martyn Payne, “A Reflection from a Recent Messy Church Visit,” para. 4. *Messy Church* (blog), 12 February 2015, <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/messy-blog/reflection-recent-messy-church-visit>. Also cited in Lucy Moore, *Messy Hospitality*, 74–75.

¹⁰⁸ Lucy Moore, “Conclusion,” in *Messy Discipleship: Messy Church Perspectives on Growing Faith*, ed. Lucy Moore (Abingdon: BRF, 2021), 118.

¹⁰⁹ Lucy Moore, *Messy Church*, 21; Tom Donoghue, “Christ-Centred,” in *Messy Discipleship: Messy Church Perspectives on Growing Faith*, ed. Lucy Moore (Abingdon: BRF, 2021), 62.

inferior and inadequate’).¹¹⁰ But, having considered Moore’s justification and defence of the format, I will now look at how the hospitality offered within Messy Church is conceptualised.

5.2. Developing Messy hospitality

As already outlined, hospitality is a constitutive core value for Messy Church, and their website declares: ‘Hospitality runs through every Messy Church like a golden thread . . . It is a church of justice and equality, expressed most of all around the meal tables’.¹¹¹ After several years of Messy Church, Moore obviously felt the need to make ‘messy’ hospitality explicit in a handbook for helpers, and she admits her debt to Christine Pohl in the Acknowledgements to what is essentially a messy manifesto.¹¹² Moore is defiantly practical therein, in her invocation of the Trinity:

We proclaim the trinitarian, relational God who, by grace, welcomes us into his kingdom, in part by having clean toilets. (Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that our proclamation of our God is not revealed to be hypocritical and empty because we couldn’t be bothered to check the state of the toilets).¹¹³

Moore’s writing in *Messy Hospitality* is intentionally easy-to-read and humorous, and she deliberately uses exaggeration, but after the manner of Alpha it seems that theological reflection on hospitality as a defining value was *post hoc*. Unsurprisingly, Moore derives her theology of hospitality from comparison with Jesus, but in exploring Jesus as host and guest her interpretation is unconventional:

When he might have settled into a safe home life, he abandoned Nazareth for the wilderness, for three years of homelessness, depending on God and on the hospitality of others. He let go of more and more, until he let go even of the ‘home’ he’d been living in for 33 years—his actual body. This was vulnerability at its most extreme. This was where the host, planet Earth, broke all the rules of hospitality

¹¹⁰ Lucy Moore, “Conclusion,” 117–18.

¹¹¹ Messy Church, “Messy Church Value: Hospitality,” bold omitted. Accessed 19 November 2020, <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/hospitality>.

¹¹² Lucy Moore, *Messy Hospitality*, n.p.

¹¹³ Lucy Moore, *Messy Hospitality*, 41. Moore’s concern is put into wider perspective by Mombo’s exposure of the legacy of colonialism, which implicates religion, urban poverty, and lack of sanitation across the African continent: ‘The mission societies, together with colonial systems, helped create cities, and it is in the cities that one now find people living in abject poverty . . . These places, where the majority of poor people live, are also places where there is too much religion. There are more churches than toilets, and one wonders how the people cope with the call of nature’ (Esther M. Mombo, “Religion and Materiality: The Case of Poverty Alleviation,” in *Religion and Poverty: Pan-African Perspectives*, ed. Peter J. Paris (New York: Duke University Press, 2009), 216).

and slaughtered the guest—the enemy—in his time of apparent weakness. It was the ultimate betrayal.¹¹⁴

In terms of preceding discussion, the embodied ‘home’ relinquished in death, counterpoints Stuart’s maternal bodily hospitality,¹¹⁵ and her novel use of the scale of planetary violation of the norms of hospitality contrasts with Winter’s ‘cosmic’ hospitality,¹¹⁶ and this personification is perhaps intended to mitigate the centuries of antisemitism resulting from Christian interpretations of the Crucifixion. Proceeding chronologically, Moore also alludes to the spatial openness of the Roman atrium and family quarters, as well as patronage,¹¹⁷ and sees the accessibility and intimacy of Messy Church as affording the selfsame possibility of transformation of status through spatial progression.¹¹⁸ Her concluding rallying cry is ‘I dream of a church with hospitality in the heart and on the face of every member’.¹¹⁹ Despite her book being written as a popular and practical exploration of hospitality for the volunteers involved in Messy Church, both her pathway for initiation, and her calling forth of welcome, is not so far from that seen in the early Church in Chapter 1, whether the nearness of potentially noisy infants and children, taken for granted by Osiek and MacDonald in their auditory evocation of Christian meetings, or Pattison’s enraptured believers (although neither approach the exuberant participation endorsed by Moore).

Moore sees eating together as ‘sacred’,¹²⁰ and with regard to hospitality, she is insistent: ‘We are not hospitable because it’s a good evangelistic tool. God can and does look after that side-effect of hospitality’.¹²¹ As an expression of a conventional evangelical trope, her choice of words could perhaps be bettered, but she echoes Morisy on obliquity. Moore links food and calling thus: ‘We trust that God will call

¹¹⁴ Lucy Moore, *Messy Hospitality*, 20–21.

¹¹⁵ Stuart, “The Kindness of Strangers,” 69. See Chapter 3, section 4, pp. 147–48.

¹¹⁶ Winter, *Eucharist with a Small ‘e’*, 125. See Chapter 4, section 2, p. 181.

¹¹⁷ Lucy Moore, *Messy Hospitality*, 52–53.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹²⁰ Lucy Moore, *Messy Church*, 33, 39.

¹²¹ Lucy Moore, *Messy Hospitality*, 33. In reflecting subsequently on how COVID-19 ‘altered the timeframe’ for the publication of a report on *Deepening Discipleship in Messy Church*, and on the measurement of success, Moore declares: ‘Like Psalm 23, what matters is that the journey is walked *together* through the valley of the shadow of death, rather than counting how many people sit down at the banquet of the king (Moore, “Introduction,” 10, emphasis in original).

the people he wants to go further. We'll just provide the fish fingers'.¹²² She even goes so far as to claim that the meal was an unintentional inspiration arising from 'embarrassing laziness' and 'shameful idleness'.¹²³ That being loath to cook at home after a tiring day merits such disparagement, perhaps arises from her sense as an evangelical Christian of normative biblical womanhood,¹²⁴ and could be seen as an internalised false consciousness which fails to register the unremitting work needed to provide family meals day in, day out. This unresolved ambivalence may also account for the saccharine praise directed towards kitchen-helpers, which I will analyse in due course.

Writing on the significance of the meal to Messy Church, Moore asserts:

The meal gives the church the 'right' to create a learning and worshipping environment, and the learning and worshipping environment gives the meal its *raison d'être*. The meal is an expression of community, of gratuity (or generosity) and of valuing guests just as they are.¹²⁵

Although she uses scare quotes to dissociate herself from presumptive provision, this sequential structuring illustrates the ambivalence inherent in feeding and teaching those on the fringes. The circulation of power inherent in unchallenged evangelistic assumptions is exposed by Aspland:

However, if the status afforded by the Christian story, is perceived to lie in the hands of Messy Church organisers, rather than shared between participants as each contributes their own perspective, the learning space will become imbalanced since the expectation will be that children should attend to adults, but that the reverse is not necessary.¹²⁶

¹²² Lucy Moore, *Messy Church*, 45.

¹²³ Lucy Moore, *Messy Hospitality*, 78–79.

¹²⁴ The qualities of the early-rising, multi-talented, and indefatigable wife of Proverbs 31 are frequently adduced in publications aimed at Christian women, as an examination of the catalogue of any mainstream Christian publisher, particularly, although not exclusively, in America, will attest. For contrasting examples, see Elizabeth George, *Beautiful in God's Eyes: The Treasures of the Proverbs 31 Woman*, rev. ed., reprint, 1998 (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2017) and Paula Clifford, *Women Doing Excellently: Biblical Women and Their Successors* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2001). Clifford uses Proverbs 31:29 ('Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all') as her epigraph, and the source for her title. Further exploration of this exemplary woman is beyond the scope of this thesis, but Hartwell provides a useful corrective from a feminist perspective in her thesis. See Jeanette May Hartwell, "Wisdom, Strange or Somewhere in Between: In Search of a Real Woman in the Book of Proverbs," PhD thesis (University of Birmingham, 2017).

¹²⁵ Lucy Moore, *Messy Hospitality*, 79.

¹²⁶ Aspland, "Unless You Become Like a Child," 125.

Accordingly, she suggests the requisite conditions for learning through storytelling:

It is not enough to provide an environment where visitors encounter the Christian stories (Biblical, historical and personal faith stories), it is also necessary for those visitors to be able to respond to the stories authentically, and in turn, that helpers and organisers receive and respond authentically to the visitors' stories.¹²⁷

Her rejection of a top-down pedagogy for dialogical encounter is a recapitulation of Nouwen, but situated in the context of creativity, and reiterates the importance I assigned to storytelling as part of hospitality in Chapter 4. An untitled and unattributed document on Messy Church, downloadable from the Anglican Church Planting Initiatives website, suggests that there is a lingering underpinning of informational impartation as the model of discipleship, but notes that an apprenticeship model extends to the meal and encouraging parents and children to do activities together.¹²⁸ More generally, Barrett and Harley outline the ease with which children can be instrumentalised, either as 'the church of the future' in idealised depictions of receptiveness, or commodified in attractively photogenic portrayals of tolerated disorder, while being disregarded when it comes to the business of 'proper' church.¹²⁹ Accordingly, I will now interrogate the norms and assumptions which underlie the activities in Messy Church.

6. Messy meals

From her perspective of child-centred learning, Aspland writes: 'Informal discussion over a shared meal provides rich opportunity for relational development and conversational learning'.¹³⁰ In consequence, the meal is seen in terms which approach the therapeutic, rather than as an expression of hospitality. Moore likewise, uses an anecdote of the withdrawal of a grandchild from Messy Church (by an explicitly-identified Sunday church-attender, who didn't want him to pick up bad

¹²⁷ Ibid., 127.

¹²⁸ Downloadable from <https://acpi2017.files.wordpress.com/2017/06/messy-church-chapter-2-2-1.pdf> via Anglican Church Planting Initiatives, "Research and Resources: Messy Church." Accessed 3 November 2020, <https://acpi.org.uk/resources>. See pp. 1, 8.

¹²⁹ Barrett and Harley, *Being Interrupted*, 59, 112–13.

¹³⁰ Aspland, "Unless You Become Like a Child," 5.

habits)¹³¹ to adopt a barely-concealed paternalistic attitude towards the opportunities for socialisation afforded by a sit-down meal. She writes of the onus on the woman herself to be an example:

It was an understandable reaction from a fond grandmother, but showed a complete lack of understanding of the bigger picture of our aim, which is a long-term process of gently setting standards that will make everyone comfortable at the table together, not insisting on middle-class table manners being learnt, or excluding rude people. She didn't see that she could help improve the situation by being there as a good influence, rather than simply disappearing from the scene.¹³²

These improving sentiments are echoed in the assumptions underlying the universal claim by BRF staff member Martin Payne: 'We all know that the family meal is an endangered species in most homes nowadays, and therefore Messy Church's inclusion of this element is distinctly countercultural'.¹³³ He then proceeds to demolish the particularity of his own assertion by citing 'most of the major religions in the world' in support of his case for intergenerational transmission of faith at festivities,¹³⁴ thereby showing his previous analysis to be an essentially class-based, culture-specific reading.¹³⁵ He concludes his article thus: 'If we are serious about nurturing faith and growing disciples in Messy Church, then the sit-down meal is definitely one of the first places to explore what this means in practice. Let's keep it on the menu!'¹³⁶ His advocacy of an instructional meal is more didactic than Aspland, and differs from that of Moore, who, despite her moralising, is aiming at inclusion. However, the views of Moore and Payne both assume parental deficiency in those attending, thus positioning the proffered hospitality as instrumental and remedial. Nevertheless, in my view, the

¹³¹ Lucy Moore, *Messy Church 2*, 61.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Martyn Payne, "Traveller's Tales: Martyn Payne Offers Food for Thought," para. 6. *Messy Church* (blog), 26 November 2014, <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/messy-blog/travellers-tales-martyn-payne-offers-food-thought>.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ In her explication of how 'messy' hospitality promotes discipleship, Czerwonka alludes to Maori and Pasifika hospitality, so it is perplexing that she undercuts her message of the need for respect by continuing to refer to living in New Zealand. See Jocelyn Czerwonka, "Hospitality," in *Messy Discipleship: Messy Church Perspectives on Growing Faith*, ed. Lucy Moore (Abingdon: BRF, 2021), 93, 97–98, 99–100. However, these perspectives hint at the further possibilities for challenging the class-based cultural norms which surface in Payne and Moore's discourse around hospitality and Messy Church.

¹³⁶ Payne, "Traveller's Tales: Martyn Payne Offers Food for Thought," para. 6.

danger is less of inculturation into particular mores, than the perennial issue of acculturation to ‘church’ (in whatever form), and a loss of outsider-perspective in those who come, persist, and believe. And so, having looked at constructions of behaviour at table, I now turn to the food on the table, in order to question the feasibility of hospitality within the Messy Church set-up.

6.1. Fairy tale food?

Earlier in the same article, Payne evaluates the meals he has been presented with on his travels around the country: ‘The meal, though, does come in various shapes and sizes, not all of them ideally suited to the sort of friendship-making and faith-sharing I have described’.¹³⁷ He outlines how many Messy Churches opt for a high tea as their preferred style of eating together; he is dismissive of the ‘party meal’ which caters to childish tastes,¹³⁸ or the ‘lone sandwich’,¹³⁹ and exhorts:

I have come across plenty of Messy Churches that, when faced with the challenge of providing a meal, have found ingenious solutions. For example, I have enjoyed pizzas that have been bought in, watched a set of six slow cookers arrive, like the cavalry, just in time to save the day, and been treated to traditional fish and chips, hot from a local takeaway.¹⁴⁰

The expense of bought-in food is ignored, which makes the enjoined hospitality seem unachievable for neophyte Messy organisers.¹⁴¹ In an exchange of emails about inadequate kitchen facilities at a church, and the environmental health regulations about using domestic kitchens, subsequently posted on the Messy Church website, Moore jokingly refers in her closing response to forthcoming home-cooked ‘six course evangelistic banquets’.¹⁴² Taken in conjunction with Payne’s scale of effort and acceptability, her tone could still be seen as indirect pressure to attain an expected

¹³⁷ Ibid., para. 2.

¹³⁸ Ibid. His assessment comes despite Moore saying: ‘We aim our food more towards children’s palates than adults’, although in this case he is clearly decrying what he perceives as a lack of resourcefulness (Moore, *Messy Church*, 36).

¹³⁹ Payne, “Traveller’s Tales: Martyn Payne Offers Food for Thought,” para. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Moore also asks unrealistically: ‘Could every family pitch in some money for fish and chips, or could you dial up a pizza or two?’ (Moore, *Messy Church*, 32, emphasis mine).

¹⁴² Lucy Moore, “Food Hygiene!” *Messy Church* (blog), 18 May 2012, <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/messy-blog/food-hygiene>.

standard of sumptuousness, once requisite approval to transport pre-prepared food from home has been gained.

However, Moore is inconsistent in her attitude to quantity and quality. She generalises thus: ‘There is something sacred about eating together, however little is actually on the plates’,¹⁴³ but she also prides herself on the ability to ‘plonk’ impromptu ‘large platefuls of chicken korma’ in front of men waiting to collect their families.¹⁴⁴ She also gleefully describes the ‘vying for the bun with the most icing’ by adults, not just children.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Moore betrays a middle-class sensibility when describing the universality of the joys of eating, wherein luxury provides a supplementary warrant to the popular bun in the promotion of sensory delight:

Eating together is a simple, fundamental human need which is also, by the grace of God, a pleasure, available to anyone from birth to the end of life. What bliss it is to bite into a warm, fragrant, crumbly bun or to let your taste buds weep for joy over a sliver of smoked salmon.¹⁴⁶

Having considered how particular menu items and food stuffs are used as proxies for hospitality, I now turn my attention to the valuation of those providing the food.

As I have already evidenced, Moore has an inimitable writing style using off-beat humour and deliberate colloquialisms, punctuated with capitalisations and exclamation marks for emphasis, on the page, or screen.¹⁴⁷ Such confected textual enthusiasm is presumably intended to be encouraging and accessible, but can lead to a performance of hapless helplessness by herself, and other leaders of Messy Church, as exhibited in this blog-post by BRF Team Member Jane Leadbetter, on the Messy Church website:

In the more than seven years of coordinating L19 Messy Church I have never been on the Messy cooks’ team. As we have invited our Messy congregation into the church space for each celebration time, I have marvelled at the way the ‘fairies’ have transformed the Messy activities

¹⁴³ Lucy Moore, *Messy Church*, 33.

¹⁴⁴ Lucy Moore, *Messy Church 2*, 60.

¹⁴⁵ Lucy Moore, *Messy Church*, 39.

¹⁴⁶ Lucy Moore, *Messy Church 2*, 58.

¹⁴⁷ As a further example, and to return, forgivably I hope, to the Bennettian sardine-tin, I reproduce her riff on Matt. 4:19 and evangelism: ‘Do we dream of adults and children plodding in through the doors and through the “messy” process like sardines in a canning factory? Is that as good as it gets? Oh dear! Have we become fishers of people for our own dastardly sardines-on-toast purposes?’ (Lucy Moore, *Messy Church 2*, 13).

church hall into a welcoming dining room for us to return to. More often than not those ‘fairies’ don’t get to worship with us, but instead go into extra hospitality mode and prepare our third space of Messy Church at each session.¹⁴⁸

Such praise of magically invisible labour demonstrates the apparently unresolvable spatial and temporal conflict between worship (celebration) and catering (hospitality) which exists in Messy Church, particularly as Moore foresees an eventual need to relinquish Sunday church and commit to Messy Church.¹⁴⁹ The faux-naïf reference to the cooks as ‘fairies’ serves both to minimise the work involved, and depersonalise the culinary and organisational gifts of these paragons confined to the kitchen. Leadbetter’s foregoing account of having to step into the breach when the usual helpers are unavailable, is echoed in another post by Moore, who uses her own professed incompetence to comic effect.¹⁵⁰ And yet, however unintentionally, such posts by designated leaders position the ability to mass-cater as an innate characteristic incompatible with ‘leadership’. Tuohy’s solution to this dichotomy was encountered in Chapter 4, but does not of itself challenge the preferential privileging of the role of ordained leadership.¹⁵¹ After conceding that ‘a cup of tea and a biscuit’ may be all that some people feel able to provide, Moore concludes thus: ‘Perhaps what the mission-shaped church needs is more paid caterers rather than youth workers!’¹⁵² As a recognition of the limits of reliance on volunteers, this has a slightly different inflection to Tuohy’s call for ordained cooks, and appears to focus on the task rather than the ministry. And so, from a challenge to the priorities of the Church of England, I turn to the demands made on Messy Church as a Fresh Expression.

¹⁴⁸ Jane Leadbetter, “Hats Off to All Messy Cooks Everywhere!” para. 1. *Messy Church* (blog), 1 May 2016, <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/messy-blog/hats-all-messy-cooks-everywhere>.

¹⁴⁹ Lucy Moore, *Messy Church* 2, 43–44.

¹⁵⁰ Lucy Moore, “The Importance/Impossibility of Clear Communication,” paras. 3–4. *Messy Church* (blog), 13 July 2007, <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/messy-blog/importanceimpossibility-clear-communication>.

¹⁵¹ Tuohy, “While They Were Eating,” 153. See Chapter 4, section 1.1, p. 171.

¹⁵² Lucy Moore, *Messy Church*, 39.

7. Mature disciples?

As Barnett explores in her essay, the demand for maturity from Fresh Expressions by those who are structurally-centred, and hence deem themselves mature, does not accord with the provisional assemblies to which Paul wrote, who were living in the expectation of Jesus' return.¹⁵³ Survey-respondents interviewed by the Church Army Research Unit for the report *Managing the Mess* (part of a 2019 portfolio of reports on Messy Church entitled *Playfully Serious*), justifiably asked whether the same questions about viability, or discipleship, or making financial contributions were asked of congregations in traditional churches.¹⁵⁴ (As Ireland and Booker observe pertinently, criticism on the grounds of monthly-meeting is not sustainable when monthly attendance at what they term 'standard' church is 'an increasing reality'.)¹⁵⁵ Similar juxtaposition causes Aspland to discern a divergence between Moore's would-be playful approach, and the conventionally expressed views on discipleship of her husband, the vicar of an evangelical parish.¹⁵⁶ However, in *Messy Church 2*, Moore appears to resile from overmuch novelty, which as Aspland astutely surmises, may reflect the political wrangling around the validity of Fresh Expressions which was prevalent at the time of her second book.¹⁵⁷ Referencing Acts 17:23,¹⁵⁸ Watkins and Shepherd observe that for some members, Messy Church 'operates as a "Church of the Unknown God", or an '(as yet) unknown God', concluding that this description may be a 'helpful self-understanding' for

¹⁵³ Beth Barnett, "Messy Maturity: Paradox, Contradiction or Perfect Match?" in *Messy Church Theology: Exploring the Significance of Messy Church for the Wider Church*, 2nd ed., ed. George Lings, reprint, 2013 (Abingdon: BRF, 2017), 183.

¹⁵⁴ Church Army Research Unit, *Managing the Mess* (Sheffield: Church Army, 2019). However, Church Army researcher Claire Dalpra elsewhere quotes one volunteer leader, who wondered if some Messy Churches 'needed to be released from the burden of expectation to be a congregation and the sense of continually underperforming', which shows how there can be an assumption of a template of success (Claire Dalpra, "A Messy Church's Journey," in *Messy Discipleship*, ed. Lucy Moore (Abingdon: BRF, 2021), 59).

¹⁵⁵ Ireland and Booker, *Making New Disciples*, 9, 11–12.

¹⁵⁶ Aspland, "Unless You Become Like a Child," 80.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁵⁸ 'Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I was went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god" ' (Acts 17:22–23).

practitioners.¹⁵⁹ Being ‘Christ-centred’ is fundamental to Moore’s vision, so that degree of incomprehension, even initially, might seem at odds with the effort that goes into Messy Church. Furthermore, it is significant that Drane can write an entire chapter on messy disciples in *Messy Church Theology* without mentioning hospitality,¹⁶⁰ which suggests a lack of clarity about Moore’s linkage of the welcome and the meal to evangelism and faith-formation.

It is a matter of coincidence that Moore references the chapter cited earlier, written by Lindsay Urwin, critic of Alpha’s neglect of progression to the Eucharist, as indicative of the latitude allowed to her for experimentation with occasional suitably modified celebrations of Holy Communion for Messy Church.¹⁶¹ Hospitality is certainly central to external recognition of Messy Church, but again it is unclear how constitutive it is of the identity either of those who come regularly, or those who periodically partake of Communion, despite Moore’s rejection of exclusive access restricted to the believer.¹⁶² Having touched upon the discernment of corporate identity, and evolving personal faith-identity, I will conclude with ecclesial differentiation, and Moore’s soliciting of discernment during the pandemic, as she entertains the expiration of Messy Church as one possibility.

7.1. Abraham redux: The future of Messy Church?

Moore uses the story of the hospitality of Abraham and Sarah as a justification for the Messy Church meal, and derives four tangential themes, of which I cite two: the first being ‘oasis’, and the second, ‘siesta’;¹⁶³ so her categorisation could be seen as simplistic Orientalism. She predictably links the former with welcome of guests,

¹⁵⁹ Clare Watkins and Bridget Shepherd, “The Challenge of ‘Fresh Expressions’ to Ecclesiology: Reflections from the Practice of Messy Church,” *Ecclesial Practices* 1, no. 1 (2014): 100, 107. doi:10.1163/22144471-00101005.

¹⁶⁰ John Drane, “Messy Disciples,” in *Messy Church Theology: Exploring the Significance of Messy Church for the Wider Church*, 2nd ed., ed. George Lings, reprint, 2013 (Abingdon: BRF, 2017), 111–26.

¹⁶¹ Lucy Moore, *Messy Church 2*, 63. See Urwin, “What is the Role of Sacramental Ministry in Fresh Expressions of Church?” For discussion of his views, see section 3.1, p. 264.

¹⁶² Lucy Moore, “Taste and See: Stories of How, When and Why Messy Churches Choose to Celebrate Holy Communion or Choose not To,” in *Doorways to the Sacred: Developing Sacramentality in Fresh Expressions of Church*, ed. Ian Mobsby and Phil Potter (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2017), 104.

¹⁶³ Lucy Moore, *Messy Church 2*, 52–54.

but turns the latter onto the institutional Church, which like Abraham and Sarah is still waiting, after trying to make God's promises happen, thus positioning Messy Church as the unexpected stranger bearing promise of legacy and fruitfulness. In her scenario of siesta, Moore sees Messy Church as a prophetic, even a provocative sign, and her narrative implies that the traditional Church is lacking vitality as members have grown weary, and have either resigned from continual serving, or do not possess the stamina to persist in waiting for prayer to be answered (unlike the example she gives of the church for whom Messy Church *was* that answer).¹⁶⁴ In *Messy Hospitality*, she cites Ezra reading the re-discovered law to the Israelites, and David's honouring of Mephibosheth to present the meal table as a place of sacrificial holiness, abundant provision, and healing to restore 'broken' people,¹⁶⁵ in a manner reminiscent of the optimism of Browning Hesel's account of the reinstatement of festive observance after a cessation.¹⁶⁶

Such a comparison is obviously pertinent to post-lockdown resumption, following the ingenious resort to deliveries of 'Messy Church in a bag', and sessions on Zoom and Facebook when gatherings were prohibited.¹⁶⁷ Writing during the pandemic, Moore reflects: 'Also, if you take away the physical reaching out, the physical touching and activity, Messy Church loses a lot of its *raison d'être*. It's very hard to do all these things virtually, to have those powerful relationships virtually'.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, she claims in a somewhat dismissive manner elsewhere, that the 'specialness' of Messy Church is demonstrated in the difficulty of reconvening in comparison to its 'traditional counterparts': 'Starting Messy Church again isn't as simple as putting on a service with people sat at a distance in masks'.¹⁶⁹ This exceptionalism comes at a price, and Booker and Ireland have previously pointed to

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 53–54.

¹⁶⁵ Lucy Moore, *Messy Hospitality*, 81–82, 84–85.

¹⁶⁶ Browning Hesel, "Shared Pleasure to Soothe the Broken Spirit," 96–98.

¹⁶⁷ Lucy Moore, "Messy Church at a Coronavirus Crossroads," para. 1. *Messy Church* (blog), 26 July 2020, <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/messy-church-at-a-corona-crossroads>.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., para. 2.

¹⁶⁹ Lucy Moore, "Locked Up!" n. 11. *Messy Church* (blog), 7 October 2020, <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/messy-blog/locked>.

the danger of routinisation and loss of spontaneity, versus the commitment required to innovate.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, given the enforced hiatus, Moore herself does now question the future oversight, and the future form of Messy Church, and whether the present resource-intensive model has run its course.¹⁷¹

8. Conclusion

It is notable that in looking to their origins, both Alpha and Messy Church claim their distinctive hospitality as accidental, although to differing extents. This indirectly supports not only Pohl's contention of the loss of hospitality as a spiritual discipline over the centuries, and her calling Christians to account in consequence, but also the necessity for this thesis to address the relegation of Christian hospitality. Indeed, the question remains, whether commensality has become decoupled from a wider ethic of Christian hospitality. Because coming together to eat is so unusual, implication with class is more evident, which contributes to Hunt, in particular, giving unwarranted credence to the claim of the co-option of hospitality in proselytisation. Consequently, if Brookes, and the thrust of Ward's argument in relation to Alpha are followed, hospitality should be part of the external outreach and internal identity of any church, rather than Alpha being a stand-alone expression of a hospitality which is not integrated into the life of the church, should Alpha-enquirers seek affiliation. If the Alpha meal is the only experience of eating together offered by a local church, then it truly could be seen as being in some measure as manipulative as it is alleged to be by sceptical critics. It might be possible to conclude that antipathy towards Alpha (or HTB) leads to all Christian eating together being treated with suspicion, except that hospitality is the common presentational link between Alpha and Messy Church. And yet, because the primary differentiation is by age, the allegation by detractors of the former that adults are susceptible to being seduced by hospitality, is curiously not forthcoming for the latter; the two experiences of corporate eating are not held to be

¹⁷⁰ Ireland and Booker, *Making New Disciples*, 133–34.

¹⁷¹ Lucy Moore, "Messy Questions on the Threshold." *Messy Church* (blog), 4 June 2020, <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/messy-blog/messy-questions-threshold>.

comparable. However, the irreconcilable tension between welcome, and hospitality that values the autonomous enquirer but also creates an opening for the gospel, versus the fostering of individual commitment, and nurturing faith-development in the longer term, lies behind many of the critiques of both formats.

In this chapter, I evaluated the hospitality evidenced in the corpus of writings about Alpha against the attributes I proposed in earlier chapters, and examined the theory and practice of ‘messy’ hospitality, and brought both brief surveys up-to-date with the shift to online delivery in 2020. I have primarily engaged with Gumbel and Moore, as figureheads for these two movements, but none of the foregoing is intended to traduce their vision or energy, or the hard work and enthusiasm of all those volunteers who faithfully seek to share the gospel using these tried and trusted means. I may be accused of an idealised and simplistic account of hospitality in this thesis, which discounts the logistics of catering for large gatherings, although I have expressed my own preference for the ‘bring and share’. However, a discrepancy between status and importance is evident in documented attitudes towards those doing the cooking in Messy Church (an apparently gendered construction celebrates not heroic cooks, but mythic creatures who conjure food and order). In addition, I may seem to have spent an inordinate amount of time critiquing language and attitudes in the case of Alpha, or manners and menus in the case of Messy Church, but it is such detailed analysis which exposes how hospitality is not neutral, may not be free of judgement, and can carry the risk of colonial imposition of middle-class norms, without due self-awareness. A charitable construal of Moore’s philosophy suggests that she is aiming for inclusiveness, and the table-manners of the kingdom, and has to strike a balance between worldly notions of precedence and awareness of scarcity on the part of some participants, and her own eschatological awareness of ultimate abundance. Despite the differing inflection of hospitality in Alpha and Messy Church, I argue that hospitality, however the welcome is staged and catered, is definitive of both, and contributes significantly to their appeal and popularity, providing the formats are sufficiently contextualised, and not treated as fail-safe formulæ. I debated

the ‘Anglicanness’ of discipleship in Chapter 5, and in this chapter I have considered the implications of allying food to Christian formation. I have dissected the characteristic hospitality of the two most public manifestations of evangelistic hospitality which have arisen within the Church of England in recent times, and by contrast, in the final chapter I will ask whether underdetermined hospitality goes largely unrecognised and uncelebrated.

Chapter 7

Life, death, and dying

The future of the Church of England

1. Introduction

In this final chapter, I identify hospitality in various guises and at differing scales by considering institutional policy, and contexts for ministry; responses to death and dying in time of tragedy; and disestablishment as a means to continuing ecclesial life. I will look at insufficiently articulated hospitality, questionable hospitality, and how the pandemic has made online accessibility unignorable as an element of inclusive hospitality. In Chapter 2, I gave attention to the banquet of the peoples and the menu, and so this chapter starts with contemporary eating and a theology of food, before moving on to consider over-consumption, poverty, and ecology. Thus, I extend my argument from God as table-host and Creator in earlier chapters to consider hungry humanity (in an inclusive adaptation of Schmemmann, and recalling Sawicki), and creatureliness more generally.¹ After a brief survey of actual and proposed responses to the issues of hunger and homelessness, including disestablishment of the Church of England, I will consider further those who question the very existence of the Church in its present form, including Martyn Percy and Jarel Robinson-Brown, in a development of discussion initiated in Chapter 5. I will also contrast the construction of hospitality in pioneering mission and parochial ministry, and the effects on clergy of institutional demands and re-organisations. In particular, I will look at the preventable tragedy of Grenfell Tower and the experience of a local parish priest. By this, I do not intend to appropriate the grief and trauma of those bereaved in the disaster, or the hapless onlookers to the unfolding tragedy, to my own

¹ Schmemmann comprehends physical and spiritual hunger in the assertion: 'Man is a hungry being', before describing how the privilege of blessing God for God-given food belongs to humanity alone (Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 14); Sawicki, "Recognizing the Risen Lord," 448. See Chapter 1, section 3.2, p. 62.

purposes; my discussion is necessarily theoretical, but it is not intended as an exploitative intellectual exercise. Instead, I am seeking to show the applicability of a more generous definition of hospitality, and demonstrate the coherence of my argument by highlighting the recurrence of themes outlined in earlier chapters. At this point, it must also be emphasised that I am not using hospitality as a diagnostic to shame or berate churches, nor advocating a separatist policy of introverted commensality.

Having initially considered food in excess, and the convicting power of the Eucharist with regard to disordered eating, I will investigate the place of Holy Communion in recovery from trauma. Following this, I will look at pandemic deprivation of Holy Communion, alongside online church as a means of spiritual sustenance in order to expand upon the discussion of virtuality in Chapter 4. The shift to online services necessitated by the pandemic can be seen as evidence of adaptability, but hospitality may be less in evidence as I shall show, although I will propose ways to evaluate technology, cyber-sociality, and liturgy. I will use Zoom for my examples, as the most ubiquitous video-conferencing software (although my conclusions can be modified for other online interactions). Having examined how discrimination shown towards people with disabilities negates their online presence and experience, I will conclude with an overview of how the misrepresentation and under-valuing of ageing members of congregations, in policy, and practice, is tied into any post-pandemic future Church.

2. Common meals and global commons

Loades writes: ‘The phrase “*koinonia hagion*”, commonly translated as “Holy Communion”, in its broadest sense has to do with making the common holy and the holy common’.² She goes on to say ‘divine presence will be mediated to us through ordinary persons and ordinary things and activities, in which hospitality has a very

² Ann Loades, “Table,” in *Journey*, ed. Stephen Burns, *Renewing the Eucharist*, vol. 1 (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008), 73.

special place’,³ and it is that ordinary hospitality that I am considering here. Percy also specifically addresses commonality: ‘The banquet of the Kingdom of God is a mutual affair with common fare. The equality and capacious, gracious inclusion it models is the only template the church has’.⁴ Despite intervening decades, he recollects the ‘common meals’ of two churches he and his wife have ministered in over the years: they reminisce about the corned-beef pie of one parish, and the meat and potato pie and ‘minted mushy peas’ served by the other.⁵ In more culinary circles these would be ‘signature dishes’, but here they serve to ramify rooted identity, indeed Percy states: ‘the common, repeated menu has a quasi-Eucharistic function’.⁶ This is the survival of the recipe as a token of proud cultural identity, when the crafts and industries which once differentiated cities and regions have vanished. Thus, the celebratory meal can be stolidly down-to-earth, although cultural homogeneity and easy recourse to a suitably representative dish should not be assumed.⁷

³ Ibid.

⁴ Martyn Percy, *The Humble Church*, 159.

⁵ Martyn Percy, *The Humble Church*, 5–6. Percy’s description of the mushy peas sounds like ‘menu-speak. See, for example, Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Word of Mouth: What We Talk About When We Talk About Food* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014), 156–59. Pastry-based class-distinctions are obviously also in play, as Percy snobbishly informs his readers of the contravention of a supposed expectation, in that the pastry-lid of the former was solid, rather than latticed, as though this is unutterably quaint (Martyn Percy, *The Humble Church*, 5). Indeed, I recall with fondness the polite anthropological interest of a visiting team from Holy Trinity Brompton in the early eighties towards a Northern pie and pea supper. Percy prefaces his culinary critique thus: ‘I sometimes wondered with the winds whipping off the moors, if the function of this food was partly ballast’, which is to insult local food and local weather (Percy, *The Humble Church*, 5). Despite his lack of insight, he unashamedly discusses snobbery and elitism in the Church of England later in the book. See Martyn Percy, *The Humble Church*, 164–65.

⁶ Martyn Percy, *The Humble Church*, 6. Apropos indigeneity and ‘Eucharistic’ meals, Riddell gives an account of an alternative worship gathering in New Zealand that served the, unpalatable to my taste-buds, combination of pavlova (with kiwi fruit, naturally) and Chardonnay, but made no mention of Communion, which resulted in unresolved questions for some participants. See Mike Riddell, “Bread and Wine, Beer and Pies,” in *Mass Culture: Eucharist and Mission in a Post-Modern World*, ed. Pete Ward (Oxford: BRF, 1999), 95–96.

⁷ In 2001, the Foreign Secretary Robin Cook asserted, as a political intervention into controversy about immigration and racism in the run-up to a General Election: ‘“Chicken tikka masala is now Britain’s true national dish”’, in an attempt to use the inauthentic curry as a marker of multiculturalism (Patrick Wintour, “Chicken Tikka Britain is New Cook Recipe,” *The Guardian*, Thursday 19 April 2001, 2). Writing with merciless irony on the pathological delusion of English exceptionalism, Gilroy skewers the mongrel diet of ‘true Brits’, who will not be ‘shamed by the overdisciplined ranks of mechanical, unfeeling krauts who don’t know the *volkish* meanings of a warm pint let alone the traditional joys of a kebab or a chicken tikka, never mind an extra bag of chips’ (Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 110). It is sobering to realise that fast food and takeaways will contribute to a discernible layer of chicken bones in the fossil record, thus providing a

Remaining on the subject of indigenous cuisine, but changing continents, Méndez-Montoya, a Dominican friar and Californian-born Mexican, elaborates connections between food and theology through the history of *mole poblano*, a traditional Mexican dish. Méndez-Montoya recalls sharing a lovingly prepared *molli* with his friends and the ‘communal sense of ecstasy’.⁸ He describes ‘a “kenotic delight,” a non-possessive rejoicing in the feeding of the concrete – not abstract – Other’.⁹ And he suggests that theologians offer their own situatedness: ‘so alimentary theology invites us to bring our own selves into it, to add our own “spices”, and so make it more spicy’.¹⁰ This self-investment brings to mind Weil from Chapter 4,¹¹ and he further suggests that this implies ‘the acquisition of a *piquant*, or prophetic voice’.¹² Although I hope that my writing has its own particularity, it is necessary to point out that his analogy depends on the history and complexity of the dish, and the laborious preparation, so I have to ask whether the commonplace cookery the Percys remember with affection focuses more attention on the enduring nature of the relationships, precisely because of the ordinariness of the food. Nevertheless, both conditions are graced gatherings, distinguished from the quotidian, and cemented by conviviality. These meals rooted in locality and tradition can be compared with the deracinated catering of Alpha, and the explanatory acrostic where the ‘p’ came to

geological marker for the putative Anthropocene Epoch. See Carys E. Bennett, et al., “The Broiler Chicken as a Signal of a Human Reconfigured Biosphere,” *Royal Society Open Science* 5, no. 12 (December 2018): 9. doi:10.1098/rsos.180325; Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin, “Defining the Anthropocene,” *Nature* 519, no. 7542 (March 2015): 171–80. doi:10.1038/nature14258. The term ‘Anthropocene’ for the current geological epoch was introduced by Crutzen and Stoermer in 2000, but Haraway rejects the designation entirely as being ungenerative, and transposes letters in the name of the *Pimoc chulu* spider to form an earthy amalgam: the ‘Chthulucene’ (Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, “The ‘Anthropocene’,” *IGBP* (International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme) *Newsletter* 41 (May 2000): 17–18.

<http://www.igbp.net/download/18.316f18321323470177580001401/1376383088452/NL41.pdf>; Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 31).

⁸ Angel F. Méndez-Montoya, *The Theology of Food: Eating and the Eucharist*, reprint, 2009, Illuminations: Theory and Religion (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 44.

⁹ Méndez-Montoya, *The Theology of Food*, 35.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹¹ Alec Irwin, “Devoured by God: Cannibalism, Mysticism, and Ethics in Simone Weil,” *CrossCurrents* 51, no. 2, *A Hell in Heaven’s Despite: Collisions of Religion and Violence*, special issue (Summer 2001): 266–67, cited in Tuohy, “While They Were Eating,” 155. See Chapter 4, section 1.1, pp. 171–72.

¹² Méndez-Montoya, *The Theology of Food*, 41, emphasis in original.

stand for pasta.¹³ Curiously, this has been unnecessarily expanded more recently to include ‘potatoes or paella or pizza’: the jacket potato is a staple of mass-catering, pizza less so, but the inclusion of paella is not only hopelessly pretentious, but also exhibits an inauthentic striving for effect in a supposedly light-hearted retroactive acronym.¹⁴ However, to highlight this contrast is not to diminish the perception of care which comes from being cooked-for, as illustrated by Lucy Moore’s story of the disconsolate toddler deprived of the expected and anticipated ritual of his weekly flapjack at Messy Church.¹⁵ In addition, Méndez-Montoya writes lyrically and holistically about food and theology more globally:

Creation is a cosmic banquet and interdependent network of edible signs that participates in God’s nurturing sharing. The Incarnation is a continuation of God’s kenotic sharing, that, at the eucharistic banquet, performs a more radical form of self-giving by becoming food itself with the purpose of incorporating humanity into Christ’s body, which already participates in the life of the cosmos and of the Trinitarian community. Because food matters, theology’s vocation is thus to become ‘alimentary,’ reorienting the interdependency between human communities, humanity with the ecology, and all creation with God.¹⁶

Obviously, I need to note that Méndez-Montoya is a Catholic, but without rehearsing the Reformation and the semiotics of the Eucharist, I note merely that food is the main crux of Méndez-Montoya’s ontological argument. Belief in the doctrine of transubstantiation is not necessary to this particular summation of Eucharist, and Méndez-Montoya’s hermeneutic of food-provision and care reiterates the hospitality I have outlined in previous chapters. Méndez-Montoya’s conjunction of the Trinity, the incarnation, and the created order accords with the hospitality I am suggesting, which

¹³ Brookes describes this summary of the features of the course as a ‘relatively late development’, but pasta is obviously emblematic. Thus: ‘A ~ anyone can come; L ~ learning and laughter; P ~ pasta; H ~ help each other; A ~ ask anything’ (Andrew Brookes, “Holy Trinity Brompton and the Formation of Alpha,” in *The Alpha Phenomenon: Theology, Praxis and Challenges for Mission and Church Today*, ed. Andrew Brookes (London: Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2007), 15).

¹⁴ Nicky Gumbel, *Telling Others: The Alpha Initiative*, rev. ed., reprint, 2016 (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2019), 59, sub-heading.

¹⁵ Lucy Moore, *Messy Church 2*, 59.

¹⁶ Méndez-Montoya, *The Theology of Food*, ix. See also Méndez-Montoya, *The Theology of Food*, 3. He explicitly evokes some of my own themes as he advances alimentary theology later in the book: ‘I hope this will move us beyond a social practice of mere mutual “tolerance” and instead welcome an effort to a simultaneously local and global embodiment of communion expressed as hospitality and mutual nurturance’ (Méndez-Montoya, *The Theology of Food*, 43).

acknowledges the illimitability of God, and the consequences of human sinfulness for society, politics, the environment, and awareness of the spiritual, but his doctrinal stance on the Eucharist does not foreclose my usage. Indeed, he subsequently uses Dennis E. Smith to argue for the hybridity of the Eucharist from early times,¹⁷ so it would be invidious of me to focus on divergent sacramental understandings, rather than the apprehensible scope of graced eating.

Furthermore, Méndez-Montoya sees the divine abundance of the Eucharist as exposing the ‘broken realities’ of our eating practices,¹⁸ which were alluded to in Chapter 4,¹⁹ but are similarly dissected by Grumett, Bretherton, and Holmes, in their analysis of fast food as a perversion of God’s provision.²⁰ Correspondingly, Méndez-Montoya also fulminates against malnutrition, and the manipulation of desire by manufacturers which results in obesity.²¹ It is perhaps indicative of the aridity of much theological and philosophical speculation, that novels provide the point of departure for his sensual excursus on the theology of food. Nevertheless, I argue that his employment of the delectable flights of fancy contained in *Like Water for Chocolate*,²² and to a lesser degree, *Babette’s Feast*,²³ is susceptible to critique on a human level as a titillatory diversion from the realities of encoded racism or poverty, despite his sacramental solution of the Eucharist as ‘*sacrum convivium*: God offering hospitality by becoming food and co-abiding with the other’.²⁴ For example, Robinson-Brown makes baked-in racism and liturgical violence explicit through his

¹⁷ Méndez-Montoya, *The Theology of Food*, 38 n. 63.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁹ See Chapter 4, section 2.1.

²⁰ David Grumett, Luke Bretherton, and Stephen R. Holmes, “Fast Food: A Critical Theological Perspective,” *Food, Culture & Society* 14, no. 3 (2011): 375–92. doi:10.2752/175174411X12961586033609.

²¹ Méndez-Montoya, *The Theology of Food*, 39–41, 152–53.

²² For example, Laura Esquivel, *Like Water for Chocolate: A Novel in Monthly Instalments, with Recipes, Romances, and Home Remedies*, trans. Carol Christensen and Thomas Christensen (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 53, cited in Méndez-Montoya, *The Theology of Food*, 50.

²³ Isak Dinesen, “Babette’s Feast,” in *Anecdotes of Destiny and Ehrengard* (New York: Vintage, 1993), cited in Méndez-Montoya, *The Theology of Food*, 118–22.

²⁴ Méndez-Montoya, *The Theology of Food*, 160. Mouth-watering repetition is permissible in situations of actual extremity, such as the example of the creation in a concentration camp of the recipe book which has become a culinary testament to an obliterated culture. See Cara de Silva, ed., *In Memory’s Kitchen: A Legacy from the Women of Terezin*, trans. Bianca Steiner Brown (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996).

discussion of the whiteness of Communion wafers and Eucharistic bread.²⁵ However, I now need to problematise any focus on food and eating divorced from food-production, and I will do so in the next section on environmental peril.

2.1. Thoughtless eating and ‘ensoiled’ thinking

In her book *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture*, Davis draws inspiration from farmer-poet Wendell Berry, and asserts arrestingly:

Possibly the most important and dangerous thing about our own historical moment is that now for the first time a great social swath across the globe – the society created and sustained by the industrial economy – is eating sacrilegiously . . . we are ‘drawing our lives out of our land’ without thought of return. If we continue to do so, we will perish from our heedlessness, a possibility that the Leviticus tradition faces squarely.²⁶

Thus, Davis judges that ‘from a biblical perspective, the sustained fertility and habitability of the earth, or more particularly of the land of Israel is the best index of the health of the covenant relationship’.²⁷ Elsewhere she positions the land as a ‘semi-autonomous moral agent’.²⁸ Receipt of God’s hospitality therefore, signals not human exceptionalism, but creaturely dependence, and biospheric interdependence, requiring holy obedience. For all the human corruption within the Nine O’Clock Service,²⁹ the president’s crossing himself with soil was a potent image of the redemption of dust, and dependence on the earth, through an apparent marring of the purity of white vestments with what would otherwise be deemed ‘dirt’,³⁰ although Rogerson

²⁵ J. A. Robinson-Brown, “Whiteness and the Aesthetics of the Eucharist.” *Lost in Wonder, Love, and Praise* (blog), 22 October 2020, <https://changedfromgloryintoglory.wordpress.com/2020/10/22/whiteness-and-the-aesthetics-of-the-eucharist-white-bread-as-liturgical-violence/>. Author initials only on website. This point is expanded by Jagessar and Burns in their discussion of rubrics on the colour of the cloth used to cover any remaining consecrated elements, but they also assert the insufficiency of naan bread as an alternative, without the development of a ‘postcolonial critique of the liturgy’ that asks ‘critical questions’: ‘To dislodge dominant and oppressive modes of representing and imaging demands nothing less’ (Michael Jagessar and Stephen Burns, “Liturgical Studies and Christian Worship: The Postcolonial Challenge,” *Black Theology* 5, no. 1 (2007): 56–57, 57 n. 50, 58–59, here at 58. doi:10.1558/blth.2007.5.1.39).

²⁶ Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 94; Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club, 1977), 38, cited in Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture*, 94.

²⁷ Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture*, 8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 100.

²⁹ See Chapter 5, section 2, p. 217 n. 50.

³⁰ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, new introduction, rev. ed., reprint, 1966 (London: Routledge, 2002), 44–45.

attributes the purpose as being ‘to emphasize the humanity and mortality of the celebrant’.³¹ Monbiot chillingly describes our hubristic arrogance: ‘We are treating soil like dirt. It’s a fatal mistake, as our lives depend on it’.³²

Of course, as Wirzba, DeWitt, and many others observe, in Genesis ‘the first human is an earthling, *adam* from *adamah* (the Hebrew for soil)’, or alternatively, ‘*human of the humus*’.³³ Thus, Bretherton and Juskus poetically remind us: ‘As Spirit-breathed soil, humans are created out of the same ground shared by all beings, animate and inanimate’.³⁴ In an exposition of ‘ensoiled’ thinking, Biddington instances the ‘culture of radical hospitality in the soil’, and draws on Kumar’s ‘new trinity for our time’ of soil, soul and society,³⁵ which offers a ‘dynamic and evolving perichoretic relationship of kinship, respect and mutual nurture’, to propose an ‘edapho-theology’.³⁶ Citing Keller, on *tehom* and grounding metaphors,³⁷ he invokes ‘the mystery of the G–d who was ensoiled before ever being enfleshed’.³⁸ In many widely available translations of Genesis 2:7 (for example, NRSV or the New International Version), the Lord God forms man from the ‘dust of the ground’, and I wonder whether dust’s connotations of desiccation and lifelessness have

³¹ Rogerson, “‘The Lord is Here’,” 49.

³² George Monbiot, “We’re Treating Soil Like Dirt. It’s a Fatal Mistake, as Our Lives Depend Upon It,” *The Guardian*, Wednesday 25 March 2015, title. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/25/treating-soil-like-dirt-fatal-mistake-human-life>.

³³ Norman Wirzba, “Food Justice as God’s Justice,” *Tikkun* 31, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 13.

doi:10.1215/08879982–3493310; Calvin B. DeWitt, “Behold the Hippo: A Zoologist Sings the Doxology,” *Christian Century*, 18 April 2012, 33, emphasis in original.

³⁴ Luke Bretherton and Ryan Juskus, “When It Comes to Climate Change, We Need to Look Earthward — not to the Heavens — for the Solution,” para. 4. *ABC Religion and Ethics*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, posted 11 October 2021, <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/for-the-solution-to-climate-change-we-need-to-look-earthward/13579516>.

³⁵ Satish Kumar, *Soil, Soul, Society: A New Trinity for Our Time* (Brighton: Leaping Hare Press, 2013), cited in Terry Biddington, “Doing Dirty Theology: How Ensoiled Humans Participate in the Flourishing of All Earthlings,” *Feminist Theology* 29, no. 3 (May 2021): 314. doi:10.1177/09667350211000611.

³⁶ Biddington, “Doing Dirty Theology,” 313, 314.

³⁷ Catherine Keller, “Talking Dirty: Ground is not Foundation,” in *Ecospirit: Religions and Philosophies for the Earth*, ed. Laurel Kearns and Catherine Keller (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 63–76, cited in Biddington, “Doing Dirty Theology,” 314. N.B. This is the subtitle from the cover, but the title page gives *Religion, Philosophy and the Earth*.

³⁸ Biddington, “Doing Dirty Theology,” 314. However, Biddington fails to draw upon Berry’s evocative description of topsoil as ‘very Christ-like in its passivity and beneficence’ (Wendell Berry, *The Long-Legged House* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969), 204, cited in Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 53. doi:10.1017/9781108631846).

unconsciously contributed to the attitude Monbiot identifies.³⁹ By way of redress, Middleton, in a conference paper, offers a promising line of synthesis between ecotheology and trauma: by building on the work of Serene Jones, Shelly Rambo, and Elizabeth A. Johnson, he inhabits the planetary emergency, to suggest the validity of the category of ecological trauma, and our place in witnessing it, in imitation of Christ.⁴⁰ Conversely, Tidball identifies what he terms ‘urgent biophilia’ as a response to trauma, and Helphand describes the ‘defiant gardens’ of soldiers in the trenches and displaced refugees, amongst others.⁴¹ It is not a surprise therefore, that members of the community of North Kensington turned to gardening after the Grenfell fire as ‘a means of therapy’, or that relatives of victims have proposed turning the shell of the tower into a ‘vertical forest’.⁴²

³⁹ This supposition gains weight from Jagessar’s advancement of *tehom*, and the Caribbean sea, as a resource for Caribbean identity and Black liberation theology, and his assertion: ‘Too much of our theological articulation has been associated with the “dry land”: hence the brittleness and deadliness of much of our God-talk’ (Michael N. Jagessar, “‘The Sea is History’: The Caribbean Sea and the Deep as Paradigms for Doing Theology on a Postcolonial Landscape,” *Black Theology* 10, no. 2 (2012): 173. doi:10.1558/blth.v10i2.169). The importance of the oceans for the preservation of life on the planet, and as a source of food is highlighted by Maggang, who notes the effects of pollution and loss of biodiversity on the marine ecology, and how a land-based theology overlooks the part played by those who fish the seas in the work of feeding the hungry and protecting the environment. See Elia Maggang, “Emphasizing *Fish*, *Fisher*, and *Sea* for the Mission of Christian Churches in the Context of the Marine Ecological Crisis: A Response to the Ten Commandments of Food,” *Mission Studies* 39, no. 1 (2021): 5–26. doi:10.1163/157338831–12341766.

⁴⁰ Tim Middleton, “Witnessing Our Wounded World: A Theology of Ecological Trauma,” paper presented at European Forum for the Study of Religion and the Environment (EFSRE), ‘Religion, Materialism and Ecology’, University of Manchester (virtual), 14–15 May 2021.

⁴¹ Keith G. Tidball, “Urgent Biophilia: Human-Nature Interactions and Biological Attractions in Disaster Resilience,” *Ecology and Society* 17, no. 2 (June 2012): Article #5. doi:10.5751/ES-04596–170205; Kenneth I. Helphand, *Defiant Gardens: Making Gardens in Wartime* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 2006). I owe these references to Rebecca L. Copeland, “Returning to the Garden: A Theological Interpretation of Urgent Biophilia,” paper presented at the International Academy of Practical Theology (IAPT), ‘Coping with Crisis: Hospitality, Security, and the Search for Faithful Connections’, Leuven (virtual), 8–10 July 2021.

⁴² Grow2Know, “Our Story: The Healing Power of Nature in the Community.” Accessed 16 June 2021, <https://grow2know.org.uk>; Mark Townsend, “Grenfell Relatives Say They Will Fight Attempts to Demolish Tower,” *The Guardian*, Sunday 16 May 2021, para. 1. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/may/16/grenfell-relatives-say-they-will-fight-attempts-to-demolish-tower>. These prototype biodiverse buildings are the vision of architect Stefano Boeri, but they are new-builds maintained annually by ‘a team of arborists-climbers [sic]’, otherwise known as the ‘Flying Gardeners’, who use mountaineering techniques to descend from the roof of the buildings; the Grenfell structure has been severely compromised, so it is unlikely that such a plan would be feasible (Stefano Boeri, “Vertical Forests,” para. 4. Stefano Boeri Architetti (website), accessed 15 June 2021, <https://www.stefano-boeri-architetti.net/en/project/vertical-forest/>).

Whatever the circumstances, such human horticulture has divine precedent, as Feeley-Harnik outlines of Creation and Genesis: ‘God, as the preeminent gardener, works to produce vital, edible wisdom-food, engendering and sustaining humans who should respond to God and each other in kind’.⁴³ Moreover, Méndez-Montoya contrasts the differences between the banquets of Wisdom and Folly to develop the culinary aspect of this provision: ‘Sophia is the cook, she prepares the food, and her food brings about life, creates community and provides correct perception’.⁴⁴ This reading of Proverbs is significant in the light of my earlier discussion of the demotion of cooks in the ministerial hierarchy, and could usefully supplement readings which look solely to the church in the book of Acts for legitimation. An intriguing complementary view is offered by Grumett, Bretherton, and Holmes:

to eat together is to enjoy communion through food, which fulfils the purpose of the items given by God for food. This brings us to food preparation and cooking. These are acts of “priesting” creation: properly human activities in which God’s good gifts are taken and in which they realise their God-given end.⁴⁵

In developing this same theme of purposive eating, Feeley-Harnik is in accord with Pattison, when she writes: ‘Biblical meals express bodily processes of understanding and communicating that accompany and may even transcend words in the fullest “face-to-face” encounters (Deut. 34.10; 1 Cor. 13.12)’.⁴⁶ Furthermore, she uses Peter’s vision of the sheet filled with clean and unclean animals (Acts 10:9-11:18), which I discussed in Chapter 1, to quirkily expand upon this faciality as ‘one striking example of how early Jewish-Christians used biblical meals to communicate their “face-to-face” understanding of the Law across the babel of tongues and stomachs that characterize humankind’.⁴⁷

⁴³ Gillian Feeley-Harnik, “Meals,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 507.

⁴⁴ Méndez-Montoya, *The Theology of Food*, 100.

⁴⁵ Grumett, Bretherton, and Holmes, “Fast Food,” 380.

⁴⁶ Feeley-Harnik, “Meals,” 507.

⁴⁷ Feeley-Harnik, “Meals,” 507. If I were Feeley-Harnik I would have been sorely tempted to write ‘the babel of tongues and the borborygmi of stomachs’ here, for the sake of alliteration and somatic equivalence.

2.2. Cultivating hunger

Having considered the interrelation of biology, ecology, and covenant, I am now going to look specifically at ethical responses to hunger and homelessness. Kreider, for example, identifies the necessity for cultural critique as part of catechesis, and uses food in an open-ended example.⁴⁸ In one sense, environmental degradation, factory-farming, and industrialised food-production are beyond the limits of this research, but more immediately they are implicated in food poverty and precarity, as Pemberton argues convincingly in his 2020 book *Broken Britain: Food Banks, Faith and Neoliberalism*.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Pemberton asserts that neoliberalism uses hunger as a ‘disciplinary tool (denying the poor the peace of being one with, or participating in their own body)’.⁵⁰ In my view, the visibility of societal hunger should be considered analogous to the apostle Paul’s concerns about unequal eating in 1 Corinthians 11, but with contemporary application which should extend beyond matters of internal ecclesial decorum, and participation in the Eucharist, to the dignity of local communities, and the formulation of national food policies. Indeed, in contrasting the immediate hospitality of the Hebrew scriptures with how poverty and hunger is obscured by the governmental safety-net as final resort, Jung observes: ‘Hospitality may still be a matter of life and death’,⁵¹ which hearkens back to discussion of the stranger and extremity in Chapter 1, and brings this thesis full circle. In addition, Shildrick and MacDonald show how narratives of the undeserving poor are internalised, as people in relative poverty disidentify themselves from ‘Others’, and engage in a politics of respectability.⁵² Part of the reason can be found in Pemberton’s assertion: ‘Shame is another means by which the poor live vicariously at

⁴⁸ Alan Kreider, “Baptism and Catechesis as Spiritual Formation,” in *Remembering Our Future: Explorations in Deep Church*, ed. Andrew Walker and Luke Bretherton, Deep Church (London: Paternoster, 2007), 183.

⁴⁹ Charles Roding Pemberton, *Bread of Life in Broken Britain: Food Banks, Faith and Neoliberalism* (London: SCM Press, 2020).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁵¹ Jung, *Food for Life*, 35.

⁵² Tracy Shildrick and Robert MacDonald, “Poverty Talk: How People Experiencing Poverty Deny Their Poverty and Why They Blame ‘the Poor’,” *The Sociological Review* 61, no. 2 (May 2013): 291. doi:10.1111/1467-954X.12018.

the periphery of the existence of the rich'.⁵³ My contention therefore, however simplistic on the one hand, and difficult to execute on the other, is that reciprocal hospitality and communal cookery, whether through church meals, neighbourly gatherings, collective jam-making or cookery lessons which celebrate fresh ingredients and diverse flavours, serve to elevate eating, and remove it from stigmatising practices of food-distribution. This is not to imply incompetence, or financial ineptitude, but an expansion of culinary repertoire and wise use of resources. The matter of time available for such activities cannot be discounted, and transport and childcare may need to be taken in to consideration, but it may be that there is an opportunity for service for those who have time on their hands, whether through choice or circumstance. In addition, new initiatives are arising, as in some neighbourhoods food pantries provide an adjunct to food banks. The model was developed in Stockport in 2013, but the geographical range is currently limited.⁵⁴ Each pantry operates as a membership food shop, and neighbourhood hub, and is run cooperatively as a social franchise.⁵⁵ The pantries are open to all, so referrals are not required: the model confers dignity because they allow choice, and the nominal weekly membership fee permits saving for otherwise unaffordable items.⁵⁶

Pemberton (like Robinson-Brown)⁵⁷ claims a rationale for disestablishment, however, this thesis is written on the pessimistic assumption of the continuance of the present polity, although that is not to deny the validity of these arguments. After calling for the decoupling of church and state, Pemberton turns the *kenosis* recommended by Percy onto the nation: 'The Christian question to society and government is: how will it substantiate life lived for the other, loving kenotically?'⁵⁸

⁵³ Charles Samuel Christie Pemberton, "Between Ecclesiology and Ontology: A Response to Chris Allen on British Food Banks," *Political Theology* 20, no. 1 (2018): 98. doi:10.1080/1462317X.2018.1509180. N.B. Despite the difference in nomenclature, the author of this article is the author of *Bread of Life in Broken Britain*.

⁵⁴ Your Local Pantry, "What is a Pantry?" Accessed 13 July 2021, <https://yourlocalpantry.co.uk/what-is-a-pantry/>.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Jarel Robinson-Brown, *Black, Gay, British, Christian, Queer*, 157. See section 3, p. 306.

⁵⁸ Charles Roding Pemberton, *Bread of Life in Broken Britain*, 137.

For government, he suggests a universal basic income, for the Church, an interrogation of its status, and a turning over of Church land for food, alongside individual Christians considering their diet.⁵⁹ In 2021, the Church of England announced the intention to release church-held land for social housing;⁶⁰ there is an opportunity for this initiative to couple nicely with Pemberton’s call for the cultivation of land. The example of the Incredible Edible Network, which promotes the use of overlooked urban spaces for edible planting, and grew from a voluntary initiative in West Yorkshire called Edible Todmorden,⁶¹ suggests an opportunity for ‘Edible Church’ (Credible Edible?), although it might be perceived as a step too far to suggest the turning-over of graveyards to food-production as the logical outcome of his suggestion.⁶² However, some churches and cathedrals use church roofs to keep bees, in an adapted retrieval of monastic practice, and Manchester Cathedral provides training in apiarism to enhance employability.⁶³ Such initiatives are consistent with justice for the poor, and preserving the fertility of the land, in line with Davis’ exposition of covenantal relationship.⁶⁴ Another related avenue is suggested by HeartEdge, which seeks to transform church and society through ‘commerce, culture, compassion and congregational life’ with church becoming a ‘model of what renewed society might look like’.⁶⁵ One of their suggestions is that churches start food-based social enterprises that make jam, chutney and pickles from local home-grown produce, or even brew beer or the organic liquid fertiliser and soil-improving

⁵⁹ Ibid., 137–38.

⁶⁰ Church of England, The Commission of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on Housing, Church and Community, *Tackling the Housing Crisis Together*, Full rept., by Charlie Arbuthnot, et al. (Church of England, 2021). <https://archbishopofcanterbury.org/media/2089>.

⁶¹ Incredible Edible Network, “Our Story.” Accessed 23 June 2021, <https://www.incredibleedible.org.uk/our-story/>.

⁶² Environmental philosopher Val Plumwood makes the process of decay explicit, and is equally critical of Christians and atheists and their denialist worldview: ‘The food/death perspective, so familiar to our ancestors, is something the human exceptionalism of western modernity has structured out of life. Attention to human foodiness is tasteless’ (Val Plumwood, “Tasteless: Towards a Food-Based Approach to Death,” *PAN: Philosophy, Activism, Nature* 5 (1998): 69). Fittingly, this article was republished posthumously: Val Plumwood, “Tasteless: Towards a Food-Based Approach to Death,” *Environmental Values* 17, no. 3 (August 2008): 323–30. doi:10.3197/096327108X343103.

⁶³ Volition, “Volunteer Bee Coordinator Joins the Manchester Team!” *News and Blog*, accessed 28 July 2021, <https://www.volitioncommunity.org/volunteer-bee-coordinator-joins-the-manchester-team/>.

⁶⁴ See section 2.1, p. 296.

⁶⁵ HeartEdge, “Vision.” Accessed 23 March 2022, <https://www.heartedge.org/about-us/vision>.

insect repellent known as ‘worm tea’.⁶⁶ But as well as institutional and local responses, it is also important to consider planetary health.

For Brian McLaren, the climate crisis, and religious and racial intolerance are inevitable outcomes of the current economic system, justified by an historic distortion of the Great Commission by Pope Nicholas V five hundred years ago, which licensed White supremacy.⁶⁷ Speaking in 2019, in a talk entitled ‘Worship that destroys (and saves) the world’,⁶⁸ with eerie prescience he entreated his listeners thus: ‘In light of our current global emergency, we hereby call on the Christians of the world to *refuse* to conduct worship as usual, and instead, we call for a time of creative disruption and liturgical and missional innovation’.⁶⁹ He called on his audience of preachers to refuse ‘chaplaincy to an extractive and exploitive economy’ that will bring about the end of the world that we inhabit,⁷⁰ although his implicit equation of consumerist personal salvation with a rapture mentality,⁷¹ speaks more to American irresponsibility, and is an unlikely doctrine for an Anglican audience at an event sponsored by the *Church Times*, however culpable they may be of supporting the status quo. Nevertheless, his polemic exposes generational sin, and the implication of racial justice and climate justice⁷² shows the inseparability of conquest, enslavement, and despoilation, on the one hand, and the absolute moral imperative of looking beyond the parochial, on the other. I will tackle the topic of church and impact of COVID-19 subsequently,⁷³ but

⁶⁶ HeartEdge, “Bottle it! Sell it! Growing Enterprise... [sic],” paras. 1, 5. Accessed 23 March 2022, <https://www.heartedge.org/main/news/post/703->.

⁶⁷ Slides downloadable from <http://brianmclaren.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/worship-that-destroyssaves.pdf> via Brian McLaren, “What I Shared in Oxford: Worship That Destroys (and Saves) the World.” (blog), 11 September 2019, <https://what-i-shared-in-oxford-worship-that-destroys-and-saves-the-world>; Brian McLaren, “Worship That Destroys (and Saves) the World,” *Church Times* Festival of Preaching (Oxford, 11 September 2019), slide no. 11 (misspelt as Nicolas).

⁶⁸ McLaren, “Worship That Destroys (and Saves) the World.”

⁶⁹ McLaren, “What I Shared in Oxford: Worship That Destroys (and Saves) the World,” slide no. 68, italics substituted for colour in original. I am not suggesting that the pandemic is divine retribution, but it does allow for courageous re-thinking on the part of all churches, not only the Church of England, and it is to be hoped that ensuing changes to structures will be neither cosmetic, nor palliative.

⁷⁰ McLaren, “What I Shared in Oxford: Worship That Destroys (and Saves) the World,” slide no. 43.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, slide nos. 19, 29.

⁷² See, for example, Leon Sealey-Huggins, “The Climate Crisis is a Racist Crisis: Structural Racism, Inequality and Climate Change,” in *The Fire Now: Anti-Racist Scholarship in Times of Explicit Racial Violence*, ed. Azeezat Johnson, Remi Joseph-Salisbury, and Beth Kamunge (London: Zed Books, 2018), 99–113.

⁷³ See sections 5 and 6.

whatever the original vector or possible reservoirs for SARS-CoV-2, consumers in the global North contribute to the emergence of zoonotic diseases as profit drives unequal distribution of externalities, and concomitant increased biosurveillance also unfairly impacts indigenous peoples and vulnerable communities.⁷⁴ The inescapable effects of climate change render futile the reductive hospitality of improved interpersonal skills seen in *From Stranger to Friend*. As I demonstrate in this thesis, welcome extends beyond the church door: exclusionary meeting and eating, and heedless consumption cannot be on the menu for Christians, never mind Anglicans. For now, I resort to emic evaluations of the Christ-likeness of the Church of England.

3. The Humble Church?

In his 2021 book *Humble Church: Renewing the Body of Christ*, Percy duly notes a resurgence of interest in kenotic ecclesiology, but he cannot resist outlining two opposing alternative ‘self-emptying’ futures for the Church of England: first, to be a serving church which does not cling to status, and secondly, in the inevitable pun, to be ‘the self-emptying church’ unattractively obsessing about growth and recruitment, and driving away members.⁷⁵ Interestingly, in the light of Percy’s stance, Riem, in his critique of *Mission-Shaped Church* points out that ‘Dying to Live’ nearly became its title.⁷⁶ Despite Percy’s evident frustration as an insider, the implication of

⁷⁴ See, for example, Kelly F. Austin, “Degradation and Disease: Ecologically Unequal Exchanges Cultivate Emerging Pandemics,” *World Development* 137 (January 2021): Article #105163, 1–3. doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.105163; Will Smith, “Understanding the Changing Role of Global Public Health in Biodiversity Conservation,” *Ambio* 51 (2022): 485–93. doi:10.1007/s13280-021-01576-0.

⁷⁵ Martyn Percy, *The Humble Church*, 140. Percy’s sentiments have resonances with McKimmon’s observations on the Kirk and the future of the Church of Scotland: ‘“The church”’ is ‘substituted for God as the subject of preaching’ if congregations are not ‘innovative and growing’ (Eric G. McKimmon, “The Gift of an Aging Church,” *Theology in Scotland* 23, no. 2 (2016): 37). Similar attitudes are evident when existing congregants in the Church of England are seen primarily as a hindrance to the desired outcome of a ‘mixed ecology’ (Madeleine Davies, “Congregations That Don’t Share the Vision Regarded as Obstacle to C of E’s ‘Mixed Ecology,’” *Church Times*, 30 May 2021. <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/4-june/news/uk/congregations-that-don-t-share-the-vision-regarded-as-obstacle-to-c-of-e-s-mixed-ecology>).

⁷⁶ Roland Riem, “Mission-Shaped Church: An Emerging Critique,” *Ecclesiology* 3, no. 1 (2006): 127. doi:10.1177/1744136606067689. *Mission-Shaped Church* declares: ‘The church is most true to itself when it gives itself up, in current cultural form, to be re-formed among those who do not know God’s Son. In each new context the Church must die to live’ (Church of England, Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context*, rev. ed., reprint, 2004 (London: Church House Publishing, 2009), 89).

his claim that top-down strategies accelerate decline is reminiscent of Morisy's tacit approach to mission and social action, and is not incompatible with Rich's anecdotal observations that growth comes from focusing on service, as discussed in Chapter 5. Morisy, in a review, sees the book as a flawed rehashing of many of Percy's favoured themes, principally his disdain for *Mission-Shaped Church* and Fresh Expressions, and which therefore lacks a defined audience and a clear message (and I agree with her, although there is sufficient new material for my purposes in this chapter).⁷⁷ Indeed, the rambling structure of the book makes this reworking only too evident. After a section headed 'Endings', there is a 'Coda' which ends thus: 'Our call now is to See, Judge, Act, Do';⁷⁸ a Study Guide intervenes, before an Epilogue explicates the first three imperatives as the motto of the Catholic Jocists who sought solidarity with the workers in the early twentieth-century, and the tetrad is then repeated in the ultimate paragraph.⁷⁹ This intermedial and terminal apostrophe is obviously fervent, and never one to stint on a good metaphor, he earlier talks of 'ecclesial narcolepsy' with regard to classism, on the back of recalling hearing John Wimber's exasperated prophetic word to the [presumably British] church to '“Wake Up!”'⁸⁰ Percy solicits agreement with his own partisan view of 'signs and wonders', but he commends Wimber's emphasis on action and '“doin' the stuff”', and thereby implicitly rejects institutional formulations of 'discipleship'.⁸¹ So, charismatic activism at one end of the spectrum, and social justice at the other, underlie his ultimate call for vision, discernment, and action, whatever his personal predilections. Although the two are not incompatible, as I have sought to demonstrate throughout this thesis: seeing in the

⁷⁷ Ann Morisy, "The Humble Church," review of *The Humble Church: Renewing the Body of Christ*, Martyn Percy, *Church Times*, 18 June 2021. <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/18-june/books-arts/book-reviews/the-humble-church-by-martyn-percy>.

⁷⁸ Martyn Percy, *The Humble Church*, 176, capitals in original.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 188, 190.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 162, capitals in original.

⁸¹ Martyn Percy, *The Humble Church*, 162. His article on Anglican cathedrals particularises 'discipleship' in a discussion of the relative merits of an internal focus or a community focus. See Martyn Percy, "Anglican Cathedrals in a Secular Society: David Martin and the Sociology of English Religion," *Society* 57, *Symposium: The Achievement of David Martin* (April 2020): 143. doi:10.1007/s12115-020-00457-8.

natural and the spiritual, and responding, are both integral to a practical and prophetic hospitality.

Percy adopts now all-too-familiar public-health parlance to state that in Christ there is no longer ‘social distance’ between us and God because of Christ’s *kenosis*, and he writes: ‘I hope and pray for a new kind of humble, listening church to emerge from our post-pandemic world. One that is openly grounded, unambiguously loving, and attentive to all’.⁸² There are possible existing grounds for this hope, as Holtam showed with regard to same-sex relationships, when he wrote in 2018 that a consensus has ‘begun to emerge about the gospel of Jesus Christ being good news for all’, ‘“all of us, without exception, without exclusion”’, in words he quotes from the Archbishops’ 2017 letter to Synod.⁸³ Nevertheless, Percy advocates deconstruction, and proceeds to cite Vanstone on the need for generative ‘divestment’, so that the Spirit can brood over the void, and God can find us in the wilderness.⁸⁴ Evidently, Robinson-Brown is unpersuaded by the warm words of the Archbishops, and does not entertain hopes of post-colonial rapprochement, so even this degree of disruption is insufficient for him in his vehement call for ‘de(con)struction’, abolition and disestablishment in his 2021 book *Black, Gay, Christian, Queer: The Church of England and the Famine of Grace*: ‘When I say that the Church must be abolished, I mean the total and complete dismantling of the White Christian project . . . which is found worshipping faithfully, a heap of ashes at the altar of Empire’.⁸⁵ Elizabeth Henry, who resigned her post as National Advisor for the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC) after seven years because of inaction, likewise condemns the Church as ‘not fit for purpose’.⁸⁶ In Chapter 5, I quoted Wells on the

⁸² Martyn Percy, *The Humble Church*, 142.

⁸³ Cited in Nicholas Holtam, “Good News for All,” in *Grasping the Heel of Heaven: Liturgy, Leadership and Ministry in Today’s Church*, ed. Aidan Platten (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2018), 171, no details given.

⁸⁴ W. H. Vanstone (no details given), cited in Martyn Percy, *The Humble Church*, 144.

⁸⁵ Jarel Robinson-Brown, *Black, Gay, British, Christian, Queer*, 157. Cleverly, the book is designed to reiterate its message of grace for all, as it has a black cover with white lettering, and the letters L, G, B, T, Q are picked out in successive words of the capitalised title, using different colours for emphasis, although disappointingly not in the sequence of the rainbow Pride flag.

⁸⁶ Hamid, *Is the Church Racist?* 27:27.

broken rebuilding the Church, but these perspectives point to a fundamentally ‘broken’ Church. Perhaps a more humble alternative to performative contrition, or the trainable welcome advocated in *From Stranger to Friend*, would be to examine the sense of social and spatial comfort felt by hosting congregations, and to expose newcomers to heterotopic spaces to disturb their complacency. Indeed, in a seminar on the future of the Church after Brexit and post-pandemic, host Sam Wells voiced his perception of the physical church building as a ‘transitional object’.⁸⁷ Paradoxically, it may be that the Church of England’s policy to permit churches which are unable to sustain regular worship to become Festival Churches, open for ‘Festivals of the Church and for Rites of Passage’, and significant days such Remembrance Sunday or ‘Mothers’ Day [sic]’,⁸⁸ but also able to host Beer Festivals and community events, disrupts that power dynamic, demonstrates greater hospitality, and allows locals to feel an increased sense of connection, albeit at the expense of liturgical rhythms.⁸⁹ This situation capitalises on the same social capital of generational goodwill, and parochial perseverance, which Everett draws upon in more tragic circumstances, as he ministers in the shadow of Grenfell Tower.⁹⁰ Having considered renunciation and redundancy, I will transition from emptying to nothingness in the following section.

⁸⁷ Sam Wells, “Bishops in Dialogue: Anglicans Post-Brexit and the Pandemic,” HeartEdge (virtual), 27 April 2021, with Guli Francis-Dehqani, et al.

⁸⁸ This is the secular usage originating in America, rather the religious tradition of Mothering Sunday. Cf. Katherine Lane Antolini, *Memorializing Motherhood: Anna Jarvis and the Struggle for the Control of Mother’s Day* (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2014). muse.jhu.edu/book/41742; Church of England, “Mothering Sunday, What Are Its Origins in the Church?” 26 March 2019, <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/stories-and-features/mothering-sunday-what-are-its-origins-church>. The problematic nature of the contemporary celebration for many women is highlighted by one research participant who renamed it ‘Hetero-Patriarchal Sunday’ (Dawn Llewellyn, “Maternal Silences: Motherhood and Voluntary Childlessness in Contemporary Christianity,” *Religion & Gender* 6, no. 1 (February 2016): 71. doi:10.18352/rg.10131). For single people, those without children, those unable to conceive, those who have experienced the loss of a child at whatever age, or those who have had a difficult relationship with their own mother, it can only be a painful reminder. The Single Friendly Church campaign has produced resources for making Mothering Sunday more inclusive, as many single people report avoiding church on that day. See Single Friendly Church, “Mothering Sunday Resources.” 10 March 2021, <https://www.singlefriendlychurch.com/spotlight/in-the-spotlight/post/38-mothering-sunday-resources>.

⁸⁹ Church of England, “Festival Churches.” Accessed 7 July 2021, <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/diocesan-resources/strategic-planning-church-buildings/festival-churches>.

⁹⁰ See section 4.

3.1. Cross-shaped Church

In his Foreword to *Out of Nothing: A Cross-shaped Approach to Fresh Expressions*, Moynagh sees Dunlop as inviting us to see ‘fresh expressions of church’ as ‘opportunities for the church to respond to shadows of nothingness in the world around’.⁹¹ Therefore, Moynagh asks, in an all too relevant question in the era of COVID-19: ‘What might it mean for a new Christian community to arise in response to nothingness?’⁹² Moynagh answers his own question thus: ‘Nothingness is countered with gifts’,⁹³ but the previous paragraphs remind us forcefully that the disregarded gifts of minoritised people invalidate the institutional Church. Dunlop himself rightly argues using John 15:5, that apart from Christ we can do nothing, but the immediate transition he makes from ‘abiding’, to concluding that ‘the key question to ask when thinking about the evaluation or fruitfulness of a new ecclesial community, is: “Are people being atoned?”’, does not follow logically, because it requires a change of stance from ontological dependence to epistemic judgement.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, he claims of this enquiry, not only that it enables the Church to ‘witness to and participate in the action of God through Christ’, but also that it allows for concomitant growth in ‘self-understanding’.⁹⁵ Once more, measurement is to the fore, and as an evangelical his question could be interpreted as valuing conversion above relationship. Olsworth-Peter, the National Adviser for Pioneer Development for the Church of England, identifies external demand for results as an institutional mindset which places greater demands for speedy results on the ordained incomer, rather than the lay resident, despite the latter not needing a period of acclimatisation, so such an analysis, although peculiar to Dunlop, is a wholly foreseeable consequence.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Michael Moynagh, “Foreword,” in *Out of Nothing: A Cross-Shaped Approach to Fresh Expressions*, Andrew J. Dunlop (London: SCM Press, 2018), ix.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, x.

⁹⁴ Andrew J. Dunlop, *Out of Nothing: A Cross-Shaped Approach to Fresh Expressions* (London: SCM Press, 2018), 135.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 135–36.

⁹⁶ Ed Olsworth-Peter, “Contextual Inhabitation: Exploring the ‘Where’ of the Pioneer Charism,” *Anvil* 35, no. 3 (October 2019): 46–47.

Moreover, Dunlop states as a complicating factor, that trust-building can be a prolonged process, because residents in some deprived areas are inured to ‘government initiatives that promise much but are then withdrawn a couple of years later’.⁹⁷ Thus, Dunlop needs to justify a protracted and apparently unfruitful listening phase because of external milestones,⁹⁸ whereas the inclusive hospitality I am propounding values listening itself as an hospitable act. Admittedly, Dunlop reframes the exercise as the sanctification of the local culture through presence,⁹⁹ but in order to justify his ministry he locates nothingness in people,¹⁰⁰ which is a problematic categorisation of others’ experience, and is in marked contrast to the emptiness of incompleteness, which Everett, a fellow priest, considers ‘*intrinsic* to our nature’.¹⁰¹ Dunlop’s approach contrasts starkly with Barrett and Harley’s assumption of endogenous communal resourcefulness, and the available God who identifies with the poor and oppressed, and is found ‘in the gaps, at the boundaries, in the in-between places—the interstices of life’ for Carson et al.¹⁰² Dunlop’s starting point of nullity does allow comparison with Percy’s generalised appeal for a sclerotic Church to embrace *kenosis*, but I am arguing it is a partial and unsatisfactory account.

A further clue to the reasoning behind Dunlop’s perspective, if one were needed, comes later when he talks about how pioneers are judged: he advocates a kingdom approach (rather than the extreme of seeing the Church as synonymous with the kingdom), so that community activities are valued as ‘kingdom work’, even if they do not eventuate in conversions, or attendance at worship.¹⁰³ Despite his laudable desire to emphasise the centrality of Christ, he gives an off-handed dismissal of social Trinitarianism: ‘We were doing kingdom work, engaging in mission, and if we had wanted to apply the relationships of the Trinity to what we were doing, it would have

⁹⁷ Dunlop, *Out of Nothing*, 135.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11–12, 14–16, 134–35.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 139–43.

¹⁰¹ Alan Everett, *After the Fire: Finding Words for Grenfell* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2018), 86, emphasis in original.

¹⁰² Carson, et al., *Crossing Thresholds*, 221, 222–23.

¹⁰³ Dunlop, *Out of Nothing*, 87.

been possible. However, none of these concepts adequately described what was going on',¹⁰⁴ which means that he fails to see the possibilities of hospitality as an overarching principle. Therefore, he justifies his own pioneering baldly: 'Our approach sprang out of a desire for mission and community with the key value of hospitality, which led us into certain practices'.¹⁰⁵ Thus, hospitality is merely a guiding value, rather than a scriptural mandate, or a divine quality. Megill-Cobbler argues: 'At their most extreme', penal substitution theories 'can threaten to divide the Trinity',¹⁰⁶ so Dunlop's limited view of hospitality may be inevitable, given the prominence of atonement in his theology and praxis, although he does reluctantly allow for *koinōnia* in the world outside the Church, as I will discuss in the following section. By contrast, Bretherton elaborates the mutual subsistence of communion and mission, despite outward variance:

While we enjoy communion with God, we are, at the same time, sent to participate in the God's creative and redemptive mission in creation. Gathering, communion and mission are ways of describing our faithful response to different moments of a single divine act of election, salvation and vocation yet which, on a human scale, can involve very different kinds of activities.¹⁰⁷

In a 2006 interview, Rowan Williams reached for what he termed 'the very old fashioned language that Roman Catholics particularly used to use' to describe the church as a 'supernatural society', which exists because of the decision of God, and is 'an invitation issued to the world from somewhere else' that is 'meant to show what human relations can be'.¹⁰⁸ Within my development of hospitality, the totality of these understandings militate against Dunlop, and show how he has confused divine origination and human-instantiated beginnings. I shall now turn to other clerics, and return to Percy, for their views on humility and community.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 92.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 89.

¹⁰⁶ Helma Megill-Cobbler, "A Feminist Rethinking of Punishment Imagery in Atonement," *Dialog* 35, no. 1 (1996): 17.

¹⁰⁷ Bretherton, "Beyond the Emerging Church?" 58 n. 61.

¹⁰⁸ Alan Rusbridger, "Interview: Rowan Williams," transcript, *The Guardian*, Tuesday 21 March 2006. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/mar/21/religion.uk>.

3.2. *Kenosis*

In *God Unknown*, fellow pioneer Ian Mobsby writes with sweeping generalisation, a tendentious telescoping of history, and a certain presumption:

Kenosis is a concept that provides a deep connection with the wisdom of the sixth and seventh centuries, helping us leapfrog the dry rationality of the Reformation and engage with the Spirit on a transformative experiential level. By pouring out ourselves in the way we see modelled in the Trinity, we share in God's nature and help to bring all things back into relationship with God.¹⁰⁹

Underlying Percy's bureaucratized Church, Dunlop's community-work, and Mobsby's theological anthropology, are particular understandings of discipleship: Percy starts from the Son, Dunlop from the cross, and Mobsby from the Spirit, but they all arrive at the need for service and action. Everett does not demur from activism, but he foregrounds the incarnation, and locates the sympathetic reader in history, to argue for human fallibility, the contribution of successive generations, and the Eucharist as a token of a glimpsed future union.¹¹⁰ He argues that even Christ 'could not anticipate the outcome of his self-emptying', and so he rejects a 'self-centred narrative'.¹¹¹ Thus, he is closer to Percy when he talks of the need, within the Church, to be 'liberated from oppressive models of success, driven by a self-punishing urge to achieve unrealistic outcomes'.¹¹² Mobsby, meanwhile, relates *kenosis* more to perichoretic relationality than the incarnation, and so service is less explicit for him than for Percy, and his adopted imperatives. For his own part, Dunlop critiques the approach of Mobsby and others:

Mission as the outworking of *koinonia* in this Trinitarian model of church could easily be seen as a second thought. At best it can leave church with a purely attractational approach to mission, as it is *koinonia* that draws people into God and enables them to participate in him.¹¹³

Despite his background in Fresh Expressions, Dunlop's criticism betrays Christendom thinking, as the attractational model is only an issue when it is complacently confined to

¹⁰⁹ Mobsby, *God Unknown*, 52.

¹¹⁰ Everett, *After the Fire*, 72, 87–88.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 87–88.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 97.

¹¹³ Dunlop, *Out of Nothing*, 77.

buildings, or seen as sufficient without explanation, or acts of service. However, his main point of disagreement seems to reside in the premature ascription of *koinōnia*, and an absence of intentional evangelistic activity, but he nevertheless concedes that although the supporting argument is ‘perhaps a little tenuous, it does leave space for the idea that creating community in secular environments could be regarded as *koinonia*’.¹¹⁴ Using a different temporal framing, Everett starts from human frailty to look instead to the future universal promise given in 2 Peter 1:4, of becoming ‘participants in the divine nature (*theos koinonoi physeos*)’.¹¹⁵ From the perspective of a hermeneutic of justice, Green intensifies *koinōnia* into the solidarity necessary for survival, including times of persecution, and critiques ‘fellowship’ as a translation which sustains the status quo,¹¹⁶ an assertion which acquires almost unbearable weight when applied to tragedy of Grenfell Tower, to which Everett testifies in *After the Fire*.¹¹⁷

Therefore, the biblical basis underlying Everett’s belief, and the instinctive truthfulness of Green’s assertion, both support a more inclusive earthly *koinōnia* than that countenanced by Dunlop. Differing doctrinal emphases aside, Dunlop subordinates hospitality to evangelism, and so views it as functional, rather than formative. It is my contention that recognition of multifaceted hospitality in the forms I outlined in Chapters 3 and 4, and give examples of in this chapter, enables *koinōnia*. Indeed, God precedes any of our missional or community-development efforts, as France-Williams illustrates so beautifully in his example of the fellowship in a barbers’ shop from Chapter 5.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, as Wakelin states emphatically:

True community is not of our making but of God’s and our response is to ask “what is God blessing?” and do it, and not do something that we

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 90 n. 3.

¹¹⁵ Everett, *After the Fire*, 88. White notes the close connection to *koinōnia* in this verse, and observes: ‘Beautifully, the words are ordered so that “participants” is right in the middle of the divine nature’ (Dominic White, *How Do I Look? Theology in the Age of the Selfie* (London: SCM Press, 2020), 50, ProQuest). N.B. Page numbers differ from the published version.

¹¹⁶ Laurie Green, *Blessed Are the Poor? Urban Poverty and the Church* (London: SCM Press, 2015), 136.

¹¹⁷ Everett, *After the Fire*.

¹¹⁸ Azariah France-Williams, “Raging Against Institutional Injustice”. See Chapter 5, section 4.1, p. 241.

hope will work and ask God to bless it. Church is not a technique for making disciples: it is a reality for disciples to receive.¹¹⁹

For Green, projects and programmes need ongoing prayer, waiting on God, and theological reflection in order to become ‘sacramental signs’.¹²⁰ In this prayerful initiation of social action can be seen some elements of the unifying sense of equitable hospitality that I am seeking to uncover. In accord with Wakelin, Green rejects the self-important intervention which seeks to bring God, rather than recognise his existing presence, and subsequently cites Peter’s conversion to the realisation that God has preceded him (discussed in Chapter 1).¹²¹ He writes polemically:

Those who do this well have realised that a ‘mission-shaped church’ is not one that merely experiments with alternative forms of worship and aggressive planning, but is a radically changed institution that is incarnated with the poor and takes its lead from its embeddedness with them.¹²²

Further to that presence and identification, the particular givenness of the Church of England is its catholicity and its ubiquity, if sentimental claims mobilised in the cause of politics by the like of John Major, as discussed in Chapter 5, and purely aesthetic claims for liturgy, or architecture, are set aside. My overall proposal of hospitality speaks to this character, just as Percy’s quest for humility speaks to bureaucracy and institutional self-regard. I suggest therefore, that in the midst of imperfection, and external (and internal) lament in the Church of England, the self-aware hospitality of hearing, sharing, and inclusion I have posited is a necessary discipline and vocation. Having considered social capital, and the building of incarnational community, I now return once more to spiritual capital and place, which I discussed in Chapter 5.

4. Tragedy and the parish

In the Introduction to a book on urban regeneration, Torry discusses the building of spiritual capital, and points out that *Faith in the City* failed to mention the

¹¹⁹ Mark Wakelin, “Education, Discipleship and Community Formation,” in *Remembering Our Future: Explorations in Deep Church*, ed. Andrew Walker and Luke Bretherton, Deep Church (London: Paternoster, 2007), 219.

¹²⁰ Laurie Green, *Blessed Are the Poor?* 149.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 151, 168.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 169–70.

Eucharist, and that there are places in the subsequent *Faithful Cities* report where mention of the Eucharistic nature of the Church's activity and theology would have been productive.¹²³ Torry writes: 'It is the Church's faithful action that constitutes its spiritual capital and contributes so uniquely to regeneration. This is particularly true of the Church gathering for the Eucharist'.¹²⁴ Rodney Clapp offers another perspective on preservation and insularity, and sees humility and vitality being accomplished through sacramental conformation: 'the Eucharist teaches and forms the church to sacrifice itself for the sake of the world. And in that sacrifice, of course, to gain its own life',¹²⁵ which is a sacramental restatement of the humility for which Percy argues. In an account of his proximity to the Grenfell Tower fire, parish priest Alan Everett describes the warranted trust and credibility given by 'a building with a tradition of service that stretched back 150 years'.¹²⁶ Hence, the architecturally undistinguished parish church can be just as much a marker in the local landscape and the psyche of inhabitants as the monumental cathedrals of Chapter 5.¹²⁷ As a consequence of his experience, Everett is compelled to offer a revision to the truism of worship as definitive of Anglican theology: 'It could equally well be said that the theology of Anglicanism – at least in the Church of England – can be found in its parish system, with its implicit commitment to binding together the wider community'.¹²⁸ He is in agreement with the primordial hospitality I outlined when giving background at the outset, and he sees not only the witness of previous

¹²³ Malcolm Torry, ed., "Regeneration and Renewal: New and Changing Communities and the Church," in *Regeneration and Renewal: The Church in New and Changing Communities*, ed. Malcolm Torry (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2007), 6–7.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹²⁵ Rodney Clapp, *Tortured Wonders: Christian Spirituality for People, not Angels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004), 124.

¹²⁶ Everett, *After the Fire*, 50–51, 55–56, here at 51.

¹²⁷ However, Zografos troubles any merely aesthetic classification by his description of structures as accretions of trauma in the built environment: 'Architecture functions like an archive, as it carries a frozen memory of previous catastrophes through design that abides by building regulations' (Stamatis Zografos, *Architecture and Fire: A Psychoanalytic Approach to Conservation* (London: UCL Press, 2019), 149. doi:10.14324/111.9781787353701). Similarly, Philcox identifies the unconscious influence of the 1918 influenza pandemic on modernist architecture in an article with a self-explanatory title. See Theodora Philcox, "The Sink in the Hall: How Pandemics Transform Architecture," *Psyche*, 5 July 2021. <https://psyche.co/ideas/the-sink-in-the-hall-how-pandemics-transform-architecture>.

¹²⁸ Everett, *After the Fire*, 66.

generations as a God-given gift, but also views place as reflecting God's image and belonging to God before us.¹²⁹

Nevertheless, despite this recognition of endowment, Everett is realistic: 'In run-down urban contexts, a parish may at times feel more like a gift from a malevolent enemy than God',¹³⁰ and this perception can only be exacerbated by political disregard for the lives of the poor.¹³¹ Everett describes the ravenous media news-cycle, and the inability of survivors to even begin to speak of their ordeal until months later, and notes 'by which time many others had spoken on their behalf'.¹³² Therefore, he struggles with the legitimacy of his own advocacy, and the ultimate impossibility of 'finding words for Grenfell',¹³³ hence his quest for representational approximation in face of apophasis prevents any romanticisation of hospitality on my part, but does exemplify Quash's tragic re-presentation and presencing from Chapter 5. (Many faith groups and organisations responded to the tragedy, but it is the Anglicanness of Everett's sense of continuity and inheritance that I am concerned with.)¹³⁴ The Grenfell fire and the link between poverty and poor housing is analysed in the 2021 report *Life on the Breadline*,¹³⁵ and the internal consequences of such events are dealt with in *Tragedy and Congregations*,¹³⁶ but I am writing primarily

¹²⁹ Ibid., 67–68.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 68.

¹³¹ Nigerian writer Ben Okri wrote a poem to raise funds for survivors and relatives of victims of the Grenfell Tower fire, in which he writes the damning line: 'If you want to see how the poor die, come see Grenfell Tower' (Ben Okri, "Grenfell Tower 2017 – A Poem by Ben Okri." 16 February 2018, <https://benokri.co.uk/news/grenfell-tower-2017-poem-ben-okri/>). The tower took its name from the road on which it stands, a militaristic reminder of Britain's imperial past, as it commemorates Field Marshal Francis Wallace Grenfell, 1st Baron Grenfell (1841–1925) who fought campaigns in Africa and Egypt. See H. De Watteville, "Grenfell, Francis Wallace, First Baron Grenfell (1841–1925)," revised by James Falkner, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 709–10.

¹³² Everett, *After the Fire*, 30–31.

¹³³ Ibid., 103.

¹³⁴ Everett describes reports of the tragedy which referred generically to 'churches', but notes that St Clement's was rarely named as the Anglican parish church (Everett, *After the Fire*, 52, 55). The response of Notting Hill Methodist Church is examined in detail in the *Life on the Breadline* report. See Stephanie Denning, et al., *Life on the Breadline: Christianity, Poverty and Politics in the 21st Century City*, A report for policymakers in the UK (Coventry: Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University, 2021). https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Life-on-the-Breadline-report-for-policymakers_July-2021_web-1.pdf.

¹³⁵ Denning, et al., *Life on the Breadline*.

¹³⁶ Megan Warner, et al., *Tragedies and Christian Congregations: The Practical Theology of Trauma*, Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020).

here about the importance of the church as visible and enduring presence in the community.

4.1. Poverty, smallness and trauma

If the preceding two paragraphs are read in conjunction with the institutional impetus for viability, and the demand for success outlined in Chapter 4, then it is dispiriting to read Everett's emic evaluation: 'It is so easy for those ministering in disadvantaged areas to internalize the message that they are the ecclesiastical equivalent of what some in the media savagely label as "benefit scroungers"'.¹³⁷ Conversely, Green notices 'a subtle temptation' to competitive assertion of the poverty of their contexts by those who work alongside the poor.¹³⁸ Bragging about the immiseration of others can be an unintended outcome of having to justify claims for funding to external bodies, but in my view such willing collusion in the objectification of others serves to perpetuate injustice, and aggrandise the metaphoric beast from the book of Revelation. In a July 2021 seminar on class and the Church of England, the contrast was made between the ubiquitous middle-class assertion of 'a heart for the poor', and whether it was likely that a working-class leader with 'a heart for the rich' would ever be sent to an affluent area, as the chair reflected on published comments from Lynne Cullens, Chair of the National Estate Churches Network.¹³⁹

In bearing witness to the resilience of the local community, and with a permissible degree of understatement, Everett describes his apologia as 'a stress-tested rationale for parish ministry'.¹⁴⁰ In the face of exhausting communal grief, he writes that 'above all' he has seen the value of two things: 'the sacraments of the church, and the compassion of friends and neighbours'.¹⁴¹ Everett's humble vision of

¹³⁷ Everett, *After the Fire*, 97.

¹³⁸ Laurie Green, *Blessed Are the Poor?* 119.

¹³⁹ Vicky Walker, "Class and the Church: Exploring Social Class and Church Culture," *Church Times* webinar, 6 July 2021, with Lynne Cullens, et al., 20:26–21:07. See Lynne Cullens, "Some Notes on Class, Relevance and the Church." (blog), 15 February 2019, <https://lynnecullens.wordpress.com/2019/02/15/some-notes-on-class-relevance-and-the-church/>; Lynne Cullens, "A Middle-Class Culture Dominates the Church," *Church Times*, no. 8137 (1 March 2019): 12.

¹⁴⁰ Everett, *After the Fire*, 125.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 126.

faithfulness is a more diffuse outlining of some of what I am subsuming under the aegis of hospitality:

Our acts of compassion may feel insignificant, and we are all too often aware that we are not the people we wish to be. But our small offerings of love are part of a large movement that we intermittently intuit, as over time, in the company of those with whom we live and work, we are taken up into the life of God.¹⁴²

He draws upon the same Eastern conception of divinisation which underlies the writing of Zizioulas, the source for both Ward and Mobsby in their adoption and promotion of *perichoresis*, but he is more circumspect than Mobsby, quoted earlier.¹⁴³ The ordinariness, provisionality, and humility of this theotic claim in the wake of tragedy is in line with both Percy and Green, and provides a modest counterproposal to the presumption criticised by Kilby. Everett's cogent articulation of his churchmanship (an allowable usage in this instance) and his priestly ministry are very particular, but even in that extremity, hospitality can be intuited. With an awareness of his own insecurity as an ageing insider, in the face of fashions in ministry,¹⁴⁴ he questions whether parish clergy 'feel disregarded, as if their ministry is second-best'.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, he reflects on how the day of Pentecost is 'recruited' to justify sweeping aside 'old, ineffective ways of doing things'.¹⁴⁶ He points out with some justification, and the wisdom of painful experience, that this is to disregard the likely persistence of after-effects in the disciples who had lived through the preceding trauma and turbulent emotions of the first Easter, and so he is unsurprised that is Paul who shapes the nascent religion.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the simplicity of daily faithfulness and neighbourliness forged in the crucible, to which he witnesses, commends itself as an unassuming eventual response to life in the receding shadow of pandemic

¹⁴² Ibid., 124.

¹⁴³ Mobsby, *God Unknown*, 52. See section 3.2, p. 311.

¹⁴⁴ Everett, *After the Fire*, 59–60.

¹⁴⁵ Everett, *After the Fire*, 96. Skirrow is more explicit: 'The hierarchy [of the Church of England] are engaged in bullying even without their activity being identified as such by them or others' (Paul Skirrow, "Bullying Can Be Institutional, Too," *Church Times*, no. 8298 (1 April 2022): 15). He names centralised initiatives, diocesan strategies, parish share, and 'persistent pastoral reorganisation' as some of the ways in which insitutional bullying is 'embedded in the structures and systems of the Church' (Skirrow, "Bullying Can Be Institutional, Too," 15).

¹⁴⁶ Everett, *After the Fire*, 131–32.

¹⁴⁷ Everett, *After the Fire*, 132.

COVID-19 as it mutates into an endemic coronavirus, and provides a compelling counter to compulsive centralised strategising and the appeal of the flamboyant project.

Indeed, Percy exposes the promotion of Fresh Expressions which constructs those involved as ‘risk-takers and edgy’ as being at odds with their failure to confront exclusion.¹⁴⁸ As a result, he asks why they rarely work with the ‘LGBTQ+ constituency’, those with disabilities, or asylum-seekers;¹⁴⁹ the invidiousness of being singled-out, or perceived as an object of missional interest when there is a history of silencing, coercive practice, and abusive discourse, contribute to answering his justified, if mischievous question. Issues around vulnerability are highlighted by O’Donnell and Cross, who condemn initiatives with an inadequate understanding of trauma which view survivors of trauma as opportunities for evangelism.¹⁵⁰ Green, and O’Donnell and Cross are all unequivocal about objectification, whether it be of those living in poverty, or trauma-survivors.¹⁵¹ More generally, while acknowledging that some find it re-traumatising, O’Donnell argues that the sequence of welcome, confession, retelling, sharing, and sending in the Eucharist assists post-traumatic ‘re-making’ of ruptured narratives and consciousness, thus enabling reconnection and re-engagement.¹⁵² Everett concurs, and describes how the first Parish Mass after the fire both contained and released emotion, as the ‘structure of the liturgy enabled us to feel the chaos of the situation’.¹⁵³ Following the effective suspension of Communion for the laity during the pandemic, as a result of the Church of England’s rejection of consecration of the elements at a distance, Brooks, a licensed lay minister (LLM) argues that foregone celebrations are irrecoverable, using O’Donnell’s discussion of

¹⁴⁸ Martyn Percy, *The Humble Church*, 119.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Karen O’Donnell and Katie Cross, “Traumatized People Are not Your ‘Mission Field’.” *The Shiloh Project* (blog), 1 April 2021, <https://www.shilohproject.blog/traumatized-people-are-not-your-mission-field/>.

¹⁵¹ Laurie Green, *Blessed Are the Poor?* xiv–xv; O’Donnell and Cross, “Traumatized People Are not Your ‘Mission Field’”.

¹⁵² Karen O’Donnell, “Eucharist and Trauma: Healing in the B/body,” in *Tragedies and Christian Congregations: The Practical Theology of Trauma*, ed. Megan Warner, et al., Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 187–90.

¹⁵³ Everett, *After the Fire*, 24–25.

‘non-identical repetition’ to argue for the recognition of Communion over Zoom, because otherwise ‘the body is denied the body’ in a time of need.¹⁵⁴ I will now discuss the transition to online services during the pandemic, and I start with another statement which time has rendered more resonant.

5. Online and offline Church

In his critique of *Mission-Shaped Church*, Riem argues for distinctiveness and evolution in words which coincidentally speak to the renewed appreciation of church buildings as a resource brought about by the pandemic:

if the Church wants to offer signs in stone, wood and glass of transcendence, draw together past, present and future in one space, and draw together people of different networks, while also being hospitable to those who do not dwell in a virtual world, then it will continue to have need for churches, providing that these buildings can continue to be adapted for community use.¹⁵⁵

This judgement was vindicated during the pandemic, as research across denominations found that non-churchgoers value church buildings as spaces for reflection, and resented the government’s closure of churches.¹⁵⁶ In addition, a report issued by the transdenominational National Churches Trust, punningly titled *The House of Good*, sought to quantify the economic benefit of the activities churches carry out and facilitate.¹⁵⁷ Riem implies an unnetworked remnant, and in general online church is critiqued on the grounds of technological mediation, and encouraging consumerism, in a carry-over of attitudes identified in earlier research into online religion, as though offline church is a purer ecclesial form without mediation, which remains unaffected by the all-pervasive culture of consumerism.¹⁵⁸ Helland first

¹⁵⁴ Bess Brooks, “Open Wounds: COVID-19, Eucharist and the Mystical Body of Christ,” paper presented at the International Academy of Practical Theology (IAPT), ‘Coping with Crisis: Hospitality, Security, and the Search for Faithful Connections’, Leuven (virtual), 8–10 July 2021.

¹⁵⁵ Riem, “An Emerging Critique,” 136.

¹⁵⁶ The Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture, *Churches, Covid-19 and Communities: Experiences, Needs and Supporting Recovery*, Key findings and technical rept. (York: University of York, 2021). <https://churchesandcovid.org/sites/churchesandcovid.org/files/2021-04/Churches-Covid19-communities-full-report.pdf> [sic].

¹⁵⁷ National Churches Trust, *The House of Good: The Economic and Social Value of Church Buildings to the UK*, Key findings and technical rept. (London: National Churches Trust, 2020). <https://www.houseofgood.nationalchurchestrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/GADS1468-%E2%80%93NCT-full-Exec-Summary-and-Technical-Report-V14-WEB.pdf>.

¹⁵⁸ See Heidi A. Campbell, “Understanding the Relationship Between Religion Online and Offline in a

classified the distinction between ‘religion-online’ and ‘online-religion’ at the turn of the second millennium, defining the former as ‘one to many’ hierarchical dissemination, and the latter as a ‘many to many’ ‘form of religious liminality’.¹⁵⁹ In the context of the pandemic, Tupling uses a similar differentiation to contrast ‘church online’ as the broadcasting of usual proceedings, and ‘online church’, not as an attempt at replication through transposition, but as equally valid digital church.¹⁶⁰ Hence, she prefers ‘offline church’ for the what happens in a building, so as not to imply that ‘online church’ is an inferior substitute or temporary measure.

Writing before the pandemic pivot, scholar of digital religion, Heidi Campbell, identifies the fears of religious practitioners and organisations that ‘the online religious community is in some way inauthentic, impoverished, and deceptive, and has the seductive potential power to lead people out of the pew and away from face-to-face community interaction’,¹⁶¹ and these fears resurface in the moralising around online church and commitment. Limiting participation to a particular time and place privileges a self that is ‘able-bodied, neuro-typical, and dominantly male’,¹⁶² whereas the pandemic has enfaced those who are frequently faceless in their absence. This lack of notice was exposed during the pandemic when worship moved to the online spaces

Networked Society,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 1 (March 2012): 79. doi:10.1093/jaarel/fr074; Esther McIntosh, “Belonging Without Believing: Church as Community in an Age of Digital Media,” *International Journal of Public Theology* 9, no. 2 (2015): 136–37. doi:10.1163/15697320–12341389.

¹⁵⁹ Christopher Helland, “Online-Religion/Religion-Online and Virtual Communitas,” in *Religion on the Internet: Research Prospects and Promises*, ed. Jeffrey K. Hadden and Douglas E. Cowan, Religion and the Social Order, vol. 8 (Bingley: Emerald, 2000), 207.

¹⁶⁰ Speaking during Ed Olsworth-Peter, “Pioneering Digital Expressions of Church,” National Anglican Pioneer Network/Fresh Expressions webinar, 30 June 2021, with Katie Tupling, et al.

¹⁶¹ Heidi Campbell, “Internet and Religion,” in *The Handbook of Internet Studies*, ed. Robert Burnett, Mia Consalvo, and Charles Ess, Handbooks in Communications and Media (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 240. During the pandemic, in addition to editing a book on the future of religion, she also edited two books illustrating make-shift and innovative responses to COVID-19 from churches and church leaders. See Heidi A. Campbell, ed., *Religion in Quarantine: The Future of Religion in a Post-Pandemic World* (Digital Religion Publications, 2020), Online. doi:10.21423/religioninquarantine; Heidi A. Campbell, ed., *The Distanced Church: Reflections on Doing Church Online* (Digital Religion Publications, 2020), Online. doi:10.21423/distanced church; Heidi A. Campbell, ed., *Revisiting the Distanced Church: Reflections on Doing Church Online* (Digital Religion Publications, 2021), Online. doi:10.21423/revisitingthechurch.

¹⁶² Teresa Berger, *@ Worship: Liturgical Practices in Digital Worlds*, Liturgy, Worship and Society (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 23, ProQuest. N.B. Page numbers differ from published version.

which had often been the sole means of spiritual support for some people with disabilities for many years. As an Autistic person, Waldock advocates for a ‘Church without walls’, and describes how the Autistic community chooses to meet in online ‘metaphysical space’ as a response not only to sensory over-stimulation, but also to intrusive micro-aggressions.¹⁶³ During lockdown, discrimination shifted onto online platforms, as hard-won technical expertise was often disregarded, or ignored, in an ableist silencing of those who had the most to contribute to discussions around isolation from a church family and sacramental deprivation.¹⁶⁴ Tupling reflected thus: ‘There was a huge influx of hurt privilege’.¹⁶⁵ Speaking at a seminar on ‘digital expressions of church’, Tupling as a priest with a disability, gave the example of being able to pre-record a talk from her sofa in her pyjamas and still have enough energy to make a meal for her children, compared with being exhausted by the physical effort sometimes required even to get to church due to her fluctuating physical condition.¹⁶⁶ (She has counted and filmed the twenty-five different surfaces she is required to negotiate to be able to minister in her church.)¹⁶⁷ Contention around the merits of online church is brought into sharper focus because, in the terms of Chapter 3, the question of dismemberment, and dis-memberment of the body of Christ as a consequence of routine and continuing inability to participate, had never been in the foreground: attendance was taken as the norm.¹⁶⁸ Taking the foregoing into

¹⁶³ Krysia Emily Waldock, “‘Doing Church’ During COVID-19: An Autistic Reflection on Online Church,” *The Canadian Journal of Theology, Mental Health and Disability* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2021): Author’s note, 70. I use the author’s preferred description and capitalisations here.

¹⁶⁴ Naomi Lawson Jacobs, “Church Online and Disabled People: Locked Down or Opened Up?” 17 November 2020, <http://naomilawsonjacobs.com/church-online-and-disabled-people-locked-down-or-opened-up>.

¹⁶⁵ Katie Tupling (no details given), cited in Jacobs, “Church Online and Disabled People: Locked Down or Opened Up?” para. 16, italics omitted.

¹⁶⁶ Olsworth-Peter, “Pioneering Digital Expressions of Church.”

¹⁶⁷ Katie Tupling, *A Place to Belong*, Film commission, ‘A Place to Belong: Disability and the Church’ Conference, Livability, Lambeth Palace, 13 July 2018, 00:13. <https://archbishopofcanterbury.org/place-belong-disability-and-church>.

¹⁶⁸ Reconfiguring expectations will also require a re-thinking of the linkage of Parish Share to attendance, indeed Norman-Walker calls for the abandonment of such capitation as ‘a tax on mission for some, and a smokescreen from the reality of death for others’ (Anna Norman-Walker, “Parishes – What Future for the Parochial System?” *The Future of the Church of England: The Westminster Faith Debates* (Oxford, 9 October 2014), here at 01:21–01:27. Last accessed 28 July 2021, <http://faithdebates.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/OFDI-Parishes-presentation-by-Anna-Norman-Walker.mp3>).

account, I contend that those in a position of privilege need to guard against using an ableist language of deficiency for the digital medium, which, by extension, further stigmatises those for whom the online environment is a space of free expression and spiritual nourishment.

5.1. Screen-time and face-time

More generally, Bailensen welcomes Zoom as an alternative to a carbon-hungry commute,¹⁶⁹ although the hellish context of recurrent conflicts and child labour in the mining of the so-called ‘conflict minerals’, required for the manufacture of computers and smartphones, make it impossible to render online a totally innocuous alternative.¹⁷⁰ As a cognitive psychologist studying virtual experiences and social interaction, he speculates that constant surveillance by apparently disembodied and out-of-proportion faces contributes to what is commonly termed ‘Zoom fatigue’.¹⁷¹ Paradoxically, as discussed in the preceding section, online meeting has enabled those who experience barriers to access, be they disabled, or those who experience fatigue from chronic illness, to be made visible in an infection-free space of equality. Even prior to COVID-19, when discussing online religion, Campbell

¹⁶⁹ Jeremy Bailensen, “Nonverbal Overload: A Theoretical Argument for the Causes of Zoom Fatigue,” *Technology, Mind, and Behavior* 2, no. 1 (2021): 5. doi:10.1037/tmb0000030.

¹⁷⁰ See, for example, Colin Kinniburgh, “Beyond ‘Conflict Minerals’: The Congo’s Resource Curse Lives On,” *Dissent* 6, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 61–68. Although he fails to track the curse back to imperial exploitation of rubber, which I alluded to in Chapter 5, or attribute it to persistent racial inequality. In 2016, the artist Eduardo Relero was commissioned by Amnesty International to produce pieces of pavement art outside Apple stores in Madrid, Brussels, and Prague for the annual World Day against Child Labour, to expose Apple’s lack of clarity around the origins of the cobalt used in their devices; his anamorphic depiction entitled ‘víctimas de los móviles’ [‘victims of mobiles’] shows children working to hack and lever Apple iPhones from the bowels of the earth, and emerging carrying pickaxes and the shiny devices (Amnistía Internacional, “Apple Mira Hacia Otro Lado y No Aclara si Hay Trabajo Infantil Detrás de Sus Dispositivos [Apple Looks the Other Way and Does not Clarify If There is Child Labour Behind Their Devices].” Amnesty International, 11 June 2016, <https://www.es.amnesty.org/en-que-estamos/noticias/noticia/articulo/apple-mira-hacia-otro-lado-y-no-aclara-si-hay-trabajo-infantil-detras-de-sus-dispositivos/>; Eduardo Relero, *Victimas de los Móviles*, Facebook video (2021). Accessed 21 August 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/eduardorelero/videos/victimas-de-los-moviles/441709690249606/>).

Technological waste is another factor in what Parikka describes as ‘the current Anthropocene of the obscenities of the eco-crisis’, thus his coinage of the term, the ‘*Anthrobscene*’; obsolete gadgets and equipment will form another layer in the future fossil record, in addition to the ossiferous stratum I referred to earlier (Jussi Parikka, “An Alternative Deep Time of the Media,” in *A Geology of Media*, ed. Jussi Parikka, Electronic Mediations, vol. 36 (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 2015), 44, 46, here at 46, emphasis in original; See section 2, pp. 292–93 n. 7).

¹⁷¹ Bailensen, “Nonverbal Overload.”

raised the possibility in ‘Congregation of the disembodied’ that despite perceptions of ‘faceless’ individuals, the global reach of positive textually-mediated experiences of online sharing could give rise to greater aspiration for closeness in the local body of Christ.¹⁷² In the particular context of video-conferencing and repeated lockdowns, this has perhaps been demonstrated negatively (from the point of view of those with no alternative even pre-pandemic) in the desire for the resumption of meeting in-person. Using della Dora’s ‘infrasecular’ geographies which blend sacred and secular, Bryson, Andres, and Davies argue that virtual services ‘transformed homes, via telemediated worship into infrasecular “places” or more precisely intersacred “places” in which homes became linked together to share in common worship’.¹⁷³ By this account, domestic worship is not constituted by the make-up of the household, in the manner deplored by Anderson in Chapter 4.

However, Zoom always represents the viewer in the upper registers of the assemblage of ‘gallery view’ (a telling designation in itself), never in the midst of an ‘assembly’, even visually. For once, wheelchair-users are not disadvantaged, and are on a visual par with everyone else, but Bailensen describes the inhibition of gesture which results from artificial confinement to the frustum of the camera lens.¹⁷⁴ (To tie virtuality descriptively to eating: I happened upon the lockdown innovation of the ‘Bring and *stare*’ lunch,¹⁷⁵ a clever consonantal shift which accurately captures emotional resignation, inherent detachment and the scrutiny of the dispersed online equivalent of Chester’s least-favoured form of church-catering.) More troubling, is the potential unconscious transfer of disciplinary visual regimes into the realm of the spiritual: Machado describes the employee as being enmeshed in ‘dramaturgies of the

¹⁷² Heidi Campbell, “Congregation of the Disembodied: A Look at Religious Community on the Internet,” in *Virtual Morality: Morals, Ethics and New Media*, ed. Mark J. P. Wolf, Digital Formations, vol. 3 (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 179, 196–97.

¹⁷³ John R. Bryson, Lauren Andres, and Andrew Davies, “Covid-19, Virtual Church Services and a New Temporary Geography of Home,” *Tijdschrift Voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 111, no. 3 (July 2020): 361. doi:10.1111/tesg.12436.

¹⁷⁴ Bailensen, “Nonverbal Overload,” 4.

¹⁷⁵ Nick Lewis, “Winter School 2021 – ‘Can Everyone See My Slides?’,” 3 February 2021,” para. 4, emphasis mine. Countryside and Community Research Institute (blog), University of Gloucestershire, www.ccri.ac.uk/ws2021.

face’, whereby ‘interfacial exchanges’ are a means of inducing workplace productivity.¹⁷⁶ He concludes: ‘The cinematic close-up . . . assumes then a telepathic function in the world of labor, where its new configurations become the default setting for the public staging of self’.¹⁷⁷ In a memorable phrase applicable to the new environment, Davies gives words to the state of subjective ‘reflective entrancement’ that can arise when gazing in a mirror, although he credits this reverie with greater philosophical underpinning than mere superficial absorption in appearance.¹⁷⁸ Nevertheless, Zoom offers the chance to ask if we are fixated on ourselves, or if we can look to those also on the call: Phillips gives the example of the church which is re-ordering its seating after the experience of face-to-face services online, thus disrupting the power relations inherent in surveyable serried rows.¹⁷⁹

Former executive at Apple and Microsoft, Linda Stone coined the phrase ‘continuous partial attention’, and defines it as a state ‘motivated by a desire to be a LIVE node on the network’, thus equating aliveness with connection and attention from others.¹⁸⁰ As a technology enthusiast, she asserts that we can ‘use personal technologies that are prosthetics for our beings’, in what she calls ‘conscious computing’, but she alerts us to the need to breathe in order to avoid unhealthy absorption, or ‘screen apnea’.¹⁸¹ Her writing reminds the screen-watcher that without disciplined practices of embodied attention habits will be carried over into the online worship-space. Further to this, Franklin starts from a consideration of fast food, a

¹⁷⁶ Guilherme da Silva Machado, “Zoom in on the Face: The Close-up at Work,” in *Pandemic Media: Preliminary Notes Toward an Inventory*, ed. Philipp Dominik Keidl, et al., Configurations of Film (Lüneberg: Meson Press, 2020), 197, Online. https://meson.press/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/9783957960092_Pandemic_Media.pdf.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 202.

¹⁷⁸ Paul Davies, “The Face and the Caress: Levinas’s Ethical Alterations of Sensibility,” in *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*, ed. David Michael Levin (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 253.

¹⁷⁹ Speaking during Olsworth-Peter, “Pioneering Digital Expressions of Church”. He has also written a booklet on *Hybrid Church* as ‘church without walls’, and he talks of the need to ‘get out of our buildings and find God in the wild’ (Peter Phillips, *Hybrid Church: Blending Online and Offline Community*, Grove Mission & Evangelism Series, no. 131 (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2020), 3).

¹⁸⁰ Linda Stone, “FAQ,” para. 2, capitals in original. Accessed 4 August 2021, <https://lindastone.net/faq/>.

¹⁸¹ Linda Stone, “Conscious Computing,” paras. 15–16. (blog), 20 April 2012, <https://lindastone.net/2012/04/20/conscious-computing-36>.

theme which fortuitously ties back to earlier discussion in this chapter, to describe how we ‘carelessly digest’ information,¹⁸² and proposes *lectio divina*, and more importantly in this context, *visio divina* as ‘imaginal slowing technologies’.¹⁸³ However, just as Cross, Radford, and O’Donnell resist timeless universalising theology in a time of pandemic, and endeavour to produce a time-bound theology through rotating consciousness and the visual representation of scattered attention and fluctuating emotion on the page,¹⁸⁴ so allowance for emotional distraction has to be made in stressful situations. Indeed, corona-chronicity was evidenced in the experience of isolation and temporal disjunction, as well as the austerity visited on many, as the workings of capitalism were exposed, in an hitherto unenvisaged conformation to McRuer’s ‘crip’ time.¹⁸⁵

With regard to the mechanics of computer-interaction, Denson invokes the phenomenological oscillation between Ihde’s ‘“embodiment relations,” in which we look through the screen as if through a window, and “hermeneutic relations,” in which we re-focus our perception to look at the screen’, as when, for example, ‘we relax our focus on a speaker and scan the screen as a whole to see who’s talking now, alternating from figure to ground and back again’.¹⁸⁶ However, unless this visual shift includes consciously looking to surroundings or the horizon, and maintaining an embodied sense of bodily orientation and emplacement, the observer is subsumed into the placeless, in my opinion. For the isolated Christian, particularly during the pandemic, perhaps it might be helpful therefore, to consider the screenful of faces as

¹⁸² Michael A. Franklin, “Foreword: Dining with the Imaginal Slowing Technologies of *Lectio Divina* and *Visio Divina*,” in *The Whole Person: Embodying Teaching and Learning Through Lectio and Visio Divina*, ed. Jane E. Dalton, Maureen P. Hall, and Catherine E. Hoyser (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), vii.

¹⁸³ Franklin, “Foreword,” vii, subtitle.

¹⁸⁴ Katie Cross, Claire Louise Radford, and Karen O’Donnell, “Fragments from Within the Pandemic: Theological Experiments in Silence, Speech, and Dislocated Time,” *Practical Theology* 14, no. 1–2 (March 2021): 144–58. doi:10.1080/1756073X.2020.1861802.

¹⁸⁵ Robert McRuer, *Crip Times: Disability, Globalization, and Resistance* (New York: New York University Press, 2018).

¹⁸⁶ Shane Denson, “‘Thus Isolation is a Project.’ Notes Toward a Phenomenology of Screen-Mediated Life,” in *Pandemic Media: Preliminary Notes Toward an Inventory*, ed. Philipp Dominik Keidl, et al., *Configurations of Film* (Lüneberg: Meson Press, 2020), 317, Online. https://meson.press/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/9783957960092_Pandemic_Media.pdf.

an internet-cloud of witnesses, as their peers cheer them on. This provides a visual parallel to being surrounded by the unseen cloud of witnesses from bygone ages, and the hosts of heaven, as the book of Hebrews and the Communion liturgy remind us.¹⁸⁷ By contrast, and in a return to the bodily conformation of Chapter 4, Laurence argues for a summoning of bone-deep bodily knowledge and the re-activation of bodily memory of contiguity:

Nevertheless, to the extent that the physicality of corporate worship under normal circumstances in the past has marked our bodies and shaped the imaginal conception of the world that we carry in our flesh, even the abnormal conditions of pandemic worship provide an opportunity to viscerally recall—to remember with our bodies, and not just our minds—the sensations we previously experienced with unexciting regularity.¹⁸⁸

This remembrance provides an unexpected reversal to the more usual description of trauma being held in the body.¹⁸⁹ If these observations are borne in mind, it might then be imaginatively possible to consider Zoom (and equivalents) as a temporal sign both of former experience and unseen realities, and thus more spiritually immersive. To be even more fanciful, the cubical windows could be seen as proleptic representation of the ‘many rooms (*monē*)’ of the Father’s house (John 14:2). However, in the face of the screen, the worshipper still requires self-reflexivity to remember their positioning before the face of God, although it should be remembered that the primordial waters are en faced by the hovering *ruach*, so the screen is not necessarily the impassive ‘black mirror’ popularised by television-writer Charlie Brooker,¹⁹⁰ which gave dystopic meaning to seeing in a glass darkly (1 Cor. 13:12).

¹⁸⁷ Writing before coronavirus, Berger does invoke the latter celestial audience, but I have extrapolated the concept to the affordances of video-conferencing, and specifically to the screenful of faces on Zoom. See Berger, *@ Worship*, 39.

¹⁸⁸ Trevor Laurence, “Addressed by the Voice of God: The Opening of Worship,” para. 7. Obviously, those who come to worship online with no prior experience will have no sense of corporate responses, but unfamiliarity does not rule out bodily apprehension of the numinous.

¹⁸⁹ See Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma* (New York: Viking, 2014).

¹⁹⁰ Charlie Brooker, “Charlie Brooker: The Dark Side of Our Gadget Addiction,” *The Guardian*, Thursday 1 December 2011. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2011/dec/01/charlie-brooker-dark-side-gadget-addiction-black-mirror>. The series is subjected to scholarly scrutiny and analysis in German A. Duarte and Justin Michael Battin, eds., *Reading “Black Mirror”: Insights Into Technology and the Post-Media Condition*, Media Studies (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2021).

5.2. Virtual gathering, virtual grief

Before ultimately implying that ‘the atomic’ and ‘the digital’ are not mutually exclusive, Byrne starts from a communicative Trinity to propose constructive evaluation of communications technologies:

We are able to judge them because we can assess their capacity to respect personhood, relationship and true encounter in community. They have to pass a test, and it is such a blindingly simple one that we might miss it: it is the test of passion, the test of love.¹⁹¹

As an educator, Treadwell writes of making up for the deficiencies of software, but his argument for emotional and vocational investment has resonance beyond the pedagogical: ‘We are beholden to a tool set built with profit in mind, built to maximize utility, and any humanity that is present is the result of our conscious effort. Any success we may have are [sic] born through what can only be called a labor of love’.¹⁹² These perspectives are calls to resist unthinking habituation, and Silverstone, Hirsch, and Morley discuss the ‘biographies’ of information and communication technologies as they are incorporated into the ‘moral economy of a household’.¹⁹³ There has been discussion around the fact that some families have found grieving easier with pandemic restrictions on funerals, as they have not had to contend with feeling the need to perform stoical grief in front of a large gathered crowd.¹⁹⁴ Episcopal priest Ángel Marrero-Ayala was quoted in the *Church Times* as saying: ‘A smartphone is no longer an intruder into the numinous, but an acolyte in service of the sacred. The tablets have transubstantiated into pallbearers: holders of the moment, and not transgressors of it’.¹⁹⁵ However, agonising deathbed farewells conducted via technology—as visiting dying relatives was prohibited and leave-takings were facilitated by nurses vulnerable to secondary trauma—provide tragic confirmation of

¹⁹¹ Lavinia Byrne, “God in Cyberspace,” *The Way* 40, no. 3 (July 2000): 251.

¹⁹² Paul Treadwell, “Authentically Connected – Being Human in Digital Spaces. An Initial Inquiry,” para. 6. (blog), 14 June 2021, <https://paultreadwell.com/2021/06/14/authentically-connected-being-human-in-digital-spaces-an-initial-inquiry/>.

¹⁹³ Roger Silverstone, Eric Hirsch, and David Morley, “Information and Communication Technologies and the Moral Economy of the Household,” in *Consuming Technologies: Media and Information in Domestic Spaces*, ed. Roger Silverstone and Eric Hirsch (London: Routledge, 1994), 17–18.

¹⁹⁴ Sarah Woolley, “Funerals: Better for Mourners?” *Church Times*, no. 8226 (13 November 2020): 19.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Treadwell's contention, and are the obverse of this mediation. Being mindful of the evolving guidance from the Church of England on Holy Communion,¹⁹⁶ the existential insufficiency of the medium in those final moments prompts the question as to why a virtual clerical Communion is seen as a satisfactory substitute for in-person communicating, as involuntary spiritual communion is enjoined of the viewing laity. To decry such solitary privilege under lockdown is not to discount the comfort ordinarily afforded by services broadcast on television and radio to the house-bound, but liturgical imagination is required in the future, as Bess Brooks requests. Just as Paul declares that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:35–39), so I acknowledge that the Spirit is not limited by technology, absence or distance, or the virus, but the enscreened comparisons I have made between succouring the dying, the rituals of death, and the remembrance of Christ's self-giving death for the living remain valid. Fortunately, the Church of England intends to give enhanced consideration to the digital domain in the future, and so in these closing paragraphs I look to the years ahead.

6. The Church, ageing, and the future

In June 2021, the Archbishop of York wrote a paper for the General Synod about developments arising from the *Simpler, Humbler, Bolder* vision and strategy published in November 2020, which I discussed in Chapter 5. He outlines one of the aims: 'Creating ten thousand new Christian communities across the four areas of home, work/education, social and digital', and he goes on to state that 'digital can no longer be an after-thought or an add-on'.¹⁹⁷ The coincidence of numerical targets between the national vision and a separate initiative named Myriad from the Diocese of London's Gregory Centre for Church Multiplication (a self-funding initiative aiming to 'support the planting of 10,000 new, predominantly lay-led Church of

¹⁹⁶ See Chapter 4, section 1.2, pp. 176–78.

¹⁹⁷ Stephen Cottrell, *Simpler, Humbler, Bolder: A Church for the Whole Nation Which is Christ Centred and Shaped by the Five Marks of Mission*, General Synod paper GS 2223 (2021), 9, 12. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/GS%202223%20Vision%20and%20Strategy.pdf>.

England churches’) has caused confusion,¹⁹⁸ but further highlights the unironic use of managerialism to characterise the will of God. Both are bold proclamations, but like self-isolation during coronavirus, only some can afford the privilege of using their time to lead in this manner, so the latter raises particular concerns, not only about unaccountability with regard to safeguarding in a different form, but also failure to tackle the issue of access to Holy Communion, and both could entrench the lack of representation of diverse voices.

The former document states: ‘An 80-year-old is 8 times more likely to be in church than a 20-year-old!’¹⁹⁹ Indeed, Day writes about impending demographic transition in cultural terms in her ethnographic research with women born in the 1920s and 1930s, whom she terms ‘the last active Anglican generation’:

One form of pew power I discovered revolves around the social calendar. Where there is piety, there’s a party, and where there’s a party, there are Generation A laywomen providing the food and drink. Like Jesus feeding the five thousand, there always seemed to be a bottle miraculously appearing from a shopping bag to be shared around the table.²⁰⁰

Day describes them unflatteringly as like ‘locusts descending on a church buffet’, and speculates that because many live alone they may no longer make themselves ‘special meals’, before commenting wryly that she ‘swiftly learned not to get between those women and the last sausage rolls’.²⁰¹ Thus, enshrining hospitality and regular all-age gatherings as part of a commitment to being church within a neighbourhood can be seen as being indirectly protective of the mental health and nutritional status of older

¹⁹⁸ CCX, “Myriad.” The Gregory Centre for Church Multiplication (website), accessed 28 July 2021, <https://ccx.org.uk/myriad>. The Bishop of Islington, Dr Ric Thorpe who leads the Gregory Centre, the home of the initiative, apologised for miscommunication after the leader of Myriad, Canon John McGinley used the phrase ‘key limiting factors’ in a discussion of lay leadership, which gave the impression that trained stipendary leadership and buildings were hindrances to growth (Madeleine Davies, “Myriad is Shining a Light, Says Thorpe,” *Church Times*, no. 8263 (30 July 2021): 4). It is telling that in the same article, McGinley’s rejection of criticisms of Myriad as ‘a middle-class initiative’, centres around his approbation of a network of churches in the Manchester diocese because they ‘“are passionate about them being Anglican, not only in managing how they do the sacraments but paying parish share”’ (Madeleine Davies, “Myriad is Shining a Light,” 4).

¹⁹⁹ Cottrell, *Simpler, Humbler, Bolder*, 6.

²⁰⁰ Abby Day, *The Religious Lives of Older Laywomen: The Last Active Anglican Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 165.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 169.

people. The robust realism of her account should be contrasted with the Betjemanian gentility²⁰² of the tea-parties of Messy Vintage (the variant of Messy Church for older people):

What a tea it was – gingham cloths, fresh roses in porcelain vases and an Indian tree-patterned tea service. Cake stands and doilies were ready to be brought out, laden with dainty sandwiches, cream and jam scones and all manner of fancy cakes.²⁰³

Even with the acknowledgement that the idea for this offshoot arose in a particular locality, such normalisation of a feminised, class and culture-specific presentation of food, is exclusionary in a multicultural society, and its portrayal of ageing and dependency may already be anachronistic, as Day’s portrayal of stalwart octogenarians and nonagenarians shows.

However, displacement from church buildings has raised the spectre of a permanent decrease in congregations post-pandemic, as a leaked internal Church of England document warned that ‘up to 20 per cent of regular worshippers may never return’.²⁰⁴ I note also that the concomitant ‘sharp fall in collection plate donations’²⁰⁵

²⁰² Kore Schröder discusses the instability of Betjeman’s constructions of Englishness, and the ideological implication of the reader in his parodic 1954 poem ‘How to Get on in Society’ with its mention of ‘soiling the doilies / With afternoon tea-cakes and scones’ (Leena Kore Schröder, “Heterotopian Constructions of Englishness in the Work of John Betjeman,” *Critical Survey* 10, no. 2 (1998): 15–34. doi:10.3167/001115798782484267). These well-known lines are quoted in the Oxford English Dictionary definition for ‘doily’. See Oxford English Dictionary, doily, adj. and n., 2.b. OED (website), updated March 2022, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/56538>.

²⁰³ Debbie Thrower, “Foreword,” in *Messy Vintage: 52 Sessions to Share Christ-Centred Fun and Fellowship with the Older Generation*, Katie Norman and Jill Phipps (Abingdon: BRF, 2021), 9. Interestingly, cake was purposely used to signify safety in a pilot course in the Oxford Diocese aimed at helping older adults prepare for death, although reference to refreshments vanished from the reporting of later presentations. Cf. Joanna Collicutt, “Living in the End Times: A Short Course Addressing End of Life Issues for Older People in an English Parish Church Setting,” *Working with Older People* 19, no. 3 (2015): 147–48. doi:10.1108/WWOP-11–2014–0034; Victoria Slater and Joanna Collicutt, “Living Well in the End Times (LWET): A Project to Research and Support Churches’ Engagement with Issues of Death and Dying,” *Practical Theology* 11, no. 2 (May 2018): 176–88. doi:10.1080/1756073X.2018.1448568.

²⁰⁴ Nicholas Hellen and Caroline Wheeler, “Church to Cut Paid Clergy as a Fifth of Flock Wanders Off,” *Sunday Times*, 31 January 2021, 4. Some churches were perceived to be in difficulties even before lockdown, and Francis, Village, and Lawson report on the effects of Covid on ‘fragile’ rural churches, which clergy, and to a lesser extent, the laity, see as financially unviable in the long term. The authors propose the adoption of intensive ‘discipleship learning’, with a duration of at least a decade, after the manner of programmes run with some success in rural Wales, Canada, Cyprus and the Gulf, although it is perhaps doubtful whether such an intervention would meet with Percy’s approval (Leslie J. Francis, Andrew Village, and S. Anne Lawson, “Impact of Covid-19 on Fragile Churches: Listening to the Voices of Lay People,” *Rural Theology* 19, no. 1 (2021): 45. doi:10.1080/14704994.2021.1895422). If funding and formation are the answer to fragility, then it

(used by those who do not have the financial security to commit themselves to direct-debit or standing order) is a proxy for the vulnerability and precarity of those presently unable to attend. And yet, anxiety about financial shortfall and emptying coffers is the primary message conveyed by archiepiscopal comment on the income statistics.²⁰⁶ Across all churches, the coronavirus led to recognition that many projects are run by volunteers who fall in the vulnerable category,²⁰⁷ which shows the foolishness of the Church of England taking existing members for granted amidst talk of the need for youthful diversity. Any over-emphasis on generational replenishment devalues those who fall into an unfavoured age-bracket: those without the Church are then seen as somehow not meriting the opportunity for amendment of life, because of insufficient longevity, rather than considering that the imminence of death requires an urgency of pastoral care;²⁰⁸ those within, are not respected and honoured for their wisdom, and contribution to parish life. Such an attitude mirrors secular pitting of the generations against each other in the bid for resources, and further promotes the perception that all the Church is interested in is numerical growth, which is a sad place to end the final chapter of my thesis.

7. Conclusion

I am cognisant that I have relied on a limited range of examples, and a largely clerical perspective in this chapter, but they are representative of the diversity of opinion and belief within the catholicity of the Church of England. I have looked at kenotic self-emptying, the self-sacrificial church, and empty bricks-and-mortar

shows how overstretched clergy have been co-opted into the preservation of the outsider's view of rose-tinted rurality, while being denied sufficient resources to invest in catechesis. They cite an earlier paper by Lawson on the experience of rural clergy, and the comments of one respondent: ' "It doesn't look all that good on a CV that a church you've been vicar of could close because of lack of people" ' (Francis, Village, and Lawson, "Impact of Covid-19 on Fragile Churches," 42).

²⁰⁵ Justin Welby and Stephen Cottrell, "A Christian Vision: The Church of England is Changing—for the Better," *The Spectator* 345, no. 10042 (13 February 2021): 25.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ The Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture, *Churches, Covid-19 and Communities*, 45.

²⁰⁸ See, for example, p. 330 n. 203. Pattison prefigured these concerns in a 2008 article: 'We need the actuality and reflective opportunities that pastoral care provides if we are to avoid becoming thoughtless institutional entrepreneurs' (Stephen Pattison, "Is Pastoral Care Dead in a Mission-Led Church?" *Practical Theology* 1, no. 1 (2008): 7–10. doi:10.1558/prth.v1i1.7).

churches during the pandemic. Hospitality does not require the backing of a powerful state church, but Christian hospitality always involves dissolution of status, and I developed the theme of humility from Percy by investigating differing contexts for the work of the Church. As I have emphasised repeatedly throughout this thesis, the absence of overt recognition of actions as hospitable, or conversely, the over-confident assertion of hospitality, distorted by social location, or evangelistic persuasion, arises from underdetermined hospitality. Heartbreakingly, a committed priest valued by his traumatised community feels overtaken by changes in church policy: unglamorous persistence, and faithful welcome are recognised as hospitality by the unchurched, but not valued by church authorities who equate hospitality with numerical increase and bureaucratic questionnaires. As with Percy's food memories, it is unselfconscious contributions which have lasting impact.

I have also considered empty stomachs and empty promises with regard to social regeneration and racial reform, through Pemberton's discussion of broken Britain, and the exposure by McLaren, Robinson-Brown, and Henry of a broken White-supremacist Church, unworthy of the name. I reviewed the biblical consequences of personal and societal over-consumption through the work of Grumett, Bretherton and Holmes, Méndez-Montoya, and Davis, and have looked at ecology and horticulture, and dug into the soil with the aid of Tidball, Helphand, and Bennington. I expatiated on the theological significance of food in the work of Méndez-Montoya, and used Percy, and the poetry of John Betjeman to draw out the class implications of food once more. Despite recourse to online meetings by those with disabilities before the advent of coronavirus, online experience has often been judged as inferior, but Berger summons a heavenly audience, and Byrne and Treadwell suggest that technology can be transformatively Trinitarian, so I contend that amateurishness in the proper sense of the word contributes to an online ecclesial identity of inclusive hospitality. I have looked at Communion as means of ecclesial conformation, situationally enforced abstinence from Communion, the restorative potential of Communion after trauma, and the power of simple hospitality in the face

of tragedy. In this final chapter, I have brought together the digestible and the digital as means showing of hospitality, to demonstrate conclusively that hospitality is more than tea, or indeed cake. I have changed scale between the cosmic banquet, the down-to-earth hospitality of pie-crust, and the literal earthiness of soil as microcosm, and soil is a suitable place to lay down the thread of my argument, as I commenced this thesis with the journeying stranger and the desert.

Conclusion

1. Summary

At the outset of my inquiry into hospitality I claimed that the expressed aims and vision of the Church of England demonstrate an insufficiently developed understanding of hospitality, which is further evidenced by Reddie's impatience with the recurrent institutional resort to a diffuse, but ultimately insubstantial hospitality. Pohl was the first to draw attention to the attenuation of hospitality over the centuries, and the need to restore it as a Christian practice; the reduction of Anglican hospitality to the banality of after-service refreshments, or the meal-based outreach of the Alpha Course and Messy Church are the correlates of this epistemic and practical deficiency. Indeed, I have established that despite the public recognition value for hospitality of the latter, reflection on hospitality was not central to the conception of either format. To counteract these inadequacies, I have adopted a concept of hospitality that is life and world-including, rather than a parsimonious definition: hospitality is not merely social nicety as an adjuvant to mission, but also the impetus behind *missio Dei*. Accordingly, I have assessed the utility of hospitality as an explanatory concept in discussing welcome as a scriptural practice, the Trinity and contemporary invocations of *perichoresis*; communion with God; the Church and the believer; and the planet and eco-systems, as well as the social, political, and evangelistic uses of hospitality. Therefore, it is my contention in this thesis that hospitality, properly conceived, renders practices and actions legible, and that the presence or absence of hospitality defines the Church of England nationally, internally, and locally. Hospitality matters.

In Chapters 1 and 2 I considered hospitality on different scales from the domestic to the international: from creation to *eschaton*, and in the presumed perichoretic relationality of the Trinity, hospitality is evident in the economy of God. Indeed, Winter describes a Eucharistic universe of hospitable excess. In giving the

scriptural background to hospitality initially, and in Chapter 1, I traced the hospitality Israel is commanded to show to the stranger back to the created order, and from the story of Abraham to the incorporation of the Gentiles as part of his promised posterity. I also made the claim that Peter's eventual acceptance of the ritually unclean animals in his vision as eatable, and thence his hosting of his Gentile visitors, and his stay with Cornelius, all serve to confirm that he has indeed understood the nature of the expansive and inclusive hospitality of the kingdom of God, as Jesus foretold when Peter was reluctant to submit to having his feet washed. The proprieties of customary hospitality were contravened by Jesus' act of humble service, and I have showed that humility is necessary both in the exchanges of everyday hospitality, and as antidote to the refractoriness of the Church of England; hospitality needs to be offered from a posture of humility. Ultimately, the implications of Peter's rethinking of hospitality and identity dilate to include the present research, and so, in order to better conceptualise and locate the place of hospitality in a Church that professes to be shaped by mission and Jesus, in Chapters 1 and 2 I derived common features of hospitality from the cultural hospitality represented in the Bible: seeing and welcoming the stranger; feasting and hearing stories; and how the ultimate hospitality of the kingdom of God is prefigured, both in the feasting of Isaiah 25:6–8, and the miraculous meals catered by Jesus. Furthermore, I categorised the experience of hospitality under the following headings: hospitality as provision and ingestion; hospitality as inclusion and incorporation; the divine hospitality experienced in contemplation; and hospitality as social action. I will summarise my research accordingly, using those characteristics and activities, rather than in a strictly linear fashion, so as to accentuate the correspondences between different situations and environments.

In Chapters 1 and 2, I considered hospitality on different scales from the domestic to the international: inclusion shifts from the solitary stranger crossing a threshold, to nations, in the Hebrew scriptures; and from crowds, and households, to people-groups, in the New Testament, as the kingdom of God is declared, and

disciples become part of God's household. Thus, in answering my first two research questions about similarities between the two testaments across the millennia, and the identity of those who are accorded welcome, a place to stay, and food to eat, or a place at the real or metaphorical table, I established feasting as a sign of future felicity, and identified the guests and the feasters. Having explored the sensory aspects of eating and communing in Chapters 1 and 2 through consideration of the food and flavours of the banquet of the nations in Isaiah, the Last Supper; the banquet of the kingdom; and the commensality of the first believers, I was then in a position, in the following chapter, to suggest that the communal meal has a place in ecclesial life as a marker of transition, and as a signifier of inclusion. In the move from places, participants, and physical ingredients, to the elements of conviviality, I juxtaposed Browning Hesel's restorative feasting from the Hebrew scriptures, and Staley's contemporary multisensory meal and worship, as an activity including people with learning disabilities, to propose the rediscovery of the meal as a variform vehicle for healing and integration in the life of a congregation.

Such eating takes hospitality beyond the educative meals of Alpha and Messy Church; both routine and ritual eating have a surplus of meaning, as my citation of Douglas on food and fellowship, Bacon's claim that the Church becomes the body of Christ through eucharistic eating; Isherwood and O'Donnell's proposals of the healing potential of the Eucharist; and Wirzba's opinion that partaking of the Eucharist overflows into ordinary eating, all indicate. I further addressed the importance of the act of eating to faith-development in Chapter 4, by contrasting the aberration of digital food with the topic of food and Christian formation. I then developed the ethical dimensions of consumption in Chapter 7, when I considered the relationships between food, theology, and the Eucharist; cookery and communal meals; food-production; hunger and ecology; and the resources available to the Church of England to tackle poverty. To further flesh out an inclusive and constitutive hospitality, I considered the place of the Eucharist in parish life and during local tragedy; the obverse of such ritual gathering was the eucharistic fast imposed by the Church of England during the early

phase of COVID-19, which I framed in terms of exclusion and inhospitality in Chapter 4. This wide-ranging discussion depended upon the *prima facie* recognition of primordial hospitality, and being hosted by God, which reverts back to my opening reflections, and the consequential assertion at the beginning of this chapter about hospitality in the span of history and the story of salvation; grateful reception of the gifts of the earth in daily life, and at the Communion table, is formative of the believer, and an outflow of hospitality is the fitting response to such dependence, as I have shown repeatedly. The ‘bring and share’ made appearances throughout, and I proposed the nature of the contributions as analogous to the members and organs of the Pauline body, and thus a fitting emblem for churchly hospitality.

As already mentioned, I specifically examined the centrality of the meal to the evangelistic hospitality of the Alpha Course and Messy Church in Chapter 6. Through analysis of the words of their founders, and their gainsayers and supporters, I uncovered motivations beyond sharing the good news which instrumentalise the offered hospitality: I exposed the privilege inherent in their promotional strategies, and the thinking behind their programmes which distort hospitality, to answer another of the questions defining my research. I demonstrated that both Alpha and Messy Church had unresolved issues around judging guests, and there were concerns around the practicalities of hospitality for Messy Church (although similar situations are nothing new in the history of Christianity, as I showed in the discussion about Peter, Cornelius, and the Jerusalem church, and the excluded widows in Chapter 1). Moreover, critics, such as Hunt and Ward, argue that Alpha is unrepresentative of experience in churches, which re-emphasises the need for the work undertaken in this thesis to advance food and storytelling as needful features of church life: the incompatibility between espoused and manifest values in my findings make my articulation of hospitality the more necessary.

In Chapter 3, I moved discussion of hospitality from inclusion as necessary to survival for the individual, and fulfilment of biblical prophecy for the Gentile nations, to querying how hospitality assists inclusion for those who experience social

exclusion and discrimination on the grounds of cognition. I brought the concept of hospitality and hospitable practices to bear on the experience of social alienation of those living with dementia, or who have learning disabilities; I gave the example of how the impulse to be hospitable can still be irrepressible, even with advanced dementia. I reflected on dementia and learning disabilities in relation to value, embodiment and personhood, and contrasted nurture, human touch, and movement, with divine embosoming and the relationality of Trinitarian *perichoresis*. In consequence, I argued that hospitality is intrinsic to human development from the womb onwards, and that the bonds between people are a reflection of the love of the Godhead. I also considered sound and intrusion, and silence and mutism, and took Harshaw's theorised mystery of divine communication and condescension, and her questioning of cerebral bias in coming to faith, in conjunction with Gillibrand on apophasis, to suggest that the hospitality of God exists in the place of inarticulacy, and in the face of inexplicable circumstances.

Having reflected on attentiveness to God, and God in others in Chapter 3, I made it clear that such awareness has to extend to the environment of worship. In Chapters 4 and 5, I sought to develop that understanding of attention in order to consider inclusion holistically as presence, representation, and brokerage, whether in-person, on-screen, in conversation and discourse, or corporately, so as to fulfil another aim of this research, and arrive at practices which intensify hospitality, and promote the creation of hospitable spaces. Research on ritual conducted during the pandemic showed a disconnect between church members and clergy, further proved by my juxtaposition of official advice and the Communion practices of a privileged few, as compelling evidence of bad faith. I enlarged upon the psychological and political functions of the story, and how storytelling operates to effect and signal inclusion for those who are cognitively-challenged, and simultaneously expand the imaginative capacities of their interlocutors. I also addressed the place of hospitality and social action in overcoming 'social abandonment' and envisioning the possible, for Pohl, and constructing Morisy's meaningful 'story-rich' life. Other uses of story include van

Ommen's advocacy of Lukken on the importance of the 'small' stories in the Bible, so that our lives are mirrored in the liturgy; Barrett's stories of community heroes; and Barrett and Harley's gathered stories of the gathered church which reorient and democratise mission. So, from the hearing of stories of those at risk of what Baldwin terms 'narrative dispossession', and the story as catalyst for overcoming difference and isolation, to the story as reassurance, recognition, and reporting, I proposed storytelling as an hospitable practice that promotes inclusion, and has value in worship, care-settings, and in the local community and politics. However, as Harshaw and Gillibrand make clear, there also has to be acknowledgement of the wordless story, and, as Brock asserts, the realisation that inclusion is the perquisite of God, not the Church. In comparing imperfect inclusion in the now, with the hereafter, I considered people with disabilities more generally, and the rhetoric around the categorical ascription of spiritual gifts, versus the allowability of undifferentiated membership in the body of Christ, and I emphasised the mutuality of gift and hospitality demanded by inclusion. Such submission to each other in Christ can be contrasted with the way capitalism infects the valuation of places and people. There is merit therefore, in juxtaposing the asset-based approach to community development adopted by Barrett, with the God-giveness of the individual, as perspectives which focus on the positive, and reject the use of postcodes, or the medical discourse of deficit, to judge people. However, the Church is not immune from worldly standards, or being unwelcoming, and the multiplied on-screen faces of lockdown have highlighted the previous invisibility of those excluded from offline church, and the need for a theorisation of hospitality that goes beyond greeting or eating.

My thematic discussion of hosts, guests, food, and stories in the first four chapters, provided the foundation for the application of those principles and practices to the mission, and the future of the Church of England in the remaining chapters. Thus, Chapter 5 used internal and external reports as a means to evaluate the declared hospitality of the Church. I analysed the presentation and content of the 2019 report *From Stranger to Friend: Changing the Culture and Practice of Welcome in the*

Church of England, and queried the dialogue partners chosen to derive an improved welcome, in order to show the conceptual and methodological insufficiency of the institutional account of welcome which is commended to local churches. Thereafter, I gave examples of Church initiatives employing problematic photographic and poetic imagery, and I considered how politicians invoke mythic representations of the Church of England that appeal to bucolicism, rather than the pastoral realities of a multicultural society, thereby helping to reproduce the seemingly ineradicable racism of the Church. When allied to fact of establishment, the potency of such reactionary images risks distorting hospitality into reactionary nostalgia and paternalism, rather than social justice and inclusion, unless challenged, so I juxtaposed historic discrimination with the disregard for appearances evidenced in these publications in order to expose the oppression concealed behind carefully presented words and images. I also considered a report from Theos on social action, which raised the possibility of a spectrum of meal-types in the weekly calendar of the local church, in support of my contention of hospitality as integral to church life. In the earlier chapters I gave examples of the fluid dynamics of hosting and being a guest, and the reversal of status, particularly through the example of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples, and in Chapter 5 I considered the reluctance of the Church to consider reparations, or relinquish the host-like power, bequeathed by establishment, to convene. As a step to resolving my question for this chapter about the tension between hospitality and mission, I made the suggestion that paying heed to the saddened and angered voices of the excluded and the marginalised would help the Church of England redress the current imbalance of power, although some still see disestablishment as the only option, as Chapter 7 re-emphasised.

I also queried whether the shift represented in the title of this thesis, from endorsing the primacy of mission, to orienting the Church around Jesus, diverted attention from troublesome aspects of Church structure. Although, the aim to be ‘Jesus-shaped’ taken in conjunction with the strapline of ‘simpler, humbler, bolder’, only reinforces the essential nature of humility, as I intimated in my earlier mention of

footwashing. Repentance and divestment would be the humble response to allegations of institutional racism and benefiting historically from the proceeds of slavery, but have not been forthcoming hitherto; so, much depends on the Archbishops' Racial Justice Commission. Just as Morisy argues for 'oblique' hospitality, rather than overtly attempting to effect change, the Church of England is at its best in quiet, unassuming service, in my opinion. Having examined social engagement and political intervention in the abstract, in furtherance of a perichoretic definition of hospitality and mission in Chapter 5, I compared the parish and the Fresh Expression, and the community and the local church, relative to each other in Chapter 7. I contrasted the aim of hospitality in Fresh Expressions of church with the perceptions of the hospitality of the parish, and debated their differing emphases on social action and *perichoresis*, to answer, in the affirmative, my question as to whether underdetermined hospitality goes unacknowledged. It was good that food-distribution continued to take place in churches during the pandemic, and the increased necessity for such service to the community may have raised the profile of the Church as an agent of social good, but as I have argued, the identity of the Church is bound up in presence *and* social action. The rootedness of prayer in a particular place is part of that hospitable parochial presence, as I showed in Chapter 7, and so the suspension of priestly daily prayer in churches at the beginning of the pandemic at a time when the sense of continuity of observance, and being held in prayer, would have been a source of stability and consolation in unprecedented circumstances was a retrograde step. I came to the conclusions that hospitality takes time to establish, and that listening to the community and God were crucial to offering a contextual hospitality. Finally, I wrote about the effects of impending demographic transition, and the consequences of the pandemic, to conclude that the priorities of the Church of England may actually be deleterious to the stated aim of diversity in the next decade. My original contribution has been to uncover and make explicit the uses of hospitality within the contemporary Church of England, and expose inhospitality, and latent privilege and entitlement, while situating my argument with a teleological framework of primordial and ultimate

hospitality. I have contested hospitality as an anodyne, and addressed the reasons for the current discrepancies between policy pronouncements and practice, as well as relating hospitality to wider societal and planetary issues, in order to propose a more inclusive vision of humble, hospitable encounter with God and others, achieved in part through ritual, pastoral presence, and restorative commensality.

2. Recommendations for future research

In the course of this thesis, I have interrogated the communications and activities of the Church of England at national, and local, level. It would be an interesting exercise to compare diocesan mission statements and priorities, and measure the frequency of mentions of hospitality, and the relative importance it is accorded, at the intermediate level, to see whether there is any correlation, either with regional socio-economic indicators, or the activities of Fresh Expressions and parishes. In addition, the relative weighting of the components of diocesan taglines would help with determining whether hospitality is merely decorative, seen as desirable, or central to the identity of a diocese (although, given the superficial treatment in *From Stranger to Friend*, the second option is more likely than the third). Apart from assessing the impact of diocesan messaging, qualitative fieldwork comparing the understandings of Christian hospitality expressed by established church-members, compared with responses by priests and leaders on the one hand, and the views of those new to faith, and outside the Church on the other, would serve to substantiate the discrepancies in theological understanding which I have highlighted, and provide evidence of the range of activities that can contribute to ecclesial hospitality.

This thesis has been marked by being written during successive lockdowns and openings-up of the COVID-19 pandemic, so some quotations reflect the particular atmosphere of improvisation and exclusion which prevailed at the beginning of the outbreak. However, there is value to be derived in future from using these as indicators of the degree of change which has occurred, as churches adapt to changed, and still-changing, circumstances. Indeed, a focus on hospitality will prevent

necessary future research into hybrid church being diverted into discussion of the affordances of technology, and keep it centred on *koinōnia*. Nevertheless, as the pandemic experiences of Alpha and Messy Church have shown, in differing ways, sustaining relationships through modalities other than meeting in-person presents challenges, and the question of forming a coherent identity across online and offline church will require experimentation and evaluation.

With regard to food, I have considered the meals and dwellings of the first Christians, and suggested that continuing attention to settings has deflected attention from the erosion of female leadership. I have explored the status of those providing hospitality and the persistent downgrading of catering as a form of ministry, and investigation of the potential for recognised diaconal ministry in this area, arising from Tuohy's question about the ordination of cooks, would be a welcome development, so long as it did not become a means to divert candidates from marginalised groups away from the priesthood. For the present, the biscuit and the fish-finger, and cakes and pasta are iconic in the representative alimentary hospitality emanating from the Church of England, be it Messy Church, Messy Vintage, or the Alpha Course, but I have not addressed the wider ethics of eating and choice of diet with relation to the urgent matters of climate change and animal-welfare. An evaluation of how the communal meals eaten by Christians, and the food they supply to others, accords with their own more usual diet, would tell us how those Christians valued not only the planet, fellow creatures, and eco-systems, but also their attitudes to other people, and their thinking about hospitality.

The disconnect between protestations of welcome and actual inclusion has informed much of my engagement with hospitality in its different guises within the Church of England. Although feeling welcomed is important, specific research is needed to ask autistic people, those with learning disabilities, and people living with dementia about their participation in the life of the Church, and if they are enabled and encouraged to be hosts, welcomers, and story-tellers in their turn, as equally gifted members of the body of Christ, and what advocacy and liturgical facilitation is yet

needed. I have addressed the issue of racism in the Church of England from an inescapably emic perspective, and the restriction of my research to the national requires a complementary investigation, asking what humble hospitality looks like from the extra-corporeal perspective of the wider Anglican Communion. This process of decentring would align the Church of England's expressed desire for institutional humility, and wider calls for a kenotic ecclesiology, with the very actors and theologies that could help bring about those aims, in building on the suppressed insights of the marginalised insiders who are currently ignored.

3. Placement of hospitality in the Church of England

In the attempt to renovate the tired tropes of caffeine and carbohydrates, I have offered a more expansive conception of hospitality beyond mandated niceness and simplistic inclusion. The American scholars, Newman, and Russell had already challenged the former, and Swinton, and Jacobs, the latter, although from differing perspectives, but uniquely, I have also sought to disrupt the insular narrative of the Church of England in the attempt to redeem hospitality from intractable Anglican myopia. Although Martyn Percy undertakes a similar task, I contend that he is frequently too invested in his own persona as a contrarian to be a properly critical friend, and his focus is on churchmanship and ecclesiolatry, not hospitality. I argue therefore, that this inquiry has challenged coincident apathy and complacency about hospitality in the Church of England, by revising the ways hospitality is perceived. At the most basic, I have proposed a rationale for the communal meal, and the convivial gathering after the abeyance of ritual, as a means of overcoming the isolation and distress engendered by the pandemic, and have thereby reconstituted the importance of commensality within church life. More substantively, I have considered the literature of Christian spirituality, and the scriptural representation of hospitality, and connected the implicit and explicit discussions of *imago Dei* and *missio Dei* that characterise the disciplines of disability theology, ecclesiology, and missiology to produce a coherent narrative of divinely inspired hospitality.

I conjoined separate discourses on the Trinity from disability theology and ecclesiology into a hospitality capable of defending personhood on the one hand, and discussing ecclesial identity on the other. Thus, I brought into dialogue the debates around *perichoresis* as a factor in conceiving of the hospitable church, and the conversations on selfhood that animate those who are usually the objects of such discussion. To the latter end, I explored Harshaw's response to the presumptuous who would dismiss the spiritual capacity of her daughter, and her maternal advocacy parallels that of the Syrophenician woman from Chapter 2, as the stigmatised become subjects of the story in their own right, with their own desires and appetites: I contend that hospitality properly understood enables that transition. And to unify those discussions, I have suggested, following Swinton, Harshaw, and others, that the inclusion in the body of Christ of those who are stigmatised, or excluded, refigures the understanding of gifts and ministries within the local church. I extrapolated this comprehension to the institution of the Church, by adopting Wells' contention that the renewal of the national Church will be achieved by the formerly rejected, but I introduced the prophecy of Isaiah 61 as a superior source to amplify his point, thus enabling an explicit connection to my development of the communicative power of the 'broken' story in Chapter 4. Narratives of acceptance and redemption are at odds with the setting of targets for the number of new churches as an outcome measure; transformation does not come without repentance. In my investigation of the places and practices which claim to show hospitality, or be hospitable, I have given evidence of the discrimination shown to mind and body differences, which render such claims of hospitality worthless.

I have explored how hospitality forms Christian and ecclesial identity, and determined that hospitality is equally at home in the offline parochial church; the online church; the Fresh Expression, and the wider community, because the presence of God precedes, as with Peter entering the house of Cornelius. In Chapters 1 and 2, I surveyed divine and human hospitality in the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament in order to draw out characteristics of hospitality which transcend cultural

difference, and I uncovered the universality of feasting and hospitality, whether on succulent meat, for the nations in Isaiah, or sufficient crumbs, for the Syrophenician woman and her daughter. This finding is relevant because it has pertinence to the politics of gathering digitally and physically, during, and after, the personal and collective trauma of this era of COVID-19, and my investigation offers the meal and the screen as means of negotiating the interregnum, and the resumption of festivity and ritual. I have attested to the potential of bodily hospitality to unsettle over-cerebral, dissociated, dualistic, propositional belief, and the quotidian meal to manifest *koinōnia*. However, I have not proposed a prescriptive hospitality, but I have drawn upon the insights of scholars and practitioners, priests and laity, and insiders and outsiders, to produce a differentiated understanding of hospitality which includes the domains of knowledge, belief, and action. Although I have argued that an inadequately articulated hospitality can be unrecognised by providers, as much as permission-givers, it does not go unrewarded by Jesus, even if it is discounted, or overlooked, by Church authorities. I hope that this thesis has provided food for thought with regard to hospitality, and inclusion, for all eaters, evangelists, and would-be belongers, Anglican or not.

Overall, in this thesis, I have established that hospitality is important, not simply for the sake of survival in times past; or civility, or social justice, in the present time; but because, from the perspective of scripture, it is fundamental to understanding life on earth, and the life hereafter. Culture, ecology, history, and technology have been represented in the move, over the course of this thesis, from the digestible to the digital; however, the climate crisis and the extractive economy implicate soil and silicon, and I have argued that the Church has to accord serious attention to food-production and methods of communication. I conceptualised a hospitality of communion arising from creaturely commonality, which extends from the cellular to the cosmic, and a political hospitality shown through bodily solidarity, social action, and representation. For the Church of England as the site of my research, this latter requires the renunciation of power; and I, in my turn, have

endeavoured to reject any paternalistic framing of hospitality and inclusion, although, as a currently non-disabled person, this will have been imperfectly achieved.

Nevertheless, I have shown the supervision of mental and bodily incapacity by divine hospitality and inclusion in the body of Christ, and how a hospitality of the body incorporates the womb, the face, hair, hands, arms, and feet; can be shown through the senses; and, of course, to the stomach. My thesis duly encompasses the edible and the ineffable, and my contribution has been to construct an embodied, en-earthed, and inspirited account of hospitality that supports inter-special co-existence in the world, and promotes intersectional inclusion in the Church of England.

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Appendix

1. Ann's Recipe for Mint Cake (or Peppermint Slice)

4oz margarine/butter
1 cup self-raising flour
1 dessertspoonful cocoa
4 handfuls crushed cornflakes
½ cup soft brown sugar
Pinch salt

Melt the margarine/butter.

Add all the dry ingredients, and mix well.

Spread into a greased tray, and flatten with the back of a spoon, or your hand.

Bake at 180°C or 350°F for about 20 minutes.

Remove from oven, and allow to cool and set.

Once cool, add topping:

8oz icing sugar
½ teaspoon peppermint essence
Few drops green food colouring
Boiled water

Mix altogether until stiff, but slightly runny.

Pour over cooled base and allow to set.

Cover in melted plain chocolate when completely set.

Julia, Ann's daughter, adds: "There's no note about how much chocolate will be needed. I'd start with a bar of plain cooking chocolate, depending on how thick you like it!"