

*How is Mission-shaped Church
changing Church of England missio-ecclesiology
in the light of classical Anglicanism?*

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*Thus says the Lord:
Stand at the crossroads, and look,
and ask for the ancient paths,
where the good way lies; and walk in it,
and find rest for your souls.*

(Jeremiah 6.16)

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Setting the scene

Since the advent of the Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Council Report (2004), "Mission-shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context" (MSC), a spark of change has occurred in Church of England missiological and ecclesiological thinking and practice. Archbishop Rowan Williams, at the General Synod debate (2004), implored how crucial it was for the Synod to grasp this *kairos* moment for the Church of England: "I don't want to get too apocalyptic about it, but the point is that God has opened for us a door of opportunity for the growth and maturation of our Church".¹ In support of MSC, measures were proposed to revise Church of England ecclesiological structures.² As Peter Toyne the chairman of the Review Group comments, "Our primary challenge, therefore, was to determine what legislative framework might best facilitate the Church's response for the future".³ With synodical commendation, the Church of England began the process of implementing change to missio-ecclesiological polity.

If MSC truly captures a *kairos* moment, then what we have is a conversion experience of sorts. *Kairos* is not a movement in time (chronos), but a *moment* in time. It is the emergence of something new, a revelation that breaks in the continuum of time and space.⁴ Is this the conversion of the Church of England? Whether the MSC has truly encapsulated *kairos*, time will tell. What is evident, however, is it has put the Church's official stamp of approval on this developing movement within the Church of England.

One has only to look at the Fresh Expressions website, to see the energy and passion of its proponents. Surely such zeal needs to be encouraged? As Paul exhorts us, "Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord" (Rm. 12.11). The desire to reach out and serve in Christ's name can only be commended. After all, as the MSC rightly says, "The essence

¹ Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury official Website, General Synod address 10/02/04: *Archbishop remarks in the debate on the Mission-Shaped Church*, (<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1832/general-synod-archbishop-remarks-in-the-debate-on-the-mission-shaped-church>), visited 01/03/11.

² Church of England Report of the Review of the Dioceses, Pastoral and related issues with Peter Toyne (Chair), *A Measure for Measure: In Mission and Ministry* (London, Church Publishing House, 2004).

³ *Ibid.*, x.

⁴ Ray S. Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches* (Oxford, The Bible Reading Fellowship, 2007), 22-24.

(DNA) of the Church” is to be “missionary community”.⁵ To renew the Church of England in her missionary calling has undoubtedly been one of the utmost results of the Report, but at what cost?

In his synodical report in 2010, Steven Croft reviewed that MSC had opened up a deep theological engagement about mission and ecclesiology in the Church of England, which “over the past six years a helpful process of challenging and testing the theological foundations in mission-shaped Church”.⁶ What this theological enterprise revealed, Croft continued, was a weakness in the area of ecclesiology, not only with Fresh Expressions but with the Church as a whole. Hindsight has shown that it is curious that there was “no recommendation to do further work on ecclesiology”.⁷ One of the key tasks, he argues, must be to deepen the theological engagement about what the Church is.⁸

1.2 Research question and purpose

The purpose of this paper is to enter into the MSC missio-ecclesiological debate. I want to critique MSC with a view of engaging with some of the deep theological issues it raises concerning the nature of the Church and mission. More specifically, I want to consider these changes in comparison to classical Anglicanism using the following research question: “How is MSC changing Church of England missio-ecclesiology in the light of classical Anglicanism?”

While I celebrate the missionary initiative and enthusiasm of MSC and aspirations to renew the Church of England, this I believe must always be founded upon sound theological foundations. As Croft wisely says, “Without a real attempt to think theologically about the nature of the Church any plan for the future is destined to evolve into a dead and deadly managerialism”.⁹ If Peter Forsyth is correct, that “the prime need of religion to-day is a theology”,¹⁰ then this is especially true of a Church that is undergoing profound change.

⁵ Church of England’s Mission and Public Affairs Council with Cray, Graham (Chair), *Mission-shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London, Church Publishing House, 2004), 85.

⁶ Steven Croft in *Report of Proceedings General Synod February Group of Sessions Volume 41 No. 1* (<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/40958/feb2010.pdf>), 142, visited 21/03/11. An audio version of the debate can be heard on <http://audio.cofemedia.org.uk/synod/feb2010/Feb1010.wax>, visited 21/03/11. Croft was at the time of writing of MSC the Archbishops’ Missioner and Leader of the Fresh Expressions.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁸ *Ibid.* Croft made a similar observation in his essay ‘Mapping ecclesiology for a mixed economy’ in Croft (ed.), *Mission-shaped Questions: Defining Issues for Today’s Church* (London, Church Publishing House, 2008), 186-198.

⁹ Croft, *Mission-shaped Questions*, 191.

¹⁰ As cited by Trevor Hart, *Faith Thinking: The Dynamics of Christian Theology* (Eugene, SPCK, 1995), 1.

I recognise it is not possible to cover all the missio-ecclesiological issues MSC raises. Selective choices of research have to be made at the sake of others. I also recognise that some subjects could be examined in far greater detail. Throughout this paper a series of secondary questions will be employed to undergird our research question. These questions will have a double purpose of supporting the research question and pointing beyond towards the wider debate.

By asking, “How is MSC changing Church of England missio-ecclesiology in the light of classical Anglicanism?” presupposes that MSC has made changes to Church of England missio-ecclesiology. This of course can be contested, but even the most moderate voices would have to readily admit that MSC has changed the shape of the Church of England. What remains disputed, however, is how much MSC has changed Church of England missio-ecclesiology and whether these changes are of the benefit of the Church of England and society at large. It is my intention to explore some of MSC missio-ecclesiological issues and examine how these are changing the Church of England compared to classical Anglicanism.

If the three functions of the Church are as John Newman suggests, teaching (prophetic), ruling (regal) and worshiping (priestly), then this work falls mainly under teaching (prophetic) function motivated by the principle *fides quaerens intellectum*.¹¹ Newman rather boldly asserts that “theology is the fundamental and regulative principle of the whole Church system”.¹² Whether theology is *the* fundamental principle is questionable, but it certainly has an essential regulative work for Church life. Taking up this challenge I want to theologially scrutinise and test some of the MSC missio-ecclesiological truth claims.

Rowan Williams suggests theology is a threefold activity between, celebratory, communicative and critical styles.¹³ In this research I will err towards the critical style. As MSC is changing Church of England missio-ecclesiology this “prompts further probing of what the ‘fundamental categories’ really mean”.¹⁴ While wanting to adhere to the

¹¹ John Henry Newman, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church* (<http://www.newmanreader.org/works/viamedia/volume2/index.html>), visited 03/04/11.

¹² Cited Paul Avis, *The Identity of Anglicanism: Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology* (London, T & T Clark, 2008), 11.

¹³ Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2000), xiii-xvi.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

characteristic Anglican principle of affirmation and restraint in this study,¹⁵ this will not be at the cost of asking tough questions. Choosing the apophatic critical path is one way to explore some of inner tensions and irresolutions of MSC. Although criticism can sometimes come across as agnostic, antagonistic and even nihilistic in its extreme, this is not my intention. Rather, my desire is to rediscover the rich heritage of the Church of England in dialogue with MSC, with a goal of moving towards a celebratory and communicative theological witness. Even when this witness is not explicitly made it is implicitly intended, allowing for continuous movement of apophatic and cataphatic theological cycles.

To help us to think theologically about the nature of the Church of England in the light of MSC, we will converse with a range of different theologians across the missio-ecclesiological spectrum. Our main conservational partner will be classical Anglicanism. By calling to mind the classical approach will enable us to see more clearly where MSC has changed the missio-ecclesiology of the Church of England. Classical Anglicanism will also provide a time-honoured perspective to the debate, what Clive Staples Lewis calls “Deep Church”.¹⁶ Deep Church is a *via media* between conserving the past for the sake of the future. As Avis surmises, “The theological imagination must inhabit the past life of the Church... in-dwell that tradition, wrestle with it and let it pervade and shape our minds.”¹⁷ Purposely, we will allow the deep Church traditions of the Church of England to be heard again in the MSC context. Furthermore, we will challenge MSC’s revisionist missio-ecclesiology in comparison to classical Anglican theological method.

By employing the classical approach as the main contender in discussion with MSC, presupposes that there is such a phenomenon as classical Anglicanism. In this study we will take this as a given, even allowing for all the various nuances and wide ranging opinions on the subject. Sometimes I will explicitly refer to classical Anglicanism, other times it will be inferred. For the sake of clarification, this study is not a discourse on classical Anglicanism. This is also not a sociological, structural, or practical study of the Church of England. We will

¹⁵ Avis, *Identity of Anglicanism*, 15-16. Richard Giles, in his rather humorous approach to Anglican identity, refers to the *instinctive* Anglican approach as: Generosity and Geniality, alongside Common Sense, Doing Things properly and Exploration. Richard Giles, *How to be an Anglican* (Norwich, Canterbury Press Norwich, 2003), 19-25.

¹⁶ C.S. Lewis, Church Times, Vol. CXXXV, 8th February 1952: “Perhaps the trouble is that as supernaturalists, whether ‘Low’ or ‘High’ Church, thus taken together, they lack a name. May I suggest ‘Deep Church’; or, if that fails in humility, Baxter’s ‘mere Christians’?” Cited by Andrew Walker, in Andrew Walker & Luke Bretherton, *Remembering our Future: Explorations in Deep Church* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2007), 2.

¹⁷ Avis, *Identity of Anglicanism*, 186.

not, for example, be describing all the various forms of Fresh Expression. The primary focus of this study remains the theological examination of MSC's missio-ecclesiology.

To accentuate the connatural relationship between mission and ecclesiology I have brought these terms together *missio-ecclesiology*: "Ecclesiology and missiology are simply two complementary ways of looking at the one reality of the Church".¹⁸ Using the Latin form of mission connects it to the *missio dei* concept which emphasises that mission is derived from the Trinity and is intrinsically linked to the Church.¹⁹ As this study will be focusing on MSC as contextualised in England, we will use the generic term Anglican to mean the Anglican Church in England.²⁰

1.3 Methodology

With the focus of this study being theological, the research method will be based upon literary sources. Chapter two "Missio-ecclesiological overview" gives an overview of the contemporary missio-ecclesiological landscape using John William's "Six approaches to the Future Church" and Andrew Walker and Luke Bretherton's "Four Streams of Contemporary Church". By doing this we will begin to see some of the contenders (re)shaping the Church for the 21st century. Such an overview introduces the broader perspective and the matrix of arguments from which MSC is but one way forward. Having critiqued the missio-ecclesiological framework, MSC is set within a Paradigm Theory where conflict is considered as a contributing factor in the moulding of MSC's missio-ecclesiology.

Chapter three is the main part of the study which specifically focuses upon the research question. In this chapter we discover that MSC is a more complex model than the missio-ecclesiological outlines suggested in chapter two. The methodological approach of MSC will be questioned and the underlining hermeneutical presuppositions made overt. MSC's loyalty to sociological analysis as an instrument in shaping missio-ecclesiology will also be critiqued. This will naturally led to an exploration of the complex issue of MSC's contextual theology and how this is influenced by Liberation Theology. Most importantly, we will see

¹⁸ Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology* (London, T&T Clark International, 2010), 194.

¹⁹ Avis writes, "Ecclesiology is the particular branch of theology that reflects on the nature and mission of the Christian Church. Ibid., 142.

²⁰ See Appendix 1 for further explanation of the differences between Anglican and Church of England.

how these theologies have affirmed experience as another source to classical Anglican *loci theologici* as exemplified by Fresh Expressions and the mixed economy.

MSC's Anglicanism is further scrutinised in the post-denominational debate. This will pave the way for MSC's central theme *dying to live* as the undergirding theology of the whole report. Following the Anglo-Catholic critique, MSC's evangelical-charismatic influences and bias will be teathed out. This theme is developed by setting off MSC's reformed theology against a more catholic understanding of missio-ecclesiology giving MSC's preference for innovation over tradition as an example. Drawing chapter three to a close, MSC's *missio dei* theology will be favourably reviewed, allowing for concerns that worship has been trumped by mission as the defining quality of Church life. Finally, we will uncover the inherent ambiguity of MSC's Kingdom of God theology before ending the chapter with rhetoric of exhortation.

Having journeyed through some of the missio-ecclesiological issues of MSC in the light of classical Anglicanism we will conclude by summarising the research before offering some final reflections.

1.4 Sources

The first point of contact for research will be the MSC report. MSC is not primarily a theological work, but a follow up from "Breaking New Ground: Church Planting in the Church of England" report (1994).²¹ It is a response to the new developments that had arisen both in the Church and society at large. Having said this, MSC does offer a theological reflection upon these changes and presents a theological rationale in chapter five. With the publication of MSC in 2004, the weight of influence of the report went far beyond its expectations. It seems that, not only is MSC changing the Church of England, but its effect is also being felt throughout a number of Christian organisations, denominations and streams (nationally and internationally), and in the Anglican Communion.²² MSC is celebrated as the

²¹ MSC, xi.

²² For example, the Anglican Church in Australia has published its own version of MSC: "Building a Mission Shaped Church in Australia" (2006). There is continued interest in MSC with ecumenical partners such as the "Porvoo Communion" and the "Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland" (EKD). For example, MSC has been translated into German and has been adopted a strategy of working towards a mixed economy over the next 15 years. The Church of England, *Presentation to the General Synod 27th February 2007* (www.churchofengland.org/media/40111/gs1648.doc), visited 21/03/11. To date, the Church of England also has the following formal partners in Fresh Expressions: Methodist Church of Great Britain, The United Reformed Church, Congregational Federation, Ground Level

best-selling General Synod report and is now in its 2nd Edition (2009), boasting sales of over 22,000. So although we will extensively make reference to MSC, supplementary sources are needed to unpack and develop the theology of MSC and how this continues to change Church of England missio-ecclesiology.

Soon after the release of MSC George Lings and Bob Hopkins published through the Church Army, “Encounters on the Edge: Mission-shaped Church: The Inside and Outside View” (2004). Lings was a Church Army representative in the working group for MSC and Hopkins was an external advisor. Their report gives some interesting inside views to MSC’s formation and points of reflection, both critical and affirmative. In the Grove series, The Church Army has also produced many other publications about MSC and Fresh Expressions. For example, Paul Bayes, “Mission-shaped Church: Building Missionary Values” (2004) and Matt Stone, “Fresh Expressions of Church: Fishing Nets or Safety Nets?” (2010).

Arguably, the most useful and used resource for information about the Mission-shaped Church is through the “Fresh Expressions” website.²³ This went live in February 2005 and serves as a portal for various Fresh Expressions support services and links. Some of these services include: an outline of Fresh Expressions, news and stories, training events, resources (e.g. publications, audio and visual, research, etc.), job vacancies, networks, Fresh Expressions Area Strategy Teams (FEAST), and so on. Some of the links include: Facebook, twitter, YouTube, MSM, and Share.

The Church of England’s publishing house has a number of books and resources in support of the Mission-shaped initiative. In 2006 a series of books took up the theme of mission-shaped and applied it to specific areas of ministry, for example: Susan Hope, “Mission-shaped Spirituality: The Transformation Power of Mission” and; Paul Bayes and Tim Sledge, “Mission-shaped Parish: Traditional Church in a Changing Context”.²⁴

Network, Church Army, CMS, and Anglican Church Planting Initiatives. Fresh Expressions, (<http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/>), visited 02/03/11.

²³ Fresh Expressions, <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/>, (visited 02/03/11).

²⁴ See Church House Publishing, <http://www.chpublishing.co.uk/index2.asp>, (visited 02/03/11).

In 2006 John Hull offered his concerns about the report with a booklet titled, “Mission-shaped Church: A Theological Response”. In the same year, Roland Reim gave his assessment of MSC titled, “Mission-shaped Church: An Emerging Critique the journal” in the periodical “Ecclesiology”. Aware of the developing appraisal, Ripon College organised a conference in 2007 entitled, “Defining the Church for the 21st Century”, whereupon it explored some of the implications of the Church of England’s Fresh Expressions Initiative. The aim was to consider the shift in the Church of England’s ecclesiology and the questions and issues this raises. These seminars were published as “Evaluating Fresh Expressions: Explorations in Emerging Church: Responses to the Changing Face of Ecclesiology in the Church of England”. In the same year, Croft, hosted a series of day conferences with the theme “Hard Questions”. Theologians were invited to present 40 minute lectures followed by questions to the speaker and a panel discussion with practitioners and church leaders. . In the introduction of the book written from these lectures, “Mission-shaped Questions: Defining Issues for Today’s Church”, Croft acknowledges, “This engagement with God’s mission has provoked deep theological questions particularly about the nature of that mission and its relationship with God’s Church”.²⁵ Ian Mobsby’s MA thesis was published in 2007 “Emerging and Fresh Expressions of Church: How are they Authentically Church and Anglican”, which gives a positive outline of Fresh Expressions and an apologetic in how they are maintaining their Anglican identity.

In 2010 Christopher Duraisingh considered the relationship between mission-shaped and Church-mission in his article, “From Church-shaped Mission to Mission-shaped Church” from the journal “Anglican Theological Review”. Perhaps the most fervent attack of the MSC has come from Andrew Davison and Alison Milbank in their book: “For the Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions” (2010). The tone of the book is set from the beginning, “An important choice is offered to the Church of England: to embrace her historic mission to evangelize and serve the whole people of this country or to decline into a sect”.²⁶ They believe MSC is major redirection of missio-ecclesiology for the Church of England, and is based upon a defective methodology, inadequate theology, and a capitulation to market values.²⁷ More

²⁵ Steven Croft (ed.), *Mission-shaped Questions*, ix.

²⁶ Andrew Davison and Alison Milbank, *For the Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions* (London, SCM Press, 2010), vii.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, vii-viii.

recently John Williams offers a useful oversight and analysis of MSC titled “Twenty-first-century Shapes of the Church” in the journal “Theology” (2011).

With MSC at the centre of the debate and with the aid of supplementary sources, we will show how MSC is changing Church of England missio-ecclesiology in the light of a classical Anglicanism. Classical Anglicanism of course, can be understood in different ways. It may give emphasis upon the continuity of its catholic identity as rooted in the original New Testament Church and birthed in England by the Roman and Celtic missionaries. It may refer to the Reformation of the Church in England and Cranmer’s Prayer Book as the foundational Church of England source. Some would see the maturing of classical Anglicanism shaped by the Anglican divines. Others would to give more credence to one particular aspect of Anglicanism, for example, Anglo-Catholic, Evangelical, Liberal and Charismatic. Any attempt at defining classical Anglicanism is clearly an enormous task. The authoritative sources defining Church of England missio-ecclesiology can be considered as a sliding rule of authority: First, Scripture, tradition and Historic Formularies.²⁸ Second, what Mark Collinson helpfully calls “internal theology”,²⁹ which is given primarily for the internal life of the Church of England (and Anglican Communion), such as canon law, official documents and noted Anglican theological works. Third, is external theology which has contributed to the life of the universal Church catholic, with the ecumenical interface overlapping sources two and three.³⁰ As a way of bringing some of these sources together in some sort of coherent whole, we will interpret classical Anglicanism principally through the theology of Paul Avis.³¹ The reasons for doing this are: Avis is an Anglican priest, renowned and published theologian, and governing editor of the journal “Ecclesiology”. The Church of England has acknowledged Avis as an authoritative missio-ecclesologist with his appointment as General Secretary of the Council for Christian Unity (1998). Avis is a well respected, contemporary theologian who represents a central position which tries to balance reform and catholic Anglican positions.

²⁸ This ordering is found in the preface to the “Declaration of Assent”, The Archbishop’s Council, *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England*, (London, Church House Publishing, 2000), xi.

²⁹ Mark, P.C. Collinson, *Making a Dwelling in Europe: An Evaluation of the Nature of the Church of England in the European Continent* (Amsterdam, Vrije Universiteit, MA dissertation 2010), 25-26.

³⁰ This is particularly evident through ecumenical bodies and statements, such as the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), the Dublin Agreed Statement (1984), The Porvoo Statement (1996), the Anglican Methodist Covenant (1992), to name but a few.

³¹ See Collinson, *Dwelling in Europe*, 18-19.

To support the debate, we will also use a broad range of theologians. Notable among these will be: Alister McGrath; George Lindberg; David Bosch; Stephen Bevens; Avery Dulles; Pete Ward; Luke Bretherton; and Andrew Walker.

2.0 Missio-ecclesiological overview

2.1 John William's six approaches to Future Church

Williams believes as the contemporary Church engages with the “popular postmodernity diagnosis”³² there are six future shapes of Church emerging: The first approach is countercultural and resists this analysis; the second and third cautiously adopt it; and the remaining three embrace it more enthusiastically, while drawing different conclusions. There are overlaps and interlocking ideas amongst the six approaches, and all display a Christian family resemblance which connects them all. Such categorisation can be viewed as both a sliding scale and matrix. For example, model one and six are at opposing ends of the scale, yet they share a radical approach to the contemporary context. William's six approaches to the future Church can be summarised as follows:

2.1.1 Retrieving the Tradition

This is the inherited church model which regards tradition as the defining paradigm for shaping Church. There is a confidence and faith in what has been *received* as being relevant for today. Even if the present culture resists the Church's witness, the Church needs to remain devoted to passing on the faith in times of trial and tribulation. There is a continuing optimism that the traditional parish system, the *church-in-community*, is the radiating centre of the Church's mission.

2.1.2 Local Ministry

This is the “priesthood of all believers” model which encourages all Christians to be more actively involved in mission and ministry. This shared responsibly generates a wider dispersal of gifts across the whole body of Christ (1 Cor. 12). This movement accepts the postmodern dismantling of hierarchical structures, seeking to renew the local church through a more equalitarian view of power.

³² John Williams, 'Twenty-first-century Shapes of the Church' in *Theology* (Vol. 114, No. 2, March/April 2011), 110.

2.1.3 Mission-shaped Church

The mission-shaped Church and Fresh Expressions models both arise from the MSC Report (A mixed economy of Church model of traditional and new patterns of Church). Based upon a postmodern analysis, MSC's overriding paradigm is to challenge churches to think and act in terms of mission. The Church is (re)defined by mission, and all activities of the Church are to be seen through mission: "To do what they have always been doing, but giving their activities a deliberate 'mission' twist".³³ The Church is mission-shaped, a mission-shaped Church.

2.1.4 Fresh Expressions

MSC recognises new expressions of Church as being legitimate forms of Church. In reviewing Church plant development since "Breaking New Ground" (1994), MSC has moved the Church of England missio-ecclesiological boundaries to include Fresh Expressions. These new churches are seen as essential and guiding examples of a mission-shaped Church providing a prophetic and evangelistic voice in society and in the Church.

2.1.5 Post-Christendom

This model has some affinity to Local Ministry as challenges hierarchical structures and concentrates on relational patterns. It accepts that we live in postmodernity and is radically critical towards the historical Church. Advocates believe it is by deconstruction that we can model a simplified form of Church based around human relationships as the core element of what it means to be Church. These small groups can more readily embody a countercultural lifestyle and be a more effective witness of the Kingdom of God.

2.1.6 Emergent Churches

In many ways this group shares the concerns of the first group, in that they want to create a liturgical centre from which to reach out. Unlike the Traditionalists, however, the emergent churches want to begin afresh. Weight is placed upon the existential dimension of faith where God can be experienced in the now. Emergent churches emphasise spirituality over dogmatism. In true postmodern rhetoric these churches are seen as a *non-movement*, a fluid church that counteracts modernist, static and solid categorical notions.

³³ *Ibid.*, 111.

2.2 Luke Bretherton and Andrew Walker's Four Streams of contemporary Church

Bretherton and Walker have simplified what it means to be Church in the contemporary context into four streams.³⁴ The use of the stream metaphor allows for more fluidity of meaning as streams intersect and overlap. The four streams can be summarised as follows:

2.2.1 Inherited Church

This stream remains loyal to inherited tradition and is counter-cultural even in spite of declining numbers of Christians. By sustaining distinct identities, beliefs and practices, the Church remains faithful to her identity and provides a counter cultural voice in the contemporary culture. This stream intersects and overlaps with:

2.2.2 Mission-shaped Church

Some new expressions of Church remain as part of a denomination and are located on the edge of the church. Intersecting with the contemporary context they have a two way dialogue with the culture and inherited Church. Mission is both for those outside of the Church and for those in the Established Church (seeking to renew and develop existing patterns). The vision is located within a broader Christian perspective and is therefore open to ecumenical influences and partnerships. This stream intersects and overlaps with:

2.2.3 Fresh Expressions

These Fresh Expressions of Church are hovering on the edge of denominational boundaries. They seek to develop regular congregational life and worship contrary to inherited or existing patterns of Church. This stream intersects and overlaps with:

2.2.4 Emerging Church

This stream represents the edge of what it means to be the Emerging Church. Arguably, this is the most radical expression of *new* Church, with no affiliation or allegiance to a denomination or congregation. In fact, not belonging to a recognisable church is crucial to their identity. Faith and a free spirited attitude may be sustained by relational networks

³⁴ Walker and Bretherton, *Remembering our Future*, xvii. The authors have not titled these streams, but for the sake of clarity I have introduced headings either inferred or explicit in the texts. I have also reversed the ordering of Walker and Bretherton streams for the sake of coherence with William's model.

such as domestic practices, small groups, occasional events (such as Greenbelt) and cultural happenings.

2.3 Evaluating the missio-ecclesiological overview

These models give a broad brush stroke of the 21st Church and help us set MSC into the contemporary missio-ecclesiological debate. As with any modular theory, these categorisations represent a way of understanding trends.³⁵ Avery Dulles describes a model as “a relatively simple, artificially constructed case which is found to be useful and illuminating for dealing with realities that are more complex and differentiated”.³⁶ Models are therefore symbolic in nature that can be taken “seriously but not literally”.³⁷ Through the use of metaphor, models reveal *partial* knowledge. They help to give an overview, but cannot fully explain *mysterious* reality: “For now we see in a mirror, dimly... Now I know only in part (1 Cor. 13.12). Even in their explanatory and exploratory role there will always be overlaps, nuances and inconsistencies that will undermine such categorisation.”³⁸

Within the spectrum of missio-ecclesiological views there are exclusive and inclusive models. Exclusive models present distinctive claims by which reality is to be interpreted (as inherited and emergent groups are particularly prone to do). Contrasting exclusive claims can become polarised into oppositional groupings. These elements will surface in the MSC debate, especially amongst inherited countercultural and more radical Fresh Expressions. Dulles warns against this approach:

We must recognize that our own favourite paradigms, however excellent, do not solve all questions... Because images are derived from finite realities of experience, they are never adequate to represent the mystery of grace. Each model of the Church has its weaknesses; no one should be canonized as the measure of all the rest.³⁹

³⁵ For a review of the development of Model Theory see Stephen B. Bevens, *Models of Contextual Theology* (New York, Orbis Books, 2009), Chapter 3, ‘The notion and Use of Models’, 28-33. Also, Cardinal Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York, Doubleday, 2002), Chapter XII, ‘The Evaluation of Models’, 181-194.

³⁶ Dulles cited by Bevens, *Contextual Theology*, 29.

³⁷ Ian G. Barbour cited by Bevens, *Ibid.*

³⁸ Dulles believes that in theology that there are two types of models: explanatory and exploratory. Explanatory models synthesise what is already known and exploratory imagines. Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 16-18. Ecclesiology in many respects is a synthesis of both the known and the imagined, as William’s six models illustrates.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

Complementary models, on the other hand, recognise the validity of a variety of options. One model might believe their model best represents the Church, without resorting to invalidating other models. This has generally been the traditional view of the Church of England, which sees itself as one model with a specific contribution to make in the missio-ecclesiological debate. Unlike for example, Roman Catholic or Orthodox claims in being the true Church, the Church of England is seen as a branch of the Church.⁴⁰ Even within the Church of England there exists a broad spectrum of missio-ecclesiologies which are held together by a common and distinctive Anglican missio-ecclesiology.⁴¹

By placing and naming missio-ecclesiological models we have created a systematic construct. Even with interpenetration and inconsistencies of models, and given the fact that models are only symbols of reality, classification has taken place. No doubt, a postmodernist critique would say this ordering is based upon a *faulty* modernist philosophical mindset. By categorising we generate a static and solid hermeneutic, which is contrary to the *real* nature of things:

If the Modern Era was a rage for order, regulation, stability, singularity, and fixity, the Postmodern Era is a rage for chaos, uncertainty, otherness, openness, multiplicity, and change. Postmodern surfaces are not landscapes but wavescapes, with the waters always changing and the surfaces never the same. The seas know no boundaries.⁴²

If postmodern surfaces are wavescapes and not landscapes, then the model theory is undermined at best and debunked at worse. The seas have no boundaries in the philosophical speculation of postmodernism. As we will discover, sociological findings that would support the postmodern critique, remain a contested area.

2.4 Paradigm conflicts

If we transpose the Paradigm Theory (given that this is yet another model of understanding and open to all the criticism above) advocated by Thomas Kuhn and endorsed by David Bosch in “Transforming Mission”, incongruity should not come as a surprise. “For the most

⁴⁰ In 1838 the Anglican theologian William Palmer formulated the branch theory in his work “Treatise on the Church of Christ”.

⁴¹ For an introduction for arguments concerning Anglican identity see the chapter ‘The Distinctiveness of Anglicanism’ in Avis, *Identity of Anglicanism*, 39-57.

⁴² Leonard I. Sweet cited by Ward, *Liquid Church*, (Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 2005), 15.

part”, Bosch argues, “we are, at the moment, thinking and working in terms of two paradigms”.⁴³ This is a time of deep uncertainty for the Church as it wrestles with modernity and postmodernity. As paradigms blur and shift there will be polarization, mutual incomprehension, inability to communicate, frustration, and discouragement in the Church.⁴⁴

Kuhn believes real change occurs only through *revolutions* as opposed to evolutions: “These are terminated, not by deliberation and interpretation, but by a relatively sudden and instructed event like the gestalt switch”.⁴⁵ Pioneers see the norm as riddled with anomalies which cannot be solved through the existing paradigm. Only through “lightening flash” moments of “conversion” can the pioneer see a different future.⁴⁶ These innovative ideas create tensions between the traditionalist and the avant-garde. Even if the world in which both groups live is the same, their perception of reality is so different that it is as though they live in different worlds. According to Bosch, this explains why “defenders of the old order and champions of the new frequently argue at cross purposes”.⁴⁷ This can trigger deep emotional reactions, notably from the traditionalists, as new views “threaten to destroy their very perception and experience of reality, indeed their entire world”.⁴⁸ They can react by nostalgic reaction, immunisation against the new, continuation in the old ways, romanticising the past, all in the hope of riding the storm and the retrieval of inherited glories.

This Paradigm Theory would seem to support the pioneering radical wing resonated by some proponents of MSC and the Emergent Church (especially the concepts of revolution over evolution, and the birth of new ideas replacing the old). Writing in defence of this apologetic, Pete Rollins believes that emerging collectives “are showing how the radical message of Christianity speaks in a revolutionary way both to those outside the church and

⁴³ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Orbis Books, New York, 2008), 349.

⁴⁴ Dulles, *Models of Church*, 24.

⁴⁵ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 122.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 122 and 151.

⁴⁷ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 185. To illustrate this, a well known evangelical pastor and writer, John Piper met with Emergent Church leaders Tony Jones and Doug Pagitt to discuss theology. Piper concluded, “I just don’t understand the ways these guys think. There are profound epistemological (the theory of how we know) differences – ways of processing reality – that make the conversation almost impossible, as if we were just kind of going by each other... We seem to differ so much in our worldviews and our ways of knowing that I’m not sure how profitable the conversation was or if we could ever get anywhere. I came away from our meeting frustrated and wishing it were different but not knowing how to make it different.” Cited by Jim Belcher, *Deep Church: A Third Way beyond Emerging and Traditional* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2009), 11.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 185.

to the church itself".⁴⁹ However, even in its most radical forms of Church, there is an innate loyalty to the past.⁵⁰ As Hans Küng notes, Christianity is "essentially defined by its relation to history," and most essentially to its origins,⁵¹ where the Gospel is the defining norm which needs to be recovered and translated in the present day.⁵² Küng continues, "Changes in theology take place on the basis of the Gospel, but never against the Gospel".⁵³ MSC highlights these concerns as it wrestles with the role of history, tradition and the contextualisation process in understanding the mission-shaped Church.

When reviewing Church of England missio-ecclesiology in the light of MSC, it is helpful to be aware of some of the psycho-interpersonal reactions when brokering and analysing arguments. Polemical language for example, may guise deeper emotional reactions and undercurrent conflicts. Confrontational language, which can be a helpful trigger in stirring up a discussion, can quickly collapse into personal affronts. Healthy symmetrical conflicts, which presuppose trust and mutual power in the hope of resolution, can dissolve into *asymmetrical* breakdowns of relations.⁵⁴ In the MSC debate these tensions have become increasingly evident in some circles. If we take one case in point, the release of the book "For the Parish" has stirred up a range of emotional responses largely due to polemics. For example, the authors conclude, "Mission-shaped Church is the least impressive theological publication from the Church of England that either of us can remember".⁵⁵ Mobsby openly admits that his review of the book is a "critique mixed in with a rant".⁵⁶ Although he welcomes the "first real critique that questions the theology and practice of fresh

⁴⁹ Pete Rollins, 'Biting the hand that feeds: an apology for encouraging tension between the established church and emerging collectives' in Louise Nelstrop and Martyn Percy (eds.), *Evaluating Fresh Expressions: Explorations in Emerging Church: Responses to the Changing Face of Ecclesiology in the Church of England* (London, Canterbury Press, 2008), 77.

⁵⁰ As there is not a complete break with the past in Christianity, unlike Science, it would seem that Kuhn's Paradigm Theory is only of relative use. Both Küng and Bosch acknowledge this discrepancy and have critically adapted the Paradigm Theory in their theological treatises. See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 185-187.

⁵¹ Cited by Byron C. Lambert, 'Reflections on Hans Küng's Theology for the Third Millennium' in *Modern Age* (Vol. 33, No. 2, Summer 1990), 158.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 158 and 161.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Terjle Torkelsen, 'Når samtale ikke fører fram. Utøvelse av ledelse i harde og nedbrytende personalkonflikter i Den norske kirke' in *Halvårsskrift for praktiske teologi* (Vol. 2, 2006), 18-19. "When communication breaks down: The Management of difficult and destructive conflicts in the Norwegian State Church". My translation from Norwegian to English.

⁵⁵ Davison and Milbank, *For the Parish*, 225.

⁵⁶ J. Mobsby, *Initial response to the Book for the Parish by Milbank and Davison*, 03/10/10

(<http://www.ianmobsby.net/mobblog/?feed=rss2>), visited 07/03/11. See also, Giles Fraser's review in the Church Times 05/11/11, controversially titled: "Mugged by Expressions of choice", and the wide range of reviews at Amazon.co.uk (http://www.amazon.co.uk/product-reviews/0334043654/ref=cm_cr_pr_fltrmsg?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=0), visited 09/03/11.

expressions of church”, he thinks “this book will be known as ‘the book you throw across the room in irritation’ ”.⁵⁷

In recent times the Church of England has made some major missio-ecclesiological changes, which have heightened conflict and impaired relations. These include for example, the ordination of women to the priesthood (1992),⁵⁸ the homosexual debate,⁵⁹ and the proposed ordination of women to the bishopric.⁶⁰ MSC is on the wave of all these changes and part of the emotionally charged debates that surround them. In a positive light, Avis believes that conflict is a normal state of affairs for the Christian Church to be seething with argument, controversy and conflict.⁶¹ Conflict has been with the Church from the beginning and has continued throughout the Church’s history. Conflict shapes and reveals a healthy state of affairs and a sign of authenticity more than “the deadly hush of enforced unanimity that we find in some other churches”.⁶² Such an optimistic view of conflict is true when it goes through a healthy cycle resulting in resolution. Conversely, one possible result of a conflict that has tainted the Church history is schism. Schism, however positively one spins the argument, is an affront to the command of Christ for the Church to be one as Christ and the Father are one (John 17.21-22). Such is the heightened climate of the Church of England where conflict, conversion and schism are close at hand.⁶³ MSC’s missio-ecclesiological changes are seen by some as a continuation of the revisionist agenda.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ For an overview of historical development of women in ordained ministry see “Women Bishops”, The Church of England, (<http://www.churchofengland.org/our-views/women-bishops.aspx>), visited 09/03/11.

⁵⁹ For example, the Episcopal Church’s General Convention consent of the non-celibate priest Gene Robinson to the New Hampshire bishopric in 2003 sparked and highlighted the conflicts between traditionalists and revisionist in the Anglican Communion. Anglican Primates from around the whole met at Lambeth Palace and made the following statement (16/10/03): “We must make clear that recent actions in New Westminster and in the Episcopal Church (USA) do not express the mind of our Communion as a whole, and these decisions jeopardise our sacramental fellowship with each other...This will tear the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level, and may lead to further division on this and further issues...”, (<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/windsor2004/downloads/windsor2004d.pdf>), visited 09/03/11.

⁶⁰ In 2000 the General Synod requested a thorough theological study on the question of women in the episcopate. For an overview of developments see “Women Bishops”, The Church of England, (<http://www.churchofengland.org/our-views/women-bishops.aspx>), visited 09/03/11.

⁶¹ Avis, *Identity of Anglicanism*, 153-154. Unfortunately, if conflict is not managed properly it can disintegrate into neurotic and pathological behaviour.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ For example, the “Ordinariate” decreed by Pope Benedictus XVI on 4th November 2009, known fully as: Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus*: Providing for personal ordinariates for Anglicans entering into full communion with the Catholic Church”, allows for Anglican congregations to come in full communion with the Holy See (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apc_20091104_anglicanorum-coetibus_en.html), visited 10/03/11.

How is MSC changing Church of England missio-ecclesiology in the light of classical Anglicanism?

3.1 Methodology of MSC

As Rowan Williams has observed, British theologians are not always good at considering the theological implications of the methodological starting point.⁶⁴ Often, he suggests, they are “inclined to begin haphazardly and let the methodology look after itself”.⁶⁵ To allow methodology to look after itself suggests a certain naiveté that method is value free. We might presuppose that there is world *out there* which is phenomenology observable. This is a world which we can objectively assess through experimental analysis by which we can collate a bank of empirical data/facts. The modern scientific hypothesis of facts as objectively true and values as matters of opinion has been called into question in the postmodern paradigm. Enlightened rationalism and its adherence to objectivism “has totally falsified our conception of truth”, argues Michael Polanyi.⁶⁶ There are no raw facts, but only value laden and interpreted facts; there is no neutral methodology, but only value laden and interpreted methodology. The critical realist would argue that there is reality is somewhere in between these two extremes. The world is out there is, in part, understood accurately (primary qualities) and well as interpreted through personal perceptual illusions (secondary qualities). Part of the task of a theologian is to be able to detect the underlining voice embedded in methodological approaches and question hermeneutical inclinations.

With these preliminary thoughts in mind, we can ask, what is the underlining voice and presupposition in MSC’s methodology? As we have already stated, MSC was written as a response to social changes in society. From the outset we can see that MSC exemplifies a context driven methodology. This illustrates (predetermines?) MSC’s theological rationale as laid out in chapter five, “a theology for a missionary church”.⁶⁷ Although MSC is quick to point out it wants to balance a double listening between the inherited tradition and context, its methodological framework would seem to differ. To begin with this is indicated by the

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⁶⁴ Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology*, xii.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Michael Polanyi cited by Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 359.

⁶⁷ MSC in keeping with recent trends has dropped the use of capital letters for the first word in its chapter headings and cover title.

point out it wants to balance a *double listening*⁶⁸ between the inherited tradition and context, its methodological framework would seem to differ. To begin with, this is indicated by the division and chronology of chapters. A “theology for a missionary church” (chapter five is *preceded* by the following chapters: “changing contexts”; “the story since Breaking New Ground”; “what is church planting and why does it matter?”; and “fresh expressions of church”. With reliance upon extensive sociological data, MSC begins with the contemporary context. This illustrates the weight placed upon context as the pretext for shaping missio-ecclesiology. By Chapter six, “some methodologies for a missionary church”, MSC’s method is more explicit. The desired missio-ecclesiological process is to listen to the mission context *first* before “discerning how the inherited Christian tradition works within it”.⁶⁹ Furthermore, “Mission precedes the shape of the church that will be the result, when the seeds of the gospel roots in the mission culture”.⁷⁰ MSC presupposes context as *a priori* in the listening process and builds a methodological construct of contextually shaped theology.

3.2 Sociological analysis

To analyse the context, MSC draws heavily upon sociological data. After a brief introduction, chapter one starts with “social trends in the last 30 years”.⁷¹ Based upon this research, MSC draws out various characteristics of the cultural, social and spiritual environment “in which the Church of England ministers in the new millennium”.⁷² These include a post-Christendom, fragmented society, based upon networks, and driven by consumerism. By investigating these trends, MSC hopes the Church of England will be open to “the possible shape, or shapes, of church to which God is calling us”.⁷³ MSC uses additional sociological data in Chapter 3, to help in this missio-ecclesiological process of shaping the Church.⁷⁴ By Chapter Six, MSC overtly gives sociology the prominent role: “*Sociology shows us that, when two cultures are together in a social context, a healthy heterogeneous mixture does not*

⁶⁸ Ibid., 93 and 104-108. After John Stott who popularised this term and concept in the book “The Contemporary Christian: An urgent plea for double listening” (1992), 24-29.

⁶⁹ MSC, 105

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 1. The sociological data is based upon the 2003 National Statistics Online, *Social Trends* (www.statistics.gov.uk).

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 36-41. For example, the research of Philip Richter and Leslie Francis “Gone but not forgotten”, and UK Christian Handbook, “Religious Trends”, No.2, 2000/2001.

result – one tends to dominate the other”.⁷⁵ Underlining this statement is the “Homogeneous Unit Principle” as popularised by Donald McGavran in his 1955 book “Bridges of God”.⁷⁶ Although MSC acknowledges that this work is contentious, it continues to use it as a basis for planting new churches.⁷⁷ Sociological findings, once again, undergird the MSC missio-ecclesiology.

MSC uses sociological research as if it is a phenomenological given. There is an almost unquestioning acceptance that this body of knowledge is objectively true. It is by applying this information (facts?) that MSC’s missio-ecclesiology is interpreted and formed. As a cautionary note it is worth considering the following when using sociological research: First, it is important to be aware of and question the values inherent in the method. Second, we need to critically evaluate the findings. Third, we must be careful not to draw too hasty conclusions and base theories from research alone.

As John Williams points out, “Churches have a tendency to adopt a one-sided ‘take’ on a particular sociological analysis that suits them, while ignoring the critiques of that analysis”.⁷⁸ To base our missio-ecclesiology upon sociological research is a tenuous business. If the research is found wanting, our whole theological *raison d’être* comes tumbling down. History has shown us that it is too easy to incorrectly “interpret the signs of the times” (Mat. 16.3). If we take the secularisation thesis of the 1960’s as an example, we can see the risks of placing too much emphasis upon sociology. Many secularists interpreted the political events of the day as God acting in history, for example the development of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.⁷⁹ The World Council of Churches (WCC) at the third General Assembly in Uppsala (1968) boldly asserted that the “world provides the agenda for the church”.⁸⁰ As churches were embracing the secularist theory and readjusting missio-ecclesiological perspectives and practice,⁸¹ sociologists were beginning to question

⁷⁵ Ibid., 109. Italics mine.

⁷⁶ Cited by MSC, 108.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 109. Most controversially it can be used to justify segregation, for example, Apartheid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 429.

⁸⁰ Cited by Bosch, Ibid., 326.

⁸¹ This *secular-dialogic* approach reinvigorated and secularized the Social Gospel. See for example, Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (1965). J. Hoekendijk saw Christianity as a “secular movement” and not “some sort of religion”. Cited by Bosch, Ibid., 326.

the validity of secularisation.⁸² With the gift of hindsight, we can see how the signs of the times were misunderstood. As Bosch points out, “Compassion and commitment, apparently, are no guarantee that one will not produce bad sociology, practice poor politics, and debatable historical analysis”.⁸³ In the words of Stephen Knapp, Christians are prone to sacralise “the sociological forces of history that are dominant at any particular time, regarding them as inexorable works of providence and even of redemption”.⁸⁴ This is a sobering thought and makes us question whether MSC has too easily capitulated to shaping a missio-ecclesiology according to sociological research. More decisively, is this a *coup d’état* of sociology replacing theology as the guiding light of missio-ecclesiology? As Davison and Milbank insightfully remark, “social sciences make good servants but bad masters”.⁸⁵ In time to come will MSC be judged as misinterpreting the signs of the times?

The Church of England has a long tradition of valuing the insights of research and intellectual inquiry. Rational thinking is part of the identity of the Church of England that seeks to balance Scripture and tradition with reason in dynamic conversation. The Church of England is receptive to new insights from secular disciplines. The “Lux Mundi” series edited by Charles Gore at the end of the 19th Century is illustrative of a Church which wants to engage with intellectual and moral problems.⁸⁶ However, it is characteristic of the Church of England not embrace these insights immediately. The classical liberal spirit of the Church of England is to take seriously the intellectual climate, to listen attentively and engage in healthy debate and apologetic. Time is allowed to critically assess and weight this knowledge before it is either applied or resisted.⁸⁷ As the self-professed conservative liberal John Habgood says,

Serious Liberalism does not start reconstructing its theology at the first hint of secular change...but needs to take seriously the questions posed by fundamental sea-changes, and be ready to live with loose ends, partial insight, and a measure of agnosticism, without losing its grip on the essential of faith.⁸⁸

⁸² John Williams, *Shapes of Church*, 112. For example, in the 1980’s Peter Berger admitted that his original secularist analysis had been incorrect and that the popularity of religion had increased in many parts of the world.

⁸³ After Max Stackhouse, *Ibid.*, 429.

⁸⁴ Cited by Bosch, *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Davison and Milbank, *For the Parish*, 229.

⁸⁶ Michael Ramsey, *The Anglican Spirit* (New York, Church Publishing Incorporated, 2004), 69.

⁸⁷ Paul Avis, *The Anglican Understanding of the Church* (SPCK, London, 2002), 41.

⁸⁸ John Habgood cited by Alister McGrath, *The Renewal of Anglicanism* (London, SPCK, 1994), 124.

Has MSC created its theology at the first hint of secular change as exonerated by its unquestioning reliance upon sociological research? Has the Church of England been too quick to reconstruct its theology and reshape its missio-ecclesiological character? Is the swiftness of change borne out of a *kairos* moment, or out of anxiety in the face of falling attendance figures? Perhaps in reality it is a mix of both. The decline in Church going has to be faced honestly and MSC is taking this seriously. There can be no head in the sand mentality and a hankering back to some idealised Christian era. But equally reconstructing a theology at the first hint of change to make the faith relevant, in the end can make the faith irrelevant. A Church that is married to the present context can quickly become a widow in the next.⁸⁹

In the spirit of classical Anglicanism, perhaps more time could be given to critically assess and weight sociological findings before making missio-ecclesiological changes. Caution needs to be applied before allowing sociology too high a position, as convictions shaped by the sociological enterprise can unknowingly mask and modify the marks of true faith. To begin to unpack some of these ideas, we will now consider the complex issue of MSC's contextual theology.

3.3 Contextual theology

The origin of the concept contextualisation is associated with the Theological Education Fund's report "Ministry and Context" (1972).⁹⁰ This report broadened the idea of indigenisation to include the process of secularity, technology, and the struggle for human justice.⁹¹ Its sister term is *inculturation*, which developed from the Roman Catholic tradition in the 1960-1970's. Although inculturation places more emphasis upon the sacramentality of the whole of life than contextualisation, generally speaking these terms are interchangeable.⁹² MSC follows this train of thought and uses both terms, for example, in its heading, "Christ and culture – inculturation / contextualisation".⁹³

⁸⁹ After Dean Inge in Arthur Middleton, *Restoring the Anglican Mind* (Gateshead, Athenaeum Press Ltd., 2008), 28.

⁹⁰ Risto, A. Ahonen, *Mission in the New Millennium: Theological Grounds for World Mission* (Helsinki, Hakapaino, 2009), 162.

⁹¹ In the modern era, "indigenisation" was the preferred Protestant term of the Roman Catholic term "accommodation/adaptation". This described the process of how faith was adjusted to a new culture. Through Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson's: "Three selves Program: self-support, self-government, and self-propagation" indigenisation was extended to encourage independence from foreign assistance.

⁹² Roman Catholics still tend to use the term inculturation and Protestants contextualisation.

⁹³ MSC, 90.

In Stephen Bevans' book, "Models of Contextual Theology" he boldly asserts that "there is no such thing as 'theology'; there is only contextual theology".⁹⁴ Bevans makes a contrast between classical and contextual theology. The classical approach is based upon Scripture and tradition, whereas contextual theology introduces a third *locus theologicus* "present human experience".⁹⁵ In a similar fashion, contextualisation is described by MSC as being a three-way conversation between the historic gospel, the Church and the given culture.⁹⁶ Bevans pushes the point further, "When we say that there are three sources for theology, we are not just adding context as a third element; *we are changing the whole equation*".⁹⁷

MSC recognises that contextual theology has had little impact upon the Church of England.⁹⁸ In an effort to rectify this MSC wants to place context as a valid conversational partner: "Any theology concerning the nature and shape of the Church in a new missionary context must address the appropriate place of culture in shaping the Church."⁹⁹ MSC stresses that the missionary context is no longer just overseas, but also in mainland Britain. The dismantling of Christendom and the rapid changing society means Britain "is becoming a new missionary context".¹⁰⁰ Reviewing the missionary task of the Church of England, MSC categorises the English society as: Non-churched, closed de-churched, open-dechurched, and regular and fringe Church attenders.¹⁰¹

John Hull argues that, even though MSC acknowledges England as post-Christendom society it continues to theologise with "a church centred view of social change".¹⁰² Also the multi-religious context of England is quietly downplayed, reflecting MSC's indifference to the positive aspects of plurality and a failure to acknowledge diversity.¹⁰³ Furthermore, he continues, this is a Christendom imperialism resurfacing "which acknowledges no diversity, tolerates no rivals and is bent upon world domination".¹⁰⁴ Although it is important to

⁹⁴ Bevans, *Contextual Theology*, 3.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5. Italics Bevans.

⁹⁸ MSC, 90

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* See MSC reflections on Christendom in the section on "Post-Christendom", *Ibid.*, 11-12.

¹⁰¹ Based upon the research of Philip Richter and Leslie Francis. *Ibid.*, 36-40.

¹⁰² John M. Hull, *Mission-shaped Church: A Theological Response* (London, SCM Press, 2006), 19.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 7.

recognise the positive aspects of plurality and other religions, one is still left wondering what Hull really means by mission. It would appear that any exclusive claims of the Gospel must be morphed into a relativised Gospel – a social Gospel divorced from the evangelism. Given Hull’s criticism, MSC still operates within a contextual framework, even if this is selective. To explore this further, and in an effort to unpack MSC’s contextual theology, we will now turn to one of the major contributors in this debate, the Liberation Movement as birthed in Latin America (1960’s).¹⁰⁵

3.4 Liberation Theology

In an effort to distance themselves from western theological methods, the Liberationists sought to contextualise their theology through indigenous resources. By focusing upon the native soil, they wanted to birth a theology that could speak directly to the Latin American condition. Unlike the West, which was dealing with such issues as secularisation and privatisation, Latin America had different issues to confront, for example dependency and exploitation. A theology of liberation was preferred over development.¹⁰⁶ To help achieve this, the Liberationist developed a methodology that interpreted faith through the contemporary context. Following in the footsteps of Karl Marx, the means to attain a true picture of the context was thorough social analysis. The Bible was then read through the lens of the context, in the hope of finding personal and social answers. In the words of Gustavo Gutierrez, “Theology follows; it is the second stage... Theology as a critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the Word”.¹⁰⁷ This *a priori* praxis model placed the world as experienced by the ordinary people as the point of departure for doing theology. This “ecclesiology”¹⁰⁸ began where the people were and called them to action. It was a missio-ecclesiology from the *bottom up* with the goal of overthrowing oppressive structures.¹⁰⁹ Liberation Theology has essentially transformed the traditional *faith seeking understanding (ortho-doxy)* into *faith seeking intelligent action (ortho-praxis)*:¹¹⁰

We reject as irrelevant an academic type of theology that is divorced from action. We are prepared for a radical break in

¹⁰⁵ MSC refers specifically to Liberation Theology in “Base Ecclesial Communities (BECs)”, 47-49.

¹⁰⁶ James C. Livingston & Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (eds.), *Modern Christian Thought: The Twentieth Century* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2006), 289.

¹⁰⁷ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, First Edition 1973), 11 and 13.

¹⁰⁸ Ahonen, *Mission*, 166.

¹⁰⁹ Liberation Theology has spawned the development of different liberation theologies notably Black Theology and Feminist Theology.

¹¹⁰ Bevans, *Contextual Theology*, 73.

epistemology which makes commitment the first act of theology and engages in a critical reflection on praxis...¹¹¹

Unlike Liberation Theology, MSC is not overtly focus upon the liberation of the poor and oppressed.¹¹² It does mention the Base Ecclesial Communities (BECs) as examples of fresh expressions which are committed to “radical justice and the priority of the local” through the “real empowering of people, truly collaborative ministry, practical reflective theological method and the use of story”.¹¹³ MSC concedes that the Church of England has failed to “express church within the urban poor”¹¹⁴ and that it is difficult to find Anglican BECs examples.¹¹⁵ According to Hull, MSC has not gone far enough in the liberation prophetic tradition.¹¹⁶ Even when MSC does mention BECs, it is unclear whether the “nervous central reactions”¹¹⁷ these have created in the Church are justified or not.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, MSC is in grave error by promoting a separatist missio-ecclesiological polity of homogeneous poor communities.¹¹⁹ This complacency and insensitivity is truly incredible, he continues, where “the poor are empowered not by having their own poor churches but by escaping from poverty”.¹²⁰ Again, Hull’s view needs tempering. Surely the Gospel itself can lift up and empower lives even amidst social poverty? As evidenced by BECs and neo-Pentecostalism in South America, for example, the Gospel brings forgiveness and reconciliation, and has the potential to transform individuals and communities into new moral and social agents.

Even with MSC lack of focus upon the poor and marginalised, MSC still continues employ a Liberationist methodology. As we have discussed earlier, MSC does start with sociological analysis from which it theologises. MSC also challenges the hierarchical top down approach of the Church of England and pursues a more radical *priesthood of all believers’* theology that listens more attentively to voices and needs of the ordinary people: “This report affirms the importance of a culturally appropriate Anglicanism emerging ‘from below’ ”.¹²¹ The

¹¹¹ Group of Third World theologians at Dar Salaam, Tanzania (1976), as cited by Bevens, *Ibid.*

¹¹² Some references for the liberation of the poor and oppressed can be found on pages MSC, 89 and 94.

¹¹³ MSC, 48.

¹¹⁴ MSC, 109. MSC also acknowledges that the training of ministers in the Church of England “demands a enculturation into middle class values, which is either alien to, or serves to alienate leaders of UPA society” (UPA – Urban Priority Area), MSC 49.

¹¹⁵ MSC, 48.

¹¹⁶ Hull develops this theme in his article ‘Mission-shaped and kingdom focused?’ in Croft, *Mission-shaped Questions*, 114-132.

¹¹⁷ MSC, 48.

¹¹⁸ Hull, *theological Response*, 32.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Hull, *theological Response*, 33.

¹²¹ MSC, 117.

traditional leadership model of clergy having a dominant role is flattened out. Pre-empting MSC, Robert Warren arguing against the inherited Church, states how this traditional structure enforces a provider/client relationship in the congregation and “reinforces passive attitudes to faith and discipleship.”¹²² What is needed, he continues, “is a more enabling, empowering and collaborative style of leadership if the church is to connect with the ordinary people today”.¹²³ MSC says very little about the theology or role of ordained ministry (for example, Church of England theologies about tradition, Apostolic Succession, the Historic Episcopate, or sacramental ministry, etc), preferring the more inclusive term “leadership”.¹²⁴ When the word ordained is used, MSC often employs the term leader alongside “ordained leader”¹²⁵ with a focus is upon professional training. For example, the identification and training of young leaders,¹²⁶ identifying pioneer leaders in the vocational process,¹²⁷ on-the-job training of local leaders,¹²⁸ and training leaders in cross-cultural evangelism, church planting and Fresh Expressions of Church.¹²⁹ The episcopate ministry is also seen in professional terms, for example, bishop as leader in mission,¹³⁰ and broker, authoriser and licensor of new initiatives.¹³¹ MSC leadership emphasis is in keeping with the trends in the market place. In discussing the evolution of leadership theory, David Seters and Richard Field observe that future leadership theory was advanced when the focus changed from top-down process to a much more bottom-up one.¹³² Sounding remarkably like the character description of Fresh Expression pioneer, David Seter and Richard Field predict that the future leader will be visionary, willing to take risks, highly adaptable to change, delegate authority, place emphasis on innovation, exemplify values, goals, and culture of the organisation, empower others, and have a collective view of leadership.¹³³ All of these insights are important for the training of leaders for the 21st Century, but it needs the balancing of a developed sacramental theology of ordained ministry.

¹²² Robert Warren, *Being human, Being Church* (London, Marshall Pickering, 1995), 32-33.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹²⁴ For example, MSC, vii; 22; 24; 29; 31; 43; 49; etc.

¹²⁵ MSC, 23; 57; 127; 128.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 135-136.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 135-136; 138; 145.

¹³² David A. Van Seter and Richard H.G. Field, ‘The Evolution of Leadership Theory’ in *Journal of Organizational Change Management* (Vol.3, 1990), 39.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 40.

To reiterate the shift from top down to bottom up missio-ecclesiology, MSC regards Fresh Expressions of churches as the shining lights for the new Church of England. Chapter four of MSC is dedicated to this ends, and narrates the experiences of some mission initiatives. These Fresh Expressions are highlighted as exemplars of *faith seeking intelligent action*: “Insight from these fresh expressions may help existing congregations to re-orientate themselves to the mission call of God”.¹³⁴ Moreover, in what George Lings and Bob Hopkins call “one of the most potent throw-away lines in MSC”,¹³⁵

Fresh expressions of church are not only legitimate expressions of church, but they may be more legitimate because they attend more closely to the mission task, and they are more deeply engaged in the local context, and follow more attentively the pattern of incarnation.¹³⁶

In a short space of time, these Fresh Expressions have moved from being an ostracised group on the edge of Church life, to being legitimate with the “Breaking New Ground” report (1994), to finally gaining the centre ground of Church of England missio-ecclesiology. “So the stranger”, continue Lings and Hopkins, “dares to invite the rest of the Church to reconsider how it has been shaped and challenges whether those expressions are any longer adequate”.¹³⁷

Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder in their comprehensive work on mission, “Constants in Context: A theology for Mission for Today”, believe that whereas the orthodox/conservative was dominant position in the past with liberal position as its main rival, it is the radical/liberation position that is now emerging as a “more adequate understanding of Christianity for many”.¹³⁸ Is Bevans and Schroeder’s a good picture of what is happening in the Church of England? Is MSC promoting the new radical/liberation position? Is the traditional synergy of Church of England missio-ecclesiologies of Anglo-Catholic, Liberal,

¹³⁴ MSC, 44.

¹³⁵ George Lings and Bob Hopkins, *Encounters on the Edge: Mission-shaped Church: The Inside and Outside View* (Sheffield, The Sheffield Centre, 2004), 10.

¹³⁶ MSC, 23.

¹³⁷ Lings and Hopkins, *Encounters*, 10.

¹³⁸ Stephen, B. Bevans & Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (New York, Orbis Books, 2004). Based upon the work of Justo L. González and Dorothee Sölle, the authors argue that there are six constants of mission that all three types have in common: Christology, Ecclesiology, Eschatology, Salvation, Anthropology, and Culture.

Evangelical and Charismatic all being transformed by an emerging radical/liberation missio-ecclesiology which is more in tune with the cultural changes of the 21st Century?¹³⁹

3.5 Present Experience

The experience *from the ground* has found its home as an all pervasive source in the shaping Church of England missio-ecclesiology. The radical break in epistemology is complete – *orthopraxis* is now the first committed act of theology. Not that MSC is unique in this, in many ways MSC is an endorsement of the renewed interest in practical theology.¹⁴⁰ During the 1970's there was the rapid introduction of pastoral theology and pastoral training courses in theological colleges, most notably in Church of England ministerial training colleges.¹⁴¹ The "Pastoral Cycle", rooted in Marxist consciousness-building and based upon Liberation Theology methodology, is now the almost unquestioned technique used in ministerial training. Reinforcing the epistemological break, the Pastoral Cycle starts with *experience* before moving on to exploration, reflection, and action.¹⁴² Under the heading "Base Ecclesial Communities" MSC makes reference to the Pastoral Cycle as the formula for "small Christian communities (SCC)" or "New Way of Being Church".¹⁴³ Citing Peter Price, MSC endorses the use of the Pastoral Cycle as a way to empower people for collaborative ministry.¹⁴⁴

MSC's Pastoral Cycle method touches upon the wider debate in missio-ecclesiological circles concerning the role of experience in theology. The key question being, is experience a valid source in theological reflection? As MSC has received the *top down* blessing of its *bottom up* theology, the question of experience has become a more pressing and central issue in the Church of England. By endorsing MSC as a strategy for shaping a new Church of England, experience as source is continues to change the classical Anglican method. Due to the

¹³⁹ These ecclesiologies of course are a lot more nuanced than this list gives credit. The Charismatic movement has crossed all ecclesiological boundaries. Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals can be conservative or more liberal in their persuasion. Changes in society and revisions in the Church of England polity have led to various alliances and pressure groups, for example, "Forward in Faith" (mainly traditional Anglo-Catholic and some conservative Evangelicals) <http://www.forwardinfaith.com>; "Fulcrum: renewing the evangelical centre" (open evangelical) <http://www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk>; "Reform" (conservative Evangelical) <http://reform.org.uk/>; "New Wine" (Evangelical Charismatic) <http://www.new-wine.org/>; "Thinking Anglicans" (liberal) <http://www.thinkinganglicans.org.uk/>; and "Sea of Change" (radical liberal and post-denominational) <http://www.sofn.org.uk/index.html>. Sites visited 24/03/11.

¹⁴⁰ Paul Ballard and John Pritchard believe the growth of Practical Theology has arisen from fundamental changes in Church and society such as pluralism, growth of social sciences and contextualisation of theology. See Paul Ballard & John Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action: Christian Thinking in the Service of Church and Society* (London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2006), Chapter one, 1-7.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ MSC, 48.

¹⁴⁴ Peter Price adds celebration to the four stages of the Pastoral Cycle. *Ibid.*

gravity of these missio-ecclesiology ramifications, it is worth exploring this issue in more detail.

The post-liberal theologian George Lindbeck refers to experience theologies as “Experiential-expressive” which perceive truth as a function of symbolic efficacy, whereby doctrine is interpreted “as noninformative and nondiscursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes, or existential orientations”.¹⁴⁵ Experiential-expressive theologies are rooted in Kant’s *turn to the subject*, which demolished the epistemological and metaphysical cognitive-propositional mindset. This prompted a reaction, starting with Schleiermacher, towards romantic, idealistic and phenomenological-existential streams of thought which “have dominated the humanistic side of Western culture ever since”.¹⁴⁶ Following the course of de-objectification, faith is deconstructed to a core “feeling of absolute dependence”.¹⁴⁷ The *person as subject* is placed above or before the communal, which can encourage individualism and protest against external authorities.

One might argue, what does it matter if MSC has included experience in the Anglican synthesis? Surely experience is an essential part of the Christian life? Admittedly the Church of England can come across as rather academic and remote from ordinary life. As Alister McGrath rather colourfully describes in his first encounter with Anglicanism, “Somehow, Anglicanism seemed to be – well, terribly *dull*... there was no engagement with the human imagination, emotions, or feelings”.¹⁴⁸ MSC clearly is trying to readdress this balance through its contextual programme of imaginative Fresh Expressions. MSC is also encouraging the interpersonal and emotive aspects of faith and allowing creativity more room to be explored in the forum of Church life.¹⁴⁹ These are welcome signs of a Church tasking seriously the whole of life. It must be remembered, however, that the Church of England has never denied the importance of experience. For instance, Evangelicals with their stress on conversion as an emotional experience, and Pentecostal and Charismatic

¹⁴⁵ George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 33; 2.

¹⁴⁶ Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 7.

¹⁴⁷ Schleiermacher cited by Lindbeck, *ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ McGrath, *Renewal of Anglicanism*, 79. Italics McGrath’s.

¹⁴⁹ See for example MSC’s “five values for a missionary church”, 81-82.

spiritualities with their stress on the gifts of the Spirit, have all found their home within the Anglican fold.

The classical Anglican approach is to validate experience as a necessary aspect of faith. Following the insights of Saint Augustine, Martin Luther, and C.S. Lewis, we can see how the existential aspect of life informs a desire for God. In Saint Augustine's "Confessions" we are taken on a journey from angst to faith. The theme of which can be summed up by Augustine's often quoted axiom: "You made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you".¹⁵⁰ Luther's "Theology of the Cross" underscored the desolate cry of the soul captured by sin and in need of release: "Living, rather dying and being damned make a theologian, not understanding, reading, or speculating".¹⁵¹ Lewis continuing this theme calls this inner yearning by the German word *Sehnsucht*, translating it as joy. In his book "Surprised by Joy", Lewis describes this joy as an "unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction".¹⁵²

By validating experience does not mean it has to be an authoritative source for theologising.¹⁵³ This view is in keeping with the classical Church of England position, where the triad source-synthesis provides a hermeneutical framework by which experience is addressed, interpreted and transformed.¹⁵⁴ "Experience may indeed seek expression", argues McGrath, "but it also demands criterion by which it may be judged".¹⁵⁵ In other words, experience ought to come under the authority of Scripture, tradition and reason. This theological method provides a necessary corrective to the transitory and flawed nature of experience. It can also make sense of experience in a positive manner as Augustine's Confessions bear witness.¹⁵⁶ As McGrath explains, "Christian theology provides a framework within the ambiguities of experience may be interpreted... it is like a net we cast over experience, in order to capture its meaning".¹⁵⁷ Has the MSC *fishing* net of mission been cast so far that it has forgotten the *safety* net of the three source-synthesis? For this net to be

¹⁵⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, (Penguin Books, London, 1961), 21,

¹⁵¹ Cited by McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 1990), 152.

¹⁵² Cited by McGrath, *The Renewal of Anglicanism*, 90

¹⁵³ Luther gives an excellent example of the inadequacy of using experience as a source in his "Theology of the Cross". The Good Friday experience of the disciples was that God as absent, but in reality, which only made sense by Easter Sunday, God was most truly present. Theology reinterprets and corrects experience.

¹⁵⁴ McGrath, *The Renewal of Anglicanism*, 86.

¹⁵⁵ McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundation of Doctrinal Criticism* (Cambridge, Regent College Bookstore, 1997), 24.

¹⁵⁶ Augustine throughout his confession makes sense of his experience through theology.

¹⁵⁷ McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 193.

most effective it needs the strength and quality of a safety net cast in mission. This net is both *church-shaped* with inherited tradition and sound theology, and *mission-shaped* with a pioneering spirit and evangelistic outlook.

The classical Anglican self definition of the “three stranded cord” (Ecc. 4.12) has traditionally been the “material ingredients of the Anglican synthesis”.¹⁵⁸ In “The Study of Anglicanism” edited by Stephen Sykes, John Booty and Jonathan Knight, Scripture, tradition and reason are listed as both sources for Anglican authority and the Anglican theological method.¹⁵⁹ Avis regards this synthesis as the threefold appeal to Anglican ecclesiology.¹⁶⁰ The *Anglican way* reads Scripture, inhabits Tradition, and uses Reason in interactive hermeneutical dialogue. Or to put it another way, the Church (Tradition) recognises and interprets Scripture and evaluates reason, Scripture oversees the Church and frames and informs reason, and reason interprets and evaluates Scripture and the Church.¹⁶¹ The classic Anglican conviction is that the truth of God “is not to be found in an exclusive focus on any of these aspects but in a disciplined dialogue between them – with a carefully managed primacy given to Scripture – leading to a state of dynamic balance”.¹⁶² This methodology was systematically developed by the Anglican divine, Richard Hooker (1554-1600), who is attributed as the founder of the Anglican method¹⁶³ and the architect of Anglican ecclesiology.¹⁶⁴ He weaved his “Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity” by the threading of the three strands into the *via media* cord of checks and balances, in the hope of avoiding extremes and advancing a tempered acumen.¹⁶⁵ Unlike this classic Anglican position, where experience was inferred within, and interpreted through the three classic sources, by sanctioning MSC The Church of England has, knowingly or unknowingly, integrated experience within the classical Anglican equation. Some MSC proponents are explicitly giving experience an equal footing in the Anglican triad: “The distinctive Anglican Ministry as ‘Scripture, Reason, Tradition’ ”, writes Mobsby, is “expanded to include ‘experience’ ”.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁸ Avis, *Identity of Anglicanism*, 24.

¹⁵⁹ Stephen Sykes, John Booty and Jonathan Knight (eds.), *The Study of Anglicanism* (London, SPCK, 2004), v.

¹⁶⁰ Avis, *Anglican Understanding* (SPCK, London, 2000), 33.

¹⁶¹ Alan Barlett, *A Passionate Balance: The Anglican Tradition* (London, Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 2007), 47.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁶⁴ Avis, *Anglican Understanding* (SPCK, London, 2000), 31.

¹⁶⁵ Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (<http://www.archive.org/details/oflawsfeclesia00hook>), visited 05/03/11. See for example, 1.xiv.2, p.216 on Scripture and Reason; Preface, iv.1, p.107 on Tradition and Scripture.

¹⁶⁶ Ian J. Mobsby, *Emerging and Fresh Expressions of Church: How are they Authentically Church and Anglican* (London, Moot Company Publishing, 2007), 76.

We are left with a tantalising issue of whether experience should be accepted as a source to the classic Church of England *loci theologici*? Is there is no longer classical Anglican theology, but only *contextualised-experienced* Anglican theology? Is MSC, in fact, the pivotal point in reshaping Church of England missio-ecclesiology according to the *experiential-expressive*? Are Fresh Expressions the embodiment of this new Anglican synthesis? Has the unifying classical synthesis of the traditional mixed economy of the Church of England been so contextualised that it has fragmented into two mixed *economies*, where one economy is protesting in favour of the triad *loci theologici* and the other the quadrilateral *loci theologici*? Of course the situation is more complex than this, as the mixed economy of the Church of England reveals.¹⁶⁷

3.6 Mixed economy of mixed *economies*?

Amidst all the enthusiasm, creativity, and entrepreneurial mission initiatives of Fresh Expressions it is easy to overlook that a radical epistemological break has occurred in Church of England missio-ecclesiology. The Review Group commissioned by the Archbishop's Council at the 2004 Synod proposed a revision of the Pastoral Measure that would be speedy and flexible, while ensuring good order and accountability.¹⁶⁸ Rowan Williams challenged Synod to agree to a "principled and careful loosening of structures".¹⁶⁹ This new way of thinking has redirected the theological and pastoral life of the Church of England. Structural and canonical changes have taken place to sanctify and enact MSC revisionist theology.¹⁷⁰ For example, through "Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure" (2007) provisions have been made to allow network churches to cross parish boundaries and work collaboratively with different parishes or ecumenical partners.¹⁷¹ Network churches are now assigned episcopal oversight through the Bishop's Mission Order.¹⁷² Measures have also

¹⁶⁷ Rowan Williams first used this term at General Synod, 14th July 2003: "At present, we stand at a watershed in the life of the Church of England – not primarily because of the controversies that have been racking us (much as they matter, much as they hurt) but because we have to ask whether we are capable of moving towards a more 'mixed economy' - recognising church where it appears and having the willingness and the skill to work with it. Mission, it's been said, is finding out what God is doing and joining in. And at present there is actually an extraordinary amount going on in terms of the creation of new styles of church life. We can call it church planting, 'new ways of being church' or various other things..." (<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2195>), (visited 04/03/11).

¹⁶⁸ Toyne, *A Measure for Measure*, ix.

¹⁶⁹ Rowan Williams cited by Croft, *Mission-shaped Questions*, 6.

¹⁷⁰ For a development of measures, see Croft, 'Fresh expressions in a mixed economy Church: a perspective, in Croft, *Mission-shaped Questions*, 6-8.

¹⁷¹ The House of Bishops, *Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007* (<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/55196/bmocop.doc>), visited 25/03/11.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

been implemented for “Ordained Pioneer Ministry” (House of Bishops 2006) and “Lay Pioneer Ministry” (House of Bishops 2007).¹⁷³ These initiatives are created and revised ministerial training across the whole of Church of England.¹⁷⁴

Even though MSC is swift to state that the “parochial system remains as essential and central part of the national Church’s strategy to deliver incarnational mission”,¹⁷⁵ a fundamental missio-ecclesiological change had occurred. The loosening of structures has meant the old parochial system has lost its unique place from which the faith is proclaimed “afresh for every generation”.¹⁷⁶ The parochial system is no longer *the* central system, but *a* partner alongside Fresh Expressions networks.

In his review of MSC Avis believes that, out of all the issues the report raises, they all come down to the one essential question, “How will the much vaunted ‘mixed economy’ remain a single economy?”¹⁷⁷ In the light of all the reforms that have taken place since Avis’s review, his question is still relevant. The Church of England continues to wrestle with two ways of being Church. One economy falls under the traditional geographical pattern of parish, deanery, diocese, and the other economy launches out as Fresh Expressions into the non-geographical, networked space. These two economies run side by side “to suit differing local needs and news ways of being Church”.¹⁷⁸ This is not the first time the Church has had two mixed economies. Celtic and Roman Christianity were two ways suited differing local needs and ways of being Church. Celtic Christianity was centred upon the monastery and encouraged free-spirited, missionary activity, as typified by Saint Patrick, Saint Columba, and Saint Cuthbert, etc.¹⁷⁹ Roman Christianity was centred upon the Greco-Roman empirical system of *polis* and favoured law, structure and administration. The Roman way eventually became the inherited norm for Church (in) of England, with its strong institutional emphasis, episcopal hierarchy and geographical boundaries.¹⁸⁰ From this history we can see clear parallels between Fresh Expressions (Celtic) and the inherited Church (Rome). As Warren

¹⁷³ Croft, *Mission-shaped Questions* 7-8.

¹⁷⁴ See the Fresh Expressions website for further details.

¹⁷⁵ MSC, xi.

¹⁷⁶ Archbishop’s Council, *Common Worship*, xi.

¹⁷⁷ Avis, *Book review: Mission-shaped Church: Church planting and fresh expressions of Church in a changing context* book review (Modern Believing, Vol. 46, No. 2, 2005), 56.

¹⁷⁸ Toyne, *A Measure for Measure*, ix.

¹⁷⁹ Stephen Neill, *Anglicanism* (London, Mowbray & Co Ltd., 1977), 10.

¹⁸⁰ A decisive point in this development was the Synod of Whitby 664, where it was agreed to move toward the Roman way.

believes, “The emerging church will need, like the Celtic Church of the past to find ways of being church through *networks of relationships*”.¹⁸¹ Have we for too long conceived of Church as the *parish church*? Are we in need of retrieving the Celtic Fresh Expression model to rebalance and invigorate missionary life back into the Church of England? In the words of the 2010 Synod, “The mixed economy of traditional churches and fresh expressions of church, working in partnership, as the most promising mission strategy in a fast-changing culture”.¹⁸²

The question of whether the Church of England is a single mixed economy or two mixed economies remains. Is Fresh Expressions a renewal movement or a new movement? The future is unclear. Aware of potential stand offs, Rowan Williams stressed at Synod (2004) that there is much within the “parochial system that continues to work and work brilliantly”.¹⁸³ He continued, “This is not an attempt to subvert the parochial system, but to ask what are those questions which the parochial system now is not answering.”¹⁸⁴

Promoting the MSC agenda, Rowan Williams declared that MSC is both deeply disturbing and exciting and “an opportunity to become in every way a more adult church”.¹⁸⁵ What does Rowan Williams mean by this weighted sentence? Did he have in mind Friedrich von Hügel’s three stages of spiritual development? Von Hügel’s seminal work proposes that maturity consists of three stages of development: First *Infancy* – which constitutes the institutional element of religion where one is nurtured in faith by the unchanging action of the Church, by prayers, liturgy, rites of passage, etc. We can sum up this stage as *growth through trust*; Second *Adolescence* – is a time of questioning and rebellion against accepted beliefs and behaviours: *growth through critical enquiry*; and third *Adulthood* – is a realisation that life is complex and mysterious. It is a time of deep trust amidst unanswered questions and sorrows: *growth through acceptance*. Problems occur if these three stages are not successfully travelled through in order. Difficulties and resistance arise when individuals and groups are not allowed to mature through these stages at their own pace. There is also the danger that one stage is overemphasised to the exclusion of the other two, or two to the

¹⁸¹ Warren, *Being human*, 27. Italics Warren.

¹⁸² Motion proposed by Philip Giddings, *Report of Proceedings General Synod February Group of Sessions Volume 41 No. 1*, (<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/40958/feb2010.pdf>), 137, visited 24/03/11.

¹⁸³ Rowan Williams, *Archbishop remarks*, (<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1832/general-synod-archbishop-remarks-in-the-debate-on-the-mission-shaped-church>), visited 24/03/11.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Rowan Williams, *Archbishop remarks*.

exclusion of the third.¹⁸⁶ Maturity means having gone through all stages and harmonising them together: “I believe because I am told, because it is true, because it answers to my deepest interior experiences and needs”.¹⁸⁷

In applying von Hügel’s insight we might begin to wonder if Rowan William’s analysis of the Church of England is correct. Is the advent of MSC a much needed corrective towards harmonising these essential elements, and a paving the way towards maturity? Has the Church of England in the past relied too heavily upon the institutional element of religion? Has this model of Church been overemphasised at the exclusion of the other two elements of Church life? As Gerald Hughes notes, “Undue emphasis on the institutional element today is likely to produce a Church of dwindling numbers, loyal, obedient, docile, uninspired and passive members, God’s frozen people”.¹⁸⁸ Perhaps the Church of England has overemphasised the institutional and critical to the exclusion of the mystical leaving the Church institutionally and intellectually alive but spiritually barren? Rowan Williams believes Fresh Expressions are essential for the spiritual growth of the Church:

Essentially the Fresh Expressions programme is not simply about a kind of scattered set of experiments; it's about that gradual, but I think inexorable shift, in the whole culture of our Church that has been going on in the last few years, and which will undoubtedly continue to grow and develop.¹⁸⁹

The fact that Rowan Williams has been so supportive of the MSC programme has undeniably been a major contributor to the rapid changes in Church of England missio-ecclesiology, and for that matter within the Anglican Communion as a whole.¹⁹⁰ In many ways, Rowan William’s theology and leadership have been architectural in the whole process in building a Church of England MSC missio-ecclesiology. As Paul Bayes points out,

¹⁸⁶ Gerald W. Huges, *God of Surprises*, (London, Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2008), 11.

¹⁸⁷ Friedrich von Hügel as cited by Avis, *Beyond the Reformation?* (London, T&T Clark, 2008), 7.

¹⁸⁸ Huges, *God of Surprises*, 24.

¹⁸⁹ Rowan Williams, *Fresh Expressions: The Life Blood of Who We Are* (<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1745/fresh-expressions-the-life-blood-of-who-we-are-general-synod-february-2007>), visited 27/03/11.

¹⁹⁰ The Archbishop of Canterbury is regarded as the senior bishop of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Anglican bishops are invited by the Archbishop of Canterbury to the normally held ten yearly Lambeth Conference. The Archbishop is President of the Anglican Consultative Council which meets every three years and he convenes The Primates Meeting. There have been various reactions to Rowan Williams’ revisionist theology and leadership within the Communion, most notably “The formation of Global Anglican Future Conference” (GAFCON). In 2008 GAFCON bishops made a statement to “preserve and promote the truth and power of the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ as we Anglicans have received it” (http://www.gafcon.org/news/gafcon_final_statement/), visited 07/03/11. For a critical review of Rowan Williams’ revisionist theology see, Charles Raven, *Shadow Gospel: Revelation in the Theology of Rowan Williams* (<http://anglicanspread.org/2009/04/shadow-gospel-revelation-in-the-theology-of-rowan-williams/>), visited 07/03/11.

Imagination and re-imagination is the ground and theme of all that Rowan Williams has been seeking to do since his appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury. This single appointment has done a great deal to foster the acceptance of emerging-church thinking across the Church of England.¹⁹¹

The question of maturity remains a poignant question. The parochial system with all its flaws continues to bring people together with backgrounds into one community. Different generations and interest groups learn to live and love each other as one family. Fresh Expressions, on the other hand, run the danger of creating and validating homogeneous personal interest groups as Church. They could lack the challenge of a mixed community and the maturing effect of self-sacrifice. It is to the Fresh Expression economy that we will now turn, as this is the most radical departure from classical Anglicanism and the key to the whole missio-ecclesiological ethos of MSC.

3.7 Proclaim afresh or Fresh Expression?

A key text in understanding Church of England missio-ecclesiology is the Declaration of Assent. As Avis suggests, this statement is a convenient and succinct account of Anglican confessional identity.¹⁹² The preface to the Declaration is as follows:

The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation. Led by the Holy Spirit, it has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, *The Book of Common Prayer* and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons.¹⁹³

MSC has interpreted the Preface to the Declaration of Assent “to proclaim afresh” to mean Fresh Expression. At first glance there does not appear to be too much difference in meaning between proclaim *afresh* and *fresh expression*. After all, is not a fresh expression of Church a way to proclaim the Gospel afresh? When we begin to look a little closer, we begin

¹⁹¹ Paul Bayes, *Mission-shaped Church: Building Missionary Values* (Cambridge, Grove Books Limited, 2004), 9.

¹⁹² Avis, *Identity of Anglicanism*, 10.

¹⁹³ Archbishop's Council, *Common Worship*, xi.

to see that there are semantic differences. Afresh is an adverb which describes the action of proclamation. To proclaim afresh means to translate and interpret the message in a language that is accessible for every generation. Authorised by King Henry VIII and immortalised under Cranmer's pen, the vernacular injunction began and remains the enduring legacy of the Church of England.¹⁹⁴ This is a dynamic orthodoxy¹⁹⁵ where the content of faith remains the same, but the presentation changes.¹⁹⁶ At times this means that the Church will be counter-cultural to the prevailing context because of the radical nature of its message. Even in translation there remains a prophetic aspect that can challenge societal values.

The Church is both guardian of the historic faith as revealed in the Scriptures and set forth in the Catholic Creeds, and proclaimer of the faith. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it was the Church that wrote the Bible, received the Bible, and canonised the Bible.¹⁹⁷ The Bible is the Church's book, a treasure to protect, an authority to judge, and a message to proclaim. The Church is the people of the Bible and the Bible lives in the Church. The Bible "containeth all things necessary to salvation"¹⁹⁸ and is the "rule and ultimate standard of faith".¹⁹⁹ Within the classical Church of England missio-ecclesiology there is a dynamic interplay between the faith uniquely revealed in the Bible and the role of the Church as interpreter and defender of the Bible. The Catholic Creeds bear witness to this living tradition, aided by reason which further increases and enlarges the divine revelation.²⁰⁰ The interpretative process within the Church of England is further expanded and gives a specific Anglican identity through the Historic Formularies, "the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, *The Book of Common Prayer* and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons".²⁰¹

Under the Holy Spirit, to proclaim afresh means to start with the inherited Church as its basis. The Church is the point of reference for proclamation – a *Church shaped-mission*. Fresh Expressions have taken up this calling but have moved the ecclesiastical centre. Fresh

¹⁹⁴ Willaim P. Haugaard, 'From Reformation to the Eighteen Century' in Sykes, Booty and Knight, *Anglicanism*, 3.

¹⁹⁵ Avis, *Identity of Anglicanism*, 13.

¹⁹⁶ Martin Davie, *A Guide to The Church of England* (London, Mowbray, 2008), 83.

¹⁹⁷ The Bible was canonised in the 4th Century.

¹⁹⁸ The Book of Common Prayer, *The 39 Articles of Religion: Article 6* (<http://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/book-of-common-prayer/articles-of-religion.aspx#VI>), visited 28/03/11.

¹⁹⁹ Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (1886-88) as cited by Avis, *Identity of Anglicanism*, 10.

²⁰⁰ Ramsey, *The Anglican Spirit*, 23.

²⁰¹ Declaration of Assent, xi.

Expressions are no longer just the activity of proclamation by the inherited Church, they are the formation of new ecclesiastical communities. These communities are new *expressions* of church, and not just the activity of the inherited Church proclaiming afresh the Gospel. These expressions shift the focus away from the inherited toward outward forms: “The planting process is the engagement of church and gospel with a new missionary context and this should determine the fresh expression”.²⁰² Expressions are no longer predetermined and rooted in a specific Church identity, but are open to an endless amount of possibilities and self-expressions. The Church of England is no longer the defining mark, but the expression, such as a Biker church, Goth church, Skater church, etc. The Rather than being evangelistic missions with a view of creating bridges from society to the Church, MSC has liberated these initiatives into being Church in their own right.²⁰³ The adjectives *fresh expressions* of Church evolve into a fully fledged collective noun *Fresh Expressions*. Fresh Expressions denote a subtle yet profound change in classical missio-ecclesiological Church of England thinking and practice. The Declaration of Assent has moved to the “new missionary context” – a declaration of assent of the Fresh Expression?

The unfortunate marketing overtones of the word fresh further illustrate the missio-ecclesiological shift away from the inherited Church. For example, fresh can mean fresh produce (as opposed to stale) and fresh, up-to-date products. Interpreted through such cultural mores, it is easy to see how the *old* inherited Church can be seen as *past its sell-by-date* in comparison to an *up-to-date* fresh expression of Church. The dichotomy this creates has regrettably only heightened polarisation between the two mixed economies, the inherited Church and Fresh Expressions.

By creating a new Fresh Expression economy in the Church of England, raises many missio-ecclesiological questions concerning Church of England identity. What does Church mean in fresh expressions of Church? Are these Fresh Expressions plants of the Church of England or new independent churches? Are such traits such as individualism, protest against authority, aversion to parental institutions, dislike of tradition, undercurrent in some Fresh Expressions? If Fresh Expressions are part of the Church of England, what credentials make

²⁰² MSC, 21. See also 91.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 23; 43.

them Anglican? With Fresh Expressions sitting lightly to Church of England structures, how will they be governed, if at all? How can Fresh Expressions be contained within the Church of England single mixed economy? Immediately, no doubt, some Fresh Expression supporters will react to the notion of containment and Anglican identity. Advocates such as Ian Mobsby, Pete Rollins and Pete Ward would all argue that more freedom is needed to allow the emerging Church to fully engage with postmodern society.

Mobsby sees Fresh Expression of Church as falling into two categories: inherited and emerging.²⁰⁴ The inherited Fresh Expression is based upon a *translation* contextual model (pre-modern or modern), whereas the emerging Fresh Expression is based upon a *synthetic* contextual model (postmodern).²⁰⁵ The translation model has always been an essential missio-ecclesiological understanding of the Church of England, as the Declaration of Assent articulates. The synthetic model, sometimes referred to as “dialogical, conservation, or analogical model” suggests revelation is both something finished and something ongoing.²⁰⁶ In the language of MSC it is the double listening process.²⁰⁷ Mixed Economy, maintains Mobsby, is simply an interim phase until the Church fully emerges (matures?) with the synthetic model.²⁰⁸

Rollins would like to see Fresh Expressions break free from the institutional Church altogether. The temptation for Fresh Expressions, he contends, is to be “baptised into the fold (for there is money available to the baptized, buildings to be had and titles to be gained”.²⁰⁹ By letting go of this restraint, emerging groups can maintain their cutting edge in mission and be prophetic voice that can challenge the Church in how it looks, functions, and exists.²¹⁰ Saint Francis of Assisi is a good example of what happens when there is assimilation of the message into the Church. By engrafting Saint Francis into the fold provided a “much-needed airvent for the institutional machine, one that allowed the church

²⁰⁴ Ian J. Mobsby, *Emerging and Fresh Expressions*, 26-31; 89-90.

²⁰⁵ Mobsby lists Alternative worship communities, cafe churches and network churches as examples of synthetic emerging churches. Ibid., 31. The terms synthetic and translation are based upon Bevans’ six models theory of contextual theology. See Bevans, *Contextual Theology*, 37-54; 88-103.

²⁰⁶ Bevans, *Contextual Theology*, 90.

²⁰⁷ MSC, 93; 104-105.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 30-31.

²⁰⁹ Pete Rollins, ‘Biting the hand’ in Nelstrop and Percy, *Evaluating Fresh Expressions*, 84.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 76; 83.

to continue as it had before”.²¹¹ Most importantly, this results in the watering down and a silencing of the radical nature the original message. Reminiscent of a radical Anabaptist missio-ecclesiology, Fresh Expressions only be fresh if they remain outside the inherited Church.

Ward believes what is needed is a new reformation to renew and refresh the Church, so that it can remain faithful to its purposes and its Lord.²¹² He openly admits that his vision of a reformation is based upon a “theological imagination”.²¹³ Arguing against the inherited Church, Ward proposes moving the noun the Church to a verb “I church, you church, we church”.²¹⁴ Church is about what we make it, what Ward calls a Liquid Church. Liquid Church is centred on the perichoretic Trinitarian dance of God, which moves outward through the body of Christ *and* through the world.²¹⁵ Whereas the Solid Church mutates “heritage, refuge, and nostalgia”, the Liquid Church is the true missionary society as it *flows* through cultural networks.²¹⁶ By starting with the positive elements in the new, Liquid Church makes these parts of the way forward for the Church.²¹⁷

These are but some of the voices of dissent that are challenging, not only classical missio-ecclesiological of the Church of England identity, but the Church as a whole. Fresh Expressions poignantly question what it means to be Church and challenge inherited forms to reform. Will the Church of England remain faithful to her inherited tradition or evolve into something radically new? MSC with its *subject-object scheme*,²¹⁸ no longer emphasises the inherited whole, but gives considerable freedom to *micro* missio-ecclesiologies in the forms of Fresh Expressions. These micro units have been given considerable freedom to operate within their own missionary contexts. As missio-ecclesiological boundaries are continually being challenged by more radical entrepreneurs, Fresh Expressions are becoming even harder to define and control. To illustrate: With the launch of the Fresh Expressions website in 2005, MSC’s 12 Fresh Expressions were expanded to 14. As a regulatory body, The Fresh Expression team under the leadership of the Archbishops’ Missioner, began to

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 72.

²¹² Ward, *Liquid Church*, 1.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 33-39, 50-55.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 13-30, 56-64.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

²¹⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 264.

gather information before authorising new communities to the Fresh Expression Directory. As Croft admits, this was not an easy task, as some Fresh Expressions would defy categorisation, so a policy of erring on the side of generosity was used to “encourage this movement and not restrict it”.²¹⁹ One of the benefits of the directory, reflects Croft, was it encouraged an ecclesial shift and ecclesial thinking from activities of the Church to being Church: “This reframing and naming enriches and extends people’s understanding of what they are doing and shapes it in turn”.²²⁰

By the elusive nature of Fresh Expressions, as to be expected, what started as a process of reframing and naming gradually dissolved into non-reframing and non-naming. Fresh Expressions are no longer defined and categorised, but listed as *stories* on the Fresh Expression website.²²¹ Narrative has become the defining missio-ecclesiological quality. The sanctioning of self-definition marks a “wholesale reconfiguration of the identity of the Church of England”,²²² toward an endorsed free church, Congregationalist missio-ecclesiology. Has MSC, perhaps unknowingly at the time, opened a Pandora’s Box of uncontainable and indefinable Fresh Expressions missio-ecclesiologies? As captured by the words of a Fresh Expression member, will the Church of England become an all inclusive, relativist, post-denominational community?

We are trying to express that everybody has a valid point of view, that nobody is made to feel that they’re wrong. That we can all learn from each other. That there is more of a kaleidoscope of experience that makes the whole. And that we are not exclusive but inclusive.²²³

3.8 Post-denominationalism

Avis believes MSC’s uncritical acceptance of post-denominationalism reveals the alarming weakness in the report which “needs some ruthless probing”.²²⁴ Fresh Expressions and the move toward post-denominationalism highlights questions concerning the nature and value of cultural and denominational identity as shaped by history and tradition. To help us probe

²¹⁹ Steven Croft ‘What counts as a fresh expression of church and who decides?’ in Nelstrop and Percy, *Evaluating Fresh Expressions*, 9.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Fresh Expressions, <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/>, visited 25/03/11.

²²² Davison and Milbank, *For the Parish*, 41.

²²³ One of Nelstrop’s interviewees, ‘Mixed Economy or Ecclesial Reciprocity’ in *Evaluating Fresh Expressions*, 201.

²²⁴ Avis, *Book review*, 55. MSC, 25; 43; 44.

a little deeper, we will return to Lindbeck's hypothesis and apply his "cultural-linguistic" model. Following Ludwig Wittgenstein's "Language Games",²²⁵ Lindberg compares Religion to languages. The understanding of how language works is linked to how words are used in the active life of a community. Language gets its intelligibility through the cultural setting in which it is embodied, and not primarily through abstract thought or individualistic speculation. Likewise, religion too "can be viewed as a kind of cultural and /or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought".²²⁶ Religion is "a communal phenomenon that shapes the subjectivities of individuals",²²⁷ with doctrine acting as grammatical rules. Religious conviction is therefore not *beneath* the surface, but *in* the surface. When actions do not match the words we speak, we call this a contradiction. It is said "actions speak louder than words", perhaps more accurately we should say "words speak *in* actions". When words and actions agree, concludes Lindberg, this is "intersystematic truth".²²⁸

Lindbeck's hypothesis is not without some difficulties, for example, his inflexibility to cognitive approaches, his underplaying the complementary of "cognitive propositional" and "experiential-expressive" with the "cultural-linguistic", his selective illustrative use of historical examples, and questions concerning the origin of language. Nevertheless, his insight concerning how the invisible and visible life are inexorably bound up together as shaped by the communal life is helpful insight relating to the post-denominational debate. The post-liberal perspective enables us to refocus and understand faith in the practices of the Church, and not just in the realm of ideas. If denominational identity is fashioned by the lived, corporate tradition of the Church, then how a Church expresses its corporate life is vital in the shaping its ongoing identity. In other words, outward forms of expressions denote and personify the commonly held belief. A change in practice means a change in theology:

Faith and order cannot be held apart in ecclesiology. They go hand in hand. Faith is reflected in life. Order is grounded in

²²⁵ Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 19.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

theology. These are not two dimensions of the Church's life that can be analysed separately. They are a seamless whole.²²⁹

If this is true, then we are left to ask how the Church of England wants to be defined? Is there something distinctive and of value in the faith and order of the Church of England that the Church wants to preserve and pass on to future generations? If we take one example, which will be explored in greater detail later, the principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi* has always been a defining aspect of the missio-ecclesiology of the Church of England. How will the new worshipping life of Fresh Expressions express Church of England faith? Will Fresh Expressions be judged as intersystematically *untrue* if their Anglican confession does not match up with their corporate life? In years to come will Fresh Expressions be recognisably Anglican? Or will they subsume into a completely new post-denominational identity?

To suggest distinctiveness is sometimes viewed as being rather conceited and narrow minded. At the risk of giving offense, it is more politically correct to relativise truth to the lowest common denominator (therefore making it untrue). There is a particular Anglican way of being a Christian community that is of value. This is not to assert that the Anglican way is the only way, or to suggest the Church of England is the true Church. This is far from the Anglican position. Michael Ramsey best sums up the Anglican spirit of modesty in such matters:

Its credentials are its incompleteness, with the tension and 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.²³⁰

The Church of England believes itself to be part of the universal Church, a branch if you like. Within the whole, the Church of England has its own personality, one that can listen and speak. Perhaps, it is through the Church of England's brokenness and incompleteness that it can point beyond itself to the universal Church. Avis even advocates that the "fact that Anglicanism is racked by disagreements is a sure sign – to put it slightly provocatively – that

²²⁹ Avis, *Identity of Anglicanism*, 41.

²³⁰ Michael Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (Peabody, Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, 2009), 188.

it is positioned at the heart of Christianity”.²³¹ Having acknowledged these tensions, and despite its failures and weaknesses, which must be readily admitted, the Church of England can uphold a sense of dignity and humble confidence. There are “distinctive Anglican tenets in ecclesiology with regard to both faith and order”,²³² which have contribution to make at the ecumenical table and in mission. As Avis rather poignantly says, “To deny the distinctiveness of Anglicanism... is to saw off the branch on which you are sitting”.²³³ Is the rise of Fresh Expressions, in part borne out of a loss of humble confidence in Church of England self-identity? Do Fresh Expressions run the risk of becoming post-denominational? Will Fresh Expressions be the *hand to saw* on the branch that Anglicanism is sitting? Or is this the Church of England simply dying in order to live?

3.9 Dying to live

MSC theologises away Church of England identity, by suggesting that the Church must *die in order to live*.²³⁴ Using the analogy of the seed being sown,²³⁵ Apostle Paul’s missionary exchange,²³⁶ and a kenotic theology of the incarnation and cross,²³⁷ the Church is called to sacrifice its old ways in the hope of resurrected life: “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”.²³⁸ *Dying to live* missio-ecclesiology is such a central theme in MSC that it was even suggested to use this motive as at as the title of the Report.²³⁹ Dying to live, according to MSC, has two dimensions: first, the willingness to die to preferred forms and second, the determination of “the ‘parent’ church not to impose its own culture on the emerging church”.²⁴⁰

The *dying to live* theology is further emphasised by MSC with its recurrent omission of the definite article before Church as the title of the report suggests: “Mission-shaped Church: church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context”. Fresh Expressions are “ways in which ‘church’ is being expressed”, not ways in which *the* Church is being

²³¹ Avis, *Identity of Anglicanism*, 154.

²³² *Ibid.*, 41.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 40.

²³⁴ MSC., 30; 88-89.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 21; 86; 89.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 88-89.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

²³⁹ Lings and Hopkins, *Encounters*, 13.

²⁴⁰ MSC, 98.

expressed.²⁴¹ Dropping the article enables Church to become an idea, a verbal concept, an event we create. The historic, institutionalised Church is stripped down to its bare essentials: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Mat. 18.20). The invisible Church is separated from the visible, the organic from the structural – *the Church needs to die for the birth of Church*. Again, in MSC we are faced with subtle yet profound changes to classical Church of England missio-ecclesiology. The traditional Church of England missio-ecclesiology has always been to fuse the invisible/visible qualities of the Church together.²⁴² Although the language of dying to live sounds very biblical, is this really an appropriate analogy for Church of England missio-ecclesiology? The traditions of the Church of England are planted in the soil to die without any expectation of what will emerge other than a fresh expression of Church shaped by the missionary context. As Roland Reim pertinently asks, “Will a church which wants to propagate the *message* of the gospel end up offering something less than the *demands* of the gospel embodied in membership of the Church?”²⁴³ MSC, however, would not see it this way. What is important is not the *static* past, but the *now* as shaped by the Spirit’s life and the eschatological vision. Paradoxically, has MSC in its drive to be culturally relevant for the sake of the Gospel, become culturally *irrelevant* due to its willingness to die to the demands of the Gospel as embodied in Church of England traditions? Are Fresh Expressions a sell-out to market forces that capitalise on, *if it brings people to Church it is a success*? Without a sharpened, countercultural Church-shaped identity, will synthetic charismatic Fresh Expressions become syncretistic Fresh Expressions?

3.10 Charismatic Expressions

As some Anglo-Catholic commentators point out, MSC promotes a typical open evangelical hermeneutic of an *obsession with the new*.²⁴⁴ This cult of the new is aptly illustrated by Martin Percy. He creates two fictional characters who are forever moving on from one trend to another. Their spiritual curriculum vitae is as followings: Fisherfolk and experimental Christian communities, Michael Harper’s Fountain Trust and the charismatic renewal, church

²⁴¹ MSC, 43.

²⁴² Philip H.E. Thomas ‘Doctrine of the Church’ in Sykes, Booty and Knight, *Anglicanism*, 255-256.

²⁴³ Roland Reim, *Mission-shaped Church: An Emerging Critique* (Ecclesiology Vol. 3, Volume 3, No. 1, 2006), 127. Italics Reim’s.

²⁴⁴ Open evangelism as opposed to conservative evangelism is more open to new ideas and ecumenical influences. For example, the Church of England College ‘Cranmer Hall’, which promotes itself as open evangelical college, works in close collaboration (covenant relationship) with the Wesley Study Centre. Methodist and Anglicans share a common life of worship, study and mission placements. Cranmer Hall (<http://www.dur.ac.uk/cranmerhall/>) and Wesley Study Centre (<http://www.dur.ac.uk/wsc.online/>), visited 29/03/11.

growth movement (e.g. Eddie Gibbs, Donald McGavran), healing ministries (e.g. Jackie Pulinger, David Pawson), power evangelism (e.g. John Wimber, David Watson), third and fourth wave charismatic revivals, Kansas City prophets, Toronto blessing, and now Fresh Expressions.²⁴⁵

Luke Bretherton surmises how the emerging churches and are offshoot of the Pentecostal/charismatic movement and share similar concerns:²⁴⁶

They should be seen as part of the continuum of what David Martin calls the 'unsponsored mobilizations of laissez-faire lay religion, running to and fro between Britain and North America' which began with Methodism and eventually spawned Pentecostalism.²⁴⁷

It is interesting to note that the Methodist Church has been a covenantal partner with the Church of England since 2003²⁴⁸ and has been a fully supportive partner in the MSC Initiative.²⁴⁹ Fresh Expressions with their non-geographical, networked boundaries, seem to echo John Wesley's vision, "I look upon all the world as my parish"?²⁵⁰ Is this the Church of England at long last validating and embracing Wesley's vision of overcoming institutional restrictions for the sake of mission? If Bretherton's observations are correct, we can begin to see how the experiential theologies of Methodist, Pentecostal/Charismatic theologies might have been an important influence in the development of MSC (and its move toward a quadrilateral source synthesis).²⁵¹

Resonating charismatic influences, MSC believes the Church of England needs to learn from the Spirit and be led by the Spirit.²⁵² What is needed is a "baptism of imagination" (baptism in the Spirit?) and an embracing the Spirit's eschatological ministry "to carry the church forward in mission, anticipating here and now in ever-fresh ways the Father's final

²⁴⁵ Martyn Percy 'Old tricks for new dogs? A critique of fresh expressions' in Nelstrop and Percy, *Explorations in Emerging Church*, 29-30.

²⁴⁶ Bretherton, 'Beyond the Emerging Church?' in Walker & Bretherton, *Remembering our Future*, 30-44.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

²⁴⁸ An Anglican and Methodist Covenant (<http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/>), visited 29/03/11.

²⁴⁹ The Methodist Church (<http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=opentogod.content&cmid=1560>). Fresh Expressions (<http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/about/introduction>), visited 29/03/11, visited 29/03/11.

²⁵⁰ Journal of John Wesley, (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/journal.vi.iii.v.html>), visited 29/03/11.

²⁵¹ For a brief overview of the historical development the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement see Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge, Cambridge Press, 2004).

²⁵² MSC, 90.

eschatological desire”.²⁵³ There is an excitement and joy of what may be discovered on the road ahead where the “nature of the Church is never to be defined in static terms, but only in terms of that to which it is going”.²⁵⁴ The tent description, MSC believes, is more appropriate image for our time than the temple image.²⁵⁵ The tent image imagines a people on a journey being led by the Holy Spirit. The Church of England needs to move away from the fixed location of the temple out and forward towards the *Parousia*. Fresh Expressions are beginning to capture this vision as a people on the move reaching out in mission by the power of the Spirit.

To be reminded of the charismatic and eschatological dimensions of the Church’s life is vital in shaping a missio-ecclesiological witness. In the history of the Church of England (and other churches) the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements have been an important corrective to an over emphasis on institutional forms. Life in the Spirit and a mystical understanding of the body of Christ are essential aspects of the Church. These movements have brought the pneumatological dimension of faith into focus again and have been key in revitalising the Church of England’s life and witness. They have contributed to a richer understanding and experience of inner-healing, physical healing, miracles, evangelism, lay ministry, etc. One has only to think of Saint Andrews, Chorleywood and the New Wine network, and Holy Trinity, Brompton and the unprecedented benefit of the Alpha course across the world, as shining examples stemming from Church of England charismatic renewal.

Given all these positive contributions, we are still left to ask whether MSC has become unbalanced in its stress of tent over temple? Surely both images (and realities) of tent and temple coexist? To create a dichotomy only exasperates a divide between the inherited and Fresh Expressions. Are there not some constants that the Church must hold on to and pass on while on the journey? Has MSC’s focus on the present and future, been at the cost of severing the past? Has MSC become so fixated on the Protestant principle of *ecclesia semper reformanda est* that it has lost a sense of the catholic tradition?

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 94.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

3.11 Reformed and Catholic

Angela Tilby openly admits that MSC is a painful wake-up call for catholic-minded Anglicans like herself, who have relied for too long on being good at prayer, well-ordered liturgy, and diaconal service at the sake of mission.²⁵⁶ Anglo-Catholic mission as typified by the “slum priests” of the 19th Century, which brought colour and beauty into worship alongside a passionate outreach in their parishes,²⁵⁷ is now “pretty dreadful” in current terms.²⁵⁸ Given this much needed mission corrective to the whole Church of England and not just within the Anglo-Catholic wing, we are still left with Tilby’s question: “How do we know when a church is a church? The question behind the question is in how we deal with history”.²⁵⁹ To add, we could say it is a question of how we deal with history in connection with the Church and tradition. A catholic understanding of the Church, history and tradition would emphasise historical continuity over discontinuity.²⁶⁰ If we take John Newman’s historical perspective as an example of the catholic position, he believed we need to see history as a whole. We cannot separate the source from the stream of unfolding development. The historical process, he suggests, is likened to the growth of an organism from a seed.²⁶¹ Divine truth is possessed first, even at an unconscious level, before it fully actualised in outward form.²⁶² Implicit truth, through the process of reflection, gradually becomes explicit truth. Centuries might pass before implicit truth is actualised in any formal expression. For Hans Küng, “The ‘essence’ of the Church is not a matter of metaphysical stasis, but exists only in constantly changing historical ‘forms’ ”.²⁶³ Simply put, history and tradition is part of what the Church *is*.²⁶⁴ This means the Church cannot be thought as some form of Kantian pure reason or Kierkegaardian existential reality. Ideas are enfolded through the living witness of the Church through the centuries. The essential nature of the Church is “always at once visible and invisible”.²⁶⁵ Even though the visible and invisible qualities of the Church are distinguishable, they are hypostatically bound together. The Church as sacrament is “an

²⁵⁶ Angela Tilby ‘What questions does Catholic ecclesiology pose for contemporary mission and fresh expressions?’ in Croft, *Mission-shaped Questions*, 78.

²⁵⁷ For example, Charles Lowder who ministered in the East London slums. See Paul Bayes and Tim Sledge, *Mission-shaped Parish: Traditional Church in a Changing Context* (London, Church House Publishing, 2006), 22-23.

²⁵⁸ Tilby in Croft, *Mission-shaped Questions*, 78.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ MSC recognises both of these aspects are in play in the life of the Church. *Ibid.*, 102.

²⁶¹ Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Indiana, University of Norte Dame Press, 1989), xiv and Chapter 1.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ Hans Küng, *The Church* (Tunbridge Wells, Search Press Limited, 1986), 4.

²⁶⁴ Tilby in Croft, *Mission-shaped Questions*, 79.

²⁶⁵ Hans Küng, *The Church* (Tunbridge Wells, Search Press Limited, 1986), 38.

outward sign of an inward and invisible grace”.²⁶⁶ It is through the visible form of the Church that God’s invisible grace is manifest: “Essentially the Church is the historical continuing presence in the world of the incarnate Word of God”.²⁶⁷

Unlike the high view of the Church presented above, MSC employs a more Adolf von Harnack reductionist framework of separating the kernel from the husk.²⁶⁸ MSC laments that in practice there “are many who still fuse the meaning and the forms of the Gospel”,²⁶⁹ and, “The Gospel may have many clothes, but there is only one Gospel”.²⁷⁰ This separation between the Gospel and its many clothes is illustrative of a more Protestant theology that wants to challenge Church practice if it does not advance Gospel. Discontinuity of history and tradition is a necessary part of the Church continually being reformed in the light of the Gospel: “Some pioneers and leaders have yearned for a more authentic way of living, being and doing church, and this has led fresh thinking about what church can or should be”.²⁷¹ One way to explore this possibility of fresh thinking about a more authentic Church is to go back to the beginning as witnessed in the New Testament. For example, the Fresh Expressions’ website “Share: Exploring Fresh Expressions of Church together”, recommends Ray Anderson’s book “An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches” as a biblical framework for Fresh Expressions.²⁷² Anderson distinguishes between the Jerusalem Church representing the inherited Church and the Antioch Church representing Fresh Expressions. MSC, however, goes in further and suggests even starting all over again:

There is a fabric of the old way of being society and being church. We are not about patching the fabric of the old garment but seeking to set up a new loom to weave the new fabric for tomorrow’s society of the kingdom”.²⁷³

²⁶⁶ 1662 Book of Common Prayer, *Catechism* 521 (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds3.iv.xii.html>), visited 29/03/11.

²⁶⁷ Karl Rahner cited by Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 62.

²⁶⁸ Livingstone and Fiorenza, *Modern Christian Thought*, 288.

²⁶⁹ MSC, 91. Based upon the Lausanne Haslev Consultation (1977): “Contextualization Revised”. See also Lings and Hopkins, *Encounters*, 14.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

²⁷² Share: Exploring Fresh Expressions of Church together, *The Jerusalem and Antioch churches*

(<http://www.sharetheguide.org/section1/mixedeconomy/antioch/?searchterm=Anderson>), visited 30/03/11. One has only to look at the list of cited authors in MSC to discover Protestant influences compared to the lack of Orthodox and Roman Catholic contributions.

²⁷³ MSC, 126.

MSC sees this making anew as a “coming to terms with a future norm that is already apparent in the present”.²⁷⁴ The past is seen as an old garment made by an old loom. MSC’s quest for the ideal Church has become abstracted from the historical Church. A Platonic, dualistic paradigm is created by setting off the imagined Church against the actual Church. Davison and Milbank believe this is an “*intellectualists*” pursuit as it elevates the Church into the realm of ideas above as opposed to actual practice down below.²⁷⁵

Rather than setting off catholic *against* reform, perhaps the classical Anglican position can offer a different way forward. First of all, it must be remembered that throughout the history of the Church of England since the Reformation, there has always been a tension between the reforming and catholic influences. Sometimes the balance of power and influence has moved toward the reformed and at other times toward the catholic (perhaps with MSC we are in a reformed time). The Church of England has characteristically tried to steer a middle path between Roman Catholic and Protestant theologies, classically known as *via media*. Even within its own house, the Church of England has tried to balance these influences to create a balanced *reformed-catholic* missio-ecclesiology. In fact, *via media* is the Anglican missio-ecclesiological way that binds all the missio-ecclesiologies of the Church of England together. Reform alongside a “continuity and succession in matters of faith and order, in the truth of the Gospel and in apostolic ministry of Word and Sacrament”²⁷⁶ is the classical Anglican way.

One way to rebalance the scales of MSC’s more reformed theology is to apply a Eucharistic understanding of the Church. As Avis rightly says, quoting Henri de Lubac, “ ‘the Eucharist makes the Church’ and ‘the Church makes the Eucharist’ ”.²⁷⁷ The mystery of capitulation involves a three-directional view of time: *anamnetic*, *epicletic*, and *anaphora*. For the sake of a healthy, balanced theology, the Church as a missio-ecclesiological community needs to always poise and synthesise these three dimensions. To give too much emphasis upon one can lead to an unbalanced view of the Church. The act of anamnesis cannot be forgotten in

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Davison and Milbank, *For the Parish*, 22.

²⁷⁶ Middleton, *Anglican Mind*, 21.

²⁷⁷ Henri de Lubac cited by Avis, *Identity of Anglicanism*, 81.

this equation as it brings a continuity of depth and wisdom to the now. Anamnesis *retrieves* the past in order to make the Church vital again in the present.²⁷⁸

It would seem that MSC is changing the Church of England's *via media* position of a reformed-catholic into a more Protestant missio-ecclesiology. We will now consider this further by the example of MSC's preferred option for innovation over tradition.

3.12 Tradition and Innovation

Having laid out the four classic marks of the Church in a "theology for a missionary church", MSC addresses Fresh Expressions in the light of Anglican ecclesiology. According to MSC, Anglican ecclesiology is comprised of: The Declaration of Assent, The Lambeth Quadrilateral, The Dominical Sacraments, Episcopacy, The national Church, and a shared family.²⁷⁹ If these particular attributes are peculiar to Church of England missio-ecclesiology does this imply a distinctiveness of Anglican identity? MSC would agree, "Anglicanism has a distinctive testimony and tradition within the Christian Church".²⁸⁰ Yet MCS also states that "no serious attempt at inculturation by the Church of England can begin with a fixed view of the outward form of the local church"²⁸¹ After all, it is the mission context which "determines the fresh expression of church".²⁸² Furthermore, "start with the Church and the mission with probably get lost. Start with mission and it is likely that the Church will be found".²⁸³ If mission precedes the shape of the church,²⁸⁴ how can distinctive Anglican identity be maintained and even justified? This is a theology of contradiction. To have a recognisable Church of England missio-ecclesiology means that there will be inherited Anglican marks in any church plant. Innovation is preferred over tradition.

If we take worship as one example of the inherited tradition of the Church of England, we can begin to see how innovation has won the day. What was once the defining mark of

²⁷⁸ Walker in Walker and Bretherton, *Deep Church*, 60.

²⁷⁹ MSC, 100-102.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 100.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 116.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 30; 105.

missio-ecclesiology for the Church of England *lex orandi, lex credendi*,²⁸⁵ has been radically simplified to a “ ‘common core’ of the Church’s worship”.²⁸⁶ As the Gospel has many clothes, so too can worship be deduced to essential elements and peripherals. Even this common core can evolve by cultural circumstances.²⁸⁷ The liturgical tradition of the Church of England, shaped by the Book of Common Prayer and Common Worship is trumped by a missionary and “culturally appropriate liturgy from below”.²⁸⁸ Seemingly disregarding Canon Law,²⁸⁹ entrusted church planters are discouraged to clone “patterns of liturgy and of church in new areas of mission”.²⁹⁰ Moreover, the creativity of alternative worship congregations has “proved to be a rich source of liturgical creativity”.²⁹¹ With all of these innovations, can the old adage, “if you want to know what Anglicans believe take part in liturgy”, still remain true? Will the move away from a common worship further fragment the Church of England? If *lex orandi, lex credendi* shapes belief, is there a real danger that emerging communities will go beyond the boundaries of orthodoxy? Will authorised rites continued to be used for the dominical sacraments? What will become of the liturgical year? Will ministers trained in the “overall structures and patterns of Christian worship”²⁹² faithfully say the Daily Office? Are ministers to become the shapers of liturgy, rather than liturgy the shapers of ministers? Has the Church of England’s tradition, which was once seen as a dynamic and life-shaping transmission of faith, now become *traditionalism*? Seen as something of a bygone age and to be discarded of?²⁹³ Traditional Anglican missio-ecclesiology, it appears, has been moved aside to for a more innovative missio-ecclesiology.

In drawing our critique to a close we will now reflect upon what Avis calls MSC’s “half-decent ecclesiology grounded in the concept of *missio dei*”,²⁹⁴ and end with the difficulties surrounding MSC’s kingdom of God theology.

²⁸⁵ The Liturgical Commission states, “The Church of England has always maintained that it is in worship that we express our theology and define our identity. Also, that it is through encountering God within worship that we are formed (and transformed) as his people”. (http://www.transformingworship.org.uk/TransformingWorship/?page_id=4), visited 30/03/11.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ Canon Law 15 states: “I will use only the forms of service which are authorized or allowed by Canon”. (<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/35588/complete.pdf>), visited 30/03/11.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ *Ibid.* See Fresh Expressions website for examples (<http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/category/story-tags/alternative%20worship>), visited 30/03/11. Some of these innovations are outlined in “Ancient Faith Future Mission: fresh expressions in the sacramental tradition”. Croft and Mobsby (eds.), *Ancient Faith Future Mission: fresh expressions in the sacramental tradition* (Norwich, Canterbury Press, 2009).

²⁹² MSC, 117.

²⁹³ Middleton, *Anglican Mind*, 38.

²⁹⁴ Avis, *Mission-shaped Church*, 55.

3.13 Missio Dei

Referring to the Church of England report “Eucharistic Presidency (1997)”, MSC “acknowledges that the Church of England has “paid insufficient attention to the Trinitarian character of God”.²⁹⁵ In keeping with the western shift towards a more thorough Trinitarian missio-ecclesiology, MSC wants to readdress the balance in the Church of England. *Missio dei* is laid down as the foundation for MSC’s “theology for a missionary church”.²⁹⁶ We can summarise MSC’s *missio dei* theology as follows: God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is relational and communal, perichoretic and kenotic.²⁹⁷ The Trinity “indwell one another, exist in one another and for one another, in interdependent giving and receiving”.²⁹⁸ Mission has its origin in the heart and mind of God.²⁹⁹ God’s nature as love is not closed in on itself, but flows out into creation and through redemption: “The mission of God as redeemer, through Christ, in the Spirit, is to restore and reconcile the fallen creation”.³⁰⁰ The Church is the fruit of God’s redemptive mission “through Christ, in the Spirit”.³⁰¹ Quoting Tim Dearborn, and what can be regarded as the MSC catch phrase, “It is not the Church of God that has a mission in the world, but the God of mission who has a Church in the world”.³⁰² There is a Church because of the missionary activity of God. The Church, in turn, is called to partake in God’s mission in the world. Mission and Church are two sides of the same coin, *missio-ecclesiology*. MSC has not only placed mission as the focus of the Church of England’s agenda, but it has affirmed mission as being the very essence (DNA) of the Church: “There is Church because there is mission, not vice versa”.³⁰³ Decades of Evangelism are no longer needed as mission is the now acknowledged shape of what the Church is.³⁰⁴

²⁹⁵ Church of England, *Eucharistic Presidency: A Theological Statement by the House of Bishops of the General Synod* (London, Church House Publishing, 1997), Section 2.2, 13.

²⁹⁶ MSC title for Chapter 5.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

²⁹⁸ Church of England, *Eucharistic Presidency*, Section 2.6, 14 and MSC, 84-85.

²⁹⁹ After Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 391.

³⁰⁰ MSC, 85.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² *Ibid.*

³⁰³ Bosch cited by MSC.

³⁰⁴ At the 1988 Lambeth Conference it was agreed to make the last decade of the millennium a “Decade of Evangelism”. This project contributed to the positive review of church planting initiatives in the Board of Mission Working Party on Church Planting, *Breaking Ground: Church Planting in the Church of England* (London, Church House Publishing, 1994) and later MSC.

Arguably, the theology of *missio dei* is one of the most important contributions MSC has made to Church of England missio-ecclesiology. MSC has brought to the surface and refocused the Church in its incarnational, *missio dei* life. This much needed impetus of a *missio dei* theology has begun to surge through the lifeblood of the Church of England. It has enabled the Church of England to see herself once again as flowing from the love of the Trinitarian God and being sent out by him into the world. *Missio dei* has infused creative ways for the Church to reach people with the love of Church. Fresh Expressions of Church are trying to interface with a rapidly changing world and parish churches are encouraged to do what they do best through the lens of mission. As Philip Giddings reviewed in 2010, MSC is energising and enlivening the Church of England “in the parishes and dioceses and on the mission orientation of the church as a whole”.³⁰⁵

By energizing the Church to be mission-shaped has placed mission firmly in the nature of the Church. Mission is for every member of the Church and not just for overseas missionaries or professional evangelists. As Henri Nouwen rather eloquently puts it,

When we live our lives as missions, we become aware that there is a home from which we are sent and to which we have to return. We start thinking about ourselves as people who are in a faraway country to bring a message or work on a project, but only for a certain amount of time. When the message has been delivered and the project is finished, we want to return home to give an account of our mission and to rest from our labours. One of the most important spiritual disciplines is to develop the knowledge that the years of our lives are years ‘on a mission’.³⁰⁶

MSC has made a major contribution to the Church of England in this regard. It has helped enable the Church to see itself in terms of being on a missionary journey with God and participating with God in his mission on earth. All of these positive insights are tainted, however, by MSC’s lack of balance in seeing *missio dei* in terms of worship, which we will explore in MSC’s Kingdom of God theology.

³⁰⁵ Philip Giddings (Chair) Mission and Public Affairs Council, *A Mixed Economy for Mission – the Journey so Far, Mission-Shaped Church: Follow Up* (<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/39126/gs1761.pdf>), 31/03/11.

³⁰⁶ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey: Reflections for every Day of the Year* (London, Darton, Longman and Tood Ltd., 1996), 132.

3.14 Kingdom of God

Hull believes one of the fundamental theological weaknesses of MSC is “its failure to distinguish clearly between the church and the mission of God”.³⁰⁷ This he deems, limits MSC’s ecclesiology and restricts the scope of Christian mission.³⁰⁸ The Church might be created by the mission of God, but does this mean that the Church is mission? The Church is not the fulfilment of mission, but an agent in the Kingdom mission of God.³⁰⁹ To clarify, Hull differentiates between essence/purpose and requirement of adequate functioning. The essence of mission is to bring in the Kingdom, to help in this, God has a functioning Church.³¹⁰ There is also confusion about whether the Church is a sign or an agent of mission and/or the Kingdom.³¹¹ The proper distinction argues Hull is between the church as agent and the Kingdom as goal:

The church is a mission project, not the mission itself; the Kingdom of God is the object of the mission, and the life of Jesus Christ continues to be manifest through the church as it witnesses to, embodies and proclaims the Kingdom.³¹²

Reminiscent of the report he seeks to critique, Hull believes the best way for the Church to achieve this goal is to be “forgetful of itself”.³¹³ Both Hull and MSC advocate a theology of self-denial/self-death for the sake of the Kingdom. Can such a clearly defined distinction be made between the Kingdom and the Church? Perhaps most strikingly, MSC describes the Kingdom as a “divine activity whereas the Church is a human community”.³¹⁴ This view contradicts a *missio dei* theology of the divinely instituted Church as set out by MSC previously. Surely the Church is more than just a human community and agent of the Kingdom? The Church was founded by Christ and created and sustained by the Holy Spirit. The Church is a covenanted people of God, the Body of Christ, the bride of Christ, a holy temple, etc. These are not just images of the Church, but what the Church is. It is humility

³⁰⁷ Hull, *Theological Response*, 1.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ MSC, 34; 85.

³¹² Hull, *Theological Response*, 5. Hull reiterates this point in Croft, *Mission-shaped Questions*, 114.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ Hull, in Croft, *Mission-shaped Questions*, 114.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

to admit weakness and sin, but it is a false humility to give what has been divinely given by God. Although the Church must acknowledge it does not have a monopoly on the works of God – the world speaks of God. The Church remains the principle *habitus* of the Kingdom. It is the herald of the Kingdom and the first fruits of the Kingdom, the “true universal community in embryo”,³¹⁵ and a foretaste of what is to come. By underplaying the Church’s mystical quality as the Body of Christ, MSC secularises the Church as agent. Its primary identity becomes the work of mission, as Martyn Atkins articulates, “being mission minded is the highest and proper calling of the church, and through it the Church finds its best reason for being”.³¹⁶ Is this true? Is not the highest calling of the Church to love and worship God? In the words of Alexander Schmemmann, the first and basic definition of every person is to be a priest who “stands in the centre of the world and unifies it in his act of blessing God”.³¹⁷ As *homo adorans* we are created as liturgical beings to praise and revere God.³¹⁸ Contrary to Hull’s interpretation,³¹⁹ the order of the Greatest Commandment is to love God in heart, mind, soul, and body *first* and then love your neighbour as yourself.³²⁰ Only through an attuned devoted life can we be transformed to love our neighbour as our self. Doxology then becomes not just an event that happens in worship, but rather it constitutes a whole way of life.³²¹ Mission flows from having a loving relationship with God. Or to put it another way, loving God is mission and out this love we are sent in mission to the world. In terms of the Anglican liturgical dismissal, sent mission is the liturgy after the Liturgy, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. In the name of Christ amen”.³²²

In the need to rebalance the scales between mission and worship, MSC has unduly put too much weight on mission at the neglect of worship. Mission needs to be *owned* again in the Church of England but it must not override the centrality of worship. Mission will one day cease, but worship will continue throughout eternity as the Church militant joins the Church victorious in the consummated eschatological Kingdom of glory and praise.

³¹⁵ Henri de Lubac cited by Davison and Millbank, *For the Parish*, 63.

³¹⁶ Martyn Atkins, ‘What is the essence of the Church?’ in Croft, *Mission-shaped Questions*, 22.

³¹⁷ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (New York, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973), 15.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ Hull in Croft, *Mission-shaped Questions*, 114-117.

³²⁰ Luke 10.27.

³²¹ Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998), 39.

³²² Archbishop’s Council, *Common Worship*, 227.

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 Summary of research

In this study we have considered how MSC is changing Church of England missio-ecclesiology in the light of classical Anglicanism. In Chapter two we introduced the theme by painting a broad brushstroke of recent missio-ecclesiologies as presented by William's "Six approaches to Future Church" and Walker and Bretherton's "Four Streams of contemporary Church". This served to place MSC within the various typologies of emerging Church. The value of this approach is it illustrated the missio-ecclesiological trends from which MSC is but one way. Through comparison and contrast we were able to classify and place MSC within a missio-ecclesiological scale and matrix. Although it was useful to see MSC in the broad perspective, we conceded that this approach lacks attention to detail and does not always take into account anomalies and contradictions. We also recognised that such categorisation falls under the modernist desire to create order and systems, which has come under criticism by the postmodern critique.

We considered MSC within the paradigm shift between modernity and postmodernity. The Paradigm Theory forwarded by Kuhn tended to favour entrepreneurs over conventionalists. In MSC terms, this was interpreted as the favouring of Fresh Expression pioneers over inherited Church conservatives. In the Paradigm Theory advocated by Küng and Bosch a more nuanced view was presented which endorsed a loyalty to the past. By mapping the Paradigm Theory over MSC, we were able to see some of the anxieties and conflicts between traditionalist and innovators within the bigger picture of societal change. This highlighted how various groups can experience and see the world from completely different and conflicting perspectives. Paradigm Theory also revealed how miscommunication can trigger emotive reactions and personal attacks, resulting in polemical and confrontational language. This was aptly illustrated by the publishing of the book "For the Parish" and the various responses it has received.

Against this backdrop and with the research question in mind, we began the main focus of study probing different aspects of MSC's missio-ecclesiology. We saw how MSC's methodology is laden with a context bias, as verified by the structure and argument of the report. The double listening theology of MSC was discerned as being tilted over to context as *a priori*. This position was further backed up by MSC's reliance upon sociological analysis. Giving the secularisation thesis as an example, we gave caution to using sociology as the point of departure for missio-ecclesiological changes. A more balanced picture of double listening was presented using the liberal apologetic of classical Anglicanism.

MSC's contextual theology was unpacked and some of its theological influences appraised. Special attention was given to Liberation Theology as being presupposed in MSC's contextual theology and shaper of its missio-ecclesiology. We discovered how MSC following Liberation Theology, had made an epistemological break away from faith seeking understanding to faith seeking action. This was further investigated by looking at the Pastoral Cycle and the *world as experienced* theology of MSC. In this process we entered into the theological pivotal point of MSC, which reflected the wider debate concerning the use of experience as a source in theology. MSC's quadrilateral synthesis was then challenged using the classical Anglican synthesis.

Having journey to MSC's theological centre, we began to explore how this theology is being manifested in the mixed economy and especially Fresh Expressions. This was reviewed with Rowan William's question of maturity in mind, as interpreted through von Hügel's thesis and Celtic/Roman paradigms. This theme was further developed by looking at the difference between "to proclaim afresh" and Fresh Expressions. This naturally led to questions related to Anglican self-identity, the pressing issue of post-denominationalism, and MSC's dying to live theology.

The Protestant nature of MSC was explored with reference to open-evangelical, Methodist, and Pentecostal/Charismatic influences. We continued to explore this theme by contrasting MSC's reformed theology against a catholic understanding of missio-ecclesiology. An

example of this contrast was highlighted by MSC's preference of innovation over tradition. In response to this, a reformed-catholic perspective was proposed as a way towards *via media*.

Missio dei was celebrated as MSC's most positive contribution to Church of England missio-ecclesiology. Finally, some of the ambiguities of MSC's Kingdom of God theology were examined before ending with a doxology.

4.2 "How is MSC changing Church of England missio-ecclesiology?"

From the results of this research, some of the ways MSC is changing Church of England missio-ecclesiology in the light of classical Anglicanism can be summarised as follows:

The rapid implementation of MSC and the missio-ecclesiological changes it has spurred is contrary to the classical Anglican method of allowing time to critically assess. The speed of these changes reflects the spirit of the age and the liberationist urgency. It also reflects the revisionist trend that has taken place in the Church of England in recent years. The accommodation to the culture is further reflected by the context driven methodology of MSC. The classical Anglican hermeneutic of giving the inherited tradition priority in double listening is now weighted towards context in MSC. This is substantiated by MSC's unquestioning appeal to sociological analysis as a means and justification for changing the Church of England.

Following in the footsteps of such theologies as Liberation, MSC has challenged the institutional Church to be more attentive to the needs of ordinary people of God. The episcopally led and synodically governed Church of England is being flattened out by MSC's endorsement of a *bottom up* theology. This is in keeping with the democratisation pattern of moving power away from institutions into the hands of the people. MSC's lack of attention to a theology of ordained ministry is an example of a move away from sacramental classical Anglicanism towards a more secularised equality. Classical theological concepts and words are being preferred or replaced by those found in the marketplace.

The contextualisation model of MSC is shaped by a Liberation methodology that supports orthopraxis as the point of departure for theological reflection. Although MSC is not the only voice advocating this move away from classical Anglicanism, the fact that it is sanctioned by the Church of England gives it weight of influence. A significant epistemological break has occurred compared to the classical framework of understanding truth. By giving contextualised human experience the status of *locus theologicus* means the classical three-source *loci theologici* has been profoundly changed. By adding experience to the Anglican synthesis has not only created a new Anglican synthesis, it has rewritten the whole equation. The *mission-shaped-experience* source permeates the new Anglican synthesis where Scripture is mission-contextualised, tradition is mission-relevant, and reason mission-revitalised. Even worship is not immune from the hermeneutic of mission as *a priori*.

With the Anglican synthesis altered and the Anglican mind changed, fresh directions have a new missio-ecclesiological point of reference, and a new theological and rational basis upon which to build. MSC signals the launch of the Church of England into uncharted waters. Missio-ecclesiological structural changes have taken place to allow these Fresh Expressions of church the freedom to explore at the interface of mission. Significantly, these Fresh Expressions are no longer seen by MSC as just outreach projects of the inherited Church, but as new ways of *being* Church. This move means MSC has planted a new missio-ecclesiology into the Church of England where two economies run side by side, the inherited economy and the Fresh Expression economy. This challenges the classical concept of parish as the central system, and most importantly raises questions concerning the classical nature of the Church of England. While MSC argues that these two economies are in equal partnership as a single mixed economy, MSC promotes Fresh Expressions as the pioneers of the Church of tomorrow. Moving from marginalisation, to legitimisation, Fresh Expressions are now centre stage in the reforming Church of England. These are uncertain times, and the ubiquity of whether the Church of England is a single mixed economy or two a mixed economies remains.

With MSC emphasis upon the present context and innovation, Catholic heritage is assuming a lesser role. MSC is changing Church of England missio-ecclesiology toward a more Protestant theology in contrast to the *via media* reformed-catholic stance advocated by classical Anglicanism. Most pertinently, the issue of post-denominationalism hovers over the whole MSC debate as a decisive threat to the survival of classical Anglicanism. Certainly MSC's theology of *dying to live* could be interpreted as a *dying* Church of England is *to live* as a mission-shaped Church. Only time will tell if post-denominationalism will be the decisive change to Church of England missio-ecclesiology.

It is arguable whether MSC's *missio dei* theology has changed Church of England missio-ecclesiology. *Missio dei* is not in contrast to classical Anglicanism, but rather it has made explicit what was implicit within its formularies and practice. Unquestionably, it has made a very positive contribution and has helped the Church of England to see itself in the Trinitarian life again. MSC has ignited the flame of mission latent within the Church and is helping the Church to pioneer new initiatives and see all its activities through the lens of a mission.

4.3 Reflections

The methodological intention of this research was *fides quaerens intellectum* and a testing of MSC's missio-ecclesiology in the light of classical Anglicanism. At first glance MSC seems extremely plausible and compatible to Church of England missio-ecclesiology. There is an energy, passion and creativity that leaps from the pages. The heartfelt goal of MSC is a genuine and commendable desire to renew the Church of England in its missionary calling. Rooting this in *missio dei* has reinvigorated the missionary identity and call for every member of the Church. MSC has helped move mission from the peripheries of Church life to the centre. Taking seriously dropping Church attendance rates and the missionary calling, MSC has tried to find ways to connect with an ever-changing culture to proclaim the Gospel. Evangelism has been dusted down and new ways are being explored to build bridges to the non-churched and de-churched. MSC has forced the Church of England to take a good look at itself and reevaluate what it means to be a Church shaped by mission. In short, there is so much to commend in MSC.

While supporting these positive contributions, an apophatic tone deployed in this research as a way to unravel some of MSC's theological inner tensions and irresolutions. In its enthusiasm to re-energise the Church of England for the 21st Century, MSC has arguably overcompensated at the cost of losing and/or changing some innately Anglican principles. Whether this is welcomed or resisted is part of the ongoing discussion. Perhaps there is a middle-way, which can maintain the missionary fervour of MSC while incorporating the wisdom of classical Anglicanism – a re-inhabitation of the classical Anglican way, while keeping afresh the missionary call. How this might take shape could be the subject of a follow-up study. For example, this could take the form of a new research which considers how classical Anglicanism might help shape a Church of England for mission in the 21st Century. Some of the areas for consideration in this study might include a: Contemplation of the classical Anglican synthesis as an effective source, theological method and practice; Continued theological reflection about reformed-catholic Anglican missio-ecclesiology and how this could be expressed in the 21st Century Church; Revisiting of the mixed economy in the light of Anglican identity and whether Fresh Expressions are churches or mission outreaches; Clarification of the differences between Church Plants Fresh Expressions and Fresh Expressions as special services and/or mission initiatives; Re-evaluation of the difference between Fresh Expressions and proclaiming afresh; Reflection on whether ineffectiveness of some parish-based mission is due to other factors other than structural;³²³ Development of a more integrated view of mission and ministry;³²⁴ Provision of a more balanced formation of ministers nurtured in classical Anglican traditions³²⁵ alongside pastoral training that equips for mission and ministry; Consideration of the differences between a “Godward as well as a ‘humanward’ orientation in mission”;³²⁶ Review of the principle *lex orandi, lex credendi* in shaping faith and order.; In summary, a vision of a deep Church which re-imagines in memory and hope, in tradition and mission, and in an ongoing conversation of a past *living* to build the future.³²⁷

³²³ Avis, *Book review*, 55.

³²⁴ See for example how mission is integrated with ministry in some of the ecumenical documents, such as the Porvoo Common Statement (1993), *Together in Mission and Ministry* (<http://www.porvoochurches.org/whatis/resources-0201-english.php>), visited 10/05/11. Also Avis, *A Ministry Shaped by Mission* (London, T&T Clark International, 2005).

³²⁵ For example, studying the Anglican divines, the Historic Formularies, key Anglican documents, Canon law, Anglican history and theology, and Anglican liturgical formation, etc.

³²⁶ Avis, *A Ministry Shaped by Mission* (London, T&T Clark International, 2005), 1.

³²⁷ After Avis, *Identity of Anglicanism*, 183.

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6.0 Appendix

6.1 Definition of Church of England and Anglican

Often Anglican and Church of England are confused, and for good reason. The English word Anglican is derived from the Latin *Anglicanus* meaning “English”.³²⁸ The Church of England was “The church of the English people”, *Ecclesia Anglorum*. In the seventh century, Pope Gregory the Great used *Ecclesia Anglorum* in his letters to Augustine of Canterbury.³²⁹ *Ecclesia Angliae*, “the Church of England” is found in the writings of Anselm (11th Century). The expression *Ecclesia Anglicana* is used by Thomas à Becket in the 12th century, and *Anglicana Ecclesia* in the Magna Carta (1215).³³⁰ These terms denoted the geographical region of the Catholic Church in England (and sometimes Wales), *Anglicana provincial*. With the breakaway of the Church in England from Roman control (1534), *Anglicana Ecclesia* came under the governance of the King (Henry VIII).³³¹ With the dawn of English expansion overseas and colonization (16th Century onwards) the English Church was exported abroad. Through this process of contextualisation, gradually the term “Church of England” needed redefining in the foreign soil.³³² Suggestions were Reformed Catholic, Episcopal, and Protestant Episcopal, yet the word Anglican won through in the end as the generic term for all of the churches.³³³ The Church of England is now part of a family of Anglican churches called the Anglican Communion (not the Anglican Church).

6.2 Personal influences

My background for wanting to write about Church of England mission-shaped ecclesiology has many interlocking aspects. At the age of 21 I became a Christian. The Church of England

³²⁸ Avis, *Identity of Anglicanism*, 19.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Robert J. Wright, ‘Anglicanism, *Ecclesia Anglicana*, and Anglican: An Easy on Terminology’ in Sykes, *Unashamed Anglicanism* (London, Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1996), 479.

³³¹ Avis, *Identity of Anglicanism*, 20.

³³² For example, episcopacy was abolished in the Established Church of Scotland (1690), and those who remained loyal to the bishops became a separate free church “Scottish Episcopal Church”. With the War of Independence in America, a General Convention agreed a constitution and canons for the “Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States” (known now as the Episcopal Church of the USA). For a more in-depth study of this development, see Colin Podmore, *Aspects of Anglican Identity* (London, Church House Publishing, 2005), 26-41.

³³³ As such, we can talk about Anglican mission-shaped ecclesiology, but more accurately Anglican mission-shaped *ecclesiologies*.

became my mother church of discipleship (mainly shaped by the evangelical-charismatic wing). My radical conversion to the Christian faith left me with a profound thankfulness to God for his grace and mercy. I became an evangelist for Christ and was led into youth ministries. Mission was simply part of my identity and practice as a new Christian.

In my thirties I moved overseas to Israel/Palestine and completed discipleship and missionary training programmes through Youth with a Mission (YWAM). It was in Israel/Palestine that I began to be open to the rich tradition of the Church, as I explored different churches and sacred places. I became more rooted in Christian history. This gave me a profound sense of identity, that I was part of a family present and *past*. I connected with Deep Church. These seeds of discovery were later explored in more depth through my time at theological college.

During my studies I furthered my interest in the historical Church, for example, I explored Orthodoxy through a dissertation titled, “Why are Anglo-American Protestants becoming Orthodox?” As part of my MA Degree, I wrote essays on: “What authority does Tradition have as a source for Christian doctrine?” And, “Is the episcopate, according to the Fathers, the *esse* of the Church?” These studies and various conversations with fellow students and teachers, revealed the importance of Tradition in the shaping of Christian life. As one of my previous tutors writes, “We should not do ecclesiology (thinking theologically about the Church), without giving weight to the reality of the Church as it has been in history”.³³⁴

Alongside my interest in tradition, I have become acquainted with fresh expressions of Church, through college worship, church placements and later my curacy.³³⁵ For example, during my curacy, I was the team leader for a café service called “Thirst”. This monthly Thirst café service was held in the church hall, whereupon we transformed the room into a café lounge. We addressed contemporary issues through art, drama, graphics, ritual, word,

³³⁴ Bartlett, Alan, *A Passionate Balance: The Anglican Tradition* (London, Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 2007), 32.

³³⁵ In the Church of England a curacy is part of the Initial Ministerial Education (IME) for training ministers and normally follows the completion of two to three years at theological college. A curacy is the second stage of ministerial training under the supervisory care of a senior priest and the Director of Training (acting on behalf of the bishop). According to the Church of England, at its heart IME is: “Equipping and developing the **Church's ministers** in order that they might begin a ministry which may stimulate and enable the **whole Church** to participate more fully in the **mission of God** in the world.” (Bold type theirs). See the Church of England official website, <http://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/ministry/ministerial-education-and-development/initial-ministerial-education.aspx> (visited 17/03/11).

etc. Our mission statement was: “We are an English speaking, mission-shaped community that seeks to *be* and *share* the Gospel of Christ”. Our vision was threefold:

- **Evangelistic** – to reach our present generation for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.³³⁶
- **Engaging** – to create a friendly *space* and *language* that is assessable for sharing, exploring and expressing faith for the contemporary generation.
- **Deepening** – to give opportunities for the contemporary generation to mature in the Christian faith.



The Thirst Logo³³⁷

The experience of the Thirst initiative has continued to leave me with a nagging question: “How can the Church proclaim afresh the faith in our generation and remain faithful to her traditions?”³³⁸ In other words, “How can we be a mission-shaped, deep Church of England?”

³³⁶ Especially the “non-churched and de-churched”. This classification is based upon the research of Philip Richter and Leslie Francis, “Gone but not Forgotten”, cited by Church of England’s Mission and Public Affairs Council with Cray, Graham (Chair), *Mission-shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London, Church House Publishing, 2004), 37-39.

³³⁷ The naming of the service “Thirst” and the design of a logo was in keeping with marketing theory and the importance *branding* to sell a product. Later it was explored to expand Thirst as a concept with different expressions such as “Thirst Cafe”, “Thirst Alternative Worship”, and “Thirst Happenings”.

³³⁸ Based upon the preface of the “The Declaration of Assent”, Archbishop’s Council, xi.