A Critical Exploration of the Ministry of a White Priest within a Black-Majority Congregation

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Stephen M Edwards

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Abstract

Many Church of England parishes with Black-majority congregations have a White parish priest. Clergy undergo mandatory racism awareness training yet do not necessarily understand cultural difference or the ways in which their priestly authority and their Whiteness may collude to have significant implications for ministerial privilege and power. What little study of these issues has taken place, is predominantly from a protestant, American viewpoint. The author's reflection as a White priest ministering in a Black majority congregation in Manchester focussed on his experiences of pastoral ministry, congregational participation and the expected role of the priest. Three questions arose from this reflection: in what ways are White priests aware of their Whiteness? How do White priests adapt their model of ministry according to their awareness? And in what ways do Black congregation members respond to any adaptation?

Using an action-research methodology a conversation was set up between the priest's experience and a focus group from his congregation. Work on White ministers' typologies by leading British Black Theologian, Anthony Reddie, was used to present the author's experiences through three models: pastoral, organisational and radical approaches to ministry. These results formed the basis of a trial training workshop with newly ordained priests to test the assumptions which lay behind my original research questions.

Within the three typologies of minister (pastoral, organisational, radical), the author identified ways in which the priest's power and knowledge influenced practice, and also ways in which congregations assumed clergy to receive training intervention, and from where this knowledge attainment might come. Alongside observations about ministers' inherent power and the resourcing of ministers from external and internal sources, the research also highlighted frustrations arising from normalising White experience above that of the Black majority. The results confirmed the assumptions behind the questions: White clergy, aware of their own colour, culture and privilege adapt their ministry in different ways and with varying success.

The research presents significant contributions to the understanding of how Black congregations perceive White ministers and how such clergy locate themselves within a different culture. Three distinct outcomes were identified: the need for intentional signposting for White clergy to be resourced by their congregations and from external sources, the liberation of Black congregational voices to enable full participation, and the necessity of acknowledging past hurts and the need for reconciliation. These three are brought together in an example surrounding the interventions required for clergy and congregations involved in the appointments process of White clergy to Black majority congregations within the Church of England.

Declaration

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The Author

The author of this thesis graduated from Lancaster University in 1993 with a BSc in Chemistry with Polymer Science before attending Westcott House theological college in Cambridge prior to his ordination to the diaconate in 1996 and the priesthood in 1997. During this time he studied for a Certificate in Theology for Ministry (CTM, 1993) from the University of Cambridge Faculty of Divinity and a MA in Pastoral Theology from Anglia Ruskin University (1999). His ministry posts have included Assistant Curate in the Parish of Colwyn Bay (1996-1999) and Priest in Charge of Bryn-y-Maen (1999-2002), both in the Church in Wales Diocese of St Asaph, and Priest-in-Charge of St Agnes' Longsight (2002-2012), Team Rector of Wythenshawe (2012-present) and Area Dean of Withington (2013-present) within the Church of England Diocese of Manchester.

Research Progression:

Summary of Thesis and Portfolio

The work collected in this volume is presented in a different order from which it was undertaken. This short introduction will help the reader to understand the development of the research through its various components and how the portfolio is now arranged in this volume.

The main Thesis [Part A] is the result of a longer work of exploration about my professional context and experience of ministry. The journey before this point is explained in this brief summary and is contained in the supporting material of Part B which was completed before the research project was undertaken. As such it represents an earlier stage of my reflection and exploration of the issues which shaped the final research question.

The initial research question centred on my position and experience as priest-in-charge of a Church of England parish in inner city Manchester. Although the neighbourhood had changed significantly in the preceding years and having a population registering at nearly 50% Muslim, the church itself had retained its strength and vibrancy and was seen as such by both members and visitors. A number of unique features about the church building, congregation and parish prompted me to ask some questions about what made this parish work, and how.

My initial investigations centred on the importance of the parish system within the Church of England and in particular how parish ministry was important to this particular congregation. The congregation is nearly 60% Black and 40% White in its membership, which although not unusual for an urban parish, certainly contrasted with my own previous ministerial experience. The building is interesting and unusual and it was also clear that it had a positive effect on the worshipping community. The congregation was particularly warm and welcoming – not just to visitors and strangers, but also to ideas and change.

My starting point was to perform a literature search [Part B Section 1] around these topics – focussing on the parish system, hospitality and servanthood, and the growing area of British Black theology. My research led me to conclude that whilst I could explain or understand some of the ways in which the parish ‘worked’ there was a significant way in which I could only begin to understand. I was becoming more aware of my skin colour. I wondered to what extent my ministry had changed and developed as a result of this growing awareness of whiteness. And if I was developing an awareness of this, how many other clergy were in similar positions?

It was this question that I explored in an article entitled, ‘Ministry in Black and White’ [Part B Section 2]. The work on this article sharpened my research and started to narrow some of the questions of the initial enquiry. Discovering just how little work had been done in this area, and by making comparison with other professions and subjects where some research had been undertaken, I was able to draw conclusions about how I might develop my original question about

the parish and congregation. It was clear that two questions had arisen: to what extent do white clergy recognise their whiteness (and its associated power and privilege), and in what ways does this consciously or sub-consciously affect their ministry?

This more focussed approach to analysing my ministry and experience became the basis for the research proposal [Part B Section 3] and it was there that the questions, approach, method and restrictions of such a project were worked out. As the research question developed and the challenges of fulfilling the original research task became apparent the final research question and method required reworking. Thus this section contains a preliminary outline of the research proposal and the main thesis itself contains details of the final research project.

Not surprisingly this research proposal had moved away from my original enquiry quite significantly though even within the progression there had been notable connections between my research and my ministry. These interactions influenced both research and ministry and became a place of spiritual and theological discovery. The final part of this portfolio [Part B Section 4] provides a commentary on that journey and offers a reflection on the nature of practice based research in a Christian ministerial setting.

Note: *Throughout this work I choose to capitalise both Black and White as this is the preference of Anthony Reddie and many other authors quoted within this volume. A comment on this is presented at the beginning of Part B, Section 2.*

Part A

A Critical Exploration of the Ministry of a White Priest within a Black-Majority Congregation

Chapter One

Introduction

‘This place works.’

Notwithstanding the bias that people may have for a project, workplace, or in this case parish, for which they have leadership, people are often able to identify whether a particular thing works or not. For something as subjective and spiritually dependent as ministry amongst a faith based community this instinctive feeling is less easily tested. However it was not only my own hunch that the parish and its ministry of which I was a part, worked, but was often reflected in the comments of congregation members, visiting clergy and external observers. Aside from the feelings of rightness and the encouragement that this brought to all the members of the congregation, something else was needed to test this intuition and to ask not just why it was that ‘this place works’, but a deeper set of questions about what was meant by the idea of ‘this place’ and what it was that ‘worked’. Inevitably a consideration of ‘place’ led to thoughts about both the geographical and cultural setting and also the members who made up the ministry which I was seeking to explore.[1]

At the heart of my initial reflections were a growing understanding of my own development in ministry and distinct awareness within the congregation of a particular ethos of cultural diversity and the challenges thus created and the joys it enabled. I doubted I was the only priest exploring these themes and wanted to seek what other clergy were experiencing. If there were common experiences, might they be shared more widely to usefully inform training and formation?

In his study of churches facing difficulties within the Diocese of Manchester, John Atherton outlined two criteria for churches facing acute difficulties: one was based on an average Sunday attendance of less than 25 and the other an electoral roll less than 51 (Atherton 2003, p100). His study looks at churches in the light of their increasing marginalisation which he states comes from two distinct areas – the ‘double whammy’:

> Our detailed work in Manchester allows and requires precisely that our continued engagement with urban church survival focuses more and more on the connection between marginalized communities and churches. For local churches in potentially terminal decline in the Diocese of Manchester are also significantly located in communities enduring endemic marginalization. That is what I mean by the double whammy of marginalization and religion. (Atherton 2003, p94)

[1] Exploring these themes would also be important if there had been an assumption that the place, the parish, did not ‘work’ but for the purposes of this research I have assumed that the ministry and mission of this particular parish church did ‘work’ For a fuller exploration of these ideas of assessing success or positivity in ministry see Part B, Section 4.

Atherton goes on to outline areas of the diocese where these types of parish are more prevalent, stating that 30 of the 42 parishes identified fall within the Manchester archdeaconry – the location of my parish. Whilst the attendance and electoral roll figures for my parish did not fit exactly with his criteria they were only just above and the parish fitted perfectly the characteristics of typical inner city deprived communities experiencing 'enduring endemic marginalization'. Added to this was a sense of disconnect experienced by the predominantly Asian community surrounding the church, at the time making up at least 65% of the parish.[2]

And yet the church community was active, not only in its worship and spiritual life, but also in social action and outreach. At the heart of the parish was a sense of openness and generous hospitality which sought to put into practice the beliefs expressed through its liturgical life.[3]

Although there was an apparent agreement between the congregation and myself as parish priest regarding the relative coherence of the parish's ministry, mission and the variety of cultural factors represented, the key enquiry needed to explore the relationships between the perceived ministerial style of present and previous clergy and the extent to which cultural heritage (spiritual, religious and practical) was valued or ignored by the parish community working together in Christian ministry. In order to set the scene it is important to outline briefly my own background, and that of the parish's diversity, before outlining the questions that arose as the impetus for the research contained within this thesis.[4]

Parish Experience

I was licensed as priest in charge of the parish of St Agnes' Longsight in 2002 six years after my ordination. Previously I had held two posts – one as an assistant curate and another a parish priest, in almost exclusively White church communities on the north Wales coast. One of these parishes was a town centre ministry with multiple centres of worship and the other was a rural community on the edge of the same town. Although predominantly English speaking there was also a sizeable Welsh speaking community and some services were held in the Welsh language. To all intents and purposes this was the single most important aspect of diversity recognised in these parishes, although there was also some acknowledgment of the tensions between those who were considered to be indigenous residents and those who had made their homes in north Wales having moved from various northern English cities. These two characteristics of language and origin did not seem of significance during my time in these parishes, but later during my time in Manchester I valued the insights that these gave me, and I shall return to this later when exploring ideas of Anglican identity.[5]

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[2] This was the figure from the 2001 census which was current during my time in the parish.
[3] The themes of hospitality and servanthood are explored in more detail in the 'Literature Review', Part B, Section 1.
[4] The outline that follows should be read alongside the biographical details contained in Part B, Section 1 and Section 4.
[5] See Chapter Two: My Ministry Experience

Although on being appointed to the parish of St Agnes I was aware of the multi-cultural nature of the congregation, and indeed the neighbourhood in which it was situated, there had been very little valuing of this in the parish profile and interview process beforehand. This inadequacy, together with my own inexperience or not placing any particular value on this, meant that I did not fully understand the significant differences that I would encounter. It was only over the course of the first few months that I encountered variations to my own practice and my own understanding.

In time I began to realise that I was in a parish which was working with different assumptions from those I was used to in the areas of worship, pastoral care and priestly roles. On the whole this was an energising experience which enabled ministry – mine and the congregation's – to flourish. Whatever it was that made this place work was good and I began to wonder why other parishes could not follow the same practices. The breadth of experience available within the parish and the apparent coherence of such a gathered group of Christians seemed to suggest a rich foundation for shared ministry.

However there were less positive feelings around which it took rather more time to become aware of and acknowledge and understand. Although there were few demonstrative expressions of unease, as my relationship with Black members of the congregation deepened in trust and familiarity so I was party to frustrations about assumptions, stereotypes and imbalances of power which were otherwise unacknowledged by the predominantly White leadership team.[6]

And so asking the question why 'this place works' led to a series of enquiries about the nature of ministry in a multi-cultural congregation and my own role in guiding and shaping this ministry. To what extent were my own assumptions hindering a more integrated and accessible vision for ministry, and in trying to listen and involve different opinions how did I give voice to the voiceless? I became increasingly more aware of the privilege of my position in hearing frustrations and imbalances, and so moved towards an exploration of my own privileges and assumptions as a White priest in a very different context.

Time to Reflect

During the progress of this research and the collection of the first part of the data I changed posts. At first this seemed an unfortunate change in circumstances as an important part of the course of this study was to reflect upon and analyse my own experience. Moving to a parish which was of a very different cultural and racial community at first seemed to cause a difficulty.

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[6] In Church of England parishes churchwardens are elected by parishioners as the Bishop's officers. Together with the elected members of the Parochial Church Council they work together with the parish priest 'in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.' (Church of England 2013, Section 6.1)

However the distance, both geographical and emotional, between the initial parish and its questions and my present ministry enabled a more objective reflection than might at first have been appropriate or possible. Appropriate because, as I shall show later, I became more aware of the influence of my findings on my ministry and parish. These were mostly in a positive way but it was harder to see clear cut lines between pastoral and research situations. My current parish and ministry situation has given me a new starting place from which to view the ten years of ministry at my last parish. Much has changed.

The reflective role of parish clergy is at the heart of ordained ministry both for deacons and priests. In the ordination services of the Church of England, the bishop declares to the candidates that they are to ‘watch for the signs of God's new creation’, ‘to discern … the gifts of all God's people’ and ‘to preach the word in season and out of season’ (Church of England, 2011). These exhortations, along with the more practical tasks associated with the ordained ministry, require study and reflection and clergy are required to set aside regular periods of time for formal reflection.

Importance of Identity

The new post has taken me away from the inner city multicultural community of my initial question to a large outer housing estate with a predominantly White resident community. This has brought me back into a more monochrome environment but with an increased awareness of my White culture, heritage and assumptions. It is interesting to reflect on which of the methods of ministry I learnt or developed in my last parish that I now employ with or without adaptation in my present post.

It is important for the understanding of this research to know something about me as the author as much of this work centres on identity whether individual or that of a group. I am a White male born in England but, apart from early childhood and my time at university and theological college, most of my formative years were spent in Wales and therefore as a member of the Anglican Church in Wales. This is an important factor in considerations about cultural background and assumptions which are at the heart of this project. I explore this more fully in Chapter Two where I explore the nature of the Anglican Communion and the presumption within England that other provinces are simply ‘the Church of England abroad’.

In contemplating the potential limitations of my own identity in understanding the group identity of the parish, I explored some of the elements affecting my role as a parish priest. Amongst the plethora of influences and factors that define and shape me as a minister are my gender, my colour and my status as an ordained priest. All three of these were evident in my own experience and were taken as givens. Whilst I might seek to restrain the privileges and power that came from such positions I could not change or annul them. The fact remained that I was a White male priest working among a predominantly female, majority Black and exclusively lay church community.

Two of these factors had not changed from my previous ministry posts – by its nature parish priest ministry is alongside the lay members of the local church and it is a fact that there is a predominance of women amongst the congregations of the Church of England.[7] However, it was my colour which was now the main difference.

It should be acknowledged that there are also interesting discussions to be had about how Black congregation members spoke about how they related to, or imagined relating to, clergy of different gender and/or colour. Although anecdotal, nevertheless I recall a number of conversations whereby a hierarchy of preferred colour/gender combinations for their parish priest were expressed. Of the four possible combinations White male was most favoured and Black male least. In order to root this research project in my own experience it was necessary to set aside these questions of gender and concentrate on my own Whiteness. However I explore these limitations and the choices that led to the research criteria in greater detail later.

For the researcher, identity cannot be separated from influence.[8] Who I am shapes what I see and what I presume. These biases are brought to the situation before my question is formed and then continue to shape the research from question through data gathering to analysis. It is this power of personal identity that leads to Heather Walton's conclusion that, as a White researcher exploring racism within the Methodist Church to say, 'I won't do it again' (Walton 1986, p17). Walton acknowledges that such preferences informed by identity are equally present for both herself as a White researcher and her Black subjects and their experiences of racism. Whilst the researcher must make every effort to confront and balance such influences they cannot be denied and therefore the researcher authenticates her findings by recognising and setting forth her identity as a foundation on which the reflection on practice is presented:

> The ethical dilemmas for a White person undertaking research in a multi-racial context do not end once the data have been collected. I was very conscious when working alongside a group of young Black women (who were both personal friends and subjects) that what I was going to write about them in my research report would not fully correspond to what they would say about themselves if they were given the opportunity. My priorities were not theirs. (Walton 1986, p15)

Questioning my Experience

These reflections on my identity and the reflection on my ministry within a Black majority church provided a framework for exploring changes to my ministry and my developing awareness of the inherent use and potential misuse of power in exercising my role as a parish priest. The questions I

[7] A 2014 survey of the Church of England found that 59% of regular churchgoers were women. See Church of England 2015, p2.
[8] For a fuller exploration of the influence of identity on research see Ellis (2003).

sought to answer came from a progression of thought: most Black congregations have White clergy; racism awareness is not race awareness or cultural awareness; Whiteness is not an issue for most White clergy; White privilege and ministerial power collude to affect pastoral leadership.

Each of these four statements were stepping stones to the questions that this research project seeks to answer and because at least two of them were my own assumptions this thesis represents the testing of these against the experience of my congregation and newly ordained clergy still in a process of formation and moves towards suggestions of how this experience might influence other ministers in reflecting on their power, privilege and cultural context. The limits of the small scale of this research must be noted. Whilst I test both my experience and the data from the focus group, any extrapolation of these outcomes to a wider context can by their nature only be suggestive. These limitations are typical of the challenges of working in the field of qualitative research on this scale, and the tension between the limited implications of my research and the potential claims relating to the wider church are inescapable. However as I show later, this understandable tension can be used creatively to outline wider outcomes with a particular suggestion given in the area of clergy appointments.

To test these assumptions and explore the effects of identity, culture and race on the exercise of ministry I kept three questions in my mind as I continued:

1. To what extent, and in what ways, are White ministers aware of their own Whiteness and its implications for personal culture, privilege and power?

2. In what ways do White ministers, consciously or unconsciously, adapt the methods of participation and communication within a Black majority congregation in light of these differences of personal culture, privilege and power?

3. In what ways does a Black congregation realise that a White priest is responding to his/her Whiteness?

In the chapters that follow I shall return to these three questions to explore the ways in which I was aware of my own colour and culture and how, if at all, I adapted my ministry according to context.

It is worth noting that my ministry was not exercised in a church community where I was the only White member. The congregation was made up of (largest majority first) West Indian (Jamaica, St Kitts & Nevis), West African (Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nigeria) and White British members. There were also younger Black British members who were children of those members of the congregation who had moved to England in the late 1950s and early 60s. Although there were some differences in expectations and attitudes amongst the younger members most of the understandings or outlook of these younger Black members were similar to, and shaped by, their older relatives who made up the majority of the church membership.

When we consider issues of power later it will be important to remember that my own 'power' exercised as a White male priest was shared with other members of the church congregation – churchwardens, parochial church councillors and elected officials. I shall return to this in detail later (under the theme of participation), but in considering my own impact and how my growing awareness of my Whiteness influenced the practice of ministry I realised that it was not enough to be simply pastorally sensitive. A more radical approach to learning and inclusion was needed:

> White ministers who are called to serve in these contexts need to realize that to be neutral or even-handed in some circumstances is to affirm the status quo. This leads to the maintaining of the existing oppressive structures, where a White remnant exercises a disproportionate and unhealthy amount of power within the church. (Reddie 2003c, p128)

Outline of this thesis

This introduction raises questions and themes which will be revisited as the thesis progresses. In the next chapter I give greater detail to specific examples which influenced my understanding of my own difference and how I began to inform my understanding of them and adapt my practice. From these examples I conclude that the common strands of knowledge and power are crucial informers of my changing practice. The examples referred to challenged me to deepen my knowledge and I outline how this took place.

Having set my research questions in the context of practical examples from my ministry, Chapter Three shows how I tested my experience through research, how the data was gathered and how the project was planned together with obstacles and issues that arose. In choosing my methodology I show how through a focus group and a workshop I test the conclusions drawn from my own experience.

Chapter Four explores further concepts of power, specifically in relation to ministry, and presents three typologies of minister suggested by Anthony Reddie (and influenced by my discussion of Reddie's contribution to Black British Theology).[9] I introduce these in relation to contemporary understandings of ministry and the exercising of power in the Church and in theology.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven focus on the three typologies of ministerial 'power' introduced in Chapter Four and use my research data to explore the themes of pastoral, organisational and radical leadership respectively.

Having presented these discoveries, Chapter Eight draws these findings together and analyses the areas of convergence with my own initial thoughts on my ministry as well as highlighting the challenges where the data diverges from experience.

[9] See Part B, Section 1.

Finally, Chapter Nine presents my conclusions, reflections on the research process, together with a suggested impact on training, formation and ministerial practice.

Chapter Two

My Ministry Experience

In this chapter I outline three areas of my parish ministry which illustrate the areas of knowledge and power. Although these samples are selective they were key themes across my time in the parish and cover a broad section of ordained ministry. The three examples are:

- Funerals
- Volunteering and Participation
- Pastoral Care and the Role of the Priest

In the first of these examples I concentrate on funerals as encompassing both pastoral care and public worship and highlight differing cultural practices as well as the expectations placed on the liturgical minister as coordinator of public faith and mourning.

The second example centres on participation in internal church administration and parish life with a particular emphasis on the method of calling for and recruiting volunteers.

Finally, in exploring pastoral care and the role of the priest I reflect on the differing expectations between West Indian,[10] African and British communities of how the parish priest might care for or relate to individuals or the wider community.

These areas bring together liturgical, administrative, pastoral and missional examples and provide good illustrations of the cultural and racial differences which can easily go either unnoticed or undealt with in parochial ministry.

Example 1: Funerals

The parish profile for the parish of St Agnes' made mention of the diverse local community and hinted at, though did not give weight to, the multi-cultural membership of the worshipping congregation. Through the profile and my interview I had gained some insight into the ethnic makeup of the congregation but was nevertheless surprised to find a majority Black congregation on my first Sunday. To know little about the worshipping community before arriving is not unusual in the Church of England selection and application process – parish profiles (information prepared by the parish in order to 'advertise' the post) may be notoriously subjective and reflect the predominant view of those involved in compilation. This in itself would endure further scrutiny as the view of the parish expressed in the profile was that of White members who held positions of

[10] I use the term West Indian as this was the identity claimed by most of the Caribbean members of my congregation.

authority in the Parochial Church Council.[11] With little experience of ministering to people of different colour, I recall my personal feeling of wanting to be sensitive and to learn about all the members of the congregation but this was more about personal relationships with them rather than any contribution to the worshipping or missional life of the parish or expectation of any previous influence.

Of course I was wrong in this and soon realised that an awareness of issues surrounding racism and exclusion strongly influenced my practice. The parish had enjoyed a diverse and creative experience of multi-culturalism but predominantly in semi-superficial areas around food at social events and music in worship. To an extent what had been included was more a result of tokenism than any organic desire for inclusion or celebration. Such tokenism is not confined to the local church. As Thorley points out:

> At major events, such as the enthronement of an archbishop, for example, when the Church of England in particular seeks to honour Black Christians, it turns to the Black-led Pentecostal churches. Otherwise, it imports foreign dignitaries, buys in a gospel choir or show-cases 'secular' dancers and drummers. This presence and profile are welcome, but nevertheless disguise and underline the poverty of the Black constituency at its heart. The Church of England is in the kindergarten when it comes to matters of race. (Thorley 2004, p49)

Black spiritual culture, like Black Christian presence in the example above, is brought or bought in without true engagement; a sort of assimilation rather than inclusion.[12] It took many months – perhaps years – for me to truly understand this difference in relation to our mission and ministry in the parish, but in one particular area it became clearer much earlier on, even if not yet fully understanding its deeper importance.

In my previous parish I had taken dozens if not hundreds of funerals; all except one had been for White Welsh or English parishioners. The one non-White funeral was for a member of a church in Colwyn Bay whose funeral I took within my first year of ministry. I was conscious that some elements of the funeral (from pre-funeral visit to the funeral itself) were different from my usual experience but, as a newly ordained minister, I did not think too much about this at the time. My first funeral at St Agnes' – a Jamaican man – was unlike anything I had undertaken before and although I did not feel at the time that I had missed anything, I reflected later after taking more West Indian traditional funerals that I needed to engage more deeply with the key differences – not

[11] For my appointment the interview panel were all White as were the churchwardens and elected officials for the first few years of my incumbency. During the second half of my ten years at St Agnes' one of the churchwardens in post was black and the interview panel for my successor included one black and one White member.
[12] 'Assimilation sucks, inclusion is all' (Thorley, 2004, p61). See Part B, Section 1, for a more detailed discussion.

simply to accommodate them, but to begin to understand their significance and the importance of my role as a liturgical pastor.[13]

Whereas most if not all of these customs were new to me at first, not surprisingly after a while they became not only normal in my view, but the norm. It was the traditional White British funeral that felt out of place and in many ways lacking. The journey to that point was driven by the wish to acquire experience and gain knowledge – the first through general parish ministry and the latter through my own research and in particular conversations with neighbouring clergy. But my key observation was that the drive to find knowledge and understanding was through my own initiative rather than from outside – diocesan, parochial or community.

I missed some of the customs at the graveside at my first funeral. I had usually left not long after saying farewell to those gathered, and attended the post-service refreshments normally only for funerals for regular church members. Over the course of a number of funerals I learnt that my presence at the full graveside ritual and the meal afterwards were not only expected but crucial to learning about the community and their grieving process.

As my relationship with members of the West Indian community deepened I was often called on to lead the singing at the graveside alongside the congregation and eventually I produced songbooks precisely for this purpose. These small gestures came about from my own instigation rather than from any particular call but were part of my cycle of reflection and responsive action.

Alongside these hands-on changes to practice there were significant changes to my understanding of the funeral process which, although part of my experience of White British custom, were made evident in this developing familiarity with Caribbean tradition. Three areas proved to be of importance and underpinned by desire to explore theologically how my practice might aid or impede my funeral ministry.

There is little doubt that these West Indian funerals were characterised by a sense of occasion. This is not to suggest that White funerals were not seen as such but the length of the service, the large attendance and the ritualised acts of farewell underlined the importance of the service for those present to acknowledge the deceased. The importance of the occasional offices,[14] funerals in particular, has long been recognised by the Church. These '*brief encounters*' (see Carr 1985) still hold an important place in the psyche of much of the English population.[15] The parish priest has a particular role in creating this sense of occasion, but it is also a role shared with those present. Expectations at a funeral are mixed – some look for celebration, some seek help in articulating grief, regret and other emotions, and others will be present out of respect rather than expectation.[16]

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[13] See Appendix 1.
[14] Baptism, Weddings and Funerals.
[15] In *Secular Lives, Sacred Hearts*, Billings (2004) suggests that Britain is a 'culturally Christian' nation and baptisms, weddings and funerals offer an opportunity for mission as well as ministry.
[16] Billings (2004, p91-99) focuses on four distinct needs for funeral services: 'keeping the door open', 'not letting go the dead', 'non-utilitarian assessment of human life' and 'tying up loose ends'.

In his consideration of the role of priest as representative, Stephen Cherry explores the sense of shared occasion presented through a difficult funeral of someone who had been violently killed. Considering the 'shared ministry' and its impact on all present he writes: 'I certainly had a major role, both in public and private, on the day of the funeral; for instance, it was quite clear that the work of Christ's ministry was not carried out by an individual but by a community.' (Cherry 2008, p36). For him the community is not just those assisting with the practicalities of the church service, but those present in the congregation too who seek to take their part in making this an occasion. When congregation members invest a whole day in such an occasion to allow for the extended graveside rituals and the full meal afterwards, the expectation is heightened and the expectation on the priest to enable and deliver that sense of occasion is tangible.

The second area is connected to that of occasion. Part of the sense of occasion is due to the time and energy that is committed but it is increased by the generally greater number of mourners attending West Indian funerals. It was not uncommon for the same faces to attend most of the funerals in my parish. There were a number of reasons for this: a genuine connection as a family member or friend, solidarity with the wider West Indian community, or simply because the funeral provided a social occasion to connect with others. These last two methods of connecting with community are related and focus on the solidarity of support.

Connectedness – whether through solidarity, familiarity or hospitality – is a key part of Black identity in Britain. Although wary of the danger of homogenising cultures, Reddie explores these shared experiences and stories (Reddie 2002) and in their strategy for harnessing power, Rasor and Chapman (2006) point to shared individual experiences leading to a corporate unity:

> One central and undeniable characteristic of Black religious life is the deep sense of community witnessed therein. There is power in numbers, but especially in numbers of people who are bound through shared history, legacy, social reality, and common goals – and above all through a common faith. […] Black church members have had multiple and varied life experiences but share a fairly common consciousness of … racist institutions and systems. (Rasor & Chapman 2006, p19)

The third area in considering funeral ministry is the emphasis on resurrection in the spiritual life of the Black community funeral. Two examples serve to illustrate this. The first is the use of spiritual songs with an emphasis of hope and resurrection, sang at the burial. Whereas the connection with resurrection is explicitly made by the physical presence of the grave, songs such as 'Shall we gather at the river'[17] and 'When the roll is called up yonder'[18] inevitably place the sufferings of

[17] One verse alludes to the struggle of labour: 'Ere we reach the shining river, Lay we every burden down; Grace our spirits will deliver, And provide a robe and crown.' while the refrain repeats: 'Yes, we'll gather at the river, The beautiful, the beautiful river; Gather with the saints at the river That flows by the throne of God.' alluding to Revelation 22. 1-2.

earthly life – both individual and shared – in the context of eternal reward. But perhaps the more impressive symbolic expression of the resurrection hope is the movement from burial with soil to the planting of flowers. In the space of an hour or so the empty grave is transformed into a mass of colourful stems – each one placed by family members and symbolic of the faith, hope and love that surrounds the deceased as s/he journeys in the hope of the resurrection.

Together these themes taken from my experience of funeral ministry – social capital[19] (sense of occasion and community connectedness) and the strong emphasis on resurrection – shaped the questions I was asking of my own ministry.

Example 2: Volunteering and Participation

A risk of reflection is that of generalisation or creating truths from assumptions, but my experience felt that when I asked for volunteers or asked people to sign up for something or come to a meeting, it was unusual for Black members of the congregation to respond in the same way that White members would. However if I personally asked or invited Black members of the congregation to be involved in the same events, either face to face or in a written letter, then the response was stronger. I suspected that something similar happened when people put themselves forward: White members suggested others or put themselves forward more readily than Black members of the congregation, especially for PCC members or elected positions.

Although I began to monitor this more closely as I became aware of it, it was nevertheless a difficult area to discuss. I was conscious of sounding accusative and appearing frustrated if I spoke to Black congregants or appearing to condone the subconscious racism of some White members if I pointed out this inequality of participation. Reminded of Reddie's explanation of 'signifying'[20] (the art of saying or doing one thing but meaning quite another), I wanted to explore whether my perception was based on my misuse of power, a genuine failure to connect, or other barriers to participation.

In a 2004 paper for General Synod, the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC) investigated the issues surround the under-representation of Black and minority ethnic groups in the life of the Church of England. Their report, 'Present and Participating' lists possible barriers to inclusion and states, 'the barriers to accepting invitations can be as deep as the barriers to extending them.' (Church of England 2004, p5)

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[18] Verse 3 reads, 'Let us labour for the Master from the dawn till setting sun, Let us talk of all His wondrous love and care; Then when all of life is over, and our work on earth is done, And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.' Words written by James Black in 1893.
[19] Billings (2004) discusses issues of connection and belonging together with the sense of occasion surround baptisms, weddings and funerals (p57ff, 78ff). See also Bogle (2004, p38), Ecclestone (1988) and Harrison (1994) who also explore the importance of the parish system for those not normally regularly attending worship.
[20] See Part B, Section 2 for further discussion.

Sometimes the barrier (both to giving or accepting hospitality) can take the form of a desire to retain cultural differences or to preserve external loyalties - or to avoid having to move out of comfort zones into controversial areas. Cultural diversity is a gift to be offered into the fellowship, but some who do not want to embrace the responsibility that participation brings may use diversity, not as a gift but as a barrier. Prime examples occur in Galatians 2, where Paul recalls having to challenge Peter for failing to be consistent in accepting the gentile converts on an equal footing; and in John 4 where the Samaritan woman responds to Jesus' invitation by asking whether she can continue to worship in the Samaritan tradition.

Another barrier to accepting hospitality may arise from a feeling of unworthiness. As Jesus makes clear on numerous occasions, recognition of unworthiness is actually an excellent qualification for receiving God's grace, as exemplified by the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 2.25), the Roman centurion (Luke 7.2) and the tax collector in the parable (Luke 18.13). (Church of England 2004, p5-6)

Example 3: Pastoral Care & Priest's Roles

Having been brought up in the Anglican Church in this country, both in the Church of England and the Church in Wales, I have experienced a particular way of being a parish priest from my childhood until now. It is often a role caught in the middle; a role of mediation and of gentle leadership. It attempts to be 'all things to all people' and because of this it can at times appear weak or indecisive. At times it seems very pastoral and at times it appears to be less so. In trying to balance different expectations of the role of a priest (pastor to a gathered congregation, priest for those seeking pastoral care or pastoral services, parson for the parish, valuing the cure of souls, etc), a parish priest may have to hold together various models of ministry at the same time. My understanding of what it is to be a 'Rector' may be very different from those among whom I minister. This is true of leadership and of pastoral care. Each member of the congregation will have a different expectation on what the Rector should do in a particular instance.

Having members of different provinces of the Anglican Communion present in one congregation leads to a diverse understanding and expectation of what the parish priest will mean to each individual. The model of Anglican ministry developed over centuries in the Churches of the British Isles is often at variance with that considered to be the norm in other parts of the Anglican Communion. Many overseas provinces were established as the result of 19th century missionary efforts where the priest arrived as evangelist. In time this role developed to become also a pastor to the gathered congregation, but the traditional community, civic and representative roles often associated with Church of England parsons may not be present. In his critique of the life and ministry of George Herbert, Lewis-Anthony (2009) explores the status and role of a parson by expanding on the eight functions listed by Anthony Russell in his book, 'The Clerical Profession'. Among the roles are those of almoner, clerk, officer of health and politician. He refers to more

spiritual, pastoral and liturgical tasks too, but the mention of these other, perhaps more secular areas of the clerical life, remind us that for much of the period of Anglican ministry the parish priest has been a focus of civic and community life outside the ministry of the Church.

I was aware that my understanding of these secular roles in a modern context – especially one serving a community with a predominantly Islamic Asian population – at times seemed inconsistent with the demands anticipated with congregation members from, for example, Jamaica or Ghana. These inconsistencies were not just potential challenges for myself or for those from different ministerial traditions, but were often misunderstood by White British members of the congregation who perhaps were less able to consider other ways of fulfilling my role of Rector.

Most importantly for me in exploring how different groups within the congregation evaluated and appreciated my ministry as their parish priest, there were significant differences in the limits (or not) of the expected role of a priest. Although generalisations, there appeared to be three distinct models of ministry in the conscience of the church community effecting or shaping my research question.

For the West Indian community the key descriptor of expectation of ministry was that of autocrat. The parish priest, as father (in name and role) to the congregation, should and could dictate, not just in areas of doctrine and worship, but also in financial giving and congregational behaviour. It was not uncommon for West Indian congregation members when in small groups to tell me what I should say to or expect of the congregation. I detected some frustration at times of my inability or unwillingness to do this. However I noticed that the suggestion that I be more authoritarian came with an implication that this might be for other members of the congregation rather than themselves!

A different approach to ministry was characterised by two West African nationalities represented in the congregation. Amongst the Ghanaian and Sierra Leonean members there was a strong emphasis on the parish priest as a personal family chaplain. This was not to the exclusion of other models, but the expectation that I would be present at family events – particularly around births, marriages and deaths – was of primary importance. This chaplaincy role, as I termed it, was not simply for the members of their family or national community who attended this particular church, but was expected from and extended to others. In the light of this, other traditional roles of the parish priest (apart from leading worship and nurturing the church community) were seen as peripheral at best, and a distraction at worst.

The third example represented the smallest group in number and yet remained the general ethos for expected ministry within the parish – not least because it was the model closest to my own understanding and to that of the White minority who held positions of authority within the congregation. At the licensing service of a parish priest within the Church of England, the bishop reads out the license and then hands it to the new incumbent with the words, ‘receive this cure of

souls which is both mine and yours'.[21] The cure (or care) is for all the souls within the parish, regardless of church attendance or faith. As such it represents the pastoral ministry which a parish priest is duty bound to exercise over all who call on his or her ministry. As populations change and religious preference and affiliation become more diverse the exercising of this ministry has become more creative.[22] Not surprisingly this broad, inclusive understanding of the role of the parish priest can cause tensions with the alternatives listed above. Where the focus of ministry appears to be anywhere other than the immediate church community or the evangelisation of those currently outside that community, the assessment of such work is by its nature both subjective and ambiguous.

Preliminary Conclusions

These three examples from my ministry, where I became increasingly conscious of my cultural background, expectation in ministry and my Whiteness, were not solely cultural differences (I had experienced that in Wales), but were influenced by experience – individual and shared – of a particular group of people traditionally excluded from, or invisible to, the White hegemony.

The most immediate observation was that the majority of my congregation were Black, and although I was aware of my unconscious and conscious ability to exercise my ministry in a discriminatory manner I did not think that the issue was necessarily one of racism. This is not to exclude racism from the issue but acknowledges that it was not simply one of racism. Something else was clear. As a member of the minority the issue was not that of the majority, but it was mine. It was my Whiteness.

The consideration of Whiteness is a relatively new area of the social sciences as well as in pastoral and practical theology. As a discipline it considers both the aspects of being White and the ideologies and norms constructed from a White experience. Allied to the exploration of Whiteness is the concept of White privilege and it is this that Curran acknowledges for the first time in his contribution to a collection of essays from Catholic theologians entitled, '*Interrupting White Privilege*': 'Acknowledging my failure as a Catholic theologian to recognise and deal with the problem of racism in society and the church is only the first step towards a recognition of White privilege. … White privilege functions invisibly and systematically to confer power and privilege.' (Curran 2007, p80)

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[21] Most dioceses produce their own order of service for the induction or licensing of a new priest. An online version is available here: http://ely.anglican.org/worship_prayer/pdf/institution.pdf [accessed 22/9/14].

[22] The late 20th century and the early 21st have seen a growth in community projects and buildings associated with the parish church. The Church of England report, 'Faithful Cities' (Church of England 2006) explores the growing concepts of social capital and faith capital – applied mission and faith inspired resourcing from churches and religious communities in the area of social justice and community action. I explore these issues with regard to the nature of a parish as place and people in Part B, Section 2.

My journey from objective racism to understanding the limitations and privilege of my White identity are shared by Curran, who continues:

> In reality, the problem was "I" and not "them." I was blithely unaware of how White privilege had shaped my understanding of what was going on. The invisible and systemic nature of White privilege came through in my absolutizing my own limited and privileged positions and making all others the object of my good will. My perspective was the normative perspective from which all others were to be seen. My White theology was the theological standpoint from which all others were to be judged. I finally realized to some extent that I was the problem. White privilege is invisible, structural, and systemic. (Curran 2007, p80-81)

Conscious that I was not the only White priest ministering to a congregation of predominantly Black Christians I needed to explore the ways in which my Whiteness directly and indirectly influenced the method of ministry that I had adopted in my parish. Before outlining my research plan to test this, here I summarise the results of my enquiry.[23]

My investigation into how other White ministers had evaluated their ministry in Black congregations yielded few results. Apart from some articles from an American and Protestant background, little had been written by Church of England ministers. At the time of this research I had some thoughts on why this might be the case but it was not until my own empirical research began that I gained a better understanding of this. So I looked at other professions where White individuals worked with predominantly Black clientele and analysed three professions for which I could find suitable research: educators, social researchers and counsellors.

In drawing conclusions from the comparative studies of these three professions I identified two themes which were common to these and my own experience. The first was the need for understanding, empathy and the valuing of difference and the second was the more challenging recognition of how power and privilege (from this knowledge or assuming an understanding) was exercised. I recognised that the two themes were connected and almost inseparable. How power and privilege are used in Christian priestly ministry is conditional on how personal knowledge or understanding is understood and used.

These enquiries led to the formulation of a research proposal to begin to answer the questions that my experiences had raised. Did other White clergy identify similar issues? And would they recognise them? If my reflections were common to others, how could clergy in the future be better informed as part of either their training or formation?

In the next chapter I bring together these questions and my experience and present the journey that led to testing my assumptions and intuitions on how knowledge and understanding together

[23] For the full account see Part B, Section 2.

with power and privilege collude to affect the way in which White clergy minister among Black majority congregations.

Chapter Three

Methodology and Method

In this chapter I show how the data needed to support my understanding of my ministerial practice was gathered. What follows is an explanation of the journey and principally the details of methods used in collecting the information from various sources. In particular I explore the changes in my plan as the collection of material grew and I begin to make sense of some of the barriers I experienced when finding clergy to participate in my research. What is presented here builds on the more detailed account that is to be found in the 'Research Proposal' (see Part B, Section 3) which preceded the thesis research period.

The questions that guided the design of this research also provided a check at each stage of the process:

1. To what extent, and in what ways, are White ministers aware of their own Whiteness and its implications on personal culture, privilege and power?

2. In what ways do White ministers, consciously or unconsciously, adapt the methods of participation and communication within a Black majority congregation in light of these differences of personal culture, privilege and power?

3. In what ways do a Black congregation realise that a White priest is responding to his/her Whiteness?

At all stages these questions were kept to the fore to ensure the data remained faithful to my research proposal. Alongside these questions it was also necessary to keep in mind the tension between the limited data from my own exploration and the wider implications I wished to draw from it.

Methodology

Having framed the above questions assuming the answer that I was beginning to be aware of my own Whiteness, and that I was consciously and subconsciously adapting my methods of ministry accordingly in order to minister more appropriately in the light of my awareness of my position of power, my first step was to test this assumption with a sample group from those among whom I ministered. A number of research methods were available to me for this process: individual interviews, individual surveys, or a focus group. Choosing the correct method was dependent on what data I wished to extract and how I was to use it. Thus my methodological approach was crucial in setting up the first round of interviews.

Alongside keeping the questions I wished to answer to the fore, the reason for asking the questions was also paramount. The impetus for this research was nurtured within the framework of a professional doctorate programme in practical theology and so the guiding principles of these two factors needed to be considered. Amongst the various definitions of professional doctorates is that they, 'are associated with the acquisition of knowledge and research skills, to further advance or enhance professional practice' (Lee 2009, p6). Likewise the characterisation of practical theology that had shaped my understanding since the beginning of the research programme was described as:

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

Thus in both of these factors the contribution of any research to a change in practice was vitally important. How was I to generate data that was of tangible use in influencing clergy formation and training? Given the necessary small data sample available, how far could I make conclusions of value to a broader audience? I needed to consider the accessibility of my methods for those participating and the importance of critiquing my personal intuitions against priestly formation in current ministerial training. Within the various contributions to the debate on contemporary priestly formation were there key concepts that would support or define my own explorations? In Chapter Four I bring priestly character and role into this conversation.

This conversational approach led to the adoption of an action-research methodology. Cameron describes this as follows:

> Action research methodology asks key participants in the church what they want to find out about their practices of evangelisation. It works with them to develop methods of gathering data, and reflects upon the data and changes practice in the light of insights from the interpretation of the data. The effect of the changed practice in relation to the original questions asked is evaluated. (Cameron 2013, p31)

So at the heart of my chosen methods was a desire to bring together my own intuitions, the reflections of my congregation and issues of contemporary ministry. In setting up this conversation I needed to ensure that the focus group enabled a communal response and this principle cemented my choice of gathering data through a focus group rather than individual responses or interviews; I wanted to ascertain the worshipping communities' response rather than simply individual perceptions.[24]

[24] I present the parameters and setting up of the parish focus group in more detail in Appendix 2.

In my original research proposal[25] I had intended to share these 'tested' findings of my conclusions with other White clergy ministering in similar situations. The dearth of literature recounting the first-hand experience of White clergy had intrigued me and I wished to give voice to those in similar situations by provoking conversation and reflection from my own experience. Knowing that I was not the only priest in this context I felt sure that others would encounter similar issues and wanted to discover ways in which colleagues exercised, or were aware of, their power and privilege.

To maintain sufficient parallels with my own situation I chose to contact other White clergy in the Northern province – especially in the dioceses of Liverpool, Ripon & Leeds, Sheffield and Wakefield.[26] I limited my search according to the following factors: each priest needed to be White, male, and serving a congregation with a significant Black membership.[27] The first and third of these parameters ensured as close a correlation with my own parish and ministry as possible but the question of gender was important too. In Chapter One I explore my own identity and its implications for shaping my experience and research question. Whilst I was aware of a number of White women who were parish priests in similar contexts the complexification wrought through the dynamic of gender and female leadership was beyond the scope of my research. As I noted in Chapter One gender roles and expectations were not insignificant factors in Christian ministry, and indeed in the wider culture, for Black members of the parish community.

Through a selection of diocesan officers (for racial justice, urban ministry etc) I was forwarded the names of six White priests serving congregations of significant Black membership. Of those I contacted three did not reply, three did and of those three, two refused and one asked for time to think about it further. After another two weeks, he too decided he did not want to take part.

I reflect further on the possible reasons for clergy not wanting to take part in this research in the final chapter, but apart from one priest replying that he simply did not have the time to meet me for an interview, the other two gave explanations that resonated with anecdotal and documented evidence about an unwillingness to open up what was a sensitive and potentially explosive issue.[28] This 'conspiracy of silence' was not unexpected given my own experience of facing up to issues around my Whiteness and privilege, and the discomfort for all who face up to conscious and subconscious racism.

I considered rethinking the exclusion criteria that I had set in my original research proposal so as to include clergy from the southern, London centred dioceses, or female clergy, or colleagues from within the Diocese of Manchester. Including either of the first two would require a significant shift in emphasis on my own reflection and research. The reasons for not interviewing female clergy I have already stated but the London question was more complex. As in so many other studies, London

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[25] See Part B, Section 3.
[26] The Church of England is divided into two provinces; the northern province of York and the larger, southern province of Canterbury. The dioceses listed are all in the north and were chosen because of their urban populations. At the time of writing the dioceses of Ripon & Leeds and Wakefield have now been dissolved and a new Diocese of Leeds has been created.
[27] For this research 'significant' was defined as greater than 50% of the worshipping community.
[28] See Walton 1986, p17 and Jagessar & Reddie 2007a, p51-52 for examples.

churches have developed either in a different way to other parts of the country or at a faster pace.[29] Apart from the considerable variances in the situation of London churches, interviewing London clergy would still only give two or three other viewpoints but would not necessarily be conclusive.

Given the commitment and energy required for reflecting on personal experience and its challenging outcomes, being interviewed and encouraged to explore issues of Whiteness, racism and power is a potentially intrusive activity. To interview clergy away from my home diocese was proving impossible and I imagined that interviewing clergy that I knew locally would not only be equally intrusive, but also fraught with ethical issues around vulnerability for both the clergy and their congregations. As I explore later in my analysis of models and typologies of minister, vulnerability and fear combine for some priests in isolated parish ministry to create a culture suspicious of intrusion – especially from colleagues. Interviewing priests whose congregations I knew and with whom I would continue to work would require a method of research which necessitates a more anonymous approach based on written questionnaire rather than interview. As my questions were exploring experiences and reflections on those experiences I was keen to use a relational method of investigation through interview and not a paper based survey without opportunity to follow up with secondary questioning.

Given these obstacles I necessarily returned to my research question to ask what data I actually needed to complete the testing of my own experience and from whom should I seek these contributions. The difficulties were not in themselves necessarily the problem, perhaps my approach required reassessing.

> Practical theology often seeks to research issues that are sensitive or whose significance is poorly recognised. Considerable networking can be required to contact hard-to-access groups. There may also be problems when participants fail to respond in significant numbers or provide trivial data. This often requires significant reappraisal of the methods being used. (Cameron 2013, p99)

So it was essential to ask, again, which methods would help me answer my question? Having received feedback about my own experience from the parish focus group I thought I had needed to reinforce this by interviewing other clergy so that I could confirm my own experience or learn from any differences in approach. However the failure to secure this confirmation allowed me to consider again the true value of the opinions gathered in the parish group. The data I had obtained had already provided both confirmation and further comments and questions and I had sufficient empirical material to begin the second process implied by my research question: how could my

[29] For examples of the unique situation in London see Jivraj, S. and Simpson. L. (2015) *Ethnic Identity and Inequalities in Britain: The Dynamics of Diversity* Bristol: Policy Press; and Eade, J. (2000) *Placing London: From Imperial Capital to Global City* New York: Berghahn Books. With regard to London churches see Davey, A. (2004) 'London: The Church on the Faultlines of the Global City' in *Crucible: The Journal of Christian Social Ethics* July-September 2004 p3-12, and Goodhew, D. (2012) *Church Growth in Britain: 1980 to the Present* Farnham: Ashgate.

experience, however particular and local, influence the wider practice of other clergy and what intervention or change was necessary to enable this contribution to practice?

This practical approach helped me identify a new group of participants and move from reflection to action: ‘Action research usually takes a pragmatic approach to epistemology. It asks how much data and of what kind will be credible to the participants who are seeking to change their practice as a result of what is discovered?’ (Cameron 2013, p98). I needed to trust the veracity and depth of the qualitative research data that I had gathered and use it as the foundation for a training intervention. Thus I began to explore putting together a workshop aimed at influencing clergy formation.

Given my intention to propose an effect on practice it was important to choose a group of clergy who were open to active reflection within their current role. Whilst this should be true for all clergy I was keen to choose a group for whom this would be alongside other formational and training processes. Aware of the need for racism awareness training for the newly ordained and some of the assumptions that this course made, the obvious target group for my workshop were those newly ordained and undergoing their continuing ministerial education.[30]

With any training intervention planned to affect practice an important question is the relationship between the intervention and the learners' contact with practice. The newly ordained are immersed in this process of making sense of what they are now experiencing in ministry and in the preparation and training that have led to this point. The formation process continues throughout ministry but most especially in these early years where the potential gulf between theory and practice might be at its most obvious.

Thus a workshop designed for the newly ordained endorsed the reflection process; the claims presented to them would by nature be within the limits of my own experience, but if I was to make any wider suggestions it was important to consider carefully with this group of curates just how far my conclusions might hold.

Method and Delivery

The examples from my own ministry, as outlined in Chapter Two, formed the core discussion and starting point for a series of questions within the Focus Group.[31] As I explained above I wanted to include a wide range of congregation members in my research and bring them together as a group so that the responses of individuals present would influence the thoughts of others present and the resulting interaction provide a rich critique of the scenarios I presented.

[30] The training process for Church of England clergy consists of Initial Ministerial Education (IME). IME 1-3 is the pre-ordination training in theological colleges and course, and IME4-7 is post-ordination training which is undertaken during curacy.
[31] See Appendix 2 for details of the setting up of the focus group and the scenarios and questions considered.

During the Curates' Workshop, before looking at the same scenarios as the parish focus group, I invited those present to reflect on their own understandings of the effect of cultural privilege on ministry and in which situations they might be aware of conflict.[32] This led into an exercise entitled, 'redefining the norm', developed by Anthony Reddie and presented in his book on practical theology and liberation, 'Nobodies to Somebodies' (Reddie 2003, 132-140).

In reflecting on the delivery of his African centred programme for Christian Education (Growing into Hope (Reddie 1998a, 1998b)), Reddie develops an exercise to help understand what is meant by the norm and how it can be redefined. The exercise:

> …is a metaphor for the church and our corporate attempts to interpret the 'story' of the gospel. In the institutionalised church there is a central norm, which is based upon the experiences of a certain type of person (White, male, middle class, ordained, well established in the church for many years). These groups of people are right at the heart of the church, and are in full possession of the 'story'. They have all the parts of the 'story', and can attempt to reinterpret it in a manner that makes sense to them. They possess the greatest sense of belonging and ownership.
>
> If you want to know who might be described as being part of that normative group, or whether you are a member of it, simply ask yourself the questions: Who are the people most likely to have their beliefs, wishes or perspectives reflected in the church? Whose personal inclinations, desires, expectations or particular understanding will be reflected? To put it bluntly, who can get their own way? By identifying the people, you will have defined the 'norm'. (Reddie 2003, p135)

The exercise involves two different groups being given a selection of lines from a story. One group has all nine pieces of paper and the other group only have five. The group that have nine are told that they are the church leaders and that they are representative of the church, the other group with only some of the story, aren't told anything at first. In their groups they try to make sense of the story by piecing the papers together. After ten minutes or so the second group are told that they are in possession of only five of the nine pieces of the story and consequently will need to fill in the gaps. At the end of the exercise both groups come together, compare their stories, and discuss the comparative validity of each other's story.

The use of this exercise not only began the exploration for the participants but framed the analysis of the data against Reddie's own typologies of White ministers which I introduce in the next chapter. Using an opening discussion to create a normative truth and then investigate the power dynamic between the two different groups helped set the scene for the examples which followed and the role of privilege that underlines our exercise of ministry. Reddie refers to the question of

[32] A full description of the setting up of the workshop and the lesson plan is described in Appendix 3.

legitimacy in discussing his exercise and goes on to use the work of Altrichter et al (1993, p102) to describe a ‘hierarchy of credibility’ in ‘a social ranking that confers a greater degree of creditability and reliability upon some people often at the expense of others’ (Reddie 2003, p138).

Analysis and Data Testing

In Chapter Two after presenting examples from my own ministry I deduced two specific themes which underpinned my research question: the first theme was the need for understanding, empathy and the valuing of difference (‘knowledge’) and the second was the more challenging recognition of how power and privilege (from this knowledge or assuming an understanding) was exercised.

The scenarios presented at both the focus group and the workshop had presented illustrations from my experience which were heavily reliant on my own understanding and knowledge – both before the event and a result of repeated experience. In testing how far this ‘particular’ experience might extend to influencing others, if at all, I had also specifically asked each group what further knowledge or resourcing might be useful for clergy in the fulfilment of these ministerial encounters and how they might be helped to understand the limits of their knowledge and expand them. In doing so I was beginning to explore the first theme of knowledge and understanding and had gathered sufficient data to inform my analysis. What I needed now was to create a framework in which to explore the responses of power that these sometimes privileged positions of knowledge and understanding prompted.

Continuing the scrutiny of his programme of education for young Black Christians, Reddie notes that ‘the minister is a crucial component in the success of any church, in its attempts to create an inclusive and participative community where people of all ages are affirmed and offered the space to exercise and share their gifts’ (Reddie 2003, p118). In observing the ministers involved in the piloting of his own work on liberation and education, he summarises the different ways in which ministers in pastoral charge of inner-city churches exercise their power.

In the next chapter I use these three typologies of minister as a starting point for investigating issues of power and privilege amongst the clergy and bring Reddie’s suggestions into conversation with character, role and power within priestly ministry.

Chapter Four

Models of Ministry and Power

Although many congregations will naturally use the Christian name of their priest, in my parish it was hard for some of the older West Indian members to do this as it had not been their tradition, and even though I was much younger than most of them, they were not comfortable calling me Stephen. Given the more Anglo-Catholic history of the parish and the preferences of previous clergy I was often known as Father. Whereas I was comfortable with this it was always a cause of frustration to a neighbouring clergy colleague who thought it very inappropriate – not on ecclesiological grounds but rather because of the paternalistic and hierarchical model of ministry that in his eyes it conveyed. Whilst I wouldn't disagree wholly with this assumption it was interesting to compare his style of ministry with mine given his personal preference of being called only by his Christian name.

Chris (this is not his real name) thought of himself as modelling a non-hierarchical form of leadership which enabled and encouraged all to take their place within the local church and which, although acknowledging his own leadership, sought not to domineer or abuse his position. The idea of priests being called 'father' equated for him with the concept of 'father knows best' (oft quoted) and was alien to his idea of a linear church of the priesthood of all believers. Ironically Chris's priestly leadership was reliant on two things: the acceptance of his authority by others and the strength of his character in persuading parishioners to do things his way (even if after discussions that might suggest a more equitable approach). 'His way' was in fact often the best way thus leading to an assumption that he did in fact 'know best' and this in turn led to a collusion between priest and people. Now in itself there might not be a problem with this model of leadership and it is in fact often used – unconsciously if not deliberately – but the contrast with my own reflections on ministry amongst a majority Black congregation led me to explore the issues of power and its manipulation by both clergy and people.

Exploring Power

For many, both inside and outside the Christian Church, power is seen largely as a negative or potentially destructive influence. In his seminal text, '*Love, Justice and Power*', Paul Tillich [1960] captures the problem by suggesting the usual consideration of power is encapsulated in the term 'power politics':

> Unfortunately, however, the term 'power politics' is used for a special type of politics, namely that in which power is separated from justice and love, and is identified with compulsion. This confusion is possible because there is indeed a compulsory element in the actuality of power. But this is only one element, and if power is reduced to it and loses

> the form of justice and the substance of love, it destroys itself and the politics based on it. (Tillich 1960, p8)

Just as power has a compulsive side, so too love has its emotional side. Too often within pastoral and ministerial studies the two are contrasted unhelpfully:

> Love and power are often contrasted in such a way that love is identified with a resignation of power and power with a denial of love. Powerless love and loveless power are contrasted. (1960, p11)

Tillich suggests that only through a structured ontological analysis of love, power and justice can they be understood. The essence of his argument can be summarised thus:

> Love is not a mere emotion but the ontological drive of separated beings toward union. Power means not mere compulsion but the intrinsic power of being itself; and so "the more reuniting love there is, … the more power of being there is. Love is the foundation, not the negation, of power." Justice recognizes the claim of every being to endure in its power and to unite in love. Thus "if power is reduced to [compulsion] and loses the form of justice and the substance of love, it destroys itself and the politics based on it." (Ramsey 1955, p156)

In discussing power, Tillich centres on political manifestations, but the same Trinitarian creative unity of love, justice and power can be applied to other forms of organisation, institutional and relational. As I demonstrate later, the recognition of the interdependence of love and justice and power will be crucial to any analysis of the power inherent in Christian pastoral ministry and exercised by those involved in recognised ministry.

Whereas Tillich considers the nature of power from a philosophical approach, my data and experience requires not only a practical theological style but also recognition of the different utilisation of power by individuals, groups and institutions. Of particular interest is the exercising of power rather than simply the potential for possessing power. Lukes develops a theory of three-dimensional power in his book, '*Power: a radical view*' (2005) in which he suggests that power can be exercised through withholding decisions and editing agendas as much as in the more tangible expressions of decisive action. In the background to his analysis, Lukes builds on the work of Bachrach and Baratz by stating:

> Power was not solely reflected in concrete decisions; the researcher must also consider the chance that some person or association could limit decision-making to relatively non-controversial matters, by influencing community values and political procedures and rituals, notwithstanding that there are in the community serious but latent power conflicts. (Lukes 2005, p6)

The third dimension of power is essentially a more thorough critique of the one and two dimensional models which had previously been espoused.[33] In developing this model, Lukes outlines the inadequacies of the other models of power. One criticism is the assumption is that power is exercised in situations of overt conflict only:

> To put the matter sharply, *A* may exercise power over *B* by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants. Indeed, is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have – that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires? (Lukes 2005, p27)

A second, and for my research crucial, criticism is that of the denying of grievances:

> If the observer can uncover no grievances, then he must assume there is a 'genuine' consensus on the prevailing allocation of values. To put this another way, it is here assumed that if people feel no grievances, then they have no interests that are harmed by the use of power. But this is also highly unsatisfactory. In the first place, what, in any case, is a grievance – an undirected demand, based on political knowledge, an undirected complaint arising out of everyday experience, a vague feeling of unease or sense of deprivation? … Second, and more important, is it not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural or unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial? (2005, p28)

Although Lukes speaks to a predominantly political and managerial audience, the language of divinely ordained perceptions speaks directly, without metaphor, to the prevailing model of Christian ministry which underpins the role of parish clergy. Seen alongside the controlling and editing of agendas, this third dimensional power, critiqued by Lukes and requiring an acknowledgement of overt, covert and latent conflict, is central to the understanding of my own experience and the research data collected from it.[34]

Lukes concludes his comments on conflict by stating that to 'assume that the absence of grievance equals genuine consensus is simply to rule out the possibility of false or manipulated consensus by definitional fiat' (2005, p28). This observation is of direct correlation to one of the criticisms of White

[33] For a presentation of the one dimensional view (based on the work of Dahl, Polsby and Wolfinger) and the two dimensional model (developed from the critique of the one dimensional model by Bachrach and Baratz) see Lukes 2005, p16-24.
[34] See Chapter Six: Organisational.

clergy outlined by Reddie, and it is in the light of Lukes' and Tillich's understanding of radical power, that I now turn to Reddie's three typologies.[35]

Reddie's Typologies of White Ministers

In my own reflection on ministry in a predominantly Black congregation, I was aware of my influence and power in shaping, not only the worship, pastoral care, and direction of the parish community, but also the nature of these ministries in terms of inclusion, representation. In terms of the agenda the parish priest has significant control, Anthony Reddie acknowledges this influence and also its potential for both empowering and depriving church members:

> The minister is a crucial component in the success of any church, in its attempts to create an inclusive and participative community where people of all ages are affirmed and offered the space to exercise and share their gifts. The role of the minister in shaping and envisioning a prophetic role that promotes liberation and transformation amongst people of faith is … to be a prophetic voice, and to enable churches to experience the faith story in a form that sustains the corporate body. (Reddie 2003, p118)

This vision for prophetic leadership is supported by sensitive cultural and community awareness and a training programme supported by wider Church administrative structures.[36]

In piloting his educational course for Black children in church, Reddie (1998a, 1998b) was aware of the importance of the minister in leading, directing and shaping a congregations' own view of liberation and transformation. He draws on the work of Foster (1987, p25) in emphasising the significance of the role of the minister and draws the conclusion that in his own study for piloting his work, he identified three distinct types of 'White ministers in pastoral charge of Black-majority inner-city historic-mainline churches' (Reddie 2003c, p120). After his identification he gives an example of one of these types (perhaps indicating, though not expressly, his own preferred typology) and then discusses the question of whether a White or Black minister is best in these circumstances.

The First Typology

The first typology Reddie identifies can be summarised as an intentional, radical and prophetic intervention by the minister in order to effect the changes needed to 'in order that [the] faith

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[35] Before leaving this discussion on power, I wish to refer to Greenwood and Burgess' book, *Power* (2005) which seeks to build a theology and practice of power in a changing Church. Through the lenses of 'Authority', 'Energy', 'Capability', 'Capacity' and 'Adaptability', Greenwood and Burgess seek to reimagine the Church's understanding of power by addressing issues such as the inadequacy and problems surrounding the name and naming of God, as well as the importance of the creative and radical mutuality of the Trinity as a model of power which moves away from historic mono-directional power. The consequences of such an understanding on the role of the ordained ministry are not insignificant.

[36] Both of these supporting elements are explored in my conclusions in Chapter Nine.

community reflect more accurately the lived experience of its Black members' (Reddie 2003, p120). This is the rarest of the three typologies and requires an ideological and systematic intention to move power from the 'minority, powerful, White elite' and give expressions and opportunity to the faith and life experiences of the Black majority within the church community. Reddie acknowledges the (often great) cost of this approach but insists that despite this it is the 'most effective means of ensuring Black liberation in such churches' (2003, p120).

The costliness of this approach requires the minister to have complete belief in this approach and be adequately supported. This commitment and vulnerability is in line with the sacrificial nature of the life of Christ himself and Reddie warns that those who choose this approach must do so out of genuine Gospel and Kingdom motivation, 'and not by some implicit or explicit desire for congratulation and reward' (2003, p122).[37]

The Second Typology

Although Reddie directly aligns this typology with the pastoral care model, he also uses the word, 'emollient' which describes more accurately the tendency of this approach, not just to sooth (in a healing or pastoral manner), but to make something more acceptable than it might otherwise be. In other words this second typology might very easily result in many words but few transformative actions:

> …to quote an older Black woman, 'I know that talk is cheap, and some of these ministers, all dem good for, is fe talk. Dem dey people never change anything.' The minister has to take the lead. Black members will not make themselves vulnerable, when the one who is paid by the church and holds a great deal of influence and power is not prepared to make a stand.' (Reddie 2003, p122)

However Reddie argues that this approach can have some positive effect if employed as a long-term strategy combined with a genuinely intentional desire to understand the culture, experience and spirituality of Black people, including a move from Euro-centric religion and engagement with Black theology:

> If one is going to adopt the pastoral care model (despite its inherent flaws) as the basis for bringing about radical changes in Black majority inner-city churches, then that practice needs to be informed by Black theological thinking. This should be coupled with an understanding of Black cultures and the historical and contemporary experiences of people of African descent. (Reddie 2003, p123)

But even this systematic engagement has its limits:

[37] Reddie warns against 'White crusading ministers with "masochistic" or "mock-heroic" tendencies' (2003, p121) as false but nevertheless, compelling motivators for clergy choosing this typology.

> In White-dominated societies and institutions, particularly in the face of White authority figures, Black people will conceal and disguise aspects of their existence or experiences. In short, there are some things they will not tell the minister. This is a major draw-back for those ministers who adopt the pastoral model as their chief means of bringing about change. (Reddie 2003, p125)

The Third Typology

In presenting his third typology, Reddie acknowledges the often difficult financial and other restraints on inner-city churches, and the limited knowledge and skills amongst the predominantly Black congregation in dealing with the planning necessary for social action and project development. Because of this, he argues that there is a tendency to place in such parishes clergy who are skilled in these strategic areas but inexperienced or 'paternalistic and patronizing' (2003, p125) in their relationships with Black members. In his research for his educational programme Reddie came across negative attitudes: 'As one woman (an African-Caribbean in her fifties) said, "The problem with ****, is that he has a massa complex [a White slave master]. He acts like we're still pickney [children] and we don't have no sense".' (Reddie 2003, p125)

The minister exhibiting characteristics of this typology is likely to know little about Black people but assume or presume much. As a result members of the congregation may distance themselves from the minister – a silence and lack of challenge which these types of White ministers are likely to see as to 'validate and legitimize their actions' (Reddie 2003, p126). With similarities to the agenda setting ('what is on and what is not') evident in the two dimensional power model critiqued by Lukes, this silence has implications for the wider Church and, if critiqued properly, in the light of intentional cultural understanding can find resolution in a more three-dimensional radical approach to the exercise of power. If not, then:

> The corporate church and individual ministers have often viewed this silence to be acquiescence and complicity. Often, this silence can mean dissatisfaction and unease, but the context is not one in which individuals feel able to express their deep-seated feelings. (Reddie 2003, p126)

If Tillich's insistence of the interdependence of love, power and justice is to be applied to these three typologies suggested by Reddie, then it may be concluded that this third typology exercises power but without love and justice. The tendency within pastoral ministry for love to be seen as the ultimate, overriding factor, may exclude justice. Conversely an overwhelming desire for fairness (perhaps misunderstood as justice) may exclude the radical love which is needed to bring true equality and empowerment. Reddie argues that this will not do, and is further supported by this example from Tillich:

> One does not usually contrast love with justice in the way in which one contrasts love with power. But it is commonly accepted that love adds something to justice that justice cannot

> do by itself. Justice, one says, demands than an inherited fortune is distributed in equal parts amongst those who have the same legal claim. But love may induce one of the heirs to surrender his right to one of the other heirs. In this case he acts in a way which is not demanded by justice, but which may be demanded by love. (Tillich 1960, p13)

In my own ministry experience and observations, I could clearly see examples of each of the three of these typologies. However as presented by Reddie, the typologies imply a different emphasis and progression of thought from that which I had experienced. The perception of each typology from within by a White person seemed to be significantly different from the way in which Reddie had presented it. To use these models as given was not enough. How could I critically engage with them as useful lenses through which to view and utilise not only my own experience but the reflections of the curates I had explored them with? Later I describe how I adapt and use these typologies as the lenses through which to view my data. But first I want to set these models within a wider setting of ministry and the Church's exercise of power.

The Kairos Document

After reading about Reddie's understanding of the three categories of priest identified through his project, I started to think about the clergy that I knew and most especially those working in similar parishes to mine. Did I recognise these three types and if so were they helpful? But perhaps the key reflection was rather on how I found myself trying to locate my model and experience of priestly ministry within one of these types?

In helping to identify these models – both in my own ministry and that of other clergy – I wanted to look at another situation where ministry has made an impact on the Christian approach to race, racism and the issue of power and locate my experience within the wider Church. In 1985 a group of Black theologians and Church leaders came together in South Africa to attempt to critique the political situation under apartheid and to assess the Church's collusion with or challenge to the crisis. The resulting Kairos Document (1985) is

> …a Christian, biblical and theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa today. It is an attempt by concerned Christians in South Africa to reflect on the situation of death in our country. It is a critique of the current theological models that determine the type of activities the Church engages in to try to resolve the problems of the country. It is an attempt to develop, out of this perplexing situation, an alternative biblical and theological model that will in turn lead to forms of activity that will make a real difference to the future of our country. (Kairos, paragraph 1)

Although the document critiques churches as corporate responses rather than individuals, it nevertheless identifies three theologies at work within the mainstream churches which resonate with those that Reddie identifies in his work with ministers. Making direct comparisons between the

South African experience outlined in Kairos and my own reflections on parish ministry obviously has limitation, but nevertheless the overlapping areas of racial justice, institutional power and knowledge, and the key area of reconciliation, resonate enough to warrant further exploration. The Kairos document offers another three models of power, and the way in which knowledge is used or denied, providing a useful tool for analysing and arranging the theological approaches to power and privilege which are key to my use of Reddie's typologies. Here I give a brief introduction to the Kairos trinity of theologies - State Theology, Church Theology and Prophetic Theology - before making connections between these and the progression I have suggested by Reddie's three typologies.

State Theology

In introducing this theology Kairos states:

> The South African apartheid State has a theology of its own and we have chosen to call it 'State Theology.' 'State Theology' is simply the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism. It blesses injustice, canonizes the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy. (Kairos, Chapter 2)

The institutional nature of this theology aligns closely with the third of Reddie's typology which I have called the organisational model. It clearly shares institutional, organisational and negating elements whereby through power, the type of knowledge that is accessible or accepted is closely controlled (to the advantage of the ruling minority). The comparison is not necessarily that straightforward however in that State Theology seeks to normalise the oppressive regime of the state as the status quo (Kairos Chapter 2, paragraph 13). In this sense State Theology shares much with Reddie's pastoral typology whereby in order to minimise conflict, radical pro-action is quashed and issues of concern are consciously side-lined.

Church Theology

The Kairos document defines Church Theology thus:

> We have analyzed the statements that are made from time-to-time by the so-called 'English-speaking' Churches. We have looked at what Church leaders tend to say in their speeches and press statements about the apartheid regime and the present crisis. What we found running through all these pronouncements is a series of inter-related theological assumptions. These we have chosen to call 'Church Theology.' We are well aware of the fact that this theology does not express the faith of the majority of Christians in South Africa today who form the greater part of most of our Churches. Nevertheless the opinions expressed by Church leaders are regarded in the media and generally in our society as the official opinions of the Churches. We have therefore chosen to call these opinions 'Church Theology.' The crisis in which we find ourselves today compels us to question this

> theology, to question its assumptions, its implications and its practicality. (Kairos, Chapter 3)

The subtle deception of Church Theology is that it appears to say one thing (i.e. identify apartheid) and yet fails to challenge its existence and practice. In this it shares similarities with the pastoral typology. It does move towards reconciliation. However, in defining justice simply as fairness it fails to acknowledge the need for repentance that precedes reconciliation, especially in a situation where there is clearly no equality of positions on two opposing sides:

> The fallacy here is that 'Reconciliation' has been made into an absolute principle that must be applied in all cases of conflict or dissension. But not all cases of conflict are the same. We can imagine a private quarrel between two people or two groups whose differences are based upon misunderstandings. In such cases it would be appropriate to talk and negotiate to sort out the misunderstandings and to reconcile the two sides. But there are other conflicts in which one side is right and the other wrong. There are conflicts where one side is a fully armed and violent oppressor while the other side is defenseless and oppressed. There are conflicts that can only be described as the struggle between justice and injustice, good and evil, God and the devil. To speak of reconciling these two is not only a mistaken application of the Christian idea of reconciliation, it is a total betrayal of all that Christian faith has ever meant. (Kairos, Chapter 3, paragraph 4)

At the heart of the Church Theology is a hypocrisy of privilege whereby the Church's ethical pronouncement are claimed for the status quo, and for the ruling minority. The document gives the example of the Church's condemnation of violent protest and yet tacitly supporting 'the growing militarisation of the South African State'. In this cautious approach, similar to the pastoral typology of Reddie, Church Theology fails to prioritise the side of the oppressed:

> In practice what one calls 'violence' and what one calls 'self-defense' seems to depend upon which side one is on. To call all physical force 'violence' is to try to be neutral and to refuse to make a judgment about who is right and who is wrong. The attempt to remain neutral in this kind of conflict is futile. Neutrality enables the status quo of oppression (and therefore violence) to continue. It is a way of giving tacit support to the oppressor. (Kairos, Chapter 3, paragraph 20)

Prophetic Theology

The third type of theology is closest to what Reddie identifies as the radical typology of White ministers, however it is not the easiest to define as it is seen as a goal to work towards rather than a descriptor of what currently is:

> Our present KAIROS calls for a response from Christians that is biblical, spiritual, pastoral and, above all, prophetic. It is not enough in these circumstances to repeat generalized

> Christian principles. We need a bold and incisive response that is prophetic because it speaks to the particular circumstances of this crisis, a response that does not give the impression of sitting on the fence but is clearly and unambiguously taking a stand. (Kairos, Chapter 4, paragraph 1)

In outlining what such a prophetic theology might look like, Kairos identifies the key foundations of social analysis, oppression in the Bible, tyranny in Christian tradition, and a message of hope. The outcomes of such foundations are both radical and prophetic: radical in that they suggest new and controversial ways of being and speaking as Church (e.g. civil disobedience) and prophetic in that they clearly identify with a God who sides with the oppressed and participates in struggle (Kairos, Chapter 5).

The Kairos document and Reddie's typologies stem from two very different contexts and yet both speak of the Church's ministry *by* White structures (addressed by Kairos) or clergy (addressed by Reddie) *to* or among a Black community. They both explore the use, misuse and abuse of power, and the decisions involved – consciously or unconsciously – in evaluating what sort of knowledge counts as valid when attempting to work towards equality and empowerment. These theologies and typologies are summarised in the table below.

Table 1: Comparison of Reddie's Typologies and Kairos Theologies

Reddie's Typology	**Key traits**	**Similarities with Kairos**
Radical	prophetic and radical empowerment of oppressed unambiguous change	Prophetic Theology
Pastoral	says the right thing no deep challenge status quo maintained	Church Theology
Organisational	challenges denied status quo unchanged	State Theology

I have already commented that direct links between Karios, Reddie and my own experience cannot easily be assumed, but within the Kairos document we see three distinctive themes which were useful in analysing my own experience and the research data. The first of these is, perhaps obviously, that of racial justice. Whereas this is a primary purpose of both Kairos and Reddie, it had only become a focus of my own ministry after reflecting on how I had changed and developed in my approach to participation and engagement with the wider congregation. The Kairos document in particular strengthened my understanding of my ministry style and provided a way of locating my experience in a similar – albeit more significant – arena. As a document written by Black theologians and Church leaders, the critique of institutional power and privilege it contains provides a second theme through which to evaluate model of ministry researched through my focus group

and workshop. The potential shortcomings of my own accessing of institutional knowledge[38] can be seen within the particular experience of the South African authors of this document. Finally the need for repentance and reconciliation inherent in the Kairos document and seen in its working out in later South African political and ecclesial life, underline the motifs of *belittling*, *depriving* and *smoothing* power, and the need to address these that I outline in Chapter Nine.

Expectations of Ministry

In assessing my own experience I realised that much of this new awareness of power and knowledge was a result of personal reflection and experience alongside priestly formation, training or theology. The implicit power of priesthood (or indeed of any authorised and accredited ministry) is not easily explored and in order to make sense of my research findings it is necessary to look briefly at contemporary models of ministry and how they address the subjects of power, privilege and persuasion in priesthood.

'Clergy, like all public figures, operate within a persona given them by the Church or community. Offence occurs when office holders sit light to inherited expectations or when the Church makes a move to unravel the archetype' (Greenwood & Burgess, p119). But what are these 'inherited expectations'? and what does the Church, the community or the individual priest understand as 'archetype'?

The persona of the clergy is also directly linked to the persona of the Church. That clergy are representative of the institution as well as their office is a given in most denominations. For Greenwood and Burgess this 'is the iconic role of the clergy for the Church, for the committed worshipper and for society. Clergy in the traditional churches vary, personally and systemically, in how far they understand their primary role as being for the Church itself or for wider society. […] reform of the Church and the work of the Church in and for society is highly determined by the theory and practice of ordained ministry.' (Greenwood & Burgess, p118)

If the nature of the clergy and their calling has significant impact on the way in which the Church is understood in wider society, so too does the nature of the clergy have an effect on how society understands and perceives the nature of Christian faith and ultimately God himself. Greenwood & Burgess' use of the word 'iconic' is in this sense poignant. However they also acknowledge the strain that such high expectations can impose on clergy and it is at this point that there is a requirement to distinguish between character and role when talking of clergy persona. Calling on the work of Rulla,[39] Greenwood & Burgess note that 'all Christian vocation is a decision to cooperate with God … in the manner and power of Christ … [and] that this partnership … is often limited or impaired' (p118). This impairment, Rulla concludes, means that 'clergy can, for their own

[38] See Chapter Six.
[39] Luigi Rulla is a Jesuit psychiatrist.

security, continue to hold on to their formal office even when genuine respect for and belief in its meaning has dissipated [for themselves]' (p118).

The importance of this observation is that it highlights the complexity of priestly vocation and its expression in priestly ministry. The two are often conflated and yet may be energised by or rooted in very different callings. Whilst the parish priest has always both possessed a character and exercised a role, it is a relatively modern distinction and understanding in ministerial practice.[40]

Developing a Matrix

From an early stage in my reflective journey I was aware of the options available to me in exercising my ministry.[41] I began to think of images of priestly ministry available to me which responded to the ways in which clergy exercise pastoral ministry and how these are perceived. Initially exploring roles such as 'curate', 'priest', and 'rector' – each emphasising a different aspect of perception and connection between minister and congregation - this developed into a theological, then biblical, set of images which began a deeper conversation between the three particular approaches to ministry which I had identified.[42] However throughout my reflection I had in mind the typologies identified by Anthony Reddie through his work with Black majority congregations with White ministers. Given the importance of this work in my own research and its resonance with my own situation I decided to use his three typologies as the foundation for approaching my investigation.

I introduced these typologies in detail earlier but with little comment on their importance for this study. As I began viewing the data through these three lenses I became aware of a need to reorder them according to what was emerging and so the three typologies are used in the chapters that follow but prioritised differently from Reddie's presentation. I explain my reasoning for this reordering below, but first I consider other important factors that influenced the viewing and understanding of the data from the focus group.

From early on in my research process I identified two key areas of interest: the theme of understanding or knowledge, and the theme of power.[43] I have developed a fuller understanding of the nature of power above, especially in relation to ordained ministry in a parish setting. I concluded that the self-knowledge and character of an individual priest crucially influences the way in which ministerial power is exercised.

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[40] Recent legislation in the Church of England has made this more apparent. Vacancies for clergy posts are now required to have both a Role Description and a Personal Specification, similar to most secular posts. Previously such distinctions were less explicit.
[41] See Chapters One and Two for a detailed discussion, alongside Part B, Sections 1 and 2.
[42] See Appendix 4.
[43] These are developed earlier in this Chapter but also introduced in Part B, Section 2 'Publishable Article'.

In bringing the themes of knowledge and power to the data I began to see areas of convergence with and divergence from my own experiences as well as some new, previously unidentified, areas which I develop in my analysis and conclusions.

In the chapters that follow the theme of knowledge reflects the variety of uses it has described so far – from personal self-knowledge and awareness, through reflective and observational understanding, to the direct self-accessed or taught cultural education. Each time it is used in a different sense it is defined in that section's introduction.

The examples of understanding listed above are suggestive of different approaches to learning and development. Each one is not simply a method of resourcing but indicative of a preference for a particular type of employing power. As we shall see in the presentation of the data in the next three chapters, I believe that the power dynamic employed ranges from passive to active, from re-active to pro-active with subtle stages in between. This is explored fully as the uses arise but I introduce it here to explain why it was necessary for me to reorder Reddie's typologies.

Reddie begins with the radical approach to ministry, and thus the radical approach to exercising power. As this is the only typology for which he gives a fuller example, I believe he presents this as the ideal, the goal for inclusive ministry. Given the potential personal, communal and institutional costs associated with this approach, together with the requirement to fully understand the cultural context, it is unlikely to be a starting point for most White ministers. Placing it first not only prioritises it but conditions how the next two are read, thus potentially preventing White clergy from seeing their own experience more clearly first in the other two. It is for these reasons that I place this as the third and final typology in viewing my data. Reddie's second typology is the pastoral approach – the default position as described by him, and this is confirmed, not only by my own intuition of pastoral ministry, but also in the comments recorded by the focus group. As a default positon I choose to place this as my first typology. I clearly saw the beginnings of my experience in this pastoral approach and, given its inherent resonation with pastoral ministry, its importance as a starting point cannot be overstated. It is an intrinsic aspiration of ministry and as such the first stage from which to progress to what Reddie sees as the ideal typology.

Between these two I place the organisational typology, which Reddie places third.[44] For Reddie, as I have already noted, this is the least positive typology and yet it is perhaps one of the most attractive for White clergy who, aware of the deficiencies of the pastoral typology, seek to move towards an apparently more inclusive and demonstratively participative model of ministry. As Reddie demonstrates, this typology has short terms gains only – the longer term affects are less than empowering. As I have outlined in Chapter One I sought to increase my understanding of ministry by accessing predominantly external resources. In doing so I sometimes bypassed congregational experience and knowledge which served only to increase power imbalance and further emphasise my own privilege. Reddie's positioning of this as third was not consistent with my

[44] Reddie does not explicitly name his three typologies and these are my own titles. Neither does Reddie necessarily rank his three typologies, but rather presents them as observational examples.

own experience. It had clearly been a necessary step towards further reflection. Given these influences of understanding (knowledge) and the method employed (power) in increasing such understanding in ministry, I needed to challenge the order of Reddie's typologies. The table below summarises this new ordering as the matrix through which I viewed the data from the focus group. The table also comments on both power and knowledge though, again, the chapters that follow describe these more fully.

Table 2: Matrix employed for viewing the Data

Progression [1]	→	→	→
Typology	PASTORAL	ORGANISATIONAL	RADICAL
Power	priest/White	institutional/White	congregational/Black
Knowledge [2]	inter-human	institutional	structural
Norm	unchanged	unchanged	re-centred

Notes on Table 2

[1] This marks the personal journey of the priest in reflexive understanding.

[2] The three types of knowledge listed here represented personal resourcing (inter-human), external resourcing (institutional) and enlightened, inclusive understanding embedded within ministry and the wider Church (structural).

[3] For an explanation of the importance of re-centring the 'norm' see the exercise suggested by Reddie and described in Chapter Three with regard to its use in this research with the curates' workshop.

Preliminary Conclusions

Having explored the nature of power and its application by both individuals and organisations, I have also introduced the three typologies of White minister identified by Reddie. This combination of power and typology was brought into conversation with the organisational models of exercising power critiqued in the Kairos Document written by the South African churches during the apartheid years.

Whilst it is not possible, nor desirable, to correlate all these outcomes into one definitive tool for analysing my own ministry experience and the reflections on it as found by my research, I do see clear parallels between the different approaches. Direct comparisons between Kairos and my situation are by necessity limited, but are nevertheless relevant. I have critiqued and reordered the three characteristics identified by Reddie (pastoral, organisational, radical), and can now look at my experience and that of other White clergy to make sense of the way I became aware of my changing approach to ministry amongst a Black majority congregation.

This requires ministerial role and character, and attitudes towards them, to be taken into account. I have demonstrated the importance of both and also developed a tool for analysing my data which

considers both the importance of role and character on influencing the exercise of power, and how attitudes are influenced by knowledge and power. It is from this analysis that I conclude in Chapter Nine that self-awareness is as important a resource for White clergy as cultural understanding, and, acknowledging the limits of extrapolating the outcomes of the small data sample of my research, I can present outcomes which may have implications for those involved in training and placement of ministers in the wider Church.

Chapter Five

Viewing the Data: Pastoral Model

Preamble

So far in this thesis I have presented a discussion of my experience and the reflective journey that led to asking questions about my role leading a Black majority congregation. I have looked at issues surrounding power, privilege and culture and set out in Chapter Three a method for investigating my experience and gathering data in order to answer my questions. I set out to consider contributions to my understanding of priestly ministry and use the results of this exploration to shape the way in which I interpreted the comments generated by the focus group with my congregation.

Having explored the way in which models of ministry and power have shaped my approach to presenting the data which follows, the matrix developed from Reddie's typologies in Chapter Four is employed in the following chapters, thus presenting the collected data in a form which begins to answer the questions I posed at the beginning of my journey. The research questions were developed in the light of my exploration of power, knowledge and Reddie's typologies of minister. From these results I begin to identify areas of convergence and divergence, as well as themes I had not previously identified.

Three distinct areas form the starting place from which I draw conclusions about my research. As I demonstrate in Chapter Eight, areas of convergence resonate with the assumptions I made in asking the research questions; areas of divergence suggest areas which I had misjudged; and the unidentified areas form the basis of a new exploration and personal reflection.[45] This analytical instrument is further explained when I apply it in Chapter Nine where I suggest how the data might influence a wider application.

The following chapters present data from the parish focus group in conversation with my own practice only. When describing the methodology behind this research and the methods used in obtaining the data, I identified the need for using a method of interventional research, thus testing the veracity of both my experience and its critique by the parish focus group. Thus in Chapter Eight the preliminary conclusions from the focus group are brought into conversation with the curates' workshop. From this I then construct more robust answers to my initial research questions.

[45] Part B, Section 4 'Research Proposal' explores the origins of these areas of analysis.

A Note on the Focus Group

The group was made up of predominantly over sixties, first generation Black worshippers, who had arrived in the United Kingdom from the late 1950s. Two people present had moved to Britain within the past five years and were younger. One woman present was a younger, second generation participant. As I explain in the chapters that follow, different understandings of authority and participation, together with differing experience, shape the responses of the members of the focus group and these generational differences are explored when I reflect on their responses.

Participation in the focus group was by general invitation to the whole congregation. Those present had self-selected and, although they were broadly representative of the church community, my discussions of the responses that follow acknowledge the potential of absent voices and guard against concrete extrapolations.

Signatures of the Pastoral Model

In this Chapter I present examples from my research using the first of these typologies – the pastoral care model which Reddie describes thus:

> This category includes those who operate in a more implicit and emollient vein, using the pastoral care model as their instrument for change. There are a great many advantages to this model. Certainly, the minister who possesses the ability to be in solidarity with his/her predominantly Black congregation will be in a more advantageous position to encourage those individuals to use their innate talents and experiences in the church. This approach, however, although very helpful, does not address the central issue of power in the church. Many Black people are very sophisticated in their ability to differentiate between the 'minister who says he's on our side, and the ones who do something about it.' (Reddie 2003, p122)

In analysing the data from the parish focus group I looked for comments that suggested pastoral approaches to ministry with the external signs of care, soothing and stability but acknowledging that ultimately power continues to reside with the powerful minority White leadership (whether individually with the minister or shared with key parish leaders and post holders). Failing to shift this power base denies the existence of potential problems or, even if acknowledging them, simply smooths them over and allows for the continuing status quo. Power remains with the White minority and deeper tensions and cultural issues remain hidden or rejected.

Reddie acknowledges that there may be a long term process of empowerment associated with this model but it requires a building up of trust and profound relationship that necessitates a deeper understanding and appreciation that is 'culturally attuned to the life experiences of the faith community' (Reddie 2003, p122).

In conceding that this typology of minister, and therefore ministry, can be both positive and in itself liberating, the key to its accomplishment lies in the methods used by the minister to resource himself and others. The nature of the pastoral method will involve personal energy for the minister to resource himself and reflect on personal experience and access support from his own initiative.

Within the transcript of the focus group I identified four types of power use which fitted the pastoral model and four types of resourcing or knowledge acquisition ('understanding'). I shall define each of these as I introduce them but in summary the four types for each are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Key themes identified from analysing the data through the Pastoral lens

Pastoral Power	**Pastoral Knowledge**
Ignorance	Ignorance
Soothing	Frustration
Smoothing	Outside Intervention
Status Quo	Personal Action

Examples of Pastoral Power

1. Ignorance

Although often used as a negative concept, *ignorance* is as much about being uninformed or misinformed. It is a word which implies lack of knowledge. This lack of knowledge may lead to ignorance in the more usual understanding of that word whereby a person shows their lack of knowledge by presuming an understanding (often incorrectly) or dismissing the need to know something as irrelevant or unimportant.

In the context of the data I discovered there were two distinct types of *ignorance* at play: that of my own state of being unaware and the unawareness of others. In the first instance this was often as a consequence of my relative inexperience of cultures other than my own and in the second it was an ignorance of other people's unawareness – especially when it was presumed that 'they' would know and therefore 'they' should have discovered for themselves or made it known to me. Both of these deficiencies could potentially lead to my making unhelpful assumptions.

In the examples that follow there is much overlap between viewing these through the idea of *ignorance* and the other themes which I explore later. As I sought primarily to gather the congregation's views on my own personal ministry I shall look first at examples of the congregations' perception of my *ignorance*.

'and I don't think that was a mistake he just do not know how to do it'[46]

As we shall see later, at the heart of much of the focus group's comments were a sense of surprise and of support. Surprise that I was looking into this and making a purpose of enquiring about it, and also a sense of care and support for me as their parish priest of ten years. Although it was clear on occasions from their comments that there was a frustration at my 'not knowing', there was also a genuine understanding that it was not unusual or necessarily wrong that I did not know something. As one contributor said, '*I think often through experience we don't know what we don't know until something happens*'.

That 'something did happen' was clear from the nature of my questions put to the focus group and the nature of my enquiry. One person picked up on this by enquiring, '*how did he find out though that he was wrong?*' Perhaps because of the nature of the pastoral relationship between people and priest, or because of the inhibition of a group who know they are being recorded and listened to by the researcher, there was a deliberate move away from highlighting my ignorance to that of others who it was felt should have helped. And not just others who could have helped me, but previous incumbents too:

> *Can I just ask something, […] how's it gone before Father [Stephen], how the other incumbents do feel, do they do different than Father Stephen? Cos it looks as though Father Stephen has done things different.*
>
> *I'm sure it's going back a long time; I cannot believe that this hasn't happened before.*

This moved from 'me' to 'others' and then to a more general realisation that not-knowing was not simply a neutral situation but a cause for both conflict and for growth as I show later. Amongst the areas of conflict was an acknowledgement of the tensions between expectations (fuelled by ignorance) between congregants and their families as well as between the congregation members and the minister:

> *Can I ask you something really, because, like I have my family. And when they's coming for dinner what can I say to them? I have to go home and see them cos I doesn't see them in the week. So you do have to go home. That's the problem cos you want to go.*

These pastoral responses to the lack of knowledge – demonstrated by genuine care and concern as well as making allowances for ignorance – can lead to people (both priest and congregation members) making assumptions about what might be the norm in terms of culture and practice. This was particularly true of the discussions that followed the scenario about volunteering and participation. There was an assumption by one member that the parish priest ought to do more,

[46] In this and the following chapters data from the focus groups and the curates' workshop are printed in italics and without any alteration to the direct transcript of what was said. Only minor additions in square brackets are presented to clarify the context of the conversation.

despite both he (and the complainer) not fully understanding the different expectations from different parts of the congregation:

> *I think, I feel that Fr Stephen relatively is much younger than most of the congregation, and that may be a point. 'Cos maybe he find it very difficult to be more forceful. There's a limit to how often he can sort of announce that oh could people volunteer to do this that or the other. He's not as forceful as he could be. I feel that he should be able to approach people and say, 'would you consider doing this, see how you go'. Encourage them; actually they probably grow to like it. I feel that he probably get somewhere by doing that. Because like I said I think some people like to be asked.*

Not only was this an assumption (or perception) about my ability and method of ministry, but it was also a presumption that other national and cultural groups within the congregation shared the same view point. Sometimes these assumptions are projections of one person's understanding (as in this example above about the authoritative role of the priest) but at other times it is merely one of blindness to difference as illustrated by one person's comment on funeral practices:

> *So I think, I wouldn't have thought it was a West Indian funeral I would have thought it was just a personal view. You know what I mean? I didn't realise it was that I thought it was just a personal view, that that's what you wanted to do.*

Assumptions put in place through lack of knowledge or understanding are common to both the minister and congregation members. Naming them, or at least acknowledging their existence was considered necessary – if only to prevent further ignorance. As one contributor noted after questioning why such support was not put in place by the Church hierarchy: '*You know, not expect the priest to bumble along basically and do the best he can*.'

2. Status Quo

Although some issues around culture, inclusion and the role of the priest were ignored or un-acknowledged, there was also an underlying feeling that change was nevertheless important. As to the nature of this change a number of views came to the surface, which I explore in later chapters, but there was evidence from the conversations that although change was necessary it was often either too little too late, or ineffectual. I have termed the manipulation of this kind of power which disables any real change as 'status quo'. Compared with other methods of power (and indeed the use of knowledge which I discuss later) there was very little material in the data about this kind of power use. However, what there was was striking. Perhaps this apparent lack of data is indicative of the fact that for many Black members of the community most of what was experienced was inherently unchallenging of the White-led power base (of myself and the elected parish officers).

Early on in the focus group conversation one Black member of the group responded to a White member's question, '*possibly this is why he's doing what he's doing?*' with the statement, '*it's too late*.' After this there is a period of silence followed by the (White) facilitator of the group reminding everyone of the original scenario and the question in hand. The nature of this exchange is another example of the shared roles of power and privilege amongst the White 'leaders' of the congregation and I shall discuss this more in Chapter Nine.

Although this quashing of any further discussion is representative of the next type of pastoral power 'soothing' (see below) it is also illustrative of maintaining the status quo in order to avoid tensions and challenges to existing structures. A number of Black members of the group responded to the scenario about volunteering and participation with examples of how they avoided putting themselves forward for a particular reason:

> *I wouldn't put myself forward because I like to do little bits and pieces rather than be that one thing you have to be here more: bit of this cleaning, bit of tea, sweep up or what have you. I'd rather do that.*
>
> *So you'd rather be in the background rather than... is that what you're saying?*
>
> *Yes, I tried to be a reader and I didn't find myself comfortable doing that.*

In the dialogue above it is interesting to note the presumption by the White questioner (that the Black contributor would rather be in the background) is both a clarification and an assumption. It seeks to project one reasoning (of the minority power group) on to the description of another. Blending in to the background whether as a means of avoiding tension (both Black and White members) or simply conforming to expectation (for Black parishioners) was highlighted a number of times: '*and they don't want to say anything in case, they think well, it's getting a bit nasty now and we don't want to step on their feet.*' This expression of tension is once again swept over and the conversation is brought back to the questions in hand. Although the focus group may not have been the forum to discuss what was meant by the nastiness which was named, nevertheless it would have been interesting to allow space for this to be unpacked and explored.

This glimpse of frustration in terms of the exercising of pastoral power was made apparent by group members referring to their frustrations in regard to the (mis)use of knowledge and I explore this later in this chapter. However the example provides another illustration of the impotence of the status quo application of pastoral power which may be felt by both Black and White members. One White member of the group responded to pleas for the focus group to be widened to the whole congregation and that they be 'made' to stay behind to participate, ('*He should come out and say, right, today I have decided that everyone should stay for just 10 minutes to discuss what's going on*') by saying: '*I don't think he can do that*' and the conversation was closed.

3. Smoothing

The blocking of any forced wider discussion was seen again at the end of the focus group when another White member, responding to suggestions that the whole congregation be forced to confront these issues, stated, '*but I don't think you can tell people that they must stay though. Because we appreciate the freedom to make up our own minds*'. Ironically it is this appeal to freedom that prevented a true liberation for both White and Black members in ignoring the possibility of learning from others, thus preventing the possibility of transformative change.

I identified a number of illustrations of this ignoring of the implications of pastoral power which I call *smoothing* – side-lining the problems by either denying or diminishing them. To a point this was done by both Black and White members present in the focus group. At its most subtle level this smoothing was merely a diminishing of issues, as in the comment, '*it's only natural that … he would find things different… so he would be a bit surprised the way West Indians doing things in general*'. Although this was a positive pastoral statement it also acknowledges a permission for ignoring difference that was not recognised.

Other contributions were less positive and denied problems either by denying their existence or their affect:

> *Well, really I didn't see him make any mistakes.*
> *So I think, I wouldn't have thought it was a West Indian funeral I would have thought it was just a personal view. You know what I mean?*

Inherent in each of these comments was not only a method of ignoring the potential tensions, but also pastoral responses provided to bypass deeper or engaging issues which might lead to conflict within the congregation or renewal of pastoral practice and understanding. 'Not seeing' is both an innocent statement and a smoothing over. It is a convenient method of escaping from searching challenges: 'Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand' (Isaiah 6.9-10 and quoted by Jesus when explaining the purpose of the use of parable stories in introducing the Kingdom of Heaven).

Choosing not to see is a weapon of prejudice.[47] It not only denies the existence of something but diminishes its power and importance. When a White member of the group suggested it might be as a result of racial prejudice that fewer Black people volunteered for positions of leadership within the congregation the responses were emphatically 'no' but led to some of the strongest reactions about the importance (and hesitance) of speaking the 'truth': '*yea, I speak the truth, you said speak the truth so I speak the truth*'.

[47] For a consideration of the consequences of ignoring the power of prejudice see, amongst others, Lago 2006, p23-40, and Leech 2005, especially chapter 1 and 2.

Seen together these two key themes of managing the status quo and smoothing away difficulties highlight more proactive uses of power which I discuss in the next two chapters. But seen through the lens of pastoral power as described here, they illustrate the limitations of pastoral responses where care and concern for the congregation and parish priest are uppermost.

4. Soothing

It is inevitable that pastoral concern and care would be a fundamental characteristic of pastoral power. In its positive delivery a concern for the well-being of congregation members would be at the heart of such a pastoral model (as highlighted by Reddie in his definition of this typology). But genuine care and concern can be masked by a desire to soothe where it would be better to expose. In the above examples the easier, more comfortable, choice of not challenging the status quo or smoothing and ignoring potentially difficult situations, was responded to by mistakenly easing the tensions with soothing words. In this next set I present examples of priestly pastoral power which are soothing but not necessarily caring as well as some genuine understandings of the potential for growth as a congregation.

One of the drawbacks of not being present for the discussion was not being available to clarify either my feelings or the exact meaning of the question I had presented. There were obviously some frustrations about what they thought had happened to me and the consequences drawn from reflection on my experience. Alongside the comment '*they should've made allowances for Stephen*' was this observation that the process might lead to a more widespread pastoral understanding of the issues involved:

> *I can understand, feeling the way he's feeling, that maybe he could have done it better, but that's what he's trying to put right. But, I'm a bit lost in a sense because everyone's an individual and even though the West Indians do something in particular, there are different variations so how the communication's not coming from the family.*
>
> *That's why he's doing this discussion, to put him in the right direction. And to learn from any mistake that he has made, he wants to put them right so this is why he wants to hear every one of us points of view. And then he can pick out ... you know.*

Perhaps this is indicative of a collusion with the soothing process – to make things 'right' for all concerned, minister, congregation and parishioners – but it also acknowledges a pastoral concern from people to priest; soothing me for my discomfort and calming any fears that they had, unwittingly, upset me. Two final quotes illustrate this:

> *He is a good priest, he listens.*

Can I say something now, Father Stephen, we are sorry. Because we didn't know that you didn't understand it. We are sorry.

Examples of Pastoral Knowledge

1. Ignorance

As outlined at the beginning of this chapter applying the lens of Reddie's pastoral typology to knowledge delivers examples of pastoral responses which do not always deliver change or liberation for either Black or White members of a church community. In the above examples I concentrated on pastoral power but here I present examples which illustrate the use of understanding according to the same pastoral typology. The first of these is again ignorance – simply not knowing the activities and traditions of a particular culture.

The focus group conversations provided many examples of their recognition that I, like other White clergy, did not know certain things and that this would not be a surprise as I was from a different culture. In response to my question about whether members of the group were surprised that I might not know certain things, the responses were unanimous in believing I would not know: '*coming from outside like he has, I can't imagine... There's lots of other things he doesn't know*.' Behind this statement of my 'not knowing' lay two presumptions: that I had not been prepared in any way and that my previous experience, before arriving in this parish, had not been relevant.

That I had not been prepared – or that I gave no hint that I had not been offered preparation before arriving – was a key theme that repeated many times during the focus group. Later in this chapter I will present the expectations that members of the group voiced in terms of resourcing me and other clergy for posts like this one. But 'not knowing' was met with an apparently contrary mix of both resignation and surprise. As I show later, much of the resignation was aimed at the wider system and expressed disconnect with the wider Church and hierarchy, but the surprise had a more pastoral focus out of concern for not undermining my pastoral ministry. (The two seemingly opposing ideas were brought together with the response, '*someone should've told him*'.)

The mention of me '*coming from outside*' was significant for two reasons. As I have outlined in Chapter One my own experience before arriving in this parish was of great significance. Although not multi-racial the parishes of north Wales where I had ministered were multi-cultural and bilingual in terms of its Welsh-English population. Whilst direct comparison had not always been possible, I was acutely aware of my 'difference' but it was apparent that my present congregation did not recognise my previous experience in any particular way. It is a peculiarity of the Church of England appointments system that is often only a select few (involved in the direct appointments process) who get to know the full background of a priest's previous ministry. The majority of the congregation would only be aware through snippets of information offered directly by the priest at different times, thus assumptions would be made about what he or she would have known or not.

In an interesting comment, one member of the group said they '*thought [Stephen] came from Wales and more or less plonked here, but he wasn't was he? He chose to come here*'. This reveals a number of presumptions about my experience in Wales, how I had landed in the present parish, and why I might choose to minister is such a different context, and chimes with an observation made by Reddie in his summary of the pastoral typology:

> The examples I have witnessed seem to indicate models of pastoral care that are purely Eurocentric in conception. The administrative machinery of the church has sent people with little or no knowledge of the experiences, cultures or history of Black people, to churches where the greater majority of the members are of African descent. Given the distinctive stories of Black people, one might well speculate as to the means by which someone is going to care effectively for the spiritual, emotional and psychological needs of people about whom they know next to nothing. (Reddie 2003, p123)

Perhaps true to a pastoral – soothing – typology, members of the group quickly explained why I should not know something, or that it was not my responsibility to know everything about different cultures. One Ghanaian group member gave an example of how people did not necessarily understand her circumstances with a detailed explanation of the differences in culture that were not always recognised. Her example of 'not knowing' widened the problem to other non-Ghanaian members of the group and not just the concern of the priest when she explained the reason for many of her family coming to Britain and their need to work in order to earn enough to send money home to family. In working long hours it was not always possible to commit time to church activities and this was not understood. She noted,

> *So you find them doing a lot of overtime and things like that. And that may be part an explanation to that. They can't always commit because of this other extra responsibilities they have, because if you commit to something like PCC for instance, you may have to be committed to it, whereas it may affect other times you need to work for instance, 'oh can you do this extra work shift today'. I have to say I can't because I'm going to the PCC meeting. Obviously, ultimately, you're going to do that extra shift. It's a priority for you, due to your circumstances. And I think that may be a factor*.

To summarise the ignorance of not knowing certain things the facilitator of the group reviewed the comments that had been shared about different funeral traditions by commenting:

> *Maybe we didn't know either, because, the funeral procedures do vary with culture, and we've all probably made mistakes and maybe we didn't know how to direct people. And because may be we thought incumbents knew about this, you know it's very difficult, we are all guilty, not guilty but, misunderstood, or hadn't really acknowledged to, to direct people. Because it's a very personal thing isn't it? In any culture a funeral is a very*

personal thing. And people have different wishes and I think you know maybe we were unaware.

Within her comments it is possible to gauge a sense of frustration and impotence and it is this second type of pastoral approach to knowledge, frustration at not knowing, to which I now turn.

2. Frustration

Throughout the conversations there was little evidence of serious tension or conflict; most of the conversation was positive and constructive, aiming to generate support and change for the future rather than airing difficult issues from the past. However there was a common theme of frustration directed towards me as the minister and the wider congregation in terms of not knowing quite how to get past the stage of not knowing (as illustrated above) and move towards a future which was more useful for incoming clergy.

In this section I provide examples of this frustration – a sort of impotence of not knowing quite what to do next or how things might change in the future. This theme is illustrated by one comment, '*And then I've thought I've could have done some things so much better. You know because I didn't know what I didn't know if you know what I mean*.'

Reddie acknowledges that changing the status quo is inherently hard using the pastoral typology. The essence of this type is to smooth things over, lessening tension and maintaining the current hierarchy of power, thus when it becomes apparent that certain things are not only 'not known' but also difficult to approach in order to change, a sense of impotence is felt within the group. Questions arose as to why I was questioning my experience and sharing it with the group: '*Has somebody said something to him?*', *'I'm quite shocked at that [lack of volunteering]* ', '*It is interesting; where is this coming from?*', and there was an expression that those present were not surprised by my not knowing.

Many of the comments of frustration were accompanied by suggestions of why and how I should have been told more information prior to my arrival or during the first weeks of my incumbency, and I shall look at these at the end of this chapter, but there was also a feeling that I should have done more to resource myself. The comments that suggested what I could or should have done are summarised in these few examples:

Well anyway, when Fr Stephen done the first funeral and it was strange for him, he should've asked somebody – get some information.

Not sure autocratic is the word but I think he could be more forceful, more persistent.

I think a word from the head would have more weight.

Not only do these statements illustrate the frustration of what I did not, or appeared not, to do, they also demonstrate some of the diverse ways in which different national groups understood the role of the priest and their frustration that at different times I did not act according to their perception of ministry. The third of my scenarios put to the focus group explored the different understandings of priestly ministry in different provinces of the Anglican Communion. My generalisation was that Black parishioners, especially those from a West Indian heritage, welcomed a more authoritarian, autocratic approach from the priest than did the White members.

As noted above the frustration was also voiced in relation to the focus group itself and why more people hadn't taken part despite the invitation being open to all. Towards the end of the discussion the final comments from group members centred on opening up the discussion to the wider congregation and compelling them to stay behind to take part:

> *This discussion, should be with the whole congregation – may be a good idea to have something like this with whole congregation*
>
> *He should come out and say, right, today I have decided that everyone should stay for just ten minutes to discuss what's going on.*
>
> *But I don't think you can tell people that they must stay though. Because we appreciate the freedom to make up our own minds.*
>
> *No times have changed.*

This final resignation that it was no longer (if it ever was) possible to decide that people should stay behind and take part in something was offered by a White member of the group. However the tape records the general consensus that everyone agreed. That intervention by the priest would be welcomed is explored in the next chapter.

3. Personal Action

If the criteria for the pastoral typology is signified by the assumption that nothing will change or that the current balance of power and knowledge will be unchanged by priestly intervention, then a pastoral use of knowledge or understanding will by definition be unchallenging. In this category I include examples which point to the priest's (or others) access to resources and information (which I term knowledge) that neither relinquish any power from the hierarchy nor liberate or empower the congregation. Knowledge is gained solely for the purpose of making ministry smoother and I define it here as knowledge which I gain myself from my own initiative.

Whilst this is not necessarily a negative type of accessing power, it is inherently self-selected and self-editing knowledge. It is not impossible for organisational and radical knowledge to be obtained and utilised but that requires a shift in thought process similar to that which I explore in the next two chapters. Pastoral accessing of personal knowledge – personal action – has a limited ability to transform structures and practice because it is, by nature, self-selective and therefore subjective.

Throughout the conversations already presented in the previous examples from the data there were many references to feelings that I, as the priest, 'should have', and 'could have' accessed information on my own initiative. That I did this was obviously not immediately apparent to all those present with one contributor saying, *'and so maybe that's something lacking on his part*' in response to suggestions that I had not done enough to invite and include Black people into parish groups and activities. This wasn't held unanimously and something of the sensitive balance between inviting and pushing people into participating is illustrated by the comment, '*people say that Fr Stephen should ask. I am on the cleaning rota, and Fr Stephen asked many times for help and nobody answer. It's me have to ask [others]. Me have to ask them, nobody volunteer*'.

It is these divergent perceptions from congregation members of the method and nature of my interventions that differ with my own understanding of what I did and why. As I look at the data through the organisational lens in the next chapter I begin to look at the intentions behind my personal actions: were they for my own affirmation or did I genuinely seek to empower Black members of the congregation?

4. Outside Intervention

The final example of pastoral typology applied to the obtaining of knowledge and information that might help White clergy in Black majority congregations provides a key to where those interventions might come from. Studying the data reveals a hierarchy of intervention *from* 'somebody' should say something *to* a specific suggestion of who exactly that somebody might be – whether within or outside of the congregation.

As the conversation developed the suggestions that somebody ought to induct and instruct the priest became more specific. At first many of the more general comments were generated as part of the frustration which I outlined above with one contributor suggesting, '*maybe he should have been better prepared*'. However, a more detailed proposition came from a Jamaican woman who said:

> *My thought it not so clear but I'll try, when about the funeral I think somebody should direct Fr Stephen when he came, because we in the West Indies, that's the way we do our funerals. So I do not know what go wrong but we should have somebody to direct him in this. In these places. So I don't know why somebody never direct him.*

Interestingly the responsibility for outside intervention here is not laid upon the parish priest but on the congregation. The use of the word 'we' implies a corporate responsibility which I wish to explore later in Chapter Eight and in my conclusions. Nevertheless, this demonstrates some degree of denial of responsibility and a 'smoothing' of obligation so I include it here as an example of pastoral typology at work.

More specific examples of who might intervene with regard to resourcing the clergy are given. However in these instances again the responsibility is shifted away from the congregation to individuals at unique moments:

> *I was saying something similar to this to [A] last week but [B] just says, that when he take the first funeral, he went to the home, he should said to him this is the way we do our funeral. I doesn't know if he know anything about it, cos he's coming from a different path.*
>
> *Yea but listen to all of you, what I gather is that, that even though West Indian do something in particular, there's a different slant to, to most of it, so it's up to the individual to express their wishes.*
>
> *But when he visits the night before isn't that the time the family should say 'this is what we want', when he goes round he can get it all in before*

These responses are pastoral, according to my definitions, because they leave the onus for educational change and experiential reflection firmly on the priest. This view is defended by one contributor who points out that as such traditions (especially within funeral ministry) can be very subjective and differ from family to family it is always necessary for the priest to check with individuals:

> *Yea, yea, it's just lack of communication really essentially, isn't it? Because even now if obviously even if it's right all about what we're about now he can still go wrong, if there's no communication from the family as to their wishes. 'Cos I come from Ghana, we do some things in particular but I wouldn't want to do all those things, so even if we tell him that what the Ghanaians do, I may have a slight slant or variation in what I want doing. And it's up to me to communicate that. Well, my family...!*

But relying on individuals is not always enough. My own experience suggested that at first bereaved families were not likely to come forth with this kind of information. Perhaps this was because they assumed that I knew, or it may be because they felt it was inappropriate to tell me things they felt I ought to know – perhaps through politeness or a feeling that it was not their place to tell me. After conducting a number of West Indian funerals I learnt that some things were expected and I began to include these suggestions into my pre-funeral visits.[48] This inclusion of

[48] The funeral practices are outlined in Chapter Two.

certain questions was very much at my own instigation but would have been helped by some intervention. This was picked up on by one member present:

> *It's like what [B] says really. So it's not all his fault really, the person, a warden, somebody should say, 'this is how the West Indian done the funeral'. Cos he's not a mind reader; he was just doing his best.*

A number of suggestions as to who that 'someone' should be were given in the focus group but I regard these as agents of potential change so will evaluate those in the next two chapters as appropriate.

Preliminary Conclusions

Given the potential inertia implied by the pastoral typology – according to Reddie's definition of it not addressing the central issue of power – it is easy to dismiss this model as of little ministerial value. In terms of liberational empowerment it is hard to see that such an approach will engender significant change in the long term. Having outlined what I believe to be the signature characteristics of this pastoral model (inability to change or challenge problems, maintenance of status quo, denying or ignoring conflicts etc) I have shown that the examples presented here support that view. However there are other, less negative, conclusions that can be drawn from this typology.

Ultimately this typology is passive – it relies on either the clergy finding the correct resources or others providing them without any direct control or active participation from the congregation. Given the constraints on freedom of expression and shared experience inherent within the pastor-person role as well as the collective memory of racism and discrimination, it is unlikely that any proactive intervention is possible under the pastoral typology. As Reddie notes:

> In White dominated societies and institutions, particularly in the face of White authority figures, Black people will conceal and disguise aspects of their existence or experiences. In short, there are some things they will not tell the minister. This is a major draw-back for those ministers who adopt the pastoral model as their chief means of bringing about change. (Reddie 2003, p125)

From the data recorded in the focus group I would add to this drawback the following conclusions as to the effect of the pastoral approach.

Firstly the pastoral typology is naturally the default position for most ordained ministers. It is a natural approach appealing to the nature of priestly ministry. For this reason I considered it first amongst the three typologies I explore.

Secondly and partly because it is the default positon, it is also the easiest. It requires little preparation in terms of information gathering or reflection, and thus its ease is reflected in the relative immediacy of its application.

Because of this immediacy, the third conclusion is that this approach draws short term gains with all its obvious pastoral attraction.

Finally, the apparent stability which this approach presents resonates with the commonly perceived success criteria by which pastors are judged (both internally and externally).

Chapter Six

Viewing the Data: Organisational Model

The second of Reddie's typologies, which I name 'organisational', refers to ministers who do not naturally adhere to a pastoral model but who have gifts and energies focussed on practical projects and strategic ministries. An indicative summary of this typology can be seen in Reddie's comments:

> *The majority of these ministers are well meaning. The ministers in this category are the ones who know relatively little about the Black people in their charge. Black people will most usually conceal their negative experiences and feelings in the presence of White authority. White ministers can use this to validate and legitimise their actions. (Reddie 2003, p125)*

As I explore in Chapter Four above this typology is another example of power imposed from above rather than liberational congregational power from Black members.

Signatures of the Organisational Model

Whereas in pastoral models there is little or no change and maintaining the status quo is key for a sense of stability and care, in this approach changes are evident but through manipulation or force rather than agreement or empowerment. The manipulation may be subtle or obvious, conscious or unconscious, and the distinctions between these modes of manipulation may be clouded by the positioning of Black members (as explained by the quote above). Thus in this model change occurs with consent but without engagement – all members are aware of the change to the status quo, but real power remains with the White hegemonic minority.

For the minister who adopts this approach there is an apparent sense of issues being dealt with and racism or discriminatory practice engaged with, however it is often external to Black congregational concerns. In this sense it is blind to the concerns of the disempowered group.

In looking at the data through this organisational lens, I identified four themes for the use of organisational power and three for organisational knowledge as shown in Table 4 below. Each of these will be defined as it is presented. Because of the overlap between external intervention as a form of organisational power and the use of organisational (external) knowledge I consider these together first.

Table 4: Key themes identified from analysing the data through the Organisational lens

Organisational Power	**Organisational Knowledge**
Manipulative Power Depriving Power Belittling Power External Intervention	Assumed Knowledge Manipulative Knowledge External Intervention

Examples of External Intervention

Throughout the conversations there was a growing sense that I ought to have been helped in my ministry as part of either an induction process or interventional training. One comment, '*maybe he should have been better prepared*' was echoed by many and often more emphatically. In Chapter Five I hinted at the frustration that this caused – partly as a way of soothing any feelings of inadequacy on my part, and also as a frustration at the diocesan hierarchy for landing clergy in this position without preparation.

Specific examples of who that intervention might come from were given with regard to all three scenarios (funerals, participation, and priestly roles). This was not *instead* of my own personal exploration and self-learning but alongside it. Three particular sources were identified, one of which – the congregation itself – I shall look at in further detail in the next chapter as illustrative of what I term radical power, but the two listed here (elected representatives and diocesan officers) represent examples of organisational power in that they use outside (and predominantly White) figures of authority to help the priest to begin to understand how he or she might do things differently.

These methods reflect a cultural respect of authority and hierarchy which is not without its problems or criticisms. They might be particularly associated with first generation Black members of the congregation rather than more questioning and liberated views of power, authority and reactionary outlook practiced by second and third generation Black communities.[49] But the Black members of the parish focus group were predominantly older people who had been born outside Great Britain.

The first of the suggested parties' interventions of power and knowledge was that of elected representatives from the congregation. This was in a development of thought from the realities of different funeral traditions:

> *When he take the first funeral, he went to the home, he should said to him' this is the way we do our funeral'. I doesn't know if he know anything about it, 'cos he's coming from a different path. So it's not all his fault really. The person, a warden, somebody should say,*

[49] This generalisation is explored in more detail in Part B, Section 1 'Literature Review'.

> *'this is how the West Indian done the funeral'. Cos he's not a mind reader; he was just doing his best.*

Relying on the deceased's family to supply information of different traditions was not always possible (as I was never told about things unless I specifically brought them up after my experience evolved) and this was understood by members of the focus group, so the identification here of a churchwarden – as representative of the whole congregation, and thus having the equivalent of elder status – suggested a reliable source of information other than those immediately involved in the pastoral situation.

For most of my time in this parish the churchwardens were White; only during my final two years (out of ten) was a Black warden elected. Thus the wardens' post was symbolic of White institutional authority. In the matters raised by this focus group and in many parish conversations, the wardens were referred (or deferred) to as the definitive source of authority other than the parish priest. Whether this was partly out of tradition, genuine respect or as a means to avoid debate was not clear and is beyond the scope of this analysis. However the outside nature of the wardens and their use here as a point of contact for clergy needing inductive training is significant.

There were also more general suggestions of 'somebody' or 'the sidespersons'[50] but the wardens were mentioned most in the contributions. Their authority and 'given-ness' as symbols of continuity and stability within the parochial system were hinted at in one comment made by a Black member of the group:

> *After saying the wardens should tell Stephen, well what's the wardens before - the previous incumbent - tell? Did they tell him what to do? But what I'm saying is how far back is this going? That's what I'm trying to get at.*

Perhaps in this statement there is a hint of resignation that this is the way it has always been, but also a genuine enquiry asking if this had happened before. And if not, then why not? Answering this question is key to my analysis and conclusions in the final chapters.

The second place suggested from which intervention should come was from outside the parish arena. The phrase 'the diocese' is often used without any specific identification as to who or what that might mean. Despite encouragements from 'the diocese' that we all consider ourselves 'the diocese' it does in general consciousness refer to the hierarchy of bishops, senior clergy and diocesan officers as individuals and as functional roles.

At first the external source was not specified:

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[50] Sidesmen and Sideswomen are members of the congregation elected to assist and support the Churchwardens in their duties and are part of the legal administrative requirements for a Church of England parish.

So really may be that should have come from higher up rather than from congregation.

But then a reason was suggested as to this being someone other than the parish clergy:

But by the other way we all have different traditions, you know, it does need looking up from higher up, you know. Rather than expecting a priest to have a look at that.

The notion that the priest should not have total responsibility for this was evident in another contribution too, this time with a specific proposal that the assistance for parish clergy should come from, or be authorised by, the bishop:

You know what I find a pity is, the higher up ones, the bishops and all them, have not put some sort of the structure in, with any priest learning in the first place, … cos we live in a multi-cultural society, the whole of Britain is and has been for many, many years. Why they've not put something in before now? You know not expect the priest to bumble along basically and do the best he can.

Given that the majority of bishops and senior clergy in the diocese (and indeed in the Church of England) are White, this suggestion is a good illustration of organisational change which does not empower congregations or engage with Black experience and tradition directly, but generates an institutional approach.

Within these examples of external intervention there are illustrations of both organisational power (its source through privilege and status as well as its use as a manipulative method) as well as organisational knowledge (the employment of external, predominantly White, authority figures to resource superficial change). I now provide examples separately for power and knowledge according to the key themes I identified in the data.

Examples of Organisational Power

1. Manipulative Power

Describing something as manipulative calls to mind abusive and perhaps unscrupulous behaviour. Although these are the more usual connotations, I choose to use 'manipulative' here both with those meanings and also with a more neutral association of power that is calculated and controlling. Of course this too might be, and most usually is, a negative and abusive form of power, but it can also be productive within the organisation of communities and institutions seeking specific change. In the context of combatting discriminatory practices of ministry, or eliminating exclusion, or, more positively, engendering inclusion, such manipulative power by the minister may often be encouraged, even if unintentionally.

As I acknowledged earlier there are many issues at play with the understanding of authority and power amongst the Black community: this may be a mix of cultural legacy, a genuine respect for authority – regardless of colour – as well as a signifying activity playing along with a given structure to undermine or lessen its impact.

I was conscious while preparing the third scenario on pastoral care and priests' roles that I had in mind some generalisations of expectations from three distinct groups within the congregation. I perceived that those coming from a West Indian province of the Anglican Communion held to a model of priesthood which was autocratic, West African provinces regarded priests as similarly strong but also as personal chaplains to the wider family (whether churchgoers or not) whereas the White British (Church of England from birth) members of the congregation had a more general, parochial model balancing the authority of the priest with the elected structures of parochial administration and the diocese.

This generalisation proved to have some truth and was supported by responses to all three scenarios:

> *I think a word from the head would have more weight.*
>
> *Not sure autocratic is the word but I think he could be more forceful, more persistent.*

Both of these comments came from parishioners who had spent their early years in the Caribbean and echoed responses given elsewhere (and presented above) with regard to the frustrations around why I did not appear more forceful. Both before and after the focus group, my feeling was that this desire for a more authoritarian approach to my ministry was directed more at how I might behave with other members, rather than for themselves! Although the right to freedom of choice was only vocalised by White members of the group in this research, I was aware from other conversations that it was valued by all as a personal right. Exactly what was meant by authority and over whom it should be exercised was harder to discover.

Reading these comments after the focus group (not having the right to reply, or explain) left me intrigued as to how they might see such 'forceful, persistent' ministry in action. I had not understood my ministry as requiring more authority but I had been judging it through my own experience of British Anglicanism. The differences between perceptions of ministry from different provinces were illustrated by one woman from Jamaica who said:

> *In Jamaica we have to respect our priest. We did have a priest as young, he was 21, we had to respect him. If you did anything that was not right he give you a good slap as a child and tell you off. You had to call him reverend, old or young. That respect is still there. Visiting sick people or people that dies, we all congregate together, which I find it very hard in this country it not the same. Even we as Jamaican we still help, but not out of the way help. It's not there.*

I am aware that this reminiscence may refer to a Black priest in a Black congregation in Jamaica and so the power implications will be very different. However, the attitude of priest to people and people to priest illustrated here has wider consequences for the understanding of roles in this congregation. In this quote above there are examples of the authoritative power expected from the priest and also the expectations on pastoral care. Direct action from the priest - whether over the congregation, on individuals or their families - was indicative of a good pastor as well as the norm. The note of disappointment that this model (which encompassed pastoral care amongst the congregation members too) had not survived the journey across to Britain is evident. Wilkinson speaks about the disillusionment with the Church of England (and the country as a whole) of those arriving in in England in the late 1950s and early 60s, describing it as 'rejection by two "mothers" ' (Wilkinson 1993, p31). This reality was apparent for those who had arrived in Britain but not part of the consciousness of British people who had not experienced any other models of Anglican pastoral care.

I include these illustrations as examples of organisational power as they represent definite change – through authoritative power – which appears to solve problems of inclusion, and yet do little to alter the underlying causes of exclusion or poor cultural understanding. A similar contribution from a West African woman corroborated the importance of priestly authority as well as supporting the family chaplaincy model which I suggested in the third scenario:

> *If you're in Ghana the pastor knows most of the family, he knows all your business as well! He is autocratic in a way. You can be called in. If there is gossip or rumour he is able to take it on himself to talk to the person.*

It is clear that a similar use of this kind of clerical authority would be welcomed from some members of the focus group (and wider congregation) but with reservations in terms of privacy and purpose. I present further examples of manipulation later when I consider manipulative power at work, however it is interesting to note two final comments from the group which illustrate an understanding of what it means to be aware of this type of power use.

> *Have previous priests made similar mistakes at the beginning?*
>
> *That's why he's doing this discussion, to put him in the right direction. And to learn from any mistake that he has made, he wants to put them right so this is why he wants to hear every one of us points of view. And then he can pick out [a way forward].*

This question, from a group member, and its response are included here in that they begin to address a sense of change (which I suggest is part of the organisational typology) but without fully engaging with the possibility that the impetus for change might come from within the congregation rather than remain within the power and responsibility of the parish priest.

2. Depriving Power

Whereas manipulative power may have negative, neutral and some positive applications the second type of organisational power that I consider is disempowering for Black members of the congregation because it deprives them of expression of difference or change. These types of minister use their authority combined with a personal sense of directive mission to dismiss any challenge to his or her understanding of the present situation. Again this style of exercising power is shared with other members of the congregation who enjoy the inherent power of their Whiteness and its control of what is considered to be their norm.

In these examples I speculate that there is not necessarily a considered desire to disempower or to belittle (I demonstrate those later) but rather blindness to difference stemming from either an inability, unwillingness or unawareness of different traditions and practices. Any suggestion to the contrary might be met with disbelief. After reading my observations about Black parishioners being less willing to volunteer or participate without some kind of manipulative intervention, the following responses were recorded (for clarification White people's contributions are marked W and the Black participant's reply B):

> *W1: I'm quite shocked at that.*
> *W2: Oh I am as well.*
> *W1: You know cos no matter what we do there's always Black people there isn't there*
> *B: I think that's not what he's saying. That's not what he saying, 'that Black people don't volunteer', what he's actually [saying], well from my view and I could be wrong, but may be they could volunteer more readily.*

The shock expressed by the White participants demonstrates an unwillingness and an unawareness of difference as well as a misinterpretation of the proposal. This misinterpretation I believe was through a genuine ignorance but was also interpreted by the Black responder as a possible deliberate – though unintended – twist of interpretation. There were many instances of this kind of denial of difference which were examples of depriving power - both priestly, and congregational.

Perhaps the most significant statement which summarises the assumptions that lay behind these types of depriving power was this comment:

> *'Cos I know we're all looking at God in what, in the same way.*

Whereas it is probable that most people assume that their own understanding of God, moulded as it is by the teachings, nurture and spiritual examples of those introducing them to the Christian faith, is the norm for White members of Church of England congregations there are very few opportunities for this assumption to be challenged, or contested. For Christians brought up in a different tradition from this Western, White 'norm', whose experience does not easily resonate with

the cultures underpinning this hegemonic understanding of Christianity, much spiritual reflection is necessary to connect life experience and the Christian tradition. This may not necessarily be a conscious reflective cycle, but rather a journey of understanding re-aligning the tradition with personal experience. So this statement by a White member of the focus group is partly true (*we're all looking at God*) but this truth overshadows the possibility that it might be from a different viewpoint – hence the additional, power depriving assumption that this is '*in the same way*'. Depriving power may not just be about assuming that differences don't exist – a blindness to variance – but also a depriving of opportunity to explore or engage with such differences. Although intended as a pastorally sensitive suggestion the following comments illustrates such disengagement:

> *Not only that [but] when they [the clergy] do go to the house, the people who are bereaved are so distressed they wouldn't think to explain an awful lot of things.*

Apart from the patronising assumption that families would 'not think' to tell the priest what was required, there is also a feeling that it might not be necessary. The differences are just not that important to warrant any confrontation – however mild.

> *And some people make quite specific requests of what they want to have at their funerals themselves, before they die, so I think all these sort of variations are taken into consideration I think, through different cultures. And but, it's just a question I think, of looking at being sensitive about it.*

Again this second comment was made by the White facilitator in a summarising statement before moving to the next set question, unintentionally depriving the group of any further discussion.

The questions following each scenario served also to lead the group into my own thought processes so that there was an understanding of how my awareness developed. The same journey was to be found in the group understanding of the issues around power use and misuse and a gradual understanding was found in comments like these:

> *And then I've thought I could have done some things so much better. You know because I didn't know what I didn't know.*
>
> *I didn't realise it was her culture, I just thought it was just her church.*

Both of these comments were made by White members of the group following questions about my own process of reflection and action. I include them here because although hinting at a different way of exercising power (and knowledge) they still rely on personal intervention rather than a congregational, or radical mediation from members of the Black community. But such realisations did not stimulate any possibility of change of approach. The shock of the initial statement (as presented at the start of this section) may have been transformed into some self-realisation but the

effect of this '*depriving power*' was yet to be understood. As one Black member commented in response to my statement that few Black people volunteered or participated in PCC meetings without personal invitation, '*I don't blame them… You wouldn't want to go, because sometimes you have some good points, people who sit in the back have some really good points and you know they're not listened to.*' Reddie talks about the power dimensions at play when Black people speak in these types of meetings, suggesting that it is less a matter of lack of voice, and more about what is heard (or not) by White authority:

> An unsafe environment is one that is formal, and White people, particularly authority figures (especially the minister) are present. Grown adults will be rendered dumb and inarticulate. The corporate church and individual ministers have often viewed this silence to be acquiescence and complicity. Often, this silence can mean dissatisfaction and unease, but the context is not one in which individuals feel able to express their deep-seated feelings. (Reddie 2003, 126)

This honest statement showing resignation to powerlessness is in stark contrast to the shock expressed by the White group member who saw (or chose to see) no difference at all.

3. Belittling Power

The last illustrations of organisational power are related to the above depriving power examples where there was a disempowerment, as there is here, but often through genuine ignorance or misunderstandings. Here what I term belittling power is a distinctive belittling through either patronising observations or a manipulative retaining of personal power. In a sense there is an element of frustration in some of these comments – perhaps through a reluctance to engage with the challenges that were presented in my initial scenarios. For example, '*that's what usually happens when someone comes to your house, you tell the priest what you want. This is what I don't understand, why there's a difference?*' demonstrates a degree of unwillingness to understand the issues from a different viewpoint. In terms of organisational power this highlights the nature of this typology where issues are acknowledged or named and yet underlying causes or concerns are ignored. For the powerful the situation appears to have been recognised; for the powerless the opportunity has been cancelled.

Reddie includes this in his discussion of organisational power, he writes:

> Unfortunately this way of working, although necessary and a justified means of operating, can develop into a paternalistic and patronizing tendency that finds expression in all areas of minister-church relations. It is sad to report that many Black members voice with compassion, sadness and anger, their negative feelings about the attitude of many of the White ministers who have pastoral charge of their churches. As one woman (an African-Caribbean in her fifties) said, 'The problem with ****, is that he has a massa complex [a

> White slave master]. He acts like we're still pickney [children] and we don't have no sense.' (Reddie 2003, p125)

Averting any progress might be seen in the contribution of one member who said: '*the idea is I think, to prevent … other priests making similar mistakes in the future and it will sort of help other people*' and although it is unsure who she intended to be 'helped' it appears that it was the priest. The word 'prevent' is particularly disabling and hints at the deeper attitudes voiced in these two observations:

> *I think is it because of their shyness that they don't want to take a leading role? They are very good when they get into it, I must admit.*
>
> *You know, 'cos no matter what we do there's always Black people there, isn't there?*

In accordance with the criteria of organisational ministry, these comments demonstrate an apparent appreciation of the presence of Black members in congregational participation but again prevent any dialogue – in fact the comments are condescending. These comments may not necessarily be restricted to examples of actual power misuse; the words themselves – voiced either in this focus group or at other times in parish life – exercise organisational power.

The final example illustrating what I have termed belittling organisational power also exhibits the same condescending statements but more explicitly voices the expectations of the White 'norm' which support the notion that something is being done (by the White minority) to help (in their eyes) the Black majority fulfil their potential:

> *I think over the years now, looking back, the Black congregation has always worked very hard. But what I find is that they never seem to put themselves forward for key positions, and I find this, you know, as if they think, 'I couldn't do that job'. But they could. They can. But I think they say they are more shy of going in the front. They do well in the background, extremely well in the background.*

It would have been interesting to explore whether the term 'Black congregation' was a specific understanding of a separate group within what I always understood as one congregation (though with different groups present) or if it was merely shorthand for Black members of the congregation. Either way it presents a belittling half-story of the participation and involvement of Black members and presumptions as to what they might or might not be capable of. This belittling power exercised within both the group and in the wider congregation stems from a misuse of organisational power – the knowledge (in this case assumed and untested) that is used to project manipulative power on to a disempowered minority. It is to this organisational knowledge to which I now turn.

Examples of Organisational Knowledge

1. Assumed Knowledge

The first of the subtypes of organisational use of knowledge overlaps significantly with the examples above, but I list them here as they are seen within the focus group as examples of personal understanding (both priestly and congregational) that are used to affect a veneer of change without true engagement. Assumptions can be both innocent and biased or manipulative and controlling. This subtype gives voice to assumed knowledge which prevents deeper engagement unless the normative position of the powerful minority is repositioned.

This first example I used earlier but it reflects assumed knowledge too and is typical of organisational power: '*Cos I know we're all looking at God in what, in the same way'*, though I do not believe there to be anything other than genuine ignorance behind this comment. I have explored this comment above and will return to it again in Chapter Seven as it summarises both the disempowering organisational typology as well as being a suggestive start for radical power.

At the end of the previous section I gave an example of belittling power which was both patronising and assuming. A similar example I choose to list here as this equally condescending contribution also portrays the misuse of personal knowledge in assuming that because one person can then others might follow:

> *The only person I knew, one of the Black people, was very good at doing, was [Name]. She was very outgoing. She was, she was very outgoing. But most folks work very, very hard, but in the background and sometimes they don't get noticed.*

This statement also suggests that there is a normative behaviour which is good (i.e. outgoing personalities) and that other ways of being involved fall short of that ideal. This assumed knowledge is used to guide the thoughts of what is considered correct behaviour for others to involve themselves.

2. Manipulative Knowledge

By far the most prolific examples of organisational power were those listed above as manipulative and this is true also of organisational uses of knowledge. Manipulation is a key element of the organisational typology as defined by Reddie and its relative ease of use may account for its frequent employment. In these examples of manipulative knowledge I include comments which although used in terms of manipulative power are supported by a particular organisational view of knowledge – an understanding of what is achievable by manipulating certain people or situations. There is a danger in this type of knowledge in that being self-sourced, or received, from mainly White authorities, it fails to engage with the Black community but superficially manipulates change.

Knowing what might be done to achieve an appearance of empowerment was recognised by the focus group as coming from the priest. Clearly it was not just me that had used this method of intervention with one contributor noting, '*when [the previous rector] was here she asked me many times to go on the PCC, and you [are] just scared of people going to say, "oh you taking the post but you only just come here*" '. I was conscious that I tried many times to encourage Black members to take up positions of authority, I hoped, with sensitivity and gentleness, but it was interesting to note that a more forceful, pressured approach might not have been as insensitive as I had thought:

> *But I think there are some people who like to be asked.*
>
> *I feel that he should be able to approach people and say, 'would you consider doing this, see how you go'. Encourage them; actually they probably grow to like it. I feel that he probably get somewhere by doing that. Because like I said I think some people like to be asked. They need a bit of [encouragement].*

These comments were echoed by many, with some Black members stressing a more organising, (manipulating?) role again for the parish priest:

> *You know, I mean if a member of the congregation ask me 'can you come in on this', I would think many, many times, but if it come straight from the head, you would say, 'yes, I will fix a time and come and do it'. I think it must come from the head. And if the head could approach the congregation, whatever time, and then they will be able to make a decision.*
>
> *So it's like encouraging them. Then they probably realise it's not as bad and 'I could devote my time'. Being involved in church is really, really special. So I think people need to be encouraged. I really, really agree. I feel Fr Stephen maybe should be more forceful.*

The recurrence of the forceful exercising of ministerial power was not what I had expected and not one which I had utilised often and, after considering this in the next chapter on radical typologies, I analyse this divergence from my own experience in Chapter Nine.

Preliminary Conclusions

I began this chapter by stating that one of the signatures of this typology is the appearance of change and a tackling of important issues but without the in-depth attempts to address underlying causes of inequality and the misuses of power or privilege. The examples above illustrate this and clearly show the frustrations with this type of power use in that the beginnings of change are seen, but because of the misuses of external power, or White minority norms, the Black community within the congregation are effectively paralysed.

This typology is in many ways encouraged by the ethos of church life and politics – on a parochial, diocesan and institutional level. Reddie describes this method of ministry as suited to the project-focussed, outreach based priest especially in inner city and urban communities, where there may well be low skill levels and therefore an apparent need for strong decision making clergy who are active doers. The decline in numbers attending churches and the disconnect between some churches and communities has been addressed by encouraging community witness – especially project-based social action – in many urban parishes.

Positively, this typology does introduce the importance of inclusion and equality. It begins to see that there is a power imbalance and that that imbalance needs 'something' in order to address it. However the minister may often fail to recognise the need for internally understanding and tackling this imbalance and reaches to external sources – themselves exemplifying power and privilege – in order to impose a new understanding. Thus frustration is increased as glimpses of true sharing or experience, knowledge and power are glimpsed but kept beyond reach. The difficult and sensitive maintenance of balance between the empowerment of others and the retaining of power was seen in a comment of the focus group chair who commented, '*but I don't think you can tell people that they must stay [for a congregational discussion of participation issues] though. Because we appreciate the freedom to make up our own minds*'. The empowerment of one group is clearly seen as a threat to the freedom of those whose power might be eroded.

This naming of issues is important. The evidence from this group suggests that the scenarios I presented were of importance to the Black members present (though admittedly were often met with the disbelief or the unrecognition of White members). However the purpose of this identifying and presentation was often with the hope of deleting them, brushing them aside rather than a considered attention.

Chapter Seven

Viewing the Data: Radical Model

In this Chapter I consider the third and, for me the most important, typology of Reddie's three: radical or prophetic power and knowledge.

Signatures of the Radical Model

It is first important to restate Reddie's description of this type:

> These ministers decide that in order to effect the necessary change in their churches (in order that these faith community reflect more accurately the lived experience of its Black members), they must act in an overtly ideological and systemic way. These ministers inform the minority, powerful, White elite … that they should move aside graciously. […] The focus … of the minister's attentions will be the marginalized and disaffected majority. Explicit attempts are made to ensure that churches reflect the cultures and narratives of the majority Black congregations, whose presence sustains these communities. (Reddie 2003, p120)

The material that follows focusses on examples from the data which speak of Black experience, the empowerment of Black members of the congregation, and the redefining of the White minorities' normative position of power.

There is another important mark of this kind of ministerial method which is that of costly, sacrificial service which may result in opposition and unpopularity from the White church members. Reddie notes that, 'By its very nature, this strategy can be very costly for ministers' (Reddie 2003, p120). He continues to explore this sacrificial, yet vital, ministerial behaviour in terms of justice and righteousness – akin to the life and witness of Christ (Reddie 2003, p121f). Some of the data hints at this kind of risk and I give examples from both Black and White members of the group.

In previous chapters I have separated the examples into two distinct, yet often overlapping, areas – power and knowledge. The examples of 'knowledge' have centred on the resources, cultures or the 'norms' that are brought to the situation by the priest or focus group members, and the 'power' examples have reflected the ways in which this knowledge has been used. In this chapter I choose a different approach to representation as it is less clear on the divide between knowledge and power in this typology.

In Chapter Four I reordered Reddie's typologies. In doing this I see a distinct progression from the pastoral model through to this radical or prophetic typology. Although there may be tendencies

amongst ministers to prefer a particular type, I see within my own experience (and that of others) the possibility of a journey from one to another. I noted that in my own parish experience I started with an inherently pastoral model which led to a more organisational method and finally the beginnings of a radical typology which was nurtured and resourced by the other two. Thus the radical power examples which I perceived within my ministry were informed by the power and knowledge experienced and learned from the other two. I believe therefore that it is not possible to act within the radical typology without knowledge, and thus knowledge and power are here so entwined that they must be viewed as one.

In looking at the data through the radical lens I identified four themes for the use of radical power and knowledge as shown in Table 5 below. Each of these will again be defined as it is presented.

Table 5: Key themes identified from analysing the data through the Radical lens

Radical Power	**Radical Knowledge**
Evidence to be listened to and understood	Evidence to be listened to and understood
Different empowerment of the White minority	Different empowerment of the White minority
Empowerment of the Black majority	Empowerment of the Black majority
Involvement and Inclusion	Involvement and Inclusion

Examples of Radical Knowledge and Power

1. Evidence to be listened to and understood

A key area of the radical typology is the discovering and giving voice to the experience of Black members of the congregation is such a way as to present them as the norm rather than tokens of experience to be assimilated into White experience (for more on assimilation see Part B, Section 1). In the examples below I provide comments which I term ‘evidence’ in that they give evidence for cultural and traditional practices from the experiences of Black members of the congregation and focus group. As ‘evidence’ in a radical typology this must be heard and acted upon by the minister (and other White parochial colleagues) in both empowering the Black community and enabling the White power minority to reassess their understanding of normative church practice.

At the heart of radical type ministry is active listening which hears, understands and acts on the evidence provided by those who are marginalised. Following the reading of the third scenario on pastoral care and the role of the priest, amongst the first response from two Black members was a comment on my listening skills:

> *He is a good priest, he listens.*
> *I must say he does listen, he gives you his attention. He listens and he looks at you. Not like some priest, they are looking all over.*

Notwithstanding the possibility that this comment was intended simply as a compliment I do believe that in its context and given the conversation that followed about the role of the priest this represents a key important gift for the minister who seeks to hear, understand and implement the changes needed to value the inclusion of Black members of the congregation. As well as this direct comment on my listening ability there were also suggestions for how I – or another priest – might benefit from listening to certain people at particular times in order to better understand the pastoral and spiritual needs of parishioners:

> *I was saying something similar to this to X last week but Y just says, that when he take the first funeral, he went to the home, he [the relative of the deceased] should said to him [the priest] this is the way we do our funeral.*
>
> *But when he visits the night before isn't that the time the family should say 'this is what we want', when he goes … he can get it all in before.*

Although these examples are also symbolic of the frustrations referred to in the previous chapters and the importance of finding out (and being told) about different practices, they are also representative of the understanding that the priest should deliberately enquire and actively listen to what is being said (rather than assuming or projecting his/her own cultural practice on to the family). Even in the first example where there is a greater emphasis on the family informing the priest, the implication is that the priest will listen and understand.

These comments at first seem to represent knowledge (and its attainment) but the strength of the comments and their emphatic tone suggest a powerful (and radical) proposal directed towards the priest. As with many contributions during the focus group, here are signs of a newly found voice from the Black community of ways to direct and guide the priest.

There were other suggestions for how the parish priest might access information and the attitudes needed by a priest in enabling congregation members to be heard with one contributor saying:

> *Encourage them; actually they probably grow to like it. I feel that he probably get somewhere by doing that. Because like I said I think some people like to be asked. They need a bit of [encouragement].*

At the end of the Chapter Six I collected examples under the term 'manipulative knowledge' where personal knowledge and practice was used to force change, or manipulate the practice of the wider congregation. Whereas I saw this as a predominantly negative intervention, the comments from the focus group also suggested that this might be positive too. I had often reflected that those who encouraged a more autocratic model of ministry were often referring to the ministers' actions towards and on people other than themselves, but given the recurring theme that congregation members preferred to be asked (in terms of volunteering and participation) it was clear I needed to rethink this manipulative intervention in terms of positive, radical typology: forcing change for the

benefit of the disaffected at the risk of offending the powerful minority. There seemed to be subtle, yet important, differences between the manipulative authority of the priest and that of other members of the congregation. The former was acceptable and even anticipated – a risk that the clergy should be expected to take – whereas the latter was seen more in terms of interference and patronisation.[51] One West Indian man made this comment:

> *You know, I mean if a member of the congregation ask me 'can you come in on this?', I would think many, many times. But if it come straight from the head, you would say, 'yes, I will fix a time and come and do it'. I think it must come from the head. And if the head could approach the congregation, whatever time, and then they will be able to make a decision. Either put a name down or say well I'm busy or got college or what the case may be but I'm available on Tuesday or I'm available on Friday.*

The use of the word 'head' to represent the parish priest illustrates a particular understanding of priesthood which was certainly different from my own but important for considering the expectations of other members of the parish community. Here the minister is seen as representative, the focus of authority and power in enabling the congregation to participate more widely in the life of the church. The final sentence is of particular interest in that it demonstrates a retaining of some power by the participant (in terms of controlling when the participation takes place) whereas retaining power might be less easy when approached by another member of the congregation. I suggest that this might develop from a greater expectation of a sensitive response from the priest when he says a straight forward 'no' as opposed to the more reactive response of a general parishioner.

But by far the largest collection of data in this area of 'evidence' to be listened to when exercising a radical ministry is in terms of specific examples of different cultural practices and attitudes. The examples presented here and my comments on them (in three sections corresponding to the three scenarios presented to the focus group) are included for their contribution to the radical typology that they typify.

The first scenario referred to the funeral traditions of West Indian parishioners and my response to them. As well as comments on my examples the following additional observations were made.

> *My thought, it not so clear but I'll try, when about the funeral I think somebody should direct Fr Stephen when he came, because we in the West Indies, that's the way we do our funerals. So I do not know what go wrong but we should have somebody to direct him in this.*

Repeating this comment again here provides an example, not just of external intervention (as explored previously) but of radical typology in that the external source is identified as being from within – or at least appointed/suggested from within the congregation. 'We should' as opposed to

[51] See Chapter Six above for various examples.

‘he should’ or ‘they should’. It would have been useful to explore whether the ‘we’ was suggestive of a member of the congregation, a member of the West Indian community, or a member of both. But the ownership of the intervention is of significance.

Continuing the funeral theme, the following conversation details differing practices of participation:

> *-The thing that surprised me when I came to the UK is that they’ve got the invitation for funeral, and in the West Indies you live in a village, and where a person dies, I wouldn’t say the whole village but everyone knows. I was shocked.*
> *-I was shock as well.*
> *- I was shocked. You can’t go without a written invitation. […] I was shocked definitely. Invitation in the West Indies is for wedding, and like christening…*
> *- And engagements, marriage.*
> *- But for funeral...*
> *- Anybody!*
> *- If you mention invitation for funeral they will laugh at you. Something wrong with you!*
> *- So that’s worth knowing as well.*

In the above dialogue all of the comments were made by Black members of the group apart from the final comment (‘*so that’s worth knowing as well*’) which was from a White member. This last comment is a significant understanding by the White member of what can be learned from these conversations, but the other point of interest here is that of the misunderstandings on invitation. Although I have rarely known specific (and exclusive) invitations to funeral services in White British culture, it is not unknown for there to be more specific invitations to any formal refreshments that follow. This may be due to either financial or numerical constraints at the venue or for family privacy. However the confusion that seems to arise from this conversation gives an example of misunderstandings that become normalised and extrapolated. Specific invitations – though not excluding general attendees – are seen as exclusive even though the intention might be very different.[52] Not having any system to explore or question these assumptions leads to a cultural misunderstanding where there might not need to be one. I include this here in the radical typology section as it demonstrates the importance of dialogue, not just for genuine cultural difference, but for dispelling myths which disengage sections of the congregation. Invitations are important but inclusive invitations are crucial.

The final example from the funeral theme is about the cultural practice of burial over cremation in the Black traditions (with W representing White speakers and B Black):

> *W1: The actual funeral is based on what you believe.*
> *W2: And does cremation not happen in the West Indies?*

[52] At West Indian funerals it was common for most if not all of those attending the funeral service to also attend the committal at the graveside and a hot meal served afterwards – often 200 or more people.

B1: Well while I was living there [Jamaica] I didn't know nothing about cremation.
B2: And going on that we [Ghanaians] hardly have cremation, because the general belief was when the day comes, and Jesus come again and everyone has to wake up from the grave, if you're cremated you couldn't be put back together!

This illustration of a different 'norm' together with the humorous, yet theological, reasoning behind it, is proffered in direct response to the White contributor's observation that funeral services are shaped around the families' needs and understandings. Given that there was often a misunderstanding of culture and tradition – or rather a misunderstanding of the reasons behind such practices – this exchange suggests a way forward for both Black and White members to begin a journey of discovering different traditions. The humour suggests an honesty – and ease – in sharing with the group things that had otherwise been assumed or unspoken and the consequences for understanding a new 'norm' for the White members enables the beginnings of a transformational approach typical of the radical typology.

Volunteering and participation were at the heart of the second scenario questions put before the focus group. I now provide samples of evidence given by Black members of the group of family and community practice that might conflict with the normative understanding of White parishioners participating in church activities and events.

I'm going to make a generalisation and it may - it's from my own standpoint. When we come over here, we … got extended family, we committed to send money, remit, them. In most cases they dependent on us. For that reason we find a lot of Ghanaians definitely... their work ethic, they work hard. I'm not saying there's no work ethic, pardon me I'm not saying that, they have to work extra hard to make up for these expenses. So you find them doing a lot of overtime and things like that. And that may be part an explanation to that. They can't always commit because of this other extra responsibilities they have, because if you commit to something like PCC for instance, you may have to be committed to it, whereas it may affect other times you need to work. For instance, 'oh can you do this extra work shift today?' I have to say I can't because I'm going to the PCC meeting. Obviously, ultimately, you're going to do that extra shift. It's a priority for you, due to your circumstances. And I think that may be a factor.

This explanation of the difficulty in balancing expectation of family and of church members was a popular theme. The conversation developed into one with many contributions from Black members explaining that these tensions were not necessarily understood as genuine or adequate reasons according to the overriding ethos of participation in church life. Many of the White members had families and family commitments, but the connections were at different levels of commitment and importance. It is hard to suggest more than a cursory reasoning for this but as the next two samples from the conversation show, the sometimes conflicting demands of personal family and church family were not insignificant:

Can I ask you something really, because, like, I have my family. And when they's coming for dinner what can I say to them? I have to go home and see them 'cos I doesn't see them in the week. So you do have to go home. That's the problem 'cos you want to go. Because like the other Sunday when we was having the dinner there, I had to tell them don't come because [we had a church lunch] ... and I don't like to say that to them really. Because I wanted to stay for the [church] dinner.

Well they make up their mind, you know, I can't force them. And like one live in Oldham and they coming to mother for their dinner. I can't say that. 'Cos some people have their children and don't see them. You know and that's the reason why sometimes not because you want to, you have to go. Because they coming certain times and you wants to cook a meal for them. You'd love to stay but you still have to give your family a bit of support sometimes. Sometimes they want to discuss something with mother. So you have to look at it both sides. Some people doesn't have their family coming. Fair enough but some of us have family.

These comments do not deny the fact that White members have families or that they treat them in any different way. But rather they speak of the tension that exists to a greater extent amongst the Black community in terms of faithfulness to church events. A generalisation might serve to explain this. Whilst White members felt a commitment to the church's worship and services, Black members often exhibited a commitment to the worship and the social, community aspect of church life as well. Wilkinson explores this in detail in '*Church in Black and White*' where he details four 'plumblines'[53] of Black Christianity and churchgoing, including the communal nature of shared liberation, where nobodies become somebodies (Wilkinson 1993, p13-15). In her analysis of two African-American congregations in America, Brenda Aghahowa (1996) lists one of the strengths of Black community churches as 'attention, affection of members, investment in lives':

> No one can escape the sense of investment these church members seem to have in each other's lives. Their willingness to share and hear each other's pains and to pray for one another, both in worship and away from worship, is one indication of this investment. Most in the church seem to know many other church members … that reveal[s] a true sense of *community* at the church. (Aghahowa 1996, p112-113)

Of course a sense of community is not limited to the Black members of the parish congregation but the emphasis on post-worship social fellowship is often of greater importance in terms of solidarity and support, thus blurring the boundary between church and everyday life. In his checklist for building a multi-ethnic church, Linbert Spencer identifies community as a key factor (Spencer 2007, p102 & 123).

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[53] Wilkinson uses this word in direct reference to Amos 7.7-8: 'This is what he showed me: the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb-line, with a plumb-line in his hand. And the Lord said to me, 'Amos, what do you see?' And I said, 'A plumb-line.' Then the Lord said, 'See, I am setting a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never again pass them by'.

Following the third scenario (focussing on pastoral care and the role of the priest), the conversations exposed once again the disappointment that my ministry had not conformed to a particular understanding of priestly role:

> *If you're in Ghana the pastor knows most of the family, he knows all your business as well! He is autocratic in a way. You can be called in. If there is gossip or rumour he is able to take it on himself to talk to the person.*

At first I read this as a negative comment on the pastor but, in the context of the conversation where there is obvious disappointment that I had not been as intrusive in people's lives as had been expected, I choose to present this in the radical typology as an example of evidence desiring deeper, personal involvement in people's lives. It provides evidence of a growing confidence within the focus group of putting forward examples of ministry from home traditions without the fear of being assimilated or denied. The fact that this is hard for clergy (like myself) and perhaps other White members of the congregation to hear demonstrates a challenge to the normative ways in which the parish understood pastoral ministry.

2. Different empowerment of the White minority

In presenting the radical typology of minister, Reddie points out the costly nature of this method for the minister who may meet considerable opposition – even persecution – from a small minority of White people holding the power. Whilst I do not deny this possibility and was certainly aware of this kind of opposition, I was conscious that an alternative to dis-empowering the White elite was to differently empower them through deep engagement and multi-cultural conversation. Letting go of one understanding of church and ministry in order to enrich both with a new, more inclusive understanding, I believe resonates with the goal of the radical typology to liberate all people, and not just one section.

I was not able to test whether the responses I present here as examples of this new understanding from White members of the focus group were a result of the group conversations themselves or due to a particular trust and relationship with me as their long term parish priest. However, there were clear examples of a growing realisation of the need to listen carefully, understand and then act on these new revelations. The following excerpt from the dialogue demonstrates a gradual unfolding of comprehension (all spoken by White members):

> *- I think it also says something about the people already doing the jobs that, if other people perceive that that's their job … they don't want to offend them. That says something about us. You know, it's difficult really. I think it's important we all say how you actually feel.*
> *- But most folks work very, very hard, but in the background, and sometimes they don't get noticed.*
> *- And there's so many cultures come into the country in the last few years.*

- Unless it stemmed from prejudice years ago, I don't know.

Whilst these comments may not yet illustrate a relinquishing of power by White members of the congregation, nevertheless they demonstrate a growing understanding of what might need to be considered: '*That says something about us', 'sometimes they don't get noticed'* as well as comments acknowledging a new multi-cultural situation and the prejudice which at times impedes true inclusion and diversity. That the challenges are made visible I believe make these key signifiers of the radical typology in themselves, but the comments also developed into suggestions that a way forward might also be found – thus cementing transformation of the knowledge and practice of power. Though this was not always met with acceptance as this dialogue illustrates (again, W representing White voices, B denoting Black):

W1: Possibly this is why he's doing what he's doing.
B: It's too late.
W2: The idea is I think, to prevent other priests making similar mistakes in the future and it will sort of help other people.

That there might be a way forward was, perhaps correctly and inevitably, only tentatively suggested by White members present but the possibility was acknowledged:

And some people make quite specific requests of what they want to have at their funerals themselves, before they die, so I think all these sort of variations are taken into consideration I think, through different cultures. And may be to ask the right questions, you know, because it is difficult.

Asking the 'right questions' is perhaps one part of the way forward for White people, asking what those questions might be, is of greater importance, as I shall explore in the conclusion.

3. Empowerment of the Black majority

At the heart of the radical typology is the transformation of 'nobodies to somebodies' and empowerment is at the heart of the gospel which seeks to provide dignity to those who believe by freeing those who have been oppressed. This has a particular resonance in Black Christian Spirituality as Wilkinson writes, 'Jesus, "de Lawd", was encountered as One who could give divine power the believer, which the slaves appropriated to affirm their 'somebodiness', their dignity as human beings. With the help of Jesus they were able to survive the traumas of bondage…; with his help they could struggle to be free' (Wilkinson 1993, p13).

The selection in this section represent comments which free the speakers to say things which had previously been difficult to voice. There is a four-step journey from observation to speaking out,

followed by questions which lead to suggestions. The first step is a tentative exploration of what I was doing with the focus group and why:

> *I'm not quite sure... why he feel almost like…, I can understand feeling the way he's feeling that maybe he could have done it better, but that's what he's trying to put right.*

This cautious statement was followed (as we shall see below) with some more direct questions and suggestions but it was the first of the more confident expressions of understanding. Some comments were more protective of the group than necessarily of me as the priest, or the Black members of the church family:

> *I think that's not what he's saying, that's not what he saying, that Black people don't volunteer. What he's actually [saying], well from my view and I could be wrong, but maybe they could volunteer more readily.*

This comment immediately followed the expressions of shock and denial from White members after the reading of the second scenario suggesting that Black people were less likely to volunteer. This woman's quick reply soothes and clarifies, and offers a positive observation on both my comments and my ministry. A number of times during the focus group members spoke up in ways which voiced challenges to what was being said as well as providing direct examples from experience which would resource the group's discussion:

> *If they put you on [the PCC] like for the first day, suppose you have some really good point and you're bursting and you can't say anything?*

Seeking to provide background to why some Black members felt unable to speak or be present at meetings, this statement was explored by the group and became the start of suggestions for further inclusion (which I explore later). Thus this information leads to understanding and a potential change of practice, rather than assimilation into a 'given' system – the heart of the radical approach.

There were very few times that the group touched on difficult material, or used language with any great passion, but another example of this 'speaking out' motif was found in a brief exchange after why it might be that Black members prefer to be asked, or not put them forward into the foreground:

> *B: Yeh, I speak the truth, you said speak the truth so I speak the truth.*
> *W: That's how she feels.*
> *B: That's how I feel, I speak my mind. I used to do many things in the church. You have to be truthful, you said to talk the truth.*

Honesty is at the heart of the radical typology, even though potentially it brings with it a costliness for both ministers and congregation members – Black and White. The group may have been shaped by the directness and honesty of the stories and questions I had presented because a number of direct questions were asked of me during the recording. The questions were also sometimes answered as this exchange illustrates:

> *And again what I want to ask, why did somebody like a sidesperson, like X, [not advise Stephen], they supposed to direct him?*
>
> *That's why he's doing this discussion, to put him in the right direction. And to learn from any mistake that he has made. He wants to put them right so this is why he wants to hear every one of us points of view. And then he can pick out ... you know.*

Other questions included:

> *Has somebody said something to him?*
> *How did he find out though that he was wrong?*
> *It is interesting; where is this coming from?*

The tone of these questions is of genuine enquiry rather than surprise or criticism. They are spread across the three scenarios and are met with support from the other members of the group. Each of them voiced by a Black members of the group, they illustrate a sense of interest rather than one of awkwardness.

Two more examples in this section I include because they illustrate the end of this journey from observation through to suggestions for the priest:

> *But when he visits the night before isn't that the time the family should say 'this is what we want?' When he goes round he can get it all in before.*

On one level this is not an obvious example of this typology because it does not provide for resourcing from the Black members of the congregation, but it does re-centre knowledge firmly with the family of the deceased and thus moves the focus of power from priest to people.

A final comment, already presented in a previous chapter, serves to illustrate a total move of power through the acknowledgement of the lesser knowledge of me as parish priest. One Black woman said directly to me, '*Can I say something now, Fr Stephen, we are sorry. Because we didn't know that you didn't understand it. We are sorry*.'

4. Involvement and Inclusion

In this final selection I present examples which again appear contrary to my own instincts. In Chapter Six on organisational power and knowledge, I identified in a use of manipulation as a way of forcing change which might appear empowering but was both contrary to my own disposition and also in conflict with my understanding of genuine empowerment - precisely because of its manipulative nature. However, as noted earlier this apparent forcefulness could also be viewed in a more positive, authoritative sense as seen from the examples below. Unsurprisingly given the length of the session, the comments on the last scenario moved off topic in some ways but also brought together feelings and comments from the whole research and provide an interesting suggestion for a way forward. It is in this last section that are found statements – predominantly from Black members of the group – which suggest that the problems that have been acknowledged within the group discussion now need to be shared and explored on a wider scale.

> *This discussion, should be with the whole congregation – may be a good idea to have something like this with whole congregation.*

The White facilitator of the group suggested that the smaller group might be more productive in terms of listening and change:

> *Sometimes a group which is representative of the congregation, (as nobody was excluded, everybody was invited), maybe can achieve more in a smaller group round a table, than you can when you've got a big congregation. Because some people are not so confident to talk in a large group.*

To which one Black member responded in agreement:

> *I was like that. I were on the PCC meeting, first thing it take too long late in the night, and everybody keep on talking, and I find I couldn't say what I want to say. That's why I [not] keen about it.*

But the overwhelming response was for a congregation-wide discussion and backed with some forceful authority by me as the priest:

> *He should come out and say, 'right, today I have decided that everyone should stay for just 10 minutes to discuss what's going on'.*
>
> *I think this meeting, I think it should be everyone in the church. It should be in the church, after the service over.*
>
> *Well spoken! After the Sunday service this should be presented. Get everyone involved. Before they move.*

Although there is some ambiguity as to what kind of meeting was being referred to (I suspect each member present had different views on the nature and potential outcomes of the proposed meeting), nevertheless the focus group had in no small way been the catalyst for greater discussion. That this was due to the three former themes suggested in this chapter (evidence listened to and understood; different empowerment of the White minority; and empowerment of the Black majority) was evident from the conversation. In this way the radical typology's key themes had been met. The focus group in itself was part of the process.

Preliminary Conclusions

In this chapter I have presented examples from the data through the radical lens of those comments which speak of Black experience, the empowerment of Black members of the congregation, and the redefining of the White minorities' normative position of power. I have done this by presenting four distinct sets of material concerning evidence to be listened to and understood; different empowerment of the White minority; empowerment of the Black majority and involvement and inclusion. In Chapter Eight I look at what can be drawn from this data. However, some initial themes are evident.

Radical use of knowledge and power identifies issues which deserve change and begins the process of transformational ministry that empower and liberate not only the Black majority but also the White minority. This latter empowerment centres on redefining the norms of White British church culture and allowing space for new and culturally sensitive practices to be at the heart of Christian ministry – for both priest and people. The data shows signs of the need for forgiveness – not only of the White priest, but also of the whole congregation – a community where listening and understanding leads to learning and development. Forgiveness first requires repentance – a turning away from and renunciation of previous patterns of exclusion and ignorance. In living out of forgiveness the whole community (but most especially the White minority) are able to make visible the practice of the kingdom where new ways are possible and the radical, prophetic vision of the Gospel can be glimpsed.[54]

[54] Cf Isaiah 43.19, John 10.10 and Revelation 21.5

Chapter Eight

Analysis

Having presented the themes generated from looking at the data from the parish focus group through the lenses of pastoral, organisational and radical power and knowledge, in this chapter I analyse the data in conversation with the feedback from the curates' workshop.

So far I have only included data collected with the parish focus group as it was in that setting that I first set out to test my own conclusions and expectations arising from reflection on personal ministerial experience. It was important to present this first as it was the feedback from the focus group which either confirmed or challenged my initial conclusions. After collecting this data I was able to test my conclusions through presenting to the curates' workshop suggestions for change in training and formation, and guided questions enabling them to think more critically about their own knowledge resources and their power in using and conveying that knowledge. In this chapter I bring conclusions from the focus group in conversation with the curates' feedback to present key outcomes which I finally put forward in Chapter Nine.

Throughout this project I have sought to identify areas of both convergence and divergence: to what extent were my own conclusions recognised by others (parishioners and other clergy) and in what ways were my own conclusions incorrect? Alongside these is a third concern: what evidence is there that I have missed key issues surrounding my use of power and knowledge in my pastoral ministry?[55]

The nature of this research implies that the evidence from the focus group, or that which resonates with the focus group, will carry the most weight in relation to changes in practice, but the workshop data suggests implications for training and formational development for future clergy and so has a similar significance. Again I note that any impact on practice suggested by the relatively small scale research presented here is limited. Extrapolating one parish's example, even when tested more widely on other clergy, does not necessarily lead to a universally applicable proposal. As I present my analysis and conclusions here, I hope to clarify the tension between the limited implications of this research, and the larger claims I suggest to the wider Church.

A Note on the Curates' Group

The group of curates were, as with the congregational focus group, self-selecting. They were all over thirty and so had varying degrees of previous experience prior to ordination. All of them had worked in social, caring or education professions and this practical knowledge and skill was reflected in their responses – at times drawn upon directly. This experience enabled them to

[55] For a more detailed discussion, see Part B, Section 4 'Research Proposal'.

engage quickly and reflectively with the workshop. The overriding conclusion was that the discussion of Whiteness had not been actively addressed in relation to previous roles, but that earlier experience informed their approach to this session. The reflections presented below are illustrative of these connections and thus inform the conclusions that are drawn from them.

Power and Knowledge

Throughout this thesis I have noted the challenge of expressing meaningful differences between power and knowledge. There are rarely distinctions between the two that are exclusive. Rather it is clear that they are often so entwined as to be two sides of the same coin: power is a manifestation of knowledge and knowledge is often the root of power.

Whilst I do not wish to dismiss the distinctions between the two, for the purposes of this analysis the distinction must be blurred as the conversation with the curates' group workshop was less able to articulate this difference. Given the nature of the role of a parish priest and the authority inherent in his/her position this was not a surprise.[56] I now present my conclusions, supported by the workshop feedback according to the three distinct categories I developed from Reddie's typologies.

Analysis: answering my own questions

In Chapter One I introduced the background to my research question by outlining my parish experience and understanding of my identity as a White male priest. As a result I identified four assumptions which lay behind my reflections. These assumptions developed into three questions which underpinned the whole project.[57] In shaping the project around these three questions I sought to test the assumptions (developed from my own experience) that lay behind them.[58] The answers I assume are these:

1. White clergy are not initially conscious of their own Whiteness or its implications on their ministry.

2. White clergy do adapt their pastoral practice when they become aware of significant difference in culture and practice within the Black congregational community.

[56] It may also be of significance that the workshop was held with newly ordained clergy – less than three years of public licensed ministry. By the nature of the post, curates do not exercise significant explicit power, rather it is the power implicit in their status as the ordained that is recognised by others.
[57] The four assumptions which developed into these three questions are introduced in Chapter One.
[58] See Chapter One, page 18.

3. Black members of the congregation are aware of these adaptations of ministerial practice by White clergy.

In the analysis below I start with the assumed answers to my questions to see where the data from both the focus group and the workshop either confirm or resonate with my assumptions and I introduce the workshop feedback here to support these confirmations. Then I identify the ways in which the data diverges, challenges or produces new themes.

Areas of Convergence

Assumption 1: Clergy not conscious of their Whiteness

The first assumption recognises the focus group's data about knowledge. If power is about the way in which knowledge is used, then the extent to which clergy are aware (or unaware) of their own colour is about such knowledge. In the previous chapters I identified a number of ways in which knowledge was a key factor in the three typologies of minister and at the start of each chapter I presented a table summarising the relevant ways in which knowledge influenced clergy ministry. In support of this first assumption the key areas of convergence are those which sit under the following headings.

Ignorance and Assumptions

Although the focus group acknowledged that assumptions are made by both the minister and the members of the congregation (individually and corporately), for the purposes of this project it is the assumptions about colour and culture which are of particular interest. Before deeper reflection on my ministry, I had not readily acknowledged the power inherent in my own Whiteness or its effects on practice. The data supports this view and strongly suggests that this was of no surprise to the Black members of the congregation. When I presented this to the curates' workshop, the White members of that group also confirmed that their colour had not been consciously considered before my intervention: *'[this workshop] challenges the rightness of my way'*, *'[we make] assumptions [about] the things we are aware of [in the] interpretation of experience*'.[59]

The workshop enabled the curates to explore their Whiteness and its importance for the wider Church:

> *No mention of cultural differences when I arrived in my parish.*
>
> *It struck me that self-awareness and cultural awareness is very important for the church when nurturing faith and witness in Black majority congregations. There is a personal,*

[59] Again in this chapter data from the curates' workshop is printed in italics and without any alteration to the direct transcript of what was said. Only minor additions in square brackets are presented to clarify the context if necessary.

inter-personal, collective and institutional dimension to that particular challenge. And there is still a gaping hole in the Church of England's institutional DNA.

There are lots of racial assumptions regarding power and privilege that are deep-seated and need to be addressed at all levels.

Personal Action and Outside/external Intervention

Aware of my own practice of selectively choosing who and where I would obtain knowledge from, I made an assumption that White clergy would feel safer initially seeking for advice from other White, or official (i.e. diocesan) sources. The focus group confirmed this viewpoint (to a degree)[60] and was supported by a comment from the curates that a diocesan training programme would be important as '*awareness of the issues is important so that reflection can be done'.*

Assumption 2: White clergy adapt their practice of ministry

In assuming that clergy do adapt their practice of ministry, evidence from the focus group presents this according to the three typologies of Reddie's ministers, with, not surprisingly, more evidence from the pastoral and organisational models then for the radical typology. The confirmation from both the focus group and the curates that the first two types were indeed present in my own ministry also produced suggestions as to how these might be moved (according to the progression I outlined earlier) towards a more radical transformative practice enabling empowerment, or greater significance for the Black community within the congregation.

In evidencing this assumption the focus is less on the types of knowledge presented in the preceding chapters but on the types of power – the way in which personal awareness is then adapted positively and negatively in the practice of ministry itself. For the purposes of evidencing this assumption here I present the data from the curates' workshop in terms of passive and active power.

Passive Power: Soothing, smoothing and the status quo

In Chapter Five I presented focus group results as seen through the pastoral typology lens. In many ways this is a passive form of ministry as maintaining the status quo through the methods of smoothing and soothing, does not challenge or change ministerial practice either for empowerment (the radical model) or awareness (the organisational model).

There was some evidence of the desire for a soothing approach to pastoral ministry which, although helping the clergy, did not require deep engagement with the issues amongst the congregations. In thinking about differences in funeral customs the expectation was that the families should say rather than an intentional direction from the congregation and community: '*expect to be told of differences at the visit'* was said so that congregations need not be involved in what is a potentially difficult area. There was some concern that given the 'unspoken expectations'

[60] See below 'Areas of Divergence' for a caveat to this view.

some areas were best left alone: '*Roles are shared between Black and White – but which roles? We don't quite say why or whether they should be, but there are unspoken expectations of who does which roles – a thorny issue*.'

The idea of status quo in terms of engineering fairness within the congregation was a recurring theme: '*Black and White churches may be different – need to maintain fairness'*, not least because it was the duty of the minister to provide a '*balance of culture and Christianity'*, in other words differing cultures were to be held in proportion to the dominant culture of the Christian church as expressed in English Anglicanism.

Active Power: manipulative, belittling and depriving

A good deal of the pastoral and organisational exercise of power was seen in terms of the White priest interfering so as to manipulate the congregation. At times this was for purely positive reasons by the priest, but at others there may have been less constructive reasons for the belittling or depriving of power from the Black community. This might take the form of conscious minimisation of conflict or challenge, or it might be through dismissive comments or actions which disempowered members of the congregation.

Some of the comments from the curates' group reinforced this view especially by belittling the importance of difference – providing excuses why it might not be as important an issue as had been suggested:

> *It is helpful to have external input – not directions, but a guide – there's no right or wrong.*
>
> *Forewarned is forearmed.*

These comments were part of a larger discussion about ecclesial culture and the need to maintain balance. Views from the congregation were important ('*flexibility of ministers is required'*) but must never be seen to overtake the overriding culture of tradition, after all there is a need for the '*balance of culture and Christianity'*. On occasion this belittling type of power found voice in defensive statements about particular instances, for example the '*tension between [the priest and the] Black verger wanting to take over at funerals*'.

In arguing that the radical typology is an important goal for the journey through pastoral and organisational models of ministry, the curates' felt that the empowerment, or increased significance, of Black community and culture would be of importance (as I argue in my conclusions) but this too was not without clarification. In discussions before the workshop there was a suggestion that manipulative power might be demonstrated both ways ('*power and authority – the exertion of this over congregation – I suspect it might be the other way round'*) and attempts to increase the '*voice of the congregation and participation might be hard*'. However, as we shall discover later, the feedback after the workshop suggested that efforts to increase participation and give a voice to the wider congregation are essential.

Assumption 3: Black members are aware of White ministers' adaptations

Although the focus group hinted at ways in which the Black community within the congregation were aware of efforts on my part to adapt my ministry according to my experience, it was clear that this was interpreted predominantly in ways of concern for me as opposed to my concern for inclusion or empowerment. The curates' group picked up on the importance of not misinterpreting the responses or needs of Black members. Ideas of leadership and leaders' roles are not only of importance for the leader, but are also considered by members of the congregation, as one non-White member of the curates' group noted:

> *The importance of perception in leadership: both of the leader and of those being led, even or especially in a church setting where leadership is spiritual amongst all the other things. This is the case in situations where race is an issue. I had only thought this from my perspective, being an ethnic minority at a church where almost everyone is from the ethnic majority, and not the other way round.*

This leadership may be perceived in different ways depending on generation particular heritage:

> *I think there is a definite but unarticulated and hidden hierarchy in the Afro-Caribbean community (to do with which island, family and class you are from) which we don't understand but which still applies. We also talked about relations between the Afro-Caribbean and African communities. That is another issue. The children, grand-children and great-grandchildren of the Black majority congregants have different attitude or understanding of power. I think many of them have given up on the established church.*

These sensitivities will impact on the way in which White leadership (or any leadership) is perceived. The discussion also confirmed that colour, heritage and cultural experience had a huge impact on the practice of ministry with the curates noting that it would be interesting to '*wonder how a Black priest would be treated*', as well as the different racial mix within congregations, '*not sure how West Indian and West African [people] understand each other – plus the mixed race issue too*' and most significantly '*all-Black churches might be different*'. Although I had considered this in my initial investigation I had not expected this to receive such a strong emphasis among the curates. I return to this vital issue of diversity, especially when drawing wider implications from this data, in the final chapter.

Areas of Divergence

During the curates' workshop, and in feedback afterwards, I provided opportunities for participants to express what, from my own reflection and research with my congregation, they felt was relevant, and also an option for suggesting new ways in which the knowledge of a minister might affect ministerial power and practice. Under three themes I now present data from the workshop which

demonstrates significant difference of emphasis from my own: new areas which I had not considered and other areas which develop my own reflections and assumptions.

1. The Importance of Personal Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 outlines the key areas which are protected in the legislation.[61] Using these as indicators of personal characteristics I identified areas which, although present in my presentation, received increased prominence in the curates' feedback. The important characteristics mentioned were gender and race. For the purposes of this analysis I would also include here class and social background as these I consider to be 'givens' which significantly influence practice. Curates talked about their personal circumstances as being influential on their practice. I explore this in particular ways below.

These characteristics were also identified by one curate in responding referred to Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's notion of kyriarchy which she (the curate) describes thus: '*a system of domination in which one's position in the structure is determined by gender, race, sexuality and class. Power or lack of it relates I suppose to one's position in that hierarchy*.'[62]

Although I had deliberately shaped my research based on my own personal characteristics and I was aware (as I suggest in the next chapter) that further research would be necessary to explore issues around gender, sexual orientation and race, I was surprised by the continuing emphasis on personal characteristics amongst the curates who placed an importance on this personal identity that I had not expected.[63] Whilst not representing a significant divergence, it does demonstrate a desire to change the course of discussion away from the direction of redistributing congregational power to empower the Black members, and perhaps indicates an opportunity for individual excusing or distancing from personal culpability.

The focus group also hinted that they were '*unsurprised'* that my practice would be influenced by my background, but in terms of the 'soothing' pastoral power which I identified in Chapter Five, this was often an indication of necessary detachment to avoid responsibility for actions which may be perceived as manipulative or belittling. I had often wondered whether my hunches surrounded areas of colour and culture or whether they were simply about difference in a more generalised form. This requirement to see a bigger picture than the restrictions of race, colour and culture were not simply individual as presented in the curate's feedback above, but also communal - thus highlighting the limitations of extending my conclusions to a wider setting.

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[61] The Equality Act 2010 lists the following characteristics as being protected: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation. See www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/part/2 (retrieved on 29/11/2014).

[62] The term originated in Fiorenza, S, (1993) *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* Boston: Beacon Press.

[63] In Chapter One I consider my own identity ('personal characteristics') and their influence on both my ministry and my research.

2. Communal Environment

That my assumptions might be true of any congregational group different from my own personal characteristics and background (i.e. in class, education, gender etc) was something I had not deliberately focussed on in the workshop but which again became a recurring conversation. In terms of the scenario about participation and volunteering, one curate noted that there was, '*low participation in general*', and that in any group: '*[There is a] lot of unspoken expectation 'who would stand for what' … but which roles? [They] don't quite say why or whether they should be, but there are unspoken expectations of who does which roles – a thorny issue*'.

The feedback recognises the need for a wider exploration of involvement and participation in parish and congregational life beyond that defined by colour and, although I had identified differences in the background and cultural influences for different Black communities in terms of expectations on the role of the parish priest in pastoral care, I had not factored this into my assumptions of how and why past and indeed present community influences and experiences might impact on the relationship between White priest and Black congregations. Communal environment was a new area, hinted at in the focus group, and of significance to the curates' observations. In response to my question, 'Can you identify any particular issues around the area of knowledge and understanding?' two new areas were identified:

> *Knowledge - the fact that the environments where Black majority congregations are located is subject to many social forces and therefore can change and develop quite quickly and unexpectedly.*
>
> *Understanding - Listening to, being able to interpret and respond to these changes and the underlying, unspoken assumptions in these types of congregations is very important. Communication and understanding can be difficult, because people often cannot articulate what they feel or want with confidence. And because congregations and parish also change, this can make communication and understanding even more difficult. (That is also true of other congregations, but Black majority congregations are more difficult in those regards.)*

The 'change' referred to in this last comment represents a greater notion than the changing nature of church life in view of modern culture and practice; it also represents the significant change in culture from one province or national church background to that of the Church of England. These differences are not insignificant and yet, as we shall see in the conclusions presented in the final chapter, may not receive significant visibility within an appointments process or clergy formation and training.

3. Ministerial Style

Allied to the above two weaknesses in my assumptions is that of ministerial style: the understanding of ministry (especially parish priesthood), churchmanship[64] and personal working preferences of clergy.

Although I had expressed an awareness of churchmanship in terms of the role of the parish priest and the expectations placed upon her when presenting the third scenario, this was very much from the point of view of the congregation. I had not allowed for the influence of the priest's churchmanship on attitudes to, and exercising of, power within a congregation. This was picked up on by one curate who identified the need for understanding of how, '*difference between how priest sees herself and how congregation see the priest*' was crucial, especially when, '*churchmanship is an issue*'.

Aside from my own personal churchmanship style, which after ten years of ministry was also influential on and influenced by the parish (as witnessed by the focus group), I had not explicitly included such observations in the presentation on training and intervention for the curates' workshop. By the nature of my research, the models of ministry presented in recent literature,[65] served only to clarify the deficiency of knowledge and its use as power within ministry, rather than in themselves provide further lenses through which to view the ministry of White clergy.

Forasmuch as personal character may be best suited to particular models of ministry so these typologies also influence personal working preferences for parish clergy. After considered reflection on my own practice, and with my personal situation as a starting point, I had not openly considered the effect of individual working style on ministerial practice.

In considering the lack of resourcing during training (which I present below as a key proposal in the final chapter), one curate demonstrated an approach different from my own:

> *During our training perhaps we have little in the way of developing cultural understanding – [though] when that is done it can be woefully inadequate. I remember doing an 'orientation weekend' before I went to work in India. Nothing can really prepare you for living in and understanding a different culture apart from just living it and being critically aware. I suppose that was my experience too when I worked in Bolton in a school where the kids came from Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, Afghani, Kurdish and Somali cultures. I developed understanding of the way things worked not through any training but by simply chatting - to the women particularly. Sitting on the floor in someone's front room with 20 other women, mourning the death of a child, not quite knowing what I was doing by dropping these beans into a jar, but just doing it. And it seemed to create trust and an ethos in which things could be shared and sympathy expressed.*

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[64] By churchmanship I refer to the diversity of ecclesiastical, liturgical and spiritual styles within the Anglican tradition, often with labels such as Anglo-Catholic, Liberal, Charismatic, Evangelical etc.
[65] See Chapter Four.

Notwithstanding the fact that such experience ('*just living it*') can and should lead to theological and professional reflection, this comment illustrated a different personal approach of just '*doing'* and then reflecting and applying, rather than resourcing, reflecting and then applying. This different ordering may be reflective of the different approaches within Reddie's three typologies with personal preference (influenced by ecclesial style and background) dictating a preference for either a pastoral, organisational or radical approach to ministry. This awareness of type will be of key importance as I present the outcomes of this analysis in the final section below.

Preliminary Conclusions

My analysis suggests that for the curates' focus group there were more areas of resonance than challenge to my original reflection on practice. Notwithstanding the necessary limitations of extrapolating a wider proposal from this data, I have identified two key outcomes and a consideration which arise from this critical exploration of my ministry as a White priest within a Black majority congregation. These are directly related to the nature of the conversations themselves and cover the areas of knowledge (for clergy) and power (for congregations). I introduce these here, together with a suggested example, before presenting a fuller conclusion in Chapter Nine.

Outcome One: Signposting for Clergy Knowledge

A recurrent theme from both the focus group and the curates' workshop was that of resourcing: where do clergy receive training and information about differing cultural practices, how do they choose to access these, and when they have accessed these resources how do they put such information and knowledge into practice? Although this had been part of my own initial reflection, I had not deliberately made this a prominent element with the parish focus group, and yet the various ways in which a priest might be informed were of major importance for this group. Amongst the three approaches identified within the data were pastoral (priests managing their own sourcing of knowledge), organisational (the diocese or another external source providing training and information), or radical (the priest's formation in cultural issues is directed and formed by the congregation's needs).

The curates clearly identified a desire to be thus informed if they were working in parishes of a different culture to their own. Although they were less clear about the preferred source of their information, their feedback shows their clear desire for signposting for White clergy working within Black majority congregations, though it was unclear from where.

Outcome Two: Liberating Congregational Power

In presenting the three typologies of ministry I argue that the third type (radical) is the closest to the liberational educative approach adopted by Reddie[66] in his work and also resonant with the gospel imperatives of liberty, dignity and transformation.[67] A radical approach to the signposting indicated as Outcome One above, suggests there may be scope for work with congregations to articulate their local needs and to give voice to the frustrations associated with the belittling and depriving power at work amongst the White hierarchy[68] and desire for greater involvement.[69]

It was encouraging to hear the focus group's energy that surrounded both the discussion itself and the desire to open up that discussion to the wider congregation and perhaps on a regular basis. This suggests that such an inclusive and radical approach to the exercising of power might be of value for other, similar, congregations. The hierarchical model inherent in the parochial administrative system in an episcopally ordered church, emphasises the dominance of the voice of the parish priest and principal elected leaders. Notwithstanding the evidence that some communities within the focus group (i.e. the West-Indian members) called for a strengthening of the voice of the priest in exercising power, this was in order to enable Black voices to be heard. Again this radical approach to ministry, enabling greater sharing of influence and role within the life of the parish and the exercise of ministry, demonstrates, within this sample at least, the need for a systematic approach to greater and more inclusive participation of Black voices. Although this might be an ongoing programme for parishes, I suggest there is a particular need when preparing for a new parish priest. This period of intervention is often termed 'transitional ministry' and I see this as a key proposal from this research.[70]

Consideration: Forgiveness – rethinking knowledge to re-exercise power

In Chapter Six (smoothing and soothing) and Chapter Seven (belittling and depriving power) I presented examples of how power may be used to silence greater discussion. Although the frustration in such silencing was often only subtly expressed in the focus group, there were occasions when stronger voices were heard. I suggest that this silencing is related to a discomfort in facing up to long-standing notions of guilt about past (and present) prejudice and discrimination. Any attempt to hear the voices of the previously voiceless – both Black (as above in Outcome Two) or White, will require a conscious journey towards forgiveness, which must start from honest

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[66] For example in Reddie (2003).
[67] See Chapter Four for a full description of this.
[68] See Chapter Five.
[69] See Chapter Seven, section 3 and 4.
[70] Transition Ministry takes many forms: sometimes the focus is on appointments and the guiding process linking clergy with parishes, and in other places the focus is on developing congregations in readiness for a new phase in their parish mission. For further examples and background see *http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/transition-ministry* or for a British example of a Anglican transition minister working with a parish reconsidering its ministry and mission, see *http://www.plwyfwrecsam.org.uk/index.php/parishinfo/meet-the-team/82-jolo* [Retrieved 1/12/14]

acknowledgement and a desire to work through sensitive and potentially harmful stories and experiences.

The curates' group also identified this need for reconciliation – both within individual Black or White communities, and between the two. I suggest that any genuinely inclusive congregational enabling process might consider giving space for an honest naming of the issues that prevent full inclusion or participation. This key consideration of forgiveness, resonates with the processes described in the Kairos document which I brought into conversation with Reddie's typologies in Chapter Four.

An Example: Clergy Appointments

Perhaps my most relevant conclusion from this analysis is that of a framework to enable White clergy to engage with the three other outcomes when they apply, interview and prepare for their ministry within a majority Black congregation and parish. The development of such a tool (which I outline in Chapter Nine) will necessarily include work with the congregations in the preparing of parish profiles, statement of needs and the selection process itself. This example focusses on a practical, reflectively considered approach to clergy appointments, informed by this research and attempts to answer the questions I set myself at the beginning of this project. As I shall demonstrate, this example is drawn only from the data considered in this research, but with consideration, I will also show how this evidence suggests wider implications.

This research stemmed from my consideration of the ministry in the parish where I was priest and how its cultural diversity (and in particular majority Black membership) had hitherto been unacknowledged. As stated in Chapter One, on being appointed to the parish of St Agnes I was aware of the multi-cultural nature of the congregation, and indeed the neighbourhood in which it was situated, but there had been very little valuing of this in the parish profile, information, or application and interview process beforehand. In Chapter Nine I suggest how these four outcomes, drawn from my analysis, may have wider implications for other parishes.

Chapter Nine

Conclusions

In his memoir, *The Gatekeeper* (2001), Terry Eagleton envisions the need for balancing true recognition of cultural diversity alongside genuine acknowledgement of the price that has been paid to reach that goal:

> If cultural diversity is part of what makes life worth living, it has also brought a great many lives to a bloody conclusion. The call to celebrate such diversity is nowadays the merest cliché in the mouths of theorists and politicians; but it is only when cultural difference can be taken for granted, rather than defiantly affirmed, that it will have ceased to be a source of conflict. It is also likely that far fewer people would have been slaughtered and abused if all human beings had been Black, gay and female from the word go, apart from a few males and heterosexuals here and there to keep the species ticking over. To affirm human difference without reckoning the terrifying price we have had to pay for it is the kind of liberal sentimentalism which Catholics, for all their aberrations, were trained to sniff out. (Eagleton 2001, p34)

In this bold statement, Eagleton's comments resonate with a number of key themes from my experience, my research and my analysis. I now summarise these conclusions, not only as deductions from reflective practice but also what I believe are significant contributions to the development of practice and the body of knowledge. First I present suggestions in which this thesis contributes to knowledge, then in a section on contribution to practice I outline conclusions drawn from my research with potential impact on ministerial practice and formation. Bringing these together I suggest a possible approach for parishes and clergy in the appointments process through extrapolating my conclusions in ways which may find resonance in the wider Church. Finally I reflect on the whole research process with its strengths and weaknesses and provide an outline suggestion for future work.

Contributions to Knowledge

Eagleton suggests that cultural diversity is only truly affirmed when it is taken for granted rather than sensationalised or tokenistic as is so often the case. Earlier in this thesis (and in Part B) I have provided examples of how the Church, like other institutions, uses a partial approach to diversity training and celebration of ethnicity so that cultural diversity is presented as either a minority issue or as a potential problem. As such there is little valuing of difference and variety which could begin to lead to a Church culture where diversity was indeed taken for granted. Though I am conscious that this very thesis, in trying to address the problems of unacknowledged difference, presents another focus on the BAME membership of the Church from a White perspective, it has been my

intention to do so with a sense of inclusion and re-centring of Black experience. I have already acknowledged that White authors (especially Robinson and Walton) have recognised the difficulty, and potential inappropriateness, of such research. As such there is very little literature – especially from a British perspective – on the role and character of a White priest who ministers in a predominantly Black Christian community. At its very least this thesis contributes to this literature and the account of my experience, reflection and the research which stems from it now contributes to this subject.

A second significant area of contribution from this research is the data gathered from both the focus group and curates' workshop. Together they record the experiences and thoughts of a group of congregants and clergy respectively in relation to cultural and racial difference and ministerial style. The collected conversations form a narrative with considerable impact.[71] The recognition of 'narrative-as-knowledge' is explored by Swinton and Mowat:

> …narrative is an implicit dimension within most qualitative approaches. The telling of stories and the accurate recording, transcription and analysis of this data forms the heart of the qualitative research experience. … For the qualitative researcher, narrative knowledge is perceived to be a legitimate, rigorous and valid form of knowledge that informs us about the world in ways which are publicly significant. Stories are not simple meaningless personal anecdotes; they are important sources of knowledge. (Swinton & Mowat 2006, p38)

The 'publicly significant' implications of this knowledge, implicit in Eagleton's comments above, are of particular importance as the focus is not simply on the individual minister and the institution of the Church as an organisation, but on the public ministry of that minister and the public interaction of the Church with both congregations and the wider community. As such the findings of my research build on the work of others who have explored the public ministry of Church of England clergy, and in particular the typologies of ministers suggested by Reddie in his own research and experience.[72]

The rationale for basing my exploration of power and knowledge around the three typologies suggested by Reddie is given elsewhere in this thesis[73] but I made a decision to reorder the typologies before presenting the data and its analysis. Again the reasons for this are given earlier (in Chapter Four) but before I present my conclusions of how this interpretation of the data contributes to a change in ministerial practice, I consider whether, and if, this reordering was successful or indeed necessary.

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[71] Presented in Chapters Five, Six & Seven.
[72] Reddie writes from a Methodist background but does not limit his typologies to one particular denomination.
[73] Most significantly in Chapter Four, but see also Part B, Section 1 'Literature Review' for a commentary on Reddie's work and contribution to British Black Theology.

The reordering recognised a progression in my thought process, but also a progression of *experience* influencing the *practice* of ministers, at least in the understanding of my own ministry. This dynamic – one of improvement and positive formation – is clear within Reddie's commentary on his typologies but not from the order in which he presents them. In fact the order of presentation starts with what I have termed the radical typology and it is clear that Reddie prioritises this whilst the pastoral approach is given a slightly more positive presentation than his final, organisational typology. Reddie himself does not comment on the order in which he presents the three, neither does he explicitly suggest that one has priority over the others. He does however explain the necessity of choosing, or exercising, the relevant type dependent on cultural context, placing great emphasis on the need for recognising the 'complex issues of "race", power and history' (2003, p127). As Eagleton points out in his analysis of cultural diversity, so too Reddie is clear that any exercising of power – especially by the White hegemony – must take place in the open acknowledgement of the 'terrifying price' (as Eagleton puts it) of past history. Failing to name these injustices is, Reddie suggests, 'wholesale historical amnesia' (2003, p127) and he warns of White ministers who see themselves as 'honest brokers' (amongst diverse Black communities): 'Those who exploit these situations for their own ends are the opponents of the kind of liberation they so often espouse, and their so-called commitment which they parade so proudly on their sleeve' (2003, p128). Such direct action, based on power and ignorance as opposed to experience and cultural awareness, not only affirms the status quo but becomes pastorally destructive. In my ministry I avoided this by deliberate attempts to work for inclusion and wider congregational participation.

In changing the order of Reddie's typologies I demonstrate the importance of radical intervention rooted in experience and an awareness of ministerial power. I believe this new ordering mirrors my own journey. During these ten years as parish priest I moved through the three typologies, sometimes inhabiting different typologies at different times, but with a definite shift towards the 'radical', proactive and deliberate model of ministry which enabled participation and a re-centring of Black experience within parish life. The focus group itself was a part of this process and was not unlike a set of smaller congregational groups which shaped and influenced the parish's ministry. At times this participative approach to inclusive ministry made both myself, and other White members of the congregation, vulnerable (through the apparent, but not always real, loss of control) however, adopting the 'radical' typology permitted a conscious rationale to continue. The new ordering also chimes with the experience of the curates, and points to a programme of formational training which allows participant clergy (and congregations) to enter at their current level and progress to a radical intervention where power is exercised with self-knowledge and humility. I am certain that if I were to return to a similar context now I would begin with a very different typology as a result of this reflection and research. With this confirmation of my reordering of Reddie's typologies I now move to my suggested implications for practice.

Contribution to Practice

In developing my research proposal, I identified two ways in which the information gathered from my explorations might prove helpful. One was to recognise areas of insensitivity and ignorance, the second was identifying methods of communication and engagement which might prevent further disconnect. These two areas broadly align themselves with the two key themes of this thesis: power and knowledge, the former concerned with self-awareness for both priest and congregation, and the latter concentrating on how priests in particular, but also congregations, might resource themselves to connect with multi-cultural experiences rather than simply 'elevating the White 'norm' to its position as 'normal'.[74] The conclusions which follow stem from this research and offer an introductory reflective tool, not just to present day White clergy and the majority Black congregations that they minister among, but also for those who are engaged in ministerial formation and training.

Drawing together the results of my analysis of both the focus group and the curates' workshop, from these conclusions I suggest areas where White clergy ministering in majority Black congregations might be able to use their knowledge and power in order to build a more fully inclusive multi-ethnic Church. In his book, *The Life and Work of a Priest*, Pritchard himself touches on the role of a priest as prophet, not simply as 'friendly irritant' (Pritchard 2007, p91) to the wider community and to society, but also to the church itself. He describes three ways in which this prophetic ministry manifests itself; in presence, partnership and prophecy. In the suggestions that follow I seek to demonstrate ways in which presence, partnership and prophecy are at the heart of the vision for inclusion that this thesis seeks to build. Pritchard clearly sees a progression in these three approaches, presence must come first and it is from this that true partnership can be established. This is not a one-way street for partnership must involve a true understanding one of another as well as acceptance of collaboration in ministry. It is from this foundation that truly prophetic ministry – the sort that challenges, changes and often frustrates the status quo, can be born:

> The 'sting' of the gospel, however, may upset this happy equilibrium at the next level of engagement. This is the level of *prophecy*. This is where the priest [*and people*][75] may be called on by the gospel to take a stand against a clear injustice or an ethically dubious action (2007, p93)

Truly prophetic ministry must be a partnership between both people and priest. Without this full collaboration the action of a well-meaning but autocratic priest may lead to the ministerial typology which Reddie identifies, and I describe, as the organisational approach. Conversely my data suggests that a congregation eager to begin the work of transformative prophetic challenges to the status quo, but without the will or cooperation of the parish priest, may experience some of the stagnancy and frustrations exhibited by the pastoral approach, as described in Chapter Five.

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[74] See Part B, Section 3 'Research Proposal'.
[75] The words 'and people' are my addition in the context of what I propose.

In these conclusions that follow as 'contributions to practice' I believe that this partnership approach is crucial. Engagement between priest, people and the wider Church is vital to any shared ownership of real change. As my analysis of the research data progressed I became more aware of the importance of my approach: my personal experiences shared with and strengthened by the work of the parish focus group which in turn were reflected back in the development of the workshop with current curates. I consider this participative journey and the interactions which it relied on is in itself a process of understanding knowledge and power for both priest and people. I have made mention earlier of the use in this particular congregation of focus group type meetings for creatively discerning parish policy and practice in a number of areas, and the focus group for my own research was a natural part of this parish's experience. Perhaps in another situation such a group would have been less comfortable with sharing personal experience and suggestions for the future.

Such participative processes require much effort in developing trust, safety and confidence. As I demonstrate later, the safe space to name past and present hurts is crucial to any genuine interaction and exchange. A similar process was undertaken a number of years ago by a whole diocese. In *Multiethnic Church*, Sandiford (2010) sets out the process of how the Diocese of Southwark embarked on a journey of racial and cultural awareness in order to increase participation within church life.[76] The overriding energy within that diocesan process was that of partnership and participation and in the proposals that follow the same focus of partnership between priest and people is crucial.

Outcome One: Signposting for Clergy Knowledge

Throughout this thesis there is a dual emphasis on knowledge and power. For the purposes of this first proposal our attention is firstly on knowledge and the understanding that this incorporates presumptions (projected understanding), assumptions (expectations which may be either correct or unfounded), resources (in multiple formats and from various personal and institutional sources) and experience (and reflections on this). Both the focus group and workshop identified the importance or significance of all of these knowledge types and the need for a better understanding of how clergy accessed such knowledge and then acted upon it. My own personal journey describes my reflection on this as a key instigator of this research process and I became aware of a definite progression from personal resourcing, through accessing external information and finally a more participative (and I believe healthier) approach through partnership with my own congregation. As I outlined in the last chapter I believe these three stages chime well with the order in which I have placed Reddie's three typologies and are summarised in the table below.

[76] At the time of writing the Diocese of Manchester is embarking on a similar process and the development of a BAME Vocations Strategy group has led to the first of a diocese wide forum for BAME church members to gather together.

Table 6: Knowledge sources by typology

Typology	**Source of Knowledge**
Pastoral	Personal resourcing
Organisational	Institutional resourcing
Radical	Congregational partnership

At the beginning of my ministry at the heart of this research I relied solely on my personal reflections and understandings, trying to make sense of what was going on through my own experience and background. I also sought out information from books and colleagues, but as this was a personal response it was also subjective and self-editing. I started my journey of understanding from my own viewpoint and thus selected resources accordingly. Although I consider this to be inadequate I also acknowledge that it led to a greater understanding and eventually to a deeper process of reflection which moved me towards the next stage of obtaining knowledge. As a 'pastoral' response this approach reflects an attempt to smooth and sooth rather than transform or change approaches.

In looking for external sources from a personal viewpoint I became aware of a number of external resources offered either by the diocese or the wider church. Much of these were in the form of literature, but some were course based,[77] either local or national. Setting my personal experiences within a wider context, enabled me to challenge previously held assumptions and to question my approach – both in terms of personal understanding and also the exercising of ministry: these external prompts enabled me to reflect on my practice. This 'organisational' method was less subjective than the personal approach but still relied predominantly on experiences, people and cultures other than my own ministry and context.

Although the focus group acknowledged that it was often the responsibility, and duty, of the clergy to source their own support, the group also clearly felt that ultimately the best form of external intervention for the priest should come from within the congregation and community itself. This had become part of my own practice as time went on. It is of course impossible to say whether I could have begun at the stage of resourcing myself through the active participation of and partnering with my own congregation and community (the 'radical' approach) without journeying through the other two stages, however it was this final stage which was strongly identified as important by the focus group and which had been the most beneficial to me.

The focus group and curates strongly suggest that congregational involvement in resourcing the parish priest is dependent on two things: the ability and willingness of the parish priest to listen and engage with such intervention, and the ability and willingness of the congregation (and/or local community) to engage with and agree on identifying areas of importance for their clergy. The first of

[77] There is a growing interest within the Church of England in 'Unconscious Bias' training which identifies personal prejudices and cultural triggers which colour our actions and understanding of situations.

these points I shall return to in the example presented later, but it is the second of these, congregational empowerment, to which I now turn.

Outcome Two: Liberating Congregational Power

Throughout this thesis I have tried to explore the relationship between knowledge and power; how an understanding of power by either the priest or the congregation can influence the way in which knowledge is either acquired or put into practice. The discussion of power in the previous chapters focussed on the power of the priest, coming as it does from a development of Reddie's typologies of ministers. However as I have shown in Chapter Four, power is not simply present only when it is clearly articulated. The different types of power that different groups hold may be expressed in different ways at different times depending on context and company. This was seen clearly in the ways in which the members of the focus group identified within the discussion itself an exercising of participative power. Again I believe that the focus group was a key part of the liberational educative process in enabling members of the congregation who took part not only to have a voice but to know that their voice would be listened to and given attention. Any attempt to involve congregations and local communities in the signposting process for clergy, as outlined above, would require an empowerment of the congregation to shape the process and also to have the ability to participate and speak out. We have seen already the struggle of some Black members of congregations to communicate with their White priest – not simply through any anxiety of speaking, but through a lack of confidence in the ability of the minister to 'hear'.[78]

The data demonstrates that working with congregations not only enables congregations to shape the experience and knowledge of the White clergy who lead them, but also starts to bring together the frustrations that arise from an imbalanced power that belittles, frustrates and deprives Black congregation members of expressing or celebrating their own cultural norms. During the focus group conversations diverged from the questions, sometimes significantly, not always as irrelevant deviations, but examples of embracing the relatively safe and confidential space to speak openly about the things that mattered to them. It is this active participation which I believe may be extended more widely as a crucial step in empowering Black-majority congregations in working with a White minister.[79]

The energy of the focus group was clearly welcomed by many of those present and the tape records on numerous occasions a desire to see the conversation opened out to the wider congregation. As acknowledged earlier, the group was self-selecting, but the members present felt strongly that other members of the congregation would profit as individuals from being present, and

[78] See Chapter Six.
[79] Reddie comments on his adoption of 'dramatizing theologies' as 'a participative approach to Black God-talk for all people, whether those without power or for such individuals or groups who have too much of it for their own good. A democratizing of theology can only be good for all of us. This bottom-up process of liberative praxis can contribute to the revitalizing of the Church and the broader work of God's reign in this world'. (Reddie 2006a, p259)

that significantly the whole church would benefit from such participating. For some the participative approach was not something they considered possible within a church setting: challenging the priest was alien to a culture of church governance regardless of colour difference. Sandiford notes this is also an area where knowledge (of different cultures) and power (between priest and people) come together in a challenging way:

> People coming from a church tradition elsewhere in the world need information to enable them to function effectively in their adopted homeland. For example, where the priest in say, Nigeria, is seen as the dominant force and the church council or vestry rubber stamp his decisions, the collegial style of church leadership in the UK may surprise and disempower some people. There is an information gap that has to be made good in order to facilitate participation. (Sandiford 2010, p18)

Experience suggests that there are many members of the committees of our governance structures within the church who are unaware of the function, protocol and authority of the body on which they sit. This is as true for people of White British heritage as it is for others, however it may be particularly sharp for those who have experienced church governance in different countries – either first hand, or through their understanding from parents and grandparents. This research suggests that how the local church inducts new members of its committees and councils may be crucial to better participation. Therefore a key area for empowering Black and White members of congregations could be to provide induction training for newly elected members and better information on the nature of such committees before elections take place.

Cultural differences were highlighted within the focus group many times – not just the generalisation between White and Black cultural heritages, but also within the Black community. I have spoken earlier about the dangers of failing to acknowledge the diversity of tradition within Black culture but suggest that within the Church the failure to acknowledge such difference not only diminishes the Church but also demonstrates a misuse of power which belittles and ignores Black individuality. This was confirmed by the curates' group.[80] The divergence of expectation, understanding and experience between, for example, Caribbean islands, or between West Indian and western African cultures, therefore ought to be explored openly within the parish context to disseminate tensions based on favour or focus. To address this often unacknowledged diversity the Diocese of Southwark set up area committees and a diocesan forum bringing together diverse voices from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic members of its churches. In these meetings local and diocese wide issues are raised concerning inclusion and participation as well as challenging racism and injustice. The whole initiative is guided by the members of the forum but is episcopally led, 'Because the bishop gives visible leadership, office holder and staff take it seriously' (Sandiford 2010, p24).

Inevitably the focus of such sharing of information (knowledge) of different cultures must reposition the focus of power on to those who share knowledge, each in turn participating in a process of

[80] See Chapter Eight.

learning about each other. For some there will be more to learn than to teach. For all there will be a journey of reshaping the power dynamic within the group. This redistribution or transition of power is, Percy demonstrates, a key element of inclusive ministry. In a chapter on dependency and interdependence she continues with her exploration of ministry as 'mothering' and describes how the child is at first dependent on his mother. As time progresses this dependency goes through a transition so that the two, child and parent, become interdependent. Percy acknowledges that this interdependence also requires what she calls a 'generous inequality' in that the tendency to be over-intrusive in mothering as well as in ministry, requires a withholding of the exercising of power at key times in the development of the interdependent relationship. Ultimately the goal (in ministry) is collaborative ministry which not only allows true participation, but also values the contributions of each member or group:

> …collaboration trusts another to work with you, to find a way for that person to do something which might arrive in a different place and create something which you could not have done or even thought of. Within the church, too often what is called collaborative ministry is simply delegation. Truly collaborative ministry requires a proper trust in others and in the overarching creativity of the Holy Spirit. (Percy 2014, p80)

Whereas the challenge of letting go, so that truly collaborative ministry can take place, is difficult in most congregations, it may be doubly so when the 'different place' arrived in is culturally very different from the diverse congregational norms. At the heart of such a radical approach to the sharing of ministry is trust, a trust which is based on mutual valuing and mutual sharing of power. It is this sharing, the true collaboration, which should be at the heart of Christian communities seeking to reflect the nature of God himself: '…power, understood as the relational energy generated and maintained by the triune God, is to be comprehended and entered into as contextual, that is, through radical patterns of mutuality. Christian insights into the truth and meaning to be found in worshipping the mystery of God who is a community of difference indicate the potential for all human living' (Greenwood & Burgess 2005, p168). In Chapter Four I introduced Lukes' three dimensional model of power and concluded that the important element of his model in relation to this research was the acknowledgement of 'overt, covert and latent conflict'.[81]

Combining the necessary depth of trust which ensures mutuality of power and yet allows for the acknowledgement of conflict as prescribed by Lukes in his theory of power requires confidence in the group process. Throughout the focus group, parishioners drew attention to the requirement for clergy not only to hear the views of the people present, but also for more members of the congregation to feel enabled (empowered) to participate. Any such empowerment of Black majority congregations ought to take into account this complex dissemination of power and the methods required to ensure congregations can have honest conversations with their minister. However given the diversity of the congregation even in this small sample, any standardised approach to empowerment should be developed with caution lest the process itself reverts to an organisational approach, denying diversity, difference and the needs of the context.

[81] See Chapter Four, page 40.

A Consideration of Forgiveness: rethinking knowledge to re-exercise power

In the previous section we saw how truly collaborative ministry ought to be founded on mutual trust to enable flourishing. Percy acknowledges that such mutual trust requires an often painful honesty born out of the need to forgive and be forgiven. This is not simply about acknowledging hurts caused by weakness or poor ministry but rather, '…a result of lack of attention to certain people, a slippage into seeing people as types rather than individuals … [The] apology does not necessarily means that things could have been done differently. It is an acknowledgement of the other's hurt and an opportunity for both to learn through the encounter.' (Percy, p80). At the heart of this kind of forgiveness is opportunity; opportunity to learn from the past, to acknowledge, name and own historic wrongs, and to grow into greater inclusion and equality. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa in the 1990s benefited from such an approach, and I have highlighted the Kairos Document's focus on reconciliation.[82] My process of engagement with the parish focus group, together with a series of congregational meetings where members were safely able to share experience and deeply held emotions surrounding participation in church life, also demonstrated this approach to reconciliation. In listing 'implications' of ethnic inclusivity in the Church, Jagessar notes:

> Honestly wrestling the issue of who holds power in the congregation is certain to come up and creating an environment in which decision-making is shared among all those at the table. We must live out a community of radical engagement. We are well aware that in the midst of our brokenness in a fallen world, we need God's grace and healing if we are going to embrace unity in diversity as a kingdom value. As believers in Jesus Christ, we need to first seek our healing within our community of faith. (Jagessar 2015, p92)

The tendency of Christian communities to ignore the pain of 'honestly wrestling' has all too often denied the expression of painful experience. On a number of occasions within the focus group, and in the curates' workshop, I identified 'soothing' and 'smoothing' as significant obstacles to better participation and empowerment of both Black and White members of the congregation.

I opened this chapter with Eagleton's comments about the costly nature of such truthfulness and trust, an honesty which he asserts is not simply one of painful recognition, but of a sign of hope essential to the Christian community. It is a failure to see such recognition as a foundation of hope that may prevent congregations from actively exploring what is such a crucial step within congregational empowerment but, as Rice notes (2005), 'Lament… becomes a practice and task of remembering and grieving well, through which Christians do not forget and continue naming the truth about the past. To the extent communities of Christians are able to do this, lament is not only a cry of grief – "Oh, God, we see and feel the pain of our divides, our brokenness!" – but a declaration of hope – "This is *not* the way God intends things to be! Christ brings new life!"' (Rice 2005).

[82] In the Kairos Document, Chapter Three, section 3.1.

Thus forgiveness and reconciliation is part of the empowerment of Black congregation members within our churches, and also a sign of hope for the wider Christian community. This process is described as birthing for the Black community by Novette Thompson, who writes of Black ministers:

> The ministry of one person will not be able to address all these variables overnight. There needs to be consistent work over a period of years that will enable Black people to chisel out for themselves a way of life that has advantages and opportunities, not only disadvantages. This is a lengthy operation which calls for intense attention to the birthing process of the Black community. For the time being, I feel that the place for most Black ministers and priests is within, multi-cultural settings. Possibly in the future, we will perceive a need for us to be in rural areas, But for now our work must be with our people because of the sign of hope that we represent for them. (Thompson 1995, p159)

Within the focus group questions were raised about the preferred ethnicity of the parish priest and, as I have alluded to in the introduction, I had heard previously about the preference for a White priest (male or female) over a Black male priest. Thompson's comments raise important questions about the selection of clergy who minister in congregations with significant Black membership and it is to the issue of clergy appointments to which I know turn in a suggested example.

An Example: Clergy Appointments

In the outcomes and consideration above I have shown ways in which the results from my research indicate that the ways in which a White clergy person ministers within a Black majority congregation are influenced by the knowledge and understanding which that minister accesses, and the nature of the participative ways through which the Black members of the congregation engage in parish life. I have also shown that true collaborative ministry stems from an honest and open acknowledgement of the barriers to full inclusion and equality. At the heart of this research, underlying both the original questions presented in Chapter One and also through the theology and methodology I have used in answering those questions is a desire to understand the role of a minister in 'supporting and affirming a Black Christian education of liberation'.[83] I have shown that any such education of liberation ought ultimately to benefit the White community and clergy as much as the Black congregation members, thus leading to a more fully inclusive and representative Church. It is this task which Reddie sets himself in his book, 'Nobodies to Somebodies' - a key conversation partner throughout this research. Reddie, calls on the work of Charles Foster in setting forward his position on the importance of the minister in bringing such liberation to a local church setting:

> Foster continues by stating that the pastor's role requires a unique understanding of that community's culture and corporate experience. This understanding needs to be supplemented by the ability to read accurately those qualities that confer a sense of

[83] This phrase is taken directly from Reddie 2003, p118.

> identity on that community. Foster explains this point by stating that to "advocate the Christian vision, however, begins with the ability to 'read' the values, commitments and lifestyles of the congregation's culture in the light of the Christian story." … Foster argues that church leaders, particularly those who are ordained, must be supported and trained to move beyond the often-pressing needs of maintenance, management and administration. Administration and management should be supportive of and subordinate to a visionary, prophetic role that seeks to challenge and change the church. Central to this role is the church leader as educator. (Reddie 2003, p119)

The example I now present aims to be one possible working out of the conclusions drawn from my research. I believe that it is possible to extend the themes of my conclusions to a wider audience in the area of selecting and appointing clergy to parishes, enabling clergy and parishes to engage appropriately with my findings. In offering the following practical approach I present an answer to the questions I set forward in Chapter One in reflection on my own ministry.

Clergy Appointments: a practical approach for parishes and clergy

In Chapter Eight I began my analysis of the research data by assuming answers to my original research questions and then testing them through the feedback from the curates' workshop. In doing so I presented areas of convergence and divergence as well as suggesting new areas for formational development for White clergy working in majority Black congregations which might be drawn from these. It has been my intention from the outset not only to reflect on my own experience and to make sense of it, but to use this reflection as the basis for developing a toolkit for similar clergy to consider how to minister more appropriately to the congregations they serve.

At the beginning of this work I noted that the journey was not mine alone. A key starting point was the realisation that the information supplied to me prior to my licensing as parish priest at St Agnes' was inadequate, not simply in its omissions, but in its Whitewashing of the presentation of the parish found in the profile.[84] Thus the intervention I suggest in this section has significant implications for parishes awaiting the appointment of their next incumbent. The second important factor in realising that this was not simply my own journey was the positive feedback from both the focus group and the workshop on the process itself. Providing intentional space for deep engagement with the issues surrounding culture, colour and context, was in itself a beneficial and liberating experience. These two factors suggest that any practical approach now put forward must consider the appointments process from both the parish's and the minister's point of view.

[84] When parishes become vacant each Parochial Church Council is tasked with creating a parish profile outlining the nature, context and vision for the church together with the parish's requirements from the next parish priest.

Tool One: Considerations for Parishes

I now outline the key areas of the appointments process for parishes and suggest how, by extending my research findings, these might be developed.

1. Parish Profile

It was clear from the parish profile that I received prior to my appointment that it had been compiled by White members of the congregation. No doubt it had been agreed by the whole PCC but it was conspicuous in its omission not only of factual evidence of the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic diversity of the congregation, but by its failure to acknowledge any necessary awareness of the future priest in ministering in a diverse community. In the first and second outcomes above I presented the desire for a greater knowledge and understanding amongst both congregations and clergy of their context and community. A truly collaborative approach to compiling the parish profile, considering also forgiveness and reconciliation, would give voice to a broader section of the congregation and better represent their needs and concerns. There is I believe significant scope for congregational empowerment by an honest reflection on the current composition and needs of the whole church community.

2. Person Specification & Role Description

Part of the application pack presented to the enquiring minister is a person specification and role description identifying the needs of the parish with regard to particular ministerial skills – both of ministerial role and personal character. Given the importance placed on proactive inclusion and challenging the status quo exemplified by Reddie's radical typology and confirmed both by the focus group and curates' workshop in this research, I believe that these documents might specifically identify and encourage clergy applicants to explore the nature of inclusion, equality and diversity in the particular ministry that the parish requires. In the light of the current appointment system of Common Tenure within the Church of England, which places greater emphasis than previously on duties and responsibilities of clergy, and how these might be both supported and assessed, I believe that these two documents could become increasingly important in fulfilling the desire of a parish to increase Black participation and presence. However, as already noted, any such process must be particular to the parish concerned; the results of my research were rooted in a particular context and could not be applied directly to another situation. I explore this need in the commentary below.

3. Induction Training

Both of the above interventions develop preliminary processes which are already standard practice within the Church of England. This third consideration is a distinctive, though not unique, result of my research. I have already explored the nature of my own reflective journey – predominantly by accident rather than design. I believe that that journey has yielded important learning outcomes for

my own ministry and yet the importance and scale of issues surround cultural awareness were considered so important by the focus group that I purposely include here in this tool for parishes a suggestion for developing an Incumbent's Induction Programme. I do not suggest that this is unknown anywhere within the Church however my experience of arriving in each parish has not yet included any formal induction. This contrasts with other roles I have taken in the secular world (school governor and trustee of a community centre) where I have received intentional induction training. In the next section I will show how this is also a useful tool for consideration by clergy appointed to such posts, but here I include it as a key process for congregations to undertake as part of their own liberative and educational formation in ministry.

Comments made in the focus group confirmed, as I have noted above, the positive affect of the focus group itself and the guided participative process of exploring issues around culture, power and privilege. Such a journey if undertaken with deep participation would in itself prove to be liberating for the congregation. This is true of interregna in parishes generally, but if the above processes around the parish profile and person and role documents are engaged in appropriately it would be frustrating if the process was left behind when the new incumbent arrived in post. To waste such energy (invested emotionally, spiritually and practically) would not only do a disservice to those involved but would undermine the process and collude with the themes of smoothing, soothing and ignorance illustrated particularly by the pastoral and organisational typologies set out in Chapters Five and Six. I suggest that the outcomes and process of the parish conversations developed above should form a part of the induction process for the new minister. This would form an important resourcing point for the new parish priest and help to continue the journey of change. A new priest confronted with the role description and parish profile having now arrived in the church community will require an understanding of the context in which those documents were brought into being, underlining for the incoming minister the nature of collaborative working desired by the congregation.

The foundational nature of this formal induction may also be supported by more practically focussed training around, for example, funerals and pastoral care. The scenarios identified as examples at the beginning of my research journey[85] provide indications of why this is a simple, yet important, necessity.

[85] See Chapter Two.

Tool Two: Considerations for Ministers

Following the above tool for congregations, here I suggest considerations for priests applying for and appointed to majority Black congregations.

1. Personal Awareness

The discernment process for clergy applying for parishes will differ depending on the individual style and character of the priest however, in line with the analysis of the data presented in this research, I suggest that a particular process of personal awareness might be engaged upon when ministering amongst communities significantly different from the priest's own. I am aware of the impossibility of this task with regard to the variety and diversity of parish cultures and congregational needs when considered with different ministerial styles. Nevertheless the data, particularly that drawn from the curates' workshop, suggests that a directed programme encouraging personal reflection would be valued. Given the process developed by both the data and structure of this thesis I propose three distinct areas clergy might consider.

The first is to consider the differences between character and role explored in Chapter Four. In bringing these into conversation with understandings of power and knowledge I developed a matrix through which to view the data gathered in my own research. In doing so I believe that this enabled a greater understanding of the issues at play in ministering to a particular congregation. Whilst this would be, at least, an unconscious part of any discernment process, the analysis suggests that this is of greater significance when White clergy minister among majority Black congregations.

I suggest that my development of Reddie's three typologies of minister, forming the lens through which I viewed my own data, could be of particular consideration to priests. Not only could such consideration highlight personal styles and areas for growth, but I have shown that it provides a pathway for liberation and greater inclusion in moving from one typology to another. As a first step towards understanding ministerial style, my research suggests that a simple question as to which typology priests see themselves modelling currently and in the future might ensure a deeper connection with the issues at hand. Having reflected on their preferred typology, clergy might then ask how they might better understand the effect of this on their new congregation, and what obstacles they might have individually in transitioning from one typology to another, given the dynamic suggested in Table 2.[86] Such reflection on appropriate talents and styles of ministry are, Percy argues, of great benefit when clergy discern their call to particular parishes, not least in how clergy relate to the people they serve:

> I will suggest that clergy need to learn to play the "gift game", developing ways of cherishing those for whom they are called to serve. Learning to know people and places involves listening to their stories and telling stories together. Listening, chatting and

[86] See Chapter Five.

> spending time together are important for the development of relationships. (Percy 2014, p41)

Of course any such personal awareness is liable to subjectivity and just as I tested my own experiences on the parish focus group and then the assumptions I drew from that with the curates' responses, so too clergy might be encouraged to take part in a similar process with due consideration to context. Most ministerial development programmes contain peer comment and I believe that a similar exercise would not only be beneficial to the priest but also in continuing the journey of empowerment for the congregations as outlined in Tool One above. As I present the findings of this work I confirm what I suggested in Chapter Three on method and methodology that the process is in itself transformative and productive.

2. External Resourcing

I have given examples earlier of how certain dioceses provide resources through training and literature for cultural awareness as well as racism awareness, but in preparation for this research I noted that the outcomes would have important implications for training – both before and after ordination. As well as the initial ministerial education provided by the Church of England for those training for ordination and then immediately afterwards for the first three years of ministry, the Church also provides continuing ministerial development in the form of training – especially at key moments of change.[87] The current practice within Manchester Diocese contains formational training on transition, role and identity, linking it with the central learning outcomes for ordinands and curates concerning 'Vocation and Ministry within the Church of England' and 'Personality and Character'.[88] Further cultural awareness training would fit within this programme alongside racism awareness training which is already delivered. After taking part in an activity based on my experience and an exercise suggested by Reddie, the curates proposed that similar activities might be beneficial to others at specific moments during ministry.[89]

3. Induction Training

The final consideration for priests might be participation in induction training at a parish level (as well as any diocesan provision). Full details of this proposal are given above in Tool One: Considerations for Parishes.

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[87] For example, changing posts and pre-retirement courses.
[88] The Nine selection criteria used by the Church of England are explored in Smith 2014, which I consider in Chapter Four.
[89] Again the 'unconscious bias' training referred to earlier would be appropriate.

Commentary on the Example

In presenting these outcomes and worked example I suggest that the questions asked at the beginning of this research have been answered and particular contributions made to both knowledge and practice of ministry. However it is important to acknowledge the boundary between the conclusions from my research, the suggestions that I draw from them, and the necessary limitations of such proposals. I have indicated these areas above, both in the presentation of the outcomes and the worked example, but here I wish to make further comment together with a recognition of the importance of being aware of issues of diversity both of the sample group and any intended proposal.

In the three chapters presenting the data from the parish focus group I present the data through the lenses of the pastoral, organisational and radical typologies without deep interpretation. In doing so I illustrated the typologies using only the material from the transcript and presented the findings without analysis. It was in Chapter Eight that these findings were brought into conversation with the curates' comments in order to test the assumptions that I had originally made, and outline areas of convergence and divergence. At this stage the conclusions I drew were taken directly from the experience of myself, the parish and the curates. This limited sample enabled me to make clear conclusions from the data which, through reflection and interpretation with Reddie's typologies and the issues surround power and knowledge previously discussed in Chapter Four, I then began to suggest might have a wider implication on practice beyond my situation. The initial conclusions from this sample surrounded issues of ignorance, smoothing and soothing; areas of personal and external intervention; frustration; manipulative, depriving and belittling power; assumed and manipulative knowledge; and empowerment.

In this chapter I have proposed ways in which these conclusions might be used to affect induction processes for clergy and parishes in a much wider context. In doing so I acknowledge the tension between the limited implications of this research, and my aspiration to make larger claims related to the wider Church of England. I have stated already that this is a particular challenge of an action-research methodology which by definition draws from a particular set of experiences. Any proposals drawn from this data must be tentative and yet, I believe in setting out the outcomes and worked example above, I have remained faithful to the context of my own exploration as well as that of both groups. The proposals therefore speak authentically to the wider Church when the validity of the particular data is balanced with a realistic understanding of the situation into which it might speak. Examples of this are given above where the areas of divergence outline the limitations of my data, as well as below in my suggestions for further work where a rigorous testing against different but similar groupings are recommended.

The example provided above is developed from my research data and acknowledges areas where any direct application ought to be avoided. In setting out the research criteria and also explaining the composition of both the parish focus group and the curates' workshop I note the diversity of each group. The predominantly Black focus group included members from a number of Caribbean

islands as well as three different West African countries. Alongside this there were first and second generation communities, more women than men and some, a minority, who had only recently become Anglicans. This breadth adds further complexity to the conclusions drawn from the data. I acknowledge this particularity but show definite themes which clearly resonated with the curates – themselves a diverse group. Again I note the limitations of blanket assumptions drawn from such a small and diverse sample, yet the themes which I develop speak clearly to a wider situation.

In presenting these outcomes above and the example of intervention for parishes and clergy, I acknowledge the need for a contextual, bespoke 'toolkit' which takes into account the specific cultural, spiritual and pastoral context of both the parish and the priest. Some parishes will be more reflective, and some clergy more self-aware than others. The experience of both parties must therefore be considered. As I have stated earlier, any failure to recognise the specific situation of a parish would result in the deployment of an organisational typology – which is contrary to this thesis' intention. The danger of White clergy assuming Black congregations are all alike is, as I demonstrate in Chapter Six, all too easily made. The liberative process of creating suitable, local intervention is as important a part of Reddie's 'radical' typology as its intended outcome. The proposals in this example spring from a local context and, although they generate wider themes, their application in a wider diocesan context depends on the recognition of local empowerment and radical, intentional collaboration.

Reflections on the Research Journey

In Chapter Three I explain the change in direction which my research method took as a result of being unable to contact clergy in similar situations to my own. Consequently I chose to verify my understandings of ministry with a group of curates rather than more experienced parish priests. This change of approach yielded a more constructive set of results in that it did, as I have shown, contribute to a heightened understanding of the possibilities for training those approaching ministry in Black-majority parishes. However the chosen route also presents a number of issues which need to be explored in terms of why other White clergy were reluctant to engage and in highlighting the weaknesses and gaps, as well as the strengths, within my research.

Inertia and Stumbling Blocks

In failing to make contact with White clergy in situations similar to mine it was necessary to pause during my research. Partly this was a practical necessity as I waited to hear from either the clergy or the diocesan officers who had suggested names, and it was also in part a pause to re-asses the method of my inquiry. Both of these reasons created a sense of inertia – an inability to move forward and a frustration. In the light of what I discovered, both in the focus group and curates' workshop I believe that there are three particular causes for the reluctance of White clergy to put themselves forward.

Firstly, and simply, the clergy might not have fully understood the nature of my research either through lack of information or from lack of personal interest. Although the information sheet sent to other participants was considered adequate in explaining the nature of the questions and the process, it might not have been sufficient to catch the attention of the clergy I contacted. One diocesan officer responded that clergy are busy and do not necessarily take much interest in such requests!

Secondly, and related to this, is the possibility that the clergy invited to take part just did not see the relevance of the question, or the possibly that there was any difference in their pattern and approach to ministry because they worked amongst predominantly Black congregations. Was their ministry that different? and if so did it matter? Given the universal nature of ministry espoused by some of the authors I explore in Chapter Four, I believe that many clergy might consider cultural difference as influential on ministerial typology as inappropriate.

However the third reason I identified is possibly the most important and relevant: fear. Walton (1986) and Wilkinson (1993) both speak about their discomfort in undertaking their work as White researchers. Although much of my work was not directly in the area of racism, the allied issues of power, privilege and cultural awareness which are at the heart of this work highlight vulnerabilities within individual ministers as well as within the institution. I was aware of these potential problems when I compiled my initial research proposal and associated ethics form, but did not expect such universal disengagement with my process. Such fear, of exposure of personal weakness, vulnerability and prejudice, needs to be taken into account when any future programme of intervention as worked out above, is implemented. Although I suggest that any further consideration of this fear is beyond this work, as I have noted throughout this thesis, fear and denial are constant themes which require sensitive and yet bold (radical) address.

Weaknesses

In setting forward both my methodology and method[90] I explain why I chose to seek out only White, male clergy, working in majority Black congregations and from the north of the Church of England. I stand by these necessary parameters though acknowledge here that such restrictions also limit the application of the outcomes presented in this thesis. The change from other White parish priests to local curates limits the field even further. In the section below regarding future work I consider broadening these parameters but here I would also note that I question whether a similar exercise working with White clergy working in predominantly White congregations but of different national and cultural diversity would yield similar results? I have noted on a number of occasions that the nature of this research is about cultural awareness rather than predominantly colour or racism, though of course they are allied issues. This thesis makes no comparison with White clergy working in culturally diverse, yet majority White congregations.

[90] Chapter Three.

A second limitation of the conclusions in this chapter is that my data refers to a particular group and a relatively small sample. Even with its testing on a group of curates, making wider suggestions is be necessity limited. I explored this above in the commentary on the worked example.

Strengths

At the beginning of this chapter I outline the contributions of this work to both knowledge and practice. As a final summary I would reemphasise the conclusion that this research critiques Reddie's work, especially in relation to the three typologies of minister that he proposes. In doing so my outcomes confirm the presence of the three typologies in Anglican ministry and in re-ordering them I develop a suggested tool for formational training and intervention.

I have argued that the research process itself forms part of practical theology's defined aims as put forward in Chapter Two as 'critical theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God's redemptive practices in, to and for the world' (Swinton & Mowat 2006, p6). This definition which has accompanied my research journey has been fulfilled in three areas. Firstly this has been a personal journey on reflective practice through which my own knowledge and practice have both influenced and been influenced by theological understanding. For the congregation, the focus group provided a formal space for corporate reflection on practice and their understanding of the nature of Christian community and ministry. For the curates, the workshop enabled a systematic opportunity for exploring issues around racism, culture and privilege at a time of ministry where models of priesthood are being explored and at a time when the pressured urgency of discernment about a particular parish post was absent.

Suggestions for Further Work

In this concluding chapter I have brought attention to weaknesses and gaps within this research as well as outlining its strengths and benefits. Although I conclude that the questions I set at the beginning, in relation to my own reflection on personal experience and practice in relation to ministry with a Black majority congregation, are answered by the analysis and outcomes drawn from the data, there remain three areas where future work would be beneficial.

The first of these areas is simply a broadening of this research to include those excluded from its original remit. As I have stated this would include women priests in particular and also a study of a similar kind amongst a majority White congregation. In doing this a comparison survey would illustrate convergence and divergence within gender roles (and typologies of ministry) as well as assessing to what extent this research is dependent on culture and heritage rather than racial difference.

Secondly, further work needs to be undertaken in carrying forward the original suggestion that my personal experience (as developed in the light of the parish focus group) ought to be set in conversation with other parish priests. Whilst holding that the results contained within this thesis are of significant value, giving a clear insight in to the ministry of a White priest within a Black majority congregation, they remain my personal experience and interpretation and spring from this small data sample. The resonance with the understanding of the curates in their workshop suggests that a supplementary exploration of how more experienced clergy, working as parish priests, relate to these findings would be a further contribution to understanding the typologies of minister and preferred and truly transformative responses. Such a wider sample would strengthen my argument for extrapolating wider implications from the research.

Finally, as the outcomes presented in this conclusion are drawn directly and indirectly from the feedback obtained for the congregational focus group, it would be both desirable and beneficial to present the four outcomes to the original group for consideration, reflection and critique. In doing so a truly collaborative approach, as put forward, could be tested and put into practice.

My theological reflection on my practice sprang from a desire to make sense of my parish and ministry. This disciplined approach to researching practice and theory has resulted in a journey of personal awareness, change in personal practice and deepening knowledge of context. Intentional intervention runs the risk of quashing such personal exploration by limiting the self-questioning and reflection on which this research was founded. Notwithstanding such a caution, I consider the conclusions of this thesis to provide influential guidance for White clergy who ‘find’ themselves in majority Black congregations within the Church of England.

Appendix 1

Outline of Some West Indian Funeral Traditions

What follows is a description of the key features of West Indian funeral traditions predominantly from a Jamaican background. There are overlaps with other Caribbean countries and indeed some similarities with African traditions but the purpose here is to contrast these funeral customs against those of what might be termed the normative White British funeral.

- The evening before the funeral it was likely that the deceased body would be laid out in their home and visitors invited.
- After being carried into church, the coffin would be opened for the rest of the service.
- Alongside the minister's and family eulogies, members of the congregation were often encouraged to come and up and speak about the deceased.
- After the final blessing and before the coffin was taken out of the building, the minister invites the congregation to come forward and file round the coffin to pay their last respects (often touching the deceased or talking to him/her).
- Almost always burials as opposed to cremations and the graveside service attended by the majority of mourners who were present at the church service.[91]
- Not uncommon to see mourners sharing drinks at the graveside while the male members of the family fill in the grave (instead of the cemetery assistants) after the service.
- During the filling in of the grave the rest of the congregation sing hymns and songs, usually led by community elders – it was not uncommon to see the same women at most funerals.
- After the soil had formed a mound on top of the grave, the female family members would undo each bouquet brought by mourners and individually plant each stem to create a mound of flowers and colour.
- Following the burial a hot meal was provided for family and friends and there was an expectation that the minister would attend. This could last for many hours.

[91] On the rare occasion that the committal took place at a crematorium as opposed to a burial, there was often disquiet and questions from non-family members as to why.

Appendix 2

Focus Group: outline, scenarios and questions

This appendix gives details of how the Focus Group was set up and the contents of the discussion that followed.

Focus Group Set Up and Outline

I began with announcing my intention to conduct the discussion during the usual notices slot at the Sunday Parish Eucharist together with a short note on the weekly newsletter. This first announcement was simply a short description of my research programme and an invitation to pick up a longer more comprehensive participant information sheet describing in greater detail my intentions, my questions and how the focus group would work. As many of those in my congregation had not experienced similar research methods I also outlined the necessary issues of confidentiality, anonymity and freedom to withdraw at any time.

The following Sunday after those who were interested had had time to read the detailed participant information sheet I spoke more about my experiences and purposes, again to the whole congregation, and made clear my intention and the nature of the focus group.

The focus group itself was held in my rectory. I was aware that this might be considered problematic to those outside this situation but it was deliberately chosen as most parish groups which had a reflective or studying nature were held in my house. I wanted to provide a setting which was as similar as possible to normal parish groups. At the beginning of the group which was held on a Monday morning[92] everyone present read the participation information sheet outlining my research and completed the standard Faculty of Humanities consent form. I then explained that the whole discussion would be recorded. The facilitator of the group was the lay vice chair of the Parochial Church Council who had been given copies of the scenarios and questions beforehand.[93] Paper copies of the questions were also made available to everyone present. I then left the room.

[92] Monday 12th December 2011 at 10.30am.
[93] The scenarios and questions were based on the three examples from my ministry experience (see Chapter Two).

Focus Group: Scenarios and Questions

The scenarios and questions provided for the focus group are given here in full in the format they were presented:

Scenario 1: Funerals

'In the six years before coming to St Agnes' I must have taken well over a hundred funerals, most of them following a similar format. I assumed funerals would be the same here as anywhere else. It was not until the day of my first West Indian funeral that I realised that some things were different. After a few more West Indian funerals I think I became more aware of some of the differences: Open coffins; an open invitation for people to add their own tribute; filing past the coffin before leaving the church; men filling in the grave; the women singing; flowers carefully arranged on the grave; and the funeral meal. Not knowing about these things was a little bit uncomfortable. They were surprises that I wish I had known about. I am sure there are still some things that I have not noticed or understood properly.'

1. Did you notice that Stephen didn't know about certain traditions? Did you expect this?
2. Did you expect Stephen to know things? Were you surprised or frustrated or unsurprised that he didn't know?
3. How do typical 'White British' funerals seem compared with typical West Indian funerals?
4. What else should be said about all this?

Scenario 2: Volunteering & Participating

'I may be wrong but it feels that when I ask for volunteers or ask people to sign up for something or to come to a meeting, it is unusual that Black members of the congregation will respond in the same way that White members would. However if I personally ask or invite Black members of the congregation to be involved in the same events, either face to face or in a written letter, then there is a strong response and commitment. I also suspect that something similar happens when people put themselves forward. White members suggest or put themselves forward more readily than Black members. White members are more likely to put themselves forward for PCC members or elected positions. These are all very big generalisations! But I think there is something important in this generalisation.'

1. Stephen doesn't think this is anything to do with ability. He wonders whether this is to do with confidence. Is it about confidence, or is it about courtesy?
2. Do you wait to be asked or do you put yourself forward? Why?
3. Do you wish you were asked? Have you been overlooked?
4. Is it worth participating?
5. What else should be said about all of this?

Scenario 3: Pastoral Care & Priest's Roles

'I have been brought up in the Anglican Church in this country. In England and Wales I have experienced a particular way of being a parish priest from my childhood until now. It is often a role caught in the middle! It is a role of mediation and of gentle leadership. It attempts to be 'all things to all people'. At times this can appear weak or indecisive. At times it seems very pastoral and at times it appears to be less so. A parish priest may have to keep together various models of ministry at the same time. My understanding of what it is to be a 'rector' will be very different from yours. This is true of leadership and of pastoral care. Each members of the congregation will have a different expectation on what the Rector should do in a particular instance.'

1. Do you think the parish priest should be more autocratic? In other words, should he be telling the congregation more directly what to do, or how to do it?
2. Do you see the parish priest as a priest for the whole parish? Or just for the congregation?
3. Do you expect the priest to be your family chaplain at certain times?
4. What are the differences between how, for example, the Jamaican community or Ghanaian community express pastoral care, compared with the English community?
5. If there are differences how does this difference affect the expectation on the parish priest?
6. What else should be said about all of this?

Appendix 3

Workshop: preparation, lesson plan and questionnaire

This appendix gives details of how the Curates' Workshop was set up and the contents of the discussion that followed.

Workshop Preparation

Before contacting the curates in the second and third years of their training, I first obtained permission from the Diocesan training officer responsible for these year groups and the director of ministry training. At my suggestion the initial email inviting participation came from the training officer and so received a semi-official authorisation. The email contained details of my research programme (in the form of a participant information sheet), my research questions and an outline of the workshop. Participants replied directly to me and then I set up a workshop at a time to suit as many as possible.

The workshop took place at the diocesan offices in Manchester city centre in a training suite provided by the diocesan ministry department.[94]

After completing the relevant consent forms (provided by the Faculty of Humanities of The University of Manchester), the participants were given a brief outline of my research journey and the intention of the workshop. Reddie's 'redefining the norm' exercise took place before the workshop continued with a reading of the examples from my own experience and questions for discussion within the group.[95] I made notes of key themes and asked for any further comments at the end of the session before giving each participant a questionnaire to complete after the workshop and send back to me. I received completed questionnaires from each participant.

Workshop Scenarios and Questions

The scenarios used in the workshop were the same as those given above for the focus group, however the questions that followed them were adapted in the light of the data gathered from the original focus group to recognise the areas of convergence and divergence which I had identified. The follow up questionnaire contained these additional questions:

1. What did you learn today, or what struck you as important issues arising from the scenarios and discussions?
2. Can you identify any particular issues around the area of knowledge and understanding?
3. Can you identify any particular issues around the area of power and privilege?
4. What, if anything, would you appreciate as a new parish priest to help you understand these?

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[94] The workshop was held on Thursday 17th July 2014 at 4.00pm.
[95] For details of this exercise see Chapter 4, p24.

Workshop Lesson Plan

Thursday 17th July 2014

Aim: to introduce newly ordained practitioners to issues around race and culture and how their positions as leaders might give power and privilege

	Item	Objectives
1.	Participation Sheets and Consent Forms	
2.	Welcome: introduction to my research question	To get an overview of the participants own hunches as to what issues surround culture, race, knowledge, power and privilege
3.	Exercise: redefining the norm	To help participants understand that knowledge is power. How what we know can affect what we assume about others. Where and how we fill in the gaps in our knowledge. We presume what others know. We project onto others what we think they ought to know.
4.	Introduction to my research • My story and experience • My hunches • My research programme	To situate the question within my own experience and context. To explain my journey before and during my time at St Agnes'. Where this workshop fits into my research programme
5.	Scenario 1: Funerals	
6.	Scenario 2: Participation & Volunteering	
7.	Scenario 3: Pastoral roles	
8.	Concluding Discussion Themes that have arisen: knowledge power What has not been said? Other comments	Areas of divergence – their experience with mine Areas of convergence – their thoughts against mine
9.	Explain Questionnaire to take away Thank you.	To explore what they have learnt and discovered. What might be useful for them in future ministry Who might help in providing information or in bridging the knowledge/culture gap

Follow up Questionnaire

Workshop: Cultural Awareness

Thank you for taking part in the discussion. It would be helpful if you could provide some feedback to the questions below.

1. What did you learn today, or what struck you as important issues arising from the scenarios and discussions?

2. Can you identify any particular issues around the area of knowledge and understanding?

3. Can you identify any particular issues around the area of power and privilege?

4. What, if anything, would you appreciate as a new parish priest to help you understand these issues as you arrived in a new parish?

5. Any other comments?

Appendix 4

Developing the matrix

In Chapter Four I speak about developing a matrix through which to view the data:

> From an early stage in my reflective journey I was aware of the options available to me in exercising my ministry. I began to think of images of priestly ministry available to me which responded to the various ways in which clergy exercise pastoral ministry and the ways in which these are perceived. Initially I explored roles such as 'curate', 'priest', and 'rector' – each emphasising a different aspect of perception and connection between minister and congregation. This developed into a more theological, and then biblical, set of images which began to build up a deeper conversation between the three particular approaches to ministry which I had identified.

Initially I intended to view the three stories used in the Focus Group and Workshop through three images as shown in Matrix 1 below however, as I explain in Chapter Four, in time these stories were replaced with the themes of knowledge and power. Below are the initial thoughts on how these images developed before the final matrix was decided upon.

Matrix 1: demonstrating the three stories used in gathering the research (and presented in Appendix 1 above) together with the themes through which to view the data, here listed as A, B and C.

	A	**B**	**C**
Funerals			
Volunteering & Participating			
Pastoral Care & Priest's Roles			

I explored different ways of looking at each of these three stories through a range of theological, scriptural and ecclesial images. As I reflected on each proposal I encountered increasing difficulty in interpreting the terminology, and the sometimes subjective theology, of each image. Because of this potential for subjective interpretation and its impact on developing a lengthy interpretation of each, I finally concluded that it would best suit my analysis to remain with Reddie's typologies given the importance of his thinking in both Part 1 and Part 2 of this research. The various alternatives considered are listed below in Matrix 2.

Matrix 2: Examples of various models considered as a lens through which to view the three stories.

	A	**B**	**C**
Reddie's Typology	*Pastoral*	*Organisational*	*Radical*
Theological Model	*Pastoral*	*Dogmatic*	*Liberation*
Biblical Person	*Mary*	*Paul*	*Moses*
Life of Jesus	*Mary, Martha & Lazarus*	*Feeding the Five Thousand*	*Challenge to the money changers in the Temple*
Christological Model	*Priest*	*King*	*Prophet*
Clerical Model	*Curate*	*Rector*	*Priest*

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Part B

Part B: Section 1

Practical Theology: context, practice and performance (Literature Review)

Themes and Tools for Understanding a Black Anglican Congregation

Introduction

The parish where I minister is a typical inner city parish in the Church of England, conforming to the hallmarks of urban parishes that are the inspiration and core of Anglican reports such as '*Faith in the City'* (1985) and '*Faithful Cities'* (2006). The community lives with the stereotypical factors of unemployment, poor housing, low educational horizons, and the health issues associated with them. The church building sits within a predominantly Asian-Muslim neighbourhood which brings with it significant challenges to the church in the way it sees its presence and engagement for mission and outreach. There is also a significant population of African-Caribbeans and Africans, some of whom worship in the parish church, thus making the congregation a mixed community with a slight majority Black membership. I am the parish priest and I am White, as have been all the previous incumbents.

My experience inspires me to construct a rationale for the ministry and witness of this Anglican parish church. I have identified three themes: the parish system, the ministry of hospitality and servanthood, and Black majority congregations.

Theme One: The Parish System

The first area of influence focuses on the church's presence in an area with a majority Muslim population. Although it could be seen as an opportunity to examine the effects of closeness of locality of different cultures in terms of cohesion or separation, it appears that the more important effect on the congregation and church's ethos produced by the ethnicity of the local community is best seen in the church's strong identification as a parish and parish church. The church building and the ministry, mission and identity it encapsulates is seen more distinctly against the backdrop of the local Asian community.

With a changing society affecting how local communities see themselves and relate within and to each other, the traditional notion of Anglican parish with its parish church has been under question in its usefulness as a missional resource. This debate has been identified for many years: in 1988

The Grubb Institute's collection of essays on the nature and future of the parish church (Eccleston 1988) began by saying that the changes in church and community life had been evolving for already 25 years (Eccleston 1988, p1).

Study of the parish system often centres on two areas; what the church could or should provide in terms of parish ministry and what parishioners want and need. There is a wealth of work around the nature of the church's ministry and how it is deployed, from Tiller's report (1983) and its interpretations through to the ground-breaking '*Mission Shaped Church'* report (2004) and the explosion of related literature that followed. Much of this work starts from a premise that the parish system with its church is ether un-removable and therefore should be accepted as a given, or that it is redeemable and with creative manipulation can serve the church's mission well in the 21st century (Bayes and Sledge 2006, Croft, 2006).

With regard to parishioners, Billings (2004), Davie (1994), Selby (1988), and less formally, Harrison (1994) identify the changing nature of people and lifestyle and the individual's relationship with organised religion and its consequences for the Church of England. Laurie Green uses an analysis of people's approaches to God and their experience of God to underline his response to the Faith in the City report and his parish in Poplar, London (Green 1995). In this study he describes three attitudes to God: God is good, God is a bastard and God of the last resort (Green 1995, p77). These three attitudes have resonances with the hallmarks of Black religious experience and the style of Black liberation theology which I will return to later.

These strands of parish ministry come together in Torry's collection of essays from ordained practitioners working in urban parishes and continuing the creative process of connecting the parish system to a the needs of a changing world (Torry 2004). Involving issues such as ecumenism, art, regeneration, work, evangelism, multiculturalism and others, these essays bring together work from a clergy theology group.

Theme Two: Hospitality and Servanthood

Inherent within the Anglican parish system, the very name of which (derived from *parakoia*) implies a decisive, proactive reaching out to and inclusion of the stranger, 'those outside the house' (Percy 2006, p4), is a tendency towards ministerial models of hospitality and service. It is this generosity of welcome, beyond the norm, that is a significant element of the nature of the parish I wish to study and thus I include as a second area the themes of hospitality and servanthood.

Within the church's theology of ministry such ministerial qualities of service and servanthood may be found in the traditional role of *diakonia* – the first order of ministry ordained by the Church which can be found in New Testament accounts of the early church's organisation and outreach. Traditionally sitting alongside the two other orders of *presbyters* and *episcope*, Steven Croft (1999) suggests ways for parish ministry that liberates these three ministerial dimensions from individuals

to create multi-dimensional ministry. Thus the roles of deacon, priest and bishop traditionally the focus of the three dimensions of ministry become distributed across the whole church as activities performed by the whole membership taking its part in the Body of Christ. This understanding of shared ministry echoes the work of Boff (1985) who suggests that the church as worshipping and prophetic community can take on the roles of ministry towards the world it serves, rather than the present hierarchical model of clergy serving congregations serving the world.

Encouraging the use of base communities (work also developed by Hebblethwaite (1993)) as a model of church which values the apostolicity and collegiality of the laity and not just the clerical hierarchy (Boff 1985, p154ff) provides models of liberation for the people of God, that is, the laity. The empowerment (and self-empowerment) of the laity in order to become the truly diaconal church in the world is, David Clark (2005) argues, the key to a new model of church which break 'the mould of Christendom' (Clark 2005, p.61).

A diaconal church serves in order to empower or to liberate; it will perform functions of prayer, worship and care often on behalf of others rather than just in place of others. Thus the church in diaconal mode (according to Boff, Clark and Croft) will be seen as surrogate rather than as vicarious in its relationship with the world it serves (Sykes 1995, p203). From a pastoral ministry viewpoint this surrogacy mode for parish churches and their ministry will inevitably have greater appeal than the vicarious model in that for the congregation, i.e. the worshipping parishioners, there is an element of reward and Christian service in doing something on behalf of and for another, whereas performing a function (even as central to Christian faith as worship and prayer) instead of someone else has less immediate appeal. In fact it may engender feelings of antagonism and despair towards the world outside whom, ultimately the congregation is charged to serve.

Theme Three: Black Majority Congregation

I am keen to understand what effect the religious experience of the Black members of the congregation bring to the ministry that this church community encapsulates, so an understanding of Black Christian experience in Britain and the challenge of Black theology as a discipline to the Church of England is the third strand to explore in this project. The challenge of Black experience, as we shall see, is beginning to emerge with a growing confidence within British Black theology.

The 'Black' in Black Theology

A substantial part of the introduction of any theology will be given to the defining of terms and parameters for its field. This is particularly true of liberation theologies which by their nature centre on specific groups or cultures in order to defend, assure and promote their place within the salvation narrative of the Christian faith. In Black theology the first such clarification of terms must

surround the use of the word Black. Jagessar and Reddie use the word Black to refer to people of African-Caribbean, African and Asian descent: ' "Black" does not simply refer to a skin pigmentation, but is also making a political statement relating to one's sense of marginalization within the contested space that is Britain.' (Jagessar and Reddie 2007b, pxiii).

There is a wider use of the word Black which takes on a radical meaning in addition to its socio-political and racial definitions. Black encompasses the struggle for freedom civil rights and Black power:

> In using the term 'Black' with reference to a particular understanding, development and intent of the Church, embodying the Body of Christ, we are drawing upon a particular theological, philosophical and ideological tradition that finds its roots in the epoch of slavery. This particular understanding of the term 'Black' … adopted an academic conceptualization in the development of Black theology in the 1960's, during the Civil Rights and Black Power era in the United States of America.
> (Jagessar and Reddie 2007a, p2)

Beckford further defines this particular definition of Black by drawing attention to Black theology's struggle with the White hegemony of the Church saying that the concept of 'Black':

> … can encompass those who are not White or those engaging in resistance to domination or what I call here counter-hegemonic resistance. For example, Black nationalist philosophy in the 1960s in Britain was a movement dominated by African Caribbeans and Asians but it also incorporated a few Whites.
> (Beckford 2000, p2)

This reference to countering (and eventually quashing) the White hegemony which is at the heart of Black theology resonates with the experience of Hispanic American liberation theologians in north America who define their theology as one of struggle against a dominant political and powerful culture (Goizueta 1992, Gonzalez 1990, and Villafane 1995). This parallel struggle which is at a similar stage in North America to the progress of Black theology in Britain may provide useful insights into the development of liberation theologies in a post-colonial setting. Gonzalez (1990) encourages the creation of 'a national parish' (Deck 1992) as a means of nurture and strengthening of the Hispanic Christian community before they can truly find inclusion and integration with existing Church communities within the United States. Like the Black communities in Britain, these struggles are unfolding at a time long after the civil rights movement and concentrate more on identity than on rights.

But the civil rights movement was still in action at the time of James Cone's first work, '*Black Theology, Black Power'* (Cone 1969) – a book which heralded the beginning of Black liberation theology and which shook the theological world in its challenge to the White American Church. Black Theology, of which Cone is considered the founder (at least in north America), is always a

liberation theology. This is the collective view of those involved in Black theology today in Britain and elsewhere. Theology done by Black people is not necessarily Black theology, in the way that theology done by women is not necessarily Feminist theology. (Jagessar and Reddie 2007a, p4). As Beckford challenges the Black Pentecostal church over its conservatism in his book 'Jesus is Dread' by his belief that it is impossible to be Black and Christian without being explicitly political (1998, p2) so too Black theology is by its nature and definition liberation theology and therefore political.

> Black theology cannot be reduced to the notion that conservative Black Christian approaches to the Bible can be deduced as Black theology. Black theology stands and falls on its commitment to situational analysis, liberation and social transformation. Those wanting to invoke the term 'Black theology' without wishing to engage in the dangerous and often controversial work of this approach, simply want to have the luxury of using terminology whilst still holding to the creedal building blocks of normative (White) Christianity. (Jagessar and Reddie 2007a, p4)

Radical and Controversial

Just how controversial this theology is depends on the author. Cone sees Black theology as the only authentic theology in that it truly reflects the struggles of the oppressed and their relationship with the God who proactively sides with the poor. In his essay on the nature of the human being and the existence of human kind, Cone assesses the theology of other (White) theologians and dismisses them by suggesting that they 'have failed to see that there is no real speech about God except in relationship to the liberation of the oppressed' and therefore 'unless God's revelation is related to black liberation, blacks must reject it' (Cone 1986. p83).

Cone's influence on Black theology is huge, not just as the author of the first major texts but also as a vocal pioneer for a new way of doing theology. Indeed Delores Williams comments that Cone's work 'became "scripture" for many black seminarians and graduates who had for years been trying to reconcile their own black experience of Jesus in the black Christian community with the Jesus they met in Eurocentric theological education.' (Williams 1986, p189).

Williams (1986) argues that Cone's work made some Black communities uneasy as much as it did the American White 'norm' and in this respect his work had a greater effect on theological education than just in the consciousness of Black Christians. But Williams also notes that his original work failed to take seriously the oppression and exploitation of Black women from within and without the Black community; an omission which Cone addresses in the preface to the second edition of '*A Black Theology of Liberation'*.

As a White reader of this work I cannot easily identify with much of its theology and, perhaps, by definition, I should not be able to. It is a theology which takes as its starting point Black life

experience, and the inherited history and memory of Black people. Thus a White reader may comprehend, even empathise or identify to a degree but can never fully live and do as a Black theological thinker. There is a confidence of superiority in the work of Black theologians like Cone and Beckford which sees little or no part for White theology (or the inherited theology of the 'norm') for Black Christians and even questions its usefulness and vitality for the White Christian community. This superiority is fed not by arrogance but by a deep belief in the authenticity of Black oppression as a source for religious experience. Cone (1986, p4f) suggests that the inherited theological White 'norm' may even be blasphemous because of the White Eurocentric hegemony that is supports.

'It is not the purpose of Black theology to minimise the suffering of others, including whites' states Cone (1986, p7) but it is the experience of oppression that Black theologians use to create a liberation theology on behalf of and for all the oppressed. So a Black theology of liberation is not only for Black people, but it is the Black experience which, for Cone at least, is the starting point for any Christian theology of liberation. The initial reaction of exclusion as a White reader of Black theology is softened by this deeper understanding that it is not that Black theology is the only *correct* theology (or indeed that Black experience is the only oppressed experience) but rather the assertion that Black theology is the most authentic expression of God-talk in that it springs from the voices, experience and culture of the oppressed whom God always favours (See Sobrino 1985, Gutierrez 1988).

White Responses

So as a White priest ministering in a majority Black congregation I may use the tools of Black theology to draw insights from my experience and practice but I can do no more than use Black theology as a resource. My Whiteness (as well as my position of power as a priest) disqualifies me from constructing a Black theological critique of the parish situation. There is little work from White people on ministering in such congregations - it seems that the cautioning by people like Cone and Beckford against White people 'doing' Black theology has been heeded! Writers do touch on issues of race, Black religious experience and liberation theology (notably Leech, 1988) but analysis and comment on the practice of ministry by White clergy in Black majority congregations is minimal.

An article by Powell (Powell 2000) concentrates on the author's awakening as a White Presbyterian pastor to a new Christological understanding of Jesus through her ministry in a Black congregation; '*The Lord in Black Skin'* charts the changes in her personal relationship with Jesus as a result of her new religious experience. She begins by facing the issues: her life had been very different from those in her congregation and so she asks herself 'how "careful" she should be. 'Should I watch what I say? Should I say I "understand" what I can never fully really understand? Should I try to put on "black skin"?' (Powell 2000, p51). In these questions and sharing the experiences of her congregation she was, through a community outreach project, to say 'for the first time in my life, I saw my Lord in Black skin'.

Such transformational revelations are not the only story, Whiteside (a pseudonym) tells of a similar experience as a White pastor sent to a Black congregation where through worship, pastoral care and social encounter he develops a 'growing appreciation' of Black church experience but 'recognizes how impossible it is for a white minister truly to understand the black experience, however accepted he may be by his Black congregations' (Whiteside 1977). He questions whether Cone can himself fully understand 'the strengths of the blacks themselves' because of 'his [Cone's] comfortable affluence sitting at his desk in a white seminary' (Whiteside 1977, p61). Whiteside argues that the strength and conviction for change and protest amongst the Black congregation he serves is one of non-violence similar to that of Martin Luther King and not the 'justified violence of young blacks to gain their liberation from an oppressive white society' (Whiteside 1977, p61) which is the implication of Cone's rhetoric.

The most notable account of the White experience of ministry within a majority Black congregation is that of John Wilkinson. His book, '*Church in Black and White'* (1993) was not just a contribution of a White theologian to the issues facing the multi-cultural Church but also played a valued role in the formative years of Black theology in Britain. Jagessar and Reddie comment:

> Time has not diminished the importance of Wilkinson's work, but most tellingly, as a White middle-class male, he has recognized the need to remove himself from the forefront of the discourse in this country. ... We salute John Wilkinson not because his actions are exemplary, but simply because we recognise the important role he has played in helping to establish the position and intent of Black theology as an academic discipline in Britain, particularly within theological education.
> (Jagessar and Reddie 207a)

Through personal stories (both the author's and others) Wilkinson paints a background picture of Black Christian tradition, both corporately through churches and personally through individual faith, which the author then uses to develop a strategy for bringing the oppressor and victim of white and black together in a dialogue. This dialogue he believes may provide a pathway via naming and healing of experiences towards a healthy inclusive identity for a truly black and white Church. Once again the transformative power of Black theology as a branch of practical theology is apparent. There is a definite move through the book from a descriptive, semi historical, introduction to Black Christianity from both a white and black viewpoint to a suggestive process of healing and transformation for the Church.

Wilkinson writes from his own experience as a White Church of England priest and in particular from his time in an urban parish in Birmingham. He uses the book to make sense of and draw on this experience of ministry. He carefully outlines, from a white observation point, a background to the identity of Black church experience and Black Christian spirituality. It is through this detailed background that the specific issues around racism (such as exclusion, silencing, invisibility, pain) can be named, and acknowledged by both black and white members of the Church. This painful

encounter with these realities is a necessary step towards the healing of the church and its ultimate Kingdom manifestation of inclusion, participation and diversity.

Growing Courage in British Black Theology

As noted above, the importance of this work lies in its Britishness - a specific working though of the issues facing Black congregations within the Church of England in particular. After telling of his own experience of Black Christianity, Wilkinson outlines the Church of England's reactions (including a painful retelling of the abuses of the colonial past) and although using predominantly American sources he provides a journey through Black church experience from emancipation in the 1960's onwards, with particular reference to the 'triple inheritance' of American, Caribbean and British black Christianity. This 'underside of history' must be incorporated into the traditional Anglican dialogue alongside reason and tradition, Wilkinson argues.

Black voices have often been invisible and therefore silent and through his own experiences Wilkinson presents the feelings, expectations and criticisms of Black Anglicans in a number of key (if perhaps stereotyped) areas of Black Christianity: religious origins, worship, music, preaching, rites of passage etc. The recurring messages in the responses are for authenticity, commitment and depth in faith, practice and spirituality.

Using these resources of background, experience and voices the author lists five areas for future transformation with the Church: Black people claiming Black inheritance; White people responding to this new found voice; changes in Churches at national level; changes locally; and the effect on theological education. In all these areas Wilkinson uses five tests of Black Christianity which he refers to as plumblines.

Wilkinson connects the issues of White ministry and a Black congregation in a British location, specifically the Church of England – issues I face in my examination of my particular parish situation. It is this area of the development of Black theology and the religious experience of Black Christians in Britain to which we must now turn.

Postcolonial Confidence

Jagessar and Reddie contend that to a certain extent all Black theology in Britain is postcolonial:

> Black British theology's birth is tied to British colonialism and Black presence in Britain as a result of these encounters. Black theologians have been rereading and rewriting biblical/theological texts in the Empire's own frontyard. The implication is that Black British theology has been, in a number of ways, postcolonial from the inception.'
> (Jagessar and Reddie 2007b, p xvii)

Postcolonial is here used as a term borrowed from other disciplines and applied to theology in recognition of the 'cultural, political and economic facts of colonialism' (Sugirtharajah, 2007, p xvi). The gulf between the White hegemony of both colonial and postcolonial Britain and the oppression, struggle and resilience of the Black 'subjects' of this rule form the heart of British Black theological discourse.

Much Black theology in Britain has been caricatured or simplified by the predominantly White denominations with a reluctance to engage with both its diversity and its message of liberation as much for the White Christian as for the Black. Indeed one of the aims of Jagessar and Reddie's book, '*Postcolonial Black British Theology'*, is to provide a showcase for a growing and diverse community of Black theologians which can feed into the debate on liberation theology in Britain in general.

But this debate gets off to a questionable start with the previous Archbishop of York, John Habgood's statement that 'liberation theology does not yet seem to be easily applicable in Britain' (quoted as the title of an article by Tony Haynes, 2007). Perhaps the un-readiness of Britain lies in the fact that for many people issues of racism within the church and in society are seen as vital topics for discussion and for the working through of methods to combat such obvious discrimination but to go further than this and to positively encourage integration and the valuing of Black presence is just more difficult. As Haynes puts it, 'the English society is not one that looks favourably on integration, but, rather, is keen on assimilation.' (Haynes 2007, p95). But in ignoring the identity, individuality and provenance of those to be 'assimilated' the Christian community cannot tolerate such a crushing of human dignity, as Thorley says, 'assimilation sucks, inclusion is all' (Thorley, 2004, p61). And this is the challenge facing the traditionally White-led denominations in Britain; 'the Church no longer finds it difficult to reject the suggestion that Black people are inferior, but it is the affirming of their unique value that does not come naturally or easily' (Haynes, 2007, p96).

The listening to and reflection upon the experience of the Black community within the churches of Britain is highlighted by Joe Aldred in his article, 'Paradigms for a Black Theology in Britain' (1999). Aldred uses biblical examples to draw out similarities of experience amongst today's British Black Christians. Together with reflections on Hispanic and South African Black theology, he is able to construct a liberation theology rooted in the reality of Black experience within Britain. Elsewhere Aldred presents and evaluates this religious and cultural capital within the African Caribbean Christian community to again provide the foundations of a new stronger and unapologetic Black British identity.

Aldred sees this development of theology as timely and the result of a growing expressive confidence within the Christian Black community, as opposed to the waiting and yearning which characterised the previous generation. Novette Thomson (1995, p157) compares this waiting to that of a 'labouring woman' and Paul's use of 'eager longing' in Romans 8.19.

Anglican Voices

But is perhaps the work of Lorraine Dixon and David Isiorho within the Church of England that provides the best analysis for my particular situation. Much is written in American Black theology from a variety of denominations although still less from the Episcopal background than others. In Britain the work of Beckford and Reddie reflect the Black theology from Pentecostal and Methodist traditions respectively but there is only a small but developing reflection of Black Anglican experience in England that is producing what might be called Black British Anglican theology. Perhaps this scarcity might be related to the relative lack of Black leadership (both lay and ordained) within the Church of England [see Church of England 2007]. The report seeks to address the problem of the lack of valuing and inclusion of ethnic minority members of the Church of England in its life and suggests that the Church is poorer because of it.

Dixon's article on identity and belonging in the Church of England (2000) begins with a personal reflection on her experience of growing up within the church and how she reacted to her feelings of exclusion or difference. In this her reflection resonates with the stories of other marginalised groups and their desire to assimilate before gaining confidence of identity to demand acceptance on their own grounds. From these teenage memories through to her relationship with the church today Dixon outlines the ways in which the Black identity within the mainstream churches remained hidden, or unacknowledged and yet resilient and a resource for survival. Some White commentators might ask why Black people stayed within the congregations of such churches where their religious identity and needs were largely unfulfilled. But as Dixon and others point out, Anglicanism was and is the home denomination for both African and African-Caribbean Christians: the Church of England can all to easily overlook the reality of the Anglican Communion's expression in the various overseas Provinces as well as make assumptive generalisations that Black African Caribbean Christians will be predominantly from the charismatic churches such as the Church of God of Prophecy or Pentecostal. The rejection, or at best cold reception, of Black worshippers within the mainstream churches in the 1950s and 60s (see Wilkinson 1994, Leech, 1988) was influenced by a stereotyping of Christian faith as well as pure racism.

But the particular denomination can become, and indeed is, 'home':

> We are written out because we are perceived not to matter or have significance, we have not taken or been given power. We need to reclaim our stories, our inheritance, our place in time and space, ultimately our healing. We have chosen to remain in these churches, many of us feel called by God to remain, to be an irritant. … We have a right to be in them and no matter what, we remain. Perseverance and faithfulness are indeed valued traits of the Christian's walk in the Spirit. (Dixon 2000, p36)

This perseverance, even through being an 'irritant', can produce a transformative effect on the Church's self-identity: 'The sacrament of Black presence has sought to herald a realized vision of freedom, equality and change for all.' (Dixon, 2000, p37)

Dixon shares with David Isiorho the view that it is not enough for the Church of England to fit the needs of its Black members into its system but rather that 'the Church of England will have to interrogate its self-identity, its essentialist nature as English' (Dixon 2002, 51). In areas such as worship and prayer, teaching and nurture, evangelism and outreach, and justice and care, Isiorho, a Black Anglican priest, makes recommendation that the church, 'stops talking about Black participation for this denotes Black people fitting into a White organization', instead it is involvement that is the key concept: 'the concept of involvement suggests a partnership and some convergence of perspective' (Isiorho 2007, p71) This concept of involvement is also at the heart of James White's argument that until Black and White experiences of life within the church are equal and equitable, then there can not be a genuine response to the call for Black leadership within White denominations (White 1979).

Isiorho's observations are backed up by his surveying of Black marginality through focus groups within the Church of England (Isiorho, 2004) which builds on his PhD thesis which outlines ways in which the Black presence can help the church develop a 'new understanding of English ethnicity [that] can revolutionise the Church of England into a biblical, prophetic and inclusive community.' (Isiorho 1989)

Conclusion: Engagement and Application

Within Black theology there are strands that resonate with the three themes of parish, hospitality and the Black Christian presence which I identified at the beginning of this work. But what about putting this into practice? How do the voices of Black British theology influence and effect change within the churches and especially in the analysis of my own situation?

As I demonstrated earlier, Black theology sees itself as a liberation theology and liberation theology must be seen as a branch of practical theology in that according to one definition:

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

If the voices of Black theology provide the critical reflection then how does the necessary participation and redemption take place for the churches? Both Reddie and Beckford begin to address this gap between the theological reflection of Black theology and the ways in which Black (and White) Christians can affect the structures of the denominations. It is in particular the work of Anthony Reddie that I discuss later for it is he who concentrates on how the educative process can change the form of Black theology into the reality of practice.

At its most basic level, liberation theology is a theology of hope and it is this transformative nature of sharing and airing stories that Mukti Barton uses to write her own liberation theology from rejection through resistance to resurrection (Barton, 2005). The same story-telling technique and the sharing of personal and collective memory is used also by Westfield (2001) who, in her book 'Dear Sisters', explores the sacramental nature of conversations held between Black women often in survival against the male as well as White hegemony of society. This womanist approach was taken up from a British viewpoint by Toppin (2006) in her personal sharing of meals and a critical reflection on the film 'Soul Food'. Hospitality, service and generosity are the positive side of ministerial servanthood that has, for Black people, a more sinister history. Through revisiting the biblical and theological notions of servanthood, Grant (1999) attempts to redeem servanthood theology through a womanist exploration.

These ideas of servanthood (particularly sacrificial service and generosity) within Black theology are made apparent in the differing approaches to community involvement and missionary outreach between Black and White congregations. As Whiteside (1977, p56) puts it, there is a 'mutual burden bearing, sharing, and helping one another among black people. Younger, more affluent black families … tend to lose this concern for others of their people. But … when prosperity comes their way, they are bound to help their less fortunate neighbours.'

The literature investigating this is almost exclusively American (Cavendish, 2000, Chaves and Higgins, 1992, Brown 2006) and implies a greater community awareness and involvement amongst Black congregations. And yet, given my own particular context, I am keen to ask to what extent the ideas of servanthood, diaconal ministry and the Black experience I have outlined here have moulded congregations in Britain. Apart from a study by Doreen McCalla of the Church of God of Prophecy in Britain (a Black-led denomination), there is a vacuum of study around the generosity of outreach among Black parish congregations within White-led denominations.

Black liberation theology and the experience of Black congregations within the Church of England (and other mainstream White-led denominations) is often characterized by the stronger action of resilience rather than survival. This resilience at the local congregational or parish level has consequences for the wider Church. The working out of identity amongst both Black and White members of Anglican congregations mimics the struggle within the wider Anglican Communion in terms of history and culture and their interaction with contemporary issues of globalization in a world of greater migration. The parish as the local, geographical manifestation of Christian presence and service is fertile ground for these explorations. In its urban multicultural expression, where on a Sunday 'clergy conducting services … look out on the world church in their pews' (Sichel 2004, p14), the local church demonstrates that in its diversity and immediate interaction with these issues of race, theology and postcolonial religion it is discovering its ministry in new and radical ways that ultimately inform the wider Christian world:

> While challenging the reshaping of the geography of power, the Christian faith is lived through presence(s), through communities that include, strengthen and give integrity to those at the margins. Local pastoral praxis becomes simultaneously global political praxis. (Davey 2001, p39)

From approaches to pastoral care to the adaptation and development of appropriate liturgy to reflect this new realisation of the family of God's people (Jagessar and Burns 2007), the local church works through the tensions of what it means to be a Black or a White Anglican within a postcolonial Church of England.

Anthony Reddie: Pioneer Practical Black Theologian

The voices of Black theology provide the critical reflection on Black religious experience and Black spirituality as apparent in British churches today. If this is the case then how does the necessary participation in this Black theology, and the redemption that it seeks to affect, take place for the churches?

This is the question I asked when outlining the development of Black theology in Britain and its usefulness as a tool in my own particular situation. In the discipline of Black theology in Britain it is both Anthony Reddie and Robert Beckford who in their writing begin to bridge this gap between the theological reflection of Black theology and the ways in which Black (and White) Christians can affect the structures of the denominations. I now discuss Reddie's work which concentrates on how the educative process can change the form of Black theology into the reality of practice.

Bridging the Gap

Relating academic or theoretical theology (by which I mean the Christian and secular professional study of Christian theology in the academe) to the living experience of Christian believers and the church communities to which they relate has always been an area of conflict for ministers and educators within the Church. This is not a one-way concern merely questioning how the teaching of the academic elite may be brought to the ordinary Christian through application and absorption. It is a dialogue between those who create theology and those who live by (or perhaps under) theology. Indeed it is not as simple as this may first seem as it is the question of 'who does the theology' that beckons the follow up: where does theology come from?

The tensions arising from these questions are at the heart of Anthony Reddie's pioneering work in Black theology. Unlike other contributors to the Black theology scene in Britain, such as Joe Aldred and Robert Beckford, it is Reddie who analyses and uses the work of other Black theologians and educational theorists in order to move the theological process from being simply an academic and professional method into a tool of liberative, transformative education for the ordinary Black person. Indeed Reddie goes further than this for, in liberating Black Christians this 'Black Christian education of liberation', as he terms it (2003b) also forms a new liberation for White Christians too. The extent to which techniques for liberation education can be distilled from Black theology are reflected in Reddie's own description of the process as one of democratization: referring to his particular methodology of dramatizing theologies (to which I will return later), Reddie calls it, 'a participative approach to Black God-talk for all people; whether those without power or for individuals or groups who have too much of it for their own good. A democratizing of theology can only be good for all of us. This bottom-up process of liberative praxis can contribute to the revitalizing of the church' (2006c, p190).

In this brief introductory comment I have concentrated on Reddie's contribution to Black Christian education for it is this that I believe is the hallmark of all of his work. Even his later works, which move away from the distinctly education-based material of his earlier publications, are committed to the cause of making Black theology known and distilling the theory of Black theology widely so that it may be of use and practical for the ordinary Christian – Black *and* White. Practical, as in something functional and useful, is a word which summarises much of Reddie's work, a word he uses himself in describing his own pioneering work on Black Christian education from a British perspective [1998] as 'the practical and applied arm of Black theology' (2006b, p113).

Is Black Theology Practical Theology?

Having looked at the development of Black theology as a discipline particularly in Britain and attempted a definition of Black theology as a liberation theology, I now ask this new question for two reasons. Firstly, in order to find out which process of theological exploration takes priority in Reddie's writing. I am convinced it is not easy to or possible to answer this question for it is clear from his works that his own experience as a Black British Christian is the foundation for his exploration of how Black theology might be practically applied to the life and experiences of the churches. On this level Reddie is a Black man using his own particular understanding and contribution to Black theology to engage in a process of practical theology. But how then in this sense can the discipline of practical theology be understood?

Secondly in asking this question specifically about the work of Reddie I am enquiring whether all liberation theologies (and therefore from my earlier argument all Black theology) are by definition part of practical theology? By bringing together these three areas of Black theology, transformative education and liberative theology, Reddie's work becomes a useful focus for a critical exploration of Reddie as a key voice in the field of practical theology.

Practical theology?

In Reddie's definition of Black Christian education as a 'practical and applied arm of Black theology' (2006b, p113) he equates practical with applied as a descriptive term for the type of theology he writes. But is applied theology the same as practical theology? In the eyes of purists practical theology (with its simplistic definition of being theology applied to a particular circumstance) is not in fact a theological discipline at all:

> For some, practical theology is not a real theological discipline. It is about practice. Its task is to teach people 'how' to operate in a given situation. The scholarly critical questions of 'why?' or 'whether?' tend to be missing. It is really only training, learning how to apply an already established belief. Practical theology therefore is not an open enquiry but a churchly activity (Ballard & Pritchard 2006, p11).

But to simply equate practical theology with applied theology is to ignore the tension that lies between the two fields of academic theology and the 'churchy activity' of Christian experience. There are many reasons why the application of theology is simply not that easy, not least because of the clash of the cultures of the source and the end-user. It is in particular this understanding of the culture of most hitherto received theology (as White, patriarchal and Eurocentric) that Reddie unpacks in the solid introductions to all his works. This he extends to material for Christian education:

> [The] majority of current … material available in Britain, from whatever theological or denominational background, carries within it the experiences and "world view" of its writers. It also says something about those people who will most readily relate to the material. Most … is written by, and largely for, white middle class people. These existing materials do not intend to be exclusive, but they remain so, because the way in which the Christian faith is expressed, portrayed and understood is mainly from a white, eurocentric perspective. (Reddie 1998a, p4)

In fact it is not just that theology cannot or should not be applied directly to situations in order create a ready to use 'practical theology', it is a dangerous and destructive method. For Black people in particular (as for other oppressed groups) it leads to the absorption of, and oppression by, images of God and self which fail to validate or recognise the struggles, shared experience and spirituality of Black peoples.

It is worth noting at this point that Black experience is not homogenous. Although there is to some extent a shared history, and shared religious contemporary experience of life within Britain, it is a diverse, pluralistic existence in theological terms as much as in any other sphere and to distil Black experience, religious or otherwise, into a unified cause is to do an injustice of paternalism and condescension (see Reddie 2006c, p10-22).

It is in this creative tension between the worlds of author and reader, of academic theologian and the lived-out experience of Christian faith, that the discipline of practical theology as a way of doing God-talk (Reddie 2003c, p39) comes to life. It is Swinton and Mowat's definition of this place of interaction that best describes the form of practical theology subscribed to by Reddie:

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

Using this definition the 'practices of the Church' are both the theory laden theologies of Church and academy, *as well as* the day to day practice, however unorthodox, of Christians (either as individuals or as local church communities). So this is the first creative tension as a place for

practical theology. Added to this is the interaction 'with the practices of the world' (which for us in this study must represent the experience of Black people living in a racist White British society). This is a second space for the performance of practical theology, thus Reddie's significant work in producing a Black Christian education of liberation is grounded in the arena of practical theology.

In all of this it is clear that experience (accepted as the authentic starting point of Black theology) is the informer of theology and not visa-versa. Practical theology is the theorisation of Christian practice, and it is, as Graham notes 'an interpretative discipline enabling faith-communities to give a public and critical account of their performative-truth claims. It attempts to capture glimpses of Divine activity amidst human practice.' (Graham 2000, p113).

Praxis and Transformative Practice

Ballard and Pritchard outline four models for practical theology; applied theory, critical correlation, praxis and the habitus/virtue model, describing the praxis model as 'a reflection on practice' that 'arises from committed action [and] underlines that faith is essentially a transformative activity, serving the manifestation of the kingdom' (Ballard & Pritchard 2006, p57). Later they develop the praxis model in particular with reference to the pastoral cycle of experience, exploration, reflection and action, for use as a tool in practical theology. Popularised in the 1960s by the liberation theologians in Latin America, a commentary on this model is beyond this work, but it is clear from their analysis that Reddie's method of doing Black Christian theology of liberation uses this tool. The 'basic principles', as opposed to processes, of the Pastoral Cycle are listed as: theology coming out of shared experience, theology is done from below, theology is dialogue, and theology draws on the tradition (Ballard & Pritchard 2006, p87ff). It is these principles that form the marks of practical theology as undertaken by Reddie in his works. In '*Dramatizing Theologies'* Reddie develops these processes distinctively through his participative approach, allowing theology to be created 'from the bottom up' (Reddie 2006c, p128ff)'.

According to the definition given earlier an inherent characteristic of practical theology is its engagement with the practices of the church and the world which enable 'faithful participation in God's redemptive practices in, to and for the world' (Swinton & Mowat 2006, p6). To be redemptive implies that the reflective action, the practical theology must bring with it a change of some kind. Whether this change is personal or corporate, spiritual or tangible, transformation is at the heart of practical theology. (Ballard and Pritchard 2006, p167) argue that it is the spiritual transformation which is the key measure of effectiveness of any other change, cognitive, behavioural, social or otherwise.) As practice informs theory, so the new theory enables new practice. Thus the cycle is completed (and continues) and change is inevitable.

That Reddie sees transformation as crucial, not just to his practical application of Black theology to Christian education, but to the discipline of Black theology itself, is clear.

> Practical theology is essentially a continuing dialogue between the many ways in which people think about God, and how these ideas and forms of understanding are practised, i.e., it is a dialogue between theory and practice. A natural feature of this approach to the relationship between the theory and practice of theology (i.e. 'practical theology') is the presence of what is often termed 'theological reflection'. In using this term we are talking of the ways in which ideas about God are investigated (the term 'interrogate' is often used) in the hope that what emerges from this process is a model of learning *that will be liberating for Black people*.' (Reddie 2003c, p4 *my italics)*

As I discussed earlier, Black theology is not simply a reflective theology, or even just an experiential theology. It is by definition a liberation theology and as such must always engender change and transformation.

Subversive and Challenging

With change and transformation come challenges. When James Cone's seminal work on Black theology was first published [1969] it took the academic world by surprise. His later work (1970, 1975) continued his revolutionary and radical critique of White theology and society. It was Paulo Freire who, commenting in his foreword to a later edition of one of Cone's books, said that Cone's Black theology would make some readers feel 'chilled by their anger, others will tremble with fear' (Cone 2004, p ix). Black theologians, both in the United States and in Britain, acknowledge freely that the liberation and challenging message of Black theology is set to question and breakdown the inherited White, Eurocentric hegemonic assumptions of the western Christian tradition.

Reddie acknowledges the subversive nature of Black theology. The roots of Black theology (especially postcolonial British Black theology, 'lie in the counter-oppressive struggles of Black peoples in the Americas, the Caribbean, Asia and Britain to challenge the worst excesses of oppressive Christian inspired supremacist practices through a radical reinterpretation of the central tenets of the Christian faith.' (Jagessar & Reddie 2007b, p xiv). It is precisely this 'radical reinterpretation of the central tenets of the Christian faith' that challenges and threatens the (White) establishment. Not only does the rise of Black theology challenge traditional theology it also weakens it. Reddie continues,

> the roots of Black theology can be found in the radical and subversive reinterpretation of Christianity by Black slaves in the so-called New World, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Black people, having being exposed to the tendentious Christian education of the exploitative planter class in the Americas and the Caribbean began to 'steal away' from beneath the close confines of their slave masters to worship God in their own existential spaces (Jagessar & Reddie 2007b, p xiv).

The assumption that Black slaves simply absorbed the religion of their White masters is thus challenged. From the outset a practical theology was being enacted by Black people; a practical theology of the interpretation of daily experience in relation to the theory of Christianity given through the White education process.

It is not surprising that such practical theology produces challenge. Ballard and Pritchard, in talking again about the pastoral cycle and the importance of completing all the stages of the process, note, 'the cycle must reach a particular outcome in practical action. Practical theology is never an abstract and disembodied enterprise; it always, to use the phrase of James Whitehead, moves 'towards some graceful action'. Of course the grace in this action may not be comfortable' (Ballard & Pritchard 2006, p162 quoting Whitehead 1987).

In Britain the work of Robert Beckford is perhaps the most visible Black theology. Described as 'iconoclastic' (Jagessar & Reddie 2007a, p82) Beckford's influential books frame a 'consistent apologetic for the development of a Pentecostal inspired approach to Black liberation theology that is informed by Black popular cultures and the Diasporan routes of the Black Atlantic. […] we recognize that his literary canon continues to argue for the conscientized re-reading of the Christian tradition in light of Black Diasporan existential experience for the ultimate purposes of liberation and systematic, social transformation' (Jagessar & Reddie 2007a, p83)

Democratizing theology

Despite the demanding nature of engagement with Beckford's work, he remains the most evaluated of British Black theologians. Jagessar and Reddie suggest that this might result from his 'otherness' in terms of being Pentecostal (traditionally a Black-led denomination in Britain) rather than the mainstream Anglican, Methodist and United Reformed Churches (Jagessar and Reddie 2007a, p xix). The threat to their received theology and status being somewhat dampened by its non-White denominational source.

But the difficult challenge of Black theology is not simply a matter for White Christians. The radical and academic nature of much Black theology creates a sense of alienation amongst the Black Christian community too. Rather than a cultural barrier of race, there is a more complex obstacle. A lack of validation of Black experience and a low confidence within the Black Christian churches, combined with the systematic denigration of Black people over the centuries, makes the process of a Black Christian education of liberation, one which is not readily embraced. The Black theology of Cone and Beckford may be alien to the received (and sometimes treasured) religious language of Black Christians formed within a White-supremacist society and Church. Whereas a Black spirituality or religious experience may exist inwardly, the outward display and naming of such a theology would be denied (see Reddie 1998a, p6).

It is ironic that a Black theology of liberation might find it hard to break away from the academic arena and into the mainstream. Reddie notes that 'one of the continuing weaknesses of Black Theology in Britain has been its difficulty in converting theoretical and epistemological insights into the practical service of Black people, the majority of whom reside outside the academy' (2003a, p53).

In order to overcome the joint stumbling blocks of low confidence and disempowerment through indoctrination, Reddie seeks to interpret and create Black theology from the bottom up. Giving the voiceless a voice, not just of the Black theological body, but *of their own*. As we saw earlier, Reddie clearly sees the process of education for liberation as one of democratizing theology, of reworking the methods of doing theology so that it becomes the tool of ordinary Black people rather than the elite. This enabling the local church to do theology in such a way as to re-enact and influence that done elsewhere by academic Black theologians allows theology to be 'intelligible' (Schreiter 1997) to local communities.

Anthony Reddie's writing

As we have seen earlier Reddie's primary application of Black theology is in the field of a Black Christian education of liberation. This application of practical theology to Black theology in order to communicate its liberative message is the hallmark of his style and it is to his work that we must now turn.

> There is no doubt that Anthony Reddie is the most prolific, creative and committed Black British theologian. To date, his eight volumes, numerous articles, essays and editorial leadership of *Black Theology: An International Journal* reflect the amazing combination of scholar, researcher, teacher and practitioner in Black theological discourse on a still White-dominated theological landscape. […] While [he] engages members of the academia, [he] adeptly unpacks complex theological issues for ordinary readers. (Jagessar & Reddie 2007a, p191)

Many of Reddies' articles track the development of significant themes in his work which then become part of the broader picture represented by his books. It is striking how much of these articles are reworked (and often lifted from his books) in order to gain a greater audience; the inter-disciplinary nature of his writing allows for his work to contribute to a range of fields including theology, ministerial education, social studies and educational theory. It will be useful to provide a chronological and developmental overview of his writing before a specific analysis of the themes and methods.

'Growing into Hope', Reddie's first publication (1998a, 1998b), is a pioneering piece of work which produced a Christian education syllabus for multi-ethnic churches. In two volumes and covering the major seasons of the Christian liturgical year, Reddie provides Britain's first consciously Black-

aimed education programme. The piloting of the material and the analysis of its development (1998c, 1999) were the foundation of his PhD thesis at the University of Birmingham which was completed in 2000.

It was this innovative and influential work on Black Christian education that became his third book, '*Faith, Stories and the Experience of Black Elders'* (2001). Here Reddie continued his development of the processes of Black Christian education and broadened the age range from the mainly child and teenage focus of '*Growing into Hope'* to include the voices of Black elders. In an article for the British Journal of Religious Education (2002) Reddie was able to bring together the work of his first three books and PhD in a way which summarises this first stage in his work. In his book, '*Nobodies to Somebodies'* (2003b) Reddie provides a systematic commentary on his development of a Black Christian education of liberation.

The fifth of Reddie's books, '*Acting in Solidarity'* (2005a) marks a transition in style and performance. This transition is one which moves his work on from the development of resources for Black Christian education towards a new way of performing Black theology through the oral tradition of sharing and dramatizing stories of faith. This is Reddie's first major use of dramatic sketches as a tool for engaging theologically with issues surrounding Black liberation and Black spirituality. The use of drama introduces the second stage of Reddie's work and a more radical approach [see Dixon 2006] to his practical theology of an education of liberation.

It is through his development of this dramatic and participative approach to doing Black God-talk that Reddie 'attempts to create a more inclusive and accessible method to enable theological reflection with Black lay people in Britain' (2005b, p16), juxtaposing Christian drama with action research methods of learning 'in order to create a liberating praxis for theological reflection.' (2005b, p16). The culmination of this research is contained in '*Dramatizing Theologies'* (2006c) – the subtitle of which, '*a participative approach to Black God-talk'*, encapsulates the method and style of this second stage of Reddie's writing.

The third and latest collection of work from Reddie centres still on the communicating of Black theology to a greater audience but moving away from the Christian education field. Through three distinct yet related works, '*Black Theology in Transatlantic Dialogue'* (2006b), '*Black Theology in Britain: a reader'* (2007a) and '*Postcolonial Black British Theology'* (2007b) Reddie (together with his colleague Michael Jagessar in the latter two volumes) brings together a collection of Black theology methods, themes and people. The first of these works creates a dialogue between Black theology in the United States and in Britain. Outlining the development of the discipline, the contribution of Womanist theology and his own education work and the role of '*Black Theology: an International Journal'*, Reddie concludes by looking forward to the future possibilities for Black theology in Britain.

Because of the sheer amount of his writing as well as the pioneering approach to Black theology through drama and education there is understandably a great deal of Reddie's work in the two co-

edited collections (Jagessar & Reddie 2007a, 2007b). At times there is a jarring of tone between the way in which Reddie's works are brought to the fore (as the most prolific writer and co-editor of the book) and the more well-known material of Robert Beckford is then also given similar attributions of importance. The tension may be related to the areas in which they site themselves: Beckford described as occupying 'the dialectical nexus between normative Caribbean British Pentecostalism and the so-called mainstream of White theological liberalism' (Jagessar & Reddie 2007a, p83) contrasts with the person of Reddie, a British Methodist. One stands outside his tradition and the other chooses to work within; both lead within their particular and different fields of Black theology in Britain.

Themes and methods

I have identified three phases within Reddie's work: developing a Christian education of liberation, utilisation of drama as participative theology, and the broader communication of Black theology. Within all these phases and within each book and article there are groupings of themes which emerge to unite Reddie's work. I have recognized four themes within his work which, in their developmental style, echo the phases in his work that I have already identified. The first three themes I am calling, 'know who you are', 'confidence' and 'ways and means'. The fourth theme is a 'challenge for change' and as such I will consider it later as a conclusion in that it collects all three themes together and challenges me as a reader of this material, in relation to my area of research and indeed it demands the consideration of the larger White Christian community.

'Know who you are'

We begin with this theme most obviously as a starter since knowing one's starting point is crucial to the understanding of any theology. In almost every text, article or book, Reddie introduces the reader to a relevant personal history. He lays out to his readers all that he brings to his arguments in terms of parentage, birthplace, childhood, denominational allegiance, culture and more. The extent of the 'history' is dependent on the nature of the work but nevertheless it is a required starting point for understanding the theological reflection and processes that follow. Reddie admits to the 'subjective narrative' (2006c, p6) that will inevitably be a part of practical theology such as he writes but the background information not only introduces Reddie to the reader, but encourages the reader to immediately compare and contrast her own background and situation. A dialogue has been created.

Perhaps the most striking example of this is in his first works, '*Growing into Hope'*. No doubt because these volumes are aimed towards the educators and leaders who will be putting his material into use, there is a detailed introduction, complete with exercises, to the ways in which background, worldview and culture can inhibit or colour (sic) the way in which theology (or any other discipline) is produced and presented. There is a dual call within this material; some of it is about the honesty of acknowledging what negatives are brought to the dialogue by the writer

and/or reader, and some is about naming the positive, and yet often overlooked or silenced, resources that Black people can bring to this conversation.

Amongst the negative, and painful, issues for Black readers are the way in which denial becomes a common survival feature amongst Black people in order to fit in to a situation. Through his classic 'meal test' where he invites participants to choose between a favourite (and personal) or a standard (and 'acceptable') meal, Reddie discusses the tendency amongst oppressed communities to distinguish (and live between) the formal behaviour which is considered acceptable and the preferred, informal (and natural) behaviour which may be viewed as embarrassing (Reddie 1998a, p6-7).

This is a continuing theme for Reddie and is highlighted again in a later work when he notes the tension between what he calls Black religiosity and White orthodoxy (2003c, p18); the balance between acceptable and unacceptable, between expected and preferred. Reddie also uses this theme to acknowledge the way in which Black people have often internalised the cultural and social correlations of black equating with ugly, or evil, or moral and spiritual darkness (2003c, p24-26).

But positively there is a concentration on the importance of faith and spirituality (Reddie 2001), Black culture, and Afrocentricity (although not without a critique of its essentialist approach which can 'impose a rigid strait-jacket of homogeneity' (Reddie 2002, p9)).

'Confidence'

In the first theme, Reddie encourages the reader to understand or at least acknowledge her world in order to comprehend his work. In doing so the reader is also encouraged to understand her own world and begin to enter the world of the 'other'. This engagement both with self and other builds confidence and this is the second theme which I have identified.

Acknowledging and naming the cultural understanding (and difference) of Black Christians makes for a validation of an otherwise silent or unrecognised experience. This validation, or authentication, empowers the Black Christian to move from existence within and collusion to White religious structures towards liberation. Indeed identifying this collusion is a key priority in overcoming oppression. Just as Black Christians may collude with supremacist White structures, so the received (white) theology colludes with notions of Black inferiority – an indoctrination sometimes supported by the state (Reddie 2002, p7).

This move towards liberation that I highlighted above is key to the process of doing theology from the ground up. Reddie sees liberation through education as a way of increasing self-esteem and challenging oppression, 'the importance of Christian education, as a corrective to the ongoing psychological denial of the Black self, cannot be overstated. Christian education directed towards people of African descent must assert the importance of self-esteem' (Reddie 2003c, p146). Liberation sources self-esteem and self-esteem produces confidence.

But confidence is not merely the ability to use and affirm what is natural (for example the adoption of 'Black English' as a language for theology (Reddie 2003c, p78)) but it is also the source from which power to challenge and act comes. This power might well be harnessed through cathartic rage (Reddie 2006c, p21), a concept developed from Beckford's '*God of the Rahtid'* (Beckford 2001).

It is this confidence that enables perhaps the most important stage of the liberation process – that of action. In the sketch 'We know best' (Reddie 2006c, p14-19) Reddie uses the righteous rage of the oppressed to confront the assumed superiority and inherent racism of a group of White men who seek to justify their withdrawal of funding from a particular (fictional) project. Amongst the many themes of this particular sketch is the challenge of the assumption that those in power (here they are White men) 'know best' of how to speak on behalf of those they claim to help. The confidence of the woman in contending this notion not only surprises the powerful but questions their power. These examples of non-malicious trickery (the 'tricksters' of Beckford's work in '*Jesus Dub'* (Beckford 2006)) create an inversion which confronts White supremacy and locates Black power. A Black theology may do the same.

Within this sketch the White powerful men who claim to understand, do so partly through a desire of good intention. Reddie takes up this theme as well but I wish to consider this as part of my conclusion later.

'Ways and means'

The introduction of a sketch as a method of performing theology is possibly the most notable characteristic of Anthony Reddie's work. Although he is not the first or the only theologian or educator to use drama as a tool for participating in theology (a tradition which he charts in '*Dramatizing Theologies'* (Reddie 2006b, p33-61)), he certainly pioneers this within a Black theological framework. The related, but distinct, processes of drama and the oral tradition are for Reddie the process and method by which his own style of practical theology engages with Christian education. This is what I term here the 'ways and means'.

The importance of using the oral as opposed to the textual approach for liberative education was vital to Reddie's work, although, 'the shift from written curriculum to oral-based approaches was to prove something of a struggle' (Reddie 2001, p30). But such an approach not only increased participation: it opened up a new inter-generational aspect to this approach to liberative education.

In many ways a conversational or oral approach to both gathering experiences and theological reflection was a pragmatic one, not simply for the work with the children's syllabus of '*Growing into Hope'* (1998a, 1998b) but with the later youth and adult centred work of '*Dramatizing Theologies'* (2006c). But alongside this pragmatic approach was a considered appropriation of the methodologies of various educators, most notably, Jerome Berryman and the notion of Godly Play (Reddie 2003c, p94), the liberation educationalist Paulo Freire (Reddie 2003c, p81ff) and Grant

Shockley, whom Reddie describes as ‘a prolific apologist for a Black Christian education of liberation’ (Reddie 2003c, p47).

Drama and the oral tradition both allow for a deep engagement with the material of religious experience and theology. In talking about it, in performing it, in participating in the dialogue the theology of liberation becomes performative: it self-authenticates by validating the shared experiences and produces a sense that the strength of personal experience and spirituality can be a force against oppression (May-Parker, 2002, p79).

Participative observation which is central to the dramatizing technique and inherent within the oral tradition enables theology to become inclusive and empowering; it challenges the (White) norms of theology and education by providing an antidote to the lack of action and impetus for change within the White hegemony. Reddie describes this method as a ‘theology of dramatic engagement’ (Reddie 2006c, p162ff). In performing and relating to a sketch entitled, ‘My God!?’ Reddie invites participants to use this theology of dramatic engagement to de- and re-construct their image of God. The ways and means, Reddie’s methodology of both creating and doing this liberative education ‘democratizes’ (Reddie 2006c, p190) theology in its ability to engage with Black, White, literate, non-literate, and the scholar and the ordinary person.

Conclusion: Challenge for Change

The challenging of assumptions, made or held, about the Black communities’ needs is perhaps at the heart of Reddie’s development of a Black Christian education of liberation. It is not simply a matter for Black or White communities, but for both in slightly different ways. Returning to the analysis of the drama, ‘Who knows best’ mentioned earlier, Reddie comments about the two Black characters (who are challenging the White men’s abolition of a group:

> If the two Black characters are speaking with the cognizance of others then their discourse in this context is naturally imbued with a marked sense of mutuality and collegiality. If not (which I believe to be the case), then their discourse is a possibly presumptuous and somewhat detached form of rhetoric that reveals echoes of the kind of assumptions made by their White adversaries. This dilemma lies at the heart of this research. Can Black Liberation theologians exhibit greater levels of engagement and mutuality with poor Black marginalized and oppressed people, which go beyond notions of tokenism, paternalism and condescension? (Reddie 2006c, p22)

This ‘dilemma’ (here concerned with Black engagement) is the dilemma too for me as a White minister within a White denomination struggling to engage with a Black majority congregation. A genuine desire for anti-racism is only the first (and easier) stage of inclusion. Too often the anti-racist rhetoric of Churches and congregations fail to move beyond the legalistic or social levels of nicety to real engagement and participation which brings about change. Reddie calls this ‘theology

of good intentions' the failure 'to deal with the systematic and structural underpinning that gives rise and fosters racial injustice' because 'White power, both individual and corporate, is content to simply apologize and 'say sorry' as if these words are infused with magic properties' (Reddie 2006c, p162). A theology of good intentions is 'a way of responding to the oppressed and powerless, by refusing to take the experiences or perspectives of these people seriously' (Reddie 2003c, p154).

Reddie touches on the important role of the minister in the process of engagement both within Black congregations and between Black and White members. He describes three 'typologies' of ministers, which in essence describe three levels of engagement (Reddie 2003c, p120f). Given the argument that my Whiteness disqualifies me from the ultimate level of engagement, Reddie's process of a Black Christian education for liberation challenges me to seek appropriate levels of awareness, repentance and engagement that benefit Black and White members of the church. I am left asking, 'how?'

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Part B: Section 2

Publishable Article

Ministry in Black and White[96]

This article stems from a desire to make sense of the ways in which my approach to ministry has changed and developed in the past seven years or so because of my growing awareness of my Whiteness as a minister in a majority Black congregation.[97] There has been no sudden moment or particular event which has given rise to this article but rather a realisation, following reflection on my situation and my differing approaches to ministry, that I have directly and indirectly altered my patterns of leadership and ministry. These alterations have ranged from the direct approaches I have made to change the way I do things by seeking out resources to inform my ministry, to the more indirect, but no less focussed ways in which, through reflection on practice, I have become more conscious of the manner in which I perform certain roles within ministry. That there was no sudden realisation of difference or moment of clarity whereby my Whiteness became an issue is interesting for two distinct reasons. Firstly, as we shall see, the study and self-awareness of Whiteness is a relatively new area within the social sciences and certainly not a strong theme within practical and pastoral theology. Secondly it is only from a systematic reflection on other more noticeable areas of my ministry that I was then able to build up a realisation of the importance of acknowledging the factor of racial awareness and difference.[98]

Parish: place and race

The parish of which I am Priest-in-Charge is an urban parish exhibiting the typical social, economic and demographic factors that one might expect to associate with an inner city community. I have been in post for over seven years, having previously ministered in the almost exclusively White Anglican parishes of two north Wales communities. The most distinguishing feature of my present parish is the ethnic diversity of the local population: between 40% and 60% of the parish identify as Asian (and Muslim) in census returns.[99] The congregation reflects an earlier stage of the local

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[96] The title of this paper is a deliberate reference to the influential book by John Robinson, *Church in Black and White* (1993) which provided the first major review of race and racism in the British churches in the 1980s.

[97] In this paper I capitalize the first letters of both White and Black as this is the convention in most recent writing. However I question the appropriateness of this when other standpoints are introduced to the conversation and where it could be possible to stress every distinguishing human factor as a relevant describer of status and opinion. For example, a person's gender or sexuality will have as much influence as their race on their experience.

[98] Of course I had always been aware that I was a White man within a Black congregation but that is different from an awareness of the culture and privilege that my Whiteness gave me.

[99] The different figures reflect the actual returns from the last census of 2001 (the lower number) and the local authority estimates for 2008 as provided by a Diocesan officer.

communities' ethnic mix with about 60% of the congregation being of either Caribbean or west African descent.

Although the congregation is diverse in its mix of cultures with members from various Caribbean islands, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and British nationalities, there is a slight Black majority. For this reason I use the term Black majority congregation. It is important to distinguish this from the term Black church which is given to a Christian denomination and/or congregation with its roots and foundation in the Black spiritual, theological or sociological tradition as well as having predominantly Black membership. This distinction is of particular importance in my situation where I began to acknowledge my difference as a White man amidst the congregation of majority Black members but in a denomination (i.e. The Church of England) which is most definitely a White church.[100]

A growing awareness of the particular strengths of the congregation I minister among led me to try to discover what set this particular worshipping and serving community apart from other churches I knew or had attended. It became clear that there were three interlinking hallmarks of the parish's ministry: a sense of location and place as a *parish* church, the servant nature of surrogate faith,[101] and an almost excessive generosity of hospitality and welcome. These hallmarks of faith are not particular to this congregation. They are certainly not surprising gifts for any congregation. But it was through investigating these themes and my developing understanding of the spiritual and prayerful motivation from whence these congregational charisms came that I sensed the importance of identity and culture in shaping personal faith. These hallmarks were not empty offerings or, worse still, an imposed vision for the congregation. These marks of ministry were rooted in the particular experience, identity and individual journeys of faith of members of my congregation. As a pastor and leader of worship I no longer felt I could assume common or shared understandings of faith or life, nor would I want to continue to do so. I suddenly became very aware of the limits of my understanding as a White minister.

Self-Awareness in Ministry

To come to this awareness is not unusual or unique but I was noticing that my limitations could now be interpreted or acted upon in two distinct ways. There was a choice; the first option was to do all I could to understand the ways of the 'other' that is the different cultures of the Black members of the congregation, and thus find words, images and techniques which helped Black members to fit in with the views and ideas of my White, Eurocentric theology. Alternatively I could try to discover and learn from the experiences of those who were of a different race from me. This could then start a

[100] The Anglican Communion may certainly be a Black majority church in terms of membership, but its culture and historic roots most definitely locate it within the White European heritage.
[101] By surrogate faith I refer to the particular way in which the Church of England is seen and felt to pray and/or believe on behalf of the nation or local community. This is different from what I call vicarious faith which is in place of or instead of the nation or community. For further discussion see Billings (2004) and Davie (1994).

conversation that would hopefully help me with the effectiveness of my ministry of teaching and pastoral leadership as well as enriching and valuing the whole community of the local Church. Broadly speaking these two methods presented a choice between assimilation or inclusion.[102]

As well as developing an understanding of Black spirituality, culture and religiosity it was also important to recognize the way in which my own outlook as a White man influenced my leadership and ministry within the congregation. Was being a White man hindering my pastoral relationships within the parish? I felt that there wasn't a problem but that there was at least some realisation of difference and at times empathy within my relationships that I wanted to understand. So the question was formed: what are the issues surrounding the role of a White priest within a Black majority congregation?

Nobody talking?

Finding literature on Black church, Black spirituality and Black religiosity is relatively easy. There is much written from both a theological and sociological viewpoint. It isn't hard to discover, if only superficially and generalistically, some common themes from the different Black traditions which also shed new light on my own (White) understanding of the Christian faith. Although these findings are helpful and informative in my ministry they do not give attention to the difference between Black and White understandings, assumptions or intentions. When difference is the focus of a study it is usually in the realm of racism; difference as a negative source of fear and disunity. Where the difference of race causes inequality and injustice, the nature of racism within the Christian communities and churches is the subject of much literature. It is doubly prevalent because of its presence in both the descriptive, historic literature about racism as well as the strategies and analysis of racism within the churches and the policies they develop to combat it.

This material on racial difference does not focus on the positive potential of identifying difference in order to encourage and enrich the Church. Neither does it focus on the White minister rather than the Black congregation. Very little has been written by White ministers on how they have understood their approach to ministry within a Black majority congregation. What does exist is predominantly from the American protestant traditions,[103] although the seminal work of John Wilkinson [1993] gives a brief insight into the personal experiences and reflections of a White priest within the Church of England. However he concludes that his Whiteness disqualifies him from any further engagement with the subject area.[104]

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[102] I choose these words deliberately as alternative approaches to the church's struggle to involve Black culture. It is taken from a chapter by Barry Thorley entitled 'Growing a Black Church' where he concludes, 'Assimilation sucks. Inclusion is all...' (Thorley 2004, p61)
[103] Pam Powell (2000) writes of her American Presbyterian experiences, Steve Whiteside (1977) shares a similar American experience as a white pastor, and Gilbert Caldwell (1994) writes more about a the place of Black Christians within a White church, rather than in relation to White pastor.
[104] Not least because he is aware of the irony of, as a White man, being at one point in British theology, the 'expert on Black folks' (Jagessar & Reddie 2007a, p51)

Beyond ministry: a different conversation

This dearth of literature exploring ethnic identity in situations of Black congregations with a White minister is interesting since statistics suggest that the majority of Church of England parishes with Black majority congregations will have a White parish priest.[105] I expected to find some reflections on experience and practice but whether through fear of misunderstanding or from simple unawareness of their situation it seems that White clergy are not writing about this.[106] However the absence of literature is not echoed in other, allied professions where White people work for or in predominantly Black groups or communities. I found similar situations, outside the Church, where practitioners had reflected on the nature of ethnic identity in such a way as to produce practical and positive resources for their work. The three main professions were: education, social research and counselling. In each of these areas I found literature reflecting on the nature of ethnic identity, not simply in racism or the nature of Black or White standpoints, but on the relationships and interactions between Black and White identities.

In each area I found examples reflecting on the role of a White teacher, researcher or counsellor among Black students and clients and I wondered if the experiences described in these bodies of work might resonate with what I had identified in my own experience of parish ministry. Were their common themes between the three professions and the ministry? Could the insights gathered from comparing the literature begin to formulate resources for ministry, both for me and for the wider Church?

This comparative research approach is not uncommon in the social sciences as a method of analysing differences and similarities between related disciplines when approached from different cultures or nations. By placing two or more related resources together the researcher is able to draw out the places of overlap and the areas of clear divergence in relation to the source culture, nation or background. By using a similar approach in this exercise I collected literature from the various caring and social professions already mentioned and discovered that some themes emerged not just common between those professions but also common to my own experience as a parish priest.

White is not a colour

Before we look at the themes which can be identified from such a comparative analysis of the literature I wish to note the particular difficulty of researching race from a positive point of view (by positive I mean in ways described above, other than racism, inequality or injustice). The study of race has most often been the study of difference. Or at least that is the case for White researchers

[105] The Research & Statistics Department of the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England.
[106] In *Space for Grace* Goddard (2008) explores the challenges of inclusion in parish life. Linbert Spencer's, *Building a Multi-Ethnic Church* (2007) begins to address similar issues of positive inclusion although he is not a White author.

and authors. Although there is now a growing interest in the study of Whiteness[107] it is a comparatively new field within the social sciences. For theologians it is most definitely in its infancy.[108] This says much about the way in which White people have viewed their role within the Church – not just at an academic or theological level, but in terms of leadership, ministry and preaching and teaching. It is not that White is just the norm or the starting point for such thought but that White is almost colourless, or even invisible in terms of the cultural implications of race and ethnicity on faith and practice. Again this has influenced the position of the churches in their work of racial awareness and inclusion in terms of assimilation rather than inclusion.[109]

Inclusion is everything

It is important to make clear the difference between assimilation and inclusion in the context of this work as it arises later in the conclusions I draw from the comparison of working relationships within other professions. That Thorley said, 'Assimilation sucks; inclusion is everything' (Thorley 2004, p61) tells of the problem in much denominational and local church work whereby the main thrust of racial awareness has been about melting the traditions of Black[110] Christians into the majority view of the (White) Church. At best this simply ignores the contribution, experience and heritage of Black Christians and at worst it exhibits them in terms of spectacle and an illusion of inclusion.[111] Inclusion on the other hand acknowledges, respects and values the additional contribution to the life of the church that Black Christians bring and this involvement is developed through active participation which in term leads to a renewed and changed church.[112]

Conversation with Education

The first partner in my conversation is also the one for which I found by far the largest amount of material with regard to White professional working with Black people. Perhaps it is unsurprising that

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[107] Mainly in the field of social work, politics and culture studies. See, *Out of Whiteness'* (Ware 2002) for political and cultural analysis and *Whiteness: an introduction* by Steve Garner (2003) for a more general approach to the subject.
[108] The most significant work to date is James Perkinson's *White Theology: Outing Supremacy in Modernity* (2004b).
[109] See Heather Walton's work for the Methodist church which I refer to later, David Isiorho (2002), Mukti Barton's, *Rejection, Resistance and Resurrection* (2005) and reports from the Church of England Committee for Minority and Ethnic Anglican Concerns, particularly, *An Amazing Journey* (Gordon-Carter 2003).
[110] I use Black here to include all non-White Christians. In doing so I acknowledge the shared experiences of Asian and Black people oppressed by the White hegemony of a still Euro-centric Church. For further discussion on the use of the word Black as representative of a larger race struggle see Jagessar and Reddie 2007b, xiii.
[111] Thorley notes the tendency of the Church of England to 'buy in' representation of Black Christians (especially from Black-led Pentecostal Churches or gospel choirs) when it is seeks to honour Black Christians at major national events (Thorley 2004, p49).
[112] The notion of participation is reflected in the title of the Church of England's report on experiences of minority ethnic people which was presented to the General Synod in July 2007, 'Present and Participating'.

it is in the field of education – both statutory and further education – that a great emphasis has been placed on understanding the differences and inequalities which can separate the races. It is in the area of education that inequality may have the greatest affect later in life in terms of employment and opportunity. As in my initial look at the literature on race and ministry I was able to find a great deal about difference, inequality, expectation and aspiration in education, but there are also a number of places where White teachers have began to look not just at their Black pupils and students (and the communities from which they come) but also their own Whiteness. Significantly Paley's work entitled '*White Teacher'* (2000) is a detailed look at how her teaching, and perhaps more importantly, her pastoral response in the classroom changed over the course of her career. She has a reflective approach to the subject which obviously came originally from necessity rather than a planned approach to working with Black children. After moving to a neighbourhood with a significant Black population, Paley finds herself the only White person in class and with no preparative training or information as to what affect this might have on her teaching and her leadership.

I find this useful as it is almost identical to my own position whereby I arrived in a Black majority congregation without any sense of what might be different or any thought of preparation as to how I should consider my own actions, thoughts and words. That this area is neglected by those who make such appointments is perhaps not surprising when it is assumed that the Christian minister is considered to be so aware of racism and other discrimination (precisely because of his or her Christian conscience)[113] that any suggestion of training for such a position is thought unnecessary.[114] As we have seen this approach assumes an awareness of Black issues rather than a self-awareness of Whiteness. In this way race is seen as 'them' rather than affecting the social-structure for all of us and the resulting distortion gives an impaired or uncritical understanding of racism issues. Joyce King employs the term 'dysconscious racism' meaning not an absence of consciousness but a distorted, impaired or uncritical consciousness. (King 2004, p73)

Without any direct resourcing Paley takes moves to evaluate and change her own understanding of teaching. Using her own experience as a Jewish child she realises that being a minority is not a numbers issue for she herself was a minority in her class even though her class was at least one-third Jewish. Again her class of Black children experience minority status because of their experience of the teacher's Whiteness, and the school and the institution's Whiteness. This clash of cultures – Black and White – causes confusion within the child who experiences a Black environment at home but a White environment in school. Identifying this tension, Paley adjusts her original strategy of treating Black children as if they were White,[115] and avoiding any talk of difference to a new approach which not only valued but at times emphasised difference. In doing

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[113] Jones (1999, p74) demonstrates how the Christian equality model of 'not seeing difference' actually denies individuality and can produce blanket dismissal or unawareness of racism and other prejudices.

[114] Awareness Training on Racism is compulsory for Church of England clergy, Race Awareness training isn't.

[115] For an example of this method of school integration see Johnson, 'Treating Black Students like White Students: A Definition of School Integration' *Urban Education* 1976; 11; 95

so she realised that this new consideration was beneficial to all children – Black AND White – as children valued their individuality, background and heritage.

However acknowledging and celebrating difference is not always straight forward. What a person looks like may not be altered, but behaviour and especially conversation can be misleading. Whether this misleading is deliberate or unintended is a question in itself but for a teacher (and indeed for a Christian minister) there is always a need for awareness. The art of signifying[116] is too easily dismissed as deviance by White people who do not consider its origins, purposes and messages. Paley rather sees it as a good introduction for White people to think about the messages and implications of what they say and do in the classroom.

But perhaps the strongest theme of interest for me is Paley's distinction between past and future in terms of how teachers encourage and guide children in educational choices. Will the choice be simply decided by where the child comes from, her family, race, status etc. Or will the teacher allow the child to develop because of her family, race, and the potential that this holds? I was struck by this subtly different approach to the idea of race and ethnicity as defining our potential as it resonated with my own change from seeing a congregation of people different from me (and the generic Church of England members), to seeing a congregation of Christians representative of the wider Anglican Communion.[117]

An inability to see beyond colour in our judgements about people is at the heart of Jones' survey of White beginning teacher and their attitudes to race and in particular Black children in their classes (Jones 2007). From complete denial of any problem or any potential for problem, through apathy and disinterest in race and racism awareness, to resistance and confusion, Jones exposes the prejudices of a particular group of White teachers. This prejudice (often from innocence rather than conscious choice) was not helped by a training process which continued to send White teachers to White placement schools, and which relegated race and racism awareness to the level of add-on modules rather than integrated parts of the course. This inexposure combined with the predominantly middle-class background of most teacher candidates highlighted the difficulty of understanding inequality or racism when teachers hadn't themselves experienced or understood inequity (King 2004, p71).

The most significant piece of work relating to the role of a White professional in a teaching environment is Sarah Pearce's book, '*You Wouldn't Understand'* (2005). Starting from her own experience as a teacher in a school with a majority of South Asian children, Pearce kept a diary of her developing working style and understanding of her situation and her growing perception of the 'problem' of race and difference. The use of the word problem is interesting because Pearce clearly

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[116] In its simplest definition, the art of saying or doing one thing but meaning quite another. For a fuller understanding see the work of Robert Beckford or Anthony Reddie.

[117] I remember asking our Church School for a breakdown of which ethnic minorities were present and finding it difficult to get direct answers initially. I later realised through further conversations that this was because the school leadership were keen not be allow the school population to be judged by its racial mix but rather for the potential of each child's future. The school consistently has at least 95% Muslim children.

begins by seeing her situation of difference and misunderstandings as one that requires resolution. Firstly she sees herself, i.e. the teacher, as the solution, and then she moves towards seeing herself, the teacher as the problem. This journey reflects the situation I have outlined above whereby the initial reaction of the White majority can be to see the need for change as directed by and coming from the White norm; the dysconscious racism of privilege and uncritical consciousness. It is only later that questions about Whiteness and personal experience enable an alternative approach to the problem.

Her initial discussion about the teacher as part of the problem centres on avoidance: avoiding difference and avoiding racism. 'One of the most difficult things to face up to as I re-read my diary was my attitude to racism when it emerged in the classroom. The recurring theme is fear and uncertainty.' (Pearce 2005, p33) That fear and uncertainty comes from avoiding the issues of difference and racism; in turn fuelling a further avoidance of what becomes an increasingly difficult subject. This is echoed by the children in her analysis of children's attitudes. But here the absence of conversation about difference and racism is not through the children's desire to avoid the subject but rather through a colourblindness (representing a child's innocent dis-interest in difference) or confusion brought about from exposure to religious, social and educational thought and conversation (Pearce 2005, p53-80). Once again Pearce turns to the teacher's role but this time as both cause and problem. She examines the attitudes of her colleagues towards race and difference and discovers similar attitudes to her own and the children's: avoidance, fear, stereotyping, and colour-blindness. But she also notices a more positive identification with difference and with the experience of oppression.

> Paula [a colleague] explicitly described herself as working class and she saw this as a key feature of her identity as a teacher: She said she felt more at home in a school like this; being from a working class background... regardless of race... she said, 'you might have a cultural connection with the children, or it might be an economic one – and I've got the economic one'.
>
> For her there were points of connection between teachers and pupils, based on shared experiences. Talking to her made me see that while I had focussed on differences between me and my pupils, Paula found the similarities more striking. (Pearce 2005, 92)

It is on this level of identification and confidence in naming both similarity and difference that she sees the political nature of teaching and its potential 'as a vehicle for social change' (Pearce 2005, 119). Teaching was about the personal confidence to name difference, to share and value experience and to identify with both pupils and families in such a way that possibilities were opened up rather than hopes crushed. The culture of low expectation so readily imposed upon (and often accepted by) those in less privileged communities was now easier to challenge, 'I keep saying, "remember – you can do anything" ' (Pearce 2005, 118). Teaching staff focussing on similarity and identification rather than difference are more able to encourage expectations and participation rather than impose limits and exclusion.

Conversation with Social Research

Although I have been unable to find similar positive approaches to understanding the role of Whiteness for the researcher as I did for teachers, there is perhaps an even greater awareness of the need for recognition of difference and awareness of race. Not surprisingly the researcher is acutely aware of his or her subjectivity and the importance of self within the process of research from initial question, through the acquisition of data and to the subsequent analysis and conclusion. Perhaps in few other fields of study has there been such systematic study of the place of the researcher within the research.

Some of the issues raised by acknowledging the influence on the researcher's background, culture and power upon the outcome of research are not restricted to race and ethnicity. Difference in general between the researcher and subject will always create a tension between understanding and representing the subject. But such tensions can be exaggerated by the difference of race. A major issue for researchers is the quality and level of participation that they receive from those being researched. Rosalind Edwards in an article about her role as a White researcher working with Black subjects identifies two stages in the difficulty of such a relationship. Firstly there is an element of suspicion: 'The Black mature women students' interpretation of my request for interviewees reveals how acutely aware they were of race when white institutions take an interest in them' (Edwards 1996, p171). This suspicion in turn leads to resistance to participation, a common mechanism used to exercise power and control. Again, Edwards comments on her reaction to this resistance by discovering something about her own identity. She becomes aware of her Whiteness rather than simply reacting against the lack of participation:

> I had been jolted by the meeting of my own identity – Ros Edwards, approachable woman researcher who had been a mature student and a lone mother, and was 'on their side' – with a racialized categorization as an untrustworthy white institutional figure. The categorization was not resonant with my experiences and conception of self. (Edwards 1996, p171)

Of particular interest to me is Edwards' understanding of the different form of power that develops between the two groups – the 'powerful' White and the 'subordinate' Black. She bases her understanding on Patricia Hill Collins' work on Black Feminist thought: 'Knowledge without wisdom is adequate for the powerful, but wisdom is essential to the survival of the subordinate.' (Hill Collins 1990, p208). Edwards continues:

> Hill Collins also states that wisdom does not necessarily require you to have experienced a situation for yourself; but you do need to have been part of an empathetic dialogue with those who have. In this dialogue there is no need to 'decentre' anyone in order to centre someone else; rather, power dynamics are fluid, and the centre is constantly and appropriately pivoted. Each participant's experience is partial, but is also valid. (Edwards 1996, 172)

This is of particular interest as a reflection on practice within the churches where power is exercised by ministers, hierarchies and 'the centre' in such a way as to deny the experience and wisdom of whole congregations regardless of race. Unsurprisingly a failure to acknowledge the existence of Black experience and wisdom further 'decentres' the Black community in order to normalise the White hegemony of the Church. Perhaps through this 'empathetic dialogue' that Edwards talks of it may be possible to create a model that works towards a greater inclusion of Black experience within the churches.

Throughout Edwards' article there is the recurring question of the appropriateness of her involvement; she begins by asking 'can' or 'should' a White woman undertake research with Black women. Creating her argument in order to conclude it is possible and satisfactory, she cautiously suggests that it is inappropriate for her (or any White researcher) to 'produce representations and theorizations ... that are based on white women's accounts alone, but which have wider pretensions'. She describes this as 'indefensible' (Edwards 1996, 174). It is this same reticence and discomfort that Heather Walton explores in her commentary on her research work within the Methodist Church in Great Britain - work which resulted in the publication of '*A Tree God Planted'* (Walton 1985). She asks the question, 'who can play the game?' and then explores the issues that faced her before accepting the research, the tensions she confronted during the work, and the final analysis of her role as a White researcher. Her final words to her own questions are, 'I won't do it again.' (Walton 1986, 17)

However the report that followed was well received and became the foundation of further work in race and racism within the Methodist church. Walton identified a number of areas of interaction and separation during her research interviews and questionnaires that again highlight similar issues to those already discovered. The overlap of race and class, or race and social context; the researcher as the one holding the power – both as researcher and as a White person; the constant need for self-checking of results – whose priorities are being heard?; problems of subject resistance and inhibition; the need for restraint in making assumptions – about the Black community and those made about herself as White researcher: all these issues are resonant with those we have already seen in other areas.

Perhaps this comparison is not the fairest. Whereas Walton concludes that she would not repeat the exercise and she questions the ethical appropriateness of her research as a White woman, she does so because she recognises that there is an alternative (of a Black researcher undertaking the same work). In parish ministry this is slightly different. It may be possible to have Black clergy ministering to Black majority congregations[118] but is it necessary in the same way that is might be

[118] Statistics suggest that this would be difficult with the present numbers of Black clergy being ordained in the Church of England with only 1.5% of clergy identifying as Black/Black British in a 2005 survey carried out by the Church of England. Figures from a Church of England Clergy Diversity Audit 2005 and prepared by the Research & Statistics Department of the Archbishops' Council. Published at http:// www.cofe.anglican.org/info/statistics/statsfiles/diversityreportpart2.pdf (accessed on 01/07/2009)

necessary in the field of social research? The inclusion and diversity agenda within the Christian faith which celebrates the Church as the Body of Christ (with its variety of members) must surely encourage the development of inter-racial clergy-congregation relationships.

Conversation with Counselling

The final area of comparison is that of psychological counselling and not unlike the work outlined above in the area of social research, this conversation concentrates again on the importance of self-awareness and the need for a constant checking of what the white professional is bringing to the situation in terms of assumptions, presumptions and power. There is much emphasis placed on the need for empathy and informed understanding of culture, difference and social and ethnic ways; the White counsellor must become bi-cultural and not just uni-cultural. In other words the counsellor seeks to understand Black culture alongside mainstream culture and his or her own White culture (Williams & Kirkland 1971, p115). This informed position where culture is understood and respected can only then lead to the overcoming of assumption and prejudice. How often within the Church have we assumed prejudice to be overcome without seriously understanding and valuing the 'other' of Black Christian experience?

There are two areas in which the counsellor has particular experience and which perhaps may be of interest within the context of ministry. Firstly the need to name difference rather than deficit. We have already seen above the importance of seeing differences as potential gifts to the wider community rather than causes for tension or separation. Perhaps the counsellor, among all professionals, is specifically able to understand background and culture in a more neutral way than other professions. Rather than assuming that environment or genetics or heritage create a deficiency that causes tension, rather it is these things that provide the potential for a different but equally viable culture (Williams & Kirkland 1971, p115).

The second insight from the counsellor is that of detachment. The counsellor must remain independent from both the client and the institution – whatever this might be. Although the counsellor might be employed by the institution and will have close ties with that body, it is crucial to the success of the counselling process that independence is seen to be held and that the counsellor has a stronger advocacy for the client than the institution. Thus the counsellor is interested more in the causes than in symptoms of complaint. The White counsellor must work hard to avoid collusion with the power framework of the (presumably White) institution and to enable the client to maintain appropriate control. White counsellors can all too easily be seen as representative of and caught up with the power of the White institution.

Related to this sense of the counsellor as bridge between Black and White is the difficulty of aspiration: to what extent if any might the Black person wish to cross over this bridge into the White structures? Since success is often defined by the White hierarchy and can be seen as collusion

with the White hegemony there is a tension within the Black community of how to fulfil any aspiration. To what extent does participation matter if it is only on their (White) terms?

This question of participation is interesting as it cuts across the areas of education, social research, counselling and the church. If there is a barrier between Black culture and the White institution then on one side there are those that will simply not engage (for a range of reasons from defiance through to disinterest) and on the other there are those who have broken through the barrier and discovered that acceptance is still not automatic and they find need to prove themselves as Black members of the White elite.[119]

Conclusions

The three areas of comparison have provided insights into how a closer look at the role of the White professional can begin to help those professions when they work in a predominantly or majority Black environment. There is much overlap between the three chosen areas of education, social research and psychological counselling and it is also clear that these findings closely resemble my own reflection on my role as a White parish priest in a Black majority congregation.

Having discovered the reflections of other white professionals and their own situations I tried to find some common themes that would make sense of the shared ways in which they have developed a new way of working or a better way of understanding their professional relationship. Thus by making this comparison across the professions I hope to suggest ways in which White clergy within the Church of England might reflect on their own experience within Black majority congregations.

I have identified two distinct themes across the professions; the first is the need for understanding, empathy and valuing of difference and the second is that of the challenges faced through recognition of the exercise of power and privilege.

The Theme Of Understanding

In a sense the first of my themes is about the ways in which differences need to be noticed, named and explored before any change in relationship can take place. Within all three professions it was clear that the strongest relationships and partnerships of trust came from those who were able to acknowledge difference in a way which led to a genuine enquiry and exploration; one that valued different cultures and viewpoints so that both parties were enriched. The temptation that arises from fear to avoid issues that were difficult to discuss or even to name leads only to further isolation and fear. Therefore the confidence to identify and name differences needs to be developed in order

[119] See Donnetrice Allison, ‘Free to Be Me? Black Professors, White Institutions’ in *Journal of Black Studies* 38 (4) p641

to value and include those who would otherwise be ignored and to bring understanding and familiarity to those who struggle with difference.

Part of understanding involves acknowledging misunderstanding and presumptions that our made about people and cultures. Individually and corporately it is easy to assume a certain set of characteristics about people because of where they come from and how we see them. Our ability to name and share experiences on an equal basis without the desire to absorb or diminish will have a great effect on the inclusion of both Black and white members of our churches.

The Theme of Power

In an episcopally ordered church like the Church of England it is inevitable that there will be a concentration of power among the clergy and certain other recognised official lay people, but in a congregation with Black majority membership and the probability of White clergy there is an extra dimension to the concentration of power. I am particularly interested in Hill Collins' suggestions for the decentring of power and the re-valuing of all people's experiences as valid and worthy of inclusion. Can the local congregation find ways to give voice and weight to those who have so long been unheard?[120] Much talk is given to the 'silenced' voices amongst society but for many there has also been an unwillingness to raise their voice let alone have it silenced. For some there would be a genuine unwillingness to speak up or out not from fear but through conditioned behaviour.[121] Earlier notions of conformity to White standards or White acceptance amongst the first generation of Caribbean and African immigrants are now giving way to a greater confidence to be heard; the White norm is no longer accepted unquestioningly. The re-distribution of power must address this.

Power of course is not in itself negative and the acknowledgement of advantage and power may lead to a greater self-awareness of position and advantage. Indeed it has been my experience that a greater awareness of self and one's vulnerability and awareness of areas of similarities with other people can prove invaluable in pastoral relationships as well as parish leadership. As we saw above it was the teachers who identified (and lived in the same area as) their pupils' families that were perceived to have a better understanding and relationship. As background, environment and who we are will all influence our understanding and attitude it is not surprising that where these areas overlap and become shared experiences then a greater understanding and relationship may develop. If any of these areas come from a place of oppression, marginality or powerlessness then perhaps there is a chance that such affliction can be turned into a resource – the double consciousness that Robert Beckford, quoting Paul Gilroy, talks of as 'a hermeneutic of marginality providing diaspora blacks with a unique (learned and taught) objectivity ... [which] has resulted in innovative responses'. (Beckford 2007, p114)

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[120] See Limbert Spencer's work (2007) mentioned earlier.

[121] Norman Mailler adopts the use the term 'colonized people' to describe those 'people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality [and which] finds itself face to face with the language of the [conquering master]' (Mailer 1957, p18, quoted in Pfeifer 2009, p542)

Next Steps: More Conversations

Although I recognise within the three other professions common strands and themes which clearly parallel my own experiences in parish ministry I am aware that these findings are subjective and I have gleaned the information that I felt to be resonant with my own experience. I am keen to test my identification of the two themes I have outlined above. Will other White clergy identify similar issues? If they do not identify them themselves will they recognise them if they are suggested? Is my own particular experience too unique given my own story, parish and people? These theories will need to be tested on those who have reflected on their position and role as a White person within a Black congregation and I acknowledge that for many there will not have been a conscious or considered reflection. Again I might ask whether such reflection is always helpful – and if it is helpful, then to whom? Is this another example of White self-indulgence?

Given the importance of what I have read in other professions and discovered within my own reflections, I am confident that there is a value to this exploration of the role of White ministers within the Black majority congregations. There may be simple practical applications such as the need for explicit language when explaining and leading parish business, language that does not assume an unwritten understanding or preconceptions.[122] There may be spiritual needs which take into account different histories and cultures, acknowledging that spiritual formation is complex and multi-cultural; pastoral implications where awareness of difference can ease any initial discomforting situations; and theological implications for the presentation of doctrine and liturgy that is sensitive to language, symbolism and history.

These areas have an impact on ministry and therefore should be addressed as part of preparation for ministry. Perhaps such exploration should become part of initial ministerial formation with a greater emphasis on theological courses and colleges including race awareness alongside racism awareness. And there is even greater scope for the preparation of and support for White clergy who find themselves (and I deliberately choose to use the word 'find') in parishes with a Black majority congregation. Such preparation and awareness training for inclusion ought to be an essential part of ministerial formation in a serving church.

Thorley speaks of a universal church which welcomes and includes all people, but acknowledges:

> ...we are not quite there yet. There is still much work of redemption to be done. In fact, down to earth, in one small corner of the vineyard, at this precise moment in time, it has been suggested that the very survival of the Church of England, in many of its inner-city

[122] This is an interesting area where our instinct does not always help, for example in this description of a job interview: 'When acknowledging and expressing power, one tends towards explicitness (as in yelling to your 10-year-old, "Turn that radio down!"). When de-emphasizing power, there is a move toward implicit communication. Therefore, in the interview setting, those who sought to help, to express their egalitarianism with the East Indian applicant, became more and more indirect – and less and less helpful – in their questions and comments.' (Delpit 2004, p229)

> parishes, is dependant upon positively welcoming an ineluctable ‘black presence’, on growing ‘black’ churches. ... However, the question we must sooner or later face is this: Is the Church of England actually a safe place for black people? Is there an authentic space within its branches, the parishes, for strong and confident black people, or will it only and forever receive the other as a victim, a client or a token, and therefore, in many places, rightly and inevitably die? (Thorley 2004, p60)

The time is right for developing both Black and White awareness amongst the clergy that serve in these parishes.

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Part B: Section 3

Research Proposal

Research Proposal

Introduction

This research proposal looks at the way in my approach to ministry has changed and developed, with my growing awareness of my Whiteness as a minister in a majority Black congregation. A systematic reflection on the development of my ministry, and my approach to parish leadership, ministry and administration has led to a set of preliminary conclusions about the ways in which my personal ethnic background has both influenced and hindered my ministry as a parish priest. The conclusions lie within two broad areas of interest which form the basis of this proposal.

Firstly I want to ask to what extent, and in what ways, are White ministers aware of their own Whiteness and its implications on personal culture, privilege and power? The second question asks in what ways do White ministers, consciously or unconsciously, adapt the methods of participation and communication within a Black majority congregation in light of these differences of personal culture, privilege and power?

Background

These questions stem from reflective analysis of my own experience. They are an attempt to test and explore the subjective and personal conclusions which I have drawn from my ministry for the past nine years within a Black majority congregation. The move from subjective and personal opinions towards a more objective and shared understanding of this personal experience will be discussed later, however the questions are not limited to or dependant on the particular circumstances of my parish or ministry.

My experience as a White Church of England priest ministering in a majority Black congregation has highlighted a number of social, cultural and spiritual differences which have required a revision of my existing ministerial practices and the re-presentation and adaptation of much official Church information or practice. The growing awareness of the choices available to me as a minister highlighted the position of power, privilege and difference that I could exercise. There were the visible places of cultural difference, with their dual possibilities for either misunderstanding or opportunity for discovery, and also the less visible and more numinous realisation of a changing style of leadership and participation within both small group and individual congregational relationships.

The conclusions and observations from reflecting on my experience have been driven largely by a desire to make sense of my situation. However within this process I have recognised a need to compare my experience with that of neighbouring parishes and clergy. Often my enquiries have been due to a small element of the need for self-justification, but I believe that the greater drive in looking towards other priests' experiences has been that of genuine enquiry and resourcing. The lack of any intentional resourcing from the institutional structures of the Church of England heightens this desire for enquiry and research. The nature of this process of reflection and reassessment intrinsically affects those who I work amongst. The implications for ministry on a wider level are also obvious; this reflection and research centres on participation, engagement and communication – all of which are key areas of pastoral ministry.

The Wider Situation

I am not alone in my situation. The statistics uphold the fact that the majority of Black majority congregations within the Church of England will have a White parish priest.[123] So other White priests new to ministry in churches with significant Black membership will share similar experiences even if they do not choose to acknowledge these observations is a different question. This research is less concerned with the issues of denial of difference (or blindness to it) as it about discovering, managing and implementing the implications of those observations. The natural leaning towards an almost systematic sensitivity and enthusiastic welcome which may be inherent in Christian public ministry may cloak or even exacerbate difficulties of engagement and participation. This may manifest itself in a cloaking of racism or prejudice because of ignorance or an inability to acknowledge its presence, or perhaps a genuine desire to combat such prejudice by an over-active compensation which highlights the presence of non-White members as a spectacle or novelty.[124] Spencer develops this idea and warns of stereotyping: 'Every time we think we know all about someone because "We worked with lots of people 'like them' in Africa/India" or "We used to have a couple like them in the church", we fool ourselves.' (Spencer 2007, p105)

A greater understanding of the issues surrounding colour, culture, power and privilege could enable White clergy to minister more affectively and with greater sensitivity within their congregations. This is not a one dimensional benefit. The benefits to congregations are most obvious but there is also a spiritual and pastoral implication for the minister. There are two ways in which this information may prove helpful. The first is to prevent discomfort, insensitivity or ignorance of the different cultures, heritage, understandings and assumptions that are at work in a pastoral situation. This might range

[123] Not only is this the case, but the Church of England is second only to the Roman Catholic church in Britain in terms of Caribbean British and African British presence in mainstream denominations. (see Aldred 2005, p81).
[124] At a church event on the theme of inclusivity within the church in 2009 I noticed that the leader of the meeting commented loudly that the latest arrival to the meeting (the only black person present) had brought African food. Whilst in itself this was only a statement of fact, mention was not made of anyone else's gifts of food or were any other members spotlighted in such a public way.

from an assumption made in a particular reference which is alien to the other person,[125] to the use of terminology or symbolism inappropriate or insensitive to those of a different background.

Such awareness and knowledge of power, privilege and difference may lead to an empowering and participative culture within a congregation in terms of its leadership and mission. Therefore a second area where this might benefit clergy is in how the methods of communication and engagement might be adapted so as to connect with both Black and White culture and experience rather than simply elevating the White 'norm' to its position as 'normal'.

Importance of this Research

These two outcomes of this research may be of particular interest to those involved in ministerial formation and development as well as White clergy ministering in Black majority congregations and wishing to reflect on their practice. The research will also contribute to a wider audience of practical theologians interested in the changing face of parish ministry in a post-colonial and multi-heritage Church. That the Church is post-colonial is in one sense obvious: we live after the age of empire and colonialism. But it is also a church which has yet to fully understand the implications of this post-colonialism. And whereas post-colonial theologies may develop in this and other countries, the reality for my ministry is not about a new, post-colonial mindset or practice, but the mundane, everyday reality of working with a multi-heritage congregation.[126] This research also reflects recent moves towards an interest in Whiteness and White culture within the social sciences (Dyer 1997, Carter 1997, Garner 2007) and related disciplines.[127]

This research is also important in that it addresses an area where there is currently very little material. It is relatively simple to discover literature regarding racism within the churches but the issues at play between clergy and congregations in terms of colour and heritage have yet to be explored. What has been written previously is either outdated, in being based on the experiences of White clergy working amongst predominantly first generation Black congregations (Wilkinson 1994); or is protestant and American. The issue of British verses American is significant. The journey towards racial tolerance, integration and Black rights has taken different paths and at different paces in each country. The different colonial heritages, the complexly different

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[125] This is not simply about colour or even nationality. It is often true that phrases or metaphors common in one part of a country are not universally understand by people from another area. Within a country or colour group however it might be easier to challenge these assumptions than across country or colour groups.

[126] The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Adelaide has recently encouraged a similar exploration saying, 'The increasing ethnic and cultural diversity of at least half of the Australian Catholic population calls for a rethinking of the theoretical and practical assumptions about the identity of the Catholic Church that is in Australia.' His words are focussed primarily on the areas of spirituality, liturgy and practice. Reported in *The Tablet*. 7th November 2009, p30.

[127] That whiteness is a relatively new field of study can be explained in Frankenberg's comment, 'Whiteness, as a set of normative cultural practices, is visible most clearly to those it definitely excludes and those to whom it does violence. Those who are housed securely within its borders usually do not examine it.' (Frankenberg 1993, p228). For a contribution to the debate on white privilege and its effects on racism within the Church see Cassidy & Mikulich 2007

relationships between Black people who are immigrants or national citizens, these have had a marked affect on the development of civil rights. Whereas the American journey may be marked by an earlier and more visible and powerful movement (when compared to Britain's), it has also created a less integrated society with at times an almost parallel culture.[128]

Apart from the literature on Black church, Black spirituality and Black religiosity (much of which sheds an interesting light on my own experiences), there is little attention to the difference between Black and White understandings, assumptions or intentions. Rarely addressing the underlying causes of racism, even less does it look at the possible constructive and positive potential of identifying difference which encourages and enriches the Church. There is a strange irony that this predominance of texts on racism within the church is not accompanied by an ethos of penitence, but as Forrester points out, 'churches are usually far better at presenting themselves as fellowships of moral achievers than as communities of forgiven sinners whose message is about the availability of forgiveness and reconciliation, communities that celebrate diversity.' (Forrester 2004, p21)

Another deficiency within the current research is its focus on the Black congregation (often seen as problem or cause) rather than on the White clergy and leadership.[129] There is some evidence from the American protestant traditions, and the seminal work of John Wilkinson (1993) gives a brief insight into the personal experiences and reflections of a White priest within the Church of England. However he concludes that his Whiteness disqualifies him from any further engagement with the subject area.

That there is very little reflective writing on the experiences of White clergy working in predominantly Black congregations is interesting. Whether through fear, ignorance or misunderstanding there is a definite silence. As part of my reflection I began to look at other professions to see if there were shared experiences.[130]

In three professions - education, social research and counselling – I have found examples of reflections on ethnic identity, not simply in racism, but on the relationships and interactions between Black and White identities, in such a way as to produce practical and positive resources for their work.

My conclusions from this literature found that there were two common issues within these communities. The first centred on the importance of understanding: the understanding and naming

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[128] In 1963 Martin Luther King said, 'We must face the fact that in America, the church is still the most segregated major institution in America. At 11:00 on Sunday morning when we stand and sing and Christ has no east or west, we stand at the most segregated hour in this nation.' http://www.wmich.edu/library/archives/mlk/q-a.html retrieved on 17/6/10.

[129] Rasor and Chapman (2007) give examples of positive power from within black congregations, however even here the emphasis is on the power that black people can exercise outside the church and connecting with their community, rather than exercising power in terms of leadership within the church.

[130] What follows here is a summary of that literature review. A foundational literature review can be found in Part 2, Section 1.

of difference, of culture, of fears and of experience. This understanding leads not only to a greater valuing of difference but to an awareness of areas of potential tension and misinterpretation.

The second theme from the literature of other areas dealt with power and the acknowledgement of its dynamic within pastoral and professional relationships. An understanding of both the positive and negative effects of power and its allied privileges is at the heart of any debate about the nature of these particular Black-White relationships.[131] The situations outlined in the reviewed literature share a similar dynamic to that exercised in my current situation: Black parishioner/client/pupil and White priest/counsellor/teacher. Part of this research proposal will continue to reflect this dynamic with Black participants and a White researcher during the initial element of this research.

These two themes are necessarily held together because understanding of culture without an understanding of power can lead to a self-deceiving perception. Isiorho challenges this when he says, 'Learning about other cultures and treating them with empathy is in theory an effective challenge to racism, but this is not substantiated by empirical evidence. This approach underestimates the existence of racial prejudice and discrimination. ... When they say Britain is a multicultural society what they mean is that some of its inhabitants embrace a way of life that is different from that of the White British.' (Isiorho 2007, p67-68)

With such a shortage of information on the experiences of White ministers in Black majority congregations I have been unable to compare my experience with others. This research project will enable the resonances with the experiences of other professions to be tested and contrasted with the experience of other clergy. In order to formulate the question for this research it is necessary to provide some background to the situation I find myself in and which prompts this proposal.

Personal Experience

First to be considered is the issue of understanding. When I arrived in my new parish I was called on to take a funeral for a relative of a congregation member. The deceased and his family were Jamaican and having had plenty of experience of large and unusual funerals there was no reason for me to believe that this would be any different. During the pre-funeral visits and then during the service itself, both in church and at the graveside, I soon discovered significant differences of culture and practice.[132]

As a practitioner I am comfortable and open to accommodate difference and personalisation of funerals but I did so here without fully understanding the spiritual, and theological implications of what was happening. These different practices were not simply cultural differences but they also

[131] Speaking of the counselling profession, in a chapter on race and power, Lago begins by stating that black-white relations 'have been typified by oppression, exploitation and discrimination' (Lago 2006, p23) thus creating an immediate power imbalance. Lago argues that the understanding and acknowledgement of this historical imbalance, is crucial to the work of the counsellor.
[132] See Part 1, Chapter Two: 'Example 1: Funerals'.

spoke of a slightly different spiritual and theological understanding of death and resurrection. With time and understanding I discovered a new approach (and theology) of funerals was developing in my own mind and ministry and, now, I am grateful for this experience – not simply as a window on to another world, but as a challenge to, and a new source of, spirituality. I am conscious that I pieced together these practices and experiences by myself with little help from others and with some discussion with West Indian parishioners. It would have been easy to ignore, dismiss or tolerate such practise with little or no effect on my personal understandings. My experiences taught me the importance of moving from accepting practice through understanding practice to engaging with practice.

The second example from my situation provides further evidence for the need for the acknowledgement of power and its dynamic within pastoral and professional relationships. There are a number of issues at play within a group setting in terms of relationships and dynamics: confidence, ability, age, experience as well as the view points and agenda of the participants. Added to this, in a congregational setting with clergy present, are the delicate and complex, personal, pastoral and parochial relations between laity and priest. Power is at play in most situations of this sort, but I became acutely aware of a different form of power that exercised itself during parish meetings, with certain people, or groups of people, silent or silenced during groups and activities.

The colonial legacy of servitude, inhibition and respect within some groups and generations produces a powerful mixture of attitudes within the small group setting. I saw that some Black members spoke less than I expected from my own knowledge of their personality. This was not always simply inhibition or shyness, or even meekness of character. Gradually I began to change the agenda of small groups and the ways of presentation, discussion and engagement that did not assume a particular cultural viewpoint or heritage or background and in doing so I was aware of my need to acknowledge the position of power and privilege that I took for granted. These issues are not unique to the Black-White relationship under discussion here, but within the light of the first theme of the need for understanding, they take on an increased importance.

These short examples form a background to my situation from which I wish to ask my two questions: to what extent, and in what ways, are White ministers aware of their own Whiteness and its implications on personal culture, privilege and power? And in what ways do White ministers, consciously or unconsciously, adapt the methods of participation and communication within a Black majority congregation in light of these differences of personal culture, privilege and power?

The Research

To answer these questions I have identified a number of areas where my own practice has either been affected by or changed as a result of reflection on the issues of power, privilege and

difference.[133] Creating a focus group from within my own congregation will assess the accuracy and veracity of my own conclusions and this will cement (or create) a set of questions about the role of a White minister in a Black majority congregation.

The parish focus group will be between 5 and 10 people and representative of the wider congregation as far as possible. After a presentation of my thinking and initial research I will invite feedback as to the accuracy and veracity of my findings and if necessary include any comments or findings in the questions that I have developed for the main part of the research. As well as giving a degree of objectivity to my findings, this focus group will also provide an opportunity for comment, suggestion and enquiry about ministry within the parish from the viewpoint of the participants. The themes of understanding and of power are those that I have deduced from my own exploration and practice. However these may not be shared by the participants. This focus group will enable a greater degree of participation and opportunity for new themes to be highlighted from the congregation and not just from me as their minister. This focus group should allow for members to suggest and advance their own comments and reflections on the experience of ministry in this parish.

The questions generated by this focus group can then be shared with a selection of other White clergy ministering in similar congregations to see if there is a pattern of themes and experiences amongst the clergy. The questions will involve one-off interviews with clergy selected by myself and fulfilling the criteria necessary for the research situation. I propose to interview at least six parish priests.

Table 7: A Summary of the research participation.

Participants	**Type of Participation**	**Purpose of Research**
Congregation members	▪ focus group ▪ presentation and discussion	▪ testing themes ▪ generating new themes
Clergy	▪ interview ▪ questions	▪ discovering resonance between investigator's experience and that of other clergy

[133] These areas are explored in the submission for Part 2, Section 4.

Methodology

The lack of current research and investigation within this area of ministry means that at this stage the research must be of an exploratory nature. Identifying as yet unknown themes and concepts, relationships and behaviours within the ministry of White clergy in Black majority congregations, will require a qualitative approach. Qualitative research seeks to discover the diverse perspectives within a community of interest and also to begin to discern links between these perspectives. It is in this way that qualitative research offers an opportunity for 'seeing and discovering' (Swinton & Mowat 2006, 31).

For the first part of this research the investigation will involve participant observation - a particular form of qualitative research. Although normally participant observation would involve researchers setting themselves within the community under observation, in this case I am already a part of this community. Whilst this provides an immediate advantage in terms of participant observation it also has some ethical problems which I will discuss later.

When this research is complete then it may be possible to generate from the data analysis some observations which could then be tested and verified through a quantitative approach.

The second part of this project involves interviews and by their nature they will be qualitative and ethnographic – the interviews will record a wide range of individual's experiences and understandings which will be collated as personal accounts. These written accounts of the interviews will provide the first sample identifying the feelings, practices and reflections of other clergy.[134]

Method

The research consists of a focus group and a selected group of clergy. The focus group (created from within the congregation in which I minister) will be asked to view a presentation of my preliminary conclusions and findings and then participate in a guided discussion to provide feedback and comment. This group is expected to last between one hour and 90 minutes and will take place in the church building as this is the setting for most of our parish small groups. The presentation will take approximately 15 minutes of this. The session will be audio-recorded to collect the conversations and comments from the participants.

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[134] The idea of feelings as opposed to facts is significant. Qualitative research of this kind values the feelings and perceptions of the participants as much as what might be termed objective facts. Indeed given the nature of this research objectivity is not as measurable. Feelings are at the heart of this piece of work. Pearce describes a similar understanding of her own research in a multi-ethnic school. She admits not to writing 'an accurate portrait' (2005, p4) of race and ethnic difference in the school, but about her colleagues feelings and perceptions on race and ethnic difference.

The clergy who take part in the second and main part of this research project will be asked the questions which spring from the initial research (as confirmed and/or adapted in light of the focus group). They will be asked to give answers, or make comment where they can. Interviews will last no more than one hour. Again the interviews will be audio-recorded to allow for transcribing and analysis afterwards. There will be no reading or writing required in either group of participants although the questions will be available in written form. Interviews will normally take place in the home of the participant but should he or she wish to respond with written answers instead of, or as well as, the interview, this would possible.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The initial focus group from the parish should contain between 5 and 10 participants - based on the average size of small groups in my congregation for other meetings and activities - representing about 10% of the active membership of the church. The group should as far as possible be a representative sample of the congregation with regard to colour, age, length of membership, gender, ethnicity (in this situation particularly West Indian/African/British).

The nature of small groups in this congregation is that a core group of people volunteer for certain groups depending on the area of interest and/or the method of participation. A general invitation through the church's notices will invite interest but the encouragement of the investigator will ensure the representative sample as indicated above.

The researcher will interview at least six clergy. For the clergy sample the number is restricted only by the timescale of this project, but to allow for the opportunity for trends and themes to be identified at least six participants would be required. The inclusion criteria for this sample are that the clergy participants will need to be White male priests within the Church of England who are licensed at incumbent level to congregations which have a Black majority membership. Choosing male clergy will limit the sample of clergy deliberately. Female clergy will have a different experience of the dynamics of power on which this survey is centred. The roles of men and women and the ways in which they interact (not least in a leadership setting) would carry particular weight for this research that would fall beyond the scope of this project.[135]

Clergy of non-incumbent status will not be suitable as they do not necessarily exercise full leadership within a congregation. Clergy of Church of England congregations which have a sizeable but not majority Black membership will not be included simply because of the time available. Although their contribution would enhance this research it is beyond this project. Apart

[135] The complexity of traditional gender and leadership roles within the church and amongst West Indian communities for example would compound the difficulty of analysing the data. The investigator can use only his own experience to generate the initial questions, and whilst this will overlap with the experience of female clergy it is beyond the scope of this project.

from these exclusions the sample will try to reflect a wideness of practice and experience in terms of ecclesiastical style, parish social and demographic breadth, as well as geographical difference.

Data Analysis

On completion of the clergy interviews the material recorded will be transcribed. I will analyse the responses from the interviews, looking in particular at the following areas:

Resonance and Convergence

The findings from my own experience confirmed and verified by the focus group will produce themes around ministry, power, privilege and understanding which I imagine will be reflected in the responses from the other clergy. Some of these responses will directly correlate with my own findings and there will be a resonance of words, themes and practice. At other times this correlation may not be as direct and the findings from the clergy sample may relate to my own experiences and themes but show a different understanding or develop from a different experience. This will represent convergence.

Challenge

There may be experiences amongst the clergy sample that challenge my own findings and conclusions. Where there is a definite opposing position or practice which does not correlate with my own, and yet springs from a similar circumstance of observation on the part of the priest, this will be recognised. This challenge to my observations will need to be looked at in greater detail. Does the difference of practice directly reflect the difference of experience or circumstance within the variables in the clergy sample? Does the difference of practice alter the effectiveness of ministry and what are the perceptions of the congregation? The questions asked of the different approach will depend on the nature of the differences discovered.

New Themes

The third area of analysis will centre on completely new themes and understandings. They would be themes and understandings in the practice of the interviewed clergy that I had not identified from my own experience or presented as part of my initial inquiry.

These new areas will also serve as an important critical partner in testing and analysing the areas of convergence and challenge. Significant gaps between practices will be of interest alongside areas of convergence.

Contribution to Knowledge

These three areas: resonance and convergence, challenge, and new understandings will provide a profile of the issues surrounding ministry within Black majority congregations within the Church of

England. The collected experiences and reflections of the White clergy working in these congregations may provide a new source of information about the nature of ministry and leadership within the church. The implications of this new research are far reaching and would contribute towards the fields of ministerial development, theological education as well as the wider area of practical theology.[136]

Ethical Considerations

The process of this research centres on personal and sensitive areas of ministry and practice. As such there are a number of ethical considerations both in terms of process and its effects on those involved.

My own preliminary conclusions from the study of and reflection on my own experience of ministry raise issues of race, racism, inequality, power and privilege. At a congregational level, many of these issues are only hinted at in current discussions within small groups or parochial meetings. Whereas there is an overarching ethos of inclusion and acceptance (together with a vocal and visible anti-racism movement) within the parish, it is also clear from some previous discussions that there is a residual racism present within both individuals and the church as a parochial body.

At an institutional level within the Church of England training and resources are targeted towards anti-racism rather than underlying issues around race and cultural awareness and the allied issues of power, privilege and understanding. This research will generate new understandings of how the institution (at a diocesan or national level) could adapt its ministerial training. Such information could be seen as a challenge to some.

Given the sensitivity and potential emotional and personal nature of these issues, the presentation and discussion to the congregation based focus group (and the questions to the clergy which will be confirmed by it), will be worded in such a way as to allow for detachment from the particular context as much as is appropriate and possible. Names, particulars and specific situations and people will be avoided and, in the case of the focus group and the clergy questions (and in the final report), general case studies will be employed to allow for a detachment which then allows the participant (or reader) to create their own connections. As with all participant observation methods openness about the investigator's research agenda and intention is crucial as well as ensuring absolute anonymity and confidentiality.

All participants will be asked to complete consent forms outlining the research project, the nature of their participation, their anonymity, the way the results will be recorded and published, as well as details of how they can connect with the published outcomes. They will also be able to withdraw from the process at any time or withdraw their contribution.

[136] I outline these contributions below.

In addition to these general issues, the congregational focus group has its own particular concern. As indicated above, the initial presentation to this group may lead to a fuller and potentially emotive discussion. The naming of, and discussion around, issues of colour, racism, power and privilege as well as the concentrated analysis of the workings and organisation of the congregation may cause emotional or spiritual distress and the need for further discussions on issues raised. Opportunity must be given for a continuing exploration of the issues involved for those who wish to address them.

By definition this congregation-focussed part of the research will involve those with a particular relationship with the investigator which may be considered dependant in terms of spiritual leadership and/or pastoral care. Although congregation members can to a certain extent be seen as dependant, they are also free to choose to be independent of the investigator's leadership.

There is an additional consideration about the ways in which a predominantly female focus group (if representative of the congregation) will interact with a male cleric. Whilst my length of ministry within this congregation will have alleviated some issues of reserve or hesitation, it may still be an issue for some members of the older generations.

The interviews with other clergy pose particular problems about anonymity and vulnerability: those involved in the interviews may feel vulnerable through talking about their own ministry and/or their congregations. Anonymity must be ensured for both the participants and the communities of which they talk.

As the researcher I may also make myself vulnerable in terms of collegiality with other clergy and in the relationship with my pastoral congregation. This is one reason for not choosing local clergy for the interviews. The investigator also acts as a training supervisor for a curate. This close relationship with both this research and the congregation will need to be clearly defined. I may hear comments and feedback from the presentation which question my approaches to ministry and leadership within the congregation. I may also be party to discomfort and distress from the participants as outlined above.[137]

Whilst it is unlikely that criminal or other disclosures could arise during the study, the topic of this project does include sensitive and potentially upsetting issues. The opportunity to meet further with the investigator and/or an independent facilitator will be essential. This is true for both the focus group participants and the clergy participants.

[137] The researchers own whiteness is also an issue. Alongside issues of power and cultural difference there are other less tangible concerns for the researcher. 'Since black and ethnic minority people have historically always been connected to pseudo-scientific racist ideologies, research endeavours and researchers (white and black) are vulnerable to the pervasive way in which these ideological assumptions can unconsciously interfere.' (Lago 2006, p230)

Writing up: Conclusions & Format

The final report on this research project will contain four parts. In the first part there will be introductory chapters on the background, purpose and nature of this research, together with a discussion on the development and execution of the research itself. The outcomes and analysis of the focus group research will be collected together and this will form the second part. Part three will also contain the outcomes and analysis of the clergy interviews which formed the second part of the research project. Together these two parts will present the data and its analysis, as well as a theological interpretation of the findings.

The fourth part of the final report will summarise the conclusions that have been drawn from this study and the ways in which the research may contribute to other conversations with theological education, training and practice. The thesis will also outline suggestions for further research.

Whereas the full report will be of interest and relevance to the conversations outlined above, it is unlikely that all the participants in this research will find the report as convenient. It is expected that some participants will wish to see the report's outcomes, conclusions and suggestions, and for this a summary report will be produced. For the parish based focus group this will be in both a written form and as a presentation. For the clergy participants there will need to be a summary of the research findings produced from the final report. This summary report will be available on request.

Dissemination

As already discussed the research findings will be of interest to a variety of different audiences. I believe that the primary audience will be amongst other clergy in similar parishes. As well as both confirming and affirming the ministry of other clergy it will hopefully offer new insights and opportunities for parochial ministry. It is because of this last outcome of the research that the report should also be of importance to those involved in ministerial training on a local or diocesan level.[138] There is some significance for those involved in pre-ordination training as part of the initial formation and education of clergy, but the nature of this research and its subject rely heavily on the experience of the minister. For this reason the report should aim to be available to diocesan and local trainers and officers.

To ensure a wider audience within these communities it will be important to look for publication in journals and magazines centred on ministry and education and in particular the *Journal of Practical Theology*. The content may also be of interest to readers of *Black Theology: An International Journal*.

[138] See Lago 2006, p183 for a discussion on how 'cultural identity must be factored into' professional relationships. If this is held to be true for the ministerial profession too, then it must play an important part in its training and formation.

This research project will contain a snap shot of the current practice of some White parish priests within the Church of England and their reflections on their ministerial practice. It will provide an important base for future study and research and make a valuable contribution to the theory and practice of ministry within the Church.

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Reflective Practice

Part B: Section 4

Reflective Practice

What makes this place work?

Introduction

What makes this place work? That was the question I started with and after many twists and turns on the journey it still forms the heart of my research. Over the three years or more since I initially explored the idea of following this course of study my research question has changed, expanded and then shrunk to arrive at its present form but, nevertheless, at the heart of each of these questions (and at the heart of each of the units of work for the portfolio) there has been an enquiry into the nature of my ministry.

Of course this underlying question makes two particular assumptions. Firstly that the parish does indeed 'work' (whatever is meant by such a phrase),[139] and secondly that it is my own ministry within the parish that has contributed to this. In this piece I wish to explore the nature of ministry within this parish and to what extent I have shaped that ministry, and in what ways it has shaped me.

Although I have had a license to minister as an Anglican priest in only three parishes, I have of course had professional connections with many more. Each parish, and each church within a parish, is in many ways unique – people, history, spirituality and practice combine with the present ministry leadership team to create in each place a particular manifestation of ministry. Whilst these particular manifestations are specific and located within a particular community and context, they do of course bear similarities with others congregations and parishes so that it is possible to identify or recognise an Anglican form of ministry (or of what it is to be 'church' in that place). In this way each individual church community is an incarnation of the universal Church. Each of the church communities I had experience of (either through ministry or association) has in some way contributed to my own Christian journey – whether in terms of my professional ministry or my personal spirituality.

Given this impression and the visibility of the Christian faith within each church setting it might appear strange to single out one particular church as having a definite and significant impact on me and my ministry. After all, perhaps this impression was no more than a timely realisation of my maturing into ministry[140] or a renewed interest in the parochial life I found myself in. Even given

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[139] Success in pastoral ministry is notoriously difficult to quantify.

[140] At the time of writing this article, this post was my third licensed position, and the second as incumbent. I arrived at this post in the 7th year of my ordained ministry and at the age of 30.

these possibilities it was also clear that my parish was different. And it wasn't just me that was saying that.
In this piece I give a reflexive account of my research, aware of my own role, limitations and my position, as well as reflections on my own analysis.[141]

Part 1: My Parish, My Ministry, My Progress

The Place and Space

There are some facts about the parish of St Agnes that help to build up a picture of this Christian community. This background information forms a useful backdrop to the journey of both my practice and my research. The late 19th century brick church of St Agnes stands slightly hidden, indeed nestled within a densely populated area south of Manchester city centre. The parish covers a small geographical area but contains over 14,500 people. The census figures from 2001 tell us that at that time 45% of the population of the parish identified as Asian Muslim although recent estimates suggest that this is now nearer 60%. Significantly the area of highest percentage of Muslims is the closely packed residential streets immediately surrounding the parish church. It is virtually impossible to not feel this apparent incongruity when visitors arrive at the building for the first time.

The present predominantly south-Asian population of the parish is the latest phase in over 50 years of immigration and settlement in this area. In the late 1950s the first West Indian families arrived and then throughout the 1960s and 1970s the number of Black people living in the parish had increased significantly.[142] For the church at the heart of this changing community there has been an obvious impact.

Parish magazines from the 1950s show a broad and liberal portrayal of news and information about the topics of the day as well as a window on to a larger world, and indeed, the worldwide Anglican Communion. This must have had some affect on the parishioners as it is not insignificant that the people of St Agnes' welcomed Black people to worship from the start.[143] The present worshiping congregation is approximately two-thirds Black, with the majority being of West Indian heritage and a smaller number of west Africans.

[141] In a chapter on 'becoming a reflexive practitioner-researcher', Lee (2009, p64-65) gives a full list of what might be expected to be found in such a reflexive account and I draw on framework in this piece.
[142] The first immigrants often came alone, leaving their wife or husband or family behind until finances or lives became more settled.
[143] Whereas other local churches either refused black people entry or made them uncomfortable and challenged why they were not at the tabernacle or chapel.

These two features of the church and parish make an inescapable impression on the ethos of the place and it is the effects of this impression on people (visitors, parishioners and clergy alike) that cause me, along with many others, to ask, 'what makes this place work?'

There was a third area that provides a backdrop to my research journey and that was the growing frustration of 'mission-shaped' pressure. Although this is not the place to discuss that argument it is true that I, like many others, felt pressurised by the institutional Church's seeming obsession with the Fresh Expressions and Mission-Shaped Church (MSC) agenda. What was wrong with traditional models of ministry, parish and church? The conventional ministerial backbone of worship, pastoral care, and parish community seemed to be out of fashion.[144]

An Academic Framework

Having realised the special (if not unique) nature of the parish I began to consider how I might explore the reasons – if there were any, for at that stage I had not considered these issues fully – for this particularity. Academic research had not been at all part of my outlook and yet the arrival of the Doctor of Practical Theology (DPT) programme seemed to make sense in terms of structuring a way of looking at my ministry and parish situation that would not just enhance my understanding, but would also value and depend on practice. The DPT could provide an academic landscape in which to consider my experience.

In the preparatory conversations for the DPT I was certain that my research would focus on what I had identified as the key areas of particularity for my parish and ministry: the importance of place and the importance of the parish system. These two central themes were chosen almost directly as a result of the three major features of the parish that I have outlined above: the significance of the church's location within a Muslim community; the way the parish church was identified as 'home' by a diverse ethnic congregation and the centrality of traditional ministerial methods as opposed to newer 'fresh expressions'. As I reflect on the way I approached the initial year of my research programme I see a wide range of themes and factors mixed up in my attempts to make sense of my situation: location, place, space; belonging, community, connection; hospitality, generosity and support.

My recollections of the first few months of working towards the literature review are of confusion and flapping around. At the time I could see no great correlation between the words that I have just listed (there would certainly have been no grouping of three, threes). My research journal reflects this confusion, at one point describing my mind as 'hopelessly lost'! Thankfully such sensationalism began to wane and even the confusion became productive after a few months:

[144] This is of course a highly subjective view of the issues! Both the Fresh Expressions movement and the Mission Shaped Church report which influenced it would argue that they merely enrich, enliven and re-energise the ministerial provision of the Church. However the popular perception of these movements was less energising and quite demoralising for many clergy working in less socially mobile or educated areas than those outlined in the report.

> I started today with a still vague idea of what I am trying to do and where I might end up! I think I began earlier this year with ideas of working out and understanding what ministry and particularly parish priest ministry means to me after more than 10 years practice. This personal and experiential basis was still nevertheless aimed at, or looking towards a wider (and objective) analysis of what shape the parish and parish ministry could take in defence (almost!) against the mission shaped agenda and fresh expressions.
>
> Perhaps I am less defensive after reading and allowing myself to become more familiar with some of the [MSC] material, but I now seem less interested in battling for the protection of parishes over and against the fresh expression, but rather to see the re-freshening of parish life and priesthood. This is where it is at for the majority still.[145]

As I look back on this journal I can see that I was not content at simply noting my frustration (either at my own lack of progress or at the pressure to conform to MSC agenda). I was already turning my mind to my own experience and practice rather than simply the abstract situation:

> My situation seems to require, and indeed succeeds to a certain extent on, a priest centred, priest led ministry where all aspects of parish life from administration and buildings through to mission, pastoral care, teaching and worship are led by and expected of the parish priest.
>
> So my thoughts and questions are now coming down to land in my own situation and parish experience. This leads to questions about what makes St Agnes Longsight different from other parishes. Or perhaps better to ask what is it about parishes like St Agnes Longsight that require distinct models of ministry?
>
> Is it anything to do with urban priority areas? Is it something to do with expectations and experiences of different races and cultures? If St Agnes was a White congregation would I have ministered differently (or effectively?)
>
> Perhaps the bulk of this project needs to focus on the parish of St Agnes and its ministry: mainly Black congregation with a White priest in a mainly Asian community.[146]

These journal reflections are of course not completely isolated thoughts – they developed alongside the literature search of the first year and were guided (if not influenced) by the signposts of literature in the following areas: the parish system, hospitality and generosity and British Black theology.[147]

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[145] November 15th 2007. Extracts from my learning journal are copied here directly without any alteration or correction. As it is a private blog I do not pay much attention to grammar, punctuation or style!
[146] November 15th 2007.
[147] Looking back at the literature review I can see the black theology strand as differently important as the others. Whereas at the time it seemed directly influential on my situation, it is true that

The successful completion and assessment of the literature review marked a tangible change of tone in my experience and method of research. The confidence filters through to my learning journal posts and I begin to experience confidence in my ministry as well. This is a tricky emotion to identify. I don't think I lacked confidence previously – I have no recollection of doubt or failure in ministry. What I did fail to do before was recognise the validity of my own experience in terms of value. The knowledge that I collected from the literature I had read, the processing of this in both my mind and on (assessed) paper, as well as the new light I shed on my day to day work, all contributed to a sense of legitimacy of ministry and experience.

The confidence experienced in ministry and practice was echoed by a confidence in research technique. At first any searches within books and journals for relevant information can seem futile; the sea of research is vast and the raft from which I start my research is easily drowned or buffeted off course. But with time it becomes possible to either locate oneself within the sea, or at least keep above the waves of information for sufficiently long to be able to make out sufficient landmarks to build confidence in both practice and research.

Parish and Experience as Focus

I lost track of how many times during my first few months or so that I had heard that research was like a funnel. The initial exploration would encompass a number of themes and directions – all of them necessary in surveying the research landscape. With time and most importantly with reflection, this breadth would become focussed on something which, for me, became quite individual and specific. By the completion of the literature review it had become clear that my own experience was crucial not just to this field of research but in actually defining my research.

Being a White priest in a Black majority congregation was significant. That other people had not written on the subject was less of a setback and actually a key indicator of its importance. Exploring what is and is not said has become an important part of my research and practice since. What is most apparent can at times seem quite unobvious, and it is this hidden or ignored experience of ministry that has become the focus of my research.

In the second unit of assessment I developed this idea of the White minister in a Black congregation in an article which looked at the absence of literature and other comment. Whereas it is true that most Black majority congregations within the Church of England will have a White minister, there is so little written about their experiences. This silence is not found in other professions so I was able to explore the Black-White, professional-client relationship in other areas. The confidence and ability to be able to do this comparative reflection again brought a sense of

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actually it is black spirituality and black people's experience of church that has a greater effect on my parish experience. Most black members of the congregation have not developed an identifiable Black Theology (in the way that James Cone or even Anthony Reddie might recognise such a discipline).

validity to my own parish experience. For the first time I could see patterns in my own behaviour which were borne out in other professions. Not only did the literature bear out my own understandings, but I was also beginning to see how I was monitoring and developing my ministry on an almost daily basis – reflection and action as an inherent part of daily practice.

The apparent gap between the original research focus of parish, place and space and the present focus on colour, power and privilege begins to make sense as I look back on my research journey. They are more related than they might at first appear. The progress has taken me from a broad parish level through to a congregational level and then eventually to my own particular experience within the congregation. The themes I identified in answering my own question (what makes this place work?) have themselves been distilled so that they have become focussed on the particular core issues of race, power and privilege. How this has happened can be seen my looking at some specific examples from my parochial ministry.

Part 2: Parish Life Reviewed

In this section I give some illustrations from my parish experience and practice which highlight the developing thoughts that have accompanied the conscious observation of my ministry. In looking at these examples I am using a form of reflective learning cycle developed and popularised by Schon (1983) and Kolb (1984) and developed by Green (1990), Ballard (2006, p81ff) and others as a pastoral cycle. I describe these processes of experience, reflection, theorising/thinking and testing/action in the following sections.

Colourful Language

Worship is central to any Christian community. It has a particular importance in the life of St Agnes; a modern catholic, Eucharistic congregation which values the tradition and liturgical heritage of the church. The physical layout of the main worshipping space engenders closeness and emphasises the gathered community as the body of Christ. There is an intimacy which is not threatening or exclusive, but welcoming: it enables newcomers and longstanding members of the congregation to participate in worship. The smaller chapel used for weekday services builds on this intimacy and it is particularly important in that those who attend the weekday worship – both Eucharistic and the daily office – by default become praying partners. Even though the set texts of the liturgy (as opposed to the *ad lib* informal prayers) do not offer an insight into personal spirituality, there is nevertheless a shared liturgical journey through scripture and season. There is an intimacy which symbolically underlines the corporate nature of all the Church's worship.

The Church of England's lectionary for the daily office has been manipulated less than the Sunday tables and often throws up complex, bizarre or uncomfortable passages. On a number of occasions after the service I have made comments on the scripture in order to provoke conversation and to

ascertain the thoughts of others. I have become uncomfortably conscious of two areas of language use: power and colour.

The dualism between light and dark is a central theme in Christianity as in many religious systems. The natural equation of lightness with daylight, Whiteness, and clarity is balanced by the association of darkness with night, Black and confusion. The development of these themes to include moral dimensions of good and evil is so inherent in the Scriptures that it runs through into the spirituality and prayers of the Church. The most obvious example may be from Psalm 51: 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.'[148] But it is in the more subtle adaptations of the imagery of darkness and light that the implications of this dualism become embedded in Christian spirituality. The opening preface for Evening Prayer during the Easter season provides one example for me of an irritation rather than a call to prayer: 'Through him dark death has been destroyed and radiant life is everywhere restored. As you call us out of darkness into his marvellous light' (Church of England 2005, p269).

For many people I expect that such a phrase is without any difficulty in terms of oppression or racism. As I work out my own thoughts about the difficulty that I now have with such a phrase I can hear within my head the mocking voices of those who complain so loudly about the ways in which political correctness has gone too far! And so I find myself each time I use the sentence at Evening Prayer correcting or perhaps re-setting myself. I use the term reset deliberately. The idea of correcting suggests that it is wrong to see the possible oppressive undertone behind the language of this phrase. I do not think it is wrong. However I do see then need to reset, or realign myself in order to be clear of what exactly is going through my head when I face the discomfort of this and other language of colour.

This act of realignment involves acknowledging the different feelings and thoughts at play in my heart and in my head as I say these words. Some of the thoughts are these: a long standing sensitivity to liturgical language; the growing understanding (through my research) of language and words as power – especially for minority groups; the importance of positive models for minority groups – especially in terms of the visibility of colour, the subconscious and unconscious ways in which language (as well as architecture, music and other art forms) shape and dictate our understandings of ourselves.

Worlds Apart

There is a distance between these somewhat theorised questions and thoughts which stem from reflection on the experience and the actual reality of the experience itself. This distance always seems to need addressing, and I identified three ways. The first was to avoid the use of this text with its difficult imagery, to choose a different passage or reword it. As a pastoral liturgist I feel uncomfortable with this alteration to an agreed and official form – not least because I understand

[148] Psalm 51 verse 7, New Revised Standard Version

the importance of viewing corporate prayer as a link with the Church universal at prayer, and that this is treasured by the other people present. Changing words seems inappropriate.

My second response is to do nothing, but to learn to understand the limitations and exaggerations of my own mind and experience. This is the approach I have actually adopted and although I am not comfortable with it, it has given me time to live with the tension and paralysis that is so often associated with any attempts to confront issues in the area of discrimination.

So the third way is the way I would like to attempt as part of my research: to begin a conversation with the other people present at Evening Prayer and share my thoughts and discover theirs. Are other people as concerned, bothered, affected, as I am? Does it matter if they are or not? Although I have been unable to do this so far about this area of colour, I have in the past done so about Biblical passages on the role and position of women. The discussions have proved helpful in both understanding the passage and in general discovering the varying attitudes to scripture that are present in this group.[149] The initial stage of my research will involve a focus group from within the parish where my own experiences and conclusions will be shared, tested and verified, thus enabling me to discover the thoughts of others.[150]

Words of Power

The second area of discomfort has been around the language of power. In many ways the issues for me here are similar if not identical to those surrounding the problems of colour as outlined above. Again it is my growing awareness through a mixture of research, relationship and experience that has identified the area of concern. The same cycle of conscious awareness can be found in my journey of discovery around the language of power.

The master-slave imagery in the Bible is manifold. Alongside the historic narratives about Israel's slavery in Egypt and the persecutions of both the exodus and the exile, there are the more analogous uses of master-slave imagery in the relationship between God and humankind. Within the New Testament the shift changes away from corporate slave identity of a whole nation or peoples, to the rather practical and everyday reality of slaves within the Roman and Greek world. It is this accepted reality which then forms the basis of Paul's (and other's)[151] exhortation that slaves should be obedient.

This transformation into the acceptance of the concept of slavery (because of its spiritual parallel of the believer's following of Christ) is given a worthy place in Christian spirituality. My previous

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[149] The approach to scripture at St Agnes' may, in a generalist statement, be described as literal. Texts are taken very much at face value and understood in a simplistic and explicit manner. These are applied to life readily and liberally – if life experience echoes the understanding. However this liberal application means that if experience challenges or conflicts with this literal understanding, then scripture is honoured and set aside. There is no neglecting or dismissing of scripture, merely a setting aside – as if for later.
[150] See Part 2, Section 3.
[151] For example the First Epistle of Peter.

understandings of the use of this imagery led me to believe that although the idea of slavery is unpalatable in the modern day church, the idea is agreeable when considered from this spiritual, Christ centred viewpoint. But such a statement assumes a particular heritage and history. In terms of heritage it is easier for those who have not been the victims of majority oppression (for example, White heterosexual men) to normalise such a concept. In terms of history it is a fact that (to remain with this ethnic group) White heterosexual men have often been the oppressor, and therefore the justifier.

This discomfort with the language of power created much the same tensions within as that of the language of colour. It not only incorporated words such as master and slave, but the idea of lordship and its close connections with power and privilege.

Again such understandings are subjective. I set about questioning my own over-interpretation of both scripture and the spiritual tradition. Was my understanding motivated by a genuine cultural sensitivity or by an overly zealous application of political theology? This question strikes at the core of much of the journey I have made during this research process; it highlights the divide between researcher and subject, between academy and practice. For example, Methodist researcher, Anthony Reddie, acknowledges that his desire to encourage participation and discussion upon the Black British Church has taken him into the academic world where his views have been shaped and presented in a form which no longer has a direct connection with his subject. James Cone (1969, 1970), the pioneer American Black theologian's political and, for many White reader's, exclusive Black practical theology, again fails to engage with the audience about whom it is centred.[152]

In reflecting on practice, experience and the new knowledge obtained through research I become more aware of the distance that sometimes develops between my perception of what is happening and the reality.

At times this distance may seem small; for example during the celebrations surrounding the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade it seemed most obvious that the language of today should be more carefully chosen to avoid the painful renewal of colonial heritage. Scriptural images of the believer's master-slave relationship with Christ and the over-use of the term Lord in prayers and hymns, seemed clearly inappropriate during public liturgy. But at times the distance seems wide and I question whether I am over-analysing things or simply looking for things that aren't there. I remember recording in my journal a glimpse of this confusion:

> At the last residential we were asked to think of our research project as a film. If it was a film what would it be? I chose 'The Importance of Being Ernest' with its themes of layering, deception, good quotes easily forgotten, positing etc. But given the nature of our task and

[152] Admittedly both Reddie and Cone do not write for a public audience, but for, and as part of, the academic community. Reddie's workbooks on Christian education in multi-ethnic churches, *Growing in Hope* (1998) perhaps form the exception to this.

> work, and the people on the DPT programme the reverse process could have worked equally well: here is a film, 'X', now think about what that film says about your research, what light it throws on to your research. Reflection, making connects, analysis, comparison, teasing out meanings etc - all these are inherent in the practical theologian who lives his or her faith. We are surely programmed (if not trained) to do this anyway. It can become both a good practice and a bad habit![153]

My journal also reflects a growing sense of White guilt. I say sense because I am not sure I always own the guilt or my part in it, but I do acknowledge the implicit role of White people generally in perpetuating racism, oppression and the silencing of those who are different. Guilt is a heavy word when applied to something that perhaps we have little control over (through White nurture and heritage) but it nevertheless plays a role, especially when the connections between theory and practice seem to be at their most distant.

Permission to Participate

The area of language discussed above is only one example of the ways in which the need for cultural understanding and sensitivity has been a constant part of my recent ministry. In my research proposal I am hoping to look at the effects of cultural understanding (or misunderstanding) more closely. But there is another area which has been also been a constant challenge and with reflection, has grown in significance as I have become to understand the many complex processes at work in it.

Engagement and participation is in many ways akin to the theme of cultural understanding and sensitivity for I have found that after reflection on the question of why certain portions of the congregation engage less than others, I have often concluded that there are cultural and racial dynamics at work. One recurring example of this is the perceived poor attendance at the annual concert delivered by a group of singers. 'Why don't more people come? Why do the same people come?' are the questions asked privately (or to me as the parish priest) but never really asked to those who don't actually come. I decided to make some enquiries and discovered that the programme (often traditional British love or folk songs) had little significance or importance to a great number of our congregation.[154] This is in itself a form of discrimination – not objective or negative discrimination, but simply a failure to understand that different people have different memories and needs. This particular example is easily addressed and it can be extended to other areas where participation is low.

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[153] March 3rd 2009. This journal extract continues to comment that the journal, 'makes this real and - more importantly - captures these thoughts and images long after the mind has released them' – an important part of journaling that Boud comments on in his reflections on journaling as 'return to experience'. (Boud 2001, p14)

[154] I also tentatively suggested to the singers that it might be simply that not everyone wishes to attend such concerts! There is also a realism necessary in such situations: although there is a hope that most congregation members will support parish events, there is of course no obligation – a fact that many regular members forget.

There is however another dimension to this difficulty in engaging some sections of the congregation. I noticed over time that if I asked for volunteers (for individual tasks or to join a group) it was predominantly White members of the congregation who responded. If I invited or asked people individually then there was an almost universal acceptance. I realised that there was of course a power dynamic at play whereby it might be difficult to say no to the clergy. But even taking this in to account it was clear that the culture of invitation – and especially waiting to be invited – was a very strong expectation.

It was interesting to explore this reticence in participation – it wasn't merely shyness. I knew from pastoral and other church interactions that many members were not naturally shy. This was another dynamic: the privilege (and power) of authority. Despite my discomfort with it, I must acknowledge that for some members of my congregation my Whiteness and maleness also contribute to the authority they already perceive through my priesthood.

In my journal I wrote: 'This isn't my first encounter of this issue. The reluctance and difficulty of people talking confidently has been a recurring theme. I thought I had cracked it. I have not. Clarity is everything - and I can achieve this by either playing the controlling parent role (which to an extent is what they want because of learnt behaviour) or I can simply start to encourage them to rephrase and regroup their thoughts as a congregation of equals.'

I would not phrase these thoughts from my journal in quite the same way again, however this interests me (particularly in the light of my plan to interview other clergy) because I see exactly this parent-child, authoritarian imbalance of power at work in other parishes. I am conscious that my phrases again are loaded with bias towards a view of these relationships and indeed models of ministry, but without acknowledging our positions of privilege and power as ministers we can condone patterns of behaviour simply by our desire to appear inclusive. True inclusivity requires equality of power, position and voice; it cannot be created by presence only.[155]

This reflection on and thinking about my experience of participation and engagement gradually led to a development of the processes by which decisions were made within the congregation. Alongside the PCC[156] a number of informal small groups have been set up which allow a wider selection of voices to be heard and which deliberately include those who would not normally put themselves forward for election to a formal committee or council. It is this practice, developed in response to my observations, that I also wish to explore through my research interviews with other clergy.[157]

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[155] Presence and participation are key themes in the Church of England's report on the place of minority ethnic people in the Church. See Church of England General Synod [2007].
[156] The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a legally required body with powers and duties defined by certain Acts of Parliament and other legislation.
[157] See Part 2, Section 3.

In each of the examples explored above the action decided upon as a result of the observation and reflection may not always be explicit or practical, but in each situation an action is at least possible or considered. The difficulty in delivering this new knowledge in the form of a specific action does not diminish its importance - what Swinton and Mowat call *critical faithfulness*. This new knowledge:

> ... acknowledges the divine givenness of scripture and the genuine working of the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of what is given, while at the same time taking seriously the interpretative dimension of the process of understanding revelation and ensuring the faithful practices of individuals and communities.' (Swinton and Mowat 2006, p93)

Part 3: Theological Conclusions

In many ways 'conclusions' is an inaccurate way of describing the theological themes which I describe in this last section. They are conclusions in that they are the realisation of theological and biblical themes which I have been aware of during my reflection in the last few years. But they are not end products – the final stage of thought or process - for they also play a part of the cycle which feeds itself: experience, thought, reflection, theology and practice all working together. They are also not conclusions in that they are not always as explicit as a conclusion suggests. Much of the theological feeling behind these reflections is embedded in my own personal spirituality and thus speaks as much of my own understanding as it does of the events themselves.

Within practical parish ministry I suspect that for most clergy theology is not something that is actively undertaken, but rather a hidden tool, alongside other disciplines, which sheds light on experience and practice. And that experience is usually mundane in nature: worldly, tedious and often dull. That is not to dismiss it – in fact it is to see God at work within the ordinary and unexciting that can transform such events into the glimpses of divine presence and purpose that lie at the heart of Christian vocation.

This relates to the first theological theme which I see within the examples outlined earlier. The incarnation is central to the Christian faith. Amongst the many ways in which it is theologically applied and understood there are two which play a role in my own reflection: the incarnation as the transformative power of God – the ordinary and everyday made extraordinary and exceptional; and the incarnation as ability of one being to live within the world of another.

The issues surrounding cultural awareness, understanding and immersion into the world of those who are different, lie at the heart of this understanding of incarnation and are inherent in my reflections above. Incarnation in the transformative sense is, as Aldred suggests, a better paradigm for the Caribbean British community than the usual one of exodus: 'a theology of realized liberty

rather than one in search of it' (Aldred 2005, p164).[158] I believe from my reflection that it is exactly this realized liberty that can also be experienced by White clergy (and others) in seriously engaging with their own Whiteness and with the culture and heritage of Black congregation members.

But there is another theme, biblical and theological, which speaks through my experience and has directly challenged my practice. I have heard it said that preachers only have one sermon and if that is the case then mine is certainly about confidence and boldness. Not only is it a recurring theme within sermons but I can see now that it has also shaped my ministry in the parish of St Agnes.[159] Affirmation is at the heart of Christian ministry – affirmation of faith and of vocation. But I have recognised within my own experience a ministry of *confirmation* rather than merely affirmation. I distinguish between the two in that the former implies the giving of authority or permission to fulfil that to which we have been called.

The meekness of many older generation Black members of the congregation may prevent full participation. In my section above on 'permission to participate' I describe the difficulty in encouraging true inclusion. The use of a culture of invitation and the confirmation of the vocation of the baptised to take their full place within the community of faith has been central to my renewed action and practice and awareness of power.

The letter to the Hebrews gives a firm basis for the development of boldness and confidence. Unlike the picture of cowering fear in the presence of God in popular Christian piety, Hebrews paints a rather different picture of fear – that of reverence and awe. For the writer of Hebrew, 'looking to Jesus',[160] does not imply merely turning our lives towards him, but a full on face to face engagement with God incarnate.

It is this engagement that lies at the heart of my renewed practice. It is not an easy engagement for it involves fear in both its forms: fear as the pain of discovering extreme division as well as the painful acknowledgement of imbalances of power; and fear as the respect and awe necessary for the proper exercising of Christian ministry amongst God's people.

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[158] Aldred continues to write about the confidence which springs from such an alternative theological paradigm: 'Today's Caribbean British Christians have emerged as the 'incarnate' Caribbean British Christians, embodying the ethnic-religious traditions of their antecedents, but also adopting many of the cultural and religious values of their contemporary British context.' (Aldred 2005, p173)

[159] I inherited a parish which had been through a difficult period and was advised on my appointment that encouragement and building up were key to the future. I now recognise that this strengthening ministry was (and is) as much about healing memories of the past as it is about affirming those whose voices are often not clearly heard.

[160] Hebrews 12.2

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