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**Patricia Jones**

**Discovering the Common Good in Practice:  
The Catholicity of Catholic Charities**

**Abstract**

This research examines a group of UK Catholic charities working in the field of homelessness and social exclusion in order to understand how their Catholicity is constituted and how this impacts on their practice. I argue that their Catholicity is primarily found in how their practices enact, test and extend Catholic social vision rather than in institutional alignment. I demonstrate that the charities have an ecclesiological specificity which official Catholic texts fail to recognise. They operate across the porous boundaries of the visible Church, drawing into their work people who share elements of the social vision articulated in Catholic thought and tradition. Theologically, they enact the Catholic intuition about the meaning of social bonds and reciprocal human flourishing by working to counter social exclusion and vulnerability and point social realities towards the Kingdom. Their location on ecclesial boundaries, their inclusiveness, and their embeddedness in secular structures of social welfare and politics, are necessary conditions of social mission.

I use the concept of the common good as a hermeneutic in order to read the charities as a case study testing how Catholic social teaching's methodological strategies propose shared moral horizons. Using Thomas Bushlack's concept of civic virtue in conversation with normative Catholic social teaching about the common good enables fresh insights into the practices which enact this principle. The charities discover the meaning of the common good by recognising and wrestling with the absence of the conditions that enable people to seek fulfilment. Their asymmetrical relational work, shaped by their narratives, renders an abstract and elusive concept as a real and practical task. Their communally held and inclusively enacted intuitions disclose pragmatic coherence with Conciliar ecclesiology and validate its orientations. The charities act as agents and inventors of mediated social mission, illuminating an expansive Catholicity.

99,475 words

**Discovering the Common Good in Practice:  
The Catholicity of Catholic Charities**

**Submitted by  
Patricia Jones**

**For the qualification of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**Department of Theology and Religion  
Durham University  
2019**

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## Abbreviations

CAFOD	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
CASC	Catholic Agency for Social Concern
CBCEW	Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
CCS	Centre for Catholic Studies
CCWC	Catholic Child Welfare Council
CHAS	Catholic Housing Aid Society
CI	Caritas Internationalis
CSAN	Caritas Social Action Network
CST	Catholic Social Teaching
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
NRPF	No recourse to public funds
PCJP	Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
SVP	Society of St Vincent de Paul
YCW	Young Christian Workers

## Bibliographical Note

The versions of official Catholic texts used throughout the thesis are drawn from different sources. In regard to texts from Vatican II, I have used Norman P. Tanner's translation in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils Volume II: Trent to Vatican II* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990) because it uses inclusive language when talking about people (but not about God). In other cases, notably John Paul II's 1989 Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, I have used hard copy editions which I have owned and used over many years and know intimately. Other CST texts are cited in the version available on the Vatican website. Since CST texts exist in many editions, I have referenced using paragraph or section numbers rather than page numbers.

## **Statement of Copyright**

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More immediately, I am grateful to the Plater Trust for the funding which made this research possible, and to Caritas Social Action Network, who co-sponsored the project. I hope the outcome proves to have some value in the continuing concerns of both bodies.

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Finally I am grateful to the charities that participated in the research and especially to those who took part in interviews and focus groups. I already knew their work was impressive; as I listened to and then studied their voices, my respect grew further. Their work gives me, and many others, hope that the inclusive social vision which Catholic faith searches to articulate is being enacted in more ways than we know.

## Chapter One: The Right Response

### 1 Introduction: Why This Research Matters

I begin with two quotations. In one of the focus groups for this research, a long-serving homelessness charity manager reflected as follows:

It's a tricky one, isn't it, because as a Christian, you know, if someone knocks on my door and asks for help, I have in a sense an obligation to provide some help, and if someone knocks on the church door and says I'm hungry, you do have a duty to sort of think and reflect and try and work out what is the right response...

The same instinct is expressed in a formal voice by Richard Gaillardetz in an essay explaining the ecclesiological foundations of Catholic social teaching (CST): 'Catholic Christianity holds that the life and teaching of Jesus Christ has public significance and carries with it implications for social structures and for the conduct of men and women living in society.'<sup>1</sup>

But what is the right response? And what is at stake here, particularly in 'the implications for social structures'? This research focuses on the work of a group of charities with Catholic roots or inspiration that embed themselves in constructing the answers to these questions alongside people who are homeless, vulnerable or excluded from participation in what CST terms 'the social order'. The charities that participated share a common bond. In diverse ways, they draw inspiration from Catholic social vision and maintain relationships with Catholic communities and structures. They are part of the way that Christian communities have always asked these questions and found responses through the ecclesial practice of social mission, perhaps most significantly through practical response to need. But their work reaches beyond the simple delivery of charity. In the conditions of plural late modernity, contested secularism and growing inequality, they negotiate added complexity and reach for larger transformations. It may seem a simple act to shelter the homeless but in practice it expresses and interrogates social and political commitments and prompts ethical and theological questions. How Christian communities answer these questions enacts an understanding of their tradition-constituted task in relation to the purposes of God for the world. The assumption from which this research starts is that by examining a group of specific actors – charitable organisations linked in

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<sup>1</sup> The opening sentence of Gaillardetz' chapter, 'The Ecclesiological Foundations of Modern Catholic Social Teaching' in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. by Kenneth R. Himes, (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2005) pp. 72-99 (p. 72). Pope Francis expresses a similar if less overtly political position in *Evangelii Gaudium* (London: CTS, 2013) para 177: 'The kerygma has a clear social content: at the very heart of the Gospel is life in community and engagement with others.'

some way to Catholic faith, tradition or communities – and engaging their experience in dialogue with formal theological and ethical voices, I can find resources to serve the continuing task of Catholic social mission and refresh its urgency and reach.

This chapter introduces the research, positioning it in its immediate context and in academic discourse and explaining its parameters and contours. I also describe my positionality as the researcher, in order to bring into critical awareness the biases from my experience with which the research unavoidably interacts. Finally, I preview the argument and summarise how it is structured in the chapters that follow.

## 2 The Origins of the Research

The impulse which enabled this research is the work of the Plater Trust, a Catholic grant-making trust whose purposes include ‘the intellectual endeavour of refreshing Catholic social thought within our own British context, for example through scholarship and writing or policy formation’.<sup>2</sup> The Trust invited applications for a PhD scholarship for research on the theme of ‘the specifically Catholic character of the mission of Catholic charities today and their links to Catholic Social Teaching (CST), taking account of Pope Benedict XVI’s 2012 *motu proprio On the Service of Charity*’.<sup>3</sup> The scholarship funding was awarded to Durham University Centre for Catholic Studies, (CCS) in partnership with Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN), and the research has proceeded as a partnership between CSAN and its member charities and the CCS.<sup>4</sup> CSAN provided advice regarding possible participants and facilitated introductions where necessary, as well as participating directly in the qualitative work. The Plater Trust has continued to take an interest in the research and in its potential contribution to their mission, although the direction, scope and detail have been structured by the academic requirements for doctoral work.

The originating context is significant because it provides two primary points of reference for the project, the tradition of CST, and Benedict’s *motu proprio*, and because it

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<sup>2</sup> Plater Trust < [www.plater.org.uk](http://www.plater.org.uk) > [accessed 09.05.2015]

<sup>3</sup> The title is *Intima Ecclesiae Natura*, although this is not cited in the English text on the Vatican website <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_motu-proprio\\_20121111\\_caritas.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20121111_caritas.html)> [accessed 09.05.2015] A *motu proprio* is an addition to or application of Canon Law to a particular situation. This *motu proprio* is discussed in more detail in Chapters Three and Five. As it is the only *motu proprio* discussed, references to the *motu proprio* always refer to this text.

<sup>4</sup> CSAN is an official agency of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales (CBCEW) tasked with working ‘to strengthen and facilitate the (Caritas) network, conduct policy and advocacy work and use its “voice” at a public level’. <<http://www.csan.org.uk/about/>> [accessed 10.01.16]. The network consists of 43 social action groups and organisations, each of which has some form of relationship with Catholic tradition, faith, structures or communities. Almost all of the member agencies are registered charities.

indicates the practical salience of the research themes.<sup>5</sup> The question of what is expected of Catholic charities by the institutional church, and the charities' own understanding of their faith-related identity and its implications, has been an area of sensitivity and challenge in recent years, as later sections of this thesis will explain. It also matters for the charities in their internal life, as they construct the narratives and culture needed to sustain their work and to attract and retain staff and volunteers. CSAN's involvement also reflects their practical and strategic commitments. Their espoused mission is to support and facilitate their network of members, which consists of charities 'grounded in CST' and overlapping diocesan Caritas structures.<sup>6</sup> But they also search for the implications for social structures, developing social policy analysis similarly grounded in CST.<sup>7</sup> The exploration of what it means in deeply practical terms to be 'grounded in CST' and to work out of Catholic understandings of charity and justice lie at the heart of this research.

### 3 The Research Question and the Boundaries of the Project

I began with this research question:

**How do charities related in some significant way to Catholic tradition, faith, structures or community understand, embody and express this relationship in their identity and practice?'**

In constructing the question, I aimed to encompass the diverse ways in which the charities connect to Catholicity and Catholicism; and to problematize the concept of a Catholic charity.<sup>8</sup> It is crucial to stress from the beginning that although for linguistic ease and readability I use the term 'Catholic charity' throughout the thesis, it is an elision of the diversity which is explored in detail in Chapter Four and Chapter Eight. The participating charities have significant differences in how they relate to what they variously understand as Catholic roots or Catholic identity. Some would not identify their organisations as Catholic charities. In addition, the term is viewed differently depending on whether the voice speaking is external to the charity or internal. To some extent the term is justified by the fact that when the research started, five of the charities were members of the sixth, CSAN, which in turn connects them to the institutional Catholic Church.<sup>9</sup> Since I argue throughout that institutional alignment is an insufficient model of what it means to be a

<sup>5</sup> I quote papal authors throughout the thesis. After the first reference, I dispense with their titles.

<sup>6</sup> CSAN *Annual Review 2017* <<http://www.csan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/CSAN-Annual-review-2017.pdf>> [accessed 23.09.2018] (p. 2).

<sup>7</sup> CSAN *Annual Review 2017* (p. 4).

<sup>8</sup> The question is constructed technically, as appropriate for a PhD thesis, and paraphrased in the research tools. In conversation in and around Catholic networks, I usually explained the question as 'what does it mean to be a Catholic charity?'

<sup>9</sup> Housing Justice left the network in 2018.

Catholic charity, although not unimportant, I do not rely on that fact but rather regard it as part of the problematic. The multiple strands of the problematic also prompted the sub-questions which helped to structure the empirical work. I asked:

- How does each charity understand and express any relationship it has to the institutional Catholic Church and/or Catholic faith or religious communities; and to CST and/or other elements of Catholic tradition?
- How do these understandings and relationships influence or shape each charity's ethos, strategy and practice and how do the charities sustain this influencing?

As the research progressed and the strategy for the focus groups emerged, I added a further question:

- How does the experience of the charities resonate with or problematize the concept of the common good as formulated within CST texts?

In turn this led to a further sub-question:

- What insights emerge from the charities' work that hold potential for fresh articulation of elements of Catholic teaching?

The research has specific boundaries which shape the enquiry. It is particular to the Catholic Church, dealing with its authoritative teaching, institutional structures and lived historical experience, and focused on its social mission. Thus it locates normativity in Catholic teaching, and works within the Catholic thought-world, although with some critical distance and drawing on insights from other theological traditions and from social sciences. It is also specific to the context of England and Wales, reflecting both the Church-state settlement here and the socio-political history and structures that are in place, particularly in relation to social security and welfare.<sup>10</sup> Finally, it examines a group of charities working in a particular field, that of homelessness and social exclusion. Any empirical research compels the researcher to find a specific focus, which always means excluding many other possibilities. This research does not attempt to compare the Catholic charities to other faith-based peers, or to secular agencies, for example, and nor does it consider the overlap and differences found in other territories. Whilst the research led to perspectives about the charities' distinctiveness, these are treated as part of their operative self-understanding rather than verifiable claims. It was also not possible and arguably not necessary to develop a critical analysis of current social welfare policy and provision in the UK, other than in

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<sup>10</sup> The context of England and Wales has much in common with other European and transatlantic states, in assuming liberal democratic political regimes, even if somewhat pummelled by current political incumbents and movements. I note that elsewhere in the world the relationships between states and religions and liberal values are marked by tension, conflict and oppressive policies with implications for Catholic charities working in public space.

marginal ways. Rather, the research views this field through the experience of the charities and the conceptual principles used in interpretation.

#### 4 Locating the Research in Wider Academic Discourse

The research stands at several intersections. The most significant of these are between Catholic ecclesiology, the tradition of CST and the practice of Catholic social mission. CST is still frequently regarded and treated as a body of static doctrine, a set of principles to be applied deductively. There is relatively little empirical exploration of more reciprocal and inductive approaches to the relationship between the normative teaching documents and the actual practice of Catholic social mission.<sup>11</sup> It is not clear how and whether actors in Catholic social mission actually use CST, nor is there serious analysis of how their practice can be read as enacting or problematizing its insights. Compounding this, in Catholic ecclesiological work, discussion of social mission remains largely abstract and idealising.<sup>12</sup> Within the field of Catholic studies, thick empirical work focused on the contemporary UK context is relatively unusual, and a specific focus on Catholic social mission is rare, although Catholic participation in ecumenical research ensures some level of visibility.<sup>13</sup> In part, this research explores the potential of empirical work to engage in a dialogue between these fields which are often treated as separate theological or ethical disciplines.

The confessional framework matters here in several ways. Whilst social mission is an imperative for all Christians, and indeed finds expression in other faith traditions, the

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<sup>11</sup> There are some thematic fields where these dynamics have been explored. For example, addressing global issues such as migration ( for example, see the work of Anna Rowlands, Kristin E. Heyer and Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator), or international development issues (for example, see the work of Augusto Zampini-Davies and Meghan J. Clark). The field of business ethics has also been substantially engaged, including in the UK. The field of social welfare and the responsibilities of the state is notably less explored, particularly in the UK context.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Neil Ormerod's *Re-visioning the Church: An Experiment on Systematic-Historical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014) Ch. 4. Bradford Hinze's *Prophetic Obedience: Ecclesiology for a Dialogical Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2016) is a welcome alternative, combining serious examination and re-construction of resources from tradition in dialogue with attentive reading of the experience and context of one diocese. Hinze's work is discussed in Chapter Nine.

<sup>13</sup> The work of the ARCS Institute at Heythrop College in developing and using theological action research has included some Catholic charities alongside other charities and churches. The Durham University based Receptive Ecumenism research also includes Catholic resources. <<https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/ccs/constructivetheology/receptiveecumensim/>> Suzy Brouard's thesis - *Using Theological Action Research to Embed Catholic Social Teaching in a Catholic Development Agency: Abseiling on the Road to Emmaus* - is a rare example of UK based research in a Catholic agency engaged in social mission, although in the field of international development. (Thesis submitted to Anglia Ruskin University, 2015). I have not found any published academic research in Catholic Studies discussing empirical Catholic responses to poverty and or exclusion in the contemporary English and Welsh context.

way in which Catholic tradition in this field has evolved, generating the recent tradition of CST but also sustaining practices of *caritas* and producing generations of founders of new works, is particular. Catholic tradition also encompasses other elements of what Anna Rowlands describes as ‘theo-political performance’, in which the Church has reacted to the swirling political currents of different times and contexts, developing its political worldview and defending its public presence and voice.<sup>14</sup> Social mission expresses a particular theological reading of what it means to be human persons caught up in the divine life and purpose, and of the consequent relationship between Church and world. When empirical work on Christian social mission is attentive to confessional background, these contours come into view.<sup>15</sup>

There has been considerable study of faith-based organisations within fields including sociology, psychology, human geography, public policy research and organisational studies. This research is alert to those fields and later chapters use insights from relevant examples which provide other ways of seeing in addition to the Catholic view. It was important to approach other fields critically however. Whilst there is plentiful material about faith-based charities, for example, much of what I reviewed treats faith-based organisations as a generic category, undifferentiated in relation to confessional tradition, and blurring an important boundary between congregations and legally independent charities.<sup>16</sup> I argue throughout this thesis that this boundary matters. The charities that participated in this research have strategic and legal autonomy, which itself asks an ecclesiological question particular to the Catholic context, about what it means to use the term ‘Catholic charity’, with possible implications of institutional approval and other complications which later chapters explore. Their public existence as legal entities

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<sup>14</sup> ‘Teaching Political Theology as Ministerial Formation’, *Political Theology*, 13 (2012), 704–16 (p. 714).

<sup>15</sup> A thesis by Christopher Rice submitted to Duke University, *Towards a Framework for a Practical Theology of Institutions for Faith-Based Organisations* (2014) provides an instructive contrast. Drawing on Barthian tradition, Rice claims such organisations as ‘a uniquely Protestant story’ and argues that faith-based organisations should develop a ‘missiological imagination’ in order to insert themselves more fully in the *mission dei* and resist the isomorphic captivity of the secular social imaginaries. Rice’s argument is ecclesiological, concerned to draw faith-based organisations more deeply into ecclesial practice. There are many points of contact between Rice’s arguments and those I develop in this thesis, but the theological route and ecclesiological worldviews are very different, almost oppositional. A fuller comparison would be ecumenically enriching but is beyond the scope of this project. < <https://search-proquest-com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/docview/1620539576?pq-origsite=primo> > [accessed 23.09.2018].

<sup>16</sup> For example, see Heidi Rolland Unruh and Ronald J. Sider, *Saving Souls, Serving Society: Understanding the Faith Factor in Church-Based Social Ministry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) or Christine Hepworth and Sean Stitt, ‘Social Capital & Faith-Based Organisations’, *Heythrop Journal*, 48.6 (2007), 895–910.

within a social and political domain, interacting with multiple other actors, differs from the way in which churches situate themselves in public space.

## 5 Identity: Between Catholicism and Catholicity

In formulating the research question as the research began, I used the term ‘identity’, conscious that the concept of ‘Catholic identity’ has been highly charged in recent decades of institutional Catholic discourse, and indeed that ‘identity’ is a major theme in many other areas of cultural and political discourse and a symptom of deep shifts in modernity and post-modernity. Within the Catholic world, institutions as varied as hospitals, universities, schools and NGOs have wrestled with its meaning, sometimes in tense or even adversarial relationships with hierarchical authorities. ‘Catholic identity’ therefore has a hinterland, which later chapters de-construct. I became increasingly aware that this hinterland, and the concept of identity itself, clouded what I saw emerging in both theoretical reading and in the empirical listening and analysis. ‘Identity’ conveys something fixed or static, something at risk of being reified or defined or evaluated by fixed characteristics. When applied to organisations, it may tell you some things, even some important things, but it may not tell you what matters most, what happens in their work and what difference they make. In the ecclesial politics described later, it evoked *Catholicism*, or institutional belonging, constructed in a certain way. I became more interested in *Catholicity*, which I understand as the larger theologically structured worldview derived from Revelation which the institutional Church holds as truth and articulates in Catholic tradition, and which its social mission in particular aims to enact. Catholicity embraces both identity and mission, indissolubly linked with Catholicism but encompassing wider dynamics, structures and people.

I use the concept of Catholicity as an alternative and complementary route into the question of Catholic identity, one which offers a more open-ended horizon in which to situate the charities’ self-understanding and their relationships with Catholic social vision. My concern here is to avoid constricting the concept of organisational identity to the degree of ‘coupling’ with the institutional Church.<sup>17</sup> Exploring what Catholicity means, Paul D. Murray describes the journey of the Church ‘towards becoming more truly Catholic’ as being able to ‘think and act *kath’olou*, in accordance with the whole truth of things in the complex simplicity of Christ (Eph 1:22; 1 Cor 15:28); inspired and effected by the Spirit, who

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<sup>17</sup> Steven Rathgeb Smith and Michael R. Sosin use this concept in an empirical study of American faith-based social service agencies using theory drawn from social sciences. See ‘The Varieties of Faith-Related Agencies’, *Public Administration Review*, 61 (2001), 651–70.

is promised as leading the Church into the fullness of this complexly simple truth'.<sup>18</sup> He expands this to argue for the intrinsic diversity within Catholicism, as each part, in the words of *Lumen Gentium* (13), 'contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole Church'.<sup>19</sup> Thus the 'irreducible particularity' of each part matters, wherever Catholicity is lived, as each part, as Aquinas proposed, can manifest 'something of the goodness of God', even if in a partial and inadequate way.<sup>20</sup> Murray takes the argument into other ecclesial concerns. I draw on it here as a framework for interpreting the charities as they each work from their own irreducibly particular narratives and position themselves in different ways in relation to the boundaries of visible institutional Catholicism, problematizing what is meant by 'the whole Church'. The research explores their particular mode of configuration to the wholeness of truth to which the Church lays claim, the mediations they use and the risks they encounter in what is a real and generative relationship.

One of the theological themes running through this research arises from this interpretation of Catholicity. Murray argues for the intrinsic diversity within the wholeness of truth as grasped by the Catholic tradition. Charles Taylor pursues a related path, arguing that the temptation to privilege sameness, 'making as many people as possible into good Catholics', is a failing in Catholicity.<sup>21</sup> He proposes that Catholicity involves 'unity across difference as against unity through identity', in order that Catholics in modernity can find an authentic voice, a way of being Catholic in the conditions of secularity. Taylor points to the complexity of contemporary moral culture, open to forms of goodness yet inhospitable to the transcendent. His sketch of modernity describes some of the tensions for Catholic charities: caught between ecclesial assumptions and the conditions of secularity; unavoidably engaged with people and perspectives which are 'other' yet which are also ultimately of significance in the Catholicity that is open to the whole truth of the divine economy. The possibility explored in this research is that the charities, as examples of a particular kind of communal Catholic actor, enact a kind of Catholicity which has ecclesial connections which matter, but also reaches beyond these into domains and relationships

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<sup>18</sup> Paul D. Murray, 'Living Catholicity Differently: On Growing into the Plenitudinous Plurality of Catholic Communion in God', in *Envisioning Futures for the Catholic Church: Cultural heritage and Contemporary Change, Series VIII, Christian Philosophical Studies 23*, ed. by Staf Hellemans and Peter Jonkers (Washington DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2018) pp.109-58 (p. 111).

<sup>19</sup> I use the text of *Lumen Gentium* given in Norman P. Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Volume II: Trent to Vatican II* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990) 849-98.

<sup>20</sup> Murray, 'Living Catholicity' (pp. 124-28).

<sup>21</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Catholic Modernity?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) (p. 15) NB Taylor renders both catholicism and catholicity in lower case.

that ecclesial structures cannot easily access, pursuing in their own way the irreducible 'whole truth of things'.

## 6 Clarifying Concepts

There are other concepts and terms that I use throughout the thesis in particular ways or which hold ambiguities which are better addressed.

### **The institutional Church and the community of faith**

Properly understood, according to the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II), 'the Church' is all the baptised, equal in dignity and called to various vocations and ministries. But Catholic theological writing frequently uses 'the Church' when the sense expressed is the institutional hierarchical structures and office-holders, and not the vast messy and indeterminately bordered community of those who in some way own or profess Catholic faith and belonging or indeed enact its inspirations. This matters particularly in the thematic arenas explored in this research, the field of social mission which enacts the public significance of Catholic faith. It also matters because failure to distinguish what is meant by 'Church' risks obscuring the voices and proper autonomy of laypeople, a subsidiary but not unimportant theme in my argument. Throughout the text, wherever possible I try to make clear which meaning of 'Church' is operating. There is, of course, a risk in holding space between dimensions of what is ultimately a single theological and empirical reality, but the spaces are important and too often unnoticed or neglected.

### **Charity, charities and *caritas***

In the UK context and culture, 'charity' has multiple meanings, several of which I use. It refers to a legally established organisation that meets certain criteria including working for 'public benefit'; it also means the activity of voluntarily helping others, a social interaction that has both negative and positive associations and dynamics.<sup>22</sup> In contemporary Catholic teaching, charity has theological meanings. For Benedict, it is 'the practice of love', enabled by the Spirit, grounded in the love of God and directed towards the neighbour and especially to 'man's suffering and his needs' (sic).<sup>23</sup> It is also a constitutive and indispensable element of the Church's life.<sup>24</sup> Benedict asserts that Catholic

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<sup>22</sup> Mary Douglas, 'Though we laud charity as a Christian virtue, we know that it wounds', in 'Foreword' to Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies* (London: Routledge, 1990) (p. IX). For a contemporary voice of experience, see Dina Nayeri's article in *The Guardian* <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/15/return-to-refugee-camps-30-years-on-dina-nayeri>> 'accepting charity is an ugly business for the spirit'. [accessed 17.09.2018]

<sup>23</sup> *Deus Caritas Est* <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20051225\\_deus-caritas-est.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html)> [Accessed 22.08.2018] (para 19).

<sup>24</sup> *Deus Caritas Est* (paras 19,20).

charity is a personal and mutual encounter that goes beyond ‘technically proper care’.<sup>25</sup> Benedict’s account of *caritas* is discussed in detail in Chapter Five. Here I note that this is a specific meaning, and so throughout the thesis, I use *caritas* when I refer to this Catholic understanding, in order to distinguish it from the common understanding. However *caritas* is also the name of the official social mission structures of the Catholic Church, from diocesan to international level, and when I refer to these, I use ‘Caritas’.

### **Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Social Vision**

The mandate for this research, and my initial research question, specified CST as a subject of primary interest, and indeed the modern tradition of CST in its varied papal and episcopal voices remains a crucial interlocutor throughout. But I was also quickly aware that the charities draw on a wider array of resources to orient their identity and mission, including scripture, the charisms of religious orders and their founders, and the enacted historical experience of earlier generations. Behind these obvious sources, the iterations of Catholic social vision are found throughout Christian history, from early Church experience and patristic theology onwards, containing thematic continuities and continual attention to particular realities. In Chapter Four, I describe how the charities participating in this project fashion their narratives drawing on these elements. Throughout the thesis, I assume this expansive understanding of Catholic social vision as well as paying attention to the particular body of texts recognised as modern CST.

### **People and Clients**

It is difficult to decide what language to use when speaking of those with whom the charities work. As Chapter Two explains, I did not seek the voices of service users in the empirical work, and recognise the risk that a term such as ‘clients’ objectifies people who are subjects and agents. Many charities, including those in the faith-based and faith-related sector, struggle with this issue. Many participants in the research were concerned to find language that did not label people and committed to listening to how people describe themselves. Terms such as ‘service-user’ and ‘client’ are unsatisfactory in several ways. They indicate a transactional relationship and risk obscuring people’s humanity, but they also signal professionalism, which has its own values and dilemmas. In practice, in most of the data gathered in this research, participants talked about those with whom they work just as people; ‘the people who come here’; ‘the people we’re working with...’, although terms such as ‘client’ were also used. For clarity and brevity, I use the term ‘clients’, but its inadequacies should be acknowledged.

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<sup>25</sup> *Deus Caritas Est* (para 31).

### **Inclusiveness**

I use the term 'inclusive' throughout the research, and discuss its meaning and implications in several chapters. By inclusiveness, I mean the practical reality that those who work for and in the charities include people who profess Catholic faith or belong to other Christian or faith traditions, and people who do not profess religious faith but bring other diverse ethical motivations and commitments. The inclusiveness of the charities reflects their social embeddedness; operating in the social welfare sector, they are obliged like all other public bodies to practice equality and avoid any kind of discrimination. But alongside the legal and cultural requirements, there is another dynamic in how their work and self-presentation, including their Catholic connections, inclusively attracts people to join them. Their inclusiveness is therefore deeper than the legal compliance with which it is associated.

## **7 Positionality**

I aimed from the beginning to approach this research reflexively and decided to work in a personal voice. In part, this fits with the methodological stance I adopt. But it also reflects my awareness that I cannot disregard my Catholic formation and experience and the way in which these interact with both theoretical and empirical parts of the research. My understanding of reflexivity is discussed in Chapter Two. Here, I outline the elements of my experience which structure my positionality and which resonated as I progressed through the research.

The most obvious is that I have worked in the sector of Catholic charities that includes the participants of this research. For six years from 1992-1998, I was deputy director of CAFOD, and before beginning the research, I was chief operations officer for Depaul International, the parent charity of Depaul UK, one of the participating charities.<sup>26</sup> I have also taken on consultancy and/or voluntary work with the Cardinal Hume Centre and CSAN, two of the other charities. Whilst at CAFOD I worked on the articulation of CAFOD's Catholic identity and the implications in relation to recruitment policy, and on building bridges between CST insights and development practice wisdom. My experience elsewhere also involved translating organisational vision and values into policy and strategy, using CST or other resources. This experience gives me a great deal of tacit knowledge which is sometimes hard to explain, but more importantly, it means that the issues I research here are personal. They matter to me, because I am committed to the task of enacting Catholic

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<sup>26</sup> During the research, but after completing the empirical work, I re-joined Depaul International as a trustee.

social vision, and have experienced first-hand what the charities make possible as well as how their inclusivity enriches their work.

The crucial recognition here is that for me, Catholic faith has always meant what Pope Francis describes as ‘a deep desire to change the world’.<sup>27</sup> I grew up in a working class Catholic family in Liverpool where social involvement and political awareness rooted in Catholic faith was the air we breathed. My parents’ lives had been changed and were sustained throughout by Young Christian Workers (YCW) principles of Catholic social activism, which I inherited.<sup>28</sup> As I studied the historical material discussed in Chapter Two, I often recognised influences in my family history. But as a child of the sixties and seventies I had opportunities not available to my parents and chose to study theology at university, which led to work at diocesan, national and international levels in institutional Catholic structures and projects. For six years I was assistant general secretary of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference, working closely with the bishops and clergy colleagues. I also served two terms on the Pontifical Council for the Laity as well as attending three Synods of Bishops in Rome, in 1987 as an auditor and in 1990 and 1994 providing staff support for the three participating English and Welsh bishops.<sup>29</sup> Here too I acquired tacit knowledge and understanding of institutional Catholic perspectives, and developed an empathetic awareness of the viewpoints and perspectives of the bishops. So the tension between institutional ordering of Catholic life and the creative outflow of faith in social engagement in pursuit of the justice and peace of God’s Kingdom has been a constant dynamic in my choices and commitments.

The themes of this research have in some ways been present throughout my life. This is both an advantage, in giving me personal and historical perspectives, and a caution. The context now is that of a very different Church, even from five years ago, as the papacy of Francis alters the culture and social agenda. The social and political context has also changed. The government’s policies of austerity and welfare reform have led to poverty indicators which recall my experience of working in Liverpool throughout the 1980s. The question of how the Church should respond, and who or what ‘the Church’ means in that context, remains as vital as it always has been.

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<sup>27</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium* (para 93).

<sup>28</sup> YCW was founded by a Belgian priest, Joseph Cardijn, in Belgium in c. 1912, and spread throughout the world as a lay-led movement. Cardijn developed the see-judge-act methodology which was later taken up in CST encyclicals and elsewhere.

<sup>29</sup> I was a member of the Pontifical Council from 1990-2000.

## 8 The Argument

In his exploration of the ‘grammar’ of the common good, Patrick Riordan describes how the concept implies and works at multiple layers or levels of the social order. He comments that the levels are ‘not all straightforwardly nested in one another but are in tension’.<sup>30</sup> I borrow this image and principle to introduce the content of the thesis, which works across three levels of empirical and theological inquiry. The argument works in the spaces and tensions between the levels, proposing and problematizing the connections. The levels here are ‘not straightforwardly nested’, but I contend that sufficient continuity of horizon, purpose and commitment holds them together. I also draw attention to the levels and ‘nesting’ within my argument in order to resist a uni-directional trajectory, either from theory to practice or from enactment to theological or ethical principles, as if these are straightforward moves. In practice they are not. Rather, the movement between levels is iterative and conversational, aware of the different dimensions and idioms at play but also characterised by recognition and revision.

The ground level of the argument focuses on the charities’ self-understandings and practices. The underpinning principle I use is that of reading their practices to discover their Catholicity rather than locating Catholicity in marks of institutional alignment. I use a thick reading of the data, in conversation with normative and other theological resources, to explore how they understand what it means to be a Catholic charity engaged in social mission in the contemporary conditions of secularity. Nested within this level, I use a particular interpretative focus, the concept of the common good, to expand the reading and challenge the normative account of what it means to be a Catholic charity. The use of a single core principle from CST enables a thick analysis of the relationship between the charities’ work and the papal tradition of CST texts. I find that a full understanding of the meaning, impact and potential of the work of Catholic charities requires recognition of how they operate as agents of the common good. When Catholic charities are interpreted simply as agents of *caritas*, the specificity, scope and meaning of their work is only partially recognised. The common good enables or mediates a fresh appropriation of their Catholicity, which in theological terms is concerned with re-making social bonds in the salvific purpose and horizon of the Church’s task in human history.

The second level of argument is ecclesiological, reading the charities as a practice of the Church in social mission. I propose an account of the charities’ specificity, found in their entanglement in the conditions of secularity and their consequent inclusivity, and argue

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<sup>30</sup> Riordan, Patrick, *A Grammar of the Common Good: Speaking of Globalization, Continuum Studies in Religion and Political Culture* (London: Continuum, 2008) (p. 40).

that their experience illuminates the concrete realities of Catholic commitment to the ‘temporal progress’ which is in the interests of the Kingdom of God.<sup>31</sup> In this level, interpretation of the charities as agents of the common good offers other insights, supporting an argument for a re-constructed understanding of the relationship between normative CST and the experience of communal social actors working from Catholic inspiration. Against the current assumption that CST works like theory or doctrine to be applied, I argue for a reciprocal relationship between Catholic social mission practice and the authoritative articulation of Catholic social vision in normative texts. The charities’ Catholicity is more tensive and unrealised at this level, where they work at and beyond the boundaries of the visible or institutional Church.

Finally, the argument engages another level, that of Catholic tradition, and in particular the continuing search for right understandings and configuration of the relationship between the Church and the world, particularly in relation to political structures and the modern nation-state. At this level, what the argument can offer, built from the ground level experience of Catholic homelessness charities in a particular political dispensation and history, is more tentative. Here the space between levels yawns, but the connections exist. The levels are nested, in the shapes which configure the Catholic worldview, as least as represented by the teaching of Vatican II. So I position the argument within the emerging re-appropriation of *Gaudium et Spes*, conscious that this is based not in a full theoretical review of the extensive scholarship on this pivotal document, but rather on a thick reading of practices which I claim as standing within its horizons.<sup>32</sup> I propose that the charities’ engagement with the absence of the common good leads to heuristic practice which discovers its meaning. They resist and re-structure the social forces and structures that bear down on their clients, demonstrating the contours of prophetic and concrete work to transform social reality, working patiently at the level of micro-politics to absorb the asymmetries that disable people’s access to their own fulfilment.

## 9 Overview of the Chapters

In Chapter Two, I discuss the methodological principles underpinning the project and describe the evolution and progress of the empirical work. I adopt from Michael

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<sup>31</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, in Tanner, *Decrees*, pp. 1069-1135. Massimo Faggioli argues that the ‘interrupted reception’ of *Gaudium et Spes* is now giving way to ‘a new appraisal that is aware of the gap between the church of *Gaudium et Spes* in modernity and in the postmodern world’, in *Catholicism and Citizenship: Political Cultures of the Church in the Twenty-First Century*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2017) (pp. 91-122).

<sup>32</sup> Tanner, *Decrees*, 1069-1135.

Burawoy the concept of an expanded case study as a design logic.<sup>33</sup> Burawoy's approach directs attention to how empirical data suggests new angles of vision that lead to deepening or reconstruction of theory. To position the research in Catholic theological frameworks, I draw on Paul D. Murray's concept of how empirical work in ecclesiology can contribute to what he terms 'pragmatic coherence' in pursuit of the full 'living truth of the Church'.<sup>34</sup> Murray and Burawoy provide a framework in which to locate the central proposal of this chapter that Christian practices can be read as bearers of theology. I explain how I extend this principle in relation to the particularity of the charities, and discuss the influence of theological action research. From the latter, I draw the model of conversational structure, distinguishing the different voices of operant practice, espoused commitments, formal theological discourse and normative theological texts.

In Chapter Three, I examine the historical and contemporary social, political and ecclesial contexts which the participating charities inherit and inhabit. I argue that the history of Catholic social mission in the context of England and Wales demonstrates particular commitments and orientations that are contingently operative today, although increasingly at risk. The path taken by the Church after Catholic emancipation was one of commitment to the poor, and embedded engagement in work for the public good, combining partnership with the state with defence of Catholic principles. This path evolved as the politics and provision of welfare changed and as Catholic ecclesiology also developed. I argue that this history points to particular characteristics of Catholic involvement in social welfare that still influence Catholic charities today as they work for the public good, prioritising those who are most excluded. This pathway has latterly collided with tensions within the institutional Church in relation to Catholic charities. I review the recent ecclesial politics of concerns about the Catholic identity of Catholic charities, including the emergence of the *motu proprio* referenced in the Plater College research brief.

In Chapter Four, I expand the research question and sub-questions through a reading of the charities' public texts and public voice. This analysis of their espoused self-understanding demonstrates that even within this small group of charities there are different relationships with institutional Catholicism and Catholic tradition. I find that their relationships with CST are also varied and complex, and for some, subsidiary to other Catholic influences derived from their history. Whilst most, but not all, cite CST as

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<sup>33</sup> 'The Extended Case Method', *Sociological Theory*, 16 (1998), 4–33

<sup>34</sup> 'Searching the Living Truth of the Church in Practice: On the Transformative Task of Systematic Ecclesiology', *Modern Theology*, 30.2 (2014), 251–81.

inspiration, it is not clear how this impacts, making CSAN's membership criterion of being grounded in CST complex to discern or evaluate, particularly since the charities work in the field of homelessness, a theme about which formal papal CST has been conspicuously silent, and welfare, where papal texts are ambivalent and arguably over-critical of state systems. The practical utility of CST is opaque, despite the charities' commitments to their particular mediations of Catholic social vision, grounding their Catholicity. I then examine their political positioning and public voice in the field of homelessness, finding continuities with the historical perspectives of chapter two as well as discomforts with current welfare arrangements that indicate an operant counter-narrative. I conclude that the meaning of being Catholic, and the use of CST, are neither as straightforward as often assumed.

Chapter Five examines two normative sources that directly engage the research question. First I discuss the papal texts that present Catholic charities in theological and ecclesiological terms. I argue that the account given in *Deus Caritas Est* and re-iterated in the *motu proprio* is inadequate in that it fails to take account of key elements of the theological specificity of the charities. I propose that their specificity is found in how they are entangled in the conditions of secularity, with the autonomy, risks and ambiguities this location entails, working at and across the indeterminate and porous boundaries of the visible Church. I find that a larger theological framework, derived from the ecclesiology of *Gaudium et Spes* and *Christifideles Laici* in particular, provides a more hospitable understanding, whilst also acknowledging that since the Council, an ecclesiological gap has opened in which the charities find themselves.<sup>35</sup> In the second part, I discuss understandings of CST and propose interpreting the tradition of CST as an ecclesial practice within a wider framework of social mission, open in structured ways to the participation of other communal actors such as the charities. In such a wider understanding, there is space for the Catholicity of Catholic charities to be re-positioned, interpreted in relation to their enactment of social mission.

In Chapter Six, I narrow down the focus to the concept of the common good and discuss the theoretical content that provides interpretative tools with which to examine the relationship between the charities' work and CST. Drawing on the Catholic formulation of the concept in which it is defined as access to the conditions that enable human fulfilment, and the work of Patrick Riordan, I explain why the common good fits as the most appropriate interpretative lens and identify the 'directional elements' within what Riordan

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<sup>35</sup> Pope John Paul II (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988).

terms its heuristic.<sup>36</sup> I then discuss Thomas J. Bushlack's concept of civic virtue as an account of what it means to act as agents of the common good at the ground level of social reality, engaging in practical social reasoning to construct 'overlapping consensus' about goods to pursue.<sup>37</sup> I argue that the particular Catholic grip on the common good, drawn from immersion in natural law based ethics, illuminates a more expansive theological framework for interpreting the charities' Catholicity.

In Chapter Seven, I then use the common good directional elements and Bushlack's theory to read the empirical data. I find that the charities respond to the absence of the conditions that enable people to pursue their own fulfilment through relational work that reaches for change reciprocally with clients and absorbs asymmetries in order to restore the conditions in which they can be agents in their own lives. I argue that the charities' work is a ground level heuristic practice with implications for, and impact on, other societal levels and institutions. They demonstrate an embodied form of public reasoning, a communal enactment of civic virtue, addressing what is within their reach. They work within and alongside statutory provision, pursuing 'the change you can get' through practical action that is a form of social reasoning. They provide an ethical counter-narrative to the ambivalent impulses of social welfare policies shaped increasingly by welfare reform politics in which the assumptions of social solidarity are contested if not dismantled. Their counter-narrative also provides a corrective to the tendency within CST to deal with the common good in overly cognitive and abstract terms. I argue that their embedded and embodied work both validates and challenges conceptual elements of the common good in ways that illuminate and extend Catholic understanding. This is a pathway of Catholicity in social mission.

Chapter Eight returns to the themes examined in Chapter Five, reading the data in conversation with the normative accounts of what it means to be a Catholic charity. I explore the impact of the charities' narratives in their practice, the significance of their inclusiveness and their complex, multi-dimensional and sometimes ambivalent relationships with being Catholic. I find that their Catholicity, lived in the conditions of secularity in the context of England and Wales, means far more than institutional alignment. It involves crucial processes of mediation, translation and hospitality, in which the charities' narratives and relationships combine. They find their own routes through the ecclesiological gap described earlier, working from their proper autonomy as lay-led

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<sup>36</sup> Riordan, *Grammar*, especially Chapter Two and Chapter Eight.

<sup>37</sup> *Politics for a Pilgrim Church: A Thomistic Theory of Civic Virtue* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2015)

communal social actors, working at and across the boundaries of the visible Church and yet comfortable to own participation in its social mission. They create a space in-between Catholicism and Catholicity which asks ecclesiological questions and resonates with elements of *Gaudium et Spes*.

Chapter Nine moves explicitly into ecclesiological and theological reflection. When the charities are read through the lens of the common good, another meaning beyond the practice of *caritas* comes into focus. Their relational and reciprocal work re-makes social bonds in the interests of the Kingdom, contributing to the construction of a social order based on the truths about human personhood that the Church finds in Revelation and articulates in CST. Their experience of enacting the common good through a ground-level heuristic practice reveals the risks and costs involved in participating, however inchoately or unconsciously, in salvific processes. They take on the weight of people's vulnerabilities and work alongside them in co-construction of change. I argue that this is a kind of prophetic witness, complexified by inclusive participation and unrecognised mediation. Working at the peripheries of the Church, whilst also linked to its institutional structures and tethered by powerful narratives, the charities face and engage with 'the refractoriness of reality'.<sup>38</sup> They enact the dialogical openness described by *Gaudium et Spes* in a form of Catholicity that responds to and reflects contemporary conditions and complexities.

Chapter Ten summarises the outcomes of the research in relation to three audiences. I first propose the implications for academic discourse, discussing the extent to which the empirical voice of the charities contributes to Murray's pragmatic ecclesiological coherence. I find that their insights and experience point to ecclesiological edges, to borders, gaps and horizons which need expansion. I next address those who teach or work with CST and argue that the common good based reading of the charities brings to light insights which support the case made earlier to re-construct the relationship between the official teaching tradition and the practice of social mission. Finally I comment on the possible usefulness of the research for the charities discussed here and their peers in other fields or contexts. I conclude with reflexive discussion of the methodological principles used in the research.

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<sup>38</sup> Hinze (p. 145).

## Chapter Two: In Conversation with Practice: Methodological Influences and Research Strategies

### 1 Introduction: Tools and Concepts for Researching Communal Practices

Selecting and planning a research methodology for empirical work oriented towards theological questions is complex. For research with an explicit confessional framework, in this case, the Catholic Church and its teaching and tradition, the complexity is extended. The research design and underpinning must locate itself within wider academic discourse, making its particular assumptions and foundations clear, but also assessing these critically. At stake here is not just the account of methodology given at this stage of the thesis, and the structuring of the research activity, but how the interpretation of data and use of theory is shaped throughout the project.

In planning this research, I drew particularly upon three sources. The first is the model of an extended case study as developed by Michael Burawoy, taken from the wider field of sociological research, which provided a structural logic as well as valuable criteria to consider in interpretation. The second is the field of practical theology, where questions about the meaning of practices and the theological significance of empirical experience are explored, and where rapprochement with confessional Catholic theological frameworks is still emerging.<sup>39</sup> I found there perspectives and cautions which both problematized and helped to resolve elements of the project. The third source is the theological action research methodology, developed by an ecumenical group of theologians associated with the *Action Research: Church and Society Programme (ARCS)*.<sup>40</sup> Although it was not possible to incorporate the particular strategies associated with this methodology, its principles significantly influenced the research design and process.

It is from both practical theology and theological action research that I draw the primary principle that both underpins the research design and is central in the argument this thesis makes. Theological action research starts from asserting that practices are bearers of theology, that practice is a theological source with its own voice, an 'articulation of theological conviction and insight'.<sup>41</sup> It assumes however, that those involved in the

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<sup>39</sup> Stephen Pattison comments that Catholicism is 'the sleeping giant of pastoral and practical theology'. 'Introduction' in *Keeping Faith in Practice: Aspects of Catholic Pastoral Theology*, ed. by James Sweeney, Gemma Simmonds, and David Lonsdale (London: SCM Press, 2010) (p. 3).

<sup>40</sup> Located within the former Heythrop College in the University of London.

<sup>41</sup> Helen Cameron and others, *Talking about God in Practice* (London: SCM, 2010) (p. 51). See also Clare Watkins and others, 'Practical Ecclesiology: What Counts as Theology in Studying the Church?' in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. by Pete Ward (Grand Rapids, Michigan:

practices are ‘faithful Christian people’, a baseline assumption shared in much practical theology.<sup>42</sup> In this research, I extend the application of this principle to a setting which is not straightforwardly a location where Christian faith can be assumed, and in which the reading of practices is therefore more complex. The participating charities occupy diverse spaces in a porous border zone of ecclesial belonging, characterised by multiple relationships with lived faith and institutional Catholic structures, and inclusive of actors for whom Christian faith is neither assumed nor required as well as those who belong to Christian or other faith communities. My interest is in how communal practices connected to or rooted in Catholic faith and tradition, but enacted inclusively, also disclose theology. In this setting, structured not by ecclesial order but by the conditions of social mission, theological intuitions are largely – but not exclusively - mediated through social ethics that tether them to Christian tradition. These intuitions are sustained by continuing relationships with lived Christian faith, both through organisational narratives and cultures and through close association with Catholic communities.

The practices in view here are interpreted at two levels. The first and more substantial level is that of the participant organisations understood as communal actors, enacting their social vision in their particular and intricate work, their practice. The second is how the group of participant charities are together understood as a practice of the Church both in its institutional social mission and in what the *motu proprio* terms ‘the free enterprise of the faithful’.<sup>43</sup> Both levels disclose an operant theology in how they enact and extend the social vision through which the Church interprets and negotiates its relationship with social and political realities as an outflow of its theologically grounded worldview. Within that social vision, Catholic social teaching plays a crucial role alongside other resources which will be explored in later chapters.

In this chapter, I first briefly review these three sources and explain how they influenced this project. I then explain the research methodology and strategy and describe the implementation and the evolution of the arguments. Finally, I review the research design and execution in relation to themes such as validity and reflexivity, and comment on

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Eerdmans, 2012) pp. 167-181. This theme is echoed in other material; see, for example, ‘Practice as Embodied Knowing’ by Colleen M. Griffith in *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Vision*, ed. by Claire E. Wolfteich (New York: Paulist Press, 2014).

<sup>42</sup> *Talking about God* (p. 51). Much of the material on practical theology also describes its focus as the activity of believers. See for example, Bonnie Miller-McLemore’s ‘Introduction’ in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) p. 5; or Don S. Browning’s definition, quoted in Wolfteich, *Invitation* (p. 10).

<sup>43</sup> *Motu proprio* (p. 2).

epistemology, and locate myself in relation to reflexivity and the insider-outsider continuum.

## 2 The Extended Case Study Model

The primary question I held in view when determining a methodology for the research was how various models constructed the relationship between theory and empirical data. In the context of this research, in which the body of Catholic social teaching and the *motu proprio*, as well as theological and other resources, act as theory and are implicated in the research question, this relationship is central, and indeed grew more significant as the research progressed.<sup>44</sup> I sought an approach which enabled a dynamic and reciprocal critical interaction between theory and practice, and which worked for the context of the Catholic Church and tradition, in which official teaching is extensive and weighty. The case study model was my starting point, because as Robert Yin explains, it both acknowledges the role of theory from the beginning and investigates something in depth in its real-life context.<sup>45</sup> However, I then discovered an adaptation which offered more potential, in Michael Burawoy's re-construction which he terms the extended case study method. Where a standard case study is concerned principally with how the meanings found within the bounded case itself answer a specific question, Burawoy is more interested in the relationship between the case and its contexts.

Burawoy's innovation is to conceptualise a more dynamic relationship with theory, in which the researcher looks for anomalies, new angles of vision and refutations in empirical data which lead to reconstruction or deepening of theory in progressive ways. For Burawoy, this includes exploration of how the research site is 'simultaneously shaped by and shaping an external field of forces'.<sup>46</sup> In other words, the effects of context are 'not just noise disguising reality but reality itself'.<sup>47</sup> To some extent, he reverses the expectation of a standard case study approach, arguing for attention to the particularities revealed in the research, rather than trying to conform or reduce cases to a general theory. As Luke Bretherton notes in his discussion and use of Burawoy's model, cases are not seen as paradigmatic but of interest in their specificity.<sup>48</sup> Although the research works with a body

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<sup>44</sup> I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 4.

<sup>45</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods, Applied Social Research Methods, Vol. 5*, 4th edition (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2009), (p. 35). Yin describes the case study's use of theory as its essential point of difference from grounded theory or ethnographic approaches. In a case study, theory works as a template, a 'hypothetical story' which the research then investigates.

<sup>46</sup> Burawoy (p. 15).

<sup>47</sup> Burawoy (p. 13).

<sup>48</sup> Luke Bretherton, 'Coming to Judgment: Methodological Reflections on the Relationship between Ecclesiology, Ethnography and Political Theory', *Modern Theology*, 28.2 (2012), 167–96 (pp. 184-6).

of theory, it is one that is continually evolving through attention to concrete cases which generate the conceptual resources for the repair and reformulation of the prior body of theory.<sup>49</sup> Thus the knowledge generated is both in the insights gained from the cases studied, and in the revisions proposed to relevant theory.<sup>50</sup>

Burawoy's identification of the impact of external social forces is particularly relevant for the participants in this research, for whom the daily reality of their work is impacted constantly by policies and events with which they must engage, and where influences from Catholic origins and institutional relationships both contradict and sometimes converge with other forces. His description of how insights from practice can disrupt, surprise and reconstruct theory captured the potential in this research to re-examine themes such as the concept of a Catholic charity, and the use of empirical data to explore how Catholic social teaching relates to Catholic social practice. He also proposes a highly reflexive approach in which the researcher does not avoid her own biases but rather discovers them and allows them to be changed through the interaction of the research process, a research characteristic that also features in the other influences discussed below.

However, this remains a model drawn from social science theory which I use in a project where the primary standpoint is theological. I have kept in mind the caution that models and methods drawn from other sciences may bring assumptions about such matters as the nature of truth and what counts as knowledge that are problematic when viewed in a theological horizon but also hold potential for dialogue and discovery of common ground.<sup>51</sup> I recognise that any empirical research of necessity employs tools and concepts drawn from social sciences, and that that empirical work with theological purposes has much to learn from debates in other fields of knowledge. I have also found resources in fields such as human geography and historical/sociological study of social welfare which resonate with or illuminate the themes discussed, although I would characterise this as dialogical openness to other perspectives rather than a fully interdisciplinary enquiry. So whilst the extended case study model locates the research

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<sup>49</sup> Bretherton, 'Coming to Judgement' (p. 185). On this point, the model differs from grounded theory which generates theory from the data.

<sup>50</sup> Christian Scharen explores similar ground in his discussion of Gaston Bachelard's 'epistemological breaks' in *Fieldwork in Theology: Exploring the Social Context of God's Work in the World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2015) (pp. 38-40).

<sup>51</sup> For example, in reading the significance of particularity. John Swinton and Harriet Mowat discuss this in *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM, 2006) (pp. 75-98). I take what M. Horace Barnes characterises as a Rahnerian approach in which social sciences 'are also a work built on grace in some way', in *Theology and the Social Sciences* (New York: Orbis, 2014), (p. xv). I recognise that this is a major debate, not just within recent polarities of Catholic tradition but also in wider theology in its post-liberal turn, but it is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage with that debate.

methodology in wider horizons and offers a structure and strategy to follow as well as criteria for investigation, I note its limitations and use other tools and perspectives from theologically oriented theory.

### **3 Catholic Participation in Practical Theology: Positioning the Research**

The field of practical theology within Christian tradition provided a closer methodological context and offered resources that have influenced the design and implementation of this research. Although practical theology is a diverse field, with many overlapping definitions, the common ground is found in seeing lived Christian faith and practices as places of theological disclosure and seeking critical, disciplined and constructive dialogue between practices, texts and traditions.<sup>52</sup> For practical theologians, embodied experience and the knowledge and wisdom found there have a voice which has theological significance and the potential to contribute to wider theological discourse. This contribution offers new insights but also serves a 'critical function', testing the 'practical veracity' of the claims of other theological disciplines.<sup>53</sup> The emphasis on practice includes another crucial direction for this research. Practice is not only the starting point, but also, in Wolffeich's words, 'the final destination'.<sup>54</sup> Swinton and Mowat concur that practical theology aims 'to enable faithful living and authentic Christian practice'.<sup>55</sup> It follows then that practical theology is interested in transformation, both of individuals and of society, and so extends its reach to the political domain. This research is concerned with the real and messy practice of ecclesial, communal and individual Catholic engagement in the social welfare of the whole community in faithfulness to the Gospel and in collaboration with diverse companions and partners, and in testing whether and how this enacts Catholic social teaching. It deals with actual agencies for which the issues discussed here are continuing challenges, and with an area of social mission in which the institutional Church is actively seeking a role. The communal actors in view are, as noted earlier, deeply rooted in Catholic tradition but also operating across the boundaries of lived faith and ecclesial

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<sup>52</sup> See for example James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, 'An Introduction to Pastoral and Practical Theology', in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, eds. by same authors (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) (pp. 13-15); Elaine Graham in *Transforming Practice* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2002) (pp. 208-9); Don Browning in Wolffeich, *Invitation*, (p.10); Bonnie Miller-McLemore proposes four 'distinct enterprises' within practical theology's 'multivalent' scope in 'Introduction: The Contributions of Practical Theology' in *Wiley-Blackwell Companion* (p. 5).

<sup>53</sup> Miller-McLemore, *Wiley-Blackwell Companion* (p.17).

<sup>54</sup> Wolffeich, *Invitation* (p. 325).

<sup>55</sup> Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology* (p. 9). This is, of course, a distinctively Christian construction of a theological discipline, generated in contingent contexts.

structures, and so this project pushes at the boundaries of practical theology, challenging assumptions about ecclesial boundaries.

There are also potential discomforts as well, particularly in relation to Catholic theological horizons. Most accounts of practical theology as a discipline locate it substantially in relation to other Christian traditions and theologians, and work to understand and remedy the absence of Catholic participation in this field is relatively recent.<sup>56</sup> As Kathleen Cahalan notes, this is not because the practical is missing in Catholic theology, but rather that it is conceptualised differently, located in other fields such as moral theology.<sup>57</sup> Cahalan suggests that in the post-conciliar era, it has been associated with methods of pastoral engagement and has suffered from the same critique often applied to *Gaudium et Spes*, of lacking an adequate account of human sinfulness and a critical awareness of the fragility of interpretation. She argues that this is a failure in Catholic theology, which tends towards the assumption that right doctrine leads to right practice, when in reality, practice is 'varied, complex, fragmented and incoherent', a description which also applies to the relationship between doctrine and practice.<sup>58</sup> Other Catholic scholars re-read Catholic tradition to show how the concerns of practical theology have always been present and dynamic, and identify some of the theological strengths the Catholic tradition can bring, including its sacramental imagination, structured and robust ecclesiology and theological anthropology. Theological and practical methodologies are also cited as a Catholic strength, including the methodology of *Gaudium et Spes*.<sup>59</sup>

In locating this project in the field of practical theology, I am arguing for the validity of these research themes, in their confessional specificity, as a participation in a wider conversation about Catholic contributions to practical theology, bringing the somewhat neglected area of social mission into view.<sup>60</sup> The tendency within the Catholic theological

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<sup>56</sup> Two important collections have already been cited: Sweeney and others (eds.), *Keeping Faith in Practice*, written from the UK context, and Wolftreich (ed.) *Invitation to Practical Theology*, a largely USA based collection.

<sup>57</sup> Kathleen A. Cahalan, 'Locating Practical Theology in Catholic Theological Discourse and Practice', *International Journal of Practical Theology*, 15.1 (2011) (p. 12).

<sup>58</sup> Cahalan (p. 21).

<sup>59</sup> Annemie Dillen and Robert Mager, 'Research in Practical Theology: Methods, Methodology and Normativity' in Wolftreich, *Invitation* (p. 318), and in Cahalan and Bryan Froehle, 'A Developing Discipline: The Catholic Voice in Practical Theology' in the same volume. Among the methodologies cited are the use of the pastoral cycle, the development of lay apostolic movements and praxis-based approaches. See Cahalan, *Locating Practical Theology* (pp. 10-12). This research works on the ground laid out by Cahalan, specifying it further by attention to the specific category of Catholic charities as social mission actors.

<sup>60</sup> *Keeping Faith in Practice*, whilst wide-ranging in many ways, does not explore Catholic social mission in England and Wales. The chapter surveying the practical pathways in which Catholics engage in activities of interest to practical theology mentions development agencies and name-

world to bracket off Catholic social teaching as a sub-field of theological ethics means less attention is given to its ecclesiological context or to how and by whom it is enacted. The disciplined academic exploration of how the Church's social teaching is enacted in real contexts and becomes intelligible in practice which tests the veracity of its principles, both invites the field of practical theology to turn attention to social mission and brings the insights formulated in CST and embodied in practice into wider Christian theological conversation. I also take from practical theology and its overlapping dialogue with ecclesiology a corrective to normative Catholic ecclesiology's idealising tendencies. Debates within these fields about how to identify empirically what counts as 'the Church' have parallels with themes explored later in this research.<sup>61</sup> Nicholas Healy's challenge to practical ecclesiology, his argument that 'church community' does not exist in an 'empirically describable' way, and that we should look instead for 'distinctiveness', which is theological rather than empirical, has echoes in the argument about Catholicity in Catholic charities I make in later chapters.<sup>62</sup>

#### 4 The Influence of Theological Action Research

Theological action research, according to its originators, is an approach rather than a set methodology, in which theologically based principles are combined with elements of action research to produce a distinctive research practice.<sup>63</sup> It privileges conversation and proposes interpretation as a shared activity, working through a combination of insider and outsider participation. It is a research process which identifies and engages four different theological voices speaking both within and beyond the research context. Its primary commitment is to the 'indispensable place' of voices from practice in theological discourse, arguing that these count as theology and that practice embodies an *operant* theological voice, often in contrast with an *espoused* voice which narrates the ideal accounts of what people aim to do.<sup>64</sup> The analytical and interpretative work then brings these voices into conversation with the *normative* voices of Christian tradition and the *formal* voice of

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checks a couple of Catholic charities, but omits any recognition of the sector of Catholic engagement in social welfare or homelessness work. (pp. 26-44)

<sup>61</sup> See for example, Christopher Craig Brittain, 'Why Ecclesiology Cannot Live by Doctrine Alone', *Ecclesial Practices*, 1 (2014), 5-30; Theodora Hawksley, 'Metaphor and Method in Concrete Ecclesiologies', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 66 (2013), 431-47; Clare Watkins and others 'What Counts as Theology?' in *Perspectives*, Ward (ed.) pp. 167-81.

<sup>62</sup> 'Ecclesiology, Ethnography and God: An Interplay of Reality Descriptions' in Ward (ed.) *Perspectives* (p. 191).

<sup>63</sup> Described in detail in Cameron, *Talking about God*.

<sup>64</sup> Watkins, 'What Counts as Theology' (p. 169). In a 2017 seminar reviewing the impact of theological action research, the possibility of adding other voices was discussed. See <<https://theologyandactionresearch.net/events/theological-action-research-influence-impact-and-iterations-2018-colloquium/>> [accessed 27.09.2018].

academic theology, identifying gaps, insights and new possibilities. It is also reflexively aware of practical theology's need for perspectives and tools from social sciences whilst conscious of the epistemological questions raised. As noted earlier, theological action research assumes that the actors involved are practitioners of Christian faith in some way, an assumption that leaves somewhat unexamined the complex realities of social mission engagement in the conditions of secularity.

For my purposes, anticipating the theological framework set out in Chapter Five of this thesis, this approach is attractive because as Clare Watkins argues, it has particular resonances with Catholic ecclesiology,<sup>65</sup> and especially with the Conciliar theology of revelation in *Dei Verbum*.<sup>66</sup> For Watkins, the approach corresponds to what she describes as 'revelation-centred ecclesiology' with a pneumatological dynamic.<sup>67</sup> Its authenticity, she suggests, is found in how it uncovers 'truth about the Church' through dynamic, participative and multi-voiced reflection. However, she also acknowledges that whilst the outcomes are 'transformative' in practical terms, they are also difficult to summarise as 'systematic'.<sup>68</sup> The move I make in adopting the principles of theological action research is to extend the ecclesiological scope to the practices of the Church in social mission, affirming that these practices are also contexts in which the Spirit is active and tradition is both unfolded and created, even if more contingently than in the institutional spaces of the Church. I also observe that using principles from theological action research in a doctoral project in which academic purposes require significant theoretical work weights the formal voice in ways that carry risks as well as potential depth of conversation.

Although I hoped initially to use the practical strategies associated with theological action research, it was soon clear that it was not a viable approach for a single researcher working with a group of six charities within the timing constraints of a full-time PhD. The model proposes co-identification of a research question and insider-led research activities, as well as conversations about the data with internal and external reflective groups. I explored a more limited possibility, working through CSAN, but staffing changes also meant this was impractical. However, the core principles of the approach - practices as bearers of theology, identifying and constructing dialogue between the four voices, and a

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<sup>65</sup> Watkins, 'Texts and Practices: An ecclesiology of *traditio* for pastoral theology' in *Keeping Faith in Practice*, pp. 163-78.

<sup>66</sup> *Dei Verbum* 8 <[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651118\\_dei-verbum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html)> [accessed 16.10.2017].

<sup>67</sup> Watkins, *Texts and Practices* (p. 169).

<sup>68</sup> Watkins, *What Counts as Theology* (p. 181).

conversational dynamic expressed through reflexivity and attention to perspectives from other disciplines - have remained important throughout this research process.

## 5 Contributing to Pragmatic Coherence

Watkins points to a pivotal tension in any practical or empirical theological research, including this project, about how empirical data can speak in the spaces of formal and normative theology and offer resources that lead to reconstruction or expansion.<sup>69</sup> This tension is partly practical, concerned with mechanisms, spaces and resources, and partly about conceptualising what is possible. In the Catholic context, these tensions are overlaid by the dynamics of how authority in teaching is embedded in hierarchical structure, presenting the normative voice as embedded in institutional power.<sup>70</sup>

One resolution is to argue that this is not the primary aim of practical theological work. John Swinton and Harriet Mowat point out that its purpose is not merely problem-solving or pragmatic, but rather concerned with greater faithfulness in participation in God's mission in the world, a purpose that is also explicit in the definition of theological action research.<sup>71</sup> This risks holding practical empirical work in a restricted space, unable to speak back to the formal or normative tradition. Elaine Graham offers a different diagnosis in her review of how theological action research evolved in work with Christian faith-based charities, exploring the challenges they face in holding onto distinctively Christian identity.<sup>72</sup> She points to the risk of 'internal secularization' as other discourses are absorbed through secular engagement and argues that this requires a 'theological fluency or literacy' among those involved, so that action is safeguarded by theological coherence.<sup>73</sup> From experience, I recognize the desirability of such literacy, which would help ground level actors make practical use of theology and increase the potential for practice to speak back to the academy and the tradition. But she does not develop the implications or practical viability of her proposal, either from the practitioner or the academic viewpoint. The resources available to charities and the concerns of practitioners do not easily extend to theological discourse and there are few mechanisms that invite the insights of their experience into dialogue with formal and normative voices.

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<sup>69</sup> Watkins, *What Counts as Theology* (p. 181).

<sup>70</sup> This is not the whole picture. The Catholic context also contains voices that speak back to the normative and both influence its development and provide a critical counter-narrative.

<sup>71</sup> Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology* (p. 257); Cameron, *Talking about God* (p.63).

<sup>72</sup> Elaine Graham, 'Is Practical Theology a Form of "Action Research"?', *International Journal of Practical Theology*, 17.1 (2013), 148–78.

<sup>73</sup> Graham, 'Is Practical Theology' (pp. 155, 163).

A more constructive approach is outlined by Paul D. Murray in his discussion of how to connect empirical and systematic doctrinal perspectives in ecclesiology.<sup>74</sup> Murray proposes the concept of the 'living truth of the Church', understood as both a divine and human reality, as a unifying focus for ecclesiological work, which then requires three kinds of coherence. Alongside internal coherence of the doctrine, and external coherence which takes into account other disciplines, he proposes the need for pragmatic coherence, in which empirical work plays a crucial role in testing both doctrine and performance of faith, opening up 'the possibility of their refreshment'.<sup>75</sup> Drawing on the argument of Thomas Aquinas about how each particular thing discloses something of God, Murray terms this a 'naturalist moment' in ecclesiology, one which is necessary for a 'genuinely theological understanding'.<sup>76</sup> In this conceptual framework, perspectives from other disciplines are part of naturalist observation and play a part in 'critical accountability'.<sup>77</sup> However, the concept of coherence needs to be handled with critical awareness of the risks of falling into a disciplinary approach or settling for compromise. Murray invokes both the classical Catholic principle of good order, but also the looser and more dynamic idea of how things 'hang together'.<sup>78</sup> The categories of impact often discussed in relation to practical theology and empirical work are more likely to be described as messy and disruptive.<sup>79</sup> This does not preclude eventual coherence, but it cautions against assuming this is straightforward, either methodologically or conceptually, or that it can be completed. In the approaches discussed in this chapter Burawoy as well as Watkins and others emphasise that it is the unexpected, the anomalies and the dissonances which lead to insight. Murray also acknowledges this in noting that the ecclesiological work he proposes extends to examining 'that which is culturally, organisationally, and practically discordant, even dysfunctional'.<sup>80</sup> The tension between the value of disruption and the theologically rooted Catholic instinct for order and coherence plays out in empirical theological work; keeping the tension dynamic and active is crucial to its task.

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<sup>74</sup> Paul D. Murray, 'Searching the Living Truth of the Church in Practice: On the Transformative Task of Systematic Ecclesiology', *Modern Theology*, 30.2 (2014), 251–81.

<sup>75</sup> Murray, 'Living Truth' (p. 254).

<sup>76</sup> Murray and Mathew Guest, 'On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church: Theological and Sociological Reflections on Receptive Ecumenism and the Local Church' in *Explorations in Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. by Christian Scharen (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2012) (p. 161).

<sup>77</sup> Murray, 'Living Truth' (p. 271).

<sup>78</sup> Murray, 'Living Truth' (p. 265).

<sup>79</sup> Frances Ward, 'The Messiness of Studying Congregations Using Ethnographic Methods' in *Congregational Studies in the UK: Christianity in a Post-Christian Context* eds. by Mathew Guest, Karin Tusting, and Linda Woodhead (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004) 125-138.

<sup>80</sup> Murray, 'Living Truth' (p. 270).

Using Murray's conceptual bridge, the claim I develop is that the charitable organisations which are part of the outflow of the Church in its social mission are part of its 'living truth' in their outwardly focused mediation and enactment of ethical visions rooted in Catholic tradition, including the ways in which they are discordant and disruptive.

## 6 Research Design and Strategy

The scope of the empirical work was determined in advance as focused on charities that were members of the CSAN network and working wholly or partly in the field of homelessness and related social exclusion, but the particular organisations were not identified.<sup>81</sup> In selecting which agencies to invite to participate, I ensured other key characteristics were represented. It was important to include both newer and long established charities and those with local and national capacities and reach. I also took account of different degrees of closeness to institutional Catholic structures, contrasting policies in relation to statutory funding, and the desirability of including perspectives from agencies involved in both service provision and advocacy.<sup>82</sup> The six agencies that participated were diverse in these and other characteristics, although with strong common ground in their commitment to values based practices and their purposes of preventing, ameliorating and/or ending homelessness. Four of the six agencies primarily provided services, with some involvement in advocacy work; one of the agencies was a second-tier charity supporting church and faith based homelessness projects and more substantially active in public advocacy. The final agency was CSAN itself, which operates both as a second tier agency supporting its members and acting as a policy unit, and as an institutional and relational interface with the Catholic Bishops' Conference.

My research plan envisaged using two methods and stages of data collection, supplemented by other data sources and activities. The design and implementation of the research evolved as it proceeded and is described below.

**The first stage** consisted of semi-structured interviews at different levels of each charity – in formal terms, stratified purposeful sampling.<sup>83</sup> The interview participants covered the levels of governance (either the chair of the board or another trustee), senior management (either the CEO or another senior manager), operational work (a service or project manager

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<sup>81</sup> This was determined by the Plater Trust funding brief; see p. 10.

<sup>82</sup> By advocacy, I understand any or all of a range of strategies aimed at securing policy change or influencing political decision-making. In practice, this happens through lobbying, public campaigns and development of alternative policy proposals. Advocacy also describes a practice strategy, working with clients to secure change in their personal situation.

<sup>83</sup> For a definition, see Harsh Suri, 'Purposeful Sampling in Qualitative Research Synthesis' in *Qualitative Research Journal*, 11.2 63-75, (p. 70).

and/or front-line worker) and volunteers. In the larger charities, I conducted five or six interviews; in the smaller charities, I conducted four or five interviews, and for CSAN, two interviews. In most cases, the CEO or another senior manager proposed names of potential interviewees and I then contacted people individually to invite participation. All those invited to participate accepted and were interviewed, 27 in total.<sup>84</sup> Most interviews took place in the charities' own premises; several were arranged in external spaces. Arranging the interviews in people's workspaces was the most practical solution in terms of use of their time. It also had the advantage of locating them in their working space and professional or role experience, an important way of ensuring they began from a stance of confidence. In relation to gender, interviewees were fairly evenly divided, with a slightly larger proportion of women. In relation to personal faith identity, although the invitation did not ask interviewees to disclose whether they belonged to a Christian church, in practice all the participants mentioned their faith stance in the course of their responses. Of the 27 interviewees, half disclosed that they were Catholic; a further quarter belonged to other Christian churches; one was Jewish; and the remainder used varied forms of expression to indicate that they were not church members.<sup>85</sup>

I chose not to interview clients of the charities for several reasons. For this research question, it did not seem appropriate to expect that their experience of the charities would disclose relevant insights. All the participating charities work with anyone whose need fits the services they offer. For the clients, what they experience is the service, which responds to their personal situation. It would not have made sense to ask them to speculate on the motivations or values operative in the charity, or their sources in Catholic tradition. Whilst a different study could explore the congruence between what the charities state as their espoused values and what the clients experience, this was not my purpose – and some of the charities already evaluate this for their own purposes. This study is concerned with how the charities understand and express their faith related identity or roots, assuming that the charities' formal narratives and the operative understanding and practice of their staff and volunteers are two primary locations in which these can be found. A secondary consideration in relation to clients is their vulnerability. Research directly with clients would

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<sup>84</sup> See Appendix Three for further demographic information.

<sup>85</sup> These disclosures were largely incidental to the interviews and focus groups, and it was not possible therefore to probe more deeply whether their personal positions reflected some of the varied dynamics explored by Lois Lee in her research on those who select 'none' when asked to disclose a faith stance in a public census. Lee shows that those who select this category include a range of positions, affiliations and disaffiliations in relation to faith and religion. See 'Secular or Nonreligious? Investigating and Interpreting Generic "Not Religious" Categories and Populations', *Religion*, 44.3 (2014), 466–82.

need a wholly different framework and approach. Whilst there is undoubtedly valuable theological work to be done in the field of the experience of clients, this is not the purpose of this research.

The questions prepared for the interviews covered four main thematic areas:

- whether participants understood their charity to be a Catholic charity, and what this meant in practice, including questions about institutional links, distinctiveness, spirituality and inclusivity;
- their understanding of the purpose of their work, and the impact of their organisational values in their activities;
- their understanding (if any) of Catholic social teaching;
- how they described the political positioning of the charity and whether they viewed their work as having a political dimension.<sup>86</sup>

I treated the sequence of interviews with the first charity as a pilot phase, in order to assess whether the questions and approach would produce the data needed to answer the research questions. In evaluating this phase, two insights emerged. The first was that the response given is very different depending on the level within the organisation at which each interviewee worked. Those with more senior roles engaged in more conceptual and strategic analysis; volunteers and frontline staff were more likely to recount episodes from practice, including small details which were often revelatory. This alerted me to the need to be sensitive to different kinds of narrative and to the importance of understanding the specific work of each interviewee. In interviews with front line staff, I often spent time asking the participants to explain what they actually did and what happened as a result.

The second insight was more problematic - and illuminating - in relation to the research questions. It was clear from the first set of five interviews that knowledge of CST was very limited. Direct questions about familiarity with CST elicited very little awareness of connections between the documentary body of teaching and their work. Whilst I continued to ask this question, this early finding directed me towards the strategy for the focus groups described below. However, this was not the whole picture. Although the majority of interviewees explained that they had minimal or no knowledge of CST, a significant group – seven interviewees, roughly a quarter of the total – had substantial knowledge of CST, not just as an intellectual resource, but as a constitutive part of their personal worldview and its practical implications. These individuals, all of whom were either trustees or CEOs, play

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<sup>86</sup> Appendix Four contains the interview and focus group questions.

significant roles in connecting narratives, practice and the tradition of CST within their organisations. Several also took part in the focus groups.

Alongside the interviews, I obtained and reviewed the charities' key documents.<sup>87</sup> The most significant texts are their Vision, Mission and Values statements or equivalents, and related documents covering practice models and theories of change. These texts powerfully express the espoused vision of the charities and describe their connections to institutional Catholic structures and tradition. Their Annual Reports and Accounts as submitted to the Charity Commission also provided useful information, as did their websites and communications to supporters, and any evaluation reports available. I also spent some time in several sites where services were provided, meeting staff, volunteers and sometimes clients informally, and attended events for supporters and stakeholders associated with some of the London based charities. Throughout the research, I followed the charities on social media. Although much of this latter exposure was informal, and not sufficiently immersive to count as ethnographic, it was important in deepening my understanding of each charity's work.

**The second stage** of qualitative work was a series of focus groups, one in each charity. Whilst I intended to include this method from the outset, I was initially unsure how I would use the groups in relation to the research questions, other than an instinct not to address the same themes as the interviews. However, as noted above, as the interviews progressed, it became clear that there was a need to approach the question of connections between the charities' narratives and work, and CST, in a different way. I was interested in inductive strategies, in which an area of experience and perception is opened up and its contours and dynamics drawn out, before seeking both resonances and dissonances with either normative or formal concepts. In order to keep a manageable and coherent focus, it was important to identify a specific area of experience relevant to the charities, and to have in view the concepts from CST with which a dialogue might then be opened. The area of experience I identified was the charities' experience of the welfare system, particularly as a social safety net in relation to homelessness, and their perception of their role within it. The CST concept to which I hoped connections might be made was the concept of the common good.

The practical and theoretical basis for selecting these themes had several elements. Focusing on engagement in a particular sector of social need enabled exploration of how the vision and practices of the charities as perceived by their staff and volunteers stood in

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<sup>87</sup> See list of documents reviewed in Appendix Two.

relation to the larger politically constructed welfare system, a system which is deeply implicated in their activities and influences what happens to the people with whom they work. It also problematizes understandings of what charity or *caritas* is, and asks questions about the motivations and ambitions of faith-based interventions and about the relationship between charities and the state. Choosing the common good as the concept from CST to hold in dialogue with practice had several underpinning rationales. I began from an assumption that the question of what kind of welfare system operates in any society is a question about the common good, both in focusing on restricted or partial goods that contribute towards it, and because the inclusive nature of the common good requires attention to those who experience exclusion or social vulnerability.<sup>88</sup> I also wanted an inclusive potential, and drew on Thomas Bushlack's argument that an inclination to the common good is 'innate to human nature', and that right reasoning, assisted by ordered passions, can find its way there.<sup>89</sup> Bushlack discusses William Galston's work on value pluralism, noting that Galston proposes starting from 'the standpoint of analysing our shared conceptions of the good' in order to find a way to whatever limited public consensus about the common good is possible.<sup>90</sup> For this research, in which participants come from diverse ethical and faith based motivations and belongings, and have chosen to work in a homelessness charity, it seemed a reasonable assumption that focus groups could draw out not just their espoused but also their operant social vision, in effect their shared conception of the good, even if partial, and see whether and how this illuminates or interrogates the abstract concept of the common good. It was important that the practical meaning of the common good is in principle accessible to all, not just to those who have an explicit Christian faith. Discussion could therefore take place on common ground, whilst also acknowledging the particular formulation of the concept made available in the CST tradition.

The discussion guide I used in the focus groups is found in Appendix Four. I left the composition of the groups to the charities, which meant that different methods were used to gather the groups. In three charities, volunteers were recruited through an open invitation; in one charity, specific individuals were invited. In the other two charities, for practical reasons the group consisted of an entire team. Owing to various constraints, two of the groups were small, consisting of four participants; the other four groups had six or seven participants. Three of the groups included volunteers or interns; in a different three

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<sup>88</sup> I develop this argument in more detail in later chapters.

<sup>89</sup> Bushlack (pp. 81,231).

<sup>90</sup> Bushlack (p. 181).

groups, a senior manager took part. As with the interviewees, the gender balance overall was even. One focus group consisted entirely of women, and another entirely of men.<sup>91</sup> Where disclosed, the individual faith stances were varied.

In practice, although all the focus groups worked well with the first part of the task, describing their analysis of the welfare system in relation to their work, the ways in which they pondered and probed the ethical or faith sources of their social vision and reacted to the concept of the common good varied considerably. Whilst some participants in later groups spontaneously introduced the concept to root and interpret their social vision, in the first two focus groups none of the participants recognised the concept. At first I was surprised, and concerned that the focus group methodology was not going to work. But as I read more deeply in the theoretical material about the common good, and revisited the early focus group data, two insights emerged. The first and most important was that even though the term 'common good' was unfamiliar, their social vision did disclose a conception of the good, even if somewhat fragmentary. As my theoretical exploration of the common good advanced, I saw increasingly how the directional elements of the concept emerged in the reasoning of the focus groups when refracted through the particular thematics explored. The second was that my early expectation that the group would also engage in the work of interpreting their social vision in relation to the concept of the common good needed to be revised. It became clear that it was my task as researcher to take more of the interpretative weight and bear the risks of imposing rather than discovering meanings. In the later focus groups, although I still invited participants to reflect on what had influenced their ethical vision and analysis, including faith sources and CST concepts, particularly the common good, I saw that the practical social vision and analysis evoked in the first part of the work was itself the primary data source. I also noticed that although only a few participants used the abstract and conceptual language characteristic of CST, those who did not could wrestle equally well with the inherent ethical dilemmas. In other words, their practical reasoning, supported by their commitments and experience, led them to ethical analysis and judgement which resonated clearly with conceptual discourse about the common good, but expressed in everyday language.

## **7 Interpreting the Data: Analysis, Reflection and Discernment**

All the interviews and focus groups were recorded digitally and transcribed, mostly by myself, although I used a professional transcriber for five of the interviews. The process

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<sup>91</sup> In the case of the women-only group, this was because the organisation only employs women; the male-only group was not intentional.

of transcribing was useful as a first stage of getting to know the data as data, a slightly different relationship from the intensive listening and feeling my way through the questions in the interviews and focus groups. Listening to the audio-files also helped me reflect on how to improve my practice as the research proceeded and to identify where adjustments were needed. I learned to stay in the researcher space, and to wait through silences, both rather new ways of working for me. I also kept a journal during the empirical work, which enabled me to capture both additional elements of data – the impact of place and set-up and other factors of interest – and to reflect on the intuitive decisions I made as the interviews and focus groups proceeded.

In relation to analysis, I used several strategies. I loaded all the data into NVIVO, although I was and remain somewhat ambivalent about its usefulness.<sup>92</sup> I experienced coding in NVIVO as more mechanical and literal than working by hand on printouts in a mode which moves in a more fluid way between analysis and discernment, and where the latter is more easily open to nuances and inferences.<sup>93</sup> However, I persevered with NVIVO, coding all the data in two separate projects or sets of codes, one for the interviews and one for the focus groups and eventually found it useful for retrieval and as a counterpoint to the more intuitive work. The next strategy was to develop what Nicola Slee terms secondary data, consisting of reflective and analytical memos. I created a memo about each charity, summarising families of themes and sub-themes and mapping links to theoretical concepts, and a second set of cross-cutting thematic memos connecting to the research question and sub-questions. The two sets of memos created a matrix in which I could read across as well as within the charities. Learning from the theological action research model, I constructed initial reflection on the data as a conversation, setting myself questions – what theological action research terms ‘a guide to interpreting the data’, which I then answered in some of the memo narratives.<sup>94</sup> The memos then constituted my secondary data, the product of reflection and analysis on the primary data and emerging themes. My aim in the secondary data was still to listen to the voice of the data, to capture the surprises and complexities as well as the absences, questions and challenges to the normative concepts held in the frameworks used.

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<sup>92</sup> NVIVO is a software programme which enables researchers to store, retrieve, sort and code either or both qualitative and quantitative data. See <https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/what-is-nvivo> [accessed 29.12.2018]. I used NVIVO 10.

<sup>93</sup> Nicola Slee describes this more intuitive approach in ‘The Patterns and Processes of Women’s Faith Development: A Qualitative Approach’, *British Journal of Theological Education*, 14.1 (2003), 93–107.

<sup>94</sup> Cameron, *Talking about God* (p. 178).

The secondary data was then crucial in opening up interpretative potential. I was able to move past the stage of simply answering the research questions to explore other meanings and horizons, and potential elements of constructive theological argument. This was inevitably a selective process, in which I recognised very clearly how my subjective interests and experience pointed to particular directions. Gerard Marti's concept of 'found theology' was useful here, avoiding the temptation to force empirical shapes into theoretical frameworks, and being attentive to what is disclosed in everyday dialogue and behaviour.<sup>95</sup> Some of the theoretical material which I use in the thesis was invoked directly by the data rather than anticipated in early reading, and the theoretical framework retained fluidity throughout.

The final stage of work on the data was unanticipated, and took place during the writing of this thesis. I was surprised to find that as my argument developed in the actual process of writing, I returned repeatedly to each stage of the earlier work; to the coded data in NVIVO and to both sets of memos. The intuition which led me initially to the common good as a research focus deepened as I discovered what the data held, finding new and sometimes unexpected perspectives, and eventually confirming the concept as a central thematic structure in the thesis. The later chapters reflect the continuing process of discovery and attentiveness to the voices of the data.

## **8 What Can We Claim? Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research Projects**

Validity in qualitative research needs to be interpreted and justified for each project, depending on its purpose and framework and taking into account the claims made. John W. Creswell discusses a range of debates and perspectives on validation in qualitative research, in which concepts such as trustworthiness and authenticity are proposed as more useful than the criteria associated with positivist and quantitative work. He describes reconstructions of validity reflecting post-modern, feminist and other orientations, and various types of validation including ethical validation (self-questioning regarding assumptions and implications, equitable treatment of diverse voices, etc.) and substantive validation (understanding your topic, use of other sources, and documenting this).<sup>96</sup> Whilst many of the concepts he reviews are implicit in any good research practice, his summary of a meta-analysis of theoretical approaches offers a more focused and useful set of criteria.

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<sup>95</sup> Gerardo Marti, 'Found Theologies versus Imposed Theologies: Remarks on Theology and Ethnography from a Sociological Perspective', *Ecclesial Practices*, 3.2 (2016), 157–72.

<sup>96</sup> John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2007) (p. 248).

Robin Whitemore, Susan K. Chase and Carol Lynn Mandle identify four primary criteria: credibility, or accurate interpretation of participants' meanings; authenticity, or hearing of diverse voices; criticality, or critical appraisal throughout, and integrity, or self-critical awareness.<sup>97</sup> These are convincing, but difficult to evidence or evaluate other than through the researcher's own account. Creswell himself concludes by identifying eight validation strategies and recommends that researchers engage in at least two of them.<sup>98</sup> In this research, three of these are built into the design: triangulation, or use of multiple methods and sources of data and theories; clarifying research bias from the outset; and particular attention is paid to disconfirming evidence.

Swinton and Mowat take a simpler approach in their invaluable handbook dealing with qualitative research in theological fields. They also recommend triangulation, and identification of 'outliers', and point to tools such as careful record-keeping and journaling to support reliability.<sup>99</sup> They also discuss and reformulate the question of generalisability, suggesting that the qualitative researcher's task is to provide rich description with which others can identify or which resonate with their similar experience, even to the point of being transformative.<sup>100</sup> This insight is useful for this research, in which I recognise that the particularities of theme and context potentially limit the transferability of any insights gained. It is particular to the legal and political context of the UK, to the Catholic Church and its tradition and experience in this context, and to the sub-group of charities and their field of activity. This is one of the points at which the theological orientation of the research comes into play, as the theological significance of particularity is a primary validation for a focused local enquiry.<sup>101</sup>

Swinton and Mowat also discuss 'theoretical generalisability' in which the research develops theoretical perspectives which have conceptual comparability and thus 'have the potential to move beyond the particularities of the situation being examined', arguably including proposing cautions to or extensions of normative claims.<sup>102</sup> I argue that this

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<sup>97</sup> Robin Whitemore, Susan K. Chase and Carol Lynn Mandle, 'Pearls, Pith and Provocation: Validity in Qualitative Research', *Qualitative Health Research*, 11.4 (2001) 522-38 (p. 529).

<sup>98</sup> Creswell (pp 250-53).

<sup>99</sup> Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology* (pp. 70-1).

<sup>100</sup> Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology* (p. 48).

<sup>101</sup> Lieven Boeve discusses how post-modern sensibilities have questioned master narratives and turned to contextuality, particularity and contingency in construction of meaning. He then develops a theory of theological method which begins from recognising particularity and its boundaries, and thus being enabled to encounter 'the other' through whom the 'interruptive' strategies of God are experienced. See 'Beyond the Modern-Anti-Modern Dilemma: *Gaudium et Spes* and Theological Method in a Postmodern Context', *Horizons*, 34 (2007), 292-305. Scharen draws on Rowan Williams' theology to argue for the significance of particularity in *Fieldwork in Theology*, (pp. 83-6).

<sup>102</sup> Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology* (p. 48)

potential exists in this research, at least for some adjacent fields of Catholic charities and for thematics such as the relationship between CST and social mission practices.

## 9 Epistemological Reflections

The epistemological grounding for this research reflects influences from critical realism. Critical realism has an ontological base, asserting that what exists is real, whether we are aware of it or not, and recognising that our knowledge of it is always limited and relative. Pete Ward describes it thus: 'Knowledge lies between the extremes of absolute certainty and radical scepticism and it consists in reasoned attachment to positions.'<sup>103</sup> For Ward, following Andrew Wright, 'knowledge is contextual rather than foundational', and we bring reasoned judgement into play in creative processes of continuing revision.<sup>104</sup> But he also acknowledges that this perspective leaves normativity in a 'perilous' position, with no guarantees of truthfulness.

This is problematic for any research which engages with the truth claims which are characteristic of the normative frameworks of Catholic teaching. If knowledge is relative and contextual but nonetheless deals with what is real, although our grasp of it is limited, how can it have any purchase or relevance in conversation with a doctrinal system based on assumptions of objective truth and universal application? In the post-conciliar era, the teaching documents of the Catholic Church recognise the autonomy of human sciences and express cautious openness to insights from human and social sciences, but without giving ground on the primacy of Catholic truth claims, both in implicit epistemologies and in terms of content.<sup>105</sup> Critical realism's ontological base builds a bridge with the Catholic tradition's attachment to the material world and to natural law traditions and reasoning, but also invites Catholic theological work to be self-critically aware of limitations and contextual influence.

In developing arguments in Catholic ethics, Lisa Sowle Cahill argues that critical realism is consistent with what she terms an 'Aristotelian-Thomistic ethics of human nature', and can stand up to the arguments targeted by post-modernist deconstruction, whilst learning from its critique.<sup>106</sup> To her Thomist sources she adds the influence of Habermas to propose 'open, reciprocal and critical conversation, ultimately grounded in consensus-seeking communities of practice'.<sup>107</sup> She finds in Aquinas an openness to

<sup>103</sup> Pete Ward, 'Blueprint Ecclesiology and the Lived', *Ecclesial Practices*, 2.1 (2015), 74–90 (p.84).

<sup>104</sup> Ward, 'Blueprint Ecclesiology' (p. 85).

<sup>105</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* in Tanner, *Decrees Vol II*, para 36.

<sup>106</sup> *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) (p. 36).

<sup>107</sup> Cahill, *Sex, Gender* (p. 12).

‘inductive objectivity and realism’ which she translates into ‘shared framing experiences and moral common ground’.<sup>108</sup> More recently, Joseph Selling also focuses attention on ‘contextual ethical living and decision-making’, pointing to the importance of narrative and re-visioning of norms as ‘helpful and even friendly’ rather than admonitory.<sup>109</sup> The work of Cahill and Selling demonstrates the epistemic spaces that can be re-constructed from the deep wells of Catholic tradition and which hold validity in wider scholarship.

## 10 A Way to Be Both: Reflexivity and the Insider/Outsider Continuum

All the theoretical sources that have influenced the design and execution of this research place significant emphasis on reflexivity. For Burawoy, ‘we thematise our participation in the world we study’.<sup>110</sup> In practical theology, one of Wolftreich’s five basic principles for the discipline is that it deals with ‘two areas of meaning: one inherent to the practice or expression being examined, and one invoked by the researcher’ and the methodology is ‘determined by the way these two are made to interact’.<sup>111</sup> Swinton and Mowat describe it as a ‘*the* most crucial dynamic’ of qualitative research. They usefully distinguish between epistemological reflexivity, self-critical examination of the research design, methods and assumptions, and personal reflexivity, a recognition that ‘the researcher becomes the primary tool that is used to access the meanings of the situation being explored’ and so must be aware of the impact of her own history.<sup>112</sup> In theological action research, reflection and reflexivity are central, but structured differently, as the agents of research include all the participants, those doing the empirical work and those involved in the reflective conversations about the data. Thus reflexivity is communal and built into its methodology. Elaine Graham notes this in her evaluation of the approach, pointing out that it is difficult to determine how the positionality of individual researchers is taken into account.<sup>113</sup>

Practical theology draws here on the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, and in particular on his concept of horizons and their fusion through the practice of conversation. Gadamer’s argument is that understanding is ‘party-dependent’ and involves ‘revising

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<sup>108</sup> Cahill, *Sex, Gender* (p. 54).

<sup>109</sup> ‘Reframing Catholic Theological Ethics: Summary and Application’ in *Religions*, 8, 203 (2017) <[https://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special\\_issues/ethics](https://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special_issues/ethics)> [accessed 23.09.2018] 5-14 (p.14).

<sup>110</sup> Burawoy (p. 5).

<sup>111</sup> Wolftreich (p. 324).

<sup>112</sup> Swinton and Mowat (p. 60).

<sup>113</sup> Graham suggests that this non-disclosure is at odds with commitments normally expected of action research, but her critique is based on *Talking about God in Practice*, and a fuller judgement would need to look at the narratives of each project using theological action research. In Brouard’s research for example, personal positionality and communal reflexivity are balanced. Brouard, *Abseiling*.

goals' because we discover how 'our previous sense of reality is undone, refuted and shows itself as needing to be re-constituted'.<sup>114</sup> Charles Taylor explains that Gadamer's theory asks us to identify and undo the parts of our understandings 'that distort the reality of the other', allowing ourselves to be challenged by what is different, on the 'long march' towards true understanding. As we understand, we undergo a shift, as our horizons are extended. Gadamer calls this a fusion because the broader horizon opened by this process extends beyond the starting points of the voices engaged and combines them; 'Understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves'.<sup>115</sup> He also describes how horizons evolve and change. Gadamer's theory adds a deeper level of significance to reflexive practice as well as providing this research with a hinterland to the concept of 'horizons' which is used in later chapters.

However, even with theoretical awareness, and using practices such as reflective journaling and initial analysis of personal motivations, reflexivity in the research process is characterised by uncertain intuitions and sudden illuminations, tugging at what Pete Ward calls 'affective gravitational pulls'<sup>116</sup> that do not always rise to articulation. Ward's description captures how my own experience of Catholic faith and ecclesial life influences what I see and how I listen, underlining the value of self-critical reflexivity. Charlotte Aull Davies cautions against the absorption in which boundaries are lost, a risk that resonated as I learned to occupy the researcher space and practice its disciplines.<sup>117</sup> In contrast Kim Etherington takes a feminist approach, emphasising that the researcher must make herself 'open and vulnerable',<sup>118</sup> whereas Christian Scharen draws on Rowan Williams' work in his discussion of the dispossession, or forgetfulness of self, which is necessary if fieldwork in theology is to listen and deeply understand others' experience.<sup>119</sup> There is an interesting tension here between the presence and absence of the researcher's self, with all our messy bias and unruly affections. But both perspectives imply the need for sensitivity to power dynamics in the context studied, in the relationship between researcher and participants and in the positionality of each interviewee, and indeed the positionality of the organisation within the institutional Church.

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<sup>114</sup> Charles Taylor, 'Gadamer on the Human Sciences', in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer* ed. by Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006) 126-142 (p. 128).

<sup>115</sup> Taylor, *Gadamer* (p. 136).

<sup>116</sup> Ward, 'Blueprint Ecclesiology' (p. 76).

<sup>117</sup> Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others* (London: Routledge, 1999) (p. 5).

<sup>118</sup> Kim Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher: Using Our Selves in Research* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2004).

<sup>119</sup> *Fieldwork in Theology: Exploring the Social Context of God's Work in the World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2015) (p. 113).

In this research, the strategy of engaging different levels of responsibility within the organisations studied meant that the subtle dynamics of authority and power derived from roles were present in the background. Also present were varieties of faith positioning and attitudes to Catholicity which sometimes made the interview space complex to negotiate. I was conscious that the themes of my questions invoked some of these dynamics, and worked at how to convey unconditional openness to participants' perspectives. One of the reasons I became uneasy with asking whether participants had any understanding of CST is that in practice, since many did not, I was asking them to admit ignorance, and this was unsettling. As a researcher, my instinct was more attuned to Etherington's vulnerability and Scharen's dispossession than to the risk of seeming to know more than the interviewee. But equally I was aware of how my own subjectivity was tugged by what I heard.

From the beginning, I was conscious of the insider-outsider boundary and initially unsure which side I occupied. I have worked with some of the participating charities and already knew some of the interviewees and other participants from various professional interactions and Catholic networks. I have experienced some of the concerns discussed in this research in professional Catholic roles at earlier stages of my career. My own personal Catholic faith and ecclesial experience are also deeply implicated in the research themes. So in many ways, I felt like an insider. But my positioning now as a researcher is in significant ways an outsider role, with different accountabilities. Sonia Dwyer and Jennifer L. Buckle suggest that whilst this may be a space of paradox and ambiguity, it need not be regarded as a dichotomy but rather as a creative tension, opening the possibility that the researcher can 'find a way to be both'.<sup>120</sup> A further useful perspective is provided by Gladys Ganiel and Claire Mitchell, who argue that the insider-outsider boundary is a continuum rather than a binary, which shifts as multiple identities are engaged, including spiritual and emotional connections.<sup>121</sup> This is particularly useful for reflexivity in confessional theological research, where I recognise that I cannot bracket off my personal faith motivations any more than I could expect participants either to disclose or bracket off their personal faith stances. The challenge was to accept these and avoid a rigidity that obscured this part of the reality of the research and the researcher. The potential of the boundary as a continuum lies in how appropriate recognition of faith connections facilitates deeper levels of engagement and insight.

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<sup>120</sup> 'The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2009, 8(1) 54-63 (p. 62).

<sup>121</sup> 'Turning the Categories Inside-Out: Complex Identifications and Multiple Interactions in Religious Ethnography', *Sociology of Religion*, 67 (2006), 3-21.

Reflexive awareness soon discloses that despite a commitment to the skills and disciplines of good practice, my choices still shape the contours and dynamics of the research, and my own experiences and convictions inevitably condition what I hear and see. I recognised the pull to be protective of the charities, and tried to ensure this did not lessen a critical analysis. Throughout the research I re-entered the familiar tension between empathetic awareness of institutional Catholic concerns, and a more critical reading of relevant texts and their impact. I was conscious that in some interviews, participants articulated a personal faith narrative as well as perspectives from professional experience. These added levels of what Swinton describes as ‘inaccessible’ reality, complicating and enriching the researcher space and testing the balance between researcher neutrality and personal authenticity in how I responded. In other interviews, I was conscious of the reverse; a distance between my worldview and that of interviewees for whom Catholicism was an external and sometimes problematic or even damaging constriction.

## **11 Conclusion**

This chapter has set out how I planned and constructed the research, and the way in which it evolved as I have maintained an internal reflexive conversation between theoretical discovery and emerging empirical insights. I have argued that the fundamental concept on which the research design pivots is that of seeing practices as the bearers of theology, recognising that the practices explored in this research take place at two levels in the interface between the Catholic Church and the social and political context in which it is embedded and towards which its social mission is directed. The practices in view here not only intentionally spill into that context but also work to transform it, involving faithful Christians and Christian narratives and diverse other actors, ethics and narratives. This principle is central in the argument of the thesis that the Catholicity of the charities is located in how their practices align with and converse with Catholic social vision, the articulation of which in various forms is an ecclesial practice. The underlying theological rationale for this central principle is located in elements of Catholic ecclesiology and a case is made, drawing on Murray’s concept of pragmatic coherence, for the ecclesiological significance of empirical work of this kind.

Inherent in the empirical or naturalistic way of looking is attention to particularity. In the next chapter, I examine how the charities’ particularity is shaped by and visible in the historical contexts of the Catholic community’s experience as they have drawn on the resources of Catholic tradition and developed social engagement. James Chappel comments, ‘Whatever stories the Church might tell about itself, it is in reality a socially

embedded institution, responsive to overtures from non-Catholics, to social transformations, and to pressures from the laity.<sup>122</sup> Grounding this enquiry in the confluence of circumstances which shaped the English and Welsh Catholic Church and its social mission in the field of welfare confirms the importance of empirical ecclesiological work, explaining the patterns and instincts still operative today.

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<sup>122</sup> James Chappel, *Catholic Modern* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018) (p. 21).

## Chapter Three: Particularity, Tensions and Risks: The Evolution of Catholic Social Vision and Practice in England and Wales from the 1850s Onwards

### 1 Introduction: The Weight of History

In this chapter, I examine aspects of the history of Catholic social welfare charities in relation to the political and ecclesial contexts in which they developed following the re-establishment of the Catholic hierarchy in 1850, in order to trace influences and strategic instincts which still operate in Catholic charities today. History and context matter both at the intimate level of the narratives each charity uses to sustain its vision and orient its practice, and in relation to the larger forces and factors which enable and constrain their work. Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes this as ‘sedimentation’, whereby layers of past experience have ‘at least a specific weight’ in the present.<sup>123</sup> In reviewing the historical material available, I have concentrated on two dynamics of interest for my research question: the social vision embedded and enacted in Catholic charities working in the field of welfare, and, within this, the way in which their relationships with the state were constructed.

The chapter proceeds in four steps. First, I sketch some contours of the historical narrative, taking the period from the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in 1850 onwards, noting how the evolution of Catholic charities interacted with the development and later reform of welfare systems. I next discuss the political positioning of the charities and the tensions in relation to Catholic social vision which emerged as the twentieth century progressed. I then argue that the historical patterns disclose aspects of the particularity of Catholic charities which still have significance today. I point to the role of religious communities and the charisms they embodied; the resources of Catholic social vision as expressed in leadership visions; and the distinctive ways in which English and Welsh Catholicism constructed social mission in a context which differed from wider European experience. Finally, I review the recent ecclesial politics of Catholic identity as directives and policies from Vatican dicasteries were interpreted in the British political context, creating tensions and provoking questions.

I use these historical and contextual perspectives to provide foundations for the argument I develop about the identity and work of Catholic social welfare charities in the context of England and Wales. The way in which the English Catholic Church re-established

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<sup>123</sup> Scharen, *Fieldwork in Theology* (p. 56).

itself after 1850 expressed a social and political vision in which two elements combined. Whilst in other European contexts, Catholics formed separate political structures and Catholic Action movements through which to enact Catholic social mission, in England a different path was taken, pursuing constructive engagement in existing parties and organisation, a model of influencing from within. There was also a fluctuating pattern of defensive Catholicism, promoting concerns such as protection of Catholic children, and provision of Catholic schools, alongside and within embedded participation in secular social welfare systems, particularly in social welfare. Both these elements - embedded participation and defence of Catholic interests and insights - interact in the tensions still experienced today. Both have significant implications in relation to understanding Catholic social welfare charities. When the primary strategy pursued in the public square is constructive engagement and influencing from within, whether within electoral politics or the equally political world of social policy and welfare, the task of enacting Catholic social vision is both more ambitious and more difficult. One of the primary claims I make in this thesis comes into view here; that the Catholic identity or Catholicity of Catholic charities operating in this strategy is not a matter of visible labels or institutional adherence, though either may be in place, but rather of how the dynamics of the charities' practices and their interaction with social and political realities are faithful to the insights and priorities held in a Catholic faith-connected social vision.

Review of the historical context also discloses the particularities of the context and experience of English Catholic social welfare charities. Particularity is a significant theological thread throughout this thesis and an important practical reality for the charities. The charities' histories, shaped in and by their contexts, anchor their vision in unique narratives and provide resources to sustain commitments and orient decisions in a dynamic way. The intention here is not to claim uniqueness but to trace the influences and inspirations which mediate Catholic instincts into *particular* social visions, commitments and practice. What can be gleaned is limited, as there is minimal historical study of Catholic social welfare agencies, and examination of primary sources was beyond the scope of this project.<sup>124</sup> But there are specific characteristics which indicate the social vision which

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<sup>124</sup> For example, F. K. Prochaska's *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) surveys Christian philanthropic involvement in welfare over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but barely mentions Catholic provision. Paul Misner's *Social Catholicism in Europe* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1991) surveys what was happening in continental Europe but England and Wales are absent, as they are in Alec Vidler's *A Century of Social Catholicism 1820-1920* (London: SPCK, 1964). There is slightly more material on political Catholicism, but this focuses on political parties and movements. Archives such as that of

inspired and guided the practices, even if incompletely realised and sometimes compromised. I argue that these have also been absorbed into the cultures and horizons of meaning which underpin the Catholicity of social welfare charities in the context of England and Wales. Finally, the particular historical perspectives, even if limited, also demonstrate the tensions that arise when holding to a Catholic social vision whilst also embedded in public systems and seeking to influence from within.

These tensions are acute in the recent history discussed in the last part of this chapter. The re-assessment and re-alignments that took place as Catholic welfare charities came to terms with the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007 offers a sharp case study illustrating how the strategy of embedded participation collided with interpretations of Catholicity held by some bishops.<sup>125</sup> This local episode is part of a larger critical turn led by dicasteries of the Roman Curia in which the Catholicity of Catholic charitable organisations was scrutinised negatively. The *motu proprio* specified in the brief for this research emerged within this critical turn. The current context is marked by these tensions as the evolution of Catholic faith-related charities takes fresh paths in reaction and counter-reaction to social and political factors and ecclesial pressures.

My argument here combines these four sets of elements. I contend that the Catholic instinct in social mission in the context of England and Wales has sought to work from within as leaven in its participation in social welfare even before the Conciliar vision mandated this ecclesiological model.<sup>126</sup> Their embedded participation, first in voluntary social welfare and then in the post war welfare state, and now even in its altered landscape, has been and remains tethered to a Catholicity held in the particularities of their founding inspirations, leaders and narratives and sustained in relationships with Catholic communities. The charities have enacted the Catholic commitment for the welfare of all, and for what CST terms ‘the social order’. The history starts with *caritas*, but expands this into a larger social concern in a dynamic process of development which continues still.

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Plater College, the YCW and the Catholic Child Welfare Council would doubtless yield rich material for further research.

<sup>125</sup> The regulations are found at <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2007/1263/contents/made>> [accessed 20.11.2017].

<sup>126</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* (para 40).

## 2 The English Catholic Church and the Poor

### 2.1 'The part of Westminster which alone I covet': Nineteenth Century Catholic Social Vision and Practical Response.

Practical charity has always been a part of Christian practice and ecclesial self-understanding from the patristic era onwards.<sup>127</sup> As modernity and industrialisation changed the political and economic landscape during the nineteenth century, presenting vast new areas of need and raising what became known as the 'social question', Catholic activists, clerical and lay, and some bishops, began to respond.<sup>128</sup> Paul Misner's survey of social Catholicism in several European countries describes both intellectual reaction to liberalism and socialism and practical response to social conditions affecting the urban poor, including both works of charity and political activism. At the same time, the institutional Church was engaged internally in theological and ecclesiological re-alignment as ultramontanism developed, spurred on by the first Vatican Council in 1869-70 and in reaction to external political change.<sup>129</sup> In England however, the fragile social position of the Catholic community after penal times led to a different configuration.<sup>130</sup> The rapid growth of the Catholic population through Irish emigration and the urban poverty in which they lived collided with the urgency of securing acceptance for the newly re-established Catholic Church from the political and ecclesiastical establishment.<sup>131</sup> Catholic bishops prioritised the provision of schools, a strategic decision which endures still, and which tells its own story of partnership with the state.<sup>132</sup> But there was also energetic development of

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<sup>127</sup> For patristic accounts, see Susan R. Holman, *God Knows There's Need: Christian Responses to Poverty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Kelly S. Johnson discusses a specific theme across Christian history from the patristic era to contemporary times in *The Fear of Beggars: Stewardship and Poverty in Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2007). For a contemporary re-affirmation, see Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Chapter Four, 'The Social Dimension of Evangelisation', (paras 89-122).

<sup>128</sup> Misner argues that 'the social question' was a new situation, in which 'a newly dominant mode of production that, though highly efficient, redounded to the benefit of the few, as it seemed, and to the social and economic decline or exploitation of a great number'. (p. 39)

<sup>129</sup> Jeffrey von Arx comments that ultramontanism, which he explains as the radical 're-structuring of the Church during the course of the nineteenth century toward the center' was 'arguably the greatest structural revolution in the Church's history'. Von Arx suggests that this assertion of unity and discipline associated with ultramontanism was 'intelligible' in relation to the threats to the Church from secular states and ideologies. *America*, 212/20 (June 22-29, 2015) (p. 2).

<sup>130</sup> Described in detail in Sheridan Gilley, 'The Years of Equipose' in *From without the Flaminian Gate: 150 Years of Roman Catholicism in England and Wales 1850-2000* eds. by V. Alan McClelland and Michael Hodgetts (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1999).

<sup>131</sup> McClelland sums up Cardinal Manning's approach as concerned with provision of Catholic education, speaking about faith with a unified voice, involving the Church in social welfare and the promotion of Christian morality. 'The Formative Years, 1850-92' in *Flaminian Gate* (p. 9).

<sup>132</sup> Michael P. Hornsby-Smith 'The Catholic Church and Education in Britain: From the "Intransigence" of "Closed" Catholicism to the Accommodation Strategy of "Open" Catholicism' in *Catholicism in*

charitable institutions, particularly in response to the numbers of destitute children and young people found in London and northern industrial cities. Pioneers such as Father James Nugent in Liverpool and Bishop Vaughan in Manchester set up numerous projects, mostly focused on children and young people, often run by religious orders which they brought to the cities to take up these works. They secured funding and other resources from statutory bodies and responded to the challenges and opportunities presented by successive social reforms.<sup>133</sup> These projects eventually coalesced into diocesan agencies, which together formed the Catholic Child Welfare Council (CCWC) in 1929, with twelve diocesan agencies joining forces to muster an effective voice in relation to the government.<sup>134</sup>

This positioning of the church as concerned with poverty and social welfare was clear in the vision of successive leaders of the English Catholic community. In 1850, Cardinal Wiseman defended the controversial adoption of the title of Westminster for the primatial See. Alongside the Abbey, he said,

..there lie concealed labyrinths of lanes and courts, and alleys and slums, nests of ignorance, vice, depravity and crime, as well as of squalor, wretchedness and disease... in which swarms a huge and almost countless population, in great measure, nominally at least, Catholic; [ ]This is the part of Westminster which alone I covet.<sup>135</sup>

In many ways, the Catholic Church in this period and up to the 1940s at least was, as Cardinal Manning described it in 1867, 'the church of the poor'.<sup>136</sup> The development of

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*Britain and France since 1789* ed. by Frank Tallett and Nicholas Atkin (London: Hambledon Press, 1996) 43-65.

<sup>133</sup> For example, in the early years, Father Nugent and others took advantage of the Reformatory Schools Act 1854 and the Industrial Schools Act 1866 to set up institutions part-funded by statutory authorities. Later the 1926 Adoption Act and the 1948 Children's Act opened up further opportunities as well as arenas for defence of Catholic interests, and later still, the 1969 Children and Young People Act provided another opportunity. See sources in next footnote.

<sup>134</sup> In the absence of academic study of Catholic social welfare history, the sources used here are the brief histories produced by some agencies and related biographies of their founders: *"That they may have life": A Brief History of the Catholic Children's Societies in the Dioceses of Arundel and Brighton, Portsmouth and Southwark*; (Catholic Children's Society, 1993) [no author given]; Jim Hyland, *Changing Times, Changing Needs: A History of the Catholic Children's Society, Westminster*, (Catholic Children's Society, 2009); and Jim Hyland, *A History of the Catholic Child Welfare Council*, unpublished. Canon John Bennett's *Father Nugent of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Catholic Social Services, 1949, second edition, 1993) and John Furnival's *Children of the Second Spring* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2005) are also invaluable.

<sup>135</sup> Cardinal Wiseman, *Appeal to the Reason and Good Feeling of the English People* (London: Richardson and Son, 1950). Available in facsimile from <<https://archive.org/details/a628371100wiseuoft>> [accessed 23.09.2018].

<sup>136</sup> Cardinal Manning, *England and Christendom*, (London: Longmans, Green, 1867) Available online in facsimile from Hathi Trust Digital Library (p. xcvi). This does not just mean the Catholic poor. McClelland comments that 'from 1850 until the death of Cardinal Manning in 1892, it was the great achievement of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales that it became manifestly as

Catholic social welfare was a matter of necessity, but it was also an English response to the social question and an affirmation that the Church desired and claimed a public role and voice, both defensively to secure Catholic interests and constructively to propose a vision of the social order and participate in its realisation.<sup>137</sup> This dual motivation is evident in the social vision enacted in Catholic charities. Although the primary motif was ‘rescue’, saving children from destitution and ensuring a Catholic education, it was equally seen as necessary to prepare them for employment and a decent life as good citizens,<sup>138</sup> a purpose that reached beyond the minimal intentions of Poor Law provision or indeed the later aims of Beveridge’s social insurance system.<sup>139</sup> Whilst many initiatives, particularly in Westminster, provided solely for Catholic need, others, notably among those initiated by Father Nugent in Liverpool, helped anyone in need regardless of faith.

## 2.2 The Impact of the Welfare State

The social legislation of the 1940s transformed the landscape of social welfare, promoting the expectation that it was the responsibility of the state to respond to poverty and need and calling into question the role played by voluntary agencies.<sup>140</sup> It also opened

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conscious of problems engendered by social deprivation outside its own confessional identity as it did of those within.’ *Flaminian Gate* (p. 5).

<sup>137</sup> Susan O’Brien advances this argument in *Leaving God for God: The Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul in Britain, 1847-2017* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2017) (p. 11).

<sup>138</sup> For example, Father Nugent recognised the difficulty for poor people of escaping their conditions. He sought reform, not just relief, arguing for the need to turn ‘potential criminals’ into ‘potential citizens’ (Furnival, p. 162). He believed that education and rehabilitation could turn lives around. He was also markedly inclusive in his vision; see Furnival (p. 248). But the concept of rescue also led in directions that today are judged as damaging. Catholic children’s charities participated, with other charities, in child migration schemes for several decades, sending children to Canada and Australia, often to lives of exploitation and abuse. Gordon Lynch provides an illuminating discussion of the moral frameworks operating in such schemes, based on the concept of redemption of the child in ‘Saving the Child for the Sake of the Nation: Moral Framing and the Civic, Moral and Religious Redemption of Children’, *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*, 2.2, (2014) 165-196.

<sup>139</sup> Chris Renwick explains that Beveridge sought to secure a national minimum standard of security, to enable ‘subsistence’. See *Bread for All: The Origins of the Welfare State* (London: Allen Lane, 2017) (p. 225).

<sup>140</sup> Assessment of the impact of the welfare state on Christian charities is varied. Frank Prochaska, surveying mainly Church of England charities, comments ‘rarely has a British institution so willingly participated in its own undoing’ (p. 152). In ‘A Moving Frontier: Voluntarism and the State in British Social Welfare 1911–1949’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 1 (1990), 183–206, Geoffrey Finlayson argues that the mixed economy of public, private and voluntary partnerships in welfare provision still existed after the introduction of the welfare state, but the ‘moving frontier’ between these entered a new phase as voluntary actors had to decide whether and how far to converge with and accommodate statutory systems, or to diverge, retaining their autonomy. He points out that ‘while the frontiers of the state expanded, they did not expand to the extent that they left no room for the activity of voluntarism’ and charities remained important actors in the welfare economy even if ‘the proportions of the component parts of the mixed economy changed in favour of the state’ (pp. 185, 204). Beveridge himself believed in the complementarity of statutory and voluntary provision (Prochaska, p. 158).

a new era of partnership; Catholic charities, like other voluntary agencies, were delivering grant-funded services for their local authorities long before the recent political interest in commissioning and contracts. Gradually social work was professionalised and institutional care was re-assessed. Catholic agencies closed large institutions and began to work in different ways. By now, the Catholic community was less ‘the Church of the Poor’, as the priority given to Catholic education over previous decades meant many Catholics had better life chances leading to improved socio-economic circumstances. The support and safety net provided by statutory welfare made a difference to family income and security from the 1950s onwards.<sup>141</sup> Diocesan agencies therefore identified different kinds of poverty and exclusion, working with children and adults with special needs and disabilities. Provision of adoption and fostering services became a major element, and later the creation of family centres and counselling services and supported housing for vulnerable adults, frequently collaborating with local authorities and supplementing statutory grants with voluntary fundraising.<sup>142</sup> Gradually the services broadened their scope to assist anyone in need, regardless of faith.<sup>143</sup>

By now the diocesan agencies and works of religious congregations were no longer the only story of public Catholic social mission. As new situations of poverty became apparent despite the welfare state, the Catholic charitable instinct emerged in new forms. The Catholic Housing Aid Society, CHAS, was set up in 1956 by two lay women, Maisie Ward and Molly Walsh, in response to a family housing crisis. In the following decades, CHAS developed some 63 branches around the country, offering housing and advice to families in need, regardless of faith. Many of its branches subsequently became independent housing associations and moved away from their Catholic origins. Later on, the severe recession of the 1980s and the de-industrialisation and high unemployment that saw poverty indicators rise steeply again, led to a further wave of Catholic organisations, often addressing homelessness. These included Depaul UK, the Cardinal Hume Centre, the Passage, and many local projects. By now the social vision of Vatican II, and of *Gaudium et Spes* in particular, had emphatically directed the Church outwards, to solidarity with the poor and anyone who suffers, affirming and strengthening Catholic charities’ re-interpretation of their mission as service to anyone in need, regardless of faith. Catholic social teaching had

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<sup>141</sup> Growing up in a large working class Catholic family in Liverpool in the 1960s, I was always aware of our dependence on ‘family allowance’ which we drew each week from the Post Office.

<sup>142</sup> *Changing Times, Changing Needs* (p.100), Furnival (pp. 290 -93).

<sup>143</sup> Prochaska describes the 1950s and 60s as decades of ‘constructive anonymity’ for Christian agencies (p.160) but the new fields of work developed in Catholic agencies focussing on different kinds of exclusion such as disability merit more recognition than he allows.

also expanded and now presented an enlarged vision of human rights and social justice. At the local level, new strategies such as community development and other forms of activism emerged,<sup>144</sup> and activists sought to collaborate ecumenically where possible.<sup>145</sup> The leadership patterns also changed, as diocesan agencies were no longer directed by priests and new organisations were led by laypeople or members of religious orders.

### **2.3 The Contemporary Catholic Social Welfare Sector**

By the 1990s, the Catholic social welfare sector consisted of the diocesan social services agencies, the independent Catholic faith-related charities, and many projects still run by religious orders. In the decades since, the Catholic sector has become more diverse as welfare reform and theories of new public management have changed the landscape in decisive ways, focusing on concepts such as efficiency and impact and seeking ways to reduce costs.<sup>146</sup> The moving frontier between public and voluntary provision has been much in evidence, as successive governments have encouraged voluntary agencies to participate in newly marketised arrangements. As different governments' ideologies about the role of the voluntary sector have become evident, so too have questions about agencies becoming instruments of the state rather than independent agencies guided by an alternative vision. Social policy interest has also focused on the role of faith-based organisations, discussing their distinctiveness and contribution, although much of this material treats a wide range of diverse organisations and faiths in generic terms.<sup>147</sup> Whilst some Catholic agencies have reduced their dependence on state funding, finding either that the contracts offered are unsustainable or that the constraints they bring are unacceptable, others have sought growth by pursuing and delivering contracts. As religious vocations have declined in number and communities have aged, many have withdrawn from hands-on social welfare work, either entrusting their work to laypeople or closing down services. Some religious communities also discerned afresh their mission to those in the margins of

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<sup>144</sup> For example, see Frank Boyce's account, 'Catholicism in Liverpool's Docklands 1950s-1990s' in *Catholics in England 1950-2000: Historical and Sociological Perspectives* ed. by Michael P. Hornsby-Smith (London: Cassell, 1999) 46-66.

<sup>145</sup> Church Action on Poverty, set up in 1982, was an early fully ecumenical campaigning charity. The first director was John Battle, a Catholic activist, later a member of parliament.

<sup>146</sup> For a brief summary, see Francis Davis and others. *Moral, But No Compass: Government, Church and the Future of Welfare* (Chelmsford, Essex: Matthew James, 2008), Part Two, (pp. 28-56).

<sup>147</sup> See, for example, Adam Dinham, *Faiths, Public Policy and Civil Society: Problems, Policies, Controversies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Rana Jawad, *Religion and Faith-based Welfare: From Wellbeing to Ways of Being* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2012); Paul Cloke, Justin Beaumont, and Andrew Williams, *Working Faith: Faith-Based Communities Involved In Justice* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2013).

society, leading to new commitments and patterns of ministry.<sup>148</sup> Some Catholic charities have merged with other charities, faith-based and secular, developing new identities but still sustaining their Catholic roots and institutional Catholic relationships.

The Catholic sector today has more porous boundaries and encompasses much diversity but remains substantial. Catholic faith-related charities work together strategically through the Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN), the successor body to the Catholic Child Welfare Council, which connects 42 Catholic charities and diocesan Caritas structures to each other and to the Catholic Bishops Conference.<sup>149</sup> Its member organisations engage in multiple ways with statutory welfare systems, adapting as successive government policies tighten eligibility and raise thresholds for assistance, severely compromising any sense of a safety net that will prevent destitution. As in every era, new areas of need erupt, and either existing or new organisations respond, demonstrating afresh the Catholic instinct to engage with the poorest and most excluded groups.<sup>150</sup> Beyond CSAN's membership, there are other charities, communities and campaigning organisations rooted in diverse ways in Catholic faith or tradition with adjacent commitments to people who are vulnerable and to aspects of social justice, who choose not to belong to CSAN or are not eligible.<sup>151</sup> Overlapping with the organisations that primarily work in the public sphere, voluntary Catholic organisations such as the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) engage in practical charity in and through parishes.<sup>152</sup>

This brief outline indicates how from the 1850s onwards, Catholic social welfare charities have been implicated in both the self-understanding and public mission of the institutional Church, and in the social and political dynamics of a society and state first constructing and then radically re-shaping social welfare systems. Their development has been both contingent in its response to external political forces and influences, and anchored in a particular social vision which is deeply connected to Christian faith and tradition and which has evolved as Catholic ecclesiology and social teaching have developed. The strategy followed by Catholic charities, and the particularity of their social

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<sup>148</sup> O'Brien, *Leaving God for God*, (p. 9).

<sup>149</sup> As at August 2018: see <<http://www.csan.org.uk/member/>> [Accessed 23.09.2018]

<sup>150</sup> For example, work with refugees and asylum seekers; with trafficked women; and the work of women@thewell with women whose lives are affected by prostitution.

<sup>151</sup> For example, neither L'Arche UK ( <https://www.larche.org.uk/> ) or London Catholic Worker houses of hospitality ( <http://londoncatholicworker.org/projects.php> ) are members although both in different ways have strong Catholic roots and work with the same groups of socially excluded or vulnerable people as other CSAN members.

<sup>152</sup> The SVP is a voluntary lay-led Catholic organisation whose members provide practical charitable help to anyone in need. The SVP began in England in 1844, had over 1100 groups in 1950 and today has 10,000 members. <<https://www.svp.org.uk/what-we-do>> [accessed 27.09.2018]

vision, are crucial elements in the Catholicity they embody and enact; but this strategy also brings tensions and risks which reverberate through their history and into the present.

### 3 Catholic Social Vision and Political Engagement

Catholic social vision is not concerned only with *caritas* or practical charity but also with the structure, purpose and potential of human community, what CST terms ‘the social order’, which of necessity in the modern era involves discussion of the role of the state. Indeed, the abiding concern of a Catholic perspective, according to James Chappel, is about how and where to draw the line between the private domain which he terms society, and the state, a line which he notes is always blurry and contested.<sup>153</sup> This research examines how Catholic charities interpret this social vision in the particular context of homelessness in the UK today, as societal actors and as both partners and critics of the state. As Chapter Two explained, I use the concept of the common good as a focus to explore how the charities understand what they are doing, particularly in relation to the welfare system and the role of the state. The charities work at the sharp edges between policy and delivery where the state is currently re-structuring welfare provision with different ideological motives to those which shaped its founding, and reducing social security, with daily implications for the people whom the charities assist. This tests their social vision and political positioning as well as their practice, and discloses reasoning, both implicit and explicit, about where Chappel’s line should be drawn.

I argue that the English Catholic community developed a particular social vision in the circumstances of a liberal and plural society and state. The Church pursued an agenda which combined Catholic priorities such as schools with collaboration with other societal and statutory actors in constructing the social order. Although the Catholic vision focused initially and enduringly on poverty and need, in the post-war era it expanded to include systemic issues of social justice and promotion of the common good.<sup>154</sup> However it was not always clear how to interpret or enact this vision in practice, and nor was it unified or consistent. The tension around Chappel’s line is evident in discussion about what the state should do, and what should be left in the hands of voluntary organisations and other social actors. Later and continuing still, the question of whether the Catholic social task is

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<sup>153</sup> James Chappel, *Slaying the Leviathan: Catholicism and the rebirth of European Conservatism, 1920-1950*. Thesis submitted to Columbia University, 2012. (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2012) <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/1039317676/?pg-origsite=primo>> [accessed 5 July 2018] (p. 20).

<sup>154</sup> The Catholic Bishops’ Conference 1996 statement, *The Common Good and the Catholic Church’s Social Teaching* (Manchester: Gabriel Publications, 1996) was a significant milestone, covering a wide range of themes and proposing a local and contextual Catholic social vision.

primarily delivered in practical charity or *caritas*, or in advocacy for political change, emerges as a further tension. The narrative of Catholic social welfare charities includes diverse interpretations and in the wider Catholic community a similar diversity can be seen, often indicating the points of ambivalence at which social teaching principles do not easily resolve the way forward. Two particular strands of the history can be unpicked as examples, the Catholic reaction to Beveridge's proposals for the core institutions which formed the welfare state, and debates about Catholic involvement in politics.

### 3.1 Catholic Responses to the Welfare State

The initial Catholic reaction to the Beveridge Report and the development of the core institutions of the welfare state was mixed. Peter Coman's research published in 1977 analyses the concerns expressed by some bishops and the voices of opposition in Catholic organisations and newspapers.<sup>155</sup> He attributes these to the defensive reaction of a sub-culture that feared overbearing state intervention and to the influence of principles from *Rerum Novarum* concerning family life and the limits of the state.<sup>156</sup> Coman notes that opposition was strongest in relation to the proposed education and health systems, and opinion was more divided in relation to Beveridge's centre-piece, the national insurance system, where some were hostile although a majority gave a 'qualified welcome'.<sup>157</sup> But although Coman's analysis is over-reliant on a limited sector of Catholic views,<sup>158</sup> and other judgements are more positive, his research confirmed an instinct deeply associated with social Catholicism.<sup>159</sup> Chappel describes this as an 'allergy to the centralized state' and a preference for the freedom of civil society.<sup>160</sup> Even today, Catholic Care Leeds notes on its website that 'the need for Catholic social action was in no way diminished by post-war social reform, and for many there were mixed feelings about the advent of the welfare

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<sup>155</sup> *Catholics and the Welfare State* (London: Longman, 1977).

<sup>156</sup> *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XII's 1891 encyclical letter 'On Capital and Labour', is widely regarded as the initiating text of the modern CST tradition. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_15051891\\_rerum-novarum.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html) [accessed 20.11.2017]

<sup>157</sup> Coman (p. 73).

<sup>158</sup> George Q. Flynn, in his review of Coman (*Journal of Church and State*, 21.3, 1979, 550–52) notes that Coman did not draw any data from working class or poor Catholics who may have had a different reaction to the Beveridge reforms. Coman acknowledges himself that his work draws on 'articulate Catholic opinion at the expense of the silent masses'. Coman (p. viii).

<sup>159</sup> For example, see Peter Doyle, 'Family and Marriage', in *Flaminian Gate* (p. 210).

<sup>160</sup> Chappel, *Catholic Modern*, (p.110). Chappel analyses twentieth century Catholic political engagement in France, Germany and Austria, but the same instinct emerges in less scholarly English sources. In 1950, John Bennett commented 'Freedom to starve, or economic insecurity, has been swept away in favour of social security, at too great a price if it involves the loss of all economic freedom and the suppression of voluntary action'. 'The Care of the Poor' in *The English Catholics, 1850-1950: Essays to Commemorate the Centenary of the Restoration of the Hierarchy of England and Wales*, ed. by George Andrew Beck (London: Burns Oates, 1950) (p. 582).

state'.<sup>161</sup> However, Coman also notes that in the 1950s Catholic reaction diminished and suggests this was because 'the structures of society and social reforms did not lie at the centre of Catholic concern'.<sup>162</sup> He concludes that ultimately, CST failed to make an impact on British life although he tentatively suggests that potential to do so lay in work to 'humanise the institutions of the welfare state'.<sup>163</sup>

Coman's analysis is sociological; and although it holds immense interest as a historical perspective in itself, it has weaknesses. He does not critique how the Catholic voices he discusses make a selective reading of *Rerum Novarum*, since Pope Leo's text also laid a foundation on which to argue a case for statutory welfare provision, proposing that the state has a duty to ensure that basic goods including housing are available to all as a matter of justice and to provide a safety net when other means fail vulnerable groups.<sup>164</sup> Whilst the Catholic instinct to resist an over-controlling state expresses valid concerns, the British welfare state was, as the historians of welfare cited earlier have shown, a piecemeal creation, a mixed economy involving multiple partners, and operating in a liberal democracy. Coman fails to consider the existing patterns of Catholic engagement in social welfare and so assumes that political impact happens through visible labelled political influence, an assumption critiqued in the next section of this chapter. But his final tentative instinct meets the argument I make.

Even if some Catholic voices expressed theoretical doubts, Catholic charities continued and expanded their partnerships with statutory provision. They managed tensions as the welfare state unfolded, even if uneasily at times, and their reactions can be seen as evidence that participation involved both discernment and critique, using instincts and insights from Catholic social vision.<sup>165</sup> Coman's case study usefully illustrates the complexity of interpreting official social teaching in particular local circumstances. As Finlayson argues, the British welfare state developed in an overlapping relationship with the pre-existing field of voluntary organisations, including Christian voluntary charities and was never a monolith. Rather it was 'an inter-connected system of institutions and policies,

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<sup>161</sup> <<http://www.catholic-care.org.uk/about-us/history/>> [accessed 02.01.2017]

<sup>162</sup> Coman (p. 73).

<sup>163</sup> Coman (p. 110).

<sup>164</sup> *Rerum Novarum* (paras 32, 34, 36); see also Pope Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno*, <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_19310515\\_quadragesimo-anno.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html)> [accessed 20.11.2017] (paras 25,28).

<sup>165</sup> For example, in the Spring 1969 edition of the newsletter of the Catholic Child Welfare Council, *Fragments*, Monsignor Michael Connolly, its full-time Secretary from 1970-92, comments 'We are all a bit despondent about what happens in a country if it becomes too dependent on state provision in a welfare state'; he goes on to argue for renewed effort to take 'an active and prominent part' in the changes that followed the Children and Young People Act 1969. *That They May Have Life*, (p. 33).

infused with ideas and values that had been debated and shaped for more than a century'.<sup>166</sup> The influence of Catholic social principles had long been insinuated into elements of provision alongside other Christian and ethical perspectives. Any binary division of state from voluntary provision is unsustainable, as social reality resists such neat analysis. The work of developing a nuanced and insightful perspective on modern welfare systems and the responsibilities of states within CST discourse remains unfinished even while Catholic practice continues to engage.

### 3.2 Models of Political Engagement and Impact

Coman attributes the failure of Catholics to make an impact in politics to the lack of a 'political wing', impeding Catholic efforts to 'apply' CST in the British context. There was no obvious political party for Catholic social activists.<sup>167</sup> George Beck in 1950 had expressed a similarly negative judgement in this area,<sup>168</sup> echoed by Michael Hornsby-Smith who concluded that 'for historical reasons, Catholics have made very little contribution to politics in Britain'.<sup>169</sup> Jeffrey von Arx however, proposes a different interpretation of how the Catholic social vision is brought to bear transformatively within plural modern societies and cultures.<sup>170</sup> Reviewing the arguments of Beck, Hornsby-Smith and others, he argues that too great a dependence on the Catholic action experience that was dominant in European countries leads to a failure to see that the Church in England and Wales developed a different model of political engagement. Von Arx traces how Wiseman and Manning and their successors steered a careful route of constructive engagement with the liberal state, arguing that its duties included equitable treatment of all religious groups, including Catholics and working collaboratively with churches where possible. The English Cardinals accepted democratic politics in a pluralist society and sought to influence and critique, using Catholic social and moral principles. He concludes that Cardinal Manning

resolved the question of the form of Roman Catholic political activity in the liberal State so clearly and so decisively in favour of participation in existing mass democratic parties – as opposed to a confessional party – that the question simply never arose again in any meaningful way for the Catholic community. If what Manning accomplished is set against Catholic Action, defined as the Catholic laity organised and directed to achieve uniquely Catholic goals apart from and even over

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<sup>166</sup> Renwick (p. 267).

<sup>167</sup> Coman (pp. 86, 93).

<sup>168</sup> Beck, *The English Catholics* (p. 602).

<sup>169</sup> Michael P. Hornsby-Smith, *Roman Catholics in England: Studies in Social Structure since the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) (p. 163).

<sup>170</sup> 'Catholics and Politics' in *Flaminian Gate*.

against existing politics, then Cardinal Manning effectively inoculated the Catholic community in Great Britain against it down to the present.<sup>171</sup>

Von Arx goes on to argue that even in the post-conciliar era, the mis-reading of Catholic political involvement continues, because the embedded social consciences and political participation of Catholics bears no visible label. He concludes by suggesting that the model of political engagement developed in the experience of the English Catholic Church contributed to the work of Vatican II, particularly in the crucial texts where Catholic perspectives on the *polis* and the state are set out, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Dignitatis Humanae*.<sup>172</sup>

I argue that a parallel case can be made for social welfare as for involvement in party politics. There too, Catholic agencies participated in welfare services with an increasing focus on reducing poverty and exclusion and enabling people to have better lives. The strategy they largely adopted as the twentieth century progressed, of embedded participation and constructive engagement, is not just pragmatic but carries and infiltrates a theologically inspired vision and an ecclesial strategy, closely analogous to that which Von Arx sums up as ‘a particular view of social questions, commitment to a vision of the common good, and a willingness to collaborate within existing political forms with others of different or no religious affiliation to achieve that good’.<sup>173</sup> This has implications for the question of Catholic identity, suggesting that being institutionally or visibly Catholic is less important than the effective enactment of a social vision in services and related efforts to influence public policy and provision towards the common good. But in this model of social engagement, the impact or specificity of Catholic influence can be difficult to discern or attribute. The traces of Catholic reaction to the welfare state suggest that when social and political circumstances generate challenges to Catholic social vision, Catholic instincts and discernment are also sharpened. This may lead to defensive reactions, as Coman’s research unpicks, or to a participative but critical engagement.<sup>174</sup> Chapter four describes how the charities studied in this research largely occupy the latter positioning.

#### **4 The Particularity of Catholic Social Vision in England and Wales**

If the implicit strategy for social mission is embedded participation, Catholic charities need a secure sense of their particular vision. What matters here is not whether

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<sup>171</sup> Von Arx in *Flaminian Gate* (p. 264).

<sup>172</sup> Von Arx in *Flaminian Gate* (p. 267).

<sup>173</sup> Von Arx in *Flaminian Gate* (p. 264).

<sup>174</sup> A further stance, not discussed in this research, is that of developing radical alternatives to social welfare. In England and Wales, the Catholic Worker houses are perhaps the clearest example of this.

the content is unique or distinctive – many elements of Catholic social vision are shared by other faiths and ethical traditions and also resonate in political philosophies – but rather how effectively it is held, mediated and enacted. The history suggests that there are specific characteristics of Catholic experience in England and Wales which are important in this process. The involvement of religious communities and the practical embodiment of their charisms, the socially committed leadership visions of successive Cardinals and also of individual priests, religious and laypeople, and the interpretations of theological instincts embedded in Catholic faith and emerging CST all influenced how Catholic charities developed in the English context. The socio-economic situation and history of the Catholic community also played a part – the instinct for solidarity nurtured in first the Irish diaspora and then in the institutionally strong Catholic sub-culture, followed by the more outward-looking and generous Church of post-conciliar decades is also part of the particularity of context for Catholic faith-related charities today.<sup>175</sup> Each of these merits brief consideration.

The histories of diocesan social welfare agencies record multiple examples of projects run by religious orders, both male and female.<sup>176</sup> Each congregation brought a different charism and founding history, frequently centred on mission to the poorest, and a communal life structured by the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. At their best, they brought qualities of dedication and self-giving to the practice of Catholic charity, although as O'Brien carefully notes, alongside the espoused commitments, contemporary perspectives are 'grounded in suspicion' as so many examples of abuse of children in institutional settings have emerged.<sup>177</sup> O'Brien's *Leaving God for God* provides an invaluable and illuminating case study of one religious order, the Daughters of Charity, analysing their presence and works from 1847-2017. The particular inspiration of their Vincentian charism is important in this research, as later chapters will explain. O'Brien points to Vincent de Paul's imperative of 'active love', based on the theological understanding of the poor as embodying Christ himself, hence his injunction that Christ was not only to be found in the Eucharistic sacrament at the altar, but also in the poor person who knocked at the door.<sup>178</sup> He taught all those who followed his inspiration that 'the poor

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<sup>175</sup> For example, the Good Shepherd Collections in Liverpool and Westminster dioceses began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and still take place. St Joseph's Penny Appeal in Salford began in 1904. This is also evident in the work of the SVP.

<sup>176</sup> Many examples are given throughout the sources listed in note 134 above.

<sup>177</sup> O'Brien (p. 13).

<sup>178</sup> O'Brien (p. 28).

are our masters', an insight still powerful today in Vincentian charitable practice.<sup>179</sup> He was also determined that charity should be well organised, so that assistance was sustainable, another insight that resonates still and has been captured in a contemporary Vincentian commitment to systemic change.<sup>180</sup> Reviewing a wide field of evidence and scholarship, O'Brien comments that 'the Daughters' history provides strong indications that Catholic practices of charity were distinctive in the landscape of British philanthropy'.<sup>181</sup>

The presence of religious communities as actors in Catholic social welfare provision was extensive until fairly recent decades and even today there is some remaining involvement, both directly and through participation in governance.<sup>182</sup> Although their numerical involvement is now small, their influence remains active in how their charisms are mediated into narratives still used by Catholic faith related charities today, including several of those participating in this research. A new pattern is also emerging, of more radical response to the most marginal and excluded groups, working within voluntary and public projects and services, and in some cases, including one of the charities participating in this research, founding new organisations.<sup>183</sup>

Catholic charitable practice was also shaped by successive Archbishops of Westminster and by priests, religious and laypeople who founded institutions and organisations, creating new narratives.<sup>184</sup> Although the emphases differ – Cardinals Wiseman and Manning were more defensively Catholic than Father Nugent in Liverpool, for example – they positioned the Catholic community as concerned with and for the poor. Whilst the vision and strategies have evolved and broadened to include justice focused work and more overtly political moves as well as care and support, the commitment is

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<sup>179</sup> 'Come, then ... let's devote ourselves with renewed love to serve persons who are poor, and even to seek out those who are the poorest and most abandoned; let's acknowledge before God that they're our lords and masters and that we're unworthy of rendering them our little services' in *Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, XI, ed. by Pierre Coste CM, English, XI (p. 392). [http://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian\\_ebooks/37/](http://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/37/) [accessed 23.09.2018]

<sup>180</sup> See <[https://famvin.org/wiki/Systemic\\_Change\\_and\\_the\\_Vincentian\\_Family](https://famvin.org/wiki/Systemic_Change_and_the_Vincentian_Family)> [accessed 15.08.2018]

<sup>181</sup> O'Brien (p. 384). Jawad makes a similar generic argument about Christian influence, *Religion and Faith-Based Welfare*, Chapter 1.

<sup>182</sup> In the six charities participating in this research, two have religious women working as volunteers or staff; four have trustees who are members of religious orders; three make explicit reference to a particular charism as an inspiration for their work.

<sup>183</sup> The *Vitality in Religious Life* research confirms this trend: See Catherine Sexton and Gemma Simmonds CJ, *Religious life Vitality Project: Final Report*, <<https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/theology.religion/Keyfindingsreportv8-pages.pdf>> [accessed 27.09.2018] (p. 4).

<sup>184</sup> For example, Cardinal Hume, whose influence will be considered in later chapters; CHAS, founded by laywomen, has already been mentioned. L'Arche UK was founded by Therese Vanier, bringing the vision of her brother and L'Arche founder, Jean Vanier, into the UK where there are now twelve communities.

evident still. Theologically, these are narratives of what Vatican II described as reading the signs of the times, re-interpreting the diaconal dimension of the Church in particular circumstances and times. The social vision gradually articulated in CST documents also contributed influences. Characteristic emphases in those documents such as concern for the poor, for their dignity and worth whatever their circumstances, for justice as well as charity, the need to protect and support family life, the duties and limits of the state and the principles on which a just social order should be based, are echoed in the leadership visions of successive Archbishops, in reactions to the welfare state, and in the interactions between Catholic charities and statutory policy developments. Later documents such as *Pacem in Terris* in 1963 and *Populorum Progressio* in 1967, and the ecclesiological re-orientation of the Second Vatican Council also have traceable impact in other fields of social concern.<sup>185</sup> Whilst much of the social vision set out is not uniquely Catholic, it takes on significance when pursued with institutional Catholic weight and validated by public Catholic engagement in responses to poverty and injustice.

These influences – from religious charisms expressed in dedicated lives, leadership visions and teaching, and instinctive faith-inspired solidarity with the poor – had, and still have, considerable weight and traction, but they did not have an open field in shaping Catholic practice. The strategy of embedded constructive engagement with statutory provision means that Catholic charities have to engage with, and where necessary, resist or subvert, policies and assumptions established in the professional and political fields in which they operate, a difficult task in the pragmatic daily reality of encountering people struggling to survive. At times, they have not succeeded. This tension lies at the centre of this research, as contemporary faith-related charities negotiate how to balance their values and ethos with standards and expectations derived from other ethics and the changing political shape of welfare entitlement and provision, finding both consonance and dissonance. Sigrun Kahl and others make a convincing argument about the patterns of influence of different Christian traditions on the early formation of varied welfare state structures in different European religious contexts, which could suggest that in early

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<sup>185</sup> For example, in the founding of CAFOD, which took *Populorum Progressio* as its founding charter; and Pax Christi. The UK Pax Christi organisation began in 1958 when ‘a small group started meeting in London to discuss Church teaching on peace’. <<http://paxchristi.org.uk/about-us/history/>> [accessed 27.09.2018]. Document texts are found at <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_26031967\\_populorum.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html)> and <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html)> [accessed 23.09.2018].

decades the dissonance was not so great.<sup>186</sup> But as ideologically driven welfare reforms and state withdrawal from provision have dominated recent decades, the tensions have become sharper and more challenging, posing new questions to Catholic social thought and practice.<sup>187</sup> The significance of particularity is in part what this research explores, the possibility that the resources held in Catholic social vision and faith support enduring habits, commitments and principles that provide a compass with which to discern how to respond.

## 5 The Recent Ecclesial Politics of Catholic Identity

If the model of Catholic social engagement is embedded critical-constructive participation in wider social and political arenas, working with others towards social goods, the discernment of how to enact and when to draw lines or even withdraw is substantially in the hands of those who lead and govern the charities. As charity leadership has passed into the hands of laypeople, and the issues faced have become increasingly complex, new tensions have emerged in the relationship between charities and the institutional church which complicate both identity and practice. Several recent experiences illustrate this tension.

The first relates to the diocesan Catholic social welfare agencies described in this chapter and the impact of the Labour government's Sexual Orientation Regulations on their adoption and fostering services. In the background, there was a document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) issued in 2003 about the implications of legislation enabling same sex couples to marry.<sup>188</sup> The Sexual Orientation Regulations made it compulsory not to discriminate in selecting adopters, drawing the matter into the public

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<sup>186</sup> Sigrun Kahl, 'The Religious Roots of Modern Poverty Policy: Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed Protestant Traditions Compared', *European Journal of Sociology* 46.1 (2005), 91–126; *Religion, Class Coalitions, and Welfare States*, ed. by Kees van Kersbergen and Philip Manow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Grace Davie, 'A European Perspective on Religion and Welfare: Contrasts and Commonalities', *Social Policy and Society*, 11.4 (2012), 589–599.

<sup>187</sup> Colin Jones argues from a 'de-teleologising' historical perspective that the form and inevitability of the welfare state cannot be assumed, and that its fundamental principles are still contested. See 'Some Recent Trends in the History of Charity' in *Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past* ed. by Martin Daunt (London, Routledge, 1996), (p. 52). Christopher Pierson concludes that the welfare state is likely to survive, but to be 'variably reconstructed' so as to reflect a new pattern of rights and interests'. See *Beyond the Welfare State? The New Political Economy of Welfare* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991) (p. 172).

<sup>188</sup> *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons*, <[www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20030731\\_homosexual-unions\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20030731_homosexual-unions_en.html)> [accessed 21.05.2016] The document argued that allowing those in same sex unions to adopt would be against the best interests of children (para 7) and would treat such unions as having parity with heterosexual marriage, a position opposed in official Catholic teaching.

domain. Some - but not all - Catholic bishops directed that their agencies should not accept same sex couples as adoptive parents, and the agencies' governance bodies had to decide whether to close these services or sever official links with their dioceses. Response was varied. Some closed the services; others decided to continue the services, sometimes in separated organisational forms; in at least one case there was enforced separation from diocesan relationships when a diocesan bishop and a charity's board disagreed. Another agency unsuccessfully pursued a lengthy legal battle to claim exemption. The episode was painful and disturbing for the Catholic charity sector and beyond. As well as the impact of enforced withdrawal from a field of work in which Catholic agencies were highly regarded, there are implications for the model of social engagement discussed here. The assertion of episcopal control to determine how some charities acted in this matter conveyed a model of Catholic identity in which their professional and ethical autonomy was constrained and adherence to a moral evaluation was imposed rather than discerned within the professional, social and ethical context of their practice. The diversity of episcopal and charity governance responses disclosed another tension; it is simply not always clear what the prudential judgement in local circumstances should be.

In 2005 Benedict had issued *Deus Caritas Est*, in which he discussed the work of Catholic charitable organisations as a way in which the Church 'acts as a subject with direct responsibility, doing what corresponds to her nature', but limited the scope of this work to a specific understanding of *caritas*.<sup>189</sup> Later in 2012, the Holy See published the *motu proprio, On the Service of Charity*, signed by Benedict, which provided a framework detailing what is expected of charitable organisations linked to the institutional church and of bishops in their oversight of the charities in their dioceses. The provisions include both 'official' charities in the Caritas family and those arising from 'the free enterprise of the faithful', and deal with matters such as the use of the name 'Catholic', recruitment and salaries policies, and the gaining of episcopal approval for how they operate.<sup>190</sup> The text dealt at length with aspects of institutional alignment, but contained only one brief Article about the content of their work, stating that Catholic charities are required to follow Catholic principles and avoid any commitments which could affect their observance of these.<sup>191</sup> Although its origins reflected concerns from other levels and sectors of Catholic organisations, notably that of the relationships between Cor Unum and Caritas

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<sup>189</sup> *Deus Caritas Est* (para 29).

<sup>190</sup> *Motu proprio* (p. 2).

<sup>191</sup> *Motu proprio* (art. 1.3).

Internationalis, its Articles had implications for many fields of Catholic charity.<sup>192</sup> Caritas members as well as many other Catholic faith related charities already recognised the challenges of inclusive employment practices and interaction with secular agencies and governments and the task of ensuring that within these realities they retained ‘fundamental commitment to Christian-Catholic values’.<sup>193</sup> But the *motu proprio*’s framing of these challenges in a legislative text in which episcopal authority over charities was asserted was an intervention which altered the culture of relationships in local and international practice.<sup>194</sup>

One other event significantly influenced the local context. In 2012, Benedict visited the UK, and spoke in Westminster Hall, asserting that public and political discourse should welcome the voices of faith and that ‘there are many areas in which the Church and the public authorities can work together for the good of citizens’, whilst also defending the freedom to act in accordance with faith inspired principles and convictions.<sup>195</sup> Following his visit, there was an impetus within the Catholic Bishops’ Conference and CSAN in two directions. Firstly, to strengthen public policy work and ensure the voice of Catholic social practice is heard more clearly, and secondly, to re-orient the structures of Catholic charitable work by developing a Caritas structure in each diocese to co-ordinate and expand activities.<sup>196</sup> Six years on, there are now at least eight diocesan Caritas structures, developing in diverse ways and with a variety of relationships with the established Catholic social welfare charities. Progress is uneven, as diocesan bishops have not all chosen to pursue this direction, and local interpretation and strategies have been varied. What emerges is a re-appropriation of institutional links between Catholic faith-related social welfare work and diocesan and national structures, and an increasingly diverse field of Catholic social practice with a re-discovery of the connections between voluntary and professional activity.

These inter-connecting dynamics – of the agencies responding to their external contexts, and the relationships between institutional Catholic structures and ecclesiological

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<sup>192</sup> Cor Unum was the dicastery of the Holy See responsible for human and social development, set up in 1971. It was merged into the new Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development by Pope Francis in August 2016. Caritas Internationalis is the federation of 165 official Catholic aid and development charities.

<sup>193</sup> Donal Dorr, ‘Catholic Relief, Development Agencies and *Deus Caritas Est*’, *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*, 9.2 (2012), 285–314 (p. 309).

<sup>194</sup> See Duncan MacLaren, ‘Reining in Caritas’, *The Tablet*, 226/8946, (12.05.2012)

<sup>195</sup> <<http://www.thepapalvisit.org.uk/Replay-the-Visit/Speeches/Speeches-17-September/Pope-Benedict-s-address-to-Politicians-Diplomats-Academics-and-Business-Leaders>> [accessed 20.11.2107]

<sup>196</sup> See statement issued by the Bishops of England and Wales, November 2013, reported in CSAN Annual Review 2017, (p. 10).

understandings – indicate how the task of enacting Catholic social mission is always a process of interpretation, tension and risk. James Chappel, surveying a larger canvas of political engagement, describes this as ‘malleable’.<sup>197</sup> This is the case both at the level of each charity and for the institutional Church as its leaders – in this case the Catholic bishops of England and Wales – also try to discern their role in the field of social mission, at both diocesan and national level. In this process, the actual relationships constituted in the double embedding of charities within both Church and secular sector structures are crucial and demonstrate how these two levels of social mission practice are intertwined.<sup>198</sup> Catholic identity or Catholicity and its implications are worked out collaboratively and contingently through continuing discernment as challenges and questions arise.

## 6 Conclusion

This chapter has described some of the layers of history, both distant and recent, which are sedimented in the narratives and experience of Catholic charities in the English and Welsh context. The interaction between enduring and expanding instincts from Catholic tradition and contingent social and political circumstances has shaped the particular identity and practice of Catholic social welfare charities in this context. Within that identity, several instincts emerge as significant still: the urge to seek out and respond to the poorest; a commitment to their integral well-being and social inclusion; the desire to participate in constructing a good society, and to work with others, including statutory authorities, to achieve it; and the value of voluntarism and intermediate social structures. The strategy of being embedded in the mixed economy and moving frontier of welfare provision, influencing from within and latterly also through public advocacy, has remained consistent even when constrained or altered by institutional Catholic pressures. Defence of Catholic interests no longer means securing recognition and funding for protection of the Catholic poor, but adherence to particular moral principles threatened by legislative and cultural changes.

Within the identity formed and the strategies pursued, there are tensions and risks. The tension between the assumptions and intentions of statutory welfare and the instincts of Catholic social vision and teaching has surfaced in different ways throughout the development of Catholic charities and remains crucial. This tension both evokes and

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<sup>197</sup> Chappel, *Catholic Modern* (p. 21).

<sup>198</sup> The history of this intertwining could provide a chapter in itself but could not be fitted in this thesis. It is also a neglected area of research. The relationships between ecclesiastical figures and structures and the wider field of Catholic institutions, organisations and initiatives describes an operant ecclesiology at which my argument glances from a particular viewpoint, but there is much more to explore.

sometimes contradicts their particularity and indicates a prophetic potential in their mission which merits exploration and reflection. Although statutory welfare provision has made a significant impact on poverty, and Catholic charities still use and often depend on its funding, as the next chapter will show, they also critique its ideological and practical failures in the light of their own vision and experience. The risks also fall within the strategy of participation and becoming embedded; the instincts of Catholic social vision and teaching, whether mediated through a founder, a religious charism or in other ways, can become moderated or attenuated as new realities compel fresh discernment and decisions. It also becomes difficult if not impossible to claim distinctiveness or Catholic impact, although the search for evidence of social impact is unavoidable in the contemporary context, and arguably should suffice for Catholic evaluation too. Institutional Catholic concerns intervene both to support and problematize local discernment, prompting other reactions and decisions. Organisational Catholic identity and fidelity to founding insights are harder to maintain as the field of social welfare has become more complex, more political and more secular. The next chapter investigates how the charities in this research position themselves within these tensions and risks.

Ultimately, it is precisely in the hard work of managing these tensions and risks, pursuing this strategy, that the Catholic social vision is enacted. As theory, expressed in teaching and doctrine, it has little impact. The process of building smaller social goods that gradually orient the social order towards the common good, whilst taking seriously the secular and plural context, is difficult and messy. But the history demonstrates also the strength of Catholic instincts, the resilience of their insights and the greater potential that has emerged as the Church has in part recognised, if not fully realised, the outwardly focused ecclesiology of Vatican II.

Finally, the historical and contextual material discloses questions and complexities in relation to the principle of the common good. The strategy of embedded participation points to the cogency and validity of interpretation using the lens of the common good, even if not consciously constructed as such by the founders and leaders of Catholic faith-related charities. Such participation requires discernment about the goods pursued by welfare systems, and whether they are effective in enabling people to realise their potential and participate in society.

## Chapter Four: Catholic Social Mission Practice: Introducing the Charities and Reading their Narratives and Public Voice

### 1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the charities that participated in the research by reading their public texts to examine how they locate themselves in relation to Catholic social vision and institutional structures and to the social and political context in which they work and which they seek in various ways to influence.<sup>199</sup> It also situates the charities in relation to arguments made in Chapter Three regarding the embedded positioning and constructive critique enacted by Catholic faith-related charities in the political context of the British state and their anchoring in particular expressions of Catholic social vision. In the final section, the chapter turns to the context of homelessness, to examine how the charities respond and what their work represents as an arena of social mission. The chapter also expands dimensions of the research questions in relation to the concept of a Catholic charity and how Catholic charities reflect or use formal CST.

The public texts of the charities are expressions of their *espoused* self-understanding and play a crucial role in the charities' narratives.<sup>200</sup> The texts present their identity and mission, both to the external context and to their staff, volunteers and supporters, and explain their connections to Catholic faith traditions and communities. Later chapters will analyse and interpret the qualitative data from interviews and focus groups, which largely constitute the *operant* voice, narrating the subjective experience that may confirm, expand or complicate the espoused self-presentation. The public documents also illustrate how operant and espoused perspectives can be difficult to separate in practice. In this case, the requirements of charity law and the expectations of sector good practice result in texts that provide substantial factual data about the charities' governance, funding and describe their ecclesial and political positioning.<sup>201</sup> Whilst required to be

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<sup>199</sup> A summary profile of the charities is provided in Appendix One. The documents analysed for this chapter are the charities' Annual Reviews, Annual Reports and Accounts, Business Plans, theories of change and supporting narratives. See Appendix Two for a list of documents reviewed and the website addresses for accessing these. The footnotes in this chapter only give URLs for webpages not cited individually in Appendix Two or for other resources.

<sup>200</sup> By 'charity narrative', I intend the combination of the charity's public texts as discussed here, the accounts of their histories, and their leadership vision, as well as the informal stories held in the charities' organisational cultures. I use this understanding of the charities' narratives throughout the thesis.

<sup>201</sup> The scope of what charities must disclose is defined in charity reporting regulations and has evolved as good practice and trends in the sector – as well as some contractual and grant requirements – have compelled transparency regarding funding and the outcomes of their work. The

accurate and transparent, to describe operant reality, the texts are also consciously edited as part of the charities' self-presentation or espoused identity, and thus they blend both perspectives. *Espoused* here also overlaps with *normative*; whilst in the larger argument of this thesis, I generally treat the normative voice as the official teaching of the Catholic Church, the charities each also have their own local normativity which is expressed in the texts examined here.

The public texts lead to three arguments. First, they show how Catholic charities construct their Catholicity in multiple forms, with inherent tensions and opaque edges, and with complicated espoused connections to Catholic social teaching. I argue later in this thesis that the assumptions inherent in the *motu proprio* and in papal documents about what constitutes a Catholic charity do not adequately reflect the reality, at least for the charities involved in this research. Their public self-presentation evidences their embeddedness in wider social welfare provision and their constructive participation in how society and the state respond to vulnerability and need. This in turn leads to a more complex account of Catholicity, expanding the boundaries of Catholic social mission assumed in official texts. I draw out from the texts some of the questions that later chapters will discuss about the relationship between the practices of Catholic charities and the tradition of formal CST, problematizing the assumption that CST is a body of theory to be applied or followed. Even a reading of the public texts points to the potential to reconstruct the relationship into a more dynamic and reciprocal process in which practice problematizes theory whilst also depending on its inspiration.

Secondly, I review how the charities' documents describe their embeddedness in social welfare and indicate how they respond to the social and political context of their work. The public texts show how they diagnose the impact of current social policies and enact and assert counter perspectives. I suggest that they also evidence signs of unease in relation to the dismantling of the post-war welfare consensus and the tensions inherent within the strategy of embedded participation.

Thirdly, in relation to the specific arena of homelessness, this chapter identifies the narratives about homelessness implied in the charities' vision, analysis and strategies as presented in their public texts. Their espoused commitments disclose not just a response of care and assistance to people in need but also a concern for their integral well-being and a determination to recognise, activate and call to account the responsibilities shared by

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ethics involved in these developments are not irrelevant to this research; the requirement that charities explain how their work is of public benefit, for example, is an interesting iteration of the concepts of civic virtue and the common good which are discussed later.

society and the state to end homelessness. It is these larger dimensions of their narratives and voice that point towards an inchoate and unarticulated grasp of the common good and potential insights which could enrich and extend the tradition. Thus homelessness becomes a lens through which to examine what it means in practice to work with CST as well as a thematic through which to explore the practical working out of the concept of the common good.

In relation to the research question, this chapter demonstrates the complexity and the potential of enacting Catholicity and CST in real contexts. The participating charities signal – whether consciously or not – the scope and ambition of Catholic social vision, albeit through the partial viewpoint of their field, as evidenced by their reach beyond compassionate care towards a larger vision of human fulfilment and society's potential to reach for the good. Their contribution to Catholic social mission lies both in their practices, enacting elements of a political counter-narrative, and the ways in which their experience provokes questions for formal CST and the institutional Church.

## **2 How the Charities Construct their Identity and Mission**

### **2.1 Reading the Public Texts**

Although the texts in which Catholic charities define their identity – their vision, mission and values statements in particular – often look somewhat bland, many hours have usually been spent refining the wording. What they say, and what they don't say, is not just token formality but a precise interpretation of their history, identity and task. These texts shape the culture and ethos of their work and carefully describe where they stand, operating like creedal statements or as a local social imaginary.<sup>202</sup> They are constructed for use in organisations where the staff, volunteers and supporters come from different faith backgrounds and from the complex category described as 'nones', and so the organisations calibrate how they explain their Catholic connections and commitments in various ways.<sup>203</sup>

The six charities in this research draw on a range of materials in constructing their particular identity narratives. They position themselves in different ways in relation to CST

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<sup>202</sup> Charles Taylor's concept of a social imaginary offers a valuable framework for understanding how the charities' narratives work. Taylor develops the concept to explain aspects of how modernity functions. I use it here analogically. A social imaginary brings together how people imagine their social existence, their expectations and shared understandings, as well as 'the deeper normative notions and images which underlie these expectations', expressed not in theories but in images and stories. Social imaginaries link repertoires of practices to what Taylor terms 'a wider grasp of our whole predicament', including 'a sense of moral order'. *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007) (pp. 171-6).

<sup>203</sup> The category of those who describe themselves as 'non-religious' in public classification. See Lois Lee's research cited in note 85.

and other Catholic social vision sources. Four of the charities reference CST as an inspiration; three of these (the Cardinal Hume Centre, Caritas Salford, CSAN) couple CST and the Gospel or Gospel values, although only Caritas Salford expands its commitment to CST into a set of principles which are then translated into practice strategies and standards.<sup>204</sup> For Housing Justice, the key phrase is ‘recognisably Christian’.<sup>205</sup> Caritas Salford’s use of CST’s abstract language contrasts with the use by three other charities of the narratives of founders and the religious charisms by which they were inspired. For Depaul UK, the Cardinal Hume Centre and women@thewell it is these narratives which frame their values and practice even if CST is also briefly mentioned.<sup>206</sup> CSAN introduces the concept of being ‘grounded in CST’, to describe the basis of their network of member charities and their policy work, a conceptual phrasing which allows for much interpretation.<sup>207</sup> Depaul does not mention either CST or the Gospel.

Only two of the participating charities explicitly describe themselves as Catholic charities. Caritas Salford and CSAN both identify themselves by their relationships with the institutional structures of the Church. The Cardinal Hume Centre carefully asserts both its independence and ‘a close relationship’ with key figures in, and receipt of support from, the Catholic community. Housing Justice describes itself as ‘recognisably Christian’ whilst also strongly owning its Catholic history.<sup>208</sup> Depaul UK and women@thewell identify themselves in relation to religious congregations and traditions rather than hierarchical structures.

These diverse and precise configurations, sometimes signalling or badging charities, and sometimes conveying a generative relationship, or indeed both of these, stand in contrast to the *motu proprio*’s concern about the conditions that must be fulfilled if a charity is to call itself ‘Catholic’. The charities construct their espoused identities in a range

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<sup>204</sup> The Cardinal Hume Centre explains that ‘inspired by CST, the Centre seeks to put the Gospel message into action’ in their *Business Plan 2017-20* (p. 4). CSAN’s vision as explained in their *Annual Review 2016* is of ‘an inclusive, effective and cohesive network of charities grounded in CST’ (p. 1). Caritas Salford explains in their *Annual Review and Accounts 2017* that ‘The ability to respond practically, inspired by Gospel values and the social teachings of the Catholic Church, is the driving imperative.’ (p. 2) women@thewell’s work to support women whose lives are affected by prostitution is ‘based on Gospel values’, according to their *Annual Review and Accounts 2016* (p. 4), but CST is not explicitly mentioned.

<sup>205</sup> Housing Justice’s Values as stated in their *Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016* (and many other texts up to 2018) include ‘recognisably Christian and consistent with the principles of CST’ (p. 5).

<sup>206</sup> Cardinal Hume Centre and the Benedictine charism; see <<https://www.cardinalhumecentre.org.uk/about-us/our-vision-mission-and-values/>> Depaul UK and Vincentian inspiration; see <<https://uk.depaulcharity.org/about-us>> ;women@thewell and the charism of the Sisters of Mercy: see <[https://www.watw.org.uk/addl\\_pages.php?q=27-our-history](https://www.watw.org.uk/addl_pages.php?q=27-our-history)> [all accessed 16.08.2018]

<sup>207</sup> <<http://www.csan.org.uk/about-csan/>> [accessed 15.08.2018]

<sup>208</sup> *Housing Justice Annual Review and Accounts 2016* (p. 5).

of ways, using the diverse resources of Catholic social vision, although institutional Catholic connections are primary for both CSAN and Caritas Salford. For the others, their membership of CSAN takes on significance, asserting that even though some are not explicitly badged as Catholic, and/or may not make explicit reference to CST, they are part of a connected vision, indeed part of the social mission of the Church.<sup>209</sup> However, for most, their membership of CSAN stands somewhat in the background in their public self-description, suggesting a relational rather than public significance. The different ways in which CST is invoked also suggest that the relationship between the normative tradition of texts and the strategic self-understanding of Catholic charities is under-explored.

However there is another way of reading the texts, not looking for explicit markers or badges of identity in relation to either Catholic structures or to CST, but instead using the principles of CST as interpretative tools. When read in this way, the charities' texts disclose multiple echoes and mediations of CST concepts such as the transcendent value of human dignity, the option for the poor, solidarity, justice and the common good. The particularity of each charity is visible in how their texts map onto CST concepts, suggesting interpretations and connections that both affirm the core principles and raise new questions.

So for women@thewell, the starting point is the unique worth, dignity and rights of each woman, but their interpretation then focuses on women's rights to safety and protection from violence and abuse, a connection infrequently found in formal CST texts. There is explicit commitment to a named group, women whose lives are affected by prostitution, and to creating a society in which all women are empowered to achieve their full potential, both of which can be read with the concept of the common good in mind.<sup>210</sup> For the Cardinal Hume Centre, human dignity is also foundational, but their subsequent commitments are framed in terms of hospitality and person-centred support to enable people to develop and realise their potential, influenced by their Benedictine inspiration as encapsulated in a quotation from Cardinal Hume.<sup>211</sup> The CST principle of integral human development is echoed here, and the imperative of hospitality translates solidarity into a

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<sup>209</sup> In several recent annual CSAN Parliamentary Receptions, Cardinal Nichols has emphasised this, speaking inclusively of all the CSAN charities and their work as ways in which the Church acts in society. See texts from 2014, 2015, 2016.< <http://rcdow.org.uk/cardinal/addresses/>> [accessed 12.01.2018]

<sup>210</sup> women@thewell, *Annual Review 2015-16* (p. 3).

<sup>211</sup> "Each person matters; no human life is redundant. Every individual must be given the opportunity to live a life in which his or her basic needs are provided for and in which, so far as is reasonably possible, their full potential is realised." *Business Plan 2017-20* (p. 4).

particular practice of non-judgemental welcome and a commitment to empowerment.<sup>212</sup> For Housing Justice, although their work is not in front-line service delivery, human dignity is still foundational and linked to a strong claim about homelessness - 'we believe that human dignity is challenged by the lack of a decent home' - alongside a commitment to social justice which gives priority to poor and marginalised people.<sup>213</sup> Depaul does not mention either CST or the Gospel; instead the charity translates the inspiration of St Vincent de Paul, described variously as a saint and as a social reformer, into a quartet of Vincentian values with consonances with CST principles. They focus on the potential and agency of each person; on the rights and mutual responsibilities of their clients, staff and volunteers, and the principle of participation; and on taking 'a wider role in civil society', working for social justice through structural change.<sup>214</sup> There are strong indicators of an option for the poor: 'We work with the most excluded people...' and 'We specialise in working with young people and in communities where poverty and long-term unemployment have resulted in generations of social exclusion and high rates of homelessness'.<sup>215</sup>

Each of these charities has a tightly focused mission, and a strong narrative from their founding which is highly active in their self-understanding, and the way in which they particularise their social mission is distinctive and coherent. In contrast, the mission of Caritas Salford is broad and multi-directional, and the institutional affiliation with the Diocese is very close. It is much harder in these circumstances to particularise mission other than through locality and for individual projects. Caritas Salford's texts reference many CST themes; promotion of social justice; advocacy on behalf of the voiceless; enabling people 'to enjoy and achieve in their lives and to contribute fully within their communities'; dignity and rights; family; solidarity, stewardship and subsidiarity.<sup>216</sup> The tension here between the particularity of a limited focus such as homelessness and the encompassing scope of Catholic social vision is evident.

## 2.2 CST and the Narratives: Some Questions

CSAN's concept of being 'grounded in CST' is not just an identity marker in a public text. It is also a criterion of eligibility to belong to its network of Catholic faith related

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<sup>212</sup> *Business Plan 2017-20* (p. 4).

<sup>213</sup> *Annual Report and Financial Statements: Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016* (p. 5).

<sup>214</sup> *Depaul UK Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016* (p. 7).

<sup>215</sup> *Depaul Annual Report 2016* (p.7). Also see fuller explanation of values and history at <<https://uk.depaulcharity.org/about-us/our-values>> [accessed 15.08.2018].

<sup>216</sup> *Caritas Annual Review 2017* (p. 2).

charities that participate in the mission of the Church.<sup>217</sup> It therefore implies a substantive relationship between the charities' work and the social vision articulated in CST. Like the *motu proprio's* use of the phrase 'Catholic principles', the concept of being grounded in CST is open to many interpretations and complexities. Many of the ethical concepts set out in CST are not unique to the Catholic tradition, even if their formulation and application to contemporary contexts are articulated in distinctively Catholic documents and connected to theological frameworks. There are questions here for CSAN and for the teaching ministry of the Church as well as for the charities themselves. Given the character of the formal doctrinal tradition, how does CSAN discern whether a Catholic charity working in social welfare is grounded in CST? Is it important that a charity's grounding in CST is intentional and evidenced, or is it sufficient that it can be implicitly recognised in particular mediations, instincts and ethical orientations? How does a charity validate its interpretation and the particular judgements demanded in its work as consonant with the wider tradition? And finally, what kind of a relationship is happening; do these interpretations and judgements interrogate the tradition and invite further development?

Two examples illustrate the complexity inherent in these questions. The first starts from noticing how the charities' public texts disclose elements and emphases that point to a sense of the common good or interrogate its meaning. *women@thewell's* concern for the social inclusion and empowerment of all women, and their advocacy aimed at ending prostitution, points towards restricted social goods that imply a larger common good. Their vision asserts that a good society, a society grasping its own common good, is one in which no women are compelled into conditions of sexual exploitation, and that economic and legal structures are required to make this possible. Their vision aligns with the instincts of CST, even if the formal tradition lacks a precise discussion of their social thematic. It also aligns with streams of feminist ethics and practice, where equivalent commitments are strongly held. The Cardinal Hume Centre, Depaul and Housing Justice focus on another restricted good, that of enabling everyone to find a home, raising a number of questions about the meaning of the common good in the context of particular welfare and economic conditions.

The charities' public texts inhabit the deeply practical question of how far it is the state's role to ensure this social good is achievable, and where responsibility lies in relation to homelessness and a social safety net. Their narratives recognise that this is not simply a question of housing supply, but of a larger understanding of social participation and the

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<sup>217</sup> CSAN mission statement <<http://www.csan.org.uk/about-csan/>> [accessed 15.08.2018].

conditions which enable people to flourish. Depaul aspires not only to people having ‘a place to call home’ but also ‘a stake in their community’.<sup>218</sup> The Cardinal Hume Centre adds ‘their right to develop’.<sup>219</sup> Both have resonances with the common good directional elements and dynamics which are discussed in more detail in chapter six. Caritas Salford’s mission focuses largely on traditional *caritas*, but it includes two significant markers in its Objects; a commitment to social justice; and a commitment to work ‘for the public benefit, for the benefit of people of all faiths and none’.<sup>220</sup> These signal the inclusive concern of Catholic faith related charities in the contemporary context, in contrast with earlier decades in which they often prioritised Catholic need. But demonstrable public benefit is now a requirement of charity law, and Caritas Salford may be using the concept simply to signal legal compliance. So whilst resonances with the common good conceptual elements can be identified in the charities’ texts, these do not securely connect the charities to the concept as formulated in CST without further exploration. And indeed, as later chapters will discuss, the common good as a concept is not unique to CST even if it is one of its most distinctively Catholic commitments. So whilst it is possible to trace common good conceptual elements in the charities’ narratives, it is not straightforward to connect these to being grounded in CST, nor to evaluate how they influence or could learn from practice.

A second example is found in how the charities’ texts draw on insights from other fields, creating interesting juxtapositions but also hinting at tensions. *women@thewell*, for example, aims to provide a ‘trauma-informed, holistic response’ in ‘a creative and supportive environment informed by Gospel values’,<sup>221</sup> and Depaul’s practice model references Abraham Maslow’s concept of the hierarchy of needs, Psychologically Informed Environments<sup>222</sup> and other theoretical underpinnings alongside its Vincentian values.<sup>223</sup> The charities are acknowledging that more is needed than the resources of the Gospel or other expressions of Catholic social vision in order to be effective. Their work uses secular theory and practice wisdom alongside the resources of Catholic social vision, a primary example of how they operate in the interface between social mission and its context, where tensions and risks are unavoidable if the insights of Catholic social vision are taken seriously.

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<sup>218</sup> *Depaul Annual Report, 2016* (p. 7).

<sup>219</sup> *Business Plan 2017-20* (p. 4).

<sup>220</sup> *Caritas Diocese of Salford, Trustees’ Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016* (p. 6).

<sup>221</sup> *women@thewell Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016* (p. 4).

<sup>222</sup> Explained at <<https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Creating%20a%20Psychologically%20Informed%20Environment%20-%202015.pdf>> [accessed 23.09.2018].

<sup>223</sup> Depaul UK, *Depaul Values in Practice*, October 2014: internal circulation only.

Understandably, the public texts do not disclose such tensions but some are visible between the lines. It is striking that the texts describe their desired outcomes for their clients in terms of supporting change not just in their circumstances but also in their personal capacities. They aim to increase capacities such as resilience and self-reliance and the ability to take control. Gospel based perspectives might offer a different vision, in which the experience of vulnerability shapes social relationships rather than being reduced or eradicated.<sup>224</sup> The point here is not to argue against the value of building resilience, but to recognise that the moral visions implicit in secular theory and practice wisdom may sometimes need critique and discernment, either to test or amend their orientations or to find deeper moral insights. Being 'grounded in CST' could enable awareness of such tensions and enable such testing, drawing on other perspectives which enable a fuller vision of how to value human persons and their dignity and how to build a more challenging version of the common good.

From the charities' perspective, questions about the use and usefulness of CST are likely to be less important than the urgent challenges they encounter every day in their clients' situation. The history of Catholic charity is deeply practical and pragmatic, only constrained when certain Catholic moral principles are visibly at stake, and even then both practitioner and episcopal interpretations are varied and contested. But the institutional Church's claim in its social doctrine is that social mission is about more than pragmatic need. It is concerned with the whole of the social order, with the structuring of society, the role of the political community, with everything and anything that has an impact on persons and their dignity and chances of fulfilment. It has something to say, and a particularly effective way of saying it is likely to be through the embedded participation and voice of charities that own a Catholic allegiance, hence it makes sense to expect those charities to be grounded in CST and to be interested in what this can achieve. It is impressive to see how the charities each carve a particular social vision from diverse sources, but less clear whether normative CST itself has any real practical utility or impact

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<sup>224</sup> This is articulated well in Samuel Wells' *A Nazareth Manifesto: Being with God*, (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2015) where he profiles four Christian responses to situations such as homelessness: 'working with'; 'working for'; 'being with'; and 'being for'. Wells argues that 'being with' is the mode that is most theologically true, 'incarnationally faithful' and 'eschatologically anticipatory', a mode which is not about solving problems but enjoying and receiving from people's presence. (p. 23) Wells is not working from Catholic tradition but a similar challenge that is deeply rooted in Catholic theological instincts is found in the vision of L'Arche communities. Christian Salenson, in *L'Arche: A Unique and Multiple Spirituality* (Paris: L'Arche en France, 2009), explains how it is the discovery of mutual vulnerability that is transformative, an insight into the meaning of the paschal mystery that can be lived by anyone, not just Christians. (pp. 32-7) These theologically rooted accounts invite dialogue with CST's proposals about integral human development and the common good.

for them or how or whether this can be discerned. Their relationships with the institutional church are varied and perhaps usefully indistinct and do not either constitute or guarantee being grounded in CST. There is a gap between the aspirations associated with the *motu proprio* that Catholic charities should ‘follow Catholic principles’ and the realities of the charities’ practices and the ethical landscapes they inhabit. CSAN’s concept of being grounded in CST engages the challenges involved more directly, but still leaves open entire worlds of interpretation.

### **3 Reading the Charities’ Political Positioning: Critical or Constrained?**

#### **3.1 Embedded through Funding and Partnerships**

The front-line charities’ reports disclose how deeply they are embedded in the mixed economy of welfare provision and how they are affected by, and position themselves in relation to, their social and political context. Their funding and contractual relationships, partnership commitments and engagement in lobbying and influencing activities indicate multiple relationships with statutory structures and services, and with peer organisations and other sectors in wider society. The profile is different for each charity, reflecting their histories, opportunities and choices. In relation to funding for example, Caritas Salford in 2016 held contracts with six local authorities for provision of services in areas such as adoption support and fostering, although their homelessness projects are entirely funded from voluntary sources.<sup>225</sup> The Cardinal Hume Centre participates directly in statutory service provision under contract to Westminster City Council to supply supported housing to young people and unaccompanied asylum seeking children, but this represents a decreasing proportion of their service outputs and has an uncertain future.<sup>226</sup> Depaul UK derives almost half of its income from local authority contracts and social investment funds and a further substantial proportion from rents paid by housing benefit, and recognises that its primary risk arises from this insertion into delivery of the government’s current welfare policies.<sup>227</sup> women@thewell and Housing Justice access some statutory funding, although not from welfare budgets.

The pursuit and acceptance of statutory funding and the partnerships thus constituted with local authorities and statutory welfare services indicate very clearly the strategy of embedded participation and constructive engagement in a plural liberal state described in chapter two. Their embeddedness also raises the question of whether the

<sup>225</sup> *Caritas Diocese of Salford Trustees’ Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016* (pp. 9, 16, 18, 28).

<sup>226</sup> *Business Plan 2017-20* (p. 10).

<sup>227</sup> *Depaul Trustees’ Report 2016* (p. 18)

charities' capacity to enact their own social vision is constrained or even compromised by this engagement.<sup>228</sup> Their statutory commitments may impact on how the funded services work if the charities' values based approach comes into conflict with contractual limits or expectations. There may also be impact on their advocacy work, complicating how they call to account and critique the politics and delivery of welfare policies.<sup>229</sup> Clearly the public documents are unlikely to disclose tensions in this area, but they do enable a reading of the espoused political positioning of the charities and the extent to which they have a critical public voice.

### **3.2 Political Positioning: The Charities' Strategic Context and Advocacy Work**

The charities' public documents evidence two sets of political perspectives and implicit positionings. The first set is found in their annual reports and reviews, where elements of strategic analysis and commentary situate their stance in relation to the politics of welfare. The texts are cautious and restrained.<sup>230</sup> The charities report increased need for their services, and describe the impact of specific policies which contribute to homelessness, exclusion and related vulnerabilities, but they refrain from specific judgements or adversarial positions. They point to austerity policies, cuts to local authority funding leading to reduced local services, welfare reforms that raise thresholds and reduce eligibility for benefits, and increased sanctioning of those receiving benefits, all leading to greater demand for their services.<sup>231</sup> Housing Justice adds a mild structural economic element, noting that 'the very concept of social housing is under threat'.<sup>232</sup> Occasionally a sharper or more uneasy voice is heard. In Caritas Salford's Cornerstone Project 2015-16 *Annual Report*, for example, Bishop John Arnold notes that the project 'now offers a regional response to a number of social problems which, to our national collective shame,

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<sup>228</sup> Literature in the field of organisational studies raises this question; see the discussion of resource dependency theory in Stephen Rathgeb Smith and Michael R. Sosin, 'The Varieties of Faith-Related Agencies', *Public Administration Review*, 61 (2001), 651–70 (p. 4). In *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, (Maldon, Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), Luke Bretherton discusses how different theological traditions approach this question and concludes that involvement with the state 'forces the church to mimic the state in its form and practices'. (p. 57). I discuss Bretherton on this point further in Chapter Seven.

<sup>229</sup> The receipt of statutory funding is not the only restraint. The Lobbying Act of 2014 is the latest move in the sometimes tense relationship between a well organised voluntary sector which includes many campaigning organisations, and successive governments. Charitable status entails a set of limits in this area which apply whether or not charities commit to statutory contracts.

<sup>230</sup> This chapter discusses only the documents which the charities make public; their internal political analysis may be sharper and more detailed.

<sup>231</sup> The Cardinal Hume Centre's analysis is the most extensive; in addition to the themes noted above, their 2017-20 Business Plan also points to the drying up of funded advice services, legal aid reductions, in-work poverty and housing market problems. (p. 4)

<sup>232</sup> *Housing Justice Annual Report and Financial Statements: Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016* (p. 5).

have acquired a sense of permanence'.<sup>233</sup> The charities moderately describe the reality they see, witnessing to the impact of policies, but neither issuing judgements nor proposing radical change. *women@thewell* is perhaps an exception, arguing unequivocally for an abolitionist position in which prostitution is exploitation and abuse of women, and the solution is to decriminalise the women involved, criminalise the purchasers and work to end prostitution.<sup>234</sup>

A central question therefore remains subdued within the narratives, the question of how charities that draw inspiration from Catholic social vision and/or CST might use this inspiration to orient how they react to welfare reform policies and their impact. There is undoubted awareness that their work is entangled in welfare retrenchment. *Caritas Salford*, for example, comments that they respond to need 'where there are service gaps, or where Government, through the local authority, is no longer in a position to deliver these services'.<sup>235</sup> The implicit recognition that statutory welfare provision is inadequate and that faith-related charities should fill the gap reflects patterns identified in European research and raises questions in each welfare context.<sup>236</sup> It is not clear in the narratives whether the charities' positions betoken acceptance and commitment to ameliorate the impact of inadequate social assistance or punitive policies, or an intention to challenge and disrupt their assumptions. Their strategic texts may not be the place to advance a critical and principled analysis however, and their access to the resources needed, both in terms of policy analysis and CST expertise, is limited.<sup>237</sup> The relative silence of official Catholic voices and CST texts on such matters as welfare reform and homelessness work leaves gaps which may be too large for the charities to fill.

In the second set of perspectives, found in the issue based public advocacy they undertake, the charities' critique is stronger and more specific, at least for those with resources to enable this area of work. Four of the charities report significant levels of political activity. *women@thewell* and *Housing Justice* describe responding to consultations, attending All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) and campaigning on

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<sup>233</sup> *Caritas Diocese of Salford Annual Review 2016*, (p. 2)

<sup>234</sup> *women@thewell* are committed to the Nordic model; see < <https://nordicmodelnow.org/what-is-the-nordic-model/>>. *Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016* (p. 5).

<sup>235</sup> *Caritas Salford Annual Report 2016* (p. 6).

<sup>236</sup> Grace Davie, 'A European Perspective on Religion and Welfare: Contrasts and Commonalities', *Social Policy and Society*, 11.04 (2012), 589–599 (p. 593).

<sup>237</sup> In 2016-17, one of the charities had a full-time public policy post; another has allocated this area of work to a post combining other public-facing responsibilities. *CSAN* has two full-time posts for this area of work. The other three charities do not have specific capacity for this area of work, although CEOs and other senior managers allocate time.

matters such as the Homelessness Reduction Bill and the need to decriminalise those involved in prostitution.<sup>238</sup> Despite its insertion into delivery of statutory services, Depaul makes an explicit commitment in its 2020 business strategy to ‘campaign for government support to prevent 16-to-25 year olds from becoming homeless’, using its own research.<sup>239</sup> CSAN also carries out advocacy activities, drawing from its member organisations’ experience and data to produce government inquiry submissions, respond to consultations and lobby parliamentarians.<sup>240</sup> The Cardinal Hume Centre’s advocacy is in a lower key, giving priority to enabling the voices of their service users to be heard by policy-makers, supplying evidence to parliamentary inquiries and organising events to engage parliamentarians to listen to their direct experience. Caritas Salford is less visibly active in this area, investing in educational rather than directly political strategies, but participating in CSAN’s policy work.

The charities typically build their analysis and critique from the experience of their clients, and their viewpoint is not that of an analytical distanced observer, but an embedded accompanying partner to their clients, focused on practical conditions and needs and enabling the voices of their clients to be heard. The grounded experience which is their source material gives their organisational voice legitimacy; and the specificity of their concerns identifies achievable change. But viewing and tackling the detail can militate against a deeper critical analysis of the ideologies underlying policy shifts, particularly in fields as complex as homelessness and welfare. The analysis is clearly stronger when charities isolate and pursue key thematics over an extended period of time. The work of women@thewell on abolitionist reform in relation to prostitution, and that of Depaul UK focussing consistently on the situation of young people who are homeless or at risk, are examples of coherent public reasoning, working from within the sectoral and civil society networks available.

### **3.3 A Case Study of Advocacy**

A small case study of issue based advocacy can be found in the response from five of the charities to the House of Commons Communities and Local Government (CLG)

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<sup>238</sup> Introduced as a Private Member’s Bill in June 2016, this passed into law in April 2017, laying new legal duties on English local authorities to prevent homelessness.

<sup>239</sup> Sarah McCoy and Becky Hug, *Danger Zones and Stepping Stones* <https://uk.depaulcharity.org/sites/default/files/Depaul-UK-Report-Danger-Zones-and-Stepping-Stones-April-2016.pdf> [accessed 17.08.2018].

<sup>240</sup> CSAN Review of the Year 2016 (p. 8).

Committee's Homelessness Inquiry in 2016.<sup>241</sup> The submissions follow in the same vein as their strategic texts, analysing the impact of specific welfare reform policies and identifying failures and gaps in implementation, leveraging the charities' direct experience with their clients. But they also go further, proposing changes needed at a range of levels, covering specific policy details such as exempting supported accommodation from the cap on housing benefit and arguing for changes in the way homelessness policy is developed and implemented, joining up health, housing and benefits departments. They also act as a voice for particularly marginalised and powerless client groups with whom they work. Two other aspects of these texts are worth noting in relation to the concerns of this research; the first is the holistic framework implied or invoked in their comments, reflecting both their vision and values and their practice, and presenting elements of a counter-narrative to that which they experience in how welfare works. The second is their tone and style, which is conciliatory, practical and constructive and even empathetic towards the government at times. These texts read as from participants in the endeavour of working out how a good society should respond to homelessness in the real circumstances of economic strain. But this leads to a weakness or at least a limitation. The critique expressed and the remedies proposed barely touch on more radical changes to homelessness policy such as adopting Housing First strategies, or on larger structural issues related to housing.<sup>242</sup> The arguments are limited to how effectively welfare systems operate and for whom.

The charities participate in social welfare as insiders, committed to creating a society that enables the welfare of all, with a moderate and reasonable critical edge and occasional prophetic voice. They argue from reason and evidence, with implicit ethical principles, and whilst they don't conceal their Catholic links or roots, neither do they argue explicitly citing Catholic principles. But there is a deeply Catholic pattern underpinning their participation, in how they seek the good of society as a whole and of each individual, how they position themselves on the side of the most excluded and vulnerable members of

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<sup>241</sup> <<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmcomloc/40/40.pdf>> Evidence was submitted by the Cardinal Hume Centre, CSAN, Housing Justice, Depaul UK and women@thewell. Two of these mentioned their faith identity, CSAN and Housing Justice. 148 organisations made submissions. Apart from these five Catholic charities, only four other responses came from faith-based charities.

<sup>242</sup> The Housing First model proposes services 'which place homeless people in permanent independent housing as quickly as possible. This model contrasts with the "continuum of care" or "staircase of transition" approach, which is the predominant model for homeless services in Europe, and which is based on the assumption that homeless people need to go through a phased rehabilitation process in order to be successfully re-housed.' *On the Way Home? FEANTSA Monitoring Report on Homelessness and Homeless Policies in Europe*, FEANTSA, 2012. <<https://www.feantsa.org/en/report/2012/09/29/on-the-way-home-feantsa-monitoring-report-on-homelessness-and-homelessness-policies-in-europe?bcParent=27>> [accessed 28.09.2018] (p. 61).

society, and how they seek justice in the state's processes. There are signs of unease about their embeddedness, which briefly surface in their narratives, but not to the degree that they fracture their charities' positioning. Even though they recognise the inadequacies of contracts and of the current government philosophy of welfare, and assert their independence and freedom, they still work with the state. Their texts present a narrative of principled participation and accessible public reasoning, subtly aware of the risks but safeguarded by the strength of their valued-based position.

#### **4 Ending Homelessness? The Counter-Narratives of Practice**

As well as the headline texts describing their vision, mission and values, the charities include in their narratives the practice principles and/or theories of change which shape their services.<sup>243</sup> When their practices come into view in these parts of their narratives, their implicit challenge to welfare reform and their alternative vision emerge more strongly than in their public voice. Their practice visions confirm resonances with common good elements and complicate their relationship to Benedict's account of *caritas*.<sup>244</sup> Whether consciously or not, their practice commitments and vision disclose elements of the kind of social order they believe is desirable and how it can be pursued, and act as a critique of existing policies and systems. This is not a coherent or complete analysis, arrived at deductively, but rather emerging through the dialogue between experience, narratives and context that constitutes their histories and their daily life. The particularity of their focus in the context and experience of homelessness, vulnerability, risk and exclusion is crucial here.

Even in a group of just five front-line charities, the complexity of responding to homelessness is illustrated.<sup>245</sup> The participating charities work with different client groups and sometimes with several. *women@thewell* focus on women affected by prostitution and trafficking, recognising that homelessness or insecure housing is one of challenges

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<sup>243</sup> Theories of change are an increasingly popular strategic tool used by charities and often required by funders. They function as strategic route maps that help charities articulate how their activities will enable them to achieve their goals. Depaul UK and Women@the Well each have an explicit theory of change. The Cardinal Hume Centre's diagram, 'Our Approach' (*Business Plan 2017-2020*, p.6), serves this role. Caritas Salford set out practice principles which work in a similar way although without the strategic focus of a theory of change.

<sup>244</sup> *Deus Caritas Est* (para 19).

<sup>245</sup> I understand homelessness as including both those without shelter and those who are inadequately housed. For categories of homelessness, see the typology developed by the Institute for Global Homelessness: [http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/d41ae6\\_97a693a1aba845058f91e9cf38f7c112.pdf](http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/d41ae6_97a693a1aba845058f91e9cf38f7c112.pdf) [accessed 23.09.2018].

many face.<sup>246</sup> Depaul works specifically with young people who are homeless or at risk. Caritas Salford, the Cardinal Hume Centre and Housing Justice work with families, young people, rough sleepers, migrants, asylum seekers, people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), or simply people who are isolated and vulnerable, and offer interventions at different points of need: to those at risk of being homeless; those newly homeless where early intervention has a greater chance of success; and those experiencing multi-exclusion homelessness, typically rough sleepers and those for whom homelessness is part of a more complex marginalisation.<sup>247</sup> Depending on their capacities and funding, the charities offer crisis response – food and meals, hygiene and medical help, emergency accommodation, family mediation – and/or long term sustained support through supported accommodation, advice and advocacy, education and employment opportunities and relational work and activities to build resilience and well-being. They work in partnership with many statutory services, including local authority housing services, job centres, health services especially in the fields of addiction and mental health, education services, immigration offices and the criminal justice system. They also collaborate with peer charities in their fields, both faith-related and secular. Their advocacy work has been described above. The final strand of work is the various ways in which they facilitate and support local churches, communities and individual volunteers to respond to homelessness through projects such as night shelters, hosting schemes and Nightstop volunteering.<sup>248</sup>

Two themes run across what they do. Firstly, that in different ways, and for particular groups, they work to enable people to find a home and to pursue their own well-being. They recognise that the lack of secure and decent accommodation is both a primary need and a contributory factor in their clients' vulnerabilities. But they describe more than just assisting clients to find a safe place to live. They build capacities such as resilience and focus strongly on self-determination and opportunities, and they both co-produce and co-navigate with their clients in relation to the impact of welfare, housing and immigration

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<sup>246</sup> women@thewell's *Annual Review 2015/16* notes that 45% of its clients have needs related to accommodation (p. 4); and in their evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee Inquiry, they comment 'many of our women report engaging in unwanted sexual liaisons to avoid rough sleeping and to ensure they secure accommodation each night'. See Appendix Two for source.

<sup>247</sup> Multi-exclusion homelessness is a term used in relation to life stories in which substance abuse, exposure to street culture, a childhood in care and adverse life events have variously combined to create deep social exclusion. See Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Glen Bramley, and Sarah Johnsen, 'Pathways into Multiple Exclusion Homelessness in Seven UK Cities', *Urban Studies*, 50 (2013), 148–68.

<sup>248</sup> Nightstop is a scheme which recruits volunteers to host young people 'forced to leave their home' on a night by night basis, providing an overnight stay and meals to prevent them sleeping rough or staying in unsuitable places. Depaul UK runs several regional Nightstop services and co-ordinates the national network of local Nightstops. < <https://www.nightstop.org.uk/> > [accessed 23.09.2018].

systems. Secondly, they maintain a broader focus than homelessness alone, seeing various situations of poverty and exclusion as entry points to their services, and working with those at risk of homelessness as well as those who have reached the crisis point of actual homelessness. So they approach homelessness not as an isolated deficit to be remedied by provision of a bed but as part of a complex situation of vulnerability and risk requiring a multi-layered flexible person-centred response. Their documents describe their practice as holistic, relational, open-ended in commitment and oriented towards their clients' flourishing and social participation.

Both in their aspirations for their clients, and in their approach or model of practice, the charities work in a very different way from statutory welfare provision, which is characterised by silos, separate systems each addressing different elements of insecurity, and complex regulatory regimes to manage eligibility and resources. In helping clients to access whatever assistance can be gained from statutory welfare, the charities work in the increasing tension between the entitlements of statutory welfare and the reality of diminishing resources compelling 'gatekeeping' at a local level.<sup>249</sup> As recent official reports as well as academic policy analysis have recognised, welfare reform is having a major impact in this area, effectively dismantling, bit by bit, the social safety net constructed over the post-war decades.<sup>250</sup> The reports also acknowledge the structural economic factors which interact with political decisions about welfare – the sharp decline in availability of social housing, the increasing costs of renting in the private sector and the constraints and policies which impede the development of affordable housing.

So where the state is withdrawing or limiting the social security or safety net provided to its citizens, the charities are both taking part in the re-structured and narrowed provision, and stretching it by adding voluntary resources and capacities and by advocacy and advice aimed at making the statutory systems work more effectively. They also supplement it, filling in the gaps and responding to groups such as those with no recourse to public funds, setting their own criteria and often subverting the explicit or implicit intentions of current welfare policy.<sup>251</sup> In their practice they assert a different model, a

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<sup>249</sup> The CLG Committee Report 2016 notes that local authorities are taking steps to discourage applications (pp. 16-17).

<sup>250</sup> See also the Audit Commission Report <<https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Homelessness.pdf>> and a parallel report from the Public Accounts Committee <<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-accounts-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/homeless-households-17-19/>> [both accessed 23.09.2018]

<sup>251</sup> For example, the Government's current intentions in welfare reform include creating a hostile environment for illegal immigrants. See <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/nov/28/hostile-environment-the-hardline-home-office-policy-tearing-families-apart>>

counter-narrative, of how a society should respond to its vulnerable members, aiming at their full inclusion and participation, supporting them to develop capacities so that they can flourish rather than merely survive. They activate voluntary resources from their supporting faith-related communities but also from other sectors interested in the public good, including trusts and foundations and corporates interested in social responsibility.

Some qualifications are necessary. It is not only Catholic faith related charities – or indeed faith-based organisations of any religious tradition – that work in this way. Many other charities have similar values based narratives leading to equivalently holistic aspirations for their clients and comparable ranges of services. The strong history of voluntary social welfare in the UK, and the continuing mixed economy and moving frontier also partly shape Catholic faith-related charities alongside the background texture and motivation from Catholic charitable impulse and the impact of particular social vision and mission resources. And within the mixed economy, voluntary organisations have freedoms that statutory structures struggle to design or achieve, but which commissioners often recognise or encourage from their contracted partners, even if sometimes remaining wary of some faith-based provision.

Some questions begin to emerge in relation to understanding what it means to work within a Catholic social vision, in relation to homelessness. Whilst the imperative from Christian faith to respond in *caritas* to those who lack shelter or safety is evidenced in the many kinds of practical assistance given, this is only the starting point. The larger task they describe is that of building a society in which homelessness is decreased or eradicated, an intermediate social good, which itself raises the question of whether the social order can be structured such that no-one need be homeless or live in precarity which inhibits their flourishing. This involves more than *caritas*; it cannot be done without political visioning and strategy, without engaging with structures and policies which bear down on people's lives. To address this task is fully in line with the normative way in which the institutional Church understands Catholic social mission. As *Gaudium et Spes* makes clear, it encompasses all that is involved in 'healing and ennobling the dignity of the human person, strengthening the fabric of human society and investing the daily activity of men and women with deeper significance'.<sup>252</sup> In the Conciliar vision, this social mission is part of the Church's salvific work. It is also the sphere in which CST has relevance, where its core principles could orient a theological and ethical reading of homelessness and its contextual

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[accessed 23.09.2018]. The charities involved in this research welcome and work with migrants irrespective of status, based on their need.

<sup>252</sup>*Gaudium et Spes* (para 40).

causes and structural determinants. Such a reading is currently absent from the formal doctrinal tradition, although there is partial discussion of state welfare responsibilities, human rights and other relevant concepts. Later chapters address these questions.

## 5 Conclusion

This chapter has used the public documents of the charities to expand the research question and sub-questions. The texts examined here are only a partial way of discovering the reality of this group of Catholic charities, but they are nonetheless illuminating. How the charities describe themselves for the public gaze and how they speak in public and to the state are part of their practices and a form of witness. Their narratives also infiltrate the culture of their sector and the broader mixed economy of welfare in which they participate, and their voice insinuates counter-narratives drawn from their grip on their particular visions and values. Below the surface, there are ecclesiological dynamics which may not be visible or important to their clients or external partners or even their staff, but which matter significantly as they sustain their identities and mission in increasingly challenging contexts. The range of positions the charities construct both problematize the neat assumptions of normative texts and offer potential access to peripheral spaces and people, where teaching encounters reality and is invited to extend its understanding.

The question of what it means to be a Catholic charity comes into focus in the light of the charities' narratives. Two conceptions can be distinguished. In the first, a Catholic charity is understood as an institutionally affiliated and approved agency, primarily engaged in *caritas*. In the second, the charities' Catholicity consists of a rootedness in Catholic social vision resources, including the Gospel and CST, supported by relationships with Catholic communities that help sustain those resources as lived experiences. The resources are mediated in texts and narratives designed to enable inclusive participation, recognising plurality and confident that instincts intrinsic to Catholic social vision will find common ground with the ethics of co-workers who do not profess Catholic faith. Working within this kind of Catholicity complicates the boundaries of the Church's social mission, sometimes to the point where some would debate whether any connection still exists. But if, on these peripheries, the charities still celebrate their histories, hold to their narratives and relationships with Catholic communities, and demonstrate the impact of their values, I argue that their grounding in Catholic social vision is live and authentic, and indeed that this model extends its reach and impact. The role of CSAN as a bridge to institutional belonging and a support to diverse mediations of Catholicity is significant. In the following chapters, I examine first the normative voices of official Catholic teaching, in conversation with formal

theological resources, and then the operant perspectives disclosed in the charities' practices.

Without the contingent and sometimes ambiguous relationships between the institutional Church and charities which do not belong to it in the sense of ownership, but act as partners and participants, that dimension of the Church's mission in which it seeks the common good is weakened and diminished. Equally if the charities are to sustain the strength of their values and ethos by keeping secure their connection to a lived experience of Christian faith through which radically different insights can be accessed, they too need the community of the Church. CST has many roles here, potentially providing tools and insights to enlarge, validate or enrich local discernment and analysis. The data examined in this chapter does not securely explain what charities mean when they claim the inspiration of CST or what CSAN seeks in assessing whether charities are grounded in CST.

In the charities, a wide range of people with plural views participate in Catholic social mission. They bring and use many other resources, in dialogue with tenaciously held values derived from Catholic instincts and tradition. But do they - both the institutional church and its teaching ministers responsible for expanding and developing social teaching, and those involved in the charities - dig deeply enough or engage closely with what the Catholic vision and mission means for homelessness? This chapter began to use the common good as a tool to examine this question, finding that its implications are inherent in their narratives and in their voice, but also that its fuller potential is little realised. Could a stronger and more explicit engagement with the common good strengthen and enrich their work, even at the risk of disturbing the historical pattern of constructive participation in a plural state? The practical utility of CST is at stake here.

## Chapter Five: Pointing towards the Kingdom: Theological Resources for Constructing the Identity and Mission of Catholic Charities

### 1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the account of Catholic charities found in official Catholic teaching and discuss this using resources from broader Catholic theology. The documents I discuss provide the first treatment in official teaching of the modern reality of Catholic charities. I find that Benedict XVI's account of charities is partial and constrained. Whilst his texts offer some useful perspectives, they are tethered to one pole of a post-conciliar tension about Catholic identity which impedes a fuller recognition of the charities' theological specificity. They also use a single primary lens, the concept of *caritas*, which is indisputably central to Catholic tradition and social praxis, but limited in scope and unable to encompass a broader view of what Catholic charities do. I therefore construct a theological framework for understanding Catholic charities from principles drawn from *Gaudium et Spes* and later documents. The second section turns to a further normative voice, the official corpus of Catholic social teaching, and discusses how these texts present the relationship between CST and social mission practice, leading to undervaluing of the voice of practice and to unexplored possibilities for expanding the tradition. I propose a reconstruction in which the official tradition is also understood and developed as an ecclesial practice involving dialogue and learning. In this approach, the actors involved in Catholic social mission are re-configured as partners and interlocutors rather than simply recipients with a duty to 'apply' the doctrine.

I propose that the specificity of Catholic charities is found in how they are embedded in secular structures and dynamics, where they enact Catholic social vision, pointing social realities towards the Kingdom.<sup>253</sup> Their Catholicity is not primarily expressed in ecclesial categories such as worship and sacramental life but rather located in their practices, through which they work autonomously and communally to realise their faith-inspired social visions. The limited account of Catholic charities in official teaching does not adequately recognise their specificity, although the resources needed for an expanded theological framework exist elsewhere in Catholic teaching. The *motu proprio* fills a gap in Canon Law, but in defining charities in terms of structural affiliation and visibility, and

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<sup>253</sup> This idea is borrowed from J. Bryan Hehir, 'The Church in the World: Responding to the Call of the Council' in *Faith and the Intellectual Life*, Marianist Award Lectures, ed. by James L. Heft, S.M., (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996) 101-19.

paying inadequate attention to their substantive mission and context, it obscures the theological significance of working at ecclesial peripheries and of being embedded in secular contexts and structures. Even when the normative voice in view is the official tradition of CST, the specific work of Catholic charities is under-valued. I argue that what I term the ‘corpus’ concept of CST, in which the assumption is that CST is deductive teaching to apply in social reality, needs to be re-constructed in how the tradition presents itself and is understood. I propose an understanding of CST as a practice, a dialogical discernment of social realities involving many agents, including voices charged with the task of authoritative interpretation, but not restricted to those voices. Such a concept opens up more generative potential for understanding what it means to be ‘grounded in CST’.

The chapter continues to use theological action research principles, here bringing perspectives from normative and formal voices of theology into the conversation. In relation to the generic methodology of an expanded case study, this chapter acts as a theoretical framework, although I de-construct the assumption that CST is ‘theory’ and recognise that all theologies have histories, contextual origins and influences and intentions that complicate their role as theory. This recognition connects to a further tension running through this chapter, and indeed the research. I am working within the thought-world, and the empirical context, of normative Catholic teaching and ecclesial life, where assumptions about the authority of official teaching and its acceptance by the Catholic community shape culture and relationships, and where power remains for the most part in the hands of ordained men. The organisations that participated in this research live in or on the boundary of that thought-world and context, negotiating how to balance their mode of belonging and their proper autonomy. I too am part of that communal fabric. But my primary standpoint here is academic, requiring critical investigation and judgement, using resources from wider theological scholarship and later from empirical data to interrogate the normative voice. The tension between ecclesial and academic accountabilities is sensitive for an empirical project such as this research. Part of the value of distinguishing the four voices is that the space created makes it easier to be intentional about equal regard and empathetic listening, not just to practice but to all the voices; they all come from somewhere.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> The four voices of theology – the operative, the espoused, the formal and the normative, are explained on pp. 33-4.

## 2 What is a Catholic Charity?

### 2.1 Catholic charities in Benedict XVI's *Deus Caritas Est*

Benedict XVI's encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (DCE) was the first papal document to discuss the specific category of Catholic charitable organisations.<sup>255</sup> *Deus Caritas Est* first develops a Christian understanding of human love as a response to being loved by God, which then leads to love of others, including our neighbours, who in turn lead us back to God. Benedict then applies this in the arena of practical charitable work. Love of neighbour or *caritas* is both a manifestation of Trinitarian love, and an essential practice of the Church, part of its 'fundamental structure', whether this happens through individual voluntary acts or in the work of charitable organisations (20, 25). The work of such organisations is an *opus proprium* for the Church, a task that belongs to the Church and a way that the Church 'acts as a subject', (29) expressing the diaconal dimension which is as essential to its life as sacraments and liturgy (22). This is a strong affirmation of the ecclesial meaning of the mission of Catholic charities. But the text also makes a puzzling distinction, restricting the concept of charity or social love which has this ecclesial status. The work of justice, of social love expressed in political and social engagement, is separated from *caritas* and consigned to the lay faithful, as individual citizens acting in their personal capacity. (29) In the political arena, Benedict says, 'the Church has an indirect duty', through rational argument to awaken moral conscience to the demands of justice, but the ecclesial status of the direct political engagement of laypeople is left unclear (28, 29).

There are several problems with this ecclesiological framework. For laypeople active in social mission, it gives an ambivalent message. It is constitutive of Catholic ecclesiology since Vatican II to understand the Church as all its members, lay or ordained, all equal in dignity; none are secondary. Yet when it comes to political involvement, to explicit work for justice, laypeople are commissioned to act but also somehow separated from 'the Church' which remains an 'indirect' actor, seeking only to influence.<sup>256</sup> The

<sup>255</sup> Subsequent references in the text are to paragraphs of *Deus Caritas Est*.

<sup>256</sup> Lisa Sowle Cahill comments that 'The unavoidable connotation is that the Church's 'real' identity inheres in the ordained and in ecclesial structures supervised by the episcopacy'. '*Caritas in Veritate: Benedict's Global Reorientation*', *Theological Studies*, 71.2 (2010), 291–319 (p. 297). In a chapter in *The Legacy of Vatican II*, ed. by Massimo Faggioli and Andrea Vicini (New York: Paulist Press, 2015), Cahill adds that although Vatican II seemed to empower the laity, the message was ambivalent about how far the public voice and authority of the laity could be trusted. She judges that the impact on Catholic social engagement has been mixed. (pp. 139-40) The influences at work here may have been more contextual than the Council documents recognise. In *Catholicism and Democracy* (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012), Emile Perreau-Saussine argues that at Vatican II, the Church was taking up 'the old Gallican conception of the political primacy of the laity', backing away from 'the political limelight' other than through the influence of laypeople. (p. 117) He sees this as part of the Church's coming to terms with modernity; now 'the church could be at ease with

second difficulty then follows. If laypeople motivated by faith and engaging in work for justice through directly political means may not be regarded as ‘the Church’ but only as individuals, each following his or her own vocation, the ecclesial status and specificity of lay-led public organisations structured by their mission is problematic and the discernment of their Catholicity is impeded. If these organisations find that their concerns for people who are poor, excluded or exploited inevitably require political voice or action, whether at the micro-level or in larger public domains, the implication is that they move outside the *opus proprium* of *diakonia*, outside of working as the Church. Some of the tensions that characterise relationships between Catholic charities and hierarchical structures illustrate this ecclesiological conundrum, which also reflects what Kevin Ahern terms the ‘distinction of planes’ model of Catholic social engagement.<sup>257</sup> It is not a new problematic. The documents of Vatican II reflect this model, and construct the ecclesiological gap which remains open.<sup>258</sup>

## 2.2 The Specificity of Catholic Charities

Elsewhere official Catholic teaching recognises that laypeople work collectively in fields of social mission through associations and movements. The rights of the baptised to form and join such movements are detailed in Canon Law, and theological criteria for discerning their ecclesiality are set out in Pope John Paul II’s *Christifideles Laici*.<sup>259</sup> But Catholic charities engaged in social welfare are not lay movements or associations, even if they sometimes work or overlap with such groups. They are constituted in a secular legal framework, bringing people together to carry out specific work, in relationships that are contractual – but also invite and collaborate with voluntarism – and where Catholic faith motivations are neither assumed nor required, but nonetheless welcomed and in varying ways supported. They work primarily in the social, economic and political fields and

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democracy and liberalism’. (p. 125) Perreau-Saussine also notes Henri De Lubac’s critique of the distinction between direct and indirect power, echoing the Gallican appraisal that indirect power is only ‘direct power that dare not speak its name’. p. 119

<sup>257</sup> *Structures of Grace: Catholic Organizations Serving the Global Common Good* (New York: Orbis, 2015). (pp.112-13) Ahern summarises: ‘In short, this model limits the direct engagement of church action in society’. See also Donal Dorr, ‘Catholic Relief, Development Agencies and *Deus Caritas Est*’, *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*, 9.2 (2012), 285–314. Dorr concludes that *Deus Caritas Est* opens up areas of uncertainty for Catholic agencies, both about whether the Pope is confirming a lack of trust in lay leadership and about whether they should draw back from advocacy work.

<sup>258</sup> *Lumen Gentium* (paras 25, 35, 36); *Gaudium et Spes* (para 43).

<sup>259</sup> The Apostolic Exhortation that emerged after the 1987 Synod of Bishops.  
<[http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_30121988\\_christifideles-laici.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html)> [Accessed 21.08.2018] ( paras 29, 30).

structures of secular society.<sup>260</sup> Although they draw support and resources from Catholic communities, they are not oriented towards the sacramental life of the Church. Their specificity is found in their entanglement with the dynamics and structures of the secular world, which they negotiate in creative tension with their relationship to elements of Catholic faith and teaching. In contrast, lay movements constitute membership on the basis of personal affiliation to Catholic faith, even if their mission leads them to activity in fields which overlap with the concerns of charities.

This specificity is not yet adequately discussed in wider Catholic scholarship. Johan Verstraeten proposes a typology of five types of Catholic social movements in which he incorporates Catholic NGOs, but his typology blurs this significant boundary and thus loses sight of a key element of the theological specificity.<sup>261</sup> John Coleman describes Catholic welfare organisations as exhibiting ‘institutional peculiarities’, but this is a sociological rather than a theological description.<sup>262</sup> Kevin Ahern’s work, developing the concept of Christian social movements as ‘structures of grace’, embodying God’s grace in the world, goes some way towards recognising this specificity, but stops short of a fully theological claim about its significance, partly because he uses the same blurred categories as Verstraeten.<sup>263</sup> Ahern builds his argument from a theology of grace, but he is more concerned to set out how grace works through the prophetic work of diaconal social movements than to expand the significance of their interaction with the larger dynamics of God’s action in the secular spaces of the world through their inclusiveness.

### 2.3 The Theological Significance of the Secular

It is this larger context that *Deus Caritas Est* does not adequately recognise either. Benedict moves some way in this direction in noting some elements of how contemporary Catholic charities operate: that they must be professionally competent; that they may work

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<sup>260</sup> I am assuming here the context of developed and democratic Western nation states. There are contexts in which different settlements of secularity, modernity and non-Christian faith traditions result in varying conditions for Catholic charities. These include regimes that are inhospitable to any Christian agencies or actively suspicious.

<sup>261</sup> Johan Verstraeten proposes a five-fold typology of Catholic social movements: mainstream classical international Catholic organisations; religious orders’ spin-offs; new spirituality based movements; radical base movements; and Christians involved in secular activist movements such as Greenpeace. I don’t think this works. Catholic charities are not international Catholic organisations in the same way as, for example, Pax Christi or Pax Romana; and some of the spin-offs, such as Jesuit Refugee Services, are inclusive in the same way as the charities discussed here. See ‘Catholic Social Thought and the Movements: Towards Social Discernment and a Transformative Presence in the World’, *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*, 10.2 (2013), 231–39.

<sup>262</sup> ‘Catholic Institutions’ in *The Blackwell Companion to Catholicism*, ed. by James Joseph Buckley, Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, and Trent Pomplun (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

<sup>263</sup> Ahern, *Structures of Grace* (p. 34).

in co-operation with statutory agencies and with other faith-based agencies (30, 34); and that they must resist ideologies and equally avoid proselytising. But I contend that he does not discuss the theological significance of their presence and activity within the secular world. His account neglects potential theological principles from the Conciliar theology and other papal texts. In *Christifideles Laici*, for example, John Paul II affirmed the theological meaning of the secular as 'a reality destined to find in Jesus Christ the fullness of its meaning'.<sup>264</sup> Thus, he argued, 'for the lay faithful, to be present and active in the world is not only an anthropological and sociological reality, but in a specific way, a theological and ecclesiological reality as well'.<sup>265</sup> Whilst this text repeats the distinction of planes model, isolating the lay faithful from the ordained in constructing roles in social mission, it also strongly affirms the theological meaning of secular engagement. John Paul II developed his teaching in continuity with themes from *Gaudium et Spes*, the Conciliar text which offers the most generative ecclesiological structure in which to locate and interpret Catholic charities. The central theme of *Gaudium et Spes* is the Church's desire to be in solidarity with the world, pursuing a path of dialogue and service, contributing to human progress through promoting the transcendent dignity of the human person and work for a better ordering of human society. The document's confident account of how such work is 'in the interest of the Kingdom of God' provides a framework for the social mission of the whole Church, of all its members.<sup>266</sup>

In the horizon provided by *Gaudium et Spes*, the practical work of Catholic charities, based on a theologically founded ethic, contributes to the work of the Kingdom, albeit with the uncertainty and contradictions inherent to all pursuit of the Kingdom in a world in which two realities interpenetrate.<sup>267</sup> There is a tension here. For the charities, their embedded presence in the world, and their work with people of goodwill to transform secular realities, is a place of theological disclosure, but also a place of negotiation and risk as they balance and discern the implications of a double belonging, both to their roots and inspiration in Catholic tradition and faith, and to the secular world in which they work. They also participate in a larger ecclesial tension, often focused around interpretation of *Gaudium et Spes* and of Vatican II as an event, and recurring in interpretation of recent papacies. The orientation towards dialogical openness in which continuities with the Gospel

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<sup>264</sup> *Christifideles Laici* (para 15).

<sup>265</sup> *Christifideles Laici* (para 15).

<sup>266</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* (para 39).

<sup>267</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* (para 39), *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (para 48). <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_30121987\\_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html)> [Accessed 22.08.2018]

are recognised is at one pole, and at the other, the more defensive instinct of proclamation and critique, stressing the specific truth claims found in the Gospel against the discontinuities found in the world. Both these tensions are part of the conditions of the living and acting in the world, for the institutional Church and for associated charities. They are also part of the ecclesiological gap I have begun to describe, in which evolving interpretations leave open spaces of uncertainty, at least for those who seek to secure what Catholicity means in definite and visible terms. Benedict's appraisal of *Gaudium et Spes* is ambivalent, locating him towards the latter pole, and his writings frequently seek to correct what he sees as deficiencies in the Council's theology.<sup>268</sup> In contrast, Francis communicates a more positive appraisal.<sup>269</sup> But the principles in *Gaudium et Spes* are still normative, even if debates about interpretation underline that its inherent tensions remain active, not least in the concerns about Catholic identity which have characterised much activity of Roman dicasteries in recent decades.<sup>270</sup>

The crucial point here is that the secular context in which the charities work is not a neutral arena in theological terms, a place only of deficit or absence in relation to their mission. Rather, it already has theological significance within a larger framework of God's purposes in history. Other work on what Catholic identity means for Catholic charities explores this in constructive ways, in particular seeing the 'otherness' of the secular world as a means to discover identity through dialogical engagement. David Ranson, for example, suggests that Catholic identity is not something packaged or possessed, but rather an 'event', disclosed in commitment to a task, but also 'caught in a dialectic of continuity and discontinuity – constantly growing, constantly adapting; and being engaged with, and

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<sup>268</sup> See Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) Chapter Two, 'Gaudium et Spes and the Importance of Christ.' (pp. 30-47).

<sup>269</sup> Faggioli describes *Gaudium et Spes* as 'visibly one of the hermeneutical keys in the most crucial passage of Francis's pontificate', in *Catholicism and Citizenship* (p. 100).

<sup>270</sup> The debates about the interpretation of *Gaudium et Spes* are too extensive to discuss here, but one central tension must be noted in the contested interpretation of the Church-World relationship. Whilst many took the document as a charter for deeper social engagement, others, including Cardinal Ratzinger, thought that its teaching risked the Church failing to propose the truth about Christ held in Catholic tradition. See for example, Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith*, (p. 46). David Hollenbach discusses Joseph Komonchok's larger interpretation of the tension as contrasting Augustinian and Thomist theological frameworks in his 'Commentary on Gaudium et Spes' in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations, Second Edition*, ed. by Kenneth R. Himes (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2018), (p.298). Paul D. Murray proposes that 'a properly Catholic theology arguably needs to hold these voices in dialectical tension' in 'Ecclesia et Pontifice: On Delivering on the Ecclesiological Implications of Evangelii Gaudium', *Ecclesiology*, 12 (2016) 13-33, (p. 18). The key point for my argument is that this tension lies beneath what John Allen describes as a post-conciliar Catholic 'megatrend', the search for Catholic identity in almost all the fields in which the Church engages with the world. 'Ten mega-trends shaping the Catholic Church', *National Catholic Reporter*, 22.12.2006 <http://ncronline.org/blogs/all-things-catholic/ten-mega-trends-shaping-catholic-church> [accessed 20.01.2018]

challenged by variable circumstances – whilst at the same time, capable of recognising itself as an uninterrupted narrative of meaning'.<sup>271</sup> He argues that what matters is not resolving the tensions but fidelity to the dialogue involved, which enables 'genuinely Catholic identity'.<sup>272</sup> Neil Ormerod uses Bernard Lonergan's concept of a dialectical structure in which 'operators', principles of mission, and 'integrators', principles of identity, interact, as another approach in which the tensions are constructively recognised and each corrects the other's weaknesses.<sup>273</sup> Ormerod suggests that charities share 'in some manner' the identity and mission of the Church, each with different emphases and particular contributions. This creates valuable space for the Catholic charities working on and across the boundaries of the Church, in the porous marginal space between what is visibly ecclesial and what is secular, recognising that the secular world is also a place in which the Spirit is at work.

#### **2.4 The Distinctiveness of Christian Charitable Practice?**

*Deus Caritas Est* does however offer a further trajectory into the theological definition of Catholic charities in a discussion of the activity rather than the actors. Benedict proposes a theological and practical distinctiveness for *caritas* as practiced by Christians, an account which reflects his deeper concern to ensure the Church proclaims the truths to which the Church has particular access. He presents Christian charity at its deepest level as a response of faith to the love of God, in which we recognise every other person as a neighbour (para 15). Thus the work of Catholic charities is not 'mere social assistance', but has an overflow, a quality of self-giving, mutual encounter and receptive openness (para 31), which for Benedict is most securely sustained by Christian faith and 'interior openness to the Catholic dimension of the Church' (para 34). This latter phrase is a useful and subtle sidestep avoiding the stringency of proposing that those who work in charities should be Catholic or that only Catholics can practice charity as self-giving and encounter. It also allows space for constructing a larger concept of Catholicity than membership of the Church, one in which those who are not Church members can participate. But the 'the Catholic dimension of the Church' remains undefined and therefore open to interpretation.

*Deus Caritas Est* does provide elements of a theological account which can contribute to the specific identity of Catholic charities, but curtailed by the singular focus

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<sup>271</sup> 'A service shaped by Catholic Identity' in *Identity and Mission in Catholic Agencies*, ed. by Neil Ormerod (Strathfield, NSW: St Paulus Publications, 2008) (p. 83).

<sup>272</sup> Ranson, 'A Service Shaped', in Ormerod 2008 (p. 95).

<sup>273</sup> Ormerod, 'Identity and Mission in Catholic Organisations', *Australasian Catholic Review*; Vol 87/4 Oct 2010, 430-39.

on *caritas* and the confusions arising from the separation of responsibilities of laypeople and ‘the Church’. Although the text contains small openings to a larger and more inclusive concept of the Catholicity of charities, it pays insufficient attention to the theological dimensions of their task in the conditions of secularity and to other domains of Catholic social mission and leaves open the ecclesiological gap discussed earlier. Finally, although Benedict’s proposal about the theological distinctiveness of *caritas* invites empirical enquiry, it also emphasises the tensions inherent in questions about Catholic identity.

## 2.5 From *Deus Caritas Est* to *Caritas in Veritate*

Three years later in 2009, in *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict revisited the relationship between charity and justice, presenting a more integral concept of *caritas*.<sup>274</sup> He describes the relationship between justice and charity, proposing that justice is integral to charity, inseparable and intrinsic, and both together build the earthly city (para 6). But he maintains that charity ‘goes beyond justice’, creating relationships of ‘gratuitousness, mercy and communion’ which illuminate the truth about human persons and human society, which is only fully understood through faith in Christ and the God he reveals (para 6). Significantly for my argument, he connects charity and justice to the common good, which he describes as ‘the political path’ of charity, ‘no less excellent’ than the direct practical response to a neighbour’s needs:

To take a stand for the common good is on the one hand to be solicitous for, and on the other hand to avail oneself of, that complex of institutions that give structure to the life of society, juridically, civilly, politically and culturally, making it the *pólis*, or ‘city’. The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbours, the more effectively we love them. (para 7)

*Caritas in Veritate* then develops its major arguments about international development and global economic structures and business ethics, arguing that the dimension of gift or gratuitousness is essential, and if practiced, leads to a re-ordering of social and economic relationships.

In Cahill’s view, *Caritas in Veritate* ‘could be seen as a revision of *Deus Caritas Est*’.<sup>275</sup> She detects in its major argument a ‘political re-orientation’ in Benedict’s worldview, influenced by a more global perspective and experience, in contrast to the narrower concern focused on the diminishing Christian faith of Europe with which his papacy began. She argues that Benedict is neither trying to rein in Catholic agencies nor to

<sup>274</sup> (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2009) (para 7). Subsequent references in the text are to paragraphs of the document.

<sup>275</sup> Cahill, ‘Benedict’s Global Re-orientation’ (p. 304).

outsource political action to laypeople.<sup>276</sup> However, Hollenbach is more critical, proposing that *Caritas in Veritate* overemphasises love as ‘gratuitousness’ and neglects to balance this with love as mutuality or solidarity, and as equal regard, expressed in just ordering. In his view, a tighter link between love and justice is needed for love to be fully itself.<sup>277</sup> Drew Christiansen is more positive, arguing that Benedict both affirms that work for structural change is integral to mission and re-positions himself back into congruence with Paul VI’s teaching and indeed with ‘the optimistic, immanent, Teilhardian eschatology of Vatican II’.<sup>278</sup>

Even if refracted through a single – but constitutive – principle, *Caritas in Veritate* takes social love beyond compassion and generosity into more counter-cultural and transformative modes with political as well as social and economic implications. But like many other teaching documents, it largely sidesteps any discussion of how the entire Church, in its varied actors including charitable organisations both within and working across its boundaries, might interpret this integral concept in practice. Benedict appeals to ‘every Christian’ to practice this charity, based on each one’s vocation and social position, and returns to the imprecise usage of ‘the Church’, seeming to mean its teaching authority, which, he says, quoting Paul VI, does not offer technical solutions or interfere in politics.<sup>279</sup> He does not connect this more integral account of charity and justice to the theological category of *opus proprium*, nor to the role of charitable organisations, leaving it still unclear whether their work or their public voice is fully ecclesial when they pursue justice as well as *caritas*. Whilst his integration of *caritas*, work for justice and striving for the common good offer a richer and more expansive framework in which to locate and interpret the work of charitable organisations, this remains abstract and idealising, in Benedict’s teaching at least. Nonetheless, CiV offers generative resources to enrich the reflection of Catholic faith-related charities. They might ask how their culture and practices enable and support practices of self-giving; about whether they go ‘beyond justice’; and whether they embody or enable models of social solidarity based on a different ethic which for some of their staff and volunteers may have theological roots in communion and mercy, and for others, may reflect other ethical motivations.

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<sup>276</sup> Cahill, ‘Benedict’s Global Re-orientation’ (p.310).

<sup>277</sup> David Hollenbach, ‘Caritas in Veritate: The Meaning of Love and Urgent Challenges of Justice’, *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*, 8.1 (2011), 171–82.

<sup>278</sup> Drew Christiansen SJ, ‘Metaphysics and Society: A Commentary on *Caritas in Veritate*’, *Theological Studies* 71 (2010). 3-28 (p. 7).

<sup>279</sup> *Caritas in Veritate*, (paras 7, 9).

## 2.6 The *Motu Proprio On the Service of Charity*

The publication in 2012 of the *motu proprio, On the Service of Charity*, took a further step towards defining what constitutes a Catholic charity, this time in legislative terms.<sup>280</sup> Although signed by the Pope, it was prepared by the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts.<sup>281</sup> It states its purpose as providing a framework for ‘ordering’ Catholic charitable work, covering both official Catholic charities, those belonging to the Caritas family, and other organisations which have ‘arisen from the free enterprise of the faithful’ (p.2). An authoritative interpreter, Archbishop Hebda, asserts that the motivating factors also included the need to preserve ‘the ecclesial content and context of the service of charity’ and avoid the risk of becoming ‘just another form of organised social assistance’.<sup>282</sup> Its articles affirm the right of all the baptised to form and join charitable organisations (art. 1.1) and then set out what is required of charities ‘to the extent that they are linked to the charitable service of the Church’s pastors’ or use funds given by Catholics or describe themselves as Catholic (art. 1.1). In summary, they must submit their statutes for approval; follow Catholic principles and avoid commitments which ‘affect the observance of those principles’; use the name ‘Catholic’ only with episcopal consent (art. 2.2); and select their staff ‘from among persons who share, or at least respect, the Catholic identity of these works’ (art. 7.1). A longer list of duties is set out for bishops, who must encourage and support charitable initiatives (art 4.2); ensure they respect the Church’s law (art. 4.3); ensure charities are co-ordinated, preferably through a Caritas structure (arts. 6, 8, 9); provide for the formation of their staff (art. 7.2); guide the faithful not to support any charities that ‘propose choices or methods at odds with the Church’s teaching’ (art. 9.3); supervise their finances and ensure appropriate salaries policies; give permission to work in particular places (art. 13); and prohibit use of the name ‘Catholic’ when necessary. It goes some way towards acknowledging the diversity of Catholic charities, affirming the need to respect the ‘specific characteristics’ and autonomy of organisations, seeing in the latter an expression of the freedom of the baptised (p.2).

The *motu proprio*’s articles regulate both charities and the institutional structures to which they relate, formalising the duties of bishops in this area in ways that are

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<sup>280</sup> Subsequent references in the text are to pages (in the preamble) or articles (in the dispositive section) of the document.

<sup>281</sup> The genesis of the document is described by Bernard A. Hebda in ‘Where Canon Law Connects with Caritas: The Norms of *Intima Ecclesiae Natura*. A Year of Mercy Examination of Challenges to Compliance in a US Context’, *The Jurist: Studies in Church Law and Ministry*, 76.2 (2017), 339–59.

<sup>282</sup> Hebda (p. 346). The context in which the *motu proprio* emerged was explained in Chapter Three. The tensions surrounding the relationships between Caritas Internationalis and the Holy See’s Cor Unum dicastery are discussed by Dorr and Hebda.

potentially supportive but also productive of tense relationships if applied in a disciplinary mode. Reading this text alongside the other documents discussed here points to two particular areas of difficulty. The first arises from the text's brief theological introduction, based on *Deus Caritas Est* and focusing on the restricted concept of *caritas* Benedict presents there, rather than the larger integral treatment of charity, justice and the common good provided in *Caritas in Veritate*. If it is only *caritas*, and not the fuller concept developed in *Caritas in Veritate*, significant dimensions of charitable activity which enact the social mission of 'healing and ennobling the dignity of the human person, strengthening the fabric of human society and investing the daily activity of men and women with deeper meaning' again seem to be excluded and distanced from ecclesial recognition.<sup>283</sup> Whilst the *motu proprio* seems concerned to safeguard the ecclesial identity of Catholic charities, it does so by adopting a narrow definition of *caritas* which excludes any political or justice focused action, or a broader interpretation of all that is implied in work for the common good.

The second relates to the central requirement by which the *motu proprio* defines the substance of what it means to be a Catholic charity, the requirement that they should 'follow Catholic principles' and avoid commitments which impede this. It is uncertain what the *motu proprio* intends by this term. It could be argued that the most relevant principles are those set out in Catholic social teaching, given the consonance between the content of CST and the work of charity, but the text does not explicitly mention Catholic social teaching. It could also mean Catholic moral principles – in relation to which some sharp conflicts between Catholic charities and Episcopal bodies occur, rarely but painfully - but again the text gives no help.<sup>284</sup> Hovda sees here only a reinforcement of the principles set out in the norms of the text itself regarding episcopal oversight, respect for donors and financial transparency, and the safeguarding of Catholic identity, not least by ensuring that staff share or respect that identity.<sup>285</sup> But if this circular argument is followed, then Catholic identity only consists of superficial affiliation mechanisms rather than in substantive enactment of a Catholic social vision. The boundaries, challenges and tensions that charities cannot escape, as they exercise their proper autonomy in the diverse conditions of the secular social order, are unrecognised, or assumed to be resolved by a principle of compliance. Whether these arise from political ideologies or from contextual social norms or particular episcopal interpretations, they require discernment and merciful judgement in

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<sup>283</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* (para 40).

<sup>284</sup> See earlier discussion of the impact on Catholic adoption services of statutory regulations on sexual orientation in Chapter Three.

<sup>285</sup> Hebda (pp. 347, 351).

particular circumstances. The account in chapter three of the difficulties experienced by English and Welsh Catholic charities in relation to adoption by gay couples demonstrates the difficulties in this area. The issue at stake here is the authority of communal Catholic actors, an issue mired in the ecclesiological gap described earlier, which remains unresolved from Vatican II onwards. Whilst the normative texts assert principles of freedom and voice, they also restrict authority to speak to hierarchical office-holders and neglect the particularity of the contexts of social mission.<sup>286</sup>

## 2.7 From Benedict to Francis: A New Dynamic

In Pope Benedict's teaching and actions, the polarities which have characterised recent decades in relation to Catholic identity are active, reflecting the deeper tensions of post-conciliar ecclesiological debate about how to come to terms with late modernity. Catholic charities already live in the theological overlaps between church, world and Kingdom, and Benedict's teaching added further complexity and challenge to their identity and mission. More recently Pope Francis has changed ecclesial and social mission dynamics in a different way, moving beyond the polarities of post-conciliar debate towards a practice of demonstrative engagement. Francis' approach is driven by the imperatives of evangelical and pastoral response to poverty and need, in which we 'enter fully into the fabric of society, sharing the lives of all', discovering 'a deep desire to change the world'.<sup>287</sup> The mode of the Church in its social positioning is shifted from philosophical analysis and concern to preserve distinctiveness, to discernment in the light of the Kingdom, and practical response. Francis proposes a Church which is 'bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets', a resonant idea that stands in a direct line with the opening of *Gaudium et Spes*.<sup>288</sup> For Francis, this means structural and political change as well as personal encounter with people who are poor. His teaching represents a recovery and re-presentation of the vision of *Gaudium et Spes*, not afraid to make a critical evaluation of secular systems and culture, but choosing the path of deep involvement, a principle of incarnational praxis.<sup>289</sup> While Francis has not yet addressed the specific category of Catholic charities in a teaching text, his relationship with Caritas Internationalis and his re-structuring of the Roman dicasteries communicate a collaborative intent and commitment

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<sup>286</sup> *Lumen Gentium* (para 37).

<sup>287</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium* (paras 269, 183).

<sup>288</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium* (para 49), *Gaudium et Spes* (para 1).

<sup>289</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium* (paras 231-33, especially 233).

which might not be a formal statement about their work but is practical and real.<sup>290</sup> Finally, his commitment to dialogical or synodical processes, and the hermeneutical approach to pastoral concern which emerges from *Amoris Laetitia* also re-position relationships between teaching and the complexity of lived faith in social and cultural realities.<sup>291</sup>

## 2.8 The Need for a Different Approach to the Catholicity of Charities

Constructing a theological account of Catholic charities using the resources of official or normative texts is not straightforward, because the normative voice as found in successive texts from the Council onwards is not unified but rather discloses tensions, shifts and asymmetries and leaves open an ecclesiological gap in relation to the authority of communal lay-led actors engaged in social mission in secular structures. The way in which Catholic charities enact social mission as embedded agents in secular realities needs deeper theological and ecclesiological recognition, taking account of such factors as how they incorporate into their work people who do not share Christian faith, and how they receive and mediate the insights they draw from Catholic faith and tradition into their culture and practice, in dialogue with insights from human sciences and practical wisdom. Their autonomy is recognised in principle, but insufficiently extended to recognise the authority of their discernments in the conditions of their mission. Rather than seeking to invigilate a narrow or ambiguous ecclesiality, the potential lies in a different approach to their Catholicity, recognising the inherent tensions between distinctive claims and dialogical participation as a generative reality. Their Catholicity is not the same as that of parishes, lay associations or even of Catholic schools or colleges. It is signified in narratives and relationships, but primarily enacted in their practices, where the distinctiveness Benedict proposes may be found, or may not, and where their work nonetheless points social realities towards the Kingdom. Their existence raises the question of where the boundary of the whole Church as it acts in social mission lies; is it visibility that constitutes the boundary, or affiliation to the visible institutional structures? Or is it consonance with the

<sup>290</sup> See <https://www.caritas.org/2016/11/pope-francis-asks-caritas-prophetic-courage/> for a report of a meeting of Francis with CI staff. La Croix headlined this as 'Pope Francis reverses Vatican course on Caritas'. <<https://international.la-croix.com/news/pope-francis-reverses-vatican-course-on-caritas/4221>> [both accessed 29.10.2018] In January 2017, the new Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development began work, merging four previous structures including Cor Unum and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and initiating a new era of relationships.

<sup>291</sup> See Chapter Eight, 'Accompanying, Discerning and Integrating Weakness'. (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2016) See also Francis' address to the 2015 Synod of Bishops <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco\\_20151017\\_50-anniversario-sinodo.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html)> [accessed 20.02.2017] and Cardinal Cupich's lecture in Cambridge, February 2018, 'Pope Francis' Revolution of Mercy: *Amoris Laetitia* as a New Paradigm of Catholicity' <<https://www.vhi.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/resources-folder/papers-presentations/cupich-annual-lecture-2018>> [accessed 20.05.2018].

theological purposes of Catholic social vision, however incomplete, messy and sometimes ambiguous? I propose the latter.

### **3 Catholic Social Teaching: A Corpus of Texts and an Ecclesial Social Mission Practice**

A different approach to constructing the Catholicity and explaining the identity of charities starts not from their ecclesial affiliation or theological character but from their practice, viewed as enactment of Catholic social vision. In this approach, the normative voice is found in the texts of Catholic social teaching in which successive popes and synods of bishops have articulated elements of that vision in response to what they saw happening in the world. Throughout this thesis, I follow Johan Verstraeten in seeing papal CST as one element of a larger tradition which also encompasses the academic enterprise of Catholic social thought, the local magisterium of bishops in their dioceses and national conferences, and the voices of social mission practice, including grassroots movements and Catholic charities.<sup>292</sup> Adopting Verstraeten's framework, in this section I focus on the relationship between the normative voice in the papal texts and the voice of practice. This requires reconstruction of how we conceptualise the papal tradition and the assumptions it contains about its own utility.

#### **3.1 Deconstructing CST as Theory: The 'Corpus' Approach.**

Catholic social teaching presents itself and is widely treated as a corpus of texts, a gradually accumulating bank of theological and ethical principles discussing various social and political concerns. The self-descriptions found in papal texts confirm this concept, as does the project of collating the texts into a single *Compendium*, published in 2004 by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, in which multiple papal texts and texts issued by other Roman dicasteries, as well as biblical material, are knitted together into a single narrative. Although the *Compendium* acknowledges that social doctrine develops, the presentation assumes a level of coherence at odds with a historical and contextual reading of internal diversity, shifts and reactive judgements.<sup>293</sup> In other words, CST behaves like theory, and is often treated like theory, both by official voices and by those working in

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<sup>292</sup> Verstraeten discusses this in 'Re-thinking Catholic Social Thought as Tradition' in *Catholic Social Thought: Twilight or Renaissance?* ed. by Jonathan S. Boswell, Francis P. McHugh and Johan Verstraeten (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2001) (pp. 62-3). A longer historical perspective would also draw in earlier expressions of Catholic social vision and practice in sources such as the charisms and practices of religious orders.

<sup>293</sup> *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004). The development of doctrine and the assumption of coherence are found in para 80; see also *Caritas in Veritate*, asserting that pre- and post-conciliar CST comprises 'a single teaching, consistent and at the same time ever new...' (para 12).

Catholic social thought and practice. This conceptualisation is buttressed by the status of the texts as part of the teaching office of the magisterium. Richard Gaillardetz explains that CST ‘includes the normative articulation of official church positions regarding social questions’, and proposes an interpretation of the levels of authority held by different elements in the texts.<sup>294</sup> However, he recognizes that as teaching has moved from a propositional emphasis to ‘a more inductive and dialogical style’, it is more difficult to judge the authority of particular elements.<sup>295</sup> In addition he might have noted the blurred edges of what is included in the authoritative corpus and the ecclesiological dynamics operating in this area. The status of two documents of significant interest for my research is especially difficult to read, the document issued by the 1971 Synod of Bishops on Justice, and a text on homelessness from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace issued in 1987.<sup>296</sup>

This conceptual approach is also found in how the texts speak about what the official papal tradition is for, what it exists to do. Broadly they explain a double purpose. The tradition is presented first as a teaching ministry, in which the Church proclaims the truth about human persons, and draws out the implications for society and its structures and for all of created reality. But it is also ‘a basis and a motivation for action’; the documents speak about the need to apply the teaching to real situations and to draw practical conclusions.<sup>297</sup> Somewhat surprisingly, given this emphasis on action, they have much less to say about actors or strategies in social mission, other than in repeated

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<sup>294</sup> Gaillardetz proposes that CST contains three ‘integrally related categories of moral teaching’; universal moral affirmations which can be considered as dogmatic and require the assent of faith; specific moral principles that have ‘a provisionally binding status’; and ‘concrete applications’ which merit ‘serious attention’ but about which Catholics can disagree. ‘The Ecclesiological Foundations of Modern Catholic Social Teaching’ Himes (ed.), *Commentaries, Second Edition* (pp.87-9). Charles E. Curran also uses the same framework in *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891-Present: A Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002) (p. 107).

<sup>295</sup> Gaillardetz in Himes, *Commentaries, Second Edition* (p.92).

<sup>296</sup> The document from the 1971 Synod of Bishops on Justice in the World has been, like *Gaudium et Spes*, both a powerful rallying point for social mission and a site of contested interpretation. The *Compendium* does not cite it, although other post-Synodal texts are cited. The Synod of Bishops website provides only a version in Portuguese. <[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/index.htm](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/index.htm)> [accessed 23.09.2018]. It has an unusual status as the only Synod document issued directly by the participants; later Synods referred all their proposals to the Pope who then issued an Apostolic Exhortation. However, most academic surveys of CST include it; see Himes, *Commentaries*, both editions, for example. The only document on homelessness issued at the level of the Holy See, by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (PCJP) is ‘What have you done to your homeless brother?’ This is also absent from the *Compendium* and the PCJP website documents store. <<http://theolibrary.shc.edu/resources/homeless.htm>> [accessed 02.02.2016].

<sup>297</sup> See John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (London: CTS, 1991) (para 57); *Compendium* (paras 11 and 547-50); John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_15051961\\_mater.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html) [accessed 23.09.2018] (paras 226-236).

references to ‘the Church’, or infrequent brief mentions of ‘the lay faithful’ or even rarer references to groups, associations and organisations. When actors are discussed, the texts repeat the distinction of planes model with the fault lines already discussed, in which the bishops and priests preach and teach, and laypeople live in the world, acting individually or occasionally collectively, guided by their consciences, which should be formed in the principles of CST. Thus the core assumption is that CST is a body of teaching which is to be learned and applied to social reality, mainly by individual laypeople, who act in their own personal life circumstances, but the extent to which they constitute ‘the Church’ in so doing is ambivalent.

The difficulty with this conception and presentation of CST as a corpus of authoritative texts to be applied, is that it blurs or neglects the narrative of the tradition’s development in particular contexts and through particular popes, a narrative which is essential to understanding and interpreting its message. It therefore conveys a limited account of what it means to discern the implications of the Gospel and of Catholic faith for societal ordering. The resources of Catholic social thought, in the work of theologians, ethicists and historians who study the tradition, illuminate a broader conception. Charles Curran, Michael Schuck and others analyse how the tradition is historically conditioned and responsive to events and ideologies, internally diverse in terms of its philosophical perspectives and methodologies, and uneven in its coverage, with weaknesses and absences.<sup>298</sup> It is also a tradition which is developing, sometimes reversing earlier positions or adding new thematics, including some which decisively alter the overall framework.<sup>299</sup> The papal texts also bear the imprints of their different authors, each of whom has a personal theological worldview, historical experience, and discernment of what needs to be addressed. When these contextual conditions, challenges and motivations are recognised and understood, actors are better able to judge and evaluate the relevance of CST principles for their own situations. It also then becomes possible to understand CST as a practice, an activity of social mission in itself, enabling a re-positioning of its authority to balance both listening and teaching.

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<sup>298</sup> Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891-Present*; Michael J. Schuck, *That They Be One: The Social Teaching of the Papal Encyclicals, 1740-1989* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991).

<sup>299</sup> Examples of reversal and/or development of themes include CST’s attitudes to democracy and social structure, as discussed by Curran, contrasting *Rerum Novarum* and *Gaudium et Spes*; the relationship of Church and state, as discussed by Russell Hittinger, contrasting the teaching of Leo XIII and John Paul II in ‘The Problem of the State in *Centesimus Annus*’, in *Fordham International Law Journal*, 15 (1992), 952–96. Examples of major new thematics include John XXIII’s treatment of human rights in *Pacem in Terris*, the introduction of the concept of structures of sin in John Paul II’s *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1988), and Francis’ treatment of ecological concerns in *Laudato Si* (London: CTS, 2015).

### 3.2 Recovering the Significance of Methodology as Well as Content

Treating the modern tradition of CST as a corpus of texts also directs attention primarily to the content. This risks underplaying the significance of the methodology or process by which the tradition develops, including the influences from enacted social mission which percolate upwards even if not consciously recognised in the texts.<sup>300</sup> In the post-conciliar decades in which the tradition has greatly expanded, CST methodology has taken new pathways as a result of wider paradigm shifts in Catholic theology. The theological re-orientation of the Church-world relationship in *Gaudium et Spes* laid foundations for an explicitly inductive methodology, in which the experience of humanity as well as the light of Revelation and the principles drawn from natural law all contribute to the discernment and development of its vision. *Gaudium et Spes* also enabled a different standpoint, in which the Church approaches the world with epistemological humility, open to learning as well as teaching, rather than assuming that its teaching is the only source of truth. As Curran points out, this new perspective leads to a tension between the stance of authoritative teaching and the attitude of learning commended by *Gaudium et Spes*, a tension that reappears in debates about Catholic identity.<sup>301</sup> Recent papal texts have moved towards this more dialogical and receptive attitude, drawing on external sources and indicating their openness to assistance from human and social sciences. The Council's wider re-appropriation of a biblically based faith has also influenced the idiom of official texts. Paul VI then pushed the tradition in a crucial new direction in his insistence on local discernment and practical dialogue rather than deductive application.<sup>302</sup> These recent methodological characteristics are found particularly prominently in the recent encyclicals of Francis, who according to Verstraeten, citing Cardinal Kaspar, has introduced 'a paradigm shift in method', moving even more decisively from the dynamic of deduction to the

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<sup>300</sup> Paul Misner discusses influences on *Rerum Novarum* in *Social Catholicism*. John Coleman discusses this in Boswell, *Twilight*, 'Retrieving or Re-inventing Social Catholicism: A Transatlantic Response. The International Theological Commission's document, *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church* points to the part played by the laity in development of moral teaching and suggests that social pioneers and activists influenced the development of social teaching from Leo XIII onwards.(paras 72-3).

<[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_20140610\\_sensus-fidei\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html)> [accessed 24.08.2018]

<sup>301</sup> Curran, *CST 1981-present*, p.112

<sup>302</sup> *Octogesima Adveniens* <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_apl\\_19710514\\_octogesima-adveniens.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html)> [accessed 23.09.2018] (paras 48-51) and *Ecclesiam Suam* <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_06081964\\_ecclesiam.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html)> [accessed 23.09.2018] (paras 58-91)

dynamic of discernment and an affirmation that the entire people of God must participate.<sup>303</sup>

Thus official CST texts now exhibit more diverse methodologies. Whilst some texts lean heavily on the natural law tradition and philosophical reasoning prominent in the pre-conciliar era, other texts make greater use of theological perspectives and biblical paradigms, or work inductively from a reading of the signs of the times. These methods often overlap. Francis has pushed the latter methodology further, but even in *Laudato Si*, he draw on natural law based concepts as well as scriptural and other resources.<sup>304</sup> This dualism could be viewed as a tension or difficulty – Curran describes it as a ‘methodological split personality’ - but for the argument of this thesis, I regard it as an advantage.<sup>305</sup> The elements of reasoning drawn from natural law tradition are in principle accessible to people regardless of whether they start from a Christian faith commitment, and provide a basis for inclusive participation in Catholic social mission practice.<sup>306</sup> The common ground created by practical ethical reasoning that does not start from or require Christian faith also allows scope for those who do not profess Christian faith to contribute insights from their own experience and convictions and to find resonances with organisational narratives rooted in Catholic theology. This is important ground for charities working in a secular space, in which they have to construct a narrative which both owns and communicates their faith-based specificity and is hospitable and dialogically open in relation to participants in its work who do not share that faith.

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<sup>303</sup> Proposed in an unpublished paper given to a Symposium on CST in Rome, January 2017 which I attended. Verstraeten introduced this theme in ‘Catholic Social Thought and the Movements: Towards Social Discernment and a Transformative Presence in the World’, *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*, 10.2 (2013), 231–39. See also Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* para 50 and Cupich, *New Paradigm*.

<sup>304</sup> See for example paras 156-62.

<sup>305</sup> Curran, *CST 1981-present* (pp.48-9).

<sup>306</sup> I understand natural law, following Curran, as ‘human reason directing human beings to their ultimate ends in accord with their nature’ (Curran, *CST 1981-present* p. 25). The International Theological Commission’s 2009 text, *In search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at the Natural Law* <[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_2009\\_0520\\_legge-naturale\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_2009_0520_legge-naturale_en.html)> [accessed 23.09.2018] provides a similar definition, noting that renewed interest in natural law is part of a search for a common ethical language, and states that ‘Christianity does not have the monopoly on the natural law... founded on reason, common to all human beings, the natural law is the basis of collaboration among all persons of good will, whatever their religious convictions’ (para 9). However, in *The First Grace*, (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2003) Russell Hittinger situates natural law within an ultimate theological framework, recalling Aquinas’ definition in which it is ‘the rational creature’s participation in divine law’, as he views more limited concepts as implying an autonomy which Christian theology rejects (p. xx).

### 3.3 CST as a Social Mission Practice

When the complexity, unevenness and internally diverse character of official CST texts are recognised, and their historical evolution understood, it enables a dialogical approach to their teaching and new forms of relationship with their resources. The methodological dualism becomes an advantage in explaining a social vision which both listens to the best instincts and reasoning of humanity and offers with humility its distinctive theologically grounded and biblically motivated convictions and commitments. In this approach, official Catholic social teaching is a practice of the Church, a methodology through which the Church enacts its relationship with the world, in which there are different actors, strategies and types of authority, as well as continuing truths, principles and pre-occupations which don't preclude and indeed sometimes indicate shifts and turns. In this understanding, the official texts do not stand alone but rather are part of a conversation, involving many other actors, and enacted through practice as well as formal dialogue and debate. Alongside the papal voice, theologians, local bishops' conferences and the multiplicity of organisations active in social mission, also speak, and this wider practice is also in dialogue with the larger social and political context. This possibility is obscured within weighty expositions and receives little credibility because the mechanisms and narratives that would demonstrate its seriousness barely exist.<sup>307</sup>

A further difficulty from the corpus approach is also resolved when Catholic social teaching is approached as a practice. The ecclesiological gaps in CST, its inherent tendency to avoid discussing what is implied by 'the Church' and to operate in the two planes model and assume that the social mission of laypeople is solely a matter of individuals in their personal activities, become more evident. In interpreting CST as a practice, communal practitioners become visible and their inter-relationships become a further source of insight. And significantly for this research, the role of collaborative or communal social mission practice finds a place in the ecclesial social ecology.

### 3.4 Practitioners as Participants

If CST is understood as a practice, the task for practitioners is not so much to 'apply the teaching', using CST as a deductive syllabus, but to participate in the tradition, understanding that they bring insights and contribute to its development, and can critique its assumptions and judgements. Lieven Boeve's concept of using Christian faith as a critical

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<sup>307</sup> This may be starting to change. Recent conferences held in Rome in 2016 and 2017 to explore Catholic teaching in the field of peace and disarmament have brought together Catholic activists, theologians and senior figures from the Curia, and resulted in movement towards development in teaching. Similar work has been involved in revision of teaching on capital punishment.

consciousness, derived from the methodology of *Gaudium et Spes*, is relevant here.<sup>308</sup> The resources of CST also act in this way, providing a horizon of meaning, a worldview, and the background resources that can infiltrate a local social imaginary. They also contain specific narratives which provoke questions and scrutiny of social phenomena. Participation is a creative activity, in which actors engage not only with the voice of normative tradition, but with other sources of insight, an element of practice to which the official tradition is committed but which is otherwise rarely visible.<sup>309</sup> It also brings new tensions, particularly in relation to the authority claims of the official tradition. When contextual understanding of both the content and method of papal texts enable other actors to distinguish between its deep principles, truths and inspirations, and the application of these to particular social issues, they will sometimes develop interpretations that conflict with those of their pastors.<sup>310</sup> But these are the risks of engagement, and the reality of living in Francis' 'tensionante'.<sup>311</sup>

The official texts do contain elements that support this approach, notably in *Octogesima Adveniens*, where Paul VI commends a methodology which is both inductive and local, and *Evangelii Gaudium*.<sup>312</sup> Francis's concept of how faith leads to social engagement, to 'a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it' (183) invokes a wider understanding of how engagement reaches beyond reasoning to include human and spiritual emotions in a process of discernment. It is also an approach that resonates significantly with the theological perspectives of *Gaudium et Spes*, privileging dialogue, openness, learning and collaboration. Many of the theologians working on CST also develop accounts of the relationship between CST and practice that are potentially more reciprocal and dialogical than the official tradition exemplifies. Kristin Heyer, for example, uses William Cavanaugh's notion of a theo-political imagination to discuss how social mission practice can create a new kind of

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<sup>308</sup> Boeve, 'Gaudium et Spes and the Crisis of Modernity: The End of the Dialogue with the World?' in *Vatican II and its Legacy* ed. by M. Lamberigts, L. Kenis, (Leuven: Leuven University Press – Peeters, 2002), 83-94.

<sup>309</sup> See for example *Centesimus Annus* (para 59); *Caritas in Veritate* (para 9).

<sup>310</sup> See for example, Kristin E. Heyer, 'The Social Witness and Theo-political Imagination of the Movements: Creating a New Social Space as a Challenge to Catholic Social Thought', *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*, 10.2 (2013), 317–40.

<sup>311</sup> A theme developed by Massimo Borghesi's *Jorge Mario Bergoglio, una biografia intellettuale*, previewed in 'Living with Contradiction', *The Tablet*, 10.02.2018 (pp. 4-5). Available in English as *The Mind of Pope Francis: Jorge Mario Bergoglio's Intellectual Journey* trans. by Barry Hudock (Collegeville, Minnesota.: Liturgical Press, 2018).

<sup>312</sup> *Octogesima Adveniens* para 4; [http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_apl\\_19710514\\_octogesima-adveniens.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html) [accessed 23.09.2018]. *Evangelii Gaudium* (paras 82-6).

space in which discernment goes beyond obedient application. This is collaborative working which can ‘enlarge the tradition’s ethical presuppositions and methodologies’.<sup>313</sup> But Ellen Van Stichel also points out, in discussing the relationship between Catholic social movements and CST, ‘rather than being dialectically related, the relationship between official teachings and the movements appears thus to be a one-way communication line/street based on an unequal power balance...’.<sup>314</sup> In response, Cardinal Cupich’s argument that Francis has introduced ‘a new paradigm of Catholicity’ in the hermeneutical principles he draws from *Amoris Laetitia* for re-envisioning the Church’s engagement with families suggest a two-way street is possible, a mutual and reciprocal process of learning.<sup>315</sup> If this new paradigm can also be adapted in the work of social solidarity, the voice of experience and practice will emerge more clearly.

### **3.5 Towards a Richer Understanding: What It Means to Be ‘Grounded in CST’**

Catholic faith-related charities are not ecclesial movements, but social actors embedded in secular reality, structured for their work in its systems and cultures, and inclusive of diverse faith and ethical viewpoints. So their participation in the tradition of Catholic social teaching holds potential for distinctive insights from front-line spaces but also illustrates complex relationships with the authoritative presentation of the official tradition. The ways in which CST is mediated into their narratives and practice require attentive discernment and theological reflection, and the process of listening to the insights of their experience and testing these in dialogue with the wisdom of the tradition is likely to be demanding. It is not obvious how this is to be done or by whom. Much also depends on what is in view here; whether the focus is the further development of the official or normative tradition – which is significant but not the primary focus of this argument – or the more effective enactment of the social mission of the entire Catholic community, in collaboration with others, whether faith-based or not.

My interest is in finding an expanded set of possibilities for conceptualising and interpreting the relationship between official CST and the practice of a particular group of Catholic faith-related charities. The argument I make in this chapter about understanding CST as a social mission practice and a participative activity is theoretical; and I note the paradox of using the texts deductively in order to make the case for a less deductive

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<sup>313</sup> Heyer, ‘Theopolitical Imagination’ (p. 317).

<sup>314</sup> Ellen Van Stichel, ‘Movements Struggling for Justice within the Church: A Theological Response to John Coleman’s Sociological Approach’, *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*, 10.2 (2013), 281–93 (p. 292).

<sup>315</sup> Cupich, *New Paradigm Lecture*.

approach. A re-balanced and broader concept is not concerned to dismiss the normative content but to envisage a wider set of relationships to it, which nourishes the authenticity of both the official tradition and of the local practices. This then enables a much richer understanding of what it means to be 'grounded in CST', or to 'follow Catholic principles'; to be able to see in the charities' identity narratives and practices an ongoing dialogue with the particular structures and realities in which they are embedded and entangled, in which there is critical evaluation, values- based discernment and enactment of alternative ethics and perspectives.

#### **4 Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that the theological specificity of Catholic charities is found in their embeddedness in secular reality, in which they serve and enact the purposes of the Kingdom, deeply entangled with political and social systems but also intricately tethered to a particular narrative of meaning derived from Catholic social vision. Their Catholicity is primarily found in how their practices enact this vision and expand its reach in the contingent realities they encounter, particularly in the tensions and contradictions between their narratives and those realities. In Ranson's concept, it is an event, not a property. Their insertion into secular realities is dynamic, and their autonomy is crucial, as they make the specific judgements their mission requires, using their narratives in spaces that are very distant from ecclesial life, beyond its edges, but crucial in the light of the Kingdom. They act in, but also resolve, an ecclesiological gap which has been part of the contested reception of Vatican II. Their institutional links are not unimportant; they sustain the resources which underpin their narratives and hold them in relationships; but they should not define the Catholicity of charities, which lies rather in how they participate in pointing social conditions towards the Kingdom.

To discern their Catholicity, the theological categories and ecclesiological principles of *Gaudium et Spes* and *Christifideles Laici* provide foundations, and the tradition of Catholic social teaching, understood as an authoritative and complementary mode of social mission practice, provides a narrative for dialogue and an invitation to participate. The analogies between the charities as a social mission practice and the tradition of CST as a social mission practice help to establish Catholicity. Both practices engage with the social order to work out how to direct it to God's purposes; both depend on theological foundations, although one conceptualises these whereas the other enacts them; both make use of insights from other sciences and expertise. Each has its own authority, which may on occasion lead to internal tensions. Both are historically embedded, contextually influenced.

Both offer resources through which the originality of the Gospel can be encountered, although again in different ways. The current official presentation of the corpus tradition, and the treatment of charities in *Deus Caritas Est* and the *motu proprio* do not yet support a broader understanding of their Catholicity, although the beginnings of a new commitment to dialogical processes under Francis holds out hope for greater participation and dialogue in the relationship between teaching and practice in Catholic social mission.

Benedict proposes a tight coupling between the conceptual lens of *caritas* and the ecclesiality of charitable organisations, their status as an *opus proprium* of the Church. Drawing on larger theological frameworks, including Benedict's interweaving of charity, justice and the common good in *Caritas in Veritate*, I now move towards exploration of the common good as a primary lens through which to interpret the charities. The singular theological focus of *caritas* contrasts with the expansive meaning of the common good, prompting a question about whether the project I propose can equally be regarded as part of that *opus proprium*. The next chapter provides a theoretical base for exploring and discerning the meaning of the common good for the practice of social mission.

## **Chapter Six: Working on the Conditions for Human Fulfilment: Using the Common Good to Understand the Significance of Catholic Charities and their Work**

### **1 Introduction**

In previous chapters I have argued that the theological identity of Catholic charities is structured by their embedded participation in secular social and political realities. I proposed that their Catholicity is therefore primarily found in how their practices enact elements of Catholic social vision, including official social teaching. I also developed a case for re-balancing the relationship between the practical work of actors such as Catholic agencies and the normative corpus of CST. To achieve re-balancing, papal and episcopal voices would recognise actors such as Catholic charities as participants in developing the tradition, and create visible practices of dialogue. Voices from practice would bring insights from their experience to critique and verify the principles set out in normative texts and extend their utility and impact. Such processes would enable a more transparent understanding of CST as a social mission practice in itself, characterised by contextual influences as well as grounded in the truth-claims of Catholic tradition. Re-balancing also invites actors such as the charities to deepen the ways in which they inhabit their Catholic faith-related roots and connections, offering insights and horizons from engagement with CST principles. In turn, this could strengthen the ethical ground underpinning their voice and practice. However these arguments are still largely theoretical. In practice there is a large gap in which assumptions about 'application' of CST are untested and the relationships between those who exercise authoritative teaching ministry and those engaged in practice on the ground are indistinct and underused. This gap is visible particularly in the *motu proprio's* concern with affiliation and compliance rather than collaborative exploration of social mission and its potentially dynamic relationship with social teaching.

This chapter begins the work of bridging the gap, using the concept of the common good. In Chapter Two, I explained how this concept emerged as a significant tool in the development of the research methodology. In Chapter four, I noted how elements in the charities' public narratives pointed towards the concept without making explicit use of the term. Here I push the concept beyond the abstract and general formulations characteristic of normative CST in order to find interpretative tools and make connections to the charities' practices. An interpretation that claims a voice large enough to address the

tradition needs a thick reading of the relationship between the concept as rendered in official texts and its enactment in social mission practice. This chapter breaks open the normative concept in order to enable a thick reading. It also continues the pattern of conversation between normative, formal, espoused and operant voices. I first review how normative papal CST texts explain its meaning and then use the work of Patrick Riordan and Thomas Bushlack to expand the concept from its abstract formulation in official Catholic social teaching, moving it closer to practical utility in the field of social mission. Chapter Eight will then provide the operant voice.

I do not maintain that the common good is the only concept from CST which can be used to interpret and listen to Catholic charities. Other concepts may also yield valuable readings and insights. Nor do I imply that it is the most relevant concept for *all* Catholic charities. Much depends on their field of work and their political and ecclesial context. But I do propose that for charities working in a field such as homelessness or other social welfare concerns in the context of plural democratic states, it is the most appropriate concept through which to test and verify the arguments already developed. It allows reaching beyond a superficial correspondence to more substantive dialogue between teaching and practice and is capable of connecting the interpersonal, social and political dimensions of meaning in the charities' work. I acknowledge the risks of interpretation using a single concept. Catholic social teaching is a densely woven and intricate construction, in which the core principles inter-penetrate and imply each other, acquiring new connections as the official teaching voice continues a dialogue with the world in successive texts. To compensate, it is necessary to note the connections both to theological grounding and to complementary or overlapping principles.

As the research proceeded, it became increasingly clear that the concept of *caritas* offered limited scope to examine the charities' enactment of Catholic social vision and that the concept of the common good held much greater potential. Charities working to resolve homelessness cannot avoid the impact of social and economic structures and government policy. To work effectively, most agencies and projects go beyond *caritas* and engage with political structures and policies in varying degrees and with diverse strategies. As already argued, it is the impact of this entanglement which locates their theological specificity, as they work to change social conditions and point social realities towards the Kingdom as well as offering practical charity. In contexts such as the UK, where statutory welfare systems and policies are established but also contested politically and socially, charities are implicated in dynamics in relation to which they take a position, whether or not this is conscious and intentional.

In using the common good as a primary hermeneutic, I am constructing a case study of re-balancing the relationship between social mission practice in specific and concrete conditions, and the official corpus of teaching. As a concept, it invokes primary concerns of Catholic social teaching; what is due to the rights and transcendent dignity of every human person to enable them to pursue their own fulfilment; and how the social order should be shaped for that purpose, and by whom, because human fulfilment is irreducibly social and communal. For charities that work inclusively at and beyond the boundaries of the institutional Church, it has the advantage of being accessible in principle by human reasoning and not dependent on Catholic faith or understanding of Revelation. But its formulation in Catholic tradition also matters. Catholic social teaching does not own the concept, but brings it into focus in a particular way, disclosing its infrastructure and its theological underpinning and horizon.<sup>316</sup> As *Gaudium et Spes* notes, the concept ‘finds its ultimate meaning in the eternal law’, testifying to the Catholic tradition’s concern for the whole of material reality.<sup>317</sup> I also contend that the enduring commitment to this concept in official CST reflects the deepest intuitions in the Catholic social vision, concerned with the positive potential and meaning of the social order as well as the human person and the created environment. Thus in examining how the charities’ work inhabits the task of enacting the common good, this also explores a dimension of their Catholicity.

## 2 The Common Good in the Normative Tradition

The common good has a long history as a concept, with roots found in Aristotelian political philosophy as well as patristic theology.<sup>318</sup> Patrick Riordan surveys the Aristotelian foundations, in which the highest level of the good is that pursued by the *polis*, the political

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<sup>316</sup> Bushlack comments effectively on this point: ‘Although not the sole intellectual possession of the Catholic tradition, this is one moral truth that has survived in a distinctive manner in the institutional and intellectual structures of the Roman Catholic Church, and we have a distinctive responsibility to witness to and defend its objective reality and its significance for human wellbeing.’ (p.235). Patrick Riordan’s invaluable *Grammar of the Common Good* maps the variations in interpretation and in use. In current UK political and ecclesial life, the concept is becoming more visible in various forms of discourse. In a couple of recent examples, Archbishop Justin Welby uses the concept in *Re-imagining Britain: Foundations for Hope* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018) and an editorial in *The Guardian* in February 2018 took the common good as its theme, referencing Catholic social teaching. <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/feb/25/the-guardian-view-on-the-common-good-more-hobbes-than-calvin>> [accessed 24.08.2018]

<sup>317</sup> Para 78.

<sup>318</sup> In ‘Out of the Fitting Room: Rethinking Patristic Social Texts on “The Common Good”’, Susan R Holman reviews traces of common good conceptual material in patristic writers, finding that ‘concepts familiar to our own imagination were shared by the patristic imagination’ although refracted through different theological constructions of the social world. *Reading Patristic Texts on Social Ethics: Issues and Challenges for Twenty-First-Century Christian Social Thought*, ed. by Johan Leemans, Brian J. Matz, and Johan Verstraeten (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011) (p. 113).

community, and traces these through to the medieval political thought of St Thomas Aquinas, which in turn influenced the corpus of CST.<sup>319</sup> For Aquinas, whilst the ultimate good is the divine destiny of all things, the task of the political community is to achieve a more limited good, by establishing the conditions for a social order that enables people to live well and pursue a life of virtue. Riordan reviews the medieval debate about how far the task of the *polis* extends; whether it must only ensure ‘the temporal goods of justice and peace’, the provision of security for citizens, or whether it also includes enabling virtuous living.<sup>320</sup> In Riordan’s reading, Aquinas recognises that the common good as pursued by a political authority is the complete fulfilment of its citizens but also sees that this requires that ‘the civil authorities do not overstep their proper boundaries, and deprive households, families or religious groups of their autonomy in pursuing the life of virtue as they see fit’.<sup>321</sup> He cites Jean Porter’s conclusion that ultimately Aquinas does not provide a substantive account of what it means for society, a judgement that confirms Riordan’s description of the common good as a heuristic concept, ‘naming that which is sought but which is not yet attained’.<sup>322</sup> In other words, the meaning is not yet grasped but is still sufficiently identifiable to direct and focus what is done to discover or construct it. Riordan also comments that when the Thomist account of natural law is used to ground the common good, his doctrine ‘is radical and subversive’, as it locates political obligation only in the reason of citizens and affirms their capacity ‘to judge for themselves whether law is just or unjust’.<sup>323</sup> Aquinas, he notes, places access to political reasoning about the common good and about what is just or unjust within the scope of every citizen. Riordan draws from Aquinas one of the primary criteria for discovering or constructing the common good, which later appears in CST: that no dimension of the human good can be excluded, an important tool in assessing what does or does not serve its achievement.<sup>324</sup>

These lines of reasoning about the common good transfuse into the modern tradition of CST through the dependence of the papal texts on Thomist philosophical architecture. From *Rerum Novarum* onwards, they are repeated, notably in *Pacem in Terris*

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<sup>319</sup> Riordan surveys a range of medieval concepts of the common good, but this argument concentrates on the line of interpretation in which Aquinas discussed the purpose of the *polis*. (pp. 79-87). See also Russell Hittinger’s discussion in ‘Two Thomisms, Two Modernities’, *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, June-July 2008, Issue 184 (pp. 33-8).

<sup>320</sup> Riordan, *Grammar* (p. 80-2).

<sup>321</sup> Riordan, *Grammar* (p. 82).

<sup>322</sup> Riordan, *Grammar* (pp. 27,84).

<sup>323</sup> Riordan, *Grammar* (p. 87).

<sup>324</sup> See for example *Mater et Magistra* (para 65). This criterion resonates with the CST principle of integral human development, an emphasis that has become increasingly important in the post-conciliar CST texts.

and *Gaudium et Spes*. The frequency with which the concept is invoked indicates its significance in the Catholic social vision, even if its meaning remains largely abstract.<sup>325</sup> In the definition from *Gaudium et Spes*, the common good is ‘the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment’.<sup>326</sup> Crucially, *Gaudium et Spes* also states that it is a particular responsibility of political authorities:

Therefore the political community exists for the sake of the common good, in which it finds its entire justification and significance and from which it derives its own primary law. And the common good comprises the sum of the conditions of social life which enable individuals, families and associations to reach their own perfection more completely and more readily.<sup>327</sup>

John XXIII’s *Pacem in Terris* had already stressed that ‘every single person has the right to share in it’,<sup>328</sup> an emphasis strengthened by John Paul II’s later insistence, drawn from his characteristic theological vision, that the common good must be based on a ‘correct understanding of the dignity and the rights of the person’.<sup>329</sup> For John Paul II, the common good is also the outcome of the practice of solidarity, ‘because we are all really responsible for all’.<sup>330</sup> As already noted, Benedict also pulls the common good into his account of social love. In *Caritas in Veritate*, to work for the common good is a path of effective love, the institutional or political path of charity, ‘a good that is linked to living in society...the good of “all of us”’, because we can only really and effectively pursue our good in society.<sup>331</sup>

But whilst the conceptual lines associated with the common good are reasonably consistent in the official texts,<sup>332</sup> as Dennis McCann points out, they are embedded in different readings of political contexts as well as what John Coleman calls implicit sociologies.<sup>333</sup> McCann reviews the evolution of the concept through the modern corpus, identifying four phases of meaning, in which different papal authors oriented the concept

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<sup>325</sup> Dennis McCann charts the frequency with which CST texts from 1891-1995 invoke the common good in ‘The Common Good in Catholic Social teaching: A Case Study in Modernization’, in *In Search of the Common Good* ed. by Patrick D. Miller and Dennis McCann (New York: T & T Clark, 2005) (p. 123).

<sup>326</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* (para 26).

<sup>327</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* (para 74).

<sup>328</sup> *Pacem in Terris* (para 56).

<sup>329</sup> *Centesimus Annus* (para 47).

<sup>330</sup> *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (para 38). The full implications of this connection are explored in Meghan Clark’s expansion of solidarity as a virtue and the inherent anthropological claims, in *The Vision of Catholic Social Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).

<sup>331</sup> *Caritas in Veritate* (para 7).

<sup>332</sup> But not completely; as McCann points out, the texts often use synonyms, what he calls ‘appropriate partial substitutes’, including ‘social justice’, ‘integral human development’ and ‘peace’. (pp. 134, 141-2)

<sup>333</sup> John A. Coleman, ‘Social Movements and Catholic Social Thought: A Sociological Perspective’, *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*, 10.2 (2013), 259–80 (p. 267).

to their particular concerns, whether the defence of property and the need to set limits to what states can do in order to protect what Leo saw as ‘the three necessary societies’,<sup>334</sup> or latterly as in Benedict’s teaching, to resist over-powerful market forces and propose a moral horizon for globalisation. McCann sees *Gaudium et Spes* as pivotal, locating the common good theologically and eschatologically, and tethering its meaning to the recognition of human rights, equality and social justice. But ultimately McCann is unsure whether the common good can be concretely identified. He concludes that it functions ‘as a symbol for a cluster of social aspirations and imperatives that may be better understood or more readily implemented in a piecemeal fashion’.<sup>335</sup> His conclusion points to, but does not explore, the relationship between construction of more limited or restricted social goods and the encompassing common good, a relationship which is crucial if the concept is to offer more than symbolic force. The common good interrogates particular social imperatives in a relationship of mutual implication that is more than clustering.<sup>336</sup>

### 3 Patrick Riordan on the Political Common Good

Riordan’s discussion of how the Conciliar teaching develops the political dimensions of the concept is more penetrating. He first draws from *Dignitatis Humanae* the principle that the Catholic Church cannot coerce the moral views of other citizens who do not share its faith, a necessary implication of the right to religious freedom.<sup>337</sup> This means that in the matter of defining human fulfilment and identifying in concrete terms what conditions enable people to achieve it, the Church must dialogue and collaborate with others in society. He notes that whilst searching for these conditions, the Church retains an eschatological vision of the final good of all things in union with God, but understands its present task as contributing to ‘intermediate ends’ in which the ultimate end may be glimpsed.<sup>338</sup> Reading the common good in the light of *Dignitatis Humanae* thus draws out a crucial dimension; that it cannot be imposed on people, but only discovered or constructed

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<sup>334</sup> Russell Hittinger, ‘The Three Necessary Societies’, *First Things*: 2017, Issue 274, 19-26.

<sup>335</sup> Miller and McCann (p. 142)

<sup>336</sup> Patrick Riordan develops a more coherent argument taking account of the multiple levels at which the concept can be invoked or applied, proposing that the higher level concept always questions lower levels. He proposes that the levels are ‘not all straightforwardly nested in one another, but are in tension’. (p. 40)

<sup>337</sup> Norman P. Tanner ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990) In Russell Hittinger’s view, *Dignitatis Humanae* also marked a significant change in the Church’s thinking about the state. In Chapter Nine of *The First Grace* (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2003), he describes the text as establishing a new political claim for the Church, more clearly detached from any claims about the state than previous Catholic political ecclesiologies had been. He adds that *Dignitatis* ‘takes a rather sober view of the powers of the state’, after the atrocities of the twentieth century (p. 241).

<sup>338</sup> Riordan, *Grammar* (p. 110)

in a participatory and communal way, recognising plurality of values. It also indicates the tension between the common good as a set of conditions, and as the fulfilment that those conditions enable people to pursue. Whilst Christians hold a particular vision of that fulfilment, others will differ. But people can work together to construct or discover the conditions, to build 'overlapping consensus', even if their ultimate horizons differ.<sup>339</sup> And since the meaning of 'conditions' can vary so widely, depending on political, socio-economic and personal factors, it makes sense that they cannot be decisively defined in the abstract. Thus, Riordan concludes, discovering the conditions requires a process of political deliberation and debate.<sup>340</sup>

Riordan also discusses the role of the state in a critical reading of William Cavanaugh's argument that the state is incapable of promoting the common good, and can act only as an 'arena of bargaining among different group interests'.<sup>341</sup> Riordan argues that Cavanaugh's account is not consistent with Catholic tradition and does not make sufficient use of what he calls the 'elasticity' of the concept of the common good in official CST, capable of being applied analogically to different levels and contexts of human governance. Riordan reads the modern Catholic tradition as unwilling to absolve the state of responsibility or relevance in relation to the common good. 'The kinds of arrangements which modern states have within their power to provide, whether of a legal, social or cultural nature, are exactly the kinds of things which belong to the common good understood as public order'.<sup>342</sup> Conversely, he might have added, when states fail to ensure that conditions exist in which all can flourish, or allow conditions to develop that actively impede such flourishing, the common good ceases to be abstract and is more easily recognised by its absence or contradiction.

I agree with Riordan that we cannot pursue the concrete meaning of the common good without an account of what states should and should not do, and correspondingly, what this means for the roles of other social and political actors, although I contend that he does not go far enough in wrestling with some specific aspects of what this means in practice, notably in relation to social solidarity, where the principle is particularly tested. His reading of Catholic tradition's instinct that political authorities should act substantively

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<sup>339</sup> Bushlack discusses this concept, first articulated by John Rawls in his *Political Liberalism*, published in 1993, on pp167 and elsewhere. For Bushlack, Rawls' concept is 'precisely the kind of common ground that may provide the starting point for Christians in a pilgrim church to engage in public dialogue about the nature of the good to be pursued in pluralistic, democratic politics.'

<sup>340</sup> Riordan (p. 117).

<sup>341</sup> William Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2011) (pp. 325-6).

<sup>342</sup> Riordan (p. 116).

to enable the common good stands in tension with another instinct, in which the papal tradition resists the tendency of states to become over-powerful or even oppressive, what Bushlack terms their 'totalising tendencies'.<sup>343</sup> This question echoes throughout what John Coleman calls the tradition's 'continuous subterranean dialogue with Marxist and liberal thought', a current that runs throughout the modern corpus.<sup>344</sup> Russell Hittinger identifies a shift in this dialogue by contrasting *Rerum Novarum* from 1891 and *Centesimus Annus* from 1991, finding that John Paul II makes 'a decisive turn towards the liberal model of the state', recognising the danger that it might become coercive and therefore affirming the importance of civil society institutions as 'a good, albeit imperfect means of limiting the power of the state'.<sup>345</sup> He notes that John Paul's concern is founded in his theological anthropology, with its deep emphasis on human freedom. Thus he states that 'the social nature of man is not completely fulfilled by the state, but is realised in various intermediary groups... which stem from human nature itself and have their own autonomy, always with a view to the common good'.<sup>346</sup> This too is a constant pre-occupation and instinct of the Catholic social vision, reflected in its strong emphasis on the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, both of which underpin and construct the common good, reinforced by its commitment to human rights. Whether conceptualised as Leo XIII's 'three basic societies', or in *Gaudium et Spes*' vision of the salvific meaning of social solidarity, the Catholic political imagination insists on a multi-layered social, political and juridical order in which people's agency, freedoms and rights are respected.<sup>347</sup>

#### 4 The Common Good and Social Exclusion

Riordan's work points to the tensions built into the concept of the common good as constructed in the Catholic tradition. In the vision of CST, it is the responsibility of the political community, including the state, to ensure that the conditions exist in which people can pursue their own fulfilment. But the state must not step too far into the domains of social freedom in which people act, and nor can it impose any particular version of what constitutes the public good. The Catholic tradition, reflecting on twentieth century history, is wary of the risks involved in how states use their powers.<sup>348</sup> It is committed to

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<sup>343</sup> Bushlack (p. 23).

<sup>344</sup> 'Retrieving or Re-inventing Social Catholicism: A Transatlantic Response' in Boswell, *Twilight* (p. 266).

<sup>345</sup> Russell Hittinger, 'The Problem of the State' (p. 992). Bushlack also gives a careful interpretation of Vatican II on this point (pp. 60-62).

<sup>346</sup> *Centesimus Annus* (para 13).

<sup>347</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* (para 32).

<sup>348</sup> James Chappel proposes, in *Catholic Modern*, that it was the Catholic Church's encounter with totalitarianism of both left and right that propelled its post-war acceptance of liberal democratic

safeguarding how social institutions, whether families or communities, play crucial intermediate roles in proposing and protecting more limited goods and assisting in their construction. This dynamic also contains tensions, as people seek the direction of the common good with plural values and ethics, through dialogue and debate, in which faith-based voices have to find an appropriate idiom.<sup>349</sup> But both Reardon's abstract analysis and the contingent but theologically based instincts and responses of the papal tradition fall short when challenged by the empirical reality of poverty and welfare to push these tensions towards concrete resolution and particular ethical judgements. It is an unavoidable parameter of the common good that it includes the good of everyone. In all societies there are groups who are poor, excluded or vulnerable. The common good of all cannot be achieved unless the potential for fulfilment of each person is secured, including those groups. If the state's role is to ensure that the conditions exist in which everyone, including the most vulnerable, can seek their own fulfilment, what does this mean in terms of social policy, particularly in the field of homelessness?<sup>350</sup> How far is the state responsible for ensuring that social solidarity is in place, such that homelessness is minimised and the vulnerable are protected? Or is this an area where the groups and communities that make up civil society bear the greater or full responsibility? Is the provision of a social safety net, or what David Hollenbach terms 'a floor below which social solidarity cannot fall', a matter of community solidarity and communal moral instinct, or a part of the state's role in relation to establishing conditions that make it possible for all to flourish?<sup>351</sup> If it is shared, how is responsibility divided? What happens if, in a society with plural views, no agreement can be found about how to pursue this aspect of the common good, or even to recognise it as such? Welfare policy is increasingly an ideological battleground in contemporary Western politics, rendering these questions far from abstract. The common good concept cannot claim any practical utility unless it can be used to address and resolve these

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states as the best way to secure dignity and freedom, especially in relation to religion, and protect families. He traces two forms of Catholic modernism; an anti-fascist fraternal mode, focused on social solidarity, and an anti-communist paternal mode, focused on family protection. Chappel's analysis is based on study of France, Germany and Austria, omitting different trajectories elsewhere, but is nonetheless a valuable account of the sediment that lay beneath the Conciliar teaching.

<sup>349</sup> There is a substantial literature on this theme, mostly focused on public and political debate. In 'Translation, Conversation or Hospitality? Approaches to Theological Reasons in Public Deliberation' in Nigel Biggar and Linda Hogan (eds), *Religious Voices in Public Places*, Luke Bretherton provides a useful critical overview. Bushlack discusses this debate in his Chapter Five, and Riordan in Chapter Seven of *Grammar*.

<sup>350</sup> The existence of homelessness and social exclusion is, of course, also partly a result of political decisions in the larger spheres of structural economics and housing and immigration policy. To keep this argument manageable, I do not examine these aspects of the state's activity in relation to the common good.

<sup>351</sup> *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002) (p. 193).

questions. To do so, an investigation of how official social teaching discusses welfare provides a starting point.

## 5 CST, Welfare and the Limits of the State

The papal texts from Leo's *Rerum Novarum* onwards continually display an uneasy tension between two principles: the instinct to limit the role of the state, in order to protect the freedoms and autonomy of social actors; and the recognition that a good society, a social order that seeks the common good, should ensure that what Leo termed 'public aid' should be provided to those who cannot find help elsewhere, a task that ultimately involves the state.<sup>352</sup> Leo's preference is that such help is better provided by civil society and by arrangements that promote civic and economic participation, rather than relief from the state.<sup>353</sup> Anticipating Benedict, he adds that the work of Christian charity is more superior still.<sup>354</sup> Leo set a template that later documents and popes then followed as the twentieth century progressed. As state welfare systems expanded, albeit in varying forms depending on political and historical factors, the tension in CST became more explicit. The papal writers still prefer that need is reduced through enabling economic participation and private charity, but now also comment on the involvement of states.<sup>355</sup> The encyclicals of John Paul II in particular give a harsh evaluation, critical of 'the so-called welfare state', which he sees as prone to 'malfunctions and defects' because the role of the state is not properly understood:

By intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility, the Social Assistance State leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies, which are dominated more by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients, and which are accompanied by an enormous increase in spending. In fact, it would appear that needs are best understood and satisfied by people who are closest to them and who act as neighbours to those in need.<sup>356</sup>

Like his predecessors, he prefers to promote individual freedom, subsidiarity and the more effective care offered by those who see not just material needs but deeper human wounds, and so he praises charitable work, volunteer work, and the presence and activities of intermediate social communities and networks. Hittinger judges that for John Paul, the role of the state is only 'to establish the broad juridical conditions of justice within which

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<sup>352</sup> *Rerum Novarum* (paras 14, 38).

<sup>353</sup> *Rerum Novarum* (para 32); *Mater et Magistra* (para 58); *Centesimus Annus* (para 54).

<sup>354</sup> *Rerum Novarum* (para 30); *Mater et Magistra* (para 120).

<sup>355</sup> *Mater et Magistra* (paras 48, 58, 136); *Centesimus Annus* (para 34).

<sup>356</sup> *Centesimus Annus* (para 48).

solidarity can develop'.<sup>357</sup> Whilst the context in which the papal text was written, following the collapse of communist states in Eastern Europe, is significant, John Paul's account is still a surprisingly negative judgement.

Later still, in *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict discusses welfare policy in the context of a globalised economy, proposing an adjusted reading. He notes that welfare systems are finding it harder to achieve social justice, as economic re-structuring related to globalisation has led to 'downsizing of social security systems' leading to 'grave danger' for social solidarity and social security.<sup>358</sup> Deregulation of labour markets, and cuts in social spending 'can leave citizens powerless in the face of new and old risks' (25), especially as solidarity networks have also declined. Later, he echoes his predecessor in commenting that solidarity is a responsibility for everyone, and 'cannot be merely delegated to the state' (38). His teaching also displays the tension first evident in *Rerum Novarum*, recognising that states should ensure a social safety net is in place, but wary of the state taking too much responsibility for social solidarity. In the most recent papal texts of Francis, there is no further direct discussion of social welfare systems but he does propose other relevant principles. His critique of false ideologies which influence social thinking starts from 'no to an economy of exclusion', asserting the importance of social inclusion, and drawing attention to the cultural dimensions of solidarity.<sup>359</sup>

Two conclusions can be drawn from this brief review of how official CST discusses welfare systems. First, the historical contingency of its interpretations is striking, confirming how the official tradition has both enduring concerns and instincts and evolving responses to changing political and social contexts.<sup>360</sup> Reading this material in a particular context should not imply automatic agreement with any single papal view of welfare systems but rather a need to identify the principles of discernment and make an equivalent local judgement. This reinforces the values of a shared practice of developing Catholic social teaching, characterised by participation and reciprocal recognition rather than application alone. The second connects this discussion of welfare systems to the common good and the

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<sup>357</sup> Hittinger, in 'The Problem of the State in *Centesimus Annus*', p. 974, discusses J. Bryan Hehir's reaction to this papal position. Hehir notes that the activities which other elements of CST expect of the state correspond closely to what state welfare systems do; and warns that John Paul's evaluation could be used ideologically. Hittinger explains that the significance of the papal comments relates to the need to strengthen subsidiarity and limit state power; but he does not respond to Hehir's substantial point regarding welfare. (p. 969)

<sup>358</sup> *Caritas in Veritate* (para 25). Subsequent references are to further paragraphs in the text.

<sup>359</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium* (paras 53, 54).

<sup>360</sup> This is not a negative feature of CST, although it does prompt questions in relation to Komonchok's account of the levels of authority to be attached to papal CST as discussed in Chapter Five. What matters is that this contingency and particularity can be recognised and interpreted.

role of the state. The conditions necessary to enable all to pursue their own fulfilment will, for some, require kinds of social assistance that reach beyond what charities and private generosity can provide. To give up the role of the state in welfare allows it to abdicate an area of responsibility which directly touches on the good of all; and equally, to allow state provision to fall into the dysfunctions John Paul II fears also contradicts what is needed to enable people to take charge of their own flourishing. So some middle way must be found which balances subsidiarity and appropriate freedoms, and ensures that the political order supports and where necessary steps in, to underpin social solidarity.<sup>361</sup> As noted above, normative CST affirms that the state has a role to play in relation to the common good. I contend that part of this role must lie in the area of social welfare and social security, and there is hard work to be done in each context and in each time to work out what this means in concrete terms. Catholic social teaching should be able to develop a more penetrating and less binary account of how a good society and its concomitant political authorities manage their collaborative response to those who are vulnerable or excluded. Catholic social practitioners working in fields such as homelessness have potential insight to bring to this task.

## 6 Thomas Bushlack's Concept of Civic Virtue

In this research, I argue that the substantive work of the charities in their field of homelessness and social inclusion communicates a social vision within and to their social and political context.<sup>362</sup> Their social vision is enacted in particular practices which illuminate and critique the abstract formulations of theory and official texts. In later chapters, I pursue the specific insights which emerge when their work is viewed in the horizon of meaning provided by the concept of the common good. The work of Thomas Bushlack pulls some dimensions of this meaning into view, adding texture to the interpretative task of later chapters. His concern is with how to build the common good from the bottom up, setting

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<sup>361</sup> This debate is extensive in other disciplines, including social policy and philosophy, with which the Catholic vision and practice could usefully dialogue. John McKnight's *The Careless Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1995) for example, diagnoses how state welfare (in the USA) transforms citizens into clients and argues for re-thinking of welfare within the context of empowerment, a perspective that has many points of contact with Catholic social vision. My concern here is not to review the state of the debate but to examine the connection between Catholic social vision and what Catholic faith-related actors actually do. Whilst a full review of this debate is beyond the scope of this thesis, I note this as an area where the official tradition's commitment to learning from social sciences could valuably be pursued.

<sup>362</sup> I acknowledge the influence here of Jurgen Habermas' concept of communicative action, although I have not read substantially in this area and so cannot claim a technical use of the concept. I find helpful Massimo Faggioli's summary of the concept as 'a form of speaking in which the intersubjective relation marks and mediates the propositional matter'. *The Legacy of Vatican II* (p. 52).

out a rationale for Christian social engagement rooted in virtue ethics. His unifying theme is the notion of civic virtue, which he defines as ‘a firm and stable disposition to direct the acts of the virtues towards the common good of one’s society’.<sup>363</sup> Like Riordan, he works from the Aristotelian roots and Thomist insights implicit in the concept of the common good, and also in accord with Riordan, he holds that the Church in its mission can and must engage with the state, and also with civil society and culture, taking seriously the interim goods secured by liberal institutions.<sup>364</sup> He argues that the Church does this by instilling civic virtue in its members, who can draw on both their interior sense of justice and the distinctive insights that come from Christian faith, in their social and cultural engagement. His ecclesiological framework is drawn from the Conciliar model of a pilgrim church, caught between immanent and eschatological commitments, a model which emphasises its dynamic engagement with its context rather than its institutional structures. His background analysis includes a reading of normative CST texts and substantive dialogue with secular political philosophers in order to construct political space in which Christians and others can work towards Rawls’ overlapping consensus, building ‘limited but pervasive agreement’, through sharing different conceptions of the good.<sup>365</sup> This is central to his concept of civic virtue; doing collective reasoning to work out together the intermediate steps that will advance the common good, which is not merely an addition of individual goods but something real and concrete.<sup>366</sup> He offers his own definition;

..the common good refers to a state of affairs, a way of living together within a particular society or culture that somehow reflects that which the members of the body politic uphold together as the most important values and goods that will sustain and foster their flourishing.<sup>367</sup>

Bushlack’s work goes further than Riordan’s discussion in several important ways. His concept of civic virtue opens a perspective in which it is through ordinary life in society that the common good is primarily enacted. It happens in the vast array of ways in which people respond to each other and create spaces of compassion and solidarity, motivated by ethics derived variously from faith and from other reasoning. This view of the common good as a process rather than an indeterminate endpoint fits well with CST’s instincts about the role of intermediate levels of society and emphasises the importance of personal

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<sup>363</sup> Bushlack p. 33.

<sup>364</sup> Bushlack p. 184.

<sup>365</sup> Bushlack p. 181.

<sup>366</sup> Bushlack discusses Aquinas on the common good on pp.80-93 and provides his own summary on pp. 211-2.

<sup>367</sup> Bushlack (p. 212).

subjects and the formative role of the faith community. Bushlack concentrates in particular on the kind of public discourse that is needed, which itself enacts as well as seeks the common good. It should be passionate and reasonable, tethered to moral truth but also characterised by epistemological humility; it should be open to change and accept value pluralism, including the insights that Christians derive from faith; and ultimately trust that others can also perceive the common good and discern what human fulfilment means.

Bushlack's account relies heavily on reasoning, an emphasis consistent with the CST tradition's use of natural law, and with the thought of Benedict in particular.<sup>368</sup> However Bushlack also includes the role of emotions such as anger and compassion which strengthen and support civic virtue, although still within the constraints of rationality. His account of compassion contrasts Thomist categories with Martha Nussbaum's work on compassion, which he judges to be limited by its essential self-referentiality, basing compassion on the recognition that the person in need could be myself. He draws from Aquinas the concept that compassion also arises from a 'union of affection' which connects compassion to the common good in a way that Nussbaum cannot do.<sup>369</sup> This means that in desiring their own good, people recognise a moral horizon which compels simultaneous commitment to the good of others. This for Bushlack is why it matters so much to develop and promote discourse about the common good as a real and concrete task, so that people understand and feel that their own flourishing cannot be complete without the communal flourishing of all. There are no 'others' who can be regarded as outside the horizon of my flourishing. It also reinforces the implications of the common good in relation to people who are poor or excluded; civic virtue, he says, demands that citizens 'go one step further and take a stand for those who are most vulnerable'. The critical test of its existence and efficacy, Bushlack proposes, is found in the extent to which it allows all, especially the vulnerable, what they need in order to flourish and participate.<sup>370</sup> Here his philosophically founded, reason-based arguments find common ground with the biblical and theological principle of the option for the poor found in CST.

For the argument of this chapter however, Bushlack's account stops short of exploring a further implication. His discussion of the kind of public rhetoric that serves and enacts the common good is important and practical, and relevant to the social mission of the Church both as constituted through the public voice of bishops and through the

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<sup>368</sup> See for example Benedict XVI's Address in Westminster Hall in 2010 cited earlier.

<sup>369</sup> Bushlack (p. 235).

<sup>370</sup> Bushlack (pp. 195, 214). See also Hollenbach in *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, Chapter Seven (pp. 173-210).

advocacy activities of charities. But he does not apply the same rationale to the communicative action of organised social mission. If the common good is enacted by the right kind of civic debate and reasoning, it is equally enacted by practical work which evidences the same qualities of character, reasonableness and passion. When that practical work itself is also a place of dialogue, and a communal expression of faith-derived but inclusively mediated instincts about human fulfilment, the potential it holds for enacting the common good, both internally and in the social, ecclesial and political contexts with which it is entangled, the potential is even greater. Indeed, in some ways it could be argued that values-based organisations are particularly suited to the transmission and support of 'a firm and stable disposition', although this can no more be guaranteed than the equivalent commitment for individuals or faith communities.

Whilst I find helpful the way in which Bushlack brings the common good closer to the level of the ordinary life of citizens, I see a further area of concern in his argument. The proposal to construct the common good from below through reasonable public discourse assumes a reasoning state, credibly oriented towards the achievement of social goods and open to argument from below. Political authorities at all levels in modern liberal democratic contexts work from complex mixtures of political ideology, public service ethics and electoral calculations, and face many unpalatable choices. They will sometimes demonstrate reasonableness and evident commitment to commonly recognised social goods, but they are also prone to the opposite, acting in ways that damage or unjustly restrict human flourishing. Bushlack warns several times about the danger of individualism, in recognising the goods that liberal politics can achieve, but he does not discuss how to respond when states become actively illiberal, the situation feared and to some extent diagnosed by successive popes. The ordinary discernment and dialogue through which people share conceptions of the good, including communicative action, cannot abstain from a critical view of the state and its structures and ideologies, and may be compelled to contend with unjust and unreasonable realities which test the limits of what can be achieved through reasonable public discourse. This applies in the field of social inclusion and social welfare as in other sectors, presenting other unpalatable choices to social actors such as Catholic charities.

Bushlack's work is abstract and theoretical, but several of his themes have generative potential for social mission practice and for charities in particular. Seeing Catholic social practice as a form of communal civic virtue or demonstrative public reasoning, based in stable commitment to moral horizons, enables even small local projects to be interpreted as part of the process in which the common good emerges. Drawing out

people's innate instincts for justice is more likely to happen in contexts that are hospitable to those instincts because they are already values-based organisations. The role played by compassion is crucial, even if, as Nick Austin notes, other emotions such as mercy and magnanimity could also be developed in this framework.<sup>371</sup> Bushlack's work supports an argument that it is important to talk about the common good, to pose questions about what human fulfilment and flourishing mean in practice and how people are enabled to reach for it themselves. These add a dynamic meaning to the details of work with homeless people but also ask for attentive listening, as the ordinary discourse of practice does not immediately yield obvious resonances with the abstract conceptual elements discussed here. Finally, in his argument that we must engage with the state, the political dimension of the charities' work acquires a larger purpose. His work lacks the perspectives that come from the testing of empirical experience, and leaves important areas unexplored, but nonetheless does offer a valuable account of building the good from the ground level in society.

## **7 The Common Good and Homelessness Charities**

The existence of people who are homeless asks a range of questions of a society and state. At a fundamental level, it demands an explanation of how and why homelessness happens, and how both civil society and the state should respond, both practically and in relation to relevant economic and social structures. In contexts such as liberal democracies with welfare systems funded by taxation, questions arise about how far a social safety net should be provided, for whom and by whom. In social and cultural life, the situation of homeless and unsafely housed people asks questions about a society's moral vision and the extent to which social solidarity exists and how it is practiced and by whom. And for charities working in this area, there are questions about how to enable the agency of their clients; how far to work on behalf of the state; how to hold relevant bodies to account. These are questions that begin and continue the process of reasoning and affective and practical responses that are common good pathways. The common good progresses by inches as people wrestle with the intricate details of housing benefit policy, definitions of homelessness, recruitment of volunteers and other micro-actions. It is also at stake in larger strategic arenas where political choices directly frame the structural conditions and policies which allow homelessness but also provide some level of response, even if minimal.

If Catholic charities were to ask whether official CST offers any specific guidance for their particular field of homelessness, they would find very little. It is mentioned briefly in

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<sup>371</sup> Review by Nicholas Austin SJ, *Theological Studies* Vol 77/4, December 2016, 997-8.

lists of human needs and human rights, and John Paul II noted lack of housing as a development challenge in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*.<sup>372</sup> A 1987 document from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *What have you done to your homeless brother?*,<sup>373</sup> sets out the only substantial treatment, discussing homelessness as a denial of a human right and as a matter of structural and distributive justice.<sup>374</sup> This text implicitly works out of a common good framework although it does not explicitly use the term, affirming that society and state share responsibility for responding and that the agency of people who are homeless is important.<sup>375</sup> It is more concerned to affirm and encourage the practical diaconal work of the Church than to grapple with the responsibilities of states. In a welcome but still brief addition, in *Laudato Si*, Francis discusses the importance of people's homes as environments for flourishing and the principle that people should be able to participate in decisions that affect their housing, both perspectives reflecting common good elements.<sup>376</sup> But this is still a rather glancing treatment within papal CST, given the extensive practical involvement of Catholic charities in this field. There is an absence in the normative tradition of connections between the human right to shelter, the responsibilities of states and of civil society, the implications for social welfare systems and social safety nets, and the ways in which intermediate organisations, including the Church and faith-based organisations, can respond. In the background, larger structural issues which determine housing supply are also neglected, even though many CST texts engage with economic concerns, latterly in relation to business ethics and the impacts of globalisation. The concept of the common good provides an interpretative framework for examining all these concerns, bringing empirical experience into dialogue with normative insights and instincts. The absence of more extensive discussion within the normative tradition also points to the potential contribution that voices of practice could make, enlarging its agenda and scope.

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<sup>372</sup> For example, in John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, para 11, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html) accessed 17.09.2018; *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* briefly discusses lack of housing arising from urbanisation as a development challenge (para 17).

<sup>373</sup> As noted earlier, this text is difficult to find and rarely cited. It can be found here <http://theolibrary.shc.edu/resources/homeless.htm>

<sup>374</sup> 'Far from being a matter of simple lack or deprivation, to be homeless means to suffer from the deprivation or lack of something which is due. This, consequently, constitutes an injustice. Any ethical consideration of the housing problem must take this as its point of departure.' *What have you done..* Section III.2

<sup>375</sup> See for example, 'society, as well as the State, has the obligation to guarantee for its citizens and members those living conditions without which they cannot achieve fulfilment, either as persons or as families.' Section III.2; 'housing constitutes a basic social good and cannot simply be considered a market commodity.' Section III.3

<sup>376</sup> *Laudato Si* (paras 142-7).

## 8 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the concept of the common good as formulated in the official tradition of Catholic social teaching provides a particularly appropriate tool for recognising and learning from the practice of Catholic homelessness charities. The directional elements of the concept - a commitment to social conditions that enable people's agency in relation to their own fulfilment, an inclusive and participatory process, the necessity of attending to the good of all, particularly the most vulnerable - start to bring it closer to pragmatic reality. The further elucidations of Riordan and Bushlack, bringing the voice of formal theology into dialogue with the normative voice, extend the possibilities. Bushlack's concept of civic virtue as a practice that builds the common good through ground level practical reasoning applies also to the charities' communicative action, collectively forging particular social goods which construct layers of the common good. His recognition of the importance of affective responses as well as reasoning is important in the field of practical action, where voluntarism and self-gift are more likely to emerge from compassion rather than rational analysis. Both the normative sources and the work of Riordan and Bushlack argue strongly for engagement with the state, although none of these engage adequately with the question of the state's role in social solidarity. The official voice in particular provides an ambivalent and sometimes contestably contingent account.

Using the concept of the common good in this way has a theological purpose as well. In pursuing it at whatever levels are in reach, those who hold Christian faith are also acting in relation to the ultimate horizon of the eschatological common good, the reign of God. This too has practical implications, ensuring that the vision of human fulfilment is about the wholeness of each person and of human community and not the minimal or limited senses often found in other discourse, including the narratives of welfare systems. Charities working in secular social structures of necessity have an inclusive character, joining in their task both Christians and others. But the work they do, which may have additional motivations and horizons for some, advances the temporal common good and incarnates the Catholic vision of a good social order, even if incomplete and always in process. It is, in the largest sense of its meaning, Catholic.

Finally, this chapter has begun a thick conversation between an abstract CST principle and the realities of practice by drawing out the interpretative elements which open potential connections. The next chapter discusses the new perspectives on practices that emerge from reading the data using these elements. I note here my own unease about the ordering of the thesis. Arranging these chapters in this sequence seems to imply a deductive trajectory, which in part I have been concerned to critique. In practice, the

research conversation, both in my own intellectual journey and in the actual experience of engaging simultaneously with participants and with academic reading and official doctrine, was equally inductive and iterative.

## Chapter Seven: Bottlenecks and Stumbling Blocks: Reading the Charities' Work as a Common Good Practice.

It's trying to address the needs of individuals and finding where the bottlenecks and the stumbling blocks are, while having a vision of you know, it's a vision I think that truly informs and keeps me hopeful, it's a vision of society as it could be, as it should be, where people do live in families, in flourishing communities, that's the sort of, I suppose that's a God-given part of it as well, that keeps me hopeful...  
(Male senior manager, committed Christian)<sup>377</sup>

### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 A Conversation on Equal Terms

In this chapter, I focus on the work of the charities as narrated by those who took part in the interviews and focus groups. This is the operant voice, reporting the dynamics and details of their practices and the motivations and commitments of those involved. The questions I bring to the data are drawn from the infrastructural elements of the common good as described in normative Catholic social teaching as these apply to these charities. I first read their work in relation to the common good process of building social conditions that enable individuals and groups to access their own fulfilment, including some recognition of where the data problematizes the concept. I draw out how they locate their work in relation to social solidarity and welfare systems, to trace how the charities and the systems interact and how these disrupt the account in CST of the role of the state in this area. Since the CST formulation of the concept pays little attention to how the common good is pursued in practice, I also use Bushlack's model of civic virtue, describing how to build the common good from the ground up, through collective reasoning in public spaces about conceptions of the good to build limited agreements across plural standpoints. In reading the charities' work as a mode of public reasoning, I expand Bushlack's model and discover the inter-personal and intra-personal dynamics that are crucial to the 'conditions' that CST points towards. I also adopt Bushlack's critical test of whether the common good is being effectively pursued in a particular context, the extent to which a society allows all, particularly those he terms 'vulnerability classes', to access 'goods, ideals, values and

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<sup>377</sup> In this and the following chapters, I use quotations from the empirical data with biographical details. The biographical information is limited, mostly to job/role category and gender. As the charities involved are identified, and some have relatively small workforces, any greater degree of detail would compromise anonymity. In a few cases, where particularly relevant, I have also indicated faith stance.

practices that enable them to seek flourishing as rational self-directed creatures, and to participate in the goods of a community's civic life'.<sup>378</sup>

This step in the thesis is crucial to my argument and to the originality of this research. The normative tradition of CST and most academic treatments, including Bushlack's work, remain confined in abstraction in their discussion of the common good. As Riordan notes, its meaning is often treated as self-evident, which tends to mute rather than enable practical discourse about its implications. Little attention is paid to specific actors, and even when actors are identified, they are frequently abstractions ('the political community', 'economic activity') and the reasoning rarely tackles specific issues, leaving its practical meaning almost vacant. Bushlack's account does at least focus on the *process* of discovering the common good, but his model privileges cognitive work and neglects the wider potential of communicative action, and also fails to imagine how civic virtue happens in practice. To some extent, this confirms what Riordan characterises as its heuristic character. If its meaning is to be sought and constructed in practice, there are inherent limits to a purely theoretical exploration. It also suggests that the role of empirical research is essential and largely neglected.<sup>379</sup> The contribution I make in this research is in the conversation between thick empirical data and the theoretical elements of the concept that in Riordan's words, 'guide investigation'.<sup>380</sup> Crucially this is a conversation that engages both voices on equal terms. I argue that this equality enables the contours and complexity of enacting the common good in a particular social domain and context to emerge; the voices of practice in turn critique and expand the way in which the tradition and practice of CST can serve and enable Catholic social mission.

The particularity of the domain, the reality of social exclusion and vulnerability related to homelessness, is important. The central insight I propose is that the meaning of

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<sup>378</sup> Bushlack (p. 214).

<sup>379</sup> I have found very little academic work using the concept in a thick analysis or empirical reading of particular social realities that also engages theory in some depth. Bushlack, for example, provides three pages of practical examples at the conclusion of his book. Riordan's work provides the most notable examples; see 'Common Cause: The Enron Case', Chapter Four in *Grammar*, Enron, or 'Corruption, Public Service and the Common Good', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 90 (2001), 177–185, discussing political corruption in the Philippines. In another approach, Helen Alford uses the concept to engage with economic theory and expand an analysis of equitable global wealth distribution in *Rediscovering Abundance: Interdisciplinary Essays on Wealth, Income, and Their Distribution in the Catholic Social Tradition*, ed. by Helen J. Alford (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006). In contrast, in Christian social practice, 'common good thinking', drawing on CST and other traditions, is an increasingly visible theme. See for example

<[www.togetherforthecommongood.co.uk/](http://www.togetherforthecommongood.co.uk/)> [accessed 23.09.2018]; *Together for the Common Good* ed. by Nicholas Sagovsky and Peter McGrail (London: SCM Press, 2015); *Reclaiming the Common Good*, ed. by Virginia Moffat (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 2017).

<sup>380</sup> Riordan, *Grammar* (p. 27).

the common good emerges in the places where it is denied or contradicted, where the conditions that enable people to pursue their own flourishing are absent or compromised. This is another dimension to Riordan's heuristic, in which the end to which the process is oriented so sharply contradicts the present reality that it motivates commitment and action. The charities work to construct the conditions that enable people to find their fulfilment because they see first-hand where those conditions are absent or failing in their clients' experiences of homelessness, exclusion and insecurity. They use a combination of their faith-derived values orientation and their collective instincts, expertise and reasoning to work alongside their clients who are also agents in this process. Their viewpoint is primarily from the experience and aspirations of their clients, but their vision and reach extend to the social and political factors which determine those conditions, critiquing these against the moral horizon set by their organisational narratives. The charities and their clients both discover and enact consensus about particular social goods.

This combination of a values-based horizon and attention to the levels of power at which conditions are created or changed, whilst rooted in the daily experience of their clients, is significant. In his case study of Enron, pointing to the multiple levels and viewpoints from which the common good can be considered, Riordan comments that higher level principles always question lower levels, ensuring that 'exclusionary tendencies' are weeded out and 'the narrow constraints of operative mind-sets' are disturbed. He further notes that the levels are 'not all straightforwardly nested in one another but are in tension', requiring deliberation 'to work out where our best interests lie'.<sup>381</sup> This theme, of how layers or levels of common good dynamics are connected, is rarely explored, yet it makes little sense to disregard these relationships. The common good has implications for all the levels of a social order and its political structures. The instinct within Catholic social vision to protect the intermediate level is relevant here, pointing to the significance of communal actors who bridge the levels. This research, from its viewpoint at the ground level of homelessness work, demonstrates that interrogation between levels or layers of social practice is a two-way process; ground level insights also question upwards. Here as elsewhere, discussion of the common good pulls on other concepts from Catholic social teaching, in this case, subsidiarity, reflecting what Robert Vischer calls 'the surrounding web of truth claims' offered by the tradition.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> Riordan, *Grammar*: 'The common good of any level of co-operation can be called into question in the light of the goods intended at the higher or broader level'. (p. 40).

<sup>382</sup> Robert K. Vischer, 'Subsidiarity as Subversion', *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*, Vol 2.2, 2006. 277-311. p. 278

## 1.2 The Common Good in Ordinary Speech

This reading is from an observer standpoint, reflecting a process of recognition and discernment, as I became increasingly attentive to resonances of the common good in the participants' reflections and experience. As explained in Chapter Two, I initially planned to explore participants' understandings of the common good in the focus groups, but found that the concept was unknown to the participants in the first two groups. This led me to shift my methodology away from explicit common good language towards exploration of how participants articulated an account of how a good society should respond to those who are vulnerable or excluded. In other words, I looked for mediations, motivations and dynamics in which I could discern elements of the concept. It was in the detail of participants' reactions to the people whom they encountered and to political realities that I learned to recognise common good elements. I discovered that the heuristic of the common good requires active listening to ordinary speech, albeit in thoughtful organisational settings, to discern resonances and fragments of a common good process.<sup>383</sup> Riordan raises the question of whether it matters that people contributing to the common good know that is what they are doing, and suggests that what matters is that people realise that the goods they seek are realised by acting together, within a shared horizon of meaning.<sup>384</sup> The charities function as stable hospitable spaces that supply such a horizon and enable people to work simultaneously across levels of the social order.

As the research evolved, it became clear that this approach held most potential. But to ensure methodological consistency, I continued to ask what focus group participants understood by the phrase and to notice whenever it appeared spontaneously.<sup>385</sup> My initial reflection that using the term directly was a dead end was challenged as I noticed on studying the data further that it did evoke instincts and horizons which connect to theoretical elements, even when participants are simply trying to imagine what the term means. In the first focus group, for example, in halting speech, one female front-line worker suggested, 'it's for humanity, without restrictions, it's similar to equality'. Others identified complexities, such as the significance of who defines what 'good' means, and expressed

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<sup>383</sup> This attentiveness to ethical elements in ordinary speech is an emerging theme in anthropology. See the work of Cheryl Mattingley, for example, in 'Moral Selves and Moral Scenes: Narrative Experiments in Everyday Life', *Ethnos* Vol 78:3 (pp. 301-27). It also resonates with work in practical theology on 'ordinary theology'. See note 468 below.

<sup>384</sup> Riordan, *Grammar* (p. 65).

<sup>385</sup> Only three out of 55 participants made spontaneous references to the common good. All three were among the small proportion of participants (19 %) who had substantial knowledge of CST. One participant identified housing as part of the common good. The other two connected it to the social contract basis of taxation to fund welfare, and to the foundation of the welfare state as an investment in the common good.

doubt about whether the state was really concerned with the common good. A male advice worker was emphatic: ‘So I struggle to see that the government are doing something, for seeking the common good. Cos to me, it ain’t working, what they’re doing. The fact that we need food banks makes my blood boil.’ They pointed out the problem of defining whom it includes, especially in relation to immigration, and connected it to human rights. A female service manager pointed to the tension between the ideal and the reality:

...ideally, there wouldn’t be any need for people like us, we ought to be out of a job, if we’re all working for the common good, you know, and if we were thinking about what facilitates stable relationships, and healthy relationships across, whether that’s individual, pair or family, whatever sort, shape or type, if we were thinking about, you know, cross-cultural relationships, whatever it might be, there wouldn’t be a need for us, hopefully, but it’s, it feels so idealistic that its almost unimaginable really...

This small accumulation of instinctive reactions from people who were not familiar with CST is interesting. In relation to Bushlack’s assertion, based in natural law reasoning, that Christians can confidently trust that others will perceive the common good, it suggests that in hospitable spaces where they share interests and moral horizons, people can interpret the term intuitively, finding its directions. They imagine the meaning through the perspective of their particular experience, making concrete connections to social realities and reasoning their way forward, testing and discarding elements in a collective enquiry. It would claim too much to see this as evidence of innate instincts – personal ethics are shaped from many cultural and religious sources – but it does support an argument about the kind of spaces that the charities create and the people they attract to join their work. This glimpse disclosed the potential for research testing the kind of practical reasoning that Bushlack proposes.

## **2 The Ground Level Heuristic in the Charities’ Practices**

The charities work with people in complex situations of exclusion and vulnerability, ranging from women affected by prostitution to homeless young people and families threatened with homelessness as a result of welfare reform.<sup>386</sup> Their clients live in situations in which their capacities and the degree to which they can exercise agency intersect with social, economic and political conditions which restrict or impede their flourishing. The charities work with them to tackle these constraints. At a superficial level, it seems self-evident that their work serves the common good, as does much work done by

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<sup>386</sup> In this section, the data is drawn from the four charities involved in frontline services. The second section of the chapter draws on data from all the charities.

voluntary organisations. I contend that more is needed to connect their work and the concept in a more precise and intimate dialogue. The connections to the common good both as process and as horizon come in more subtle signs, in motivations and commitments, and experiences of encounter and personal change both for clients and for those who work in the charities.<sup>387</sup> Several themes emerge as significant.

## **2.1 Aspirations beyond the Immediate and the Overflow of Relational Practice**

The first sign is in the aspirations that the staff and volunteers have for their clients. Although the services offered are deeply practical, the intention is larger, encompassing other less defined goods. A male front-line manager simply said ‘we want better for people, and that’s probably it’. A female manager spoke in terms which reflected Bushlack’s critical test: ‘we do push ourselves to achieve the best for the most chaotic person’. A retired female volunteer summarised succinctly; ‘give them some skills, move them on, include them in society’. Most were explicit about supporting the agency of their clients so that they can take charge of their own well-being:

We want the women to be safer and we want them to ultimately value themselves enough so that they don’t have to make the life choices they are currently making....Our job is to make sure our service users do have choice and do have autonomy in their own progression. (A female senior manager)

Their work is attentive to the combination of personal factors and external pressures in each person’s situation, an approach described as as ‘tailored’ or ‘person-centred’. This is demonstrated in how services are delivered, organised around each person’s needs, and in less visible but equally significant relational commitment. The combination often leads to an overflow, to practice that is not merely transactional but has elements of encounter. A female manager commented that ‘it’s quite refreshing, exhilarating, whatever, to work for an organisation that’s prepared to do that, prepared to go the extra mile, really listen to the individual in front of you.’

The relational commitment is crucial. Several participants from women@thewell spoke about waiting for the ‘window of opportunity’ when clients may be ready to move towards exit from prostitution. A manager described it as a ‘nuance’, a point at which she can ask ‘...”have you thought about other choices?”... because you have that strong

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<sup>387</sup> I found helpful here Kathryn Tanner’s *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997) where she argues forcefully that Christian identity cannot be secured by particular boundaries or practices, but is essentially relational, using the same cultural materials as other identities, but using them differently. She proposes that distinctiveness ‘emerges out of tension-filled relations with what other ways of life do with much the same cultural stuff’. (p. 112). This describes well the tensions of Catholic social mission explored in this chapter.

relationship with her...'. This means they see their work in terms of what one trustee described as 'the long arc rather than the quick win'. As a female frontline worker noted, this resists the trend in social welfare to concentrate on measurable outcomes: '..the biggest thing we have is that ability to work with people for as long as they need us and, in this day and age, that's an increasing rarity.'

This relational approach develops a mutual belonging with many strands of interaction. In one charity, a manager described a client returning long after leaving the services because she needed help to interpret a letter. Other participants described incidents that testify to awareness of wider dimensions of human well-being. A female volunteer described a continuing dialogue with a Syrian refugee about poetry he had written; another told a story of working with vulnerable women to knit squares which they combined to make a colourful cot quilt as a gift for one of their friends who had recently given birth. A female frontline worker described kitting out a group of homeless men from donated clothes so that they would look smart at the funeral of one of their friends.

This dynamic of person-centred relational work is heuristic practice. Those who work in the charities hold together both the micro-goods people need – secure housing, legal status, somewhere to belong – and the larger potential of each person to flourish, which they do not define, still less control, but which they believe exists. The directional elements they use, such as commitment to people's agency and voice, and open-ended and multi-dimensional relationships, guide the heuristic. There is authentic hopefulness in their commitment that denies the claims of the structures, policies and deficits that impede people.

## **2.2 Reciprocity: How Those Working in the Charities Also Experience Change**

The relational dynamics are intensified in how the staff and volunteers describe what their work means to them personally. The data narrates how their relationships with clients reach beyond a helper/helped dynamic towards mutual encounter and exchange:

It's a personal engagement from each of us as well, I'm certain, it's not a sort of, it's not just a job, and this is true for most of the people in this work, that it's something personal and they're invested in trying to work and improve things. A vocational sort of side to it, in a sense. I think all of us here would say the same thing, that we work with every single part of our personality, and the amazing thing about here is that we've got the culture where we're allowed to do that... (A female frontline worker who described herself as non-religious)

There are elements of self-gift here that recall Benedict's principle of gratuitousness, but the real significance is in the reciprocity they describe. These reflections – both from people who do not have personal religious faith and from those who do - indicate practice which is

qualitatively more than 'just another form of social assistance'.<sup>388</sup> Those who work in the charities are acutely aware of the difference between their own conditions and those of their clients.<sup>389</sup> When I asked what they learned from their work, participants vividly described what they received. The common themes included reassessment of their own place in the world and of their own privileges, a 'reality check', and a sharper awareness of social inequality, combined with a sense of how easily homelessness and vulnerability can happen to anyone.<sup>390</sup> For a few, there was an explicit connection to the Christian faith:

When you meet somebody in a hostel, when you meet a mother with children that's in a hostel, or maybe fleeing domestic violence, which I've done many, many times, or you meet somebody on the street, I mean, as a Christian, I feel something rise up within me that it's just..., it's almost an angry voice, this is just not right. This isn't how it should be for this person because this person is of immeasurable worth as an individual. And this isn't their potential to be like this. So the reason I do what I do is to just try and make a difference where I can. (A female senior manager)

However, most spoke about what they gained from their work without making faith connections. One front-line worker summed it up succinctly: 'It brings out the goodness in you..'. For another,

I feel like - you become a better person, every time you interact with a young person who's, especially who's had struggles. I've never failed to be impressed by, I suppose, how they've managed to get as far as they've got, some of them, incredibly resilient, but they always, they never let you down and you do learn a lot about trusting people more.... (A male senior manager)

These brief narratives of personal change indicate how the culture and relationships encouraged by the charities enable mutuality and reciprocity even when the currency of exchange is such matters as a struggle for designated homelessness status or teaching budgeting skills. In one focus group, the link to the common good dynamic in preference to a *caritas* framework was particularly explicit;

...because people tend to look at it as this sort of pity thing, you know, I'm doing the right dutiful thing, from your faith and everything, about taking pity on these poor people and the marginalised people, that's what you're supposed to be doing, but not thinking about it just in terms of how it rewards, how rewarding it is intrinsically and fulfilling and becoming a more fulfilled human being in doing so...

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<sup>388</sup> *Deus Caritas Est* (para. 31), also cited in the *motu proprio* (p.2).

<sup>389</sup> Several participants described personal experiences of the kinds of vulnerability in which their clients lived.

<sup>390</sup> This reflects an insight from Jon Sobrino about solidarity between churches; when churches help other churches engaged in solidarity with the poor, 'they find out that they not only give but also receive from the church they aid. What they receive is of a different and higher order; they usually describe it as new inspiration in faith and help in discovering their identities in human, ecclesial and Christian terms and in relationship to God'. *The Principle of Mercy*, (New York, Orbis, 1994) (p. 146). In this perspective, the apparent asymmetries are reversed when a different scale of value is recognised.

so we talk about the shelters as places that are conducive to that, to personal transformation for everybody. (A male frontline manager)

The risk here is that the beneficiaries seem to be those who work there, rather than the clients. But the point is rather about the reciprocity that people discover. This is not part of their reported outcomes or successes, not part of what funders or commissioners require, but what comes to light when other questions are asked. This profound social process is often unrecognised in cultural narratives about charitable or voluntary work; the realisation of how completely inter-dependent we are in relation to seeking personal fulfilment does not fit many of the dominant cultural narratives. The reciprocity reverses the assumption of benefit in what are often defined as 'helping' relationships and illuminates a crucial dynamic of bottom-up work for the common good.

### **2.3 Reconceiving Professionalism: An Expanded Public Space**

The relational commitment and reciprocity narrated in the data discloses a subtle tension. The desire for other people's good reaches beyond the ethic of professionalism as the values orientation and relational culture of their practices push at professional boundaries. The participants described different ways to work generatively with this tension. One service manager commented; 'It's hard sometimes to merge the two of being professional, being a professional organisation, follow all your boundaries, rules etc. and giving a client that love that they need.' A female frontline worker described it as 'an endless struggle', particularly in the area of personal boundaries and the 'fluid line of deciding for yourself how much you want to share and talk about'. A senior manager reflected that she had developed a 'more authentic' professionalism through her current work 'which actually ultimately is more effective for those you're working with....but it is messier, so I think I'm still working that through..' One senior manager whose work involves developing the professionalism of the charity and overseeing difficult operational decisions described how he managed the tension using the organisation's founding narrative as a touchstone. He gave a vivid example of how he sees this working:

... in the meeting the other day, L. was saying, she's one of the immigration solicitors, and she said that... what was it.. shoes, she had a client without recourse to public funds, and it's a really difficult case, and she might win it, and she noticed that one of the girls didn't have any proper shoes, and she remembered that E. had a box full of girls' shoes for ages, so she got this girl two pairs of shoes, and she said she was so happy, and the mother was really happy because the girl was happy, she was dancing around the room, and L. said that's what she really liked about working here, because you'd never get that in a solicitors' practice. There's that kind of, we have that kind of thing of, we'll work at a professional level to get that, but we also have that other side of, I've got to watch it all the time, is to say that

that there's a pair of shoes for that girl in that room, that's important, so we need to hold on to that...<sup>391</sup>

Depaul UK have taken a robust approach to resolving this tension by developing a theory of change and a professional practice model which fuse their values and relevant theoretical tools. Their staff and volunteers receive training in the model and their organisational culture is built around it. The embedding of the practice model, named 'Endeavour', was in its early stages during this research.<sup>392</sup> As Depaul's use of it develops, it will be worth examining whether institutionalising values into particular practices has disadvantages as well as strengths. One of the spaces that a values-based organisation creates is a degree of personal freedom which invites rather than mandates the self-giving many described in the data. Yet Depaul's intentional work to build every aspect of what they do from their values base translates those values into a kind of public reasoning that has important communal and external dimensions.<sup>393</sup> In contrast, a committed Catholic female project manager in another charity reached for a different model, the model of vocation, to explain what the work required:

I couldn't explain what kind of job it is, you can't write down what kind of job this is, because it's beyond a job, this job, in my opinion, or anybody that's part of us, it has to be a vocation, even though we get paid, you know, and people that work here, we need to be paid because we've got things, salaries and normalities, you know, but it's more than a job...

This internal dialogue – internal both to the workers themselves and to the organisational cultures – is in itself a kind of practical reasoning in search of a social good, the release of their own and others' potential for flourishing, within the constraints of their sector and field. It recognises that professional ethical codes need to be interrogated by instincts drawn from other ethical horizons, including those proposed by faith traditions. It seems a small matter to decide to step beyond a boundary associated with professionalism but it also expresses the combination of character, argument and passion that Bushlack associates with civic virtue.

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<sup>391</sup> Where participants used names of colleagues, I have changed the names and abbreviated the assigned names to a single initial. This applies in this quotation and similar data used later in the text.

<sup>392</sup> The practice model narrative is extensive, using both Vincentian concepts and theoretical tools such as psychologically informed environments (PIE) and Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. One central element is the idea that their accommodation projects should focus on gathering around a kitchen table, constructing this as a place of equality and participation.

<sup>393</sup> The CEO described an ambition to achieve accreditation and external recognition for the practice model and to promote it across the youth homelessness sector.

## 2.4 Hospitable Organisations: The Significance of Organisational Cultures

The significance of the charities as communal actors connected to multiple networks is threaded through the data. Individuals acting alone could not do what the organisations do, in the relationships at the heart of their practice with clients and in the web of intermediate connections they build, engaging volunteers, parishes and local communities as well as peer agencies and others.<sup>394</sup> But this is not just a matter of structure; their practices are made possible by organisational cultures which are intentionally hospitable to values based practice and relational reciprocity. This is an iterative process; several voices pointed out that their organisations attract people by their work or their values, both staff and volunteers. As people are inducted and then work within the charities' narratives, they further entrench and extend those values. Volunteers make the practice of self-gift particularly visible, adding to the cogency of the values as well as extending the reach of the charities' work.

In her ethnographic research in two homelessness charities in Sacramento, Rebecca Allahyari uses social psychology to interpret similar dynamics.<sup>395</sup> She uses the category of moral selving to describe what she saw operating in the charities. Moral selving describes 'the work of creating oneself as a more virtuous and often more spiritual person',<sup>396</sup> a process in which helping others and self-betterment intersect, and mirror and shape connections to wider community.<sup>397</sup> Allahyari probes how each charity's moral rhetoric or 'vision of charity' provides the framework in which moral selving happens, leading to dimensions of personal transformation for those who work there.<sup>398</sup> This is not without conflict; she describes the struggle to sustain the personalist ethics of a Catholic worker-influenced project when the organisation grows and the challenge for volunteers who find the unconditional acceptance of all guests difficult.<sup>399</sup> She points to the moral complexity of

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<sup>394</sup> David Hollenbach argues that the common good 'is the good that comes into existence in a community of solidarity among active, equal agents. The common good, understood in this way, is not extrinsic to the relationships that prevail among the members and sub-communities of a society. When these relationships form reciprocal ties among equals, the solidarity achieved is itself a good that cannot otherwise exist'. *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, (p. 189). But the data here complexifies the assumption of equality. It exists at the level of fundamental dignity, but differences in capacity and socio-economic position are material in the relationships that develop.

<sup>395</sup> *Visions of Charity: Volunteer Workers and Moral Community*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000)

<sup>396</sup> Allahyari (p. 4).

<sup>397</sup> Allahyari (p. 110).

<sup>398</sup> Allahyari's primary focus is on volunteers, although in both the charities she studied, the boundaries between staff and volunteers are porous and staff are not excluded from the moral selving processes she describes; they are responsible for engaging volunteers in the particular moral rhetoric held by the organisation.

<sup>399</sup> Allahyari (p. 72) and Epilogue.

what is commonly understood as charity, recalling Mary Douglas' formulation of the paradox; 'Though we laud charity as a Christian virtue we know that it wounds', because it does not enable reciprocity or enhance genuine solidarity.<sup>400</sup>

Allahyari's research emphasises the importance of organisational culture in which a particular moral rhetoric and related 'framing images and metaphors...become sedimented into structure'.<sup>401</sup> Thus organisational structure is not merely a setting for individual action, and nor does it remove people from their own ethical agency. Rather it invites an interaction and participation in which the moral rhetoric is both enacted and re-created, in and through the organisation's services and functions. But Allahyari's analysis is limited by the particular examples of moral rhetoric she studied. The radical hospitality practices of Catholic worker inspired projects also draw inspiration from Catholic social thought but result in a narrative that is significantly different from those considered here. The 'vision of charity' in my data is one in which elements of reciprocity are strong and the agency and empowerment of clients is a priority. Indeed, in one focus group, participants resisted the idea that their organisation was 'a charity'; one female frontline worker commented 'I don't know that I think of us as being a charity, but I don't know why, I've just sort of screened it out'. They saw 'charity' as patronising and redolent of Victorian philanthropy and wrestled with finding another way of describing what they do. Another frontline worker tentatively described it as 'kind of community's reactions to social problems...', a description that aligns with solidarity structures rather than a relationship that wounds. The particular moral rhetoric matters in relation to common good processes. Not all faith-related 'visions of charity' have the same consonance with common good directions and perspectives. The underlying theological worldviews push in different directions; as Bushlack notes, ecclesiology shapes how you engage the common good.<sup>402</sup>

## 2.5 Testing the Common Good: The Problems that the Charities Cannot Solve

There were also parts of the data that problematize the theoretical elements of the common good and complicate this reading of the charities. The participants described how they are challenged by the vulnerabilities and damage embedded in clients' lives: decades of living on the street and resistance to change; backgrounds of abuse and violence or the trauma of exile and loss, amongst other realities. Some clients have little capacity even to sense that a better life is possible, and to respond to what is offered. A female front-line

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<sup>400</sup> Allahyari, quoting Mary Douglas' Foreword to Marcel Mauss, *The Gift* (p. 23).

<sup>401</sup> Allahyari (p. 32).

<sup>402</sup> Bushlack (p. 4).

worker described a case of a vulnerable man, living alone, who was sanctioned and lost his benefit, and could not afford to eat:

...he just took it that he was in a state of exile and he lost more than half of his bodyweight living on water and scraps... hadn't had a bean, he was in social housing so the roof was still over his head, and either the rent had been paid or the arrears hadn't triggered off any proceedings, but it was evident when he came that he was in a very poor state of health, emaciated and all of that, and his story was a heart-breaking one, and he wasn't jumping up and down he was just telling his story as if it was all inevitable and you couldn't do anything about it...

Many clients have found that the welfare system has little to offer. One frontline worker's client group was 'young people who have exhausted every other opportunity that the local authority has given them..'. He described the intricate work of helping them learn to manage their finances, avoid eviction and build life structures. Sometimes all the charities can do is *hold* the most vulnerable people so that they're not 'slipping backwards'. In the projects working with people who live on the streets, the priority is providing a safe place and a welcome; in the words of a frontline worker in a very different context, 'they know they have a place they can come, they feel secure, people want them'.

There is a profound ethical and theological challenge to the common good in the uncomfortable reality that some members of society have such low expectations and aspirations. With some clients, the charities can only support small steps to reduce harm and hope this enhances modest well-being. Their experience illuminates what it means to build – or restore - the foundations on which the capacity to seek personal fulfilment depends. Their practice asserts that everyone has more potential than their vulnerability indicates. The principle of self-agency and the directional element of participation so crucial to common good processes are challenged by these realities. Those working in the charities hold the hope of change on behalf of some clients, waiting to see if and when they become ready to take it up for themselves.

The costliness of sustaining aspirations for their clients is evident in the limits to what the charities can do. Several participants spoke about the people they could not help, such as those with severe mental health conditions, often undiagnosed, and others whom they felt compelled to exclude: those who took food and then sold it, or who broke the rules about alcohol or were violent. Participants explained why these limits were set, requiring difficult judgements about the good of other clients. They knew when to flex their own rules, making exceptions when they could see what individuals needed. They also accepted personal costs. In two of the charities, people spoke about absorbing anger and threats of violence, recognising that providing a safe place means accepting that their

clients will offload difficult emotions. They hope that people will find a better life, but sometimes they cannot help that happen, and they may even make it more difficult. Several people spoke about the risk of becoming a ‘sticking plaster’, providing the support which means that clients don’t begin to desire and pursue change. There is a combination of power and powerlessness in how the agencies work which points towards the complexity of common good dynamics in this field. As one manager commented, workers cannot *make* empowerment happen, however committed they are to it; they can only help construct the possibilities for people to achieve it for themselves. This is the fragility at the heart of the common good as a process.

This fragility illuminates a crucial element in the charities’ work. They recognise the importance of capacity for agency, and they search for ways to restore the relational as well as material conditions that make this possible. To do this, they absorb inter-personal and communal costs which have accumulated in people’s lives. There are resonances here with Meghan Clark’s exploration of solidarity as a virtue. She traces the underpinning theological anthropology for this concept in CST, emphasising the social and relational dimension of personhood which means that the call to solidarity is ‘inalienable’. She argues that equality, mutuality and reciprocity are ‘prerequisites’ for solidarity; ‘I can come in and help you but if the relationship is not one of mutual participation, then it will not be one of solidarity.’<sup>403</sup> In practice, she suggests, this means ‘seeing the people in front of me first’<sup>404</sup> rather than the poverty. On the evidence of this data, I do not disagree with Clark’s direction; but I argue that there is a distance to be travelled, and asymmetric conditions to be dismantled along the way. The prerequisite of equality proposed by Clark has to be constructed, and the cost of that construction has to be absorbed.<sup>405</sup> The charities’ willingness and capacity to do this, to accept the cost, discloses a neglected dimension of what it means to work for the common good; dissolving the asymmetries through intentional construction of social solidarity.

## 2.6 Conclusion: The Conditions the Charities Create

In their practices, the charities create and enact a set of conditions with and for the people they work with. These conditions have material and practical content – advice given or a place secured in supported accommodation, for example – but they also have equally

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<sup>403</sup> Clark, *The Vision of Catholic Social Teaching* (pp. 127, 130).

<sup>404</sup> Clark (p. 130).

<sup>405</sup> One of the challenges here concerns the way charities describe their clients. One charity wrestled with how to avoid language which assumed their clients were victims or that they needed to make ‘better’ choices. But they also recognised that most of their clients had experienced significant degrees of trauma and this complicates the equality they seek.

important intangible dimensions, relational goods and stronger personal capacities in areas such as resilience. It is in this combination of micro-goods and macro-aspirations that a practical shape for building the common good from the ground upwards can be discerned. Three dynamics constitute the shape. The first is the orientation towards and desire for the good of each person with whom they work, and the attitude of hopeful and realistic commitment towards enabling their agency in moving towards a fuller flourishing. The charities enact Bushlack's basic test, demonstrating what it means in practice. The second dynamic is the relational content of their work, and its impact on both clients and workers. The dimensions of voluntarism and self-gift and of mutuality and reciprocity are crucial and distinctive here, reflecting the concept of solidarity as a pathway towards the common good. But the relational work goes deeper still; the charities create hospitable spaces in which their staff and volunteers absorb a significant share of the personal and communal cost of enabling people to discover their agency and move forward, and also find further dimensions of their own fulfilment. They hold hope for people whilst they accompany them; they provide safe spaces and familial support; and in this way, they act to restore capacities and reverse asymmetries. The third dynamic is the outflow of this work into public spaces and public thinking; this section discussed the impact on professionalism as one example. Other dimensions are considered next.

The risk in using the common good as a hermeneutic is that of seeing in the data only what corresponds to its elements. This exploration has also indicated where empirical reality interrogates the theoretical lines. The reality of how any social actor responds to those who do not have aspirations for their own fulfilment and whose capacities to do so progress in tiny steps, or those who refuse the offer of solidarity, challenge the inclusiveness of the concept and the assumption of participative construction. The data also illustrates how particular social actors can each only do what is within reach; work for the common good is inevitably partial and incomplete. Yet the charities know this too. They are aware of falling short when they exclude people or collude with systems which they know are inadequate.<sup>406</sup> However, I contend that this is what it looks like to build the common good from the ground up; there is no purity of principle but rather a kaleidoscope of shifting dynamics and movements; not only cognitive reasoning, but varied emotions, instincts and practical wisdom.

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<sup>406</sup> For example, advising clients to access benefits rather than work, so that they qualify for particular forms of statutory support, as an interim stage whilst working to strengthen their personal capacities, skills etc.

Even if incomplete and messy, the charities enact a practical reasoning about what it means to become a society in which *all* have access to their own fulfilment. Their practice is communicative, demonstrating what it means to build the common good at the ground level in a public space, in which vulnerable groups become visible in society through the charities' work. This visibility is significant, drawing into view what Kelly Johnson calls 'an untidy corner of ethics', the discomfort of the comfortable when confronted with destitution close at hand.<sup>407</sup> In her study of begging, Johnson notes that 'we fear to be family to the poor because we fear becoming poor'.<sup>408</sup> The relational connections that the charities enable, and their commitment to agency and co-construction, change the default social assumptions about 'vulnerability classes'. Catholic social teaching texts and other theorists often interpret 'conditions' in terms of responsibilities and entitlements in areas such as health and education and economic participation. These are undoubtedly important and also implicated in the common good. But this costly and hopeful relational work must also be done if a society is to construct the common good. Indeed, this work and what is gained by it is crucial to the communal fulfilment of all.

### 3 The Public Outflow: The Charities as Spaces and Agents of Public Reasoning

I was just thinking earlier of a young client we had who came to us, and what had happened, he'd been living with his mother, and he was working for a care company on zero hours contract, he didn't drive, he walked between his clients, fair enough, and then his mother was ill, she was taken into a home, and so he lost his place where he lived. So he then had to sofa surf, and then he started missing, being late for appointments, which I understand, because sometimes they say you've got five minutes to get from one end of town to the other and it's not realistic, but as long as they meet their targets, they don't care, so he lost his job in the care company. So he came to us, lovely sweet sweet lad, came to us, and he was signing on, and took some, we gave him some food and he visited a couple of times, and then he vanished, didn't see him for ages, and I thought, great, everything must be OK, must have sorted himself out, maybe found another job, found somewhere to live, excellent. And then he popped up again, this tale of woe, he'd basically, he'd been sanctioned because he missed an appointment by about two minutes and they really are that strict, so they sanctioned him and for the first time in his life, shoplifting, and because it was his first time, he got caught. I think he ended up getting sent down for something, and that's his DBS gone, so that's his job, you know, that's what he was, he was a care worker, so how has that lad been benefitting? He went into the system as an upright citizen, a tax-paying citizen; [now] with a criminal record, and he's still homeless and his job prospects are even smaller now, so safety net's not really [there]. (A female frontline worker, who described herself as non-religious)

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<sup>407</sup> *The Fear of Beggars* (p. 14).

<sup>408</sup> Johnson, *Fear of Beggars* (p. 14).

### 3.1 Public Reasoning in Real Contexts

In Bushlack's theory of civic virtue, the task for those committed to the common good is to engage in collective reasoning to build 'limited but pervasive agreement', drawing out 'those common sense ideals that are shared, often implicitly, by the majority of the members of a political community'.<sup>409</sup> He references 'the complex dialectical relationship between individuals' thick conception of the good and the public culture'<sup>410</sup> through which we create a social imaginary, a shared idea of the good. He explores the characteristics of collective reasoning that models and seeks the common good: combining character, argument and passion; credible because tethered to moral truth; showing epistemological humility and willingness to learn; and recognising value pluralism. His account takes seriously the secularity of late modernity, and assumes a liberal state, both conditions which apply to the context in which this research has operated. Bushlack's account of public reasoning as a practice of civic virtue is attractive, but abstract and idealised: he does not explain how this reasoning happens, whom it involves or where it takes place.

I argue that the charities' practices, understood as communicative action, are a mode of collective reasoning. Their reasoning is episodic and contingent, often inchoate, combining instincts, ethics, passions and commitments. It deals with concrete matters and real people; and extends to social and political structures and agencies addressed in their public voice. It is oriented not just towards agreement on social goods, but action, most often at a micro-level, but with implications for higher level structures. It takes place in their organisations and in their multiple conversations with other social actors.<sup>411</sup> They routinely connect their ground level experience to the shifting sands of higher level welfare and economic policies, interrogating their reasonableness and their justice. Undoubtedly their reasoning is limited by the particular viewpoint they inhabit; as a male frontline worker in one of the focus groups commented in relation to the welfare system, 'Maybe we don't see the people who sail through it'. But there is no neutral viewpoint; every angle of vision is specific to a context, time and set of actors, invoking particular histories and current commitments. For these charities, the decades of welfare state retrenchment compounded by economic austerity policies create a context in which assumptions, rights

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<sup>409</sup> Bushlack (p. 238).

<sup>410</sup> Bushlack (p. 237).

<sup>411</sup> Participants mentioned: local authority commissioners of services; 'enforcement', in other words, various departments of the Police; politicians and civil servants working at national level; local authority housing departments, job centres and benefits agencies; housing associations; donors and potential donors including trusts and foundations and major corporates; and their networks of supporters, within and beyond Catholic faith communities.

and principles relating to welfare and social security are constantly at risk. In particular, the assumption from the founding era of the welfare state that a good society should have in place a systematic response to social vulnerability, often described as a social safety net, is no longer stable.<sup>412</sup> Reasoning about what a good society and its political structures should aim to achieve in this area is a continuing task in which a multiplicity of levels and actors are implicated. Through their micro-reasoning, the charities participate in the macro-reasoning of society and the state.

This section examines three strands of reasoning happening in the charities. The first is their analysis of statutory welfare provision, an analysis which motivates and infuses their practice and their relationships with statutory agencies. The second and third explore their positioning in relation to the state, examined through their attitudes to funding and their political stance. Each of these can be read as a form of public reasoning in relation to specific questions that both societies and states must address: about responding to ‘vulnerability classes’; and about the proper balance between voluntary and statutory structures of solidarity.

### **3.2 The Inadequacies and Limitations of Statutory Welfare**

The data narrates how participants reason with the welfare systems and policies which impact on their clients. Two overlapping themes emerge. In the first, people use their experience of the statutory environment to assert the distinctiveness of their practice. For some, this is explicit, producing a counter-narrative, and motivating action to correct or ameliorate the conditions pressing down on their clients. For others, notably those delivering statutory contracts and thus implicated as part of statutory provision, it is more subtle, connected to how their values rather than their contractual obligations take priority in their practice, creating elements of resistance or subversion. The second theme is the critique of current arrangements that emerges from working with clients experiencing the ‘bottlenecks and stumbling blocks’ of how social welfare operates. Their analysis and reactions illustrate how instincts pointing to the common good emerge when the systems don’t work, when they contradict or dismantle the conditions for flourishing.

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<sup>412</sup> There are multiple factors involved in the weakening of the social safety net, and a considerable analytical literature. Some research analyses destitution, tracing the triggers related to reform of social security systems; see for example, Karen Barker and others, *Preventing Destitution; Policy and Practice in the UK* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2018) <<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/preventing-destitution-policy-and-practice-uk>> [accessed 23.09.2018]. Other research examines the new ideologies of welfare, particularly relating to conditionality. See for example the research reports available through the Welfare Conditionality project involving six universities: <<http://www.welfareconditionality.ac.uk/about-our-research/>> [accessed 02.09.2018]

The research participants describe the perversities of the statutory welfare system with a range of emotions including frustration, anger, and occasional empathy. Their argument is that it does not seem concerned about people's well-being or have any sense of urgency about response. A male frontline worker commented that it 'struggles to see individuals, doesn't it, it can only work through systems, processes, rules...'. It reacts to categories of deficit or crisis, in the words of one worker, seeing 'a basket of needs' rather than a person, and yet also struggles to manage a joined-up response, since it works in 'silos' that often don't communicate. A female trustee interpreted its purpose as primarily concerned with minimising social risk rather than expressing what society owes to its vulnerable members. They describe how the system embeds high thresholds and ekes out access to scarce resources, too often supplying 'sticking plasters' rather than long-term solutions. It looks for reasons to exclude rather than to respond, and often operates in ways that reverse rather than assist people's security. They find statutory welfare lacking in both social compassion and social justice:

I think one of the problems is just the adversarial nature of the welfare state, that you're seen to be claiming a benefit, you know, you have to fight for that benefit in some way, rather than having an entitlement to it... (A male advice worker)

In contrast, the charities resist the short-termism and silos of statutory arrangements and reject the idea that any individual might be left in crisis, even someone who might be, as one frontline worker commented, 'a dodecahedron in a square-holed world, he doesn't fit anywhere'. A female service manager observed that 'we do a different type of welfare'. They 'slide into grey areas', as another noted, bending rules and advocating for generosity and justice. They challenge unfair and arbitrary processes, pointing out the failures in design and delivery of statutory welfare, what one male frontline worker described as its 'sclerotic nature'. They describe poor communication – 'as advice workers we have to interpret sometimes gobbledygook' – arbitrary limits and conditionalities which don't work. Where they work by 'travelling along' with clients, not pushing or forcing, statutory agencies have a different default: 'if you don't come to this appointment, you can't have this service.' They assign the inadequacies in part to the complexity of the welfare system, but there is also recognition that ideological shifts in the welfare reform process and structural economic policies have altered what statutory welfare provision can do and created contradictions it cannot resolve. They see this in areas such as employment and housing policy: 'so in that sense it's not the welfare system as such, but there's definitely something going wrong with society that... kind of... work, work isn't paying as much, there's a problem with dignity in work' (A male frontline worker).

In the projects closest to the poorest people, the contradictions are acutely painful and those working at the front line know that some of their clients are 'a million miles' from getting jobs, 'even if there were jobs there for them..'. They see untruthfulness in some aspects of the current welfare settlement, particularly in its blanket assumptions around work as a route out of benefit dependence. The social safety net that the system was meant to provide for times of crisis and to support people with particular vulnerabilities is barely there:

I think it is still, it is still meant to be a safety net, but it's failing, and fraying round the edges and shrinking and you know, being politically and consciously reduced so it's less and less of a safety net... (A male frontline manager)

Many of the participants also recognised that even if the safety net is smaller and the welfare system is dysfunctional, not least in how it contrives new deficits, it still remains necessary. It provides resources and services which the charities themselves could not provide and without which some people would not survive. But they were critical of how welfare benefits hardly reach beyond the level of survival for some. One male front line worker said:

..we can give people just enough money so that they can make baked beans on toast every day and they won't starve, that's fine, and their babies don't die, that's fine, because that would be, we'd be against that, wouldn't we... so as long as we're not seeing that kind of destitution, that's fine, and that's alright and we don't have to worry, because if they have all that, they should be able to participate in society - because it's a complete misunderstanding of what people need in their lives to have any energy to then participate in society....

There is outrage here at the idea that the statutory system stops at the level of preventing starvation, and an inherent recognition that people's flourishing involves being able to participate in society. The resonances with common good principles are clear.

However, several participants also expressed an empathetic understanding of what was asked of statutory agencies operating at a local level;

...I remember a housing officer, talking to them about this and them just breaking down in tears, because they desperately wanted to help this person but they knew they were limited because of the system, because they've got a job to keep, and they've got their own pressures and family to keep, income to keep in... (A male frontline worker)

They described how they encourage the statutory agencies' staff to work differently and to understand their clients more. They look for or build common ground; one male senior manager pointed out that 'commissioners need educating, but generally they all want what we want. It's not in their interests for a revolving door of homelessness..'

There is a generative dialectic in the way the charities analyse and reflect, moving between the experience of vulnerability and the potential flourishing of individuals, and the reality and difficulty of fashioning structures of social solidarity, both as voluntary actors and as citizens with expectations of the state. There is an inclusiveness in their reasoning; they don't 'other' the state or its agencies, even though they are critical, sometimes passionately so. They locate themselves within the struggle to make things work, constantly engaging whatever levers they can to achieve micro-goods and nudge other agencies and levels towards more rational, just and empowering practice. Their narrative is in many ways ordinary; their reactions are well described by Bushlack's common sense ideals, but also infused by their organisational values and commitments, which provide a tethering to moral truth and a stability of character to their practice. These charities are, of course, not the only voluntary agencies developing and enacting a particular critique of welfare; others do likewise and may equally serve as instances of public reasoning in pursuit of common goods. But the particular narratives, tethered to moral horizons, of these charities point them towards this embedded empathetic but also critical public reasoning.

### **3.3 The Statutory Funding Dilemma: Taking the Queen's Shilling?**

The question of whether to seek and accept statutory funding compels the charities to work out where they stand in relation to the state. In Chapter four, I described the charities' diverse strategic choices in this area, from Depaul's dependence on statutory contracts to the Caritas Salford Cornerstone project that uses only voluntary funding. The empirical data illuminates how the charities approach this, balancing their need for resources with their practice values. One male senior manager commented:

I'm a complete pragmatist, if the money's there to enable us to do what we need to do. If there are strings, if those strings are part of who we are and what we do, we can go in that direction. What we can't do is a two-fold thing: one that would gag us, one that would prevent us being available to any woman who needs to come through the door, and the other is to set women up to fail, so that we are pushing them, like peas, into a process.

Several charities were wary of funding that would impose conditions: a female manager noted that 'we can't take local authority money because they would demand that we work for them in a certain way.' Those in leadership were aware of the risks in this area; senior managers described instances of choosing not to seek or accept funding that compromised their values or principles in areas such as compelling inadequate wages or service levels. As one CEO remarked, '...when the state behaves badly, you don't want to be colluding with that..'. For another organisation, the risks arose in relation to whether funding would

require involvement in the criminal justice agencies who may hold views of their clients with which the charity profoundly disagrees.

The agencies' experience cautions against any blanket condemnation or approval of statutory funding. When Caritas Salford ceased their work in the adoption field in 2007/8, the impact on core funding reduced their organisational capacity.<sup>413</sup> But it also became easier to re-discover what a senior manager described as 'a mission that we've lost', of working with and supporting voluntary and community based projects. Their statutory funding had earlier meant, he continued, that 'we were agents of the state, you know, he who pays the piper calls the tune', but their greater freedom - whilst still retaining some statutory funding - has catalysed other strategies and developments. A different argument was made by those working for Depaul UK. One manager argued that it was precisely in the entanglement with statutory policies that opportunities are found to influence what happens to the young people they serve. In the example he gave, local authorities have a statutory duty in relation to homeless young people to return them to their families and interview them there. Some voluntary services prefer to avoid this element but he argued that it was

..a fundamental route in, and if you can do that right.... that's where you broker the relationship with the family to come and meet them the next week, that's when you find out what's really going on, so you can provide the one-to-one support that's needed by that young person.

Depaul is heavily dependent on statutory contracts but still takes what a senior manager describes as 'a values-informed line'. He described how scaling back of services at local authority level has diminished the quality of delivery in ways that Depaul would find unacceptable in the light of its Vincentian ethos. He acknowledged that this means 'we're less likely to be commissioned' and their growth will be slower as a result. But alongside these concerns, there is a commitment to participation in a wider social welfare contract; 'we're funded because of the welfare state and the welfare state's possibly the greatest act of social charity that this country's ever embarked upon...'. This instinct is reflected also in organisations and services that do not seek statutory funding; their running costs are covered by voluntary fundraising, but they still seek the entitlements provided by the welfare system for their clients.

The moving frontier in how Catholic faith-related charities position themselves and negotiate degrees of participation in statutory welfare systems is evident here, reflecting

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<sup>413</sup> This was part of the fallout from the situation described in Chapter Three following the Sexual Orientation Regulations (2007).

the historical patterns and ecclesial influences discussed in Chapter Three. The constant factor is that the movement is around an axis of engagement and careful discernment, not withdrawal. Within their discernment, funding is only one of the possible modes of engagement, although bringing its own constraints as well as potential. As noted earlier, they do not 'other' the state, but treat it as a complex, multi-layered and multi-level reality encompassing places of common ground as well as inadequate and sometimes punitively unfair systems. There are undoubtedly risks and dilemmas for values-based charities in discerning which kinds of funds to accept, and whether to deliver statutory services. In Luke Bretherton's interpretation, the acceptance of statutory funding is a form of co-option by the state, pulling the charities into delivery of the state's policy objectives. Within his overall argument, this is 'another chapter, albeit a post-secularist one, in the modern subversion of the church by the state' and he cautions that 'the church' should be wary and discriminating about when and where to enter partnerships and accept funding.<sup>414</sup> Bretherton's argument is weakened by his lack of attention to the difference between 'the church' and independent faith-related charities working from diverse traditions, but even without this weakness, the data in this research asserts a different reality. The charities are securely focused on their own vision, values and principles; their deliberation of when to accept statutory funds balances pragmatism and principles, and their discernment evolves and changes, as the policy context throws up new risks and realities. They recognise common ground with the interests of the state, sufficient at least for collaboration, whilst alert to, and critical of, deficiencies and ideological shifts.

### **3.4 Looking for the Change you can get: Practical Political Strategies**

In Chapter Four, I described the espoused political stance of the charities as evidenced in their public documents, drawing attention to the cautious analysis found in their strategic documents and the stronger arguments and proposals for change found in their advocacy work. The operant voices largely reflect the espoused positioning, but add further dimensions which illuminate their particular mode of constructive public reasoning.

The strongest theme in how participants describe their charities' political engagement is a strategy and tone of positive and constructive reasonableness. Across the charities, there was rejection of 'nagging negative critique' and of 'attacking' statutory agencies or policies. This is partly pragmatic: a trustee pointed out that '...government finds it a lot easier to listen to people who aren't shouting at it; and a lot easier to listen to people who aren't embarrassing it, or taking a stridently oppositional position'. It also

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<sup>414</sup> *Christianity and Contemporary Politics* (p. 57).

reflects a realist political strategy, aiming at incremental change; ‘looking for what is the chink and the change you can get, if you can’t get it all’, as a female senior manager described it. Where they disagree with policies, an advocacy worker proposed that ‘the thing is to offer some suggestions about how to make it slightly less appalling or slightly more palatable’. Others described finding like-minded individuals and recognising common ground, ‘to help them achieve what they want to do’, or being ‘solution-focussed’. The crucial element identified by several voices was the building of relationships in which they work to influence how policy-makers think by presenting them with data and voices from front-line experience. This does not mean they hold back from challenge; in two charities, they described their role as to be a ‘thorn in the side’ of those in government, willing to ‘badger and harass’ when necessary. They are clear too about where they stand; for one frontline worker, ‘I think we champion the underdog...’. A male senior manager who was explicit about his personal Christian faith expressed this lucidly:

We have to stand proudly with the poor and marginalised and disadvantaged, and I think the best way we do that is by capturing their voice experience and articulating that, both by giving them a platform, by bringing evidence from their experience to those who make policy and by enabling those who are in positions of power to experience what the disadvantaged experience. And I think if we can do that, then we prevent the poor from being hidden from sight and I do think it is our job to shine a light on their circumstances and to say: “This is unacceptable.”

This practice of shining a light on the circumstances of disadvantage and amplifying the voices of those who experience it is a crucial element of public reasoning. If public discourse does not have access to truthful and credible accounts of what is happening, it will struggle to find authentic consensus about social goods. In making the poor visible, the charities also demonstrate two other characteristics of Bushlack’s practice of civic virtue, holding the government to account, and building cultural sympathy.

Although the charities share this stance of reasonable and constructive engagement, there were differences in how participants viewed the relationship between voluntary social solidarity and the state. In two charities, CEOs argued against assuming that the state can or should bear all the responsibility for responding to social vulnerability, or that statutory bodies are the most effective agents in this area. One commented that ‘I think we wouldn’t want to go to the state until you’ve sure that at least you’ve thought about what contribution could we make as individuals and communities and as a church’. In contrast, another senior manager expressed a different reaction:

We have to get more adversarial, because there isn’t the services there, does that mean we become more, we have to start arguing with statutory agencies more than we do presently do? Because a lot of our work now, although we do that for

some work, gently do that, we try to work in partnership, which is the right way to do it, but if they get cut to the bone....

Many recognised the fundamental question inherent in their work, of whether they are colluding with statutory retrenchment, allowing the government to evade its responsibilities, because ‘often we fill the gaps that government provide or don’t provide’. They largely avoid an ideological response; rather they get on with doing what they do, for a mixture of reasons. For a few, the political route is ‘a waste of time... we might as well just take a deep breath...and show them how it’s done’ (a female manager). Others argue that the state cannot do what they do, cannot work relationally and slowly at their clients’ paces. Some acknowledged that the charities’ work can seem ‘safe’, avoiding more radical strategies, such as ‘camping on the town hall steps and saying, we’re not moving from here until you sort something out’ (a male senior manager).

The reasoning that the charities do in this area is not systematic or logically structured. It is a constant negotiation and discernment, based on their response to their clients, their ethical and faith-inspired instincts and the constraints and possibilities of their resources. I maintain that it reflects the mainstream historical pattern of the English and Welsh Catholic Church in its social mission, and the ecclesiology of *Gaudium et Spes*. If considered against Kristin Heyer’s analysis of two styles of social action derived from Catholic social vision, a public participatory style based on Catholic social teaching, and a radical prophetic style which embodies alternatives to the dominant mode of the state, these charities reflect but also extend the former position.<sup>415</sup> I contend that there are elements of radical thinking and prophetic truth-telling within their multi-layered voicing of what they see and know. Riordan defends the view that Aquinas’ account of natural law and the common good is ‘radical and subversive’, ‘in affirming the capacity of citizens to judge for themselves whether law is just or unjust...’.<sup>416</sup> The charities act as spaces in which individuals join a communal endeavour that both demonstrates and reasons about the social goods they desire.

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<sup>415</sup> Kristin Heyer, ‘Bridging the Gap in Contemporary US Catholic Social Ethics’, *Theological Studies*, 66 (2005), 401–440. Heyer analyses the work of J. Bryan Hehir and Michael Baxter as exemplars of the two approaches, and then discusses the potential convergences, exploring how each corrects the other’s weaknesses. Kevin Ahern also discusses her two models, presenting them as generally applicable, in *Structures of Grace*. But both Heyer, and the two theologians she discusses, and Ahern, are working in the American Catholic experience, with its particular Church-state history and relationships. In other contexts, including the UK, some of the assumptions would be challenged. The key point about the charities’ form of social mission is that it is not just about public voice; it provides a counter-narrative, much as Baxter desires, whilst also working with and within the public and state arena.

<sup>416</sup> Riordan, *Grammar* (p. 187).

#### **4 Conclusion**

This chapter has interpreted the charities' practices using directional elements of the common good, and found much that resonates with and expands the theory as well as disconfirming insights that challenge its assumptions. The central prescription that the common good – in its interim societal form – consists in the conditions that allow people access to their own fulfilment is embodied and validated in their work. The charities illuminate the load-bearing relational work which underpins this access, restoring and supporting people's agency. Their multi-dimensional relationship with the state, refusing a binary opposition of state and voluntary sector, combining engagement with critique and persuasion, and clear-sighted about its limits and failures, reflects the Catholic instinct that seeks the directions of the Kingdom in all human affairs.

This reading illuminates fertile ground for the conversation between the normative tradition, wider Catholic social thought, and social mission practice. The charities' capacity to tell the truth about social vulnerability, to make the people involved visible and to amplify their voices, and to call people and systems to account at a micro level as well as at other levels, all describe a counter-balance to the state's ideological impulses. They validate the importance of the intermediate level but also challenge the normative tradition to pay more attention to its meaning and to the levels and actors involved in a full account of the common good. Catholic social teaching at local levels in particular has more work to do here, engaging with the emerging realities of welfare systems and proposing a contemporary account of how to enable and support social solidarity.

The charities' experience also interrogates assumptions about people's agency and capacity for fulfilment. If human fulfilment is mutually progressed, and requires the participation and agency of all, the way in which the charities accompany people with deeply damaged capacities and immense vulnerabilities discloses a more complex and paradoxical reality. There are inequalities and asymmetries inherent in social reciprocity which have interpersonal and socio-political dimensions that test both society and the state. The charities carry some of the wounds of society, and not all of them can be healed. But woundedness does not exclude fulfilment or agency, although it challenges assumptions. This area of the charities' experience resonates with other theological themes that could bear valuable empirical exploration.

The chapter has also explored the charities' work as a case study of practical and public reasoning in search of the restricted social goods that serve the larger common good. Viewing their work using Bushlack's model of civic virtue knits together micro-details and the impact of their vision and values. I have found that common good reasoning

happens in multiple interactions and conversations, in the ordinary material of life. It is not only the preserve of policy-makers or politicians but includes everyone who reasons that a particular act or speech is necessary. For these charities, the orientations provided by their moral horizons, their history and their experience guide their reasoning in distinctive ways. The attraction of Bushlack's proposal, when expanded and interpreted in this way, is that it discovers dimensions of meaning in the texture of the charities' daily life. Their embodied reasoning builds spaces of consensus about the good and poses questions in wider areas and at other levels.

I take a risk in this chapter in using the common good to interpret the charities. The inductive approach described earlier means I cannot judge from the data whether this interpretation would be useful to the practitioners. Riordan thinks it is sufficient to have a shared moral horizon and awareness that the goods they desire require communal action, but in the light of my research question, I am interested in more definite connections. The mediations of common good principles the charities hold in their organisational narratives serve them very well, but I contend that more is possible, both for their practice and for their political voice and strategy. The common good architecture offers scaffolding for their instincts and criteria for their discernment which could assist the development of a stronger voice with greater ethical as well as practical authority. It also offers a connection to Catholic tradition and to the particular history of social mission in the English context which is both inclusive and generative. In other words, it can be used to describe a dimension of their Catholicity. As well as telling their own particular stories, they embody and enact the Catholic commitment to the common good and expand its meaning.

## Chapter Eight: Sufficient Catholicity?

### 1 Introduction: Sufficient Catholicity?

In the previous chapter, I argued that the practices of the charities disclose what it means to engage in processes that embody and pursue directional elements of the common good, resisting the conditions that impede vulnerable people from flourishing and working with them to achieve reciprocal social goods. My purpose was two-fold: first, to disclose unrecognised contours of the charities' participation in Catholic social mission; and secondly, to demonstrate that their experience offers potential to participate in the ecclesial practice of engaging social reality through social teaching. By recognising their work as a source of insight and authentic enactment, both the charities and the tradition of Catholic social vision have much to gain.

I argued in favour of using the formulation of the common good nurtured in Catholic tradition, noting that the concept does not belong only to Catholic social teaching even though it gains much from being embedded in the tradition's 'unique Catholic constellation'.<sup>417</sup> Since it expresses reasoning based in natural law ethics, it is accessible to people of different faiths and ethical positions and inheres in innate human instincts.<sup>418</sup> It is not surprising therefore if charities with other narratives not related to Christian faith can demonstrate similar motivations and commitments which have relevance for the common good. In the pneumatological perspectives of *Gaudium et Spes*, a Catholic reading of other charities can recognise this, with appropriate humility about the contribution of the visible Church and associated Catholic social mission actors to the work of the Kingdom.<sup>419</sup> It also indicates an ecclesiological challenge that can be either defensive or dialogical when the question of the Catholicity of Catholic charities is examined. Is the specificity of the Gospel and its salvific invitation lost if we rely on natural law based ethics to discern social mission? We can affirm in the background that the theological meaning of the common good and natural law ethics is found in the economy of salvation, but this is a distant perspective in relation to the charities' inclusive cultures. The charities mediate their grasp of Catholic social vision through narratives oriented to their inclusive workforces, and although they signal and in various ways nourish their Catholic roots or inspiration, the substantive content is common ethical ground. Is this a sufficient Catholicity?

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<sup>417</sup> Coleman in Boswell and others, *Twilight* (p. 273).

<sup>418</sup> Bushlack (p. 83).

<sup>419</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* (paras 11, 22, 38).

In this chapter I discuss what the data discloses about the operant and visible Catholicity of the charities. I argue that this further validates a re-construction of the relationship between the charities' work, and the institutional Catholic Church. I examine their specific modes of relating to institutional Catholicism and lived Catholic faith in the conditions of secularity. When attention is paid to how they enact not just CST but also a kind of Catholicity proper to social mission, their ecclesiological significance emerges. The charities both point to, and operate within, the ecclesiological gap identified earlier.

The gap lies between several parameters: the way in which CST is constructed and presented as a corpus to be applied, rather than an evolving and dynamic practice in which many actors participate; the ambivalence in normative texts about the authority and Catholicity of communal forms of lay-led social action; and the tense post-conciliar debates relating to the Church-world relationship and the interpretation of *Gaudium et Spes*. The post-conciliar cleavage between theological understandings of the relationship between the Church and the world, played out in part through the ecclesial politics of Catholic identity concerns, has created a climate of uncertainty and some polarisation about what it means to be Catholic. For Catholic charities, the episodes in which they have had to discern how to proceed when legislative change has confronted them with moral and strategic dilemmas in relation to interpretation of Catholic moral teaching have provoked abrupt fractures in some charities' relationships with the institutional Church. In this context, the *motu proprio* has offered only a limited perspective, confined largely to institutional affiliation and approval mechanisms and taking inadequate account of the conditions of secularity or the capacity of organisational leadership to make proper discernments. These parameters play out in the particular history of the Catholic Church in its social mission in England and Wales. Catholic demographics and the patterns of welfare state development and retrenchment have influenced the way in which Catholic faith have been part of the self-understanding of the Church in both its internal and public life. The range of charities in membership of CSAN, and the examples of those who have left or do not belong, and the development of diocesan Caritas structures testify to the shifting and evolving shape of this gap. What Hehir terms the contingency of social mission practice, or Chappel terms its malleability, are evident when examining historical and empirical perspectives. Sustaining Catholicity therefore needs a deeper understanding of what the charities are doing.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> Hehir, 'Catholic Identity: Relationship with the Secular and the Sacred'; Lecture to Caritas Internationalis, 5 April 2002, Rusinowice, Poland (circulated privately); Chappel, (p. 21).

In this chapter, I concentrate on four themes. After brief reflection on the sediment surrounding being Catholic, I begin by re-visiting the significance of the charities' narratives. I next consider how they narrate the experience of being inclusive organisations working in secular public space, containing in these conditions some significant dynamics of Church-world encounter. In the third section, I turn to their institutional links and the actual role of Catholic social teaching in their organisational life, and the tensions arising from their autonomy. Finally, I reflect briefly on the presence and significance of spirituality in the charities. In the conclusion, I outline a proposal about their Catholicity that will be expanded further in Chapter Nine.

The empirical data I discuss here discloses the contingent dynamics of working in Catholic social mission in secular conditions. In the inclusive workforces the charities attract, in their embeddedness in social realities of vulnerability, they operate in a porous border zone of visible ecclesiality. They do not lack institutional connections, but these play varying and sometimes indirect roles in shaping their practice.<sup>421</sup> I argue that it is their narratives, in which they blend charisms, history and connections to lived Catholic faith, which have the primary impact throughout their cultures and practices. The institutional connections do however play crucial roles in keeping the narratives alive and dynamic, and at times test their boundaries. I propose that these factors - secular conditions, inclusiveness, mediation through narratives and sustaining relationships - describe a more expansive Catholicity than that proposed by the *motu proprio* or by Benedict's encyclicals. This Catholicity enables social mission to inhabit wider fields of social and cultural realities that are otherwise difficult to reach.

## **2 Reflections on the Import of being Catholic: Noticing the Undergrowth**

In the areas addressed in this chapter, I was treading on sensitive ground as a researcher. As I listened to the participants, I often reflected that the word 'Catholic' is freighted with assumptions and emotions that complicate access to concepts such as 'Catholic social teaching' and 'Catholic charity'. For those who are not Catholic - and indeed for some who are - there are underlying perceptions present in their reactions, often reflecting negative assumptions.<sup>422</sup> One non-religious female frontline worker was

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<sup>421</sup> In relation to many of the themes discussed in this chapter, CSAN is in a different position to the other charities. Sustaining institutional connections through its network is a core purpose of its work as an agency of the Bishops' Conference.

<sup>422</sup> In the background to this research, the Catholic Church at all levels continues to struggle with child abuse scandals involving clergy and religious orders and episcopal failure to believe and protect victim-survivors. During this research, one of the religious congregations connected to a participating charity, the daughters of Charity, was dealing with media coverage of historical abuse disclosure in a

forthright about this: ‘...You know, historically, Catholics have always done good, but they’ve done a shitload of bad, a shitload of bad...’. With others, it was noticeable in inferences. A male senior manager described reactions when he took the job:

I think some of my friends thought, God, what’s he working there for? Do you know what I mean, there was a kind of ... God I’d never have thought J would work somewhere like that, so they had a bit of a reaction; but I didn’t, not really.

Another female manager’s comment suggested a perception of Catholic exclusiveness:

..you know when I came for my interview and I was worried that I wouldn’t get the job because I wasn’t Catholic and I thought, well I’m just going to have to trust that the organisation knows what it wants and it wants me, but I was always a bit anxious about that deficit on my part.

Some reported similar perceptions in external partners or peer agencies, or in their clients:

..it’s very interesting when you’re triaging someone and they suddenly click that we’re something to do with the Church, and you never really know whether it’s going to go well, or if you’re going to have to spend an hour convincing them just to go downstairs, have a look and see how it feels.

Internally at least, these perceptions are not fixed. Sometimes those who are not Catholic change their perceptions as a result of their experience. A female service manager reflected on this:

It’s been an eye opener for me, I think. I’ve never worked in a religious organisation before. I’ve not had any particular religious activity myself, but what I see in London, and not just in the Catholic faith, if all the church organisations that offer succour and support of any nature, whether it’s patronising or not... I really wonder what would happen. There would be dead people on the streets I think. So that’s made me think again about very disillusioned views around Church.

This background noise of perceptions, whether justified by direct experience or not, pervades this research and affects the ways in which the charities navigate their inclusivity and their institutional relationships. The meaning of ‘Catholic’ is integral and central in this project. In empirical reality, it cannot be separated from multiple other associations, negative and positive, real and imagined, both for those who are Catholics and for those who are not.<sup>423</sup>

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long closed children’s home they had run. Concurrently, the Government-initiated Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) was taking evidence from Catholic childcare agencies, dioceses and religious orders and issuing reports.

<sup>423</sup> It is beyond the scope of this research to explore this more fully, but the gap between how the Catholic Church presents its self-understanding, through its narratives and voice, and how it is seen by ‘people of goodwill’ (leaving aside ideological critiques by humanists, atheists and others) reflects a muddled mixture of cultural and personal myths and realities, all of which operate in settings such as the charities in this research. This material also challenges the arguments of Cavanaugh, Michael Baxter and others about the life of the Church as living and exemplifying the true politics of the Gospel. See for example, Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy*, Chapter Seven, ‘The Church as Political’,

### 3 The Impact of Narratives and the Limits of Mediation

#### 3.1 How the Narratives are Owned in the Charities' Work

One of the most consistent themes throughout the data describes how vividly the participants enter and use the charities' narratives. The narratives comprise the formal texts, principally their vision, mission and values statements, but also the recounted stories of the charities' founding, history and ethos. It is these narratives, rather than the formal resources of Catholic social teaching, which dominate the operant understanding and make each charity particular. The charities use their narratives in different ways to influence culture and practice. Some develop intentional strategies to embed the narratives within core organisational processes. In Depaul UK, for example, their interpretation of St Vincent de Paul's life, work and message is shared in induction, in staff training on their practice model, and in their management and leadership development programme.<sup>424</sup> One male senior manager noted, 'I always tell the stories and I talk about the stories that mean something to me from Vincent, Vincent's time'.<sup>425</sup> Senior staff in several charities described the importance of discussing the values, ethics and Catholic roots with job candidates to discern whether they will understand and work within them. The significance begins even before people are appointed and work in the organisations. One front-line worker described the first impact of the Vincentian narrative:

...even before the agency sent me to come to interview, I went and researched, who are these people. I've never heard of Depaul prior to that ... and I read about Vincent de Paul, I said, wow, I like this, this spoke something to me..

In other charities, communicating the narratives is a less formalised process, sustained by story-telling and voluntary events and transmitted in habits and practice experience, a process closer to osmosis or apprenticeship.<sup>426</sup> In the Cardinal Hume Centre, the narrative of the eponymous founder is crucial. Images of the Cardinal are scattered

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123-40. Cavanaugh does however nuance his account to recognise and include the sinfulness of the Church as part of its visible salvific activity in the following chapter.

<sup>424</sup> The Endeavour programme of staff training is described in Chapter Seven. The management programme based on Vincentian values is run by Depaul UK's international parent body, and brings together managers from several countries for residential formation in Paris, visiting Vincentian sites, and elsewhere.

<sup>425</sup> For example, one interviewee recounted: 'So things like that, the story of the bread, where he put the call out for some bread for a family that was starving, got inundated with bread, it was all going rotten, and then his lightbulb moment was, there's enough compassion in the world, it's how you organise it that matters. And you know, the organisation of people's compassion is essentially what charity is, I think, it's offering a structure..'

<sup>426</sup> This recalls Allayari's concept of 'moral selving' discussed in Chapter Seven. I also found helpful here Luke Bretherton's account of how community organising is learned through apprenticeship, a process akin to craft-learning rather than intellectual formation; see 'Coming to Judgment' (pp. 187-8).

around the building and the quotation which encapsulates his message greets everyone who visits, visible on a stone plaque opposite the reception desk.<sup>427</sup> One female frontline worker commented, 'the quotation, we turn to it... we see that every day'. The quotation works as what Johan Verstraeten, discussing Catholic social teaching concepts, characterises as a 'root metaphor', imagery that 'awakens human energies, generates a world of meaning and opens new vistas of human possibilities'.<sup>428</sup> A female focus group member commented, 'it's a matter of absorbing the culture in this place. I think it starts from... we talk a lot about what Cardinal Hume wanted and what Cardinal Hume said'. Very few of the charity's staff ever met him, but they know what he stood for, and some remember him as a public figure. One male manager reflected on the inclusiveness he represented:

He had, he was one of the people that was, a kind of, one of those rational voices that would say things when they needed to be said... he talked to people like me, who weren't in the Catholic Church.

For women@thewell, the relationship between the charity and the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy is crucial. Their narrative fuses elements from the mercy charism with 'gospel values'. The mercy charism adds some distinctive notes, particularly directing attention towards the most excluded women. According to one staff member: 'The other thing I think that I see, which I don't know if it's from their charism or if it's just the way the Order was set up, but they are very vocal and kind of not frightened of ground-breaking.' Many of the staff are strongly feminist and most are not church members, but they share the Institute's commitment to the charity's mission and values. As one frontline worker explained, 'The sisters, I am feminist and they are Catholic and they have the same intention, so at the end of the day, it's all about the intention.' Another worker expressed discomfort with elements of being in what she described as 'a God squad', but this did not impede how she used the narrative with her colleagues:

I impart that, the values and the mission, just to remind them, I do say always go back, if you don't know, think about it. Always go back to the mission and the values, you make your decisions on doing that.

Others read the commitment of the sisters through their own lens, finding connections with feminist perspectives regarding empowerment of women. A manager commented:

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<sup>427</sup> See page 78 note 211 for quotation.

<sup>428</sup> Verstraeten is drawing on Paul Ricoeur's work on the metaphoric function of biblical narratives. He describes a root metaphor as 'the most basic assumption about the nature of the world, society or experience'. Its function is to 'suggest a primary way of looking at things or experience'... which can lead to new possibilities, new horizons. 'Re-thinking Catholic Social Thought as Tradition' in Boswell, *Twilight* (pp. 72-4).

There's a sense in a way that convents and places like that were the first feminist places where women could work together and be in charge of their own lives, and although it's within a horribly patriarchal and disgustingly hierarchical overall Catholic structure, there's a kind of sense of women getting on with their lives.

The narrative of women@thewell is remarkable in creating and enabling this shared ownership of their work across what could be - and sometimes are - conflictive perspectives and principles. What emerges is how the work they do enables recognition of common ground that does not leave aside or disown different conceptions of the good, but holds them in a tension in which dialogue is possible.

For Caritas Salford, the narrative is more complex because the organisation manages and co-ordinates a range of locally based projects, each with its own history and culture and differing combinations of voluntarism and professional staff. Their narrative uses the concept of *caritas* to unify their work: as a manager describes it, 'You know, I would almost summarise it as "love in action". It's the kind of – *caritas*, the Latin of it, love and charity is an action word, a doing word, so "love in action" is our tagline.' The CEO organises regular staff development days to help them 'get an appreciation of the charity they're working in, and the diversity of the work that we do, and very much about why we do it.' In the Cornerstone project, the organisational narrative closely echoes the historical patterns of Catholic charity in the Church in England and Wales. It was co-founded by a Daughter of Charity and there are still religious sisters working there as staff and volunteers, recognised as a profoundly important presence. It serves the poorest and most excluded, and is sustained by volunteers and other support from surrounding Catholic communities. Cornerstone practices *caritas* very much as described by Benedict in *Deus Caritas Est*.<sup>429</sup> In the words of a female manager;

I believe we're doing God's work here. I always say, when the money stops coming in or the food stops coming, that I hope I can hold my hands and say, God's work's been done. While we're open and people are coming, there's a need, and I do believe we're in God's hands... the doors are open here, and anybody's welcome to come.... so we feed them, we guide them, we try and nurture them... They should be able to see God's love in us, the way we treat people.

Cornerstone's work could also be described as radical hospitality with echoes of the Catholic Worker model, but unlike the Catholic Worker houses of hospitality, they do not avoid collaboration with the state, although they pursue it only on their own terms and

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<sup>429</sup> See paras 31,33,34.

according to their own principles.<sup>430</sup> They also differ from the Catholic Worker model in their aspirations for their clients, with whom they work to secure change in their circumstances through employment, education and in other areas.

For Housing Justice, the narrative has multiple strands. The current organisation is a merger of three previous charities and its identity is ecumenically Christian, committed to working with all the Churches, although they maintain their independence and autonomy. They value their Catholic roots and founding narrative and belonged to CSAN until 2017. A senior manager described it as ‘a bit like the child of a mixed marriage...we’re partly inside and partly outside the Catholic Church’. Their intentional decision to sustain overt Christian identity caused the organisation to shed housing advice projects developed in earlier decades as part of their Catholic precursor organisation, because those projects resisted the direction of asserting that Housing Justice was a Christian organisation. Their ecumenical identity and narrative bring challenges; across Christian traditions, attitudes to evangelism in work with homeless people differ. They operate in complex spaces, in-between local church projects and policy-makers, and in-between church structures and local activists. Participants described how the organisation works as a broker and intermediary, ‘offering space for others to gather’, and in advocacy, lobbying and influencing, in which they ‘articulate a voice on behalf of others’. Their political credibility comes from how they resource and support local Christian communities to assist homeless and vulnerable people and tackle housing injustice, building a ‘groundswell’ of faith concern:

I’m very keen to stress that we’re a Christian charity, but in order to have credibility you have to show that you’re doing stuff.... the minute you say “we can deliver stuff for you and make a difference in communities”, it doesn’t matter what faith you are, people are very interested in talking to you. (A male front-line manager)

Although their primary focus is on justice in relation to housing need, their ecumenical witness is also significant. In an expressive example of receptive ecumenism, participants casually drew from different Christian traditions, explaining what they valued and receiving what each has to give.<sup>431</sup> A volunteer who is not a Catholic observed that Catholics have an instinct to ‘reach out to those who were absolutely at the bottom of the pile’. Another who

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<sup>430</sup> The ethos of Catholic Worker houses of hospitality is described here <<http://www.londoncatholicworker.org/www.php>> [accessed 10.09.2018] and by Allahyari (pp. 35-50).

<sup>431</sup> Receptive ecumenism is a conceptual approach in which ‘the primary ecumenical responsibility is to ask not “What do the other traditions first need to learn from us?” but “What do we need to learn from them?”’ <<https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/ccs/constructivetheology/receptiveecumensim/>> [accessed 02.09.2018].

is a Catholic interpreted the theological reflection of Jon Kuhrt, a Baptist minister working with homeless people in London, using the concept of solidarity from Catholic social teaching.<sup>432</sup> There was a generosity towards Catholic social teaching in particular, and a willingness to own and work from its insights.

There are two striking characteristics of the ways participants spoke about their organisational narratives. The first is the particularity and even uniqueness of each narrative. Each takes inspiration from lived Catholic faith shaped by tradition, charisms and unique histories, and mediates this in texts and habits, which in turn shape their practice in their specific context. The narratives are complex creations. In both their forms and their dynamic and evolving content, they overflow the boundaries of a social ethic and create a culture. They work through people's imagination, memory and relationships as well as through structures and strategies. The second is that everyone to whom I listened evidenced a personal and serious relationship with the narratives. The narratives engage the staff and volunteers, then are embedded by their practice and conversation, and transmitted onwards, re-interpreted as circumstances and conditions change and new people engage.

### **3.2 Leadership as Imagination and Story-telling**

The leadership vision is crucial. I listened to CEOs and other senior figures from the charities recount their narratives, blending a dynamic re-telling of the organisational story with personal convictions and commitments. Admittedly this is a skill required in their roles, but they mediated the stories in ways that reached beyond professional boundaries, integrating their personal faith stance and life trajectories. Their impact on organisational culture often emerged in almost unconscious comments. One male frontline worker remarked when discussing the welfare state, '[the CEO] would want us not to exist, wouldn't she, in every speech she makes, its "and I'm just sorry that we're still here, as needed as ever"'. In a charity culture where pursuit of growth is normative, this is more radical than it sounds. In another charity, a trustee who was not a Catholic explained what had helped her to align to the charity when she joined it. The chair at that time 'talked about how we get alongside people, we hold people as lights in our hands'. She continued, 'I really understand that kind of delicate nature of how people want to be met'. This powerful image evokes an ethical vision imaginatively and inclusively, conveying not just values but a hint of the transcendent.

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<sup>432</sup> See <<https://resistanceandrenewal.net/ethics/the-practice-of-grace-and-truth-with-homeless-people/>> [accessed 02.09.2018].

Leaders play a crucial role in maintaining organisational commitment to the narratives and navigating boundaries. A manager explained the impact of leadership:

I think [the CEO] is very, is always very clear, there have been moments when people have tried to challenge things like having the gospel values and so on and so forth, and there's times where I've kind of sat and thought about it, but she's very clear that's what has to remain, and I, I think she's, I think it's absolutely right, and it's hugely powerful.

The character of leadership in Catholic or Christian faith-related charities deserves empirical study of its own, beyond the limited exploration in this research, to explore the conversation and tensions between the standard expectations of charity leadership roles and the questioning and reversal that arises from narratives rooted in Christian theological insights.

Leadership is not only located in those holding the senior posts in an organisation or exercising strategic roles through governance. The continuing presence of religious sisters or priests, and the charisms they embody, working as trustees, staff or volunteers, has a significant impact in several charities. All four frontline agencies have continuing relationships with charisms and/or individual members of religious congregations, and many participants described the impact. One CEO described the religious on his board as 'values champions' with 'singularity of purpose in both upholding and defending the values'. Some described their impact in ways that recalled characteristic themes of the history of Catholic welfare in England and Wales:

They've committed their whole lives to serving people, the poor, in various capacities, and that's probably been the most striking thing, just that level of self-sacrifice, and in a way, the commitment and the loyalty that that invokes from others. (A male senior manager)

Another female manager described the impact of religious sisters working as volunteers, bringing gentleness to the atmosphere and 'an intrinsic kindness'. Several who are not church members see in the religious sisters a freedom and depth of self-giving that communicates a version of Catholicity that they find authentic. In one focus group, religious sisters were seen as 'working at the edge of Catholicism, working to re-define Catholicism'. They see them as distinct from the institution: as a service manager commented, 'I can't pin down what it is, because I don't have a secure faith myself, but they definitely bring something, but I don't think that's "the church"'. There is recognition too that the changing profile of religious life in contexts such as the UK means that those involved are fewer and older, and the ways in which their charisms are transmitted are changing. One of their number explained that the Sisters of Mercy set up women@thewell 'not as part of the old

model so the sisters “do”. It was to develop and create a new charity that would need support, but in reality would be able to stand alone.’ This is also part of their leadership, enacting both accompaniment and a self-emptying commitment noticed by their colleagues.

### 3.3 Mediating Catholicity: The Stability of the Narratives

The data evidences how the narratives work as particular and local social imaginaries. In Charles Taylor’s account, this means not just ‘the understanding which makes possible common practices, and a widely shared sense of legitimacy’, but also what he terms the ‘wider grasp...the background unstructured and inarticulate understanding of our whole situation’.<sup>433</sup> Crucially, he argues that ‘If the understanding makes the practice possible, it is also true that it is the practice which largely carries the understanding’. Taylor’s concept, used analogically, provides a structure within which to consider how the narratives mediate Catholicity. They do not explicitly present theological principles; but they work through mediations that communicate theological resources, reflecting principles identifiable in Catholic social vision and articulated in social teaching. It is significant here that the charities are *communal* actors, in which the narratives are held in a stable way, communicated and enacted in both disciplined practice and the overflow of relational reciprocity described in Chapter Seven. The communal structures maintain degrees of configuration to the institutional Church, but these relationships are subsidiary to the particular ways their narratives embed intuitions and insights which, when viewed theologically, find resonances in Christian Revelation. These insights and intuitions might not explicitly display their sources. Some of those who work in the charities recognise them nonetheless and participate from personal faith commitment as well as professional skills. Others will only see and work from the narrative proposed, blending it with other personal and professional ethics. One of the Depaul managers said, ‘if you strip us bare, we’re a values-led organisation’. His perception is richly evidenced in the data and repeated in the perspectives of other participants. But the values are held inseparably from the connection to St Vincent de Paul’s belief that the face of God was to be found in the poor whom we serve for the love of God. It is in the institutional and charismatic structures of the Catholic Church that the Vincentian charism has been sustained, because the Tradition has discerned its enduring capacity to reveal the Gospel. The ways in which the charities’ narratives mediate particular and generative connections to the mystery of God’s salvific

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<sup>433</sup> *A Secular Age* (p. 173).

work might not be obvious on the surface of the narratives, but they are irreducibly present and sufficiently - if contingently- insistent.

## 4 Inclusiveness as an Ecclesiological Space

### 4.1 Navigating Recruitment

Benedict's *motu proprio* directs that Catholic charities 'are required to select their personnel from among persons who share, or at least respect the Catholic identity of these works'.<sup>434</sup> The document also asks that those who work in the charities 'give an example of Christian life' and directs that bishops should ensure appropriate formation.<sup>435</sup> This formulation does at least indicate openness to the reality that Catholic charities will find it difficult if not impossible to recruit only Catholics or Christians, but it does not go far enough and risks assuming a questionable superiority for explicit faith. In *Deus Caritas Est*, Benedict sets up an unhelpful dichotomy: 'they must not be inspired by ideologies aimed at improving the world' but rather, 'they must be persons moved by Christ's love... awakening in them a love of neighbour', willing to work with the Church, sharing its 'practice of love'.<sup>436</sup> The empirical reality is that Catholic social mission is taken forward in the charities by communal work equally pursued by people who are Catholic or Christian, people from other faith communities, and people who do not profess any faith but bring other ethical commitments. The data demonstrates how people who do not share Catholic or Christian faith work in the charities with passion and generosity as well as professional competence. Their presence is not a deficit or an absence, but a source of positive ecclesiological potential, rooted in their decision to work within organisations committed to Catholic social and political ethical principles.

The charities' inclusiveness is a primary expression of working in the conditions of secularity. It is the necessary implication of engaging in social mission in a plural secular context in which equality and non-discrimination are both dominant values and legislative requirements.<sup>437</sup> In relation to recruitment, the data shows overlapping instincts and differences between the charities. Some are intentional in ensuring that some senior posts

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<sup>434</sup> *Motu proprio* (art 7.1).

<sup>435</sup> *Motu proprio* (art 7.2).

<sup>436</sup> Para 33.

<sup>437</sup> The CBCEW Guidelines, *Applying Equality Law in Practice*, interpret the legislation for Catholic organisations. The recognition in its preface of the common ground between the ethics of equalities legislation and the Catholic social vision is a significant parallel to my arguments in this section: 'The framework of the Equality Act 2010, although much of the detail has yet to be fully developed by the courts, also has at its core this profound moral intuition: the desire to uphold the inherent dignity of every person, and to ensure the vulnerable are protected. Such an aim is, of course, in accordance with Catholic teaching.' (p. v) <<http://cbcew.org.uk/equality>> [accessed 23.09.2018]

are held by people who can espouse and articulate personally a Christian commitment. In several charities, those in senior roles recognised the importance of some Catholic presence, if possible ‘a critical mass’, among the trustees, and an understanding of the Catholic context, heritage and values in other roles. One male trustee commented ‘you don’t have to be a Catholic to be a CEO, you don’t necessarily have to be a Christian, but you have to be prepared to work within the tenets of the social gospel’. In the constraints of employment legislation, this is a sensitive area, which the charities approach largely on a case by case basis when particular posts – such as CEO – are being appointed, often in dialogue with local bishops or with their trustees.<sup>438</sup> For recruitment to other posts, what matters most is competence for the work, combined with real understanding of their values and mission. Many of the participants described how it is the work that attracts them to the charities, where they then discover the values and their narrative framework. One male senior manager who is a Catholic noted that some Catholic applicants think that their religious practice is an advantage, when in reality, he pointed out, there are no privileges for those who are Catholic.

Those in senior posts were emphatic about the care taken in recruitment to ensure people understood their organisational narratives, including their Catholic roots and relationships. They are strongly committed to the inclusive character of their organisations, but not just as compliance with equal opportunities and non-discriminatory practice. They describe an organisational culture that is intentionally hospitable to faith, not only for Catholics but for people of any faith:

I think that it emboldens those people who have got faith, so I think there are people of faith who feel more confident to talk about their faith because of our values context and our Catholic heritage. There is certainly an explicit respect for people of other faiths and so, for example, my office is regularly used as a prayer room by our devout Muslim colleagues. (A male senior manager who is explicit about his Christian faith)

One senior manager commented that the only people who are uncomfortable with this are committed atheists. This hospitable context has ‘red lines’ however, particularly in ruling out any ‘spiritual evangelising’ or proselytism: ‘...as much as we may be part of the wider church, I think that the episcopal oversight, or the clergy-led expression of church, that’s the place for spiritual transformation as a salvific or a missional piece’ (a male senior manager). The inclusiveness that the charities construct is seen by many as an advantage,

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<sup>438</sup> The CBCEW Guidelines advise a case by case consideration of whether particular posts justify imposition of an ‘occupational requirement’ to employ a Catholic, based on whether such imposition is ‘a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate end’ (p. 23-4).

modelling qualities needed in wider society. Internally too, organisational cultures and practices are strengthened by diverse viewpoints. This was particularly evident for women@thewell, where feminist commitments and Catholic principles find both common ground and mutual interrogation when ‘crunchy tensions’ arise.

#### **4.2 Being Bi-lingual: Enabling Dialogue through Practice**

Throughout the research, participants casually demonstrated how they use and translate between different idioms, a kind of practical bi-lingualism. They work with the idioms of Christian faith and Catholic social vision, and the idioms of secular social welfare and in the case of women@thewell, feminism. Within Depaul UK, for example, St Vincent de Paul is both a Catholic saint and as a senior manager described him, an ‘incredible social entrepreneur’. A female trustee noted, ‘I always explain that, to me the Gospel values are kind of tenets of social care, so I think that’s how we explain it in a secular or non-secular way.’ For many of the participants, including the Catholics, it was important to insist that their values were not exclusive to Christians:

I think for those of us who are not Catholic, and are not calling what we do based on Gospel values, we’re calling ourselves humanists and it’s based on human values, and there is a huge crossover in those things.. (A female manager)

But equally, some participants were comfortable speaking in the idiom of Christian faith:

...take Christmas for example, I wouldn’t hesitate to talk about how the Christmas story illustrates God’s love for the poor and I simply caveat that with: “Those of us with faith might experience that story like that, and others might see how this story in history shapes our thinking”, and I don’t ask of people to subscribe to that translation, but I do feel free to share it. (A male senior manager)

One female trustee suggested how these connect: ‘but there is something about the force of belief in those Gospel values or whatever they want to call them, in this particular organisation that focuses that human value as well.’

The charities are interesting spaces in relation to the wider cultural assumption that faith is a private matter, and to the professional ethic which assumes that those providing services should not allow personal beliefs to be visible in their work.<sup>439</sup> It is not that there is any intensity of dialogue within the charities. As one manager commented, ‘you can’t tell who is Catholic and who is not, it’s assumed that you’re here to do the job’. Rather, it is evident that they have created cultures that are relaxed about expressions of faith,

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<sup>439</sup> As noted earlier, discourse about expressions of faith in public spaces is extensive. Faith-based or faith-related charities cross boundaries in this area. I note that the Code of Ethics for Social Work does not explicitly address the question of faith, but merely recommends maintaining ‘appropriate boundaries’. <[https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/basw\\_23237-8\\_0.pdf](https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/basw_23237-8_0.pdf)> (p. 10).

respectful of different ethics, resolutely non-proselytising and united by their commitment to an ethic with theological roots.<sup>440</sup> The common ground is found in confidence in the organisational narratives. One female manager commented that even though many of the staff are 'agnostic', 'they believe that our heritage and values do good'. A frontline worker from a different charity expressed the same view: 'I like the vision and I like the values, minus the God speak'.

I contend that this characteristic, of holding diverse ethical and faith commitments in balance with collective narratives grounded in Catholic social vision, has ecclesiological significance. At the most basic level, it takes seriously the prescription of *Gaudium et Spes* that the relationship between Church and world should be one of mutual help, exchange and accompaniment in 'preparing the ground for the Gospel'.<sup>441</sup> The charities' inclusiveness is a space in which snapshots and currents of dialogue between the Christian worldview and the diverse ethics of wider cultures take place, not in a systematic intellectual way, not even consciously, but through points of encounter between people and practices. This is another dimension of the conversational and embodied style of reasoning discussed as a civic virtue practice and a common good pathway in Chapter Seven. It also evidences some of the characteristics described by Michele Dillon in her exploration of the characteristics of the Church's post-secular engagement using Francis as an exemplar. These include: a communicative openness; accessible arguments; avoiding appeal to authority; using gestures or actions, and listening to diverse voices.<sup>442</sup> In taking seriously the secularity which inclusiveness brings into their organisational culture, the charities are enacting - whether consciously or not - the theological principle that the secular world is the place of God's redemptive work through the action of the Spirit, drawing people towards their ultimate good in God's life.

### **4.3 Ecclesial Peripheries: Spaces of Post-secular Rapprochement**

A useful framework for understanding what is happening in this area comes from the work of Paul Cloke and others working in the field of human geography, who have studied faith-based agencies responding to poverty and social exclusion. Drawing upon the thinking of Habermas about post-secularism, they argue that the agencies' work shows the limits of the secularization thesis. They develop the idea of 'post-secular rapprochement' to

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<sup>440</sup> Among the smaller signs of this relaxed culture are the religious iconography in some project settings or administrative offices, including a statue of St Vincent de Paul in the Depaul offices and a large framed print of Rembrandt's 'Prodigal Son' in the Cornerstone project.

<sup>441</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* (para 40).

<sup>442</sup> *Postsecular Catholicism: Relevance and Renewal*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) Chapter Three, 33-66.

characterise how faith-based organisations work with secular agencies to create ‘spaces of praxis in which secular and faith motivation collude in new forms of ethical citizenship’.<sup>443</sup> In these spaces of both care and resistance or subversion of neo-liberalism, they find a ‘crossing-over’ in the public arena between the religious and the secular.<sup>444</sup> Cloke and his colleagues argue that many faith-based organisations have a ‘stubborn adherence...to their theologically inspired ethical positions involving the practice of *caritas* and *agape*’.<sup>445</sup> However, the concept of ‘faith-based’ used here needs critical scrutiny. Cloke’s case studies are drawn from different Christian faith traditions with varying theological worldviews, underlining the difficulty of generalising on the basis of a single category. Nonetheless, what Cloke and others describe is recognisable in the charities considered in this research.

Cloke’s argument contrasts with the account given by Catholic theologian, John Coleman, in which he emphasises the risks of working in secular conditions. Coleman discusses the internal dynamics of what he terms ‘specialized Catholic institutions’, agencies that include significant numbers of non-Catholics and work in secular fields where they encounter pressures from competition and are subject to legal and funding requirements that ‘regulate their operations and sway’.<sup>446</sup> Using the work of Paul Dimaggio and Walter Powell, Coleman concludes that ‘institutional isomorphism tends, then, to eclipse any specialized organisational ethos, including religious ones’, making it ‘palpably more complex and difficult (but by no means impossible) to maintain a distinctively Catholic ethos’.<sup>447</sup> I agree with Coleman that it is difficult but not impossible to maintain a distinctive ethic rooted in Catholic inspiration; and counter-argue that it is not as difficult as he thinks. The organisations may be isomorphic in some elements, but in others they are tenacious in holding onto their version of what matters.

The inclusiveness and rapprochement found in the charities also recalls David Ranson’s concept of Catholic identity discovered through dialogue with otherness.<sup>448</sup> Otherness is found in the social worlds and ethics of an inclusive workforce as well as in the larger social realities in which the charities are embedded. But the nature of this dialogue is

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<sup>443</sup> Paul Cloke, Justin Beaumont, and Andrew Williams (eds), *Working Faith: Faith-Based Communities Involved In Justice* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2013) (p.16); Cloke, Jon May, and Sarah Johnsen, *Swept up Lives?: Re-Envisioning the Homeless City*, RGS-IBG Book Series (Chichester, West Sussex ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) (p. 2).

<sup>444</sup> Cloke, *Working Faith* (pp. 17-23).

<sup>445</sup> Cloke, *Working Faith* (p. 3).

<sup>446</sup> Coleman in *Blackwell Companion* (p. 7).

<sup>447</sup> Institutional isomorphism describes the process by which institutions within a sector gradually come to resemble each other in their norms and behaviour. See Coleman in *Blackwell Companion* (p. 11).

<sup>448</sup> See Chapter Five p. 100.

important. It is not an abstract process of reasoning but rather a dialogue through practice and reciprocal and mutual interpretation and ownership of organisational narratives. Its purpose matters. It is oriented towards shared ethical horizons, captured variously in concepts such as solidarity, service and justice, and interpreted in this research as enacting and constructing the common good. It is not aimed at evangelising, except in the broad sense in which any action involving Christians has an unavoidable communicative element.

## **5 Versions of Catholic Identity: Institutional Alignment and Other Possibilities**

In Chapter Four, I analysed how the charities' public texts variously explain their alignment to Catholic structures, faith and social vision, the public or espoused version of their identity. I also argued that there are resonances between their public narratives and Catholic social teaching, mapping elements from their public texts onto core principles of the official tradition. The data reviewed here provides operant perspectives on these issues, examining how participants understand their relationship to being Catholic and the extent to which Catholic social teaching and the *motu proprio* have an impact on their sense of identity and their work.

### **5.1 The Complexity of Being Catholic**

As noted earlier, only CSAN and Caritas Salford explicitly describe themselves as Catholic charities in their public identity, although all six charities draw resources from Catholic social vision and all have relationships with Catholic communities and/or religious congregations. In addition, five of the charities investigated belong to the sixth, Caritas Social Action Network, signalling a definite layer of institutional connection.

In practice, these organisational commitments stand above more complicated and open-ended perceptions. When I asked whether participants considered their organisation to be a Catholic charity and what this meant in practice, the responses were diverse and ruminative. Some replied positively, although often with qualifications and testing their own reasoning. One male senior manager's reply was typical: 'I find it difficult to ever respond in a yes-no way to that. I always feel the need, probably depending on the circumstances and the audience, to go through a kind of *spiel*'. For a few, the answer was negative: a frontline worker suggested that 'we've transitioned from that... maybe at the beginning ... but now we've gone mainstream'. Others used terms such as 'sort of', 'undefined', 'in the background' and 'at some levels', in their replies, and as their explanations expanded, it was evident that their reactions reflected underlying concerns. For some, the concern is that the charity is not, and should not, be 'religious', which seems

to mean overt religious practices or religiosity, and/or a desire to proselytise.<sup>449</sup> Others simply didn't see how their organisation could be Catholic when the workforce includes Muslim and other faith stances. Some feared that too overt an identity would repel clients or funders, or alienate staff members. These reactions also reflected puzzlement. As one senior manager commented: 'I mean, it has a culture definitely, but it's not, I don't think, it certainly doesn't impact on the front line staff in making them think in a certain way, I don't think, except in a positive way'. There was uncertainty at what it could or should mean at the ground level of practice, not least because the operative influence is their narrative rather than an identity associated with institutional structures or what one participant described as 'strict religious impact'. Often it was the associations of institutional alignment that seemed problematic. In some interviews with senior figures, I probed further, asking if they saw the charity as part of the social mission of the Church, even if not 'a Catholic charity', and this drew positive replies: 'I believe that what we do is in the name of the Church'; 'I think we are part of the continuity of social justice within the Catholic Church.' There is an interesting space here in-between the institutional structures and wider mission of the Church. The data illustrates the porous boundaries of the Church's mission, especially in its social dimensions. The participants' replies support the argument that their Catholicity is not institutionally shaped even if they are committed to sustaining institutional links. This reflects Coleman's recognition that such organisations are not 'inner ecclesial units', like parishes or dioceses, but 'a distinct face of the Church, the face of the Church as a public citizen, a leaven in society', serving the common good and co-operating with people of good will, using their values to include rather than exclude.<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>449</sup> Some of the literature on faith-based organisations found in the field of organisational studies uses categories and markers of religiosity in analysis, including, for example, 'service religiosity', which covers whether staff 'incorporate religion into their interaction with clients'. See Helen Rose Ebaugh, Janet S. Chafetz, and Paula F. Pipes, 'Where's the Faith in Faith-Based Organizations? Measures and Correlates of Religiosity in Faith-Based Social Service Coalitions', *Social Forces*, 84 (2006), 2259–72. In 'Identifying Characteristics of "Religious" Organisations: An Exploratory Proposal' in *Sacred Companies: Organizational Aspects of Religion And Religious Aspects of Organizations*, ed. by N. J. Demerath (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) Thomas Jeavons proposes a typology in which religiosity appears throughout the categories. This material explores what makes faith-based organisations different from other organisations, locating the difference in 'religiosity'. However, many of the studies take a very generic approach, including churches and church run projects as well as autonomous faith-related charities, losing the specificity of particular traditions and of independent but ecclesially linked organisations. It also suggests that 'religiosity' or 'religiousness' is itself a problematic concept, at least from a Catholic perspective. It seems to assume that the coherence between an agency's work and the outflow of its rootedness in Christian faith are measured by external and/or visible signs or 'religious' behaviours, an assumption which is inadequate at best.

<sup>450</sup> Coleman in *Blackwell Companion* (p. 412).

Other elements in the replies extend the delineation of porous boundaries of mission, indicating positive dynamics. Most were clear that they recognise and own their Catholic roots or foundation, even if some pragmatically adjust how they present these according to the audience involved. They found other resources in the diffuse relationships they described. One manager reflected that the Catholic background gives ‘a confidence, actually; I think [the charity] doesn’t have to keep second guessing itself’. Others mentioned the sense of being anchored, and how this provided more resources to question and manage complexities, including the principles which challenge other ethics and narratives. One female service manager reflected:

...there’s a kind of rootedness as well, which its background and I suppose the Catholic legacy gives it, and I suppose that’s more accentuated, because secular places, if you like - I suppose this is secular - there are other organisations that are in such a mess, that this feels like people like that kind of solidity as well.

The complex boundary space is both intra-personal and inter-personal. Some described personal compromises. For one front-line worker who is not a church member, this means ‘juggling’ with elements of the organisation and reserving her personal position in relation to some organisational commitments. For a female trustee who is not a Catholic:

I struggle with some of the Catholic teaching on specific issues, that wouldn’t be a surprise to anyone. I’m sure there are many women and many men in the Catholic Church who have a strong faith who may also struggle with some of those teachings, so I also kind of balance it ethically in mind.

Ultimately there was recognition that at the frontline of their work, it is the impact of their values that matters, not the source of those values. Even among Catholic participants – and sometimes more strongly expressed by those who were Catholics - there was concern not to claim as exclusively Catholic the motivations and commitments shared across confessional and ethical boundaries. Their commitment to inclusiveness seeped out of many answers, sometimes suggesting a default expectation that being Catholic is associated with exclusiveness or boundaries. A few recognised that they inhabit a ‘both-and’ kind of world, balancing Catholic connections and roots with inclusive cultures.

The data demonstrates the empirical complexity of being Catholic. The combination of thoughtful openness and principled critical awareness found in participants’ perceptions expands and problematizes Benedict’s expectation that those working in Catholic charities should ‘share or at least respect’ their Catholic identity.<sup>451</sup> It is not an easy or simple matter, in the conditions of secularity, to achieve this, given the hinterland associated with Catholicism described earlier.

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<sup>451</sup> *Motu proprio* (art. 7.1).

## 5.2 Institutional Relationships and the Impact of the *Motu Proprio*

Within these complicated perceptions, the charities' connections with institutional Catholic structures are important. They are visible and real relationships. Those in senior roles pointed to the value of having religious sisters, bishops, priests or Bishops' Conference staff among their trustees. Several participants described the significance of belonging to CSAN. One CEO described this as

the common thread by which we are linked, that we share a common vision... the network [is] bound by a common compulsion to live out God's love in a very practical way, particularly looking at the poorest of the poor.

For another, 'it's part of valuing our Catholic heritage', and for senior staff, CSAN provides a worthwhile peer group; 'my kind of sense of linkage is with the other directors'. A female manager described how CSAN's advocacy work is a way to amplify their voice:

It's great to be part of CSAN because we're linked with other Caritas organisations across the country and together we can advocate at a political level and lobby on decisions like housing and accommodation and welfare, and that's important, I don't think we do enough of that, to have our voice, collectively, make sure our voice is heard.

Alongside these positive relationships, the influence of the *motu proprio* was occasionally evident. As it is such an obscure document, I asked only those in senior roles whether they were familiar with the text. A handful knew what it said or could reflect on its impact, principally those in CSAN and Caritas Salford. For those familiar with the text, it was seen as part of the context that prompted the move towards establishing diocesan Caritas structures, which in turn reflected the impact of Pope Benedict's visit to the UK and the re-assessment of Catholic charities promoted by the wider concerns about identity discussed in Chapter Three. They also acknowledged fears associated with its impact. One senior figure noted that 'it was potentially divisive and potentially making the tent smaller' as 'it would have reinforced the authoritarian role of people looking at you, judging you, saying that you're Catholic or not by some criteria that you wouldn't want to buy into in the first place'. They asserted that in practice, changes in their own strategies, structures and identity followed local discernment rather than an external directive. The *motu proprio* may have raised the questions, but the answers have been locally determined.

### 5.3 The Charities' Relationship to CST

Most of the charities refer to Catholic social teaching in their organisational narratives.<sup>452</sup> However, the majority of participants in the research know little about Catholic social teaching.<sup>453</sup> Some knew it existed, and had a hazy idea of what it was about:

I've just dealt with that by thinking it's doing good...

..It sounds like a moral code to me...

I suppose it's living the Gospel...

I don't think the teaching is terribly complicated, I mean, love thy neighbour is pretty straightforward as a concept...

..it's very much about inclusiveness and putting voices across, so the way I've interpreted it here, it's about voice...

I wish I knew more about it, I'm kind of intrigued, it plays to some of my personal thoughts really, about a broad body of teaching that can be applied in different circumstances for the betterment of society.<sup>454</sup>

Others have begun to explore its resources. A manager who was a member of an evangelical church had encountered CST for the first time when he joined the charity. He had been familiar with 'great examples of Catholic charity like Mother Theresa', but 'now I realise that there's really clearly articulated themes that are being promoted in schools and through our literature, like caritas in action and stuff, all of which I completely agree with'.<sup>455</sup> Those in senior roles recognised that few of their staff or volunteers were familiar with CST. One experienced trustee estimated 'I would say it's less than 10%', half the proportion found in this research. However, none saw this limited knowledge as problematic. A male trustee in a senior Catholic position commented:

What I like though, is that people see what they're doing, like what they're doing, see the purpose behind it, and if someone says, well, it's part of CST, well that's fine, but I'm actually doing this because I see the purpose and the point and the value of doing it.

Another trustee relied on the coherence between the teaching and the organisational narratives: 'if the question is, are we behaving in the spirit of the objects,

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<sup>452</sup> See Chapter Four.

<sup>453</sup> Overall, 19% of the research participants had more than minimal familiarity. The proportion varied in each charity.

<sup>454</sup> These excerpts are drawn from participants at all levels of the case study charities.

<sup>455</sup> Caritas Salford also runs a Caritas Ambassador Programme in diocesan schools in which they train groups of pupils in CST principles and assist them to develop an action plan. See *Annual Review 2017* (p. 18).

where the objects reflect social teaching, and social teaching reflects doctrine, then yes, I think we can see those things’.

Although the proportion of participants in the frontline charities with substantial knowledge of CST was small and confined to those in senior roles, the way in which they integrate its principles into conversational exploration and into their leadership vision and narrative was striking. They interpreted using the core concepts, drawing out connections to their own motivations and the work of their charities, and at the same time, offering critique of the principles from their own experience. For a female senior manager:

The whole thing about Catholic social teaching, and how it works, is about ensuring not only that the poor are not poor, but the things that disempower and disadvantage and, in fact, keep them in captivity almost, are challenged, whilst at the same time you are dealing with the effects of those things.

But when applied to her client group and their context, ‘it’s never been radical enough’.

In two of the charities in which a higher proportion of participants had greater familiarity with CST, it is used in significant ways in their work. According to a senior staff member, CSAN determines membership of its network by requiring that member charities are ‘grounded in Catholic social teaching’. They also aim to ground their policy work in CST principles although they recognise that this is challenging in practice. One staff member commented;

I think there’s a huge gap in the Church in England and Wales, where we do the micro level work, but how do we raise our game, because we want to do system change. But to do that with a distinct Catholic voice, we need to have our own depth and integrity theologically. Where is that going to come from?

He argued that the ‘positive counter-narrative’ that CST enables, based on its fundamental principles, is insufficiently realised.

Housing Justice participants also knew and used CST in addressing audiences in church or local community settings. For a staff member frequently involved in public speaking,

...the two that I talk about are solidarity and the universal destination of human goods....particularly the latter is the one I’m most often bringing up because it isn’t one of the ones people normally talk about but it fits so well with the idea that houses are homes and not assets and we need to think about how we use them.

As an ecumenical charity, Housing Justice also draws on other Christian social ethical resources, but they are comfortable using CST. As a trustee who is not a Catholic explained, this works

...because it’s deeply rooted, it’s deeply biblical, it emerges straight out of the tradition of the undivided church really. And we are quite ... not only relaxed but

enthusiastic about embracing that, so I think that flows into the current sort of ecumenical social engagement and social justice engagement very naturally.

However, Housing Justice participants also admitted that using CST in determining advocacy positions related to public policy is complicated. One senior figure described their approach in this area as pragmatic, ‘actually working it out almost on the hoof’, sometimes reactive and sometimes identifying neglected issues, although ‘we would want to aspire at least to make sure that our response in those scenarios is informed by and is true to our particular heritage’. The connection between their public voice and the principles of CST is found in their methodology, discerning the demands of justice and working from the perspective of listening to the voices of those who live and work on the streets.

Reflecting on this aspect of the data, I conclude that the relationship between the charities and Catholic social teaching does not achieve as much as the tradition expects or assumes or the charities’ work deserves. The ‘corpus’ model barely penetrates in any depth. Even if a few influential individuals know the documents, and a few for whom this task is integral to their work wrestle with what it means to connect the principles to complex social realities, for most of those involved in the charities, there is almost no real connection. This means they don’t develop a stable awareness of their work as enacting a larger Catholic social vision as well as expressing their particular narratives; and nor do they access the insights and principles which might resonate with their inclusive cultures and strengthen the framework and voice of their practice. In turn, the normative tradition’s reach is limited by the absence of substantive strategies for listening to their experience and developing both local and middle level perspectives. Even where Catholic social teaching is seen as a tool and a source, engagement is not seen as dialogical or participatory, but rather the one-way street described by Stichel.<sup>456</sup>

## **6 Space for Spirituality? Elements of the Transcendent**

The final theme that emerges from the data concerns spirituality and the transcendent. Most of the charities had some involvement with liturgical worship. Examples of what takes place included an occasional Mass to celebrate an anniversary, an annual ecumenical service to commemorate by name homeless people who had died on the streets and an annual Mass to remember Cardinal Hume. These were generally voluntary events, valuable as a dimension of relationship to lived Catholic or Christian faith, drawing the organisational narratives into the performative reality of worship. Alongside these public religious events, participants in the front-line charities searched for language

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<sup>456</sup> See Chapter Five, p.115.

to describe a dimension to their work that is not the same as religious practices and which they identify in indistinct ways as 'spiritual'. One female manager worker commented, 'it does feel like quite a spiritual place... because it's not part of the commercial world, and because there are these values about respecting other people'. For a female volunteer, it is how 'the goodness of people comes through... a sort of general spirituality, a general regard for each other and the goodness of people.' For a male senior manager, describing the way people are welcomed;

I think it has a comfort for people, there's something here that people get that they don't necessarily get from an advice centre. The welcome, and the stuff we get from clients, they see us more as a kind of warm place to be, rather than just getting a service. .. If that's spiritual, I definitely think there's something there like that.

There are organisational habits that support this which varied considerably. In two of the charities, the on-site chapels were available to everyone, including clients, for quiet time. In Cornerstone the staff and volunteers spend a few minutes in prayer each day before the Centre opens, and a voluntary prayer group involving staff and clients meets weekly. In Depaul UK, board meetings start with a reflection on their values linked to St Vincent de Paul and connecting to clients' experience, each carefully crafted in order not to assume Christian faith but inviting openness to elements of transcendence. A female trustee commented;

I don't have a spiritual bone in my body... it calms me down when I hear that reflection. It focuses me and it takes me away from the rest of the world, and I'm concentrating within an environment – it's not a bubble – but an environment in which I'm thinking about the values that we have, that are part of this organisation.

There is a sense in several comments that this area of their organisational life could be taken further. One manager commented that 'we're trying to get better across the whole to provide staff with a greater sense of opportunity to, I guess, explore spirituality and well-being'. There is a slight wariness about being intentional in this area. It is more about a potential within their work, which may or may not be noticed or found. The elements of the spiritual that participants describe are inclusive, open to all faiths but also to people who do not profess faith. This is an area where the charities are helped by trustees and others who bring a depth of ecclesial understanding and offer resources to staff and volunteers and organisational culture.

This element of the charities' cultures and practices mixes hospitable openness to explicit religious practices in some settings, and sensitive awareness that there are dimensions to their communal work – and to the lives of many of their clients - that reach

beyond material social goods and social flourishing and include either or both spiritual or religious dimensions. If spirituality is broadly concerned with openness to the transcendent, the charities enable this openness in subtle ways, but remain wary of paying too much attention in explicit ways, although it often lies implicated in concepts such as resilience and well-being.<sup>457</sup> The isomorphic pull of secular professional expectations may be felt here, but it does not entirely dominate. There is potential here for further research; I reflected after several interviews that these questions were rarely asked, and that the tentative awareness and openness I found could be encouraged to grow.

## 7 Conclusion

The Catholicity of the charities is not worn as a badge, nor constituted primarily in their links to the institutional Church or by the proportion of their staff who are Catholic. I argue throughout this thesis that it is substantially expressed in how the charities' practices enact the instincts and intuitions of Catholic social vision. The data discussed in this chapter discloses how their practices are tethered to that vision in diverse ways through narratives and relationships that mediate and sustain their particular grasp on Catholicity, a grasp that I argue is both sufficient and generative. It is Catholicity enacted in the conditions of secularity, inviting participation and ownership across faith and ethical boundaries. It has both stable and contingent elements, strengths and risks. The stability lies in core elements of the organisational narratives and the relationships with Catholic faith communities; the risks arise because sustaining Catholicity needs internal leadership commitment and empathetic understanding from institutional Catholic figures and structures. Two kinds of configuration to Catholic wholeness operate here. The primary configuration is in how the narratives embed instincts rooted in the Gospel and articulated normatively in Catholic social teaching. In the secondary configuration, the connective tissue of governance structures, relationships with religious charisms and other strands of belonging hold the charities within reach of visible Catholic faith community, enabling access to the lived experience of those instincts.

Reading the charities' practices through the lens of the common good provided a thick description of how a deep instinct from Catholic social vision and normative teaching

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<sup>457</sup> The potential for greater attention to this theme is indicated in research by Carwyn Gravell for Lemos and Crane; *Lost and Found: Faith and Spirituality in the lives of homeless people* (London: Lemos and Crane, 2013). See <<https://www.lemosandcrane.co.uk/resources/LostandFound.pdf>> [accessed 23.09.2018] Gravell found that a majority of the homeless people interviewed described themselves as religious in various ways, and appreciative of the opportunity to engage in conversation in religious matters, yet for the agencies providing services, religion, faith or spirituality were seen as 'out of bounds' (p. 7). Gravell proposes that faith and spirituality concerns should be integrated into services for homeless people.

can be recognised. Locating the Catholicity of their narratives and relationships discloses the theological potential and meaning available. The charities embody a communal recognition that human fulfilment and flourishing are mutual and reciprocal, that ‘the stranger at the gate’ is the concern and hope of salvation for each and for all. We share the task of co-creating the conditions that enable the good of all, which for those who profess Christian faith is the vision of the Kingdom. Within this deep instinct lie insights from the Gospel, even if these are infrequently articulated or even recognised as such. This intuition is enacted in diverse ways; for some, in ways that arise directly from personal Christian faith and cohere with Benedict’s description of *caritas*. Others find motivations or resonances in values they experience as ‘human’ or secular. The Catholicity of the charities also comes into focus in their openness to finding common ground with other ethics, reflecting what Charles Taylor describes as unity across difference, rather than unity through identity.<sup>458</sup> The inclusiveness of the charities is constitutive of their Catholicity, in which the particularity of their narratives engages people across differences into common commitment to a relational and political task that also has theological significance and horizons.

Two questions also emerge. The first arises from the rather muted role of normative CST in the charities’ practices. It is not that the practices or the narratives lack consonance with the insights articulated in the normative tradition, but rather that the resources of CST have so little purchase on their actual thinking and work. This does not diminish the charities’ fidelity to their narratives but it does prompt a question about how the papal texts could become useful and accessible. In Chapter Five I proposed a different approach, viewing social mission actors as participants in a co-constructed ecclesial practice, so that both their work and the tradition of CST can be enriched and expanded. The ways in which the participants inhabited their organisational narratives illuminates both the challenges and the possibilities of working differently with the conceptual resources held in CST texts.

The second question is ecclesiological. The charities differ in their relationships to institutional ecclesial structures, some tightly coupled and others connecting through the combination of charismatic freedom and ordered structures of religious congregations, or in other ways. However they all have inclusive workforces and all are embedded or engage with wider social and political fields. The ambivalence recounted in the data about being a Catholic charity and in participants’ perceptions of the Catholic Church describes an

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<sup>458</sup> *A Catholic Modernity* (p. 14).

important peripheral space, a porous boundary zone, in which several dynamics collide. It is the space at the edges of the visible Church, where its mission is happening, with degrees of autonomy that sometimes troubles the institution and where the boundaries are difficult to discern. It is also the ecclesiological gap in which the status, mandate and recognition of communal lay-led work deserves greater attention. Their experience prompts a question about how to take seriously the principle that goodness and elements of the Gospel are found in the ethics and commitments people bring. It is important to resist colonising these or interpreting them as grounds for conversion, and also to hear the challenge they offer in their perceptions of the Church. Their critique is complex, mixed with the themes and ideologies of the cultures of modernity and post-modernity, secularity and post-secularity, and important for precisely that reason.<sup>459</sup> These are the spaces of secularity that the charities bring within reach, where a common commitment provides a ground on which to meet. The communal structures that the charities constitute, and the hospitality they construct, are not ecclesial but they are authentic places of enacted Catholicity which hold ecclesiological significance.

The problem inherent in this latter question, which is also embedded in the ecclesial politics of Catholic identity, is the assumption of clear boundaries and markers which indicate what it means to be Catholic. The Catholic Church in its teaching holds tight boundaries in many areas, boundaries that are increasingly interrogated by contemporary experience and concerns. Yet Catholicity interpreted through the ecclesiological vision of Vatican II proposes a more expansive and inclusive scope and reality, in which the salvific purpose of God is served by many diverse hands, within the hospitality of the spaces on the edge. The charities invite the institutional Church, and its local communities, to explore a larger Catholicity, a more complex territory, but secured by the common ground of the work that they do.

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<sup>459</sup> Ormond Rush underlines the importance of 'dialogic openness to the perspectives and contexts of the intended receivers of the proclamation, whether they be believers or non-believers'. But in practice, there is often insufficient attention to the freedom and insights of those termed 'receivers'. 'Towards a Comprehensive Interpretation of the Council and its Documents', *Theological Studies*, Vol 73 (2012), 547-71, (p. 55). I note that Rush also uses the concept of rapprochement to describe the dialogue.

## Chapter Nine: 'We are all really responsible for all': Towards a Fuller Theological Account of the Charities

### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 Towards Fresh Articulation of the Church in Social Mission

The task of listening to the theological meanings and insights disclosed in voices of practice and discovering how these might reconfigure doctrine is not straightforward. In theological action research, the aim is to work towards 'a complex theology disclosed through a conversational method', but the orientation towards 'formative transformation of practice' is stronger than the confidence expressed about how the enterprise can refresh formal or normative theology.<sup>460</sup> Indeed Watkins acknowledges that the 'results' of a theological action research approach are difficult to summarise as systematic.<sup>461</sup> I return therefore to Murray's concept of pragmatic coherence, in which he proposes that the theological significance of empirical work is found in how it tests doctrinal articulations and performed expression, opening up possibilities of refreshment. He recognises that what he terms 'naturalist looking' involves seeing also through frames of analysis drawn from social sciences, an unavoidable ingredient of any disciplined empirical work.<sup>462</sup> For Murray, the purpose of dialogue between the empirical and the systematic is 'critical-constructive', serving to hold to account, ameliorate the discordant and re-configure the systematic picture, bringing things to 'fresh articulation'.<sup>463</sup> This chapter offers a modest contribution to the kind of work Murray proposes, limited to a particular context and field but nonetheless validating the potential offered by empirical research and asserting its constructive contours.

Like Murray, I take ecclesiological questions to be concerned with how 'to live before and within the reality of God as known by the Church', assuming the normative Catholic framework in which the Church is the privileged – but not the only - place of encounter with the divine.<sup>464</sup> But I propose a wider understanding of the Church than

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<sup>460</sup> *Talking about God*, (pp. 56-8).

<sup>461</sup> Watkins, 'What counts as theology in studying the Church?' (p.181). Other accounts talk about empirical work correcting or chastening formal theology, language which evokes power dynamics. In contrast, theological action research seeks to avoid privileging any voice over another, an approach which reflects the underlying principle that all four voices can narrate theology. I would add the importance of working with the different voices on equal terms, in other words, using equally thick accounts of each voice.

<sup>462</sup> Murray, 'Living Truth' (pp. 268-9).

<sup>463</sup> Murray, 'Living Truth' (p. 262).

<sup>464</sup> Murray, 'Living Truth' (pp. 256-7); see also Swinton and Mowat (p. 9).

Murray indicates, with greater attention to its social existence and mission, looking at what happens at and beyond institutional boundaries. I contend that the collaborative and inclusive work of the charities in the conditions of secularity is part of living ‘before and within the reality of God’. The distinction made by Murray, between fields of social and political mission and what he terms ‘the ecclesiastical proper’ of church structures, ministries and theological frameworks, is problematic if the diaconal work of the whole Church in all the places connected to Catholic inspiration is, as Benedict states, the Church ‘doing what corresponds to her nature’.<sup>465</sup> I argue that the social mission of the Church is rightfully part of ‘the ecclesiastical proper’, in which Catholicity can be recognised and sustained although in different structures and dynamics.<sup>466</sup> This research illuminates how the diaconal dimension of the Church gains fresh articulation from recognising the work done on and across ecclesial boundaries in stable communal modes of social engagement. Such recognition points to the inadequacies of the ‘two planes’ model of responsibilities for social mission found in normative texts and begins to resolve the ecclesiological gap discussed in earlier chapters.<sup>467</sup> This is what it means to interpret the institutionally developed social teaching and enacted social mission as an interconnected ecclesial practice.

## 1.2 Finding the Theological Voice of the Data

Throughout the research, I reflected on how the charities embody and disclose in their practices particular dynamics of God’s salvific work in the conditions of a plural secular culture and society. There are different ways of reading the charities theologically; for example, by attending to whether and how people speak about God, and how organisational culture supports or inhibits such speech, and what this implies or enables in their work. Such an enquiry would illuminate challenges and possibilities in relation to expressive faith and evangelising, but was not my primary interest. Similarly, taking the approach of ‘ordinary theology’, I could have looked for the ways people express

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<sup>465</sup> Murray discusses the debates arising from Nicholas Healy’s proposal of ecclesiological ethnography and points to Bretherton’s empirical engagement in *Christianity and Contemporary Politics* as a working out of what Healy proposes. However, he regards Bretherton’s arena of social mission as not part of the ‘ecclesiastical proper’. (p. 253-4) In contrast, Benedict affirms that *diakonia*, ‘the ministry of charity organised in a communitarian orderly way’ is part of the ‘fundamental structure of the Church’. *Deus Caritas Est* (para 21). However, as discussed earlier, although he includes ‘the church’s charitable organisations’ in this ecclesial self-understanding, Benedict restricts his interpretation of *diakonia*, excluding the work of justice.

<sup>466</sup> The argument is particular to the conditions of Western Europe; the scope of this research does not allow for comparative consideration of other contexts.

<sup>467</sup> See Chapter Five for an explanation of distinction of planes model and the ecclesiological gap I analyse.

theological meanings in how they talk about their work, although such an approach would have raised other questions given that participants came from diverse faith and ethical backgrounds.<sup>468</sup>

However my interest is not in the individual stance taken by each participant but rather in what happens when a diverse group of people communally and inclusively enact a faith-connected narrative orientated towards the good of persons and the transformation of social structures to which we all belong. In viewing the charities as a group of communal actors with intrinsic and constitutive relationships to wider ecclesial bodies and traditions, I step back from the rich voices of individuals, whilst also recognising that those voices and each charity's particularity enact the dynamics I discuss. This is an unavoidable peril for the empirical researcher; to hold in tension the irreducible value of each voice, and yet also to propose insights from the middle ground perspective, seeking patterns of meaning that are disclosed across the particularities. The communal dynamic is however not just a way to access a broader theme; it is also a parameter with theological significance. I argue that the stability and public presence inherent to the charities create particular kinds of space in which their narratives are consistently enacted, reaching beyond what individuals alone or intra-ecclesial voluntary activities can achieve, participating in a larger task. In other words, just as ecclesial structures enable participation in God's salvific purposes – but cannot limit or confine the divine action - so too the communal and public structures of charities rooted in Catholic intuitions hospitably carry a potential for and enactment of co-operation with the salvific purposes of God in the arena of the social order. Their public location and inclusive character are constitutive of this potential.

Once I began to notice and pay attention to the directional elements of the common good, my theological discernment was influenced by what I saw through that conceptual lens. The theological reading which emerged is both a claim about the ultimate horizon towards which the proximate common good and its subsidiary goods are oriented in the Catholic understanding, and a validation of the meaning in the charities' levels of practice, the nested layers of how they work, and what they do. Looking through the lens of the common good grounded a theological reading in empirical detail so that the theology was not hovering above but verifiable in points of encounter and dialogue between explicitly theological insights and the directional elements of the common good discernible

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<sup>468</sup> Associated with Jeff Astley who defines it as 'the reflective God-talk of those who are largely untouched by the concepts, arguments and concerns that academic theology takes for granted'. 'Afterword: some reflections on implicit religion and ordinary theology' in *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*, 16.9, (2013), 975-978 (p. 975) Astley's concept is explored in *Ordinary Theology: Looking, listening and learning in theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

in the empirical realities explored. The specific focus also led to the critical-constructive resources with which to pose questions to formal and normative voices. Thus I experienced an iterative process, operating across levels of discourse, a dialectic between theory and empirical reality. Reading the data through a primary conceptual lens testifies to how the intuitions of the Gospel expressed in Catholic social teaching and the principles and insights derived from human reasoning have much in common, and illuminate each other, revealing overflows and reciprocal challenges as well as resonances. There is validation here of Benedict's call for profound and ongoing dialogue between secular rationality and religious faith in order to promote 'the good of our civilisation'.<sup>469</sup>

### 1.3 Re-making Social Bonds in the Interests of the Kingdom

In the first part of this chapter, I set out the primary theological meaning I see in the charities' work. I argue that their *diakonia* is participation in the re-making of social bonds in the interests of the Kingdom, enacting deep Catholic concern for the salvation of all, and asserting the implications, captured in the quotation from John Paul II's *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* which heads this chapter.<sup>470</sup> This is what Susan K. Wood terms 'the social aspect of salvation', concerned not just with those who are visibly members of the Church or of other traditions or faiths, but the whole of humanity.<sup>471</sup> It corresponds to the sacramentality of the Church, acting as a sign and instrument of the unity in which God created all people and all creation, and its task of proclaiming and establishing God's Kingdom.<sup>472</sup> I also draw from the Conciliar vision the principle that the Spirit acts freely at and beyond the boundaries of the Church, in and through many actors, in order to interpret the inclusiveness of the charities. In the second part, I explore how the empirical data interrupts and refreshes theoretical debates. The rich inner dynamics of the charities' work disclose theological insights about the salvific contours of human interdependence. The third part then draws back into ecclesiology and proposes a reading of the charities as participation in the prophetic dimension of ecclesial mission. In all three sections, I argue for new spaces of interpretation and use of the perspectives and methodology of *Gaudium et Spes*.

<sup>469</sup> Benedict XVI, *Address* in Westminster Hall, September 2010.

<sup>470</sup> Para 38, defining solidarity in relation to the common good.

<sup>471</sup> Susan K. Wood, 'Eucharist and Society', *Modern Theology* 30.2 (2014) (p. 360); *Lumen Gentium* Chapter Two (paras 9-17).

<sup>472</sup> *Lumen Gentium* (paras 1-5).

## 2 The Social Aspect of Salvation

### 2.1 The Theological Meaning of Social Relationships and the Social Order

In Hollenbach's words, people are created by God not simply as individuals but with 'a need and a destiny for community'.<sup>473</sup> I contend that the charities' work concerns the implications of the social nature of human persons and our interdependence in the matter of seeking fulfilment, which in turn points to our ultimate destiny. The Catholic intuition that the salvific work of God involves our communal relationships and the entirety of the social order as well as our personal response, through faith and/or moral conscience, is enacted in the relational and public work of the charities as agents of Catholic social mission, ecclesially linked but operating across an indeterminate boundary between Church and world. Their work enabling clients, staff and volunteers to pursue their own fulfilment, wrestling with both personal and structural factors, is an embodied social ethic rooted in mediated theological insights. They co-operate with God's salvific work not by extending the membership of the visible Church but by strengthening the social bonds of humanity and calling political structures towards the good of all, in practices configured by their values to faith-derived truths.<sup>474</sup> Their particular contribution centres on restoring the potential to flourish of people for whom this has been damaged or constrained, through personalised relational commitment. They disclose how asymmetric relationships become ultimately reciprocal, not just for those directly involved, but with wider import. Thus they point to the possibility of a social order in which all can flourish, through recognition of human interdependence structured by a truthful account of human personhood and the meaning of societal or civic life. For some, this recognition coalesces with, or arises from, Christian faith; for others, it inheres in ethics, practices and moments of openness to meanings beyond the material. The charities intentionally make 'the stranger outside the gate' into a neighbour and citizen; and in doing so, communally and in their personnel, they also flourish.<sup>475</sup>

I contend that their mode of lived Catholicity in secular public spaces constitutes an under-recognised expansion and fullness of the *opus proprium*. They are among the new 'carriers' of the social message of the Gospel, mediating it through a narrative chain into a social ethic.<sup>476</sup> Their configuration to a social ethic in which theological insights arising from

<sup>473</sup> Hollenbach on *Gaudium et Spes* in Himes, *Commentaries, Second Edition* (p. 283).

<sup>474</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* explains 'strengthening the fabric of human society' as one of the three ways that the Church participates in the salvific purpose of God (para 40).

<sup>475</sup> Charles Taylor, *Catholic Modernity?* (p. 31).

<sup>476</sup> Coleman discusses the role of 'sociological carriers' of what he terms 'social Catholicism'. Surveying the US scene, he identifies existing 'vehicles' to translate the tradition into 'policy and

Christian Revelation are embedded combines elements of stability with a challenging contingency. Their Catholicity differs from that of the ecclesial community gathered by liturgy and worship. It is structured by the demands of working within the conditions of secularity. Their practice of solidarity, which is oriented towards the good of persons and the conditions which impede or restrict their flourishing, acts as a micro-narrative with political outflow.<sup>477</sup>

In the Catholic theological framework, the building and sustaining of social bonds, of human community at every level from the local to the global, in order to restore the unity of the human community, is axiomatic. Both *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* begin by affirming that God created all of humanity as a unity, sharing an ultimate destiny in God's reign.<sup>478</sup> Theologically, Catholic teaching holds that all that disrupts human community, that divides and excludes, is a result of human sin, and yet also redeemed and restored in Christ. The social mission of the Church exists in the tension between human sinfulness and human fulfilment, between present reality and ultimate destiny. The task of creating a global human community in which no-one is excluded, in which all can reach for fulfilment in and through social relationships, is the business of the Church too. The theological ground is clear, and its translation into the ethic of Catholic social teaching follows. The common good as an ethical concept is implied by this theological truth. If humanity is a single body, drawn by the Spirit towards a saving unity, all that serves and expresses its unity, its good, must be common, not just in terms of ultimate destiny, but also in the proximate social conditions that build and sustain human solidarity. In the Catholic framework, this unity, and the bonds through which it is constructed, must reflect the truth about human persons. The bonds are not a matter of consensus or alliance but rather founded in what truly serves the mutual human fulfilment of all, recalling Riordan's criteria, that every dimension of human well-being is included, and every person.

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middle axioms' and proposes 'imagining even further alternatives'. I think Coleman is right to identify the need for expanded consideration of actors, although the concept of 'carrier' unhelpfully reduces the agency and insight of communal practitioners. 'The Future of Catholic Social Thought' in Himes (ed.) *Commentaries, Second Edition* (pp. 624-6).

<sup>477</sup> The underpinning anthropology is important here, but this reading is about the organisations rather than individual actors, and so does not explore anthropological foundations. The account given by Meghan Clark in *The Vision of Catholic Social Teaching* covers the anthropological ground usefully in her Chapter Two, drawing on Charles Taylor's work and discussing the dialogical nature of the self. Clark's primary argument proceeds in a different direction, forging the connection between solidarity and promotion of human rights, referencing but not exploring the common good, and her treatment of solidarity is theoretical rather than empirically based, but still has many points of contact with this work.

<sup>478</sup> *Lumen Gentium* (para 1), *Gaudium et Spes* (para 1).

In making this argument, I tug the shape of Catholic social vision concerning charities in a different direction. This reading differs from Benedict XVI's account of charitable organisations as concerned with *caritas*, and from the *motu proprio's* elision of *diakonia* and *caritas*, and proposes a complementary paradigm consistent with primary conciliar ecclesiological themes. In focusing on the theological ground and purpose evoked by work for the common good, I propose that diaconal activity is not only *caritas*; it includes other social tasks which the common good brings into focus. This larger social vision does resonate with the teaching of *Caritas in Veritate*, but Benedict's argument there is not tethered either to charities as a specific sector of Catholic mission or indeed to any particular actors, ecclesial or otherwise. The hermeneutic lens of the common good, a conceptual framework that reaches beyond *caritas* and approaches social justice from a different angle, enables a re-construction in which actors, both ecclesial and autonomous, become visible. It is important here to emphasise the authority of the empirical voice. This re-shaped understanding is what the charities are already doing; the task for the normative voice is to pay attention and learn. Those who work in the charities described their work in ways that reached beyond merely helping people in need, and some were uncomfortable with the idea of 'charity' or with seeing themselves as 'helping'. Rather, they spoke about their work in terms of what it means to be members of a social body, committed to building a better society. They refuse to see anyone as 'other', even in the fragmented realities of post-modern culture and politics, and they see public and political structures as their business, taking citizenship, or civic virtue, seriously, in a low key but tenacious commitment. Their stance includes compassion – both the *caritas* described by Benedict in *Deus Caritas Est*, and the rational shape of that emotion described by Martha Nussbaum – but their compassion is located in a differently shaped enterprise from that described by Benedict.<sup>479</sup> Their practice pursues goods beyond response to individual needs and constructs social and civic belonging. In their entanglement with social and political structures, they reach beyond solidarity into the complexity of creating a good – or at least a better – social order. The theological meaning in the data is located in the multiple intricate ways that participants affirm shared humanity and give freedom-enhancing and load-bearing support, and in their sense of what is needed to create not only different life chances and conditions for flourishing but also a different *polis*, the kind of *polis* in which

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<sup>479</sup> See Martha Nussbaum, 'Compassion: The Basic Social Emotion', *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 13 (1996), 27–58. Nussbaum argues that compassion is not an irrational force but deeply rational, 'a certain sort of thought about the well-being of others' (p. 28).

they – and others - also flourish.<sup>480</sup> Even if not all those involved recognise these as dynamics with salvific potential, this does not diminish their pneumatological depths and salvific value.<sup>481</sup>

I note that this account, using the common good, is not the only possible theological reading. I was aware when first pondering this thematic focus that other central principles from Catholic social teaching such as human dignity or solidarity may provide equally rich readings. However these alternatives did not capture adequately both the micro-narratives of the reciprocal relational work taking place in the charities and their efforts to construct or influence elements of change in structures and systems that diminish their clients, reaching even to the workings of government and the state. The interlocking connections between the central concepts of the corpus ensures that a focus on a single element does not remain isolated; there is much in my reading that draws on other core elements, whilst also sustaining an argument that for a thick reading of empirical reality, in order to get to the heart of the matter, interpretation using a single concept is more fruitful.

The particular insight that the empirical view brings to this doctrinal theme concerns the real demands and unexpected gifts of mending social bonds. The rational and compassionate activity of actors who ‘take a stand for those who are most vulnerable and subjected to arbitrary power’ also contributes to those actors’ fulfilment, creating a reciprocal structure of virtue, an insight that emerged clearly in the data.<sup>482</sup> But this requires participation in a complex dynamic of power and powerlessness, wrestling with asymmetries in order to make possible a social body in which the vulnerable have the possibility to flourish. This is ethically more complex than *caritas* and unavoidably communal, social and political in its dimensions. Whether it is carried out as faithful discipleship by Christians, understanding their role as leaven, or by those committed to consonant ethics, it is still mediation of God’s salvific purpose in the world.

## 2.2 The Implications for Understanding the Church-World Relationship

The theological framework in which I am arguing is concerned with how the Church acts in the world, for the good of the world, in fulfilment of its mission. By ‘Church’, I

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<sup>480</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*: ‘... insofar as it can contribute to a better ordering of human society, temporal progress is very much in the interest of the Kingdom of God’ (para 39).

<sup>481</sup> *Caritas in Veritate* (para 6).

<sup>482</sup> Bushlack (p. 195).

understand both the messy empirical reality,<sup>483</sup> and the theological affirmation that within this messy reality is ‘a space of encounter between divine gift and human receptivity that bears fruit in the life of holiness and virtue on this earthly journey of God’s people toward the heavenly home’.<sup>484</sup> I am working here within the normative ecclesiology of Vatican II, assuming the dialogical stance of *Gaudium et Spes* in which the world is understood as an arena in which God is active through the Spirit drawing all things towards their divine destiny, and the Church’s task is to discover and strengthen all that points towards God’s kingdom, a task Hollenbach characterises as ‘transformationist’.<sup>485</sup> As noted in Chapter Five, this is a disputed area of interpretation at the interface of ecclesiology, political theology and social ethics, often rendered a binary of oppositional poles, concerned either to assert a tight Catholic identity against the idolatries of the world, or committed to dialogical and hopeful engagement. In Gaillardetz’s discussion, this binary reflects two underlying styles of theological thinking, one Augustinian and the other broadly Thomist, each preferring different theological emphases in the relationship between nature, grace and sin.<sup>486</sup> Other theologians have sought paths beyond the polarised theological and ecclesial landscape. Heyer examines how the binary plays out in Catholic social ethics, in what she terms reformist or radical approaches, and points to how the two models critique and potentially remedy each other’s weaknesses.<sup>487</sup> Murray identifies the same tension in what he terms integralist and externalist ecclesiological attitudes to politics, and draws on Schillebeeckx to argue that idealised ecclesiologies need to be tested by a theology of actual practice, recognising the ‘mixed reality’ of the Church’s life.<sup>488</sup> More recently, Faggioli has pointed to an emerging new appraisal of *Gaudium et Spes* in the pontificate of Francis, attentive to the significance of its methodology, and re-reading the text with attention to the contemporary context.<sup>489</sup> Murray and Faggioli open the ground for empirical voices, both to test the

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<sup>483</sup> I found helpful here Nicholas Healy’s *Church, World, and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Healy usefully analyses the gap between what he terms ‘blueprint ecclesiologies’ and the concrete and often compromised or failing historical reality of the Church, which he describes as always ‘in via’. See Introduction and Chapter One, 1-51.

<sup>484</sup> Bushlack (p. 13)

<sup>485</sup> See Chapter Five for brief discussion of this. Also *Gaudium et Spes* (paras 38, 39); Hollenbach in Himes et al, *Commentaries*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (p. 284).

<sup>486</sup> ‘The Ecclesiological Foundations of Modern Catholic Social Thought’ in Himes and others (eds), *Commentaries*, second edition (pp. 78-9).

<sup>487</sup> Heyer, ‘Bridging the Gap’.

<sup>488</sup> Murray, ‘Ecclesiology as Political Theology’ in *Theological Studies* (in press).

<sup>489</sup> Faggioli, *Catholicism and Citizenship* (pp. 94-122).

Conciliar ecclesiology and to re-appropriate its methodology, using its vision as Boeve describes, as an interruptive critical consciousness.<sup>490</sup>

Viewing this research as in part an ecclesiological exercise, I argue that it validates Murray's point. When the theoretical binary is pressed by reality and practice, it is revealed as a limited and misleading perspective. So for example, in a discussion of Charles Curran's account of the Church-world relationship, Cavanaugh interprets Curran's world-engaging approach as proposing that 'structural change through public policy is the most important way the Catholic Church works to transform the world'.<sup>491</sup> As Cavanaugh makes clear and Murray notes, his argument does not abandon the social and political domain to its fate, but seeks different ways to effect change through the 'alterity' of Christian fidelity.<sup>492</sup> This research indicates that Cavanaugh's binary formulation overlooks the embedded practices of people and organisations in which they infuse cultural contexts, professional sectors and social domains with a faith-connected ethic, combining elements from both poles and offering a critique of claims of Christian distinctiveness. The ways in which the charities work for transformation are more multi-layered and dialogical than the binary model supposes. They enact their ethical values in ways that contrast subtly and sometimes sharply with the practices and standards of the systems around them, but which also sometimes empathise with, partner with, and work to transform those systems. A later section of this chapter examines their work as disclosing recognition of how sinfulness operates through structures and policies. They cannot be accused of lacking understanding of humanity's failures in the social domain. Their practice is rarely read as an ecclesiological source because the charities themselves are fully taken up with their front-line work, and because they lack the theological resources or motivation for such analysis. The task here is for the academy and the teaching structures of the Church, to reach beyond normative articulations into the messy empirical field, to invite the refreshment of empirical insight. The social mission undertaken by these charities represents an enactment of the ecclesiology of *Gaudium et Spes* in a way which both problematizes and resolves binary interpretations of its teaching regarding the relationship between Church and world. Their work also resists the claims of those who advocate either charity or justice alone as the primary Catholic social task.

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<sup>490</sup> Boeve, 'Gaudium et Spes and Theological Method', and 'Gaudium et Spes and the Crisis of Modernity' in *Vatican II and its Legacy*.

<sup>491</sup> *Field Hospital: The Church's Engagement with a Wounded World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2016) (p. 41).

<sup>492</sup> Murray, 'Ecclesiology as Political Theology' (manuscript p.7); *Field Hospital* (p. 53).

### 2.3 'We Work with Every Single Part of our Personality'

The inclusiveness of the charities invites a theological assessment of what happens in particular spaces at and beyond ecclesial boundaries. According to *Lumen Gentium*, the Church is an instrument of salvation for all, calling all into 'Catholic unity', which extends beyond the visible Church; 'they belong to it or are ordered to it in various ways, whether they be Catholic faithful or others who believe in Christ or finally all people everywhere who by the grace of God are called to salvation'.<sup>493</sup> There are under-explored spaces in this Conciliar teaching, about the 'various ways' in which people might belong or be orientated towards Catholicity. The Council also taught that 'the Holy Spirit offers everybody the possibility of sharing in this paschal mystery in a manner known to God'.<sup>494</sup> *Lumen Gentium* recognises that some reach for ultimate meaning through their hearts and consciences, and that goodness and truth can be seen in their lives, because grace is 'secretly at work' in their hearts.<sup>495</sup> The Council is quick to assert that this goodness and truth, their uprightness of life, is 'a preparation for the Gospel' and later to emphasise the task of the Church to nourish 'the good seed found in the minds and hearts' of people, and bring all into the ecclesial body of Christ.<sup>496</sup> The tendency in magisterial texts always to encompass the whole economy of salvation in each particular theme obscures the significance of recognising the working of grace in people who live in ways that search for and enact the good, but do not acknowledge Christ. The texts affirm that ultimate fulfilment is found in Christ; but they proceed too quickly to this end point. If the Holy Spirit works in everyone, stirring questions about what fulfilment means and creating a hunger for the truth, this is worthy of respect in itself. Francis offers a pastoral principle that is relevant here, in his explanation of how 'time is greater than space', which means accepting 'the tension between fullness and limitation'.<sup>497</sup> He counsels the need to 'give priority to actions which generate new processes in society and engage other persons and groups who can develop them to the point where they bear fruit in significant historical events'.<sup>498</sup>

The concrete ways in which the visible Church in its mixed and messy reality engages and co-operates with people who seek the good with cautious openness to transcendence deserve attention as a valid space and time in its present reality without pushing for further fulfilment. The texts of the magisterium often sound a note of formal

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<sup>493</sup> *Lumen Gentium* (para 13).

<sup>494</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* (para 22).

<sup>495</sup> *Lumen Gentium* (para 16), *Gaudium et Spes* (para 22).

<sup>496</sup> *Lumen Gentium* (para 16).

<sup>497</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium* (paras 222-5).

<sup>498</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium* (paras 222-5).

respect for ‘people of goodwill’ and counsel dialogue, collaboration and learning; but they frequently fall into asserting the incompleteness of their situation, the deficit that exists because they do not profess faith in Christ, rather than seeing the ways in which they contribute to the renewal of humanity which brings closer the reign of God. Many participate materially in ecclesial social mission with no less commitment or generosity than those motivated by Catholic or Christian faith, whilst reserving their freedom and offering discomfiting perspectives on the dissonances between Catholic aspirations and actual performance.<sup>499</sup> Their capacity for self-gift is a mode of participation in the salvific task of restoring social bonds in the interests of the Kingdom, setting a challenge to theoretical claims. Bushlack, for example, suggests that whilst compassion and solidarity are rationally available to all, the dimension of ‘total gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation’ is the distinctive contribution of Christian motivation.<sup>500</sup> The empirical evidence suggests that it is impossible to draw boundaries between kinds of compassion and degrees of self-gift according to individuals’ confessional or ethical stance. The envelope of a shared narrative and organisational commitment blends these into a thick communal practice in which individual motivations are less important than the mutual effort.

I argued earlier that the charities live and work in a porous peripheral area of the Church’s visible life, connected in important ways, more or less institutionally, with inspiration drawn from Catholic traditions of discipleship, mediating this inclusively and hospitably, enabling others attracted by the goods they pursue to join them. I argue further that the institutional understanding of Catholic charities should recognise their inclusiveness as a source of insight confirming important facets of ecclesial understanding of the dynamics of salvation and the work of the Spirit. The charities too could do more to make explicit how they value the voices and insights of all who join their work, whether critical or appreciative of institutional Catholicism, and to explore together the questions about transcendent meaning which nudge at the surface of their practice.

### **3. Probing the Insights of Empirical Work**

One of the challenges of doing empirical work with theological purposes is that the detailed nitty-gritty of a thick engagement with reality seems – and is – very distant from the abstract discourse of doctrine. The gap is wider still when dealing with the normative

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<sup>499</sup> I cannot claim this to be true for all those who work in the charities who do not profess Christian faith; but it was strongly evident in all the participants in this research.

<sup>500</sup> Bushlack (p. 121). Bushlack’s account is very much in line with Benedict’s arguments in *Deus Caritas Est* and *Caritas in Veritate*.

Catholic tradition, in which the elevated style and bricolage within the tradition render the texts remote and apparently detached from their unavoidable contextuality, despite their pastoral intentions.<sup>501</sup> Murray's hopes for what empirical work can do in relation to systematic ecclesiology are ambitious and yet the task must be tried. This section explores in more detail two particular insights which contribute fresh perspectives on the chapter's central theme of re-making social bonds in the interests of the Kingdom.

### 3.1 Dealing with 'the already': Asymmetries, Power and Powerlessness

The first insight recognises that the charities work within many complexities, personal, relational, structural and political. They cannot *ensure* that human goods are achieved, that those who are vulnerable or excluded are bonded back into the social body, and that social structures are called to account; they can only do what is within reach, and what is consistent with their values. So they live with degrees of uncertainty and possibly with compromise and failure. In his essay about Gillian Rose's account of the metaphysics operating in any political discourse, Rowan Williams draws out how political thinking always starts 'in the middle', a place of ambiguity where we cannot simply start afresh without realising how we are constrained by what he calls 'the already', all the prior determinations which affect what we can and cannot do and define 'what power we really possess'.<sup>502</sup> He goes on to argue that in acting, we must dispossess ourselves of ownership of what we do, as others will judge it; our actions may aim to resolve imbalances of power and justice, but may in fact create new ones; and we will at times undoubtedly fail, but this too is liberating, as long as we are willing to learn.

There are many resonances between this analysis and themes from the data. Many of the participants would recognise Williams' insights, and the data explained their own empirical version of 'the middle'. Williams' 'already' is present in every interaction with clients – they would not otherwise have turned to the charities for help. Those who work in the charities learn that whatever their aspirations for their clients' good, they cannot make decisions for their clients; they work from a complex position of both power and powerlessness. Against the cautions of Bretherton and others that engagement with the state is toxic for their true purposes, they accept the risks of compromise for the sake of

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<sup>501</sup> John O'Malley provides a valuable analysis of the innovatory literary style used in the Vatican II texts. In contrast to the definitions and condemnations of earlier general councils of the Church, he identifies the epideictic style of Vatican II texts, aimed not at clarifying concepts but at persuasively holding up ideals to be striven for. 'Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?' in *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* ed. by David G. Schultenover (New York: Continuum, 2011) pp. 72-83.

<sup>502</sup> Rowan D. Williams, 'Between Politics and Metaphysics: Reflections in the Wake of Gillian Rose', *Modern Theology*, 11.1 (1995), 3–22.

the good that can be done, and assume that provision of social goods such as housing requires not only voluntary solidarity but political decisions and commitments.<sup>503</sup> They experience the judgement of others in multiple ways, directly affecting their work through funding and political power and ecclesial approval. Their own power is mainly relational, and the dynamic of supporting the agency of their clients orients them towards a kind of dispossession, as do the elements of self-gift traced in their commitment and receptivity. This is the overflow invited and nourished by the charities' hospitable narratives. The ways in which they absorb the asymmetries of power and vulnerability involves degrees of both personal and communal decentring of self in order to restore capacities to build social relationships and secure conditions which hold more possibilities for flourishing. Of course, they don't do all this evenly or consistently or indeed consciously. Sometimes they fail but they also often succeed, at least in a proximate way, with individual cases or in their advocacy, despite the 'already'; sometimes they may compromise too far. They neither enact nor claim a total solution; they do what is within reach.<sup>504</sup> For some who work in the charities, their engagement stops at the boundaries of their employment contracts; the choice to work from one's whole self is a commitment that cannot be required, only given by free personal choice. But the communal pattern is characterised by, and hospitable to, these dynamics.

### 3.2 The Refractoriness of Reality and the Heuristic of the Good

The second insight connects the intimacy of practices to larger questions about larger structures that hold and exercise 'arbitrary power' over individual lives.<sup>505</sup> In Chapter Seven, I argued that the insights into the common good disclosed in the charities' experience emerge from how they wrestle with conditions that constrain people's agency and capacity to seek their own fulfilment. I proposed that the acute contradiction between the vision and values of each charity and the refractory realities they encounter compel a ground level process of communal action and reasoning which enacts the common good as a relational process, a micro-narrative which implies a larger horizon of communal fulfilment. This is how the heuristic of the common good works in practice. We discover its

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<sup>503</sup> Bretherton's argument is set out in *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, Chapter 1. (pp.31-70)

<sup>504</sup> There are echoes here of another insight from Rowan Williams, in Rebekah Howes, 'In the Shadow of Gillian Rose: Truth as Education in the Hegelian Philosophy of Rowan Williams', *Political Theology* 2018 Vol 19/1 20-34. Howes notes that Williams' themes of self-dispossession and recognition lead to the implication that social programmes cannot achieve the ideals at which they aim because sociality is 'never mended' but always caught up with difficulty. (p. 31) Bushlack also comments that it is the task of the Church to seek the 'imperfect – though no less necessary – justice that can be attained in this life'. (p. 24)

<sup>505</sup> Bushlack (p. 195).

meaning by recognising its absence and pursuing what our moral impulses, our emotions and the communal discernments in which we are embedded and participate tell us must be done. We recognise that this is not just concerned with individuals but with structures, what the conceptual material terms ‘conditions’. This way of seeing the common good as a ground level engagement with the realities that bear down on people’s lives demonstrates how the common good can break free from abstract debate and become a practical ethical tool.

A theological reading adds further dimensions. In an essay exploring a moral evaluation of the state’s practice of immigration detention, Anna Rowlands introduces Augustine’s concept that evil does not have substance, but resides in a disordered good.<sup>506</sup> She draws on Rowan Williams’ interpretation in which evil arises when decisions and emotions are attracted in error to distorted versions of goods which then trap those involved. This is a process of misrecognising which then becomes habitual, issuing in structures or systems which we recognise as destructive. Rowlands notes that what makes it possible to analyse such structures as evil is ‘an account of the prior goodness that such evil is deficient in the face of’, found in the ordinary human goods such as family life and self-determination.<sup>507</sup> The theological response she identifies is the redeeming of what is distorted and evil over time, through processes of clarification and reconciliation that are transformative, and recognition of the borders in which resistance takes place. Rowlands’ purpose is to re-conceive the purposes and processes of immigration detention by asking questions about the goods sought by the policy and the means by which these are pursued. She notes the Augustinian insight that distorted goods use the best human capacities to achieve their ends, pointing to the paradox of how those working within destructive systems do so with personal moral intent, even if they do not extend their moral reasoning to the system as a whole.

If the Augustinian principles are used to interpret the fields in which the charities work, the ground level heuristic in which the charities engage discloses further levels of meaning. Most directly the Augustinian framework illuminates the charities’ engagement with welfare and housing systems, in complex combinations of delivery, partnership, empathy, critique and advocacy for change. As the history demonstrates, and in contrast to immigration detention, statutory welfare developed as a mechanism for achieving communal goods, and still claims this purpose to some degree. But the process of welfare

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<sup>506</sup> ‘Against the Manichees: Immigration Detention and the Shaping of the Theo-Political Imagination’ in *Religion in the European Refugee Crisis*, ed. by Ulrich Schmiedel and Graeme Smith (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) (pp. 163-86).

<sup>507</sup> Rowlands, ‘Against the Manichees’ (p. 179)

reform is reshaping its founding assumptions and disciplining social imagination in ways that are experienced by many as destructive or at the very least indifferent to basic human goods. Yet as with those working in immigration detention, many of those who operate welfare provision, including both staff and policy-makers, and the charities that take on contracts to deliver services, do so with serious moral intent. The disruptive power of the charities' narratives is crucial here, offering an interruptive dynamic forged from the communal commitment in which personal faith and ethics combine with organisational moral rhetoric to enable those who work in the charities to recall and insist on rightly ordered goods. Those goods are probably the same for those excluded by homelessness as for those in detention, and summed up in the conditions that allow people to seek flourishing and fulfilment. The charities' interventions, and their perceptions and evaluations, are not perfect. They too may misrecognise or fail to clarify what really serves human flourishing. But they have the advantage of the communal culture created by their experience and narratives, which orient ways of seeing and acting towards more truthful perspectives.

Rowlands' discussion of the politics of immigration detention is helpful in two ways. Although the Augustinian metaphysic depends upon a theology of God and creation, its argument makes sense as a moral framework in the same way that natural law based thinking does, and so is accessible outside the confines of Christian communities. Rowlands also develops her argument inductively by listening to the experience of people who are detained, a dynamic I have sought in this project, although my attention has been to those who work in the charities rather than to the voices of clients. Her argument invites a discussion of how different social actors, including faith-related charities and institutional ecclesial voices, can engage these issues with the compelling depth of moral discernment she models.

### **3.3 Re-appropriating *Gaudium et Spes***

It is straightforward to recognise that the empirical voices validate the intuitions and principles of the normative texts. The charities build social bonds and nudge social structures towards inclusion and solidarity, reflecting a holistic view of human well-being. They serve the purposes of the salvific intention of God with varying degrees of recognition and awareness. They also complicate, nuance and deepen those intuitions and principles in ways that question and refresh the normative view. In one example, empirical reality demonstrates the tensive combination of power and powerlessness in how the charities work, and the necessity of absorbing the cost of asymmetries which construct social

exclusion, the 'already' of people's lives. This complexifies the assumptions about social actors which lie barely articulated in Catholic social teaching, and reaches into a deeper level of what Benedict names as 'the political path of charity'.<sup>508</sup> It also illuminates the structural dimensions of enabling mutual human fulfilment as God intends. The deeply ambiguous realities of the policies and structures with which the charities engage in the fields of welfare and housing present challenges to theological discernment as well as requiring the careful principled strategies the charities develop. Rowlands' approach, identifying even in fragments the goods that have been distorted or misrecognised by paying attention to the dissonances between what systems claim and how people experience them, opens potential for valuable theological work in the field of welfare and homelessness too. There is an important reversal in the angle of vision here, seeing in the places of failure and structural inadequacy the absences that invoke the desired human goods and energise constructive response.<sup>509</sup> The hopefulness of the research participants, nourished by their communal vision, emerges despite the powerful forces that grip and constrain people.

Lisa Sowle Cahill, in a reflection on Catholic social ethics in the light of Vatican II, comments that the hopes of *Gaudium et Spes* have not been realised, and that progress towards a universal common good is 'piecemeal, uneven and unstable'.<sup>510</sup> She uses David Hollenbach's description of this wrestling with intractable things as 'social ethics under the sign of the cross', because the cross, embodying divine compassion, enables us to discover 'a source of hope that outstrips all our ability to plan, to control and to succeed'.<sup>511</sup> But even if the goods achieved are piecemeal, uneven and unstable, they are not nothing; they have meaning, particularly at the ground level where people endure and persevere, and find ways to flourish and seek fulfilment even in objectively diminished conditions. They achieve some transformations. The charities' work reveals the intricacy of enacting and reaching for rightly ordered social goods and enables the Church to work at its

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<sup>508</sup> *Caritas in Veritate* (para 7).

<sup>509</sup> 'But this thing about the Catholic Church as well, you know, the sanctity of the Cross, but all they're looking at is the Trinity and everything up here on the cross and not what the cross is rooted in, the dirt, the ground, you know, which is where the carbon is that is crushed that creates the diamond, but there's nothing about that...' Comment from a front-line worker in one of the focus groups.

<sup>510</sup> Cahill in Faggioli ed., *Legacy of Vatican II* (p. 132)

<sup>511</sup> Cahill in Faggioli ed. *Legacy of Vatican II* (p. 133)

understanding of how its intuitions, drawn from the Gospel, can reach beyond 'rhetorical solidarity'.<sup>512</sup>

These perspectives also caution the argument often made about too great a degree of optimism in the ecclesiological vision set out in *Gaudium et Spes*, of the Church seeking the Kingdom and proclaiming the truth through immersive solidarity and dialogue with social realities. The fear of Cardinal Ratzinger and others that such involvement risks underestimating human sinfulness is hard to sustain when social involvement concentrates where the Church should rightly be, in the places where people are excluded, vulnerable or subject to arbitrary power. The charities' stubbornly held narratives are bulwarks against the risk of accommodation to the world as it is. The ways in which people join the charities in their mission whilst holding diverse ethical views, and in some cases, critical views of the Church, vindicate the conciliar commitment to dialogical openness and learning from the world. Although it is those narratives rather than explicit principles of *Gaudium et Spes* which act as Boeve's 'critical consciousness', they sufficiently embed instincts and intuitions central to the Conciliar vision and subsequent development of CST to justify a correlation with its methodology.

#### **4 The Prophetic Potential of Ecclesial Peripheries**

This research began from a question about how the charities embody and express their relationships with Catholic faith and institutional structures. Throughout the thesis, I have developed the argument that their identity is constituted primarily in how they enact narratives rooted in Catholic social vision rather than their institutional alignment. This does not dismiss their institutional relationships, which tether their narratives into configuration with a Catholic worldview and contain resources to sustain and deepen the particularity of their mission. Rather, I argue for a re-configured understanding of their location on ecclesial borders between the Church in mission and the societal context, and of their significance as communal actors. As communal actors, they have a stability and public reach that is substantially and structurally more than the individual apostolic life portrayed in normative theology of baptismal vocation and mission. I have suggested that they occupy an ecclesiological gap, mandated by social teaching but not able to speak or act as 'the Church' and not adequately recognised as sources as well as agents of discernment about the social implications of the Gospel. In this final section, I discuss a perspective on their Catholicity that brings the edges of the gap closer together.

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<sup>512</sup> Francis Davis et al, *The Ground of Justice: The Report of a Pastoral Research Enquiry into the Needs of Migrants in London's Catholic Community*, (Cambridge: Von Hügel Institute, no date given), 3.1

The starting point here is the prophetic dimension of the Church in its social mission. In Chapter six, I argued that the charities' enactment of their mission constitutes a kind of practical reasoning which enlarges Bushlack's concept of civic virtue. Within their work there is a constancy of message about the value of each person and the conditions that constitute a social order in which all can flourish, a counter-politics to which they hold steadfastly whilst enmeshed in secular and statutory domains. In the ecclesiological binary of whether the Church's task is to act as a contrast to society or to engage in its systems and structures working for change, the prophetic designation is often claimed by the radical alternative of separation from rather than involvement in those domains. Bradford Hinze offers a different ecclesiological route, developing the concept of prophetic obedience as part of reclaiming the Conciliar theology of the people of God.<sup>513</sup> Arguing that the dominant post-conciliar preference for communion ecclesologies favours the primacy of charity over justice, he retrieves the prophetic dimension of baptismal vocation, drawing on biblical theology and testing his analysis by deep insider reflection on ecclesial experience of renewal and social mission in New York.<sup>514</sup> Prophetic obedience draws on Sandra Schneiders' alternative understanding of prophecy. Rather than the classical model of word received and witness given, it is a practice of lament, of voices groaning, of facing reality, engaging and struggling. Hinze outlines the characteristics of prophetic obedience: a capacity for personal and communal discernment, reaching judgements through listening to the voice of the Spirit; attentive communal listening to the voices of protest and exclusion, and staying with the 'agonistic', making room for protest as part of consensus building; a prophetic sense of faith; reading the signs of the times, reckoning with the 'refractoriness of reality'; and commitment to mission as prophetic dialogue, expressed in accompaniment and solidarity, a mutual searching for truth.<sup>515</sup>

The charities' cultures would not use the conceptual language of Hinze's characteristics, but with some translation, I contend that many who work there would recognise and resonate with the dynamics described. Recalling as one example the passionate judgement of the failure of state welfare by a frontline worker describing the 'sweet sweet boy' who lost his home, his job and his potential even to survive, let alone

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<sup>513</sup> *Prophetic Obedience: Ecclesiology for a Dialogical Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2016)

<sup>514</sup> Faggioli offers a valuable periodization of what he terms 'seasons' in post-conciliar ecclesologies in *Catholicism and Citizenship*, commenting that communion ecclesologies rose to prominence in the papacy of John Paul II. He proposes that the current 'season' is characterised by Francis 'post-institutional' ecclesiology, that 'works not only through the system but also beyond and if necessary without it'. (p. 22)

<sup>515</sup> Hinze (pp. 130-49).

flourish, several of these qualities are evident.<sup>516</sup> The voice of the Spirit may not be named as such, and it does not fit to claim that all who work in the charities have a prophetic sense of faith as Hinze describes it, but the historical patterns and persistence with which lay Catholics initiate and sustain diverse forms of social mission are soldered into the charities' narratives and echoed in the intuitions of Catholic social vision which the charities communally inhabit.<sup>517</sup> Likewise, the discernment that happens in the charities is guided by ethical and affective intuitions as much as by faith – for some – but these stirrings of the Spirit do not need faith language to point in the direction of the good.

In using Hinze's framework to propose a prophetic dimension to the charities' communal work, I am extending its reach to and beyond ecclesial boundaries. Hinze assumes that the social body living prophetic obedience is the body of believers, and his interest is in ecclesial renewal as much as social mission. But if we do not use categories such as those he outlines when reading what happens at the indeterminate peripheries of the Church, we cannot listen fully to the Spirit or follow her prompting. The argument also gains more force if the charities, like the Church's social teaching, are regarded as a practice of the Church in social mission rather than a dubiously connected outpost to be monitored. The emphasis then enlarges to encompass how the charities offer the capacity for the wider community of faith to listen, recognise, accompany and protest, as well as supporting the charities' practical work. The point here is that the charities reach into domains of personal, social and structural vulnerability that the structured Church of diocesan and local faith communities finds it difficult to reach, other than in voluntary practices of *caritas* which can rarely touch the structural or political domain. The charities analogously enact elements of prophetic obedience; and they also offer to their connected communities of faith, and to the institutional voices, the insights which invite other ecclesial bodies to take up their own modes of prophetic engagement. They demonstrate what it means to take seriously the radical value of each human person and to construct the social bonds which recognise and sustain communal and mutual flourishing. Their prophetic mode is modest rather than loud, moderate in tone and demonstrative in strategy, resembling the intuitions of Catholic social vision and mission.

Hinze's concept of prophetic obedience makes a valuable counterpoint to Bushlack's concept of civic virtue. Both recognize an ultimate theological horizon of God's kingdom, and both describe the shape of ground level work in that perspective. Both require engagement with the social, economic and political realities in which we are

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<sup>516</sup> See Chapter Seven, p. 152.

<sup>517</sup> The historical patterns sedimented into these charities are discussed in Chapter Three.

immersed, in order to orient them in the direction of the good; and both describe communal modes of being and acting, and focus on the process involved in search for the good. Hinze is more attuned to the agonistic elements, the unavoidably conflictual stages of hewing out better social conditions, and casts the process in more holistic terms, illuminating the overly cognitive character of Bushlack's concept. Hinze also allows for different moments of experience and practice to embody or enact partial directions. In contrast, civic virtue as described by Bushlack appears monotonal; and it is hard to see how he envisages it happening in practice. He does not explain in which spaces, involving which people, civic virtue is to be practiced, still less the agenda tackled.

Both Bushlack and Hinze find direction and meaning in ground level micro-political actions which arise when people act to restore or receive social bonds, motivated by faith in alliance with personal ethics. Their concepts offer frameworks for ecclesial attention to what recent work by Anna Strhan and others terms 'ordinary ethics', 'the concrete ways in which particular utopian moments are imagined, articulated, and accomplished in the everyday'.<sup>518</sup> In Murray's formulation of Catholicity, drawing on Aquinas, it is about the eternal significance of each created thing, as an 'irreplaceable datum', manifesting the goodness of God.<sup>519</sup> The enactment and discovery of the common good, in the interests of God's reign, is a bricolage of these ordinary but also prophetic practices, agonistic and realistic but ultimately hopeful.

## 5 Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that the charities have a theological specificity in their location on the edges of the visible Church, enacting its social mission inclusively and with a particular orientation towards salvific dynamics. My reading of the data, prompted by the theological and ethical horizons of the common good, discloses the particular way in which the charities, as communal social actors, engage with God's salvific activity in the interim, in anticipation of the eschatological fulfilment, in concrete micro-practices. I propose that the intuition they enact is about the compelling meaning of seeking fulfilment through reciprocal relationships in human society, not just in stable practices of interpersonal solidarity which refuse to regard anyone as 'other', but also in the larger structures of a

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<sup>518</sup> Anna Strhan, 'A New Jerusalem' <<https://tif.ssrc.org/2017/11/17/a-new-jerusalem/>> [accessed 17.11 2017]. Strhan is discussing ethnographic observation in a school linked to a church engaged in re-interpretation of traditional evangelicalism based on viewing the Kingdom as requiring work in the present reality as well as an eschatological destiny. She argues that attending to concrete ways in which people manage ethical co-existence in the everyday enables construction of an 'ethics of the neighbour'. Strhan's approach has resonances with my use of Bushlack's theory to interpret micro-narratives as common good processes.

<sup>519</sup> Murray, 'Living Catholicity' (p. 14).

polis, taking a share of responsibility for the conditions that enable flourishing. What they do includes, but goes beyond, *caritas* and gratuitousness. They illuminate dimensions of what it means to work for the common good from the ground up, and demonstrate how such work expresses and enacts a larger and prophetic Catholicity that is intrinsic to the Catholic social vision.

This is Catholicity in which others who do not share Catholic faith participate; and which genuinely reaches for the largest possible human good, through patient detailed work, piece by piece, person by person, policy by policy. It does share an element of Conciliar optimism, in holding out hope for individual lives – and realistic determination that social policies can become by degrees more inclusive and fair. But equally significantly, their Catholicity recognises ‘the already’ of human failures and the distorted goods still partly visible in social welfare structures and policies. In their realism and wrestling with what damages and limits people’s capacities to flourish, the charities demonstrate that the ecclesiological path of engagement does not avoid the cross but rather lives within its mystery. The charities’ strategies resonate with the dynamism of what Peter Hünnerman describes as the ‘path-opening role’ of *Gaudium et Spes*.<sup>520</sup>

The refreshment that this theological reflection on the empirical data offers to doctrinal work includes the challenge to look in different ways at the ecclesial border zone, the edges at which the Church so often defines inclusion or exclusion, taking more seriously the pneumatology of the Council. The data invites attention to the voices who are not Catholic as well as those who are and to the qualitatively different mode of engagement as communal social actors that the charities manifest. I argue that taking seriously the force and impact of their moral narratives and their practices justifies recognising the charities as a prophetic mode of social mission. The leadership and expertise of laypeople refracted through the charities deserves recognition as a Catholic voice, even if not an institutional or official one. Staf Hellemans, in his analysis of the implications of being a ‘a Catholic minority Church in a world of seekers’, argues that the Church of the future needs a different relationship between the institutional Church and ‘the wider catholic milieu’, in which ‘new forms’ of Catholic faith identity might emerge.<sup>521</sup> One such new form exists already in communal and inclusive actors focused on social mission. The charities are not just carriers

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<sup>520</sup> Quoted by Faggioli in ‘Vatican II and the Church of the Margins’, *Theological Studies*, 2013, Vol 74/4 (p. 813).

<sup>521</sup> Staf Hellemans, ‘Imagining the Catholic Church in a World of Seekers’ in *A Catholic Minority Church in a World of Seekers: Western Philosophical Studies IX* ed. by Staf Hellemans and Peter Jonkers (Washington, D.C: Council for Research in Values & Philosophy, 2015).

of the Catholic social vision, but agents and inventors of its enactment and meaning in contexts that continually present new questions to the practices of the Church in search of the Kingdom. They are implicated in the social dynamics of God's salvific work.

## Chapter Ten: Conclusions

### 1 Introduction: Two Pairs of Shoes and a Sweet Sweet Lad

The two stories recounted in Chapter Seven, about an immigration lawyer finding two pairs of shoes for a client's child, and the child's delight, and about the 'sweet sweet lad', the young care worker who lost his home and his job because social security systems failed him, illuminate my answer to the research question.<sup>522</sup> Both stories were told by people who were not Catholic but worked with passion and commitment in Catholic charities. They combine a holistic relational response to conditions that diminish people and critical negotiation with the systems and structures that bear down on people, in practical social reasoning in search of shared goods. The space they and their colleagues communally create is a counter-narrative to current welfare ideologies. They work patiently to unpick the detail of what diminishes people's agency at the ground level of society, creating or re-creating the social relationships that are an infrastructure and process of the common good. For both story-tellers, the connections to their organisational narratives were explicit and alive, in no way merely formal.

This is what Catholic charitable organisations look like and what they do. This is how they enact Catholicity, in multiple strands of embedded engagement, hospitable culture, inclusive narratives and prophetic wrestling with complex and refractory reality. Their Catholicity is rooted in narratives that mediate configuration to theological truths about salvation as understood and lived in Catholic faith and articulated in CST. It is sustained by, but not confined to, or defined by, relationships and alignment with official Catholic structures.

This concluding chapter sums up the findings of the research and points to some practical implications. The arguments I make have significance for three audiences. In the first instance, I propose questions to formal systematic theology, where the claim of this research to contribute to the pragmatic coherence of Catholic ecclesiology needs to be evaluated. At stake here is whether empirical work really can offer insights that hold their own and, in Murray's words, contribute to how things 'hang together'.<sup>523</sup> Secondly, the arguments have relevance for what might broadly be termed the CST audience; those who teach in the institutional Church or elsewhere or who seek to use CST, within or beyond Catholic structures. This research contributes questions and proposals to conversations

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<sup>522</sup> See pp. 145-6 and 152.

<sup>523</sup> Murray, *Living Truth* (p. 262).

about using or finding CST in practice. Thirdly, my hope is that the research is useful for those involved in Catholic charities. There are dimensions of meaning and concepts which I propose as offering resources to strengthen further the clarity and distinctiveness of their narratives, their practices and their voice. Finally I add reflections on methodology and other concluding comments.

## **2 Catholic Ecclesiology: The Invitation to Pay Attention to Borders, Gaps and Other Horizons**

I propose that using the tools of empirical research and assisted by perspectives from other disciplines, what Murray terms ‘naturalist looking’, points attention to ecclesiological edges deserving of greater attention in Catholic frameworks.<sup>524</sup> The complex and inclusive Catholicity of the charities resists categorisation as either inside or outside the Church, problematizing the visible boundaries. It is in the interests of both normative and formal ecclesiology to recognise what is happening in border zones such as those occupied by the charities. When Catholic social mission is communally embodied by inclusive actors, they do not only enact the construction of right social relations. They also constitute and enact a dialogue with secularity in which the resources they draw from Catholic social vision and mediate into their local ethics create hospitable common ground. Their work both validates and tests the Catholic vision of the social order, offering resources for theological and ecclesiological reflection on questions such as the status and tasks of the state. They are able to do this precisely because they are inclusive and entangled in secular conditions. Doubtless there are compromises and risks. They may not notice or resist all the gravitational pulls of other social imaginaries. But the strength of their commitment to their narratives and their experience, history and relationships do a great deal to safeguard their fidelity.

The parameters of the ecclesiological gap that becomes visible in attending to the charities have been described in earlier chapters.<sup>525</sup> I have argued that they are caught between the normative texts’ two planes model of responsibility for social mission, the post-conciliar cloud over aspects of *Gaudium et Spes* refracted through the related ecclesial politics of Catholic identity, the lack of ecclesiological attention to communal lay Catholic action (still less when such action is inclusive) and the limited attention in the papal tradition of CST to its practical enactment. I contend that a new articulation is needed of the Catholicity of communal lay-led activity in fields of public social mission in contemporary conditions of secularity. The emerging re-balancing of ecclesiological

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<sup>524</sup> Murray, *Living Truth* (p. 268).

<sup>525</sup> Chapter Five, 2.1-2.3, 3.4; Chapter Eight, Introduction

perspectives and ecclesial relationships in the papacy of Francis offer a space in which this is possible, compelled by his personal vision and example. It will be important to institutionalise this. The *motu proprio's* passing reference to the autonomy of Catholic charities needs expansion in order to recognise the authority and fidelity of communal actors and to trust and support their discernment as they enact their narratives. In other words, there is an unfinished task from the Conciliar ecclesiology, of re-examining the assumptions about two planes, and affirming the full Catholicity and 'interpretative autonomy' of communal Catholic agents who work to mould the social order at multiple levels so that it points towards the Kingdom.<sup>526</sup>

The horizon to be expanded arises from how the charities test Benedict's concept of *caritas* as a singular category for defining the diaconal dimension of the Church. The reading of their Catholicity I make invites a rapprochement between the ecclesial task described in *Deus Caritas Est* and the larger social vision unfolded in the normative CST narrative, the vision that Benedict refreshes in *Caritas in Veritate*. Bringing into focus as an ecclesial task the Catholic intuitions and commitment embedded in the common good, and making the actors and practices involved explicit, is crucial. This is an expanded account of the *opus proprium*, asserting the significance of Catholic participation in social mission on a broader canvas. Such an expansion of horizon would strengthen the relationship between the charities and the institutional Church. It also fits within the emerging re-appropriation of *Gaudium et Spes*, in illuminating the contours of the Catholic social task as concerned not just with the needs of individuals or communities but also with co-construction with others of the social relationships and political conditions which enable all to flourish. This is a task in part for local churches in each context in which the dialogical methodology of *Gaudium et Spes* merits further re-appraisal drawing on contemporary analysis and tools. In this wider horizon in which the common good is centrally located alongside *caritas*, the charities' experience speaks, affirming fidelity to Catholic social vision in configurations which are not ecclesially structured but work in the riskier interface between Church and world. They find prophetic modes that work for different tasks and conditions. This may be part of a post-institutional or post-modern Catholicism, what Hellemans terms 'new forms',

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<sup>526</sup> There are parallels here with Murray's account in 'Living Catholicity Differently' of what is required in practice. The second of his six points explains the need to move beyond the *ecclesia docens* and the *ecclesia discens* to greater participation of laypeople in 'relevant conversations' and 'deliberative decision-making'. (pp. 39-40). In the field of social mission, the presumption of the essential voice of laypeople and their mandate to act and discern should be even stronger. I also borrow the concept of 'interpretative autonomy' from Dillon, *Post-Secular Catholicism*, (p. 161).

as yet unclear.<sup>527</sup> It is not necessarily the only path needed as the Church engages with the nitty-gritty of culture, politics and society but the data in this research testify that it is a generative and faithful one.

Do these interpretations of empirical reality contribute to the pragmatic coherence of Catholic ecclesiology? They certainly ask questions and propose places of interest at the edges of systematic concerns. They touch into tensions already operating and tug on the loose ends below the apparently smooth surfaces of normative teaching. In Chapter Two, I discussed Burawoy's claim that case studies work best when they present new angles of vision and diagnose anomalies, and Murray's recognition that possibilities of refreshment for systematic ecclesiology arise in examining what is dysfunctional or discordant.<sup>528</sup> Some dysfunctions are clear and evident, but others are found in unfulfilled potential or limited horizons that do not present the same urgency but nonetheless contain resources for refreshment. In this light, the ecclesial concern over Catholic identity, now softened into a generative conversation rather than an invigilatory scrutiny, could work as a catalyst that opens up reflection and new strengths in both the agencies and the institutional Church, and in the field of CST. What matters here is the journey rather than a particular destination. Catholicity is not an achievement or an institutional badge but a process of both discovery and construction.

### **3 Fresh Articulation of Catholic Social Vision: The Charities' Insights**

The communal dimension of the charities is a starting point for summarising their significance for the tradition and practice of CST. It is as communal actors that the charities sustain the stability of perspective that underpins fidelity in mission. Their organisational form enables the dynamics described in Bushlack's civic virtue or Hinze's prophetic obedience to operate even though the people involved come and go. It makes possible and nourishes hospitable and inclusive cultures, spaces of rapprochement. As communal realities, the charities enact what I have argued is their fundamental meaning, creating and sustaining social bonds that counter and resist the personal and structural threats of exclusion and diminishment. I argue that the charities' mode of enacting Catholic social mission provides a counterpart to the official CST tradition. Their insights are articulated in ordinary language and disclose a voice that holds potential for reciprocal dialogue with other CST users. In Chapter Five, I proposed a re-balancing of the relationship between the normative tradition, the official teaching voice, and the voices of practice, to create a

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<sup>527</sup> Staf Hellemans, 'Imagining the Catholic Church' (pp. 141-51).

<sup>528</sup> Murray *Living Truth* (p. 18).

dialogical process, a two-way street. This requires re-conceptualising the corpus as a dynamic practice rather than an accumulation of texts, as well as intentional and careful methods of listening to the voices of experience. The communal is important here; the first level of testing and validating of instincts happens in the charities' work as they connect their experience to processes of discernment and judgement in areas of practice and advocacy. The mediation that will bring their voices more directly into dialogue with official teaching is a further stage, in need of the skills of those who can stand in-between practice and teaching, bringing skills and expertise. Those charged with, or committed to, the development of CST either in the institutional Church or elsewhere have a role to play in developing the practical models which will make this possible.<sup>529</sup>

Two particular perspectives stand out. The first is a validation of two methodological elements emerging in official CST tradition, the use of other voices beyond papal sources, and the use of both scriptural themes and natural law based reasoning. Francis' texts do more than previous popes in making visible the plurality of voices to which he listens. This should not be in the least radical, although it is treated as a *novum* by many commentators. In making visible the process of listening, the methodology of Francis re-appropriates a core element of the ecclesiology of *Gaudium et Spes*, and re-positions the institutional Church in a dialogical or conversational mode. Cardinal Cupich's argument, based on what he terms the paradigm shift in *Amoris Laetitia*, is also important. His proposal that a synodal Church should accompany, listen and incorporate local insights, whilst upholding doctrine and universal perspectives, creates space for other actors to speak.<sup>530</sup> The use of both scriptural/theological and natural law based arguments is a more complex evolving conversation. The tradition's commitment to continuity, although overstated and weakened by not recognising its own significant shifts and reversals, ensures that natural law based reasoning is still significant in contemporary documents, even if in a subsidiary role. From the viewpoint of this research, I argue that those charged with teaching ministry need to listen to voices of practice in more visible ways, drawing their insights into dialogical theological reflection and public voice. In both, I contend that it is crucial to retain and develop how official teaching and public voice can be bi-lingual, presenting its arguments in both scriptural and theological terms and in inclusive ethical perspectives that invite wider ownership. This is not just a presentational matter but a theological affirmation in itself, a way in which the Church can de-centre its institutional

<sup>529</sup> This interface is discussed further below.

<sup>530</sup> *Pope Francis' Revolution*. Cupich is discussing this shift in relation to Catholic teaching on marriage and the family, a thematic which connects to core ecclesiological themes. If the approach of Francis is relevant in that area, it is equally, if not more, appropriate for the thematics of social teaching.

claim on the truth and open up space for common work. This is bringing the perspectives of a wider Catholicity to bear on the teaching task.

The second emerges from the reach of the charities into what Francis terms the peripheries.<sup>531</sup> Their work discloses where the official tradition, both in the texts of the papal magisterium, and in the local magisterium of bishops, has not yet articulated a Catholic perspective. This research suggests several examples of what should be addressed. These include the area of homelessness, where the fragments in official texts are insufficient in the face of a global reality with social, economic and political dimensions, and one which is central to the good of families and communities. The brief discussion in *Laudato Si* has begun to offer a broader perspective than just affirming a right to shelter.<sup>532</sup> A fuller exploration as part of rendering the common good concept in more concrete terms and connecting to other core principles should be developed in a dialogical process with voices from practice. In the related area of welfare, social security and the state, the discussion in papal texts now looks inadequate in the contemporary context. Regional and national level development of CST is crucial here as the politics of welfare differ in national contexts and require local analysis as well as wider theological and ethical work. The third example is one of the many missing themes in relation to the specific impacts on women of certain economic and social structures, including the structures which allow the sex trade and result in prostitution. Amata Miller, in her critique of the CST tradition's blindness to the specific concerns of women in relation to work, even though work is a constant theme in Catholic social thought, asks 'One wonders what progress might have been made if church leaders had been able to see and hear the women of their times, and if the women struggling for justice had found consistent support in the official teaching of the Church'.<sup>533</sup> The experience of women@thewell points to another thematic which has not yet found a way onto the agenda of official CST.

Finally the research offers specific perspectives on how CST proposes and discusses the concept of the common good. It is not just that the papal texts' articulation is abstract and therefore the common good seems a remote ideal rather than a practical task. It is also that the texts seem mainly interested in the higher levels of social and political structure. They neglect the ground level work that is within reach of every local faith community.

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<sup>531</sup> Francis speaks often of the peripheries in his addresses. Faggioli discusses this in 'Vatican II and the Church of the Margins', proposing that the concept of peripheries is both a key to understanding Francis and part of the reception of Vatican II, describing marginality as 'an opportunity to re-discover the real boundaries of the Church'. *Theological Studies* 74 (2013), 808–18 (p. 818).

<sup>532</sup> (London: CTS, 2015) paras 147-152.

<sup>533</sup> Amata Miller IHM, 'Catholic Social Teaching – What might have been if women were not invisible in a patriarchal society', *Journal for Peace and Justice Studies*, 3.2 (1991) 51-71.

They offer valuable directional elements and connections to other CST concepts, but leave their implications untested. The charities' experience shows, for example, that participation cannot just be assumed. The 'already' of people's lives and the disordered goods of social systems and policies bear down on people's agency and aspirations and point to the broken edges where other perspectives are needed. In how they attend to the people for whom access to the conditions that enable their fulfilment are absent or compromised, the charities offer pathways into the common good that make new connections and illuminate concrete meanings. Their work invites the development of local CST texts for the context of England and Wales in order to connect the ground level of social mission to the wider ecclesial practice of CST in enduring ways.

#### **4 'Trying to Grab Mercury'**

There are three areas in which I propose implications for charities such as those that took part in this research. For agencies concerned with whether people have a bed to sleep in, defining Catholicity is, as one CEO described, 'trying to grab mercury'. But although it is difficult to define, practitioners have confidence that their Catholic or Christian identity exists. Part of the challenge of empirical work is how to invite participants to articulate their insights in their own voice, when their natural idiom is practice, enacted narratives. In contrast, the discourses of ecclesiology and CST and even of practical theology are full of words, yet often become thin when they reach for the practical implications and pull out examples which seem to correspond to their arguments. The experience of this research underlines the need for interpreters, people who can work confidently in the interface between empirical experience and systematic formal and normative discourse. This is time-consuming and sensitive work. Theology does not have privileges or immediate utility at the coalface of practice, and neither does CST, even though organisational narratives and leaders claim its inspiration. It is also difficult to resource. Most charities in the CSAN network would be unable to fund, as CAFOD does, theological advisers who work as internal interpreters. Those who know the theoretical material equally may not be able to commit the time needed to accompany charities as insiders, whether for specific academic purposes or as a voluntary commitment. Episcopal ministry involves teaching responsibilities, but in practice very few bishops engage seriously with the development or use of CST. Whilst there are representatives of institutional structures involved in the charities' governance, they are unlikely to have the time or skills to interpret and expand the meanings to be found in the charities' work.

Even if interpreters can be found to play a continuing role within the charities, their role needs to be shaped in order to discover the most helpful ways in which to use resources from Catholic social vision. This requires experimentation. The use of CST in framing advocacy on a Government proposal about housing benefits or to argue a case for greater investment in Housing First approaches is a different kind of challenge from its use to enrich the moral horizon implicit in organisational narratives. A number of the concepts explored in this research offer potential models. The primary model I have used is that of using a single CST principle to examine the coherence and meaning of practice. This can be done in specific areas of each organisation's work, or used as a unifying thematic to reflect back to those involved other frameworks of meaning which may enrich their commitment.<sup>534</sup> Another model could build on Boeve's concepts of interruption and use Catholic social vision as a critical consciousness in order to excavate more dimensions of the counter-narrative inherent in the charities' practices and voice. Further potential lies in picking up Cloke's idea of rapprochement. The inclusiveness of the charities invites reflective dialogue about the ethical perspectives people bring to their work, and about the common ground and tensions they discover. This already happens when particular issues provoke crises, but could also be done in less fraught circumstances. At the end of each of the focus groups, I invited participants to reflect briefly on the experience of taking part. They always valued the opportunity, not for the research purpose but because it was nourishing to sit and reflect with colleagues in ways that lifted their view beyond the detail of their work.

The third outcome for the charities is an affirmation of the positive meaning of both their Catholicity and their inclusivity. The interface between Church and world is a place in which mutual understanding, enabling rapprochement, need sensitivity and equality of regard. It is hard for those in leadership to hold the balance between Catholicity and other ethics, and ensure the best possible discernment when difficulties arise, as they surely do. It is always sensitive and challenging in the area of recruitment, where finding people for key posts who have either or both an operative faith and a deep capacity for empathy with a Catholic worldview. The findings of this research counsel confidence in the positive contribution that 'nones' bring to Catholic social mission. This does not need to limit or inhibit the agencies in their use of Catholic resources, but it does mean learning to frame these so that others can join, participate and contribute.

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<sup>534</sup> The concepts used could also be drawn from other Catholic social vision resources. In one example, the Cardinal Hume Centre is currently examining its practice of welcome in relation to Benedictine principles in a further focused piece of empirical research directed at organisational outputs, funded by the Plater Trust.

## 5 Methodological Reflections

It is not straightforward to engage theoretical or systematic theological work and empirical reality in equivalently thick voices, particularly when the starting point is empirical. In this section, I reflect briefly on what I learned from the methodological principles used to construct this project.

First, I note that the hermeneutic framework of the four voices proposed by theological action research worked well for this project, in part because of the character, claims and impact of the Catholic normative voice. I found that the voices intersect and interrogate each other in useful ways. Cameron and others note ‘the complexity of the interrelatedness of the voices and its implications’, and the conversational principle they commend is a crucial tool for exploring this complexity.<sup>535</sup> In Chapter Five, for example, I discussed the ways in which CST’s normative voice is presented, obscuring how the papal texts have been shaped in response to operant reality. The voice now expressed as normative has deeper connections to operant reality than the texts acknowledge. The voices work at different levels, and like the levels of the common good, they are ‘not straightforwardly nested’. In several chapters, I noted how the espoused texts of the charities are also their local normative voice, providing their organisational social imaginaries. In arguing for a positive reading of the ethics brought by non-religious workers to the charities’ practices, I recognise that personal normativities also come into play in the rapprochement that takes place. The relationship between normative, formal, espoused and operant is indeed complex and shifting when examining practice, continually evolving and yet also tethered in stable ways to underpinning insights. The hermeneutic conversation between the voices also pointed to instructive contrasts. I note, for example, that the consonance between the espoused and the operant is extensive and strong for the charities. When reading the papal tradition as an espoused voice at another ecclesial level, its lack of connection to operant reality and voices is striking. The four voices hermeneutic takes the conversational dynamic into a multi-dimensional way of seeing.

The second reflection is reflexive and concerns my positionality. Dwyer and Buckle’s suggestion that the insider/outsider boundary is a place of ambiguity and paradox but also creative tension fits with my experience.<sup>536</sup> In the outsider space, I have generated an interpretation of the data which is my voice and which some participants may not recognise. It would have been valuable to undertake a further round of meetings with research participants to present back my emerging analysis and evaluate whether they

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<sup>535</sup> *Talking about God* (p. 147).

<sup>536</sup> ‘The Space Between’ (p. 62)

found it useful.<sup>537</sup> Recalling Gadamer's fusion of horizons, I recognise both the surprise and the obviousness of the central focus on the common good. It emerged in my reading of the data, in which I found both material that resonated deeply with my own formation and commitments and material that was new or other, in the voices and contexts encountered. Taylor's commentary on Gadamer recommends that when seeking understanding, we should maintain 'a kind of openness to the text, allow ourselves to be interpellated by it'.<sup>538</sup> This stands in tension with the theological perspective of dispossession as a valuable dimension of practical theological work.<sup>539</sup> There are risks here that I simply have to live with. I don't know what receded from my sight as I pursued the common good thematic, or whether I moved too soon to its use as an interpretative paradigm. Natalie Wigg-Stevenson describes how easily what she terms 'dogma' trumps descriptions of practice; 'dogma and description are pitted against each other in a competition, with dogma's victory decided before the match even begins.' She goes on to recommend a conversational dynamic, recognising our power as the writers and working with the materials 'pulling them apart and putting them back together again, tinkering with the shapes, twisting them this way and that...'.<sup>540</sup> But at some point, we have to write and bring a finality which is not always comfortable but has to be done. I have found that the writing deepens and punctuates the conversation, but does not end it.

So the presence in the research of my own biases is both obvious and ambiguous. It is helpful therefore – to me at least - to evaluate my own experience of being changed. I have found that a number of perspectives that I had previously taken for granted had to be de-constructed and re-worked, as I listened and read. Other convictions, arising from my earlier experience of working in other Catholic charities, were re-validated by the empirical encounters.

## 6 Potential Directions for Further Research

Several directions in need of further research emerged from this project. The first concerns the absence of serious historical work on the involvement of the Catholic Church in England and Wales in social welfare as a field of social mission, from 1850 onwards. This involves the early generations of Catholic charities as well as religious congregations, lay

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<sup>537</sup> I hope to do this after completing the doctorate.

<sup>538</sup> Taylor, 'Gadamer and the Human Sciences' (p. 134).

<sup>539</sup> See Chapter Two, Section 8.

<sup>540</sup> Natalie Wigg-Stevenson, *From proclamation to conversation: ethnographic disruptions to theological normativity*, Palgrave Communications <<https://www.nature.com/articles/palcomms201524>> (2015) [accessed 25.09.2018] (p. 166).

organisations and individual pioneers. The ways in which the Catholic social vision was transfused into fields of social concern and policy in the particular ecclesial, historical and political context of England and Wales deserves more attention. In empirical work, the theme of rapprochement holds more potential, exploring how those who categorise themselves as 'none' in relation to religious faith negotiate with organisational cultures and commitments rooted in Catholic or Christian faith. Such research would engage with work on post-secularism, the realities of practical reasoning and concerns about faith voices in public spaces. The most important area of potential further work lies in the areas indicated in section three above, describing what could be attempted in work with the charities to enact a dialogical and reciprocal relationship between CST and practice. The charities' experiences propose both insights and questions to the normative principles and horizons in thematic areas such as homelessness and housing as a political and societal concern, social welfare systems and social vulnerability, and the situation of women whose lives are affected by prostitution and its related economic and social structures.

## Appendix One: History, Profile and Funding of Participating Charities

*The information in the profiles below is taken from the charities' documents and websites, or personal conversations with senior staff.<sup>541</sup> Bibliographic details for the documents consulted and/or referenced are given in Appendix Two. The footnotes in this Appendix only give URLs for webpages not cited individually in Appendix Two or for other resources.*

The **Cardinal Hume Centre** was founded in 1986 in response to growing numbers of homeless young people and families during a decade in which cuts in public spending and industrial decline led to high unemployment and increasing poverty. Cardinal Hume, together with one of his priests and several Daughters of Charity, raised the funds and established the project. Initially the project provided a hostel for homeless young people, a medical centre for homeless people and services to young families living in inadequate accommodation. Although its services have evolved and expanded, the Centre has remained predominantly local, working in the neighbourhood of Westminster. Its services now include immigration advice and advocacy, welfare rights advice, and education and employment support as well as continued provision of hostel accommodation for homeless young people. The Centre reports on the outcomes of its work in the annual *Trustees' Report*. In 2016/17, the Centre worked with 1,370 new clients.<sup>542</sup>

The Centre is an independent charity with close links to the Diocese of Westminster. The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster is President of the charity, and one of the auxiliary bishops is a trustee. Significant financial and material support for the Centre's work is provided by the parishes and organisations of the diocese. As well as diocesan relationships, the Centre 'draws particularly on Benedictine teaching, looking to welcome "as Christ" each person who comes to the centre, providing sanctuary and hospitality to people from all backgrounds'.<sup>543</sup>

The Centre's income in 2016-17 was £2.86 million, of which £364,000, just under 13%, was from statutory contracts or grants. Voluntary sources of income include individual giving and legacies, grants from trusts, community fundraising in schools and parishes, religious orders and Corporates. In the same year, the Centre had 53 full-time equivalent staff and 107 regular volunteers donating an average of around 300 hours a week.<sup>544</sup> In 2017-18, income was £2.89 million, and the proportion of income from statutory contracts held

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<sup>541</sup> Charity funding is multi-stranded and highly regulated. For the purpose of this thesis, I am principally interested in the extent to which the charities seek and access statutory funding in the form of contracts or the hybrid public/private mechanism of social impact bonds, in order to explore what this communicates about their political positioning. However, it is not straightforward to use the categories of 'voluntary' and 'statutory' in relation to funding or indeed positioning. For example, rents paid for accommodation are an important income stream for some homelessness services - almost always funded from Housing Benefit, accessed via each individual claimant - but this income stream is treated as earned income rather than statutory funding. Another charity benefitted from competitively awarded grants made from the 'tampon tax', an extra pot of funding for women's charities in which the government disburses the VAT levied on female hygiene products.

<sup>542</sup> *Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017* (p.5).

<sup>543</sup> *Annual Review 2017* (p.3).

<sup>544</sup> *Annual Report 2017* (pp. 14, 18, 30, 33).

steady.<sup>545</sup> The Centre aims to maintain a ratio of at least 70/30% voluntary to statutory funding.

**Caritas Diocese of Salford** traces its origins to 1886, when the Catholic Children's Rescue Society (CCRS) was founded in response to the poverty and deprivation of children in the rapidly industrialising cities and mill towns of the region. It has remained a diocesan social welfare agency ever since, taking up adoption work in 1943, a service that 'would go on to become the foundation of the charity's work over the following decades'.<sup>546</sup> In 2008, Salford became one of the first dioceses to re-shape its social mission under the Caritas identity, gradually merging the CCRS with other several other diocesan welfare organisations working with families and older people, and latterly with the diocesan justice and peace network. The mission of Caritas was re-orientated to include encouragement and support of voluntary parish and school outreach as well as provision of professional services, maintaining the same focus on responding to disadvantage. Caritas Salford was among the Catholic agencies compelled to give up adoption work in 2008 as a result of the Government's 2007 *Sexual Orientation Regulations*, but still provides fostering services and adoption support among twenty-one projects and services clustered within the Caritas identity. Its services still focus on children, families and older people, and now also extend to community sponsorship of refugees, community befriending and work with people who are homeless. The Annual Report details the people helped and the outcomes achieved in each of the projects.

In 2016/17, the income of Caritas Salford was £2.84 million, of which £1.91 million (65%) came from contracts with local authorities or statutory agencies and £929,000 (33%) was voluntary income. During that year Caritas Salford employed 88 staff.<sup>547</sup> The Annual Report gives volunteer numbers and hours for each project.

This research focuses on the Cornerstone Centre, a service for homeless and vulnerable people initiated in 1991 by a parish priest and a Daughter of Charity concerned about people living on the streets. Cornerstone consists of a day centre providing meals, clothing, education and other services to over 150 people a day, a winter night shelter project (Safe Haven), and several houses providing longer term accommodation, with around 14 full-time equivalent staff and 177 volunteers.<sup>548</sup> Currently it receives no statutory funding and raises its costs of £438,000 from voluntary sources.<sup>549</sup>

**Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN)** is different from the other participating charities in that its services are provided to its member charities rather than directly to clients. It is formally an agency of the CBCEW and as such, integrated into the work of the Bishops' Conference and chaired by a bishop.<sup>550</sup>

Its present legal and structural form dates from 2002, when a new agency, legally named as Caritas-social action but now using the working name of Caritas Social Action Network or CSAN, 'assumed the assets and responsibilities' of two previous charities, the Catholic

<sup>545</sup> *Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018* (pp.13, 29).

<sup>546</sup> *History* (internal document)

<sup>547</sup> *Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017* (pp.26,35,38).

<sup>548</sup> *Annual Report 2017* (p.13).

<sup>549</sup> *Cornerstone Annual Review 2016-17* (p.36).

<sup>550</sup> <<http://www.cbcew.org.uk/CBCEW-Home/Agencies>> [accessed 02.01.2018]

Agency for Social Concern (CASC) and the Catholic Child Welfare Council.<sup>551</sup> CASC was an earlier attempt of the Bishops Conference to co-ordinate and unify Catholic social action in England and Wales set up around 1996, which struggled to gain full commitment from the independent diocesan social welfare agencies. The diocesan agencies already worked together through the Catholic Child Welfare Council, which had formed in 1929 to represent their interests and acted as an intermediary with statutory bodies. The formation of CASC, and then later of CSAN, recognised the need to connect the diverse range of diocesan agencies, national and local charities and voluntary projects, and works of religious congregations, both to each other and in the wider mission of the Church in the public square. From 2006 onwards, CSAN increasingly used the Caritas identity and began to encourage and support the development of new diocesan Caritas structures.<sup>552</sup>

In 2017, CSAN had 43 member organisations, described in these terms: ‘Some are formally part of the Church and some are independent, but they all share a foundation in Catholic Social Teaching and a desire to create a just and flourishing society’.<sup>553</sup> Its work today includes providing support to diocesan Caritas structures, providing forums for members on themes such as criminal justice work, older people’s services and fundraising. CSAN also undertakes parliamentary advocacy using member organisations’ experience and facilitates joint programmes of work such as the Embrace project.<sup>554</sup>

CSAN’s income for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016 was £440,000. This was a substantial increase compared to 2015, when income was £239,000. The increase partly arose from a large grant of £142,000 for the Embrace project; at the end of 2017, the income had returned to £370,000.<sup>555</sup> Half of its income is from trusts and foundations (50%). A grant from the Bishops’ Conference provides a further 30% of its income. A smaller percentage comes from members’ subscriptions (19%).<sup>556</sup> No statutory funding is received. CSAN has a staff of six.

**Depaul UK** was founded in 1989, also as a result of Cardinal Hume’s concern, working again with the Daughters of Charity and with the SVP, in response to homelessness among young people and the context of the 1980s. In contrast with the Cardinal Hume Centre’s local focus, Depaul UK grew through expanding to different regions of the UK and absorbing a number of smaller charities and projects. Its primary Catholic relationships are with four major Vincentian organisations, Vincentian priests and Daughters of Charity, the SVP, and the Ladies of Charity and through these organisations, with the global Vincentian Family.<sup>557</sup> All four are still represented among its trustees. Its identity as a Vincentian organisation is

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<sup>551</sup> *CSAN Annual Review and Accounts 2016* (p.3).

<sup>552</sup> CSAN describe this as ‘the Caritas diocesan journey’. Eight dioceses have so far established new Caritas structures, in various configurations with existing Catholic social welfare agencies linked to the dioceses. *CSAN Annual Review 2017* (p.10). CSAN is also a member of Caritas Europa, the European network of Caritas agencies, alongside CAFOD, with whom it shares the Caritas identity and membership.

<sup>553</sup> *CSAN Annual Review 2016* (p.5).

<sup>554</sup> *CSAN Annual Review 2017* (pp.10-14).

<sup>555</sup> *CSAN Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016* (pp 15,21); *Report 2017* (p.19).

<sup>556</sup> *CSAN Report 2017* (pp. 17).

<sup>557</sup> Part of the International Association of Charities or AIC, a Vincentian federation of groups of laywomen. See <<http://www.vip-gb.org/about-us/branches-of-the-vincentian-family/international-association-of-charities-aic/>> [accessed 30.09.2018] The Global Vincentian Family gathers 80 international Vincentian organisations: see <<https://famvin.org/vfo-en/vincentian-family-branches/>>[accessed 30.09.2018]

centred on values derived from the inspiration of St Vincent de Paul. It is also a member of the Depaul Group, an international family of closely connected Vincentian homelessness agencies working in seven countries.

Depaul UK provides accommodation and support for vulnerable young people facing homelessness (1,400 units) and carries out preventative work with families. The young people with whom they work include those who have run away from home, unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people who need mental health support. In the year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017, Depaul UK supported 1,722 young people. As well as accommodation, Depaul provides money management help, activity programmes and opportunities for volunteering and advocacy. Depaul also operates a Nightstop service in five regions, and leads the national network of 33 locally based Nightstop services. Nightstop services recruit volunteers to provide an overnight stay and meals to young people in acute crisis. Depaul's current strategic aims also include campaigning for more effective policy responses to homelessness among this age group. Depaul UK reports in detail on the outcomes of its work in its Trustees' Annual Reports.

In 2016, Depaul UK's income was £12.44 million, of which £3 million or 24% was generated from voluntary sources, and 76% from statutory grants, contracts and rents. Depaul has 227 staff and 411 volunteers.<sup>558</sup> By the end of 2017, income had risen to £16 million, including a voluntary income percentage of 32%, with the increase arising from a partnership with the People's Postcode Lottery which resulted in a donation of £2.5 million.<sup>559</sup>

**Housing Justice** is the ecumenical successor charity to the Catholic Housing Aid Society, CHAS, which was founded in 1956 by two Catholic laywomen, Maisie Sheed Ward and Mollie Walsh.<sup>560</sup> CHAS initially purchased and provided houses for families in need and pioneered local Housing Aid Centres as well as co-founding other organisations concerned with homelessness, both secular and Christian. From the 1970s onwards, CHAS became involved in political lobbying, frequently working with Catholic Bishops' Conference committees and departments and with ecumenical partners. In 2003, CHAS merged with the Churches National Housing Coalition, an ecumenical campaigning network it had previously helped to establish, to form Housing Justice, an ecumenical agency with strong Catholic roots and support. In 2006, it was joined by UNLEASH, an ecumenical action group working in London.

Today, Housing Justice explains its mission as being 'the national voice of Christian action to prevent homelessness and bad housing', and works both in direct lobbying of the government and in facilitating and supporting practical Christian responses to homelessness and housing shortage. Housing Justice has developed an accreditation scheme for church and community night shelter projects and co-ordinates a network of 104 local projects. Another project, 'Faith in Affordable Housing', brokers connections between churches seeking alternative uses for property or land and housing associations to develop low cost social housing.<sup>561</sup>

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<sup>558</sup> *Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2016* (p.32-4).

Approximately 45% of this statutory income is from contracts or social impact bonds. 30% is from rents.

<sup>559</sup> *Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2017* (p.17).

<sup>560</sup> Mildred Nevile recounts the history of CHAS in 'The Changing Nature of Catholic Organisations' in Michael P. Hornsby-Smith, *Catholics in England 1950-2000* (pp.110-11).

<sup>561</sup> *Annual Report and Financial Statements: Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017* (p.4).

In 2016, its income was £485,000, none of which came from statutory sources.<sup>562</sup> In previous years, Housing Justice has received small amounts of statutory funds for specific small projects but does not seek or accept statutory contributions towards core costs. In the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, income rose to £538,000.<sup>563</sup> Housing Justice had 8.5 FTE staff in 2015-16, rising to 9.3 in 2016-17.

**women@thewell** is the youngest of the participating charities. It was founded in 2007 by Sister Lynda Dearlove, a member of the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy, to respond to the needs of women affected by prostitution. It is a contemporary interpretation of the Order's charism and mission, a charism which had earlier led them to set up other projects in the fields of homelessness and to work with vulnerable women in particular.<sup>564</sup> The Sisters of Mercy remain involved in the leadership and governance, and the resources of the Institute are heavily committed in support of its work. Several sisters from the Congregation are board members and others work as volunteers.

women@thewell provides a day centre in which women can access meals, showers, and laundry facilities as well as individual support and advocacy and other activities related to health and well-being. In 2016, an outreach service was added, working with partners to engage women at risk on the streets. The charity is explicit about its aim to support women 'to develop appropriate and sustainable exit strategies from multiple cycles of abuse'.<sup>565</sup> In addition to its services, women@thewell engages in political lobbying and influencing strategies in the areas of prostitution, trafficking and violence against women, frequently in coalition with wider networks but also in its own voice, at national, European and global levels. The charity reports on the outcomes achieved in its work in each year's Annual Review and Impact Report.

women@thewell's income for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016 was £509,000, of which 8% came from statutory sources, a reduced proportion compared with 34% in 2013. The Institute of Our Lady of Mercy makes a substantial contribution to the income each year (£180,000 in 2016 and 2017). Other funds are mainly raised from trusts and foundations with a smaller percentage from community fundraising and other sources.<sup>566</sup> In 2016 there were 12 staff and around 46 volunteers.<sup>567</sup> By the end of December 2017, income had risen to £662,000 and the number of staff had risen to 14.<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>562</sup> *Annual Report and Financial Statements: Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016* (p.12).

<sup>563</sup> *Annual Report 2017* (p.10).

<sup>564</sup> For example, see the history of Providence Row < <http://www.providencerow.org.uk/our-history-catholic-charity> > [accessed 23.09.2018]

<sup>565</sup> *Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016* (p.2).

<sup>566</sup> *Annual Report 2016* (pp.13, 15, 18).

<sup>567</sup> *Annual Report 2016* (p.7,20).

<sup>568</sup> *Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016* (pp.8, 21).

## Appendix Two: Documents Reviewed

Many of these documents are or were available to the public on the charities' websites. Where later versions have been developed, some of the charities have removed earlier versions from their websites, hence no link is given, although these documents would probably still be available from the charities on request.

All the charities' *Annual Reports and Financial Statements*, including documents from earlier years, are available to the public on the Charity Commission website, <<http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/showcharity/registerofcharities/RegisterHomePage.aspx>> For ease of reading, I have not repeated this website address below each *Annual Report*. Some are also available on the charities' websites.

Some documents are internal to the charities, and were made available to me during the research. These are indicated. Some documents are public, but only available in hard copy from the charity.

The documents listed here are not included in the bibliography.

All the hyperlinks were checked on 21.08.2018.

<p><b>Cardinal Hume Centre</b> <b>Charity no. 1090836</b></p>	<p><i>Business Plan 2014-2017</i> <i>Business Plan 2017-2020</i> &lt;<a href="https://www.cardinalhumecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Business-Plan-2017-20.pdf">https://www.cardinalhumecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Business-Plan-2017-20.pdf</a>&gt; <i>Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016</i> <i>Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017</i> <i>CEO Application Pack 2018</i> <i>Charity Pulse 2015: Report from an annual staff satisfaction survey conducted in March/April 2015 (Internal document)</i> <i>Homily by Bishop Nicholas Hudson to Annual Memorial Mass for Cardinal Hume, June 2016. (Made available by Bishop Hudson)</i> <i>History of the Cardinal Hume Centre (Internal document) May 2016</i></p> <p><i>Submission to House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee on Homelessness, Third Report of Session 2016-17</i> &lt;<a href="http://data.parliament.uk/WrittenEvidence/CommitteeEvidence.svc/EvidenceDocument/Communities%20and%20Local%20Government/Homelessness/written/28565.html">http://data.parliament.uk/WrittenEvidence/CommitteeEvidence.svc/EvidenceDocument/Communities%20and%20Local%20Government/Homelessness/written/28565.html</a>&gt;</p> <p>Website &lt;<a href="https://www.cardinalhumecentre.org.uk/">https://www.cardinalhumecentre.org.uk/</a>&gt;</p>
<p><b>Caritas Diocese of Salford</b> <b>Charity no. 1125808</b></p>	<p><i>Caritas Annual Review 2015</i> <i>Caritas Annual Review 2016</i> <i>Caritas Annual Review 2017</i> &lt;<a href="https://www.caritassasalford.org.uk/annual-review-2017/">https://www.caritassasalford.org.uk/annual-review-2017/</a>&gt; <i>Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016</i> <i>Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017</i> <i>Purpose-Vision-Mission-Values-Catholic Social Teaching Paper prepared for the Caritas 'values day' 21<sup>st</sup> July 2014 (Internal document: content also</i></p>

	<p>available in the Annual Reviews and Reports and on the website.)  <i>Salford Caritas: the Way Forward: The Caritas Deal</i> Report from a review by P. October 2013 (Internal document)  <i>Introducing Caritas Diocese of Salford</i> PowerPoint presentation for induction of new staff, September 2014 (Internal document)  <i>Working in the Spirit of Caritas</i> (Internal document)</p> <p><i>Cornerstone Annual Report</i>, April 2015-March 2016  <i>Cornerstone Annual Report</i>, April 2016-March 2017  <a href="http://cornerstonecds.org.uk/annual-review/">http://cornerstonecds.org.uk/annual-review/</a>  <i>Safe Haven Project Evaluation</i>, March 2016 Report of a pilot scheme offering overnight accommodation to day centre clients living on the street, November 2015-March 2016. (Internal document)</p> <p>Websites &lt;<a href="https://www.caritassalford.org.uk/">https://www.caritassalford.org.uk/</a>&gt; and  <a href="http://cornerstonecds.org.uk/">http://cornerstonecds.org.uk/</a>&gt;</p>
<p><b>CSAN</b>  <b>Charity no.</b>  <b>1101431</b></p>	<p><i>CSAN Review of the Year 2015</i>  <i>CSAN Annual Review 2016</i>  <i>CSAN Annual Review 2017</i>  All at &lt;<a href="http://www.csan.org.uk/about-csan/annual-reports-and-impact/">http://www.csan.org.uk/about-csan/annual-reports-and-impact/</a>&gt;  <i>Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016</i>  <i>Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017</i>  <i>Caritas Journey Programme: Caritas Diocesan Toolkit</i> September 2016  &lt;<a href="http://www.csan.org.uk/about-csan/publications/">http://www.csan.org.uk/about-csan/publications/</a>&gt;  <i>Caritas Reports: The Impact of Welfare Changes 2015</i>  &lt;<a href="http://www.csan.org.uk/policy/caritas-reports-the-impact-of-welfare-changes/">http://www.csan.org.uk/policy/caritas-reports-the-impact-of-welfare-changes/</a>&gt;  <i>CSAN Advocacy Priorities September 2017-August 2018</i>  &lt;<a href="http://www.csan.org.uk/policy/advocacy-priorities-2017-18/">http://www.csan.org.uk/policy/advocacy-priorities-2017-18/</a>&gt;  <i>Consultation Response: House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement</i>, September 2017  &lt;<a href="http://www.csan.org.uk/policy/response-inquiry-citizenship-civic-engagement/">http://www.csan.org.uk/policy/response-inquiry-citizenship-civic-engagement/</a>&gt;  <i>Action and Advocacy: a Christian Response to Homelessness</i> A statement signed by leaders of 16 Christian homelessness charities (including five of the six charities involved in this research), calling on the Government to work more closely with churches and faith-based agencies, and expressing the commitment of the Christian agencies to work together in collaboration with statutory and other partners. Autumn 2017  &lt;<a href="http://www.csan.org.uk/policy/action-and-advocacy-a-christian-response-to-homelessness/">http://www.csan.org.uk/policy/action-and-advocacy-a-christian-response-to-homelessness/</a>&gt;</p> <p><i>Address of Cardinal Vincent Nichols to the CSAN Parliamentary Reception: November 2014, 2015, 2016</i> &lt;<a href="http://rcdow.org.uk/cardinal/addresses/csan-parliamentary-reception-2016/">http://rcdow.org.uk/cardinal/addresses/csan-parliamentary-reception-2016/</a>&gt;  <i>The Catholic Response to the Poverty Crisis: Address of Cardinal Nichols to CSAN Conference</i> June 2013</p> <p><i>Submission to House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee on Homelessness, Third Report of Session 2016-17</i> February 2016  &lt;<a href="http://data.parliament.uk/WrittenEvidence/CommitteeEvidence.svc/Evidenc">http://data.parliament.uk/WrittenEvidence/CommitteeEvidence.svc/Evidenc</a></p>

	<p><a href="http://www.csan.org.uk/eDocument/Communities%20and%20Local%20Government/Homelessness/written/28483.html">eDocument/Communities%20and%20Local%20Government/Homelessness/written/28483.html</a></p> <p>Website <a href="http://www.csan.org.uk">www.csan.org.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Depaul UK Charity no. 802384</b></p>	<p><i>Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2015</i>  <i>Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2016</i>  <i>Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2017</i>  <i>Depaul UK Business Plan 2014-2017</i>  <i>Depaul UK 2017- 2020 Business Strategy</i> &lt;<a href="https://uk.depaulcharity.org/about-us/governance">https://uk.depaulcharity.org/about-us/governance</a>&gt;  <i>Depaul Annual Impact Report 2014</i>  <i>Depaul Impact Report 2016</i>  <i>Depaul Annual Impact Report 2017</i> &lt;<a href="https://uk.depaulcharity.org/about-us/governance">https://uk.depaulcharity.org/about-us/governance</a>&gt;  <i>Depaul Values in Practice: Investing in Young People 2014</i> An overview of Depaul's theory of change or practice model, including the theoretical sources and practical implications. (Internal document)  <i>Values in Practice</i> (Diagram: internal document)  Sarah McCoy and Becky Hug, <i>Danger Zones and Stepping Stones: Young People's experiences of hidden homelessness.</i>  &lt;<a href="https://uk.depaulcharity.org/sites/default/files/Depaul-UK-Report-Danger-Zones-and-Stepping-Stones-April-2016.pdf">https://uk.depaulcharity.org/sites/default/files/Depaul-UK-Report-Danger-Zones-and-Stepping-Stones-April-2016.pdf</a>&gt;  Sarah McCoy, <i>Danger Zones and Stepping Stones: Phase Two: A quantitative exploration of young people's experience of temporary living</i>  &lt;<a href="https://uk.depaulcharity.org/danger-zones-stepping-stones-phase-two">https://uk.depaulcharity.org/danger-zones-stepping-stones-phase-two</a>&gt;  <i>Staff Survey Outcomes and Action Plan, 2015</i> (Internal document)  <i>The Origins of Depaul's Vincentian Values</i> (Internal document from Depaul International)</p> <p><i>Submission to House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee on Homelessness, Third Report of Session 2016-17 February 2016</i>  &lt;<a href="http://data.parliament.uk/WrittenEvidence/CommitteeEvidence.svc/EvidenceDocument/Communities%20and%20Local%20Government/Homelessness/written/32726.html">http://data.parliament.uk/WrittenEvidence/CommitteeEvidence.svc/EvidenceDocument/Communities%20and%20Local%20Government/Homelessness/written/32726.html</a>&gt;</p> <p>Website &lt; <a href="https://uk.depaulcharity.org/about-us">https://uk.depaulcharity.org/about-us</a>&gt;</p>
<p><b>Housing Justice Charity no. 294666</b></p>	<p><i>Report &amp; Unaudited Financial Statements for the Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015</i>  <i>Annual Report and Financial Statements: Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016</i>  <i>Annual Report and Unaudited Financial Statements: Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017</i>  &lt;<a href="https://www.housingjustice.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=b8eca697-e2af-478f-a1ac-901a03799283">https://www.housingjustice.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=b8eca697-e2af-478f-a1ac-901a03799283</a>&gt;</p> <p><i>Annual Review 2014-2015</i>  <i>Annual Review 2015-2016</i>  &lt;<a href="https://www.housingjustice.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=8b1ab3">https://www.housingjustice.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=8b1ab3</a>&gt;</p>

	<p><a href="#">62-b1ba-4fe7-8433-6eb15d0e8359</a>&gt; <i>Annual Report 2016-2017</i></p> <p><i>Newsletter</i>, Summer 2016, Winter 2016, Spring 2017 Available in hard copy only.</p> <p>Henry Kronsten, Alison Gelder, <i>Local Solutions to The Housing Crisis: Involving Churches and Local Communities in Reducing Homelessness</i> August 2013</p> <p><i>Faith in Affordable Housing</i> Leaflet, available in hard copy only.</p> <p><i>Disposing of Church Land and Buildings for Affordable Housing: Best Terms</i> &lt;<a href="https://www.housingjustice.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=e9321b1a-df5a-41d7-9a65-56f0c55f68f2">https://www.housingjustice.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=e9321b1a-df5a-41d7-9a65-56f0c55f68f2</a>&gt;</p> <p><i>Church and Community Night Shelter Network Impact Report 2014-2015: A summary evaluation of 34 night shelter projects run by churches and communities, involving 500 churches, synagogues and mosques between October 2014 and May 2015.</i> Internal document.</p> <p><i>Job Description, CEO</i></p> <p><i>Submission</i> to House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee on Homelessness, Third Report of Session 2016-17 February 2016 &lt;<a href="http://data.parliament.uk/WrittenEvidence/CommitteeEvidence.svc/EvidenceDocument/Communities%20and%20Local%20Government/Homelessness/written/28411.html">http://data.parliament.uk/WrittenEvidence/CommitteeEvidence.svc/EvidenceDocument/Communities%20and%20Local%20Government/Homelessness/written/28411.html</a>&gt;</p> <p>Website <a href="http://www.housingjustice.org.uk">www.housingjustice.org.uk</a></p>
<p><b>women@the well</b> <b>Charity no. 1118613</b></p>	<p><i>Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015</i></p> <p><i>Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016</i></p> <p><i>Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017</i></p> <p><i>Annual Review 2013</i></p> <p><i>Annual Review 2015/16</i> &lt;<a href="https://gnb-user-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/cnb/website/watw/dcffe6ad8762dc6811adead6e4a1940a.pdf">https://gnb-user-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/cnb/website/watw/dcffe6ad8762dc6811adead6e4a1940a.pdf</a>&gt;</p> <p><i>Annual Review &amp; Impact Report 2016/17</i> &lt;<a href="https://gnb-user-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/cnb/website/watw/f008f05c62fb6db9d6b7d5f839bb59b3.pdf">https://gnb-user-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/cnb/website/watw/f008f05c62fb6db9d6b7d5f839bb59b3.pdf</a>&gt;</p> <p><i>Work plan 2017</i> (Internal document)</p> <p><i>Theory of Change</i> (Draft; internal document)</p> <p><i>Women's Community Services: A Wise Commission</i> New Economics Foundation's Report Briefing on five women's organisations. Nef, December 2012 &lt;<a href="http://neweconomics.org/2012/12/womens-community-services/">http://neweconomics.org/2012/12/womens-community-services/</a>&gt;</p> <p><i>Submission</i> to House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee on Homelessness, Third Report of Session 2016-17 February 2016</p>

	<p><a href="http://data.parliament.uk/WrittenEvidence/CommitteeEvidence.svc/EvidenceDocument/Communities%20and%20Local%20Government/Homelessness/written/28399.html">http://data.parliament.uk/WrittenEvidence/CommitteeEvidence.svc/EvidenceDocument/Communities%20and%20Local%20Government/Homelessness/written/28399.html</a></p> <p>Website <a href="https://www.watw.org.uk/home.php">https://www.watw.org.uk/home.php</a></p>
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## **Appendix Three: Demographic information about research participants**

### **Interviews**

In total, there were twenty-seven interviews.

Locations used included central London, Woolwich, Cardiff, Salford, Northumberland and Middlesbrough.

In the group of twenty-seven interviewees, fifteen were female, twelve were male.

The gender balance varied slightly for each organisational level.

Governance level: Three male, three female.

Senior management level: Six male, three female.

Practice level: Five female, two male.

Volunteers All six were female.

### **Focus Groups**

There were six focus groups, involving thirty-two people.

Locations included London, Salford and Middlesbrough.

Seventeen were female, fifteen were male.

Governance level: One participant was a trustee.

Senior management level: Five participants worked at senior management level.

Practice level: Twenty-one participants worked at practice level or in support roles.

Volunteers Five participants were volunteers.

## Appendix Four: Research Tools

### 4.1 Catholic Faith Related Charities: Research Project: Introductory letter to CEOs

Dear CEO

You are probably already aware of the CSAN/Durham University research project exploring the Catholic character of the mission of Catholic charities today and their links to Catholic Social Teaching. I am now approaching the practical stage of that research, and hope very much that your charity might participate as one of the case studies and contribute perspectives from your own distinctive experience. This letter is a formal invitation to take part, and it explains below what this would involve.

In practice, I am asking if I can:

1. carry out 4-6 interviews at different levels of your organisation; with you or another senior manager; with the chair or another trustee; with a service manager if relevant; with a frontline worker or equivalent; and with a volunteer.
2. invite participants for at least one focus group meeting, or if possible, two or three such meetings at different levels, subject to practical considerations.
3. have access to relevant information and documents. I will be interested in your Vision, Mission and Values, theory of change (if you have one), current strategic or business plan, annual review and annual report, and other documents that we can discuss. I know some of these are already on your websites, but I also hope to have access to those that are not.
4. make at least one or two visits to observe your work in practice.

I would arrange all interviews and meetings at times and in venues convenient to participants. It would be most helpful if I could use rooms in your premises if available and if convenient for and agreeable to the interviewees and focus group participants. It will also be helpful if you could suggest the name of someone who could be my main contact to help me to get in contact with staff, trustees and volunteers.

I will ensure that everyone invited to take part receives a copy of the information sheet that summarises the project, and that they grant their informed consent individually before any interview or focus group meeting happens. I will ask each participant to sign a consent form for this purpose, which is appended for information. In particular, I will also discuss any concerns about confidentiality with participants individually. As explained on the information sheet, I will anonymise identities and as far as possible, omitting details which might identify individuals.

#### Timing

I aim to begin the research in May or June 2016, and continue through to summer 2017, allowing plenty of time to fit around busy times and holiday periods.

#### What the research will cover

The common starting point is that the participant charities are members of CSAN, and have some kind of relationship with Catholic faith, tradition or communities. I am interested in exploring and understanding how these relationships shape the identities of charities and the work that you do. To make the research manageable, I'm restricting my focus to charities that work in the field of homelessness and social exclusion, either as their entire focus or through particular projects within a wider mission. My research brief also includes two particular reference points: to look at how the charities' practice relates to Catholic social teaching (CST), and to consider any impact from Pope Benedict's *Motu Proprio* in 2012 about Catholic charities.

In the practical stage of the research, I plan to focus on the following:

- How staff, trustees and volunteers in each charity understand its identity and mission, and its relationship to the Church, if any, including how Catholic social teaching might have some influence;
- How each charity sees its relationship to wider society and central or local government; in particular I will be interested in where your funding comes from and how different funding sources affect your work;
- How each charity embeds its values in its practice, including in the work of staff and volunteers;
- How staff, trustees and volunteers see the charities' work as distinctive, and how organisational culture makes space for expressions of faith and/or spirituality.

As the research proceeds, the focus may develop further, so this is not an exhaustive list.

### **Outcome**

The primary outcome of the research will be a PhD thesis, which will, of course, be available to CSAN and its members. I would also be happy to present the research findings to the participating organisations, or boards, or at a CSAN forum, if participating organisations would find this helpful.

### **Deciding to participate**

If it would be useful for me to present this request in person either to your management team or to your board, I would be happy to do so. It would be helpful if I could meet you and discuss how this plan would work in your charity, either before you agree, or if you are clear that you will agree to participate, as a first step in the process. I will also be glad of your advice in relation to identifying possible interviewees and focus group participants. And of course, I'm happy to answer any questions you have before you make the decision of whether to take part.

If it will take some time (i.e. more than 2-3 weeks) to ascertain whether this is possible, it would be useful to know when I might expect a response, in order to facilitate planning.

Many thanks in advance for considering this. I know that you and your staff and volunteers are already very busy, and this is an extra demand. I hope it may provide a valuable reflection space for those who take part, and that the results will enrich the work of CSAN charities and help others understand the complex challenges you face.

Yours etc.

## **4.2 Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form: May 2016**

### **The project**

This research project is exploring how charities relate in some way to Catholic faith or tradition and how they understand and express those relationships in their work. The organisations taking part are members of Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) and all focus in some way on the needs of people who are socially excluded and/or at risk of homelessness. The research is part of a PhD project funded by the Plater Trust.

### **Value and purpose**

There is hardly any academic research on UK Catholic faith related charities or the challenges they face, both in relation to the Church and to wider society. This research will give a voice to that experience. It will also explore how ideas from Catholic Social Teaching are reflected in participating charities' values and practice. I hope it will generate resources that CSAN members and other Catholic faith-related charities can use in areas such as staff and volunteer development.

### **Who is involved?**

The researcher is Pat Jones, who has many years' experience working in several Catholic charities and within diocesan and national church structures. After ten years working in Liverpool Archdiocese, I was assistant general secretary of the Bishops' Conference and then spent six years as deputy director of CAFOD, where I learned a great deal about the challenges of being a Catholic charity. More recently, I worked at Depaul International for two years, a charity which expresses its identity through Vincentian values.

My research is being supervised by Dr Anna Rowlands and Dr Mathew Guest from Durham University. The Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University is hosting the research, and CSAN is a research partner.

### **What does the research involve?**

The first stage of the research includes a series of interviews and focus groups, based in the participating charities. I will also study key documents, such as vision, mission and values statements, theories of change (if you have one), strategic or business plans, and other texts. I hope to visit the participating charities and observe your work, although I do not plan to interview clients.

### **What happens to the data?**

The interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. The resulting data will be kept securely in both hard copy and digital form, and used only for this research and related publications. I will analyse the data and write this up for a PhD thesis which will also include theological reflection and analysis and use relevant ideas and theories from the social sciences. The thesis will be available to any participants interested in reading it.

### **Ethics**

The research is required to meet Durham University's ethical standards and the research plan has been reviewed and approved by the Department for Theology and Religion's Ethics Committee. All contributions will be anonymised and contextual details omitted insofar as is necessary to protect the identities of participants. If specific contributions are used in a way that makes individuals identifiable, permission from the relevant individuals will be sought.

### 4.3 Participation: Consent Form

Your charity has agreed to take part in this research project, and I am inviting you to take part in the research within the context of an interview/focus group. The interview will last around 45-60 minutes and will be audio-recorded. / The focus group will last around 75-90 minutes and will be audio-recorded.

The interview will be arranged at a date, time and place convenient for you./ The venue and timing for the focus group will be arranged at the most convenient time for participants.

If you accept the invitation to take part, please sign and date this consent form. If it later happens that you change your mind, you can withdraw from the project at any time, including after the interview or focus group. If you withdraw, any comments you have made within the interview or focus group will be excluded from the project.

	Please initial each box
I have read the attached participant information sheet and understand what the research is about.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any point by notifying Pat Jones.	
I agree to take part in an interview/focus group within the research described above, and consent to this being recorded and transcribed.	
I agree that what I say may be quoted in the thesis based on the research, and in any other written publications using the data, anonymised as far as possible (see section under 'Ethics' above).	
Name	
Position in charity	
Email	
Telephone number	
Signature and date	

You will be given a copy of the information sheet and consent form to keep.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of the research before agreeing to take part – or at any other time – please contact Pat Jones. Email: [patricia.jones@durham.ac.uk](mailto:patricia.jones@durham.ac.uk) Telephone: 07711 589153 If you wish, you can also contact my supervisor, Dr Anna Rowlands. Email: [Anna.rowlands@durham.ac.uk](mailto:Anna.rowlands@durham.ac.uk)

## 4.4 Interview Guide

### Introduction

- Summarise theme.
- Reminder that I am recording.
- Present consent form to be signed; reminder of anonymity.
- Check whether interviewee wants to ask any questions, including about PJ as researcher;
- Reminder that you can choose not to answer any of them.

### Questions

1. Settling down: how long have you worked at this charity? What brought you to this job? Can you explain your work to me?
2. How would you personally explain what your charity is trying to achieve?
3. Would you describe your organisation as a Catholic charity? Why/Why not? If not, is there another description you would use? What does this mean in practice?
4. Are there any advantages or disadvantages in being linked to Catholic faith or communities?
5. What happens in your agency to embed your values in practice? How effective is this? What or who are important in this process?
6. Are there any issues where your Catholic links or your values present dilemmas for you? Can you give any examples?
7. Are you familiar with Catholic social teaching? Does it have any influence on your work? How?
8. How might staff or volunteers learn about any ideas from Catholic faith or social teaching that are important for your work?
9. Would you describe your work as political?
10. How would you describe where your agency stands in relation to government policies affecting your work? What influences this?
11. Where do you stand on whether to accept statutory funding?
12. Is there space for spirituality in your organisation?
13. You probably have a mixture of staff and volunteers; some Catholic or Christian, some from other faiths or ethical views and values. How does that work out in practice?
14. Is there any difference between what your charity does and how similar charities that don't have any faith links work? Or between your work and statutory services?
15. What do you learn from the people who use the services?

The questions were adapted and/or further questions added for different categories of interviewees. For example:

- I asked CEOs and trustees whether they were familiar with the *motu proprio* and whether it had had any impact as far as they are aware. I also asked these participants whether statutory funding influenced the charity's work or caused any concern.
- I asked trustees about Board perceptions in relation to whether the charity understands itself as a Catholic charity.
- I asked practice level staff about whether they are aware of CST before asking how any CST ideas influence their practice.

#### **4.5 Focus groups: information sheet: September 2016**

A focus group is a standard method in research. It is a group of around 5-8 people who come together for a conversation on specific themes, guided by the researcher. The aim is to not to debate or reach agreement but rather to listen to diverse viewpoints and experiences, exploring common ground if possible, and also appreciating differences. There are no right or wrong answers or views.

This focus group is part of research into Catholic charities, so participants are invited to contribute using both your professional experience and your personal views - recognising that personal and professional experiences influence each other. In other words, participants will be asked to share your own opinions and reflections, which are probably a mixture of personal and professional perspectives.

The focus group will be recorded and transcribed, and the resulting data will be analysed as part of the research. As with interviews, any direct quotes then used in written publications will be anonymised, other than identifying categories of job roles if relevant. At the beginning, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

Focus groups provide an important and different kind of data for the research, as a discussion between several people opens up an issue in a different way from a one to one interview.

##### **Theme for this focus group**

The focus groups in this research will explore what you think about social welfare in the UK, especially in relation to homelessness and those at risk of homelessness, and how this is influenced by your experience of working in this charity, with its particular vision and values. We will break this up into about four or five steps, and try to listen to what everyone says about each step.

##### **Participation**

I will lead the discussion, and ensure that everyone can participate. Once the discussion gets going, I will ensure we move on at appropriate points, to get through the five steps.

As in any discussion, the ground rules are simple; to respect each other; to listen to each other; to avoid interrupting; to be willing to speak.

Part of the aim is also that this should be enjoyable and if possible, constructive. We learn from each other when we listen and explore issues together. In this focus group, we share the common ground of working in this charity and being committed to its concerns.

The meeting will last no longer than an hour and a quarter.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [patricia.jones@durham.ac.uk](mailto:patricia.jones@durham.ac.uk) or 07711 589153

## 4.6 Focus Groups: Introduction and Conversation Guide

### Introduction

- The purpose is to understand your reality; how you see things, what you think and feel. I'm interested in your social vision, and whether any ideas from Catholic sources or other traditions or ethics are important.
- It's not about finding agreement or consensus; difference is fine. But it is an opportunity to dig a little deeper through conversation.
- Any questions?
- Do Consent forms; reminder of anonymity

### Starting the conversation

I'd like to listen to your ideas about welfare and the welfare system. In particular, I'm interested in what you think about how, as a society, we respond to need, vulnerability and even destitution. This means questions like whether we have the right system, whether it works, whether it's fair, whether there is a safety net any more.

1. So to get us started, let's be a bit visionary: if you could change one big thing about how welfare works in the UK, what would it be? Maybe leave aside the need for more funding for everything – and think about what happens, and what is needed. Let's go round and listen to everyone.
2. So now can we open up what you think about the welfare system here, in relation to the people this charity helps; what's good or right about it? What's unfair or ineffective? Does it work as a safety net?
3. Is your charity part of the welfare system? Whose responsibility is it to respond to homelessness? How do faith-based charities fit in? What do you do that's different? Do we let the government off the hook?
4. There are some underlying principles in any welfare system; ideas such as that
  - a good or fair society should look after people in need;
  - that welfare should encourage people into work and avoid dependence on benefits;
  - that the state should provide a safety net.

What principles do you think are important? Are there any you reject?

5. Are there any ideas from Catholic or Christian faith/the religious tradition behind this charity that have influenced your thinking or your work here? What do you use to make your decisions in this charity?
6. One of the ideas that's often used in discussions on these themes is the idea of the common good. It's used in Catholic social teaching, but politicians and other people also use it. What does it mean to you? Does it relate to your work in any way?

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