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Just Friendship

The Political and Societal Implications of the
Practice of Relocation

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Doctorate of Theology and Ministry
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Just Friendship: The Political and Societal Implications of the Practice of Relocation.

Andrew Grinnell

Abstract:

Throughout the world people motivated by their Christian faith are relocating into low-income neighbourhoods, slums and shanty towns as a response to poverty. These practitioners (I call them relocators) believe that close proximity with people who experience poverty enables missional, ecclesial and spiritual transformation. In *Just Friendship* I propose that there are also political and societal implications of this practice and construct a theological framework that challenges relocators to incorporate this into their practice.

Initially I survey the literature written by relocators in the United Kingdom. I argue that their use of incarnational living to describe their practice is unhelpful as it oversimplifies the context and produces a reductionist theology. From this, I explore how the sociological frameworks of social citizenship, vulnerability and resilience provide a way of understanding the complexity of low-income neighbourhoods that ensures the theological framework relocators operate within addresses neighbourhoods appropriately.

The main theological claim of my thesis is that Samuel Wells' trope of 'being with' is orientating language for the relocators' practice. However, I argue that it overlooks and over-rejects the structural deficits within a neighbourhood and, as such, could be considered passive in the face of dehumanising structures.

By drawing upon the public theology of Elaine Graham and Duncan Forrester I argue that 'being with' may be expanded to respond to this claim and in doing so, I propose 'being with(in)' as appropriate theological language to describe the practice. Through incorporating collective social rights into a theological account of justice, relocators might be attentive to the 'cries' of neighbours and seek opportunities for neighbours to engage in the public square. Through this practice, new forms of economic and political relationships are formed. My conclusion is that relocators become part of a new generation of practical public theologians who may help reduce the gap between the churches' public pronouncements and the experience of local people.

**Just Friendship:
The Political and Societal Implications of the Practice of Relocation**

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A Thesis in one volume submitted for the degree of
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Declaration

None of the material contained in this thesis has been previously submitted for a degree in this or any other institution. The thesis is my own work.

Statement of Copyright

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

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It seems ironic that this page may be the most read one of my thesis given that it identifies some of the people that have enabled me to write the other two hundred and fifty. For me, writing a thesis has never been a solitary task. Rather, it has been a reflection on relationships with people who inspire, encourage and teach me. In the first place, there are the many relocators who I have had the privilege of walking alongside. I'm so grateful for the inspiration of friends who have been part of the Salvation Army's 614 network, Urban Expression, Eden Network, the New Monastic and New Friar movements and those who relocated without any organisational support. I am particularly grateful for those who moved to 'be with' us, each other and our neighbours in East End Park.

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1. Introduction

Climbing the decrepit old staircase at the top of the hill, we were confronted by the imposing Gothic facade of Mount St Mary's church, monumental in aspect. It was built in Victorian times when they liked to put the fear of God into you. Now the mighty stone was blackened and eaten away by acid rain, the doorways were boarded up, and the magnificent leaded windows were peppered with a thousand jagged holes from stones, bricks and air gun pellets. A sign on the vaulted front door said, 'Keep Out, Private, Danger' – a warning, a threat and a promise. Urban lobbed a couple of extra stones through a window, adding his own signature to the composition.

At the apex of the gable, high above, the figure of Christ looked down on us from a cross. Everywhere else in Leeds, there was a background chorus of traffic noise. Here, in this neglected little alcove, the silence was absolute. I was saddened that such a noble building had been allowed to fall into ruin. Behind the church was Mount St Mary's Roman Catholic School. If no one cared about the church, what message were they sending out to the kids? Had we lost faith as well as hope? And, if so, where did that leave charity? (Hare 2011: 25)

Urban Grimshaw and the Shed Crew is an autobiographical account of the life of Bernard Hare after he had returned from London to live in East End Park, the Leeds neighbourhood where he grew up. Disaffected by social work, the book tells the story of how he built relationships with a gang of local young people, the Shed Crew, and some of their family members. It charts their challenging and, at times, chaotic relationships. Yet, Hare finds a sense of belonging with crew members. He refused to write them off, seeing their latent potential and abilities both individually and collectively.

The passage from *Urban Grimshaw* quoted above outlines a number of the themes that are pertinent to this thesis. Firstly, it highlights the dividing line Hare sees between people within the neighbourhood and the church. We may assume that the 'they' he is referring to is the priest and congregants of the church, who 'liked to put

the fear of God into you'. Secondly, the decrepit state of the building acts as a metaphor for that which has been lost within the neighbourhood. This included the important role of cultivating theological virtues within the neighbourhood that the church had previously encouraged. Thirdly, it displays the detachment Hare supposes between East End Park and the wider city. The impression is given that Leeds is a thriving city whereas the neighbourhood is 'a neglected little alcove'. Fourthly, the passage shows the importance of labels. The sign in the story was meant as a threat, warning and promise to the residents so they did not enter the ruined church. The book also speaks of a neighbourhood where authorities or 'outsiders' from other areas of the city, may think East End Park has its own metaphorical sign that warns 'Keep Out, Private, Danger'.

I first read *Urban Grimshaw* in January 2006, six months before I relocated with my family to live in East End Park. We did so as part of a small Salvation Army community whose aim was to be something of an informal Christian presence within the neighbourhood. None of us were employed to work in the area. Rather, we would simply live there, build relationships with our neighbours and try to engage in the life of the neighbourhood. We were not the only Salvation Army group who were relocating to a low-income neighbourhood. At that time there were other teams based in neighbourhoods around the United Kingdom and beyond in Canada, the United States of America, Australia, Germany and New Zealand. Neither was this practice exclusive to The Salvation Army. Agencies were becoming established to support teams and communities in relocating to low-income neighbourhoods and shanty towns. For instance, Urban Expression and the Eden Network in the United Kingdom, and Urban Neighbours of Hope, Servants to Asia's Poor and InnerChange internationally. It is this practice of relocation to low-income neighbourhoods that I am

examining in this thesis. It is my claim that relocators, practitioners of relocation, enable and generate a particular kind of practical wisdom that should be heard in theological, political, societal and ecclesial discourse. This wisdom arises through the relationships built with local people and is, at the same time, embedded within the relationship. Crucially it should be offered not only by the relocators, but also by local people themselves. Yet, my argument is that without the practice of relocation this wisdom may not be discovered by church or society.

1.1 Maps of Relocation

It is important to recognise that the particular practice I am examining is not a new phenomenon. People motivated by their Christian faith have been relocating to live amongst those who struggle against poverty throughout the history of the church. The Cappadocian Fathers in the fourth century, St Francis and his brothers in the thirteenth century, and Dorothy Day and the Catholic worker movement in the twentieth century all exemplify the importance of living alongside people experiencing poverty. However, my intention is not to examine the practice throughout history. Rather, I recognise that whilst it is a historical practice, I am focusing on the practice of relocation over the past thirty years within the United Kingdom. During this period, a strand of relocation has emerged by practitioners from a broadly evangelical background. At the DAWN (Disciple a Whole Nation) congress of 1992, evangelical leaders pledged to plant 20,000 churches in the United Kingdom before the year 2000 (Moynagh 2017: 12). Although the event inspired denominations and networks to church plant, low-income neighbourhoods were often neglected as destinations for these new churches (Kilpin and Murray 2007: 8). A desire to respond to this criticism, alongside the increased evangelical fervour of young people and young adults fostered at events like Soul Survivor and Spring Harvest, gave birth to organisations

that promote the practice of relocation. For instance, the Eden Network and Urban Expression emerged in the late 1990s, and denominations like The Salvation Army developed their own 614 network in the early 2000s. Thus, by focusing upon relocators within this period we address a group of people who have similar theological and ecclesiological backgrounds. In some respects, they are an intended audience for the thesis. Specifically, the thesis is aimed at people who are currently engaging in or considering engaging with the practice of relocation, or others who are responsible for supporting relocators. It could be argued that this includes all clergy who reside within their parish or church's neighbourhood. Whilst I accept there are implications of my thesis for professional ministers and priests, I acknowledge that in order to ensure a clear focus for my thesis, I have not included these traditions within my survey of the practice of relocation.

In addition to the ecclesial similarities of relocators, during the last thirty years there have been many sociological shifts within the nature of low-income neighbourhoods and, more specifically, in how poverty is experienced within the United Kingdom. The welfare system's emphasis on conditionality, the legacy of post-industrialisation, and the closing of work places, local shops and social institutions have left many people who live in low-income neighbourhoods believing that they are detached from 'mainstream' society. This can lead to a perception that they are second-class citizens (Lister 2004: 165). If we are to develop a deep examination of the practice of relocation, we must be clear about the lived experience of poverty within neighbourhoods. Limiting the scope of the research to recent and current examples of relocation enables a thicker description to be established.

As we will discover throughout the thesis, there are many different factors that affect the shape of this practice. One way of understanding these factors is to consider how a cartographer might map the context of the practice. They might map the physical landmarks of the area. Or, they might look at the psychological and emotional connections people have to specific places within the neighbourhood. Equally, they might seek to show how social relationships are networked between households and institutions. The cartographer might then layer these maps on top of one another to try to capture the political, economic, societal and/or spiritual aspects of life in the neighbourhood. Immediately we would become aware of the complexity involved in seeking to describe a place. Additionally, if we are to develop an understanding for the practice of relocation, further maps would be needed. Here I want to focus upon what I consider to be two of the most significant for the practice – the theological map of the relocator and the default map of a low-income neighbourhood. In doing this, I will introduce what I believe are two of the main flaws in the way relocation has been understood, which I am seeking to address. These are the use of a limited theological vocabulary that restricts the societal and political implications of the practice and a simplistic, monochrome and static understanding of life within a low-income neighbourhood.

1.1.1 The Theological Map of the Relocator

Several relocators have authored books that describe their experience of relocation. They include practitioners from many of the relocation agencies, Gary Bishop (2007) of The Salvation Army, Chris Lane (2017) from the Eden Network and Juliet Kilpin (2014) from Urban Expression, alongside others who are not affiliated with an organisation such as Paul Keeble. The books outline how relocators have understood their own practice and consequently become reference points for others to

understand how they might relocate to low-income neighbourhoods. Collectively, they outline how to interpret the context into which one relocates and detail the hopes, aspirations and practices necessary for 'successful' relocation. Most of these publications are written with a wider Christian audience in mind. However, in recent years a number of academic theses have been written exploring the practice theologically and sociologically, including those by Anna Ruddick (2016) and Samuel Thomas (2012). In combination they form something of a map of relocation. In doing so, they also expose some of the blind spots that limit the detail and extent of the map proponents of this produce.

In her thesis on the Eden Network, Anna Ruddick¹ highlights some of the theological terrain of the relocators' map. She claims that the network is 'situated at a missional and activist meeting point between charismatic evangelicalism and urban theology' (Ruddick 2016: 20). Whilst not all relocators or agencies that promote relocation would consider themselves charismatic, the vast majority are shaped in their theology and ecclesiology by the evangelical tradition. Ruddick argues that an evangelical missional narrative informed the understanding of the practice of Eden teams. Building upon the approaches of David Bebbington, Robert Warner and Stephen Crites, she characterises this as having four features: the lost world, God and his church, a salvation plan and evangelical expectation (Ruddick 2016: 47). These features bleed into one another to develop a missional practice characterised by activism as Christians 'work out their salvation... by sharing the good news... in words and actions' (Ruddick 2016: 47). In addition, they are focused upon the conversion of people 'outside the church' from their 'old life' (Ruddick 2016: 48) and have an

¹ Anna Ruddick's maiden name is Anna Thompson. All published works are in her married name apart from her article 'Holy Sofas' (Thompson 2012). In the text I will use her married name.

'expectation that personal transformation and widespread conversion are imminent' (Ruddick 2016: 49). Here, I agree with Ruddick's analysis of the evangelical mission narrative that informs Eden teams. It is my contention that mission understood in this way restricts the relocater's theological imagination. By focusing upon the individual, wider notions of redemption within a given neighbourhood are neglected. For a relocater, adopting this narrative would mean that there were clear lines between church and the world, and that other potential mission postures, such as acts of mercy are placed in the service of the goal of conversion.

Ruddick argues that the experiences of Eden team members 'have forged something new, challenging and reshaping [of] their inherited evangelical missional narrative' (Ruddick 2016: 21). She proposes Missional Pastoral Care as a way of describing the practice. This acknowledges that God is already at work in the world (Ruddick 2016: 131); that mutual transformation happens through relationships with neighbours (Ruddick 2016: 132); and that through 'God's involvement [in the neighbourhood] and our cooperation, something good, if incremental, messy and complex, will happen' (Ruddick 2016: 133). Whilst agreeing that these concepts are helpful in developing a clearer understanding of the practice of relocation, I want to develop the language still further. I am particularly concerned that the term 'missional pastoral care' may still reflect a church/world binary that is unhelpful for the practice. Furthermore, pastoral care tends towards relationships with individuals rather than with the neighbourhood as a whole. Thus, a keen interest for my thesis is to explore language that helps the relocater to understand their mission towards not only the people of the neighbourhood but the structures and processes that shape it both internally and externally. Or, to put it another way, I am keen to explore a theological

language that makes clear the political and societal implications of the practice of relocation.

1.1.2 The Default Map of a Low-Income Neighbourhood

A second set of maps that are available to the relocator relates to the geographical and sociological features of a neighbourhood. Every neighbourhood has its own unique set of maps. Maps of the physical shape of an area, its streets, landmarks, and amenities are all different. Plotting the flows of people in and out, across and through, within and without each neighbourhood, produces particular maps that cannot be generalised. Mapping the power of institutions, government and citizens would also generate very different maps. Thus, while it is important to recognise that a neighbourhood has its own cartographies, contextual nuances mean that a relocator cannot simply presume that there is a default map of a low-income neighbourhood that is applicable everywhere. Furthermore, the problem with the metaphor of maps is that one might begin to think in a static way. The map as a two-dimensional object that details how things are and assumes will be for the foreseeable future is unhelpful when considering neighbourhoods. In his seminal work, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau charts the history of the map. Initially, maps outlined the itineraries of their cartographers. Thus, they acted not only as a geographical map, but as a history book as they outlined the routes that had been followed (de Certeau 1984: 120). Over time, the map has 'disengaged itself from the itineraries that were the condition of its possibility' (de Certeau 1984: 120) meaning that modern maps have become autonomous from the history of their creation and thus, colonise space. De Certeau contrasts this with understanding a space through the experience of a tour. Walking transforms the street from a place that is 'geometrically defined by urban planning' into a space that is valuable or enjoyable

for the explorer (de Certeau 1984: 117). Here de Certeau is contrasting a static, geographical understanding of place with a performative understanding of space that is dependent upon action within it for its meaning.

My argument is that some of the frameworks that are applied by relocators to low-income neighbourhoods create a static understanding of place rather than a performative space. Terms like 'working-class neighbourhood', 'deprived area', or 'people who are powerless', are unhelpful as they stigmatise the neighbourhood and its residents and create the illusion of a simplistic, monochrome and static community. Mike Pears and Paul Cloke share this concern in their discussions of urban mission. Adopting simplistic descriptions means Christians may be complicit 'with the very structures of society and patterns of living that tend to maintain or even increase the marginalisation of the poor' (Pears and Cloke 2016: 1). One way in which a more three-dimensional map for relocation may be developed is by considering the nature of relationships that are at work between local people and the relocator. Pears argues that through an increase of 'inter-subjective' relationships, by which he means relationships that are formed between the self and other that overcome cultural and social boundaries, new spatial arrangements may emerge that may make possible the transformation of place (Pears 2015: 129, 234). In this way not only does a dynamic map of the neighbourhood emerge but the neighbourhood and its residents also become cartographers in shaping the map of the relocator. Pears concludes that this enables the possibility for the eschatological dimension of Jesus' prayer, that the Kingdom will be established on earth as it is in heaven, to be theologically acknowledged (Pears 2015: 242).

From these brief introductory comments, a number of key features for the practice of relocation begin to come into focus. In particular, the language we use to create the maps, label them and interpret them, is vital. Reflecting upon her contemporary situation in 1930s Europe, Simone Weil argues that wars are waged upon words with capital letters. She writes ‘the definition of success is to crush a rival group of men who have a hostile word on their banners; for it is a characteristic of these empty words that each of them has its complementary antagonist’ (Miles 2005: 241). Her point is not that words are meaningless, but that when used inappropriately they are the source of conflict that, given greater attention, could be avoided. She concludes that a word loses its hostility when it is properly defined and loses its capital letter. Then ‘it becomes simply a sign, helping us to grasp some concrete reality or concrete objective or method of activity’ (Miles 2005: 242). A key concern of this thesis is to examine the language used in the practice of relocation to explore whether this is theologically generative in pointing towards not only a rich description of the practice of relocation, but to a *telos* for the neighbourhood in which political and societal change might occur. In order to achieve this, I will argue that travelling companions beyond evangelical sources may need to be found from within the wider Christian tradition. Furthermore, we will need to carefully discern the sociological and geographical frameworks that are helpful in generating this vocabulary.

1.2 Theological Travelling Companions

My aim within this thesis is to construct a public, practical theological framework that is faithful to the practice of relocation. To do this, I will initially need to define the practice, particularly by focusing upon the language that is used by relocators to describe their ministry. I will examine the theological language they use to assess whether it is truthful to the contexts in which they relocate, and to the practice itself. I

will then be able to begin the process of constructing a robust theology that builds on a number of traditions of theological thought and aids new practices to emerge. Theologically-speaking, relocation can be placed at the intersection between Christian ethics, political theology, ecclesiology, Christian spirituality and missiology. As such, my thesis could draw upon a wide range of theological travelling companions in order to pursue its objectives. I have chosen to focus primarily on three in particular – practical theology, post-liberal theology and public theology. I believe they are best placed to create a thick description of the practice, developing language that is faithful to the Christian tradition, helpful within the contexts in which the relocator lives and is generative of the political and societal implications of relocation. More specifically I claim that a post-liberal concept, Samuel Wells’s notion of ‘being with’, provides orientating language for the practice. Through dialogue with public theologians, specifically Elaine Graham and Duncan Forrester, this concept is expanded to make possible the political and societal implications of relocation. It is a practical theology in the sense that it examines a practice, seeking to inform it and develop more faithful practice for the future. Although I will engage in a number of theological disciplines, for example Christian ethics, they will be viewed through the ‘lens of practice’ (Ward 2017a: 22). Furthermore, I will show how the practice, when understood in this way, might inform all three schools by enabling a new generation of theologians, both relocators and their neighbours, to emerge. Briefly I will now explain how I understand my thesis to interact with each of these schools.

1.2.1 Practical Theology

Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore states that in seeking to defend the validity of the discipline, practical theologians ‘have emphasised our contributions to methodology or how to go about theology’ (Miller-McLemore 2016: 176). So great is the attention

and care given to the method of practical theology that in some cases, she argues, it is a discipline defined either by empirical study or the movement from description to informing practice. Although these aspects are important for Miller-McLemore, they 'inadvertently led us to slight what is offered [...] substantively to theology itself' (Miller-McLemore 2016: 176). One of the aims of this thesis is to concentrate specifically upon what the practice of relocation may offer theology. As Helen Cameron, John Reader and Victoria Slater (2012: xi) claim:

It is a key task of practical theology to identify the unheard voices and missing conversations in the life of the Church and make them audible. [...] Practical theology seeks to direct attention to those things which the Church is overlooking but which can contribute to its part in God's mission to the world.

Thus, a significant aspect of what I am attempting to do is to enable a voice, or more precisely, a number of voices that are not often heard within wider discourse to speak theologically. My aim is to develop a way for relocators to understand their task that allows their voices, and those of their neighbours, to speak in a variety of forums, particularly societal. Thus, although the research does not have an empirical element, a major thrust is to provide a theological framework for enabling this to happen within the practice.

Christian Scharen argues that a key feature of practical theology is the embodied nature of the knowledge it produces. Drawing upon Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, he argues that the researcher's responsibility is to enter 'into relationship with the world the body inhabits' (Scharen 2015: 28). To do this they have to contemplate their social location, the social space of the academic field and the intellectualist point of view. He describes this as 'seeking to remedy social suffering through empathic understanding, a kind of moral solidarity with those in need' (Scharen 2015: 89). In some respects, he is describing what Terry Veling calls the craft of practical theology.

I am using craft to signify a disposition that enables the practical theologian to be thoughtful and attentive not only to their context, but to their own self and the skills that they employ in interpreting and engaging in society. A key feature of the literature I address in Chapter Two is to understand how the relocater seeks to follow Christ within their respective neighbourhoods. Thus, we may argue that in seeking to do this effectively, relocation is an act of practical theology, particularly one that produces wisdom for the church and society more generally. Thus, a second feature of practical theology in this work is the importance of reflexivity for the relocater. By being attentive to the power dynamics that are at work in relationship building, I hope to develop a practical theology that will help relocators to change their ways of ‘acting, thinking and believing’ (Pattison 2016: 4).

1.2.2 Post-liberal Theology

How the relocater responds to the poverty they encounter within the neighbourhood is partially an ethical question. Ethicists throughout history have drawn upon a wide range of frameworks to explore what might be a faithful response to poverty. Post-liberal theology draws upon a recapitulation of the classical virtue tradition of Aristotle within ethics. Writing in 1981, Alasdair MacIntyre claimed that the language of morality was in ‘grave disorder’ as it had lost its theoretical and practical comprehension (MacIntyre 2007: 2). He argues that a significant reason for this was that enlightenment philosophers and those who came after them had rejected the importance of virtue within ethics. An ethics based on virtue ‘restores intelligibility and rationality,’ and enables the good life (MacIntyre 2007: 259). Virtues are ‘embedded within social traditions’ and contain a narrative structure that leads society forward towards its *telos* (Knight 1998: 67-68).

Post-liberal theologians, including Stanley Hauerwas, have built upon the foundations MacIntyre established. They offer a theological ethics in which the gospel provides the narrative structure, and the church the institution through which the virtuous life is embodied. Central to their approach is the life, death and resurrection of Christ which, 'requires that I become part of a community that practices virtues, not that I copy his life point by point' (Hauerwas 1983: 76). Samuel Wells, currently the Rector at St Martin-in-the-Fields (central London), might be considered part of the next generation of post-liberal theologians. His doctoral thesis was an examination of Hauerwas's ethical framework and he has written extensively on similar themes in an attempt to help the church live faithfully within an ethically fragmented world. Throughout his writings, poverty is an important theme. In *A Nazareth Manifesto* he argues that 'being with' is the predominant way the church should faithfully respond to poverty. Yet, he argues, most churches respond to poverty by 'working for' those who experience it. Comment on 'being with' in *Living Without Enemies* he writes:

The approach of 'being with' is less given to programmes and movements and is more to be found in piecemeal initiatives and small-scale relationships. This is because 'being with' is not fundamentally about finding solutions, but about companionship amid struggle and distress. (Wells and Owen 2011: 30)

For Wells, the life of Jesus becomes the narrative through which 'being with' should be understood. Jesus spent thirty years 'being with' others before embarking upon his public ministry. It was through being with his disciples that he formed a community of people that knew God was with them.

A central claim of my thesis is that the concept of 'being with' provides an orientating language for the practice of relocation. This reminds the relocator that foundational to their ministry is building relationships with local people. However, I argue that Wells's account of injustice within his definition is incomplete. Particularly by focusing

on the church as the embodiment of justice, the political and societal implications of 'being with' are left unexplored. In order to extend our understanding of 'being with' to incorporate this, I will engage with resources from within the tradition of public theology.

1.2.3 Public Theology

Over the last 150 years in the United Kingdom a genre of theology has developed, mainly within the Anglican tradition, that seeks to speak faithfully within the public sphere. In particular, it has sought to influence government policy on issues that are informed by and derived from the church's theology. An important theme within 'Public Theology', as it is broadly known, is poverty. Public theologians have sought to develop an understanding of poverty that requires action by the church, state and nation. To do this, they have tried to speak in a language that is recognisable to the public yet, at the same time, is theologically informed. Thus, a tension is created between speaking in a language which can be understood in public yet still has theological integrity and coherency.

As with practical theology, there is a breadth of definitions for public theology. I argue that this is for two main reasons – contested notions of the *public* and a broad range of theological methods that are utilised within public theology. In the first place there is divergence of what is meant by the term 'public'. For some it is a reaction to the liberal tendency of reducing matters of faith to the private realm. Most public theologians seek to reject this dualism. In some cases public refers to aspects of societal life that are not within the jurisdiction of the state, whereas others refer to state structures as public service (Smit 2007). Furthermore, the public realm is understood as a dynamic place. William Storrar argues that the political environment

he faced when he became director of the Centre for Theology and Public Issues in 2001 was radically different from what it had been when the centre was established seventeen years earlier. Thatcherism had been replaced by New Labour, with the latter being committed to partnership with research institutions in order to reduce poverty. Thus, he argues, the centre had to 'respond to a very different framework for addressing public issues' (Storrar 2007: 20).

The second cause of diversity within public theology is the varied ways of approaching theology. Influences upon those who consider themselves as public theologians stretch from Karl Barth to Reinhold Niebuhr, Papal encyclicals to Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Alasdair MacIntyre to William Temple. Furthermore, the boundaries of public theology regularly blur with those of other theological areas – for instance ethics, liberation theology and political theology – as well as bringing it into dialogue with other academic disciplines – notably sociology, geography and political science. There are also questions about from where public theology should be written and whom it is for. In his seminal work *The Analogical Imagination*, David Tracy claims that theology 'addresses three distinct and related social realities: the wider society, the academy, and the church' (Tracy 1981: 5). Whilst in principle this may be so, there is a tendency for theologians to lean in one direction or another. As Dirkie Smit (2007: 443) says, 'the complexity of the idea of public theology corresponds to the many meanings and uses of the notion of public; there exists no single and authoritative meaning of public theology and no single normative way of doing public theology'.

The public theology I am most attentive to within this thesis is that which examines theology's relationship to wider society. I am aware that the academy and the church may be changed by the practice of relocation, but my primary purpose in drawing

from the wells of public theology is to help incorporate a sense of theological speech as formally 'public' within Wells's concept of 'being with'. To do this I will principally focus upon Duncan Forrester's concept of theological fragments and Elaine Graham's reflections upon apologetics as dialogical speech. My belief is that I am developing a practical, public theology for relocators and, in doing so, claim that relocators and their neighbours may become a new generation of public theologians.

Throughout the thesis I will also draw upon a number of other theological sources. In the final chapter I use Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement along with Simone Weil as illustrative of how the practice of relocation may seek to resist, as well as influence, politics and society.

1.3 The Journey of Relocation – Orientation, Disorientation, Reorientation

So far, I have begun to map out the terrain of my thesis. I have claimed that I will develop a theological language that enables the relocater to negotiate the dynamic nature of their neighbourhood and develop political and societal engagement. I now want to outline a little of the journey of relocation. To do this, I will borrow categories from an unlikely source, Walter Brueggemann's reflections upon the Psalms.

In *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* Brueggemann sketches Paul Ricoeur's understanding of the dynamic of life 'as a movement, dialectic, but not regular or patterned, of disorientation and reorientation' (Brueggemann 2004: 8). Disorientation is understood as an extreme emotion summarised by loss. Brueggemann (2004: 8) writes, 'the loss of an orderly life is linked to a loss of language, or at least to a discovery of the inadequacy of conventional language'. Reorientation is both

continuous and discontinuous with the old. It comes 'through a representation of reality that is genuinely new and has the mark of gift' (Brueggemann 2004: 9). He argues that each of the Psalms may be placed within the sequence of orientation-disorientation-reorientation. Psalms of orientation are characterised by joy, where there is little 'tension to resolve' (Brueggemann 2004: 10). Psalms of disorientation are mainly the psalms of lament where there is a 'yearning for the old orientation' correlating with 'the situation of displacement' (Brueggemann 2004: 12). Psalms of reorientation are full of thankfulness for the new circumstances that speak of genuine newness, surprise and gift (Brueggemann 2004: 14). Brueggemann claims that the move from orientation to disorientation is 'the painful way' and from disorientation to reorientation 'the surprising way' (Brueggemann 2004: 30). He concludes by noting that this language is evocative and not descriptive.

As we shall see, it is my claim that the movement from orientation to disorientation, then to reorientation became a cycle that characterised how my own understanding of relocation developed. However, it is also important to say that this is not always a linear progression. It may be that each is experienced at different times, although it may also be the case within the practice of relocation that an aspect of the ministry is disorientating whilst another may be reorientating. Furthermore, such is the dynamic nature of life within a neighbourhood, that something found initially to be reorientating may become disorientating. What follows is a description of my own experience as a relocater. This is particularly necessary to locate myself within the practice, and to recognise how roles and experience have shaped my understanding.

1.3.1 (Re)locating Myself

My involvement within the practice of relocation has been principally in two ways. Firstly, I worked for the Salvation Army as the UK Emerging Mission Officer (2002-2010). A major part of this role was to identify, recruit and support people to form small teams of between four and ten relocators who would move into low-income neighbourhoods. Through this work, I spent time listening to their experiences in order to help them engage in mission within their neighbourhoods. As part of this role I built relationships with other agencies involved in relocation. We developed training programmes together, for example the Crucible Course (commencing 2005), that helped our teams practice relocation.² I also became a trustee for Urban Expression (2004-2012).³ These experiences prepared me for the second way I engaged with relocation, namely through moving with my family to live in East End Park, a low-income neighbourhood in Leeds. We relocated there in 2006 along with another young family and a man in his early twenties. Although I encountered some knowledge of relocation through my role with The Salvation Army, it was our experiences in East End Park that have had the deepest impact upon how I understand the practice. As I will explain, it challenged some of the assumptions that I had brought into the practice, as well as causing me to encounter practical wisdom in a holistic way.

1.3.1.1 Orientation

Our relocation from London to East End Park in Leeds was motivated by a desire to be involved in mission within a low-income neighbourhood. Primarily we sought to build 'personal' relationships with local people. We were not employed by the

² <http://urbanexpression.org.uk/training-and-events/crucible-course/> [accessed 21 January 2019].

³ <http://urbanexpression.org.uk> [accessed 21 January 2019].

Salvation Army for this work as we felt this may be counterproductive to building mutually beneficial relationships with our neighbours. Initially our focus was on listening to local people. We wanted to understand their experiences of living in East End Park. We thought this would not only challenge our assumptions about the area but would ensure that we did not presume we had the answers to questions no one was asking. Three of our team, including myself, had already been involved in starting a church in south-west London. However, our intention in moving to East End Park was not to establish a new church within the neighbourhood. We were concerned that if we did this, it would not be 'owned' by local people and we might import a culture that was not appropriate. However, we did muse that if local people started a church, we would like to join it. There was an ecclesial ambiguity to our practice. That said, we were interested in exploring what it meant to practise community together. We sought to explore spiritual practices that would nurture our faith and enable us to contextualise faith within the neighbourhood. A key principle for this was that there was to be 'no meeting without eating'. We believed this would ensure that the spirituality developed would be grounded in hospitality with one another and local people. Initially there was very little consideration about the societal change that our practice might produce. The societal change we did imagine focused upon the transformation of the neighbourhood rather than the wider city and nation.

1.3.1.2 Disorientation

An early question that arose for us through listening to the experience of local people was how overwhelming and complex the challenges were in East End Park. We quickly became aware that there was no 'relief' programme that could be established that would fix all the problems. It seemed to us that as the set of circumstances through which individuals and families faced poverty were unique, personal support

was most needed. We observed how there were many agencies operating in different ways to provide some of this support. Yet, they seemed to work within their own organisational silos with little co-ordination to an overall approach to tackling poverty. Not only that, but we discovered there had been a history of residents' groups within the neighbourhood that had closed due to disagreements between their members. Un-picking this history of relational breakdown, whilst at the same time reflecting upon how we should approach these challenges often felt incredibly disorientating. Was it our role to help people find reconciliation between the various parties, or should we simply build relationships with individuals?

Our relationship with agencies and the local council could sometimes be a challenge in the early years. They welcomed our approach of listening to local people, yet this meant that we became something of an ambiguous entity to them. As I could speak the organisational language, I was invited to meetings that were addressing issues in the neighbourhood. I became uncomfortable when I perceived they were referring to me as the voice for local people, something that I certainly was not. At the same time, by listening to local people I heard incredible wisdom about what should be done about the local area. This was hard fought wisdom that had been shaped by personal and collective struggle. However, it never seemed to be heard by the authorities within the area. Whenever there was a neighbourhood meeting it descended into a series of arguments where little wisdom was heard. Part of my disorientation prompted the question as to how there might be environments where this wisdom could be heard and begin to shape how responses to poverty should be made within the neighbourhood. Furthermore, I recognised that one of the challenges for East End Park was that it was isolated from the wider city. Transport links had literally cut it off from adjoining neighbourhoods and from the city centre. To get anywhere you had to

cross major roads. This meant that the neighbourhood often felt like an island upon which, apart from the council-run bonfire night celebrations in the local park, there was little reason to venture onto it. Questions about how things had come to be this way and about the structures that seemed to mean the neighbourhood continued this way became very relevant for us. A chance visit from the community activist and theologian Ched Myers gave us the biblical language of sabbath economics to imagine how life might be different, yet at the same time that seemed so far away and difficult to enact.⁴

Alongside our listening to local people, the small community of relocators began to discover that being a Christian community was hard work. In our attempt to know the area we seemed to discover a whole lot more ‘unknowing’ about the area itself, about how faith might make a difference and about how we responded to both. As we looked for reference points from other groups, communities and teams, we began to recognise the uniqueness of our particular approach. In some ways, it felt that spiritually, we were walking into a state of unknowing and this was mirrored in terms of ecclesiology and missiology too. Our natural instinct to try to organise and find solutions was difficult to resist. Yet, we knew that we did not really know how to respond and this ‘unknowing’ was often unsettling. In particular it felt that our theological formation to that point did not have the resources necessary to help us navigate these challenges. The feelings of disorientation were increased by a belief that we should seek to be a ‘radical’ Christian community. We dreamed of ways in

⁴ Ched Myers, a political theologian and activist from California spent a day with us in August 2007. The day was spent walking around the area, listening to local people and learning a little from our experience. Throughout the day he used material from *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics* (Myers 2002) to help us to comprehend a theological response to political and societal structures that oppressed East End Park. He left us with a question: how might sabbath economics be expressed in your neighbourhood? We explored our responses to that question regularly during our time in East End Park. This encounter could have been placed within the reorientating category. It was crucial for me in recognising that theological concepts have political and societal implications.

which we might embody the practices of sabbath economics that we had been introduced to yet struggled to get beyond talking about it. Our understanding of what this looked like were incredibly naive and idealistic and so, when we realised we could not express this, we felt inauthentic and discouraged.

The danger of organising my own relocation in light of Brueggemann's categories is that by focusing upon disorientation as a category, it highlights the more challenging aspects of our relocation. In truth, there was much joy on the way. It was amazing to encounter the wisdom and brilliance of some of our neighbours. It was a privilege to walk with people who faced difficulties and for them to walk with us as we felt the same. Learning to see the world from a different vantage point was disorientating, however it was also an adventure that enriched us deeply. The 'joyful way' and the 'painful way', to use Brueggemann's phrases, often collided with one another (Brueggemann 2004: 14). It was often in these moments that we experienced reorientation. As with the Psalms, often they seemed to happen in a 'surprising way' (Brueggemann 2004: 30).

1.3.1.3 Reorientation

There have been many moments of reorientation for us in East End Park. Experiences where you discover a deep insight into yourself, others and God. I want to speak briefly of four types of reorientation that challenged some of the assumptions we had arrived in East End Park with. In doing this I acknowledge that these reorientations are only partial and were not consistently applied.

Firstly, a reorientation of how we imagine the self. One of the key challenges for ethnographic research and for the relocater is understanding whether we are an

insider or an outsider. Our experience in East End Park is that you have to become comfortable with the ambiguity of the insider/ outsider identity. Around five years after we had moved, we were in a meeting of a community group of local people. During this I referred to myself as an incomer. A local resident very quickly retorted, 'you are not an incomer, you are one of us'. This felt like a significant moment for us where we had reached acceptance. However, this view was representative of a few people with whom we had spent the most time and I was well aware that there would be many others for whom we were still outsiders. We also discovered that the language of insider/outsider (incomer/local person) is incredibly problematic within East End Park. People were regularly moving in and out of the estate. This helped us identify that there was not simply one community in East End Park but many, and that these communities and cultures were far from static. Thus, we learnt to hold lightly to this aspect of our identity, recognising that we were viewed in multiple ways by different individuals and groups.

Secondly, it was through our missional engagement that the theological categories used by relocators were reoriented. A year after moving to East End Park we were involved in a fun day in the park that was organised by a local health agency. We supported one of their workers running the children's races. She had prizes to give out and described how we would award the big prizes to those who had come last in the races. Without thinking I blurted out how I thought it was a great idea and that Jesus had talked about doing things like that. My own realisation in that moment was that the Spirit was already at work in the neighbourhood, causing people to act in ways that were Christ-like. Rather than incarnating God's presence from outside of the neighbourhood we were simply finding where the Spirit was already present within

it. Our responsibility, if we had one, was to point out to others how this was connected to the Jesus story.

Another reorientation moment was discovering Samuel Wells's assertion that a Christian response to poverty and marginalisation is to seek to 'be with' rather than to 'work for' people with a direct experience of poverty. I first heard him explain it in a public lecture in Westminster Abbey. It was at a time when I felt particularly disorientated about all we were trying to achieve in East End Park. The 'being with' trope that Wells spoke of strongly resonated with our practice. I soon realised that this provided a helpful theological language to describe our presence in the neighbourhood. However, as we shall discuss in Chapter Four, our encounters with some people, particularly those with personality disorders, meant that this paradigm also became disorientating. In fact, it was our family's encounter with one particular person that eventually led to us leaving the neighbourhood. Hence, the end of the schema for us in some ways was not reorientation but disorientation.

Finally, societal reorientation occurred in a number of ways. Our attentiveness to the wisdom of local people led us to consider how we might create environments where relationships could be built between people who experienced poverty and leaders from within the city. We believed that doing so might help harness change in how the city responded to poverty. It was important that this should be done on a city-wide basis as it would provide greater opportunity for systemic change and begin to reintegrate neighbourhoods like East End Park into the city as a whole. Thus, following the lead of Faith in Community Scotland, we established the Leeds Poverty

Truth Commission.⁵ In the commission fifteen people with a direct experience of poverty build relationships with fifteen civic and business leaders to address issues of poverty that arise out of their experience. Part of the reorientation for me within this has been theological. It challenged the notion that relocators like me were the voice for the voiceless. I began to recognise that my role was to support those who are often considered voiceless long enough for them to be able to speak for themselves. Thus, their wisdom is shared directly within a civic space. Not only that but they themselves co-create new ways of dealing with poverty with public, third, faith and private sector leaders. Unquestionably my work with the Leeds Poverty Truth Commission has become a source of knowledge as to how I understand poverty within a neighbourhood context. The commission's findings articulate some of the changes that society must make if we are to respond to poverty in more humanising ways. At the same time, the commission was developed in Leeds as a direct result of my practice as a relocator and so it is an outworking of how the practice of relocation may lead towards societal change. Furthermore, it is also a source of theological reflection about what it means to 'be with' those who society considers poor (Grinnell 2018).

1.3.2 (Re)locating my Research

I began my doctoral studies in 2011, five years after I had moved to East End Park. A key motivator was the recognition that in the disorientating moments of my practice I had reached the limits of my knowledge in how I understood our engagement theologically within the neighbourhood. Thus, reflection upon my own practice was

⁵ Faith in Community Scotland established the Poverty Truth Commission in 2009. More information on the Leeds Poverty Truth Commission can be found at <http://www.leedspovetrytruth.org.uk> [accessed 21 January 2019].

always going to be a focus of the research. Initially I began my DThM programme at King's College, London. As part of the course I undertook a Ministerial Formation Study (MFS) in which I used an ethnographic framework to inquire how eight relocators in Leeds conceptualised ministry within their neighbourhood. The core conclusion of this research was that the relocators' practice was built upon the foundation of relationship-making with neighbours. All other aspects of their practice, for instance community transformation, were to be built upon this. Yet, conducting this research raised a series of questions about the theological nature of this relationship building. Firstly, does the theological language used by relocators to describe their practice enhance or limit relationship building? Secondly, are relocators too focused upon ministry within their neighbourhood to consider the wider political and societal implications of their practice? Finally, is there sufficient understanding of the agency of relocators and neighbours within the theological frameworks that relocators are adopting? Considering these questions enabled an over-arching aim for my research to form. The aim of this thesis is to develop a theological language that frames the relationships relocators build with their neighbours which acknowledges and enhances the contribution both may make within wider political and societal discourse. My claim is that 'being with(in)' and its associated dimensions, is appropriate orientating language to fulfil this aim.

The commencement of the research period for this thesis coincided with moving to study at Durham University. Initially I contemplated whether to conduct more empirical research. As the questions I was now asking were more theological it seemed that if more qualitative research was to be done, it would be best conducted within my own practice. However, conducting qualitative research presented a significant challenge to the nature of the relationships that I had already built with

people in the area. Local people often felt ‘consulted to death’ and I considered doing this would have been detrimental to our ministry to be seen as another ‘consultant’. Another research option would have been to treat this as a work of auto-ethnography. Christopher Swift describes the researcher’s role in this as ‘fully implicated in the situations researched: indeed he or she may give rise to them’ (Swift 2009: 104). In many respects our practice shares much with this. However, I felt that if I were to do this, I should have started recording my theological reflections when I first relocated. Too much time had passed for it to be a rigorous auto-ethnographical account. Thus, I concluded that I did not wish to conduct any further empirical work. Inevitably my own practice has influenced this research. It has been through relocation that the kinds of questions have arisen to which I have felt compelled to find answers. Furthermore, relocation has opened my ears to hear wisdom from unlikely places that I otherwise may not have heard. Therefore, if my own practice is to be considered part of the meaning-making of this thesis it is, to borrow Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen’s phrase, as an ‘observant-participant’ (Scharen and Vigen 2011: 44). The very nature of how we approached relocation for us meant that we focused on participation with people in the neighbourhood. However, we were always keen to reflect upon that which we had seen in order to increase the effectiveness of our participation.

Although my research does not have an empirical element, as conclusions from my Ministerial Formation Study at King’s College, London and my own practice provide the backdrop for my thesis, I argue that this work remains an exercise in practical theology. Furthermore, the process I adopt loosely resembles the pastoral cycle.⁶

⁶ Of the many versions of the pastoral cycle that have been developed, my thesis has most in common with the four task approach of Richard Osmer outlined in *Practical Theology* (Osmer 2008). Essentially, each task responds to a particular question. The tasks and their related questions are as

Initially I will describe first-hand accounts of relocators as found in the literature they have published. I will then examine some of the underlying assumptions about neighbourhood poverty within these accounts by drawing upon sociological frameworks. Following this, I will bring the theological tradition into relationship with these accounts before proposing a theological framework that enables the relocators to minister more faithfully. However, I want to acknowledge that I am using the cycle in, to use John Reader's phrase, a way that is reflective of the blurred encounter of relocation (Reader 2005). This blurring of the cycle occurs in a number of ways. Firstly, the practice of relocation is a theologically informed one. As such, its practitioners are already embodying a particular theological narrative in their decision to relocate. Therefore, theology cannot be relegated to the later parts of the cycle but must be recognised as part of the description. As Pete Ward argues, any practitioner carries into their experience 'a theologically shaped perspective' (Ward 2017a: 4). Secondly, it is blurred by virtue of the many theological disciplines that could be called upon to bring critical reflection to its practice.

In locating myself within the relocation movement I recognise that I am not in any way a neutral observer. I agree with Swift that my observation should be handled in a provisional and circumscribed manner (Swift 2009: 104). Yet, at the same time, John Swinton and Harriet Mowat encourage the researcher not to consider their own biases as entirely detrimental to the research task. Rather they should be stated and constantly brought into conversation with the researcher's findings, allowing them to be challenged (Swinton and Mowat 2016: 113). In claiming that relocation is a unique place from which to discern practical wisdom, I am aware that my own self, the skills,

follows: task 1. Descriptive-Empirical – 'what is going on?'; task 2: Interpretive – 'why is it going on?'; task 3: Normative – 'what should be going on?'; and task 4: Pragmatic – 'how might we respond?'.

resources, insecurities, weaknesses and sense of agency I inhabit will have affected how people presented themselves to me during this time. Similarly, my own motivations for relocation and 'being with' bring their own levels of distortion to ways in which life was perceived and understood as I sought to justify our choice to relocate and whether we were successful in doing so. That said, as I moved towards completion of this thesis, I was no longer formally involved within the relocation movement. We do not currently live within a low-income area, having moved out from East End Park in late 2015. I believe this has added critical distance to my research. It has helped me see more clearly the importance of building relationships with neighbours and catalysing opportunities for them to engage societally and politically. The changing political scenery in the United Kingdom, typified by the vote to leave the European Union, has revealed how it is often the voices of those who have lost most within the processes of globalisation that are unheard within society (Hobolt 2016). An aim of this thesis is to show how relocators offer a particular response to this challenge. Thus, my overall aim for this research is to develop a language that provides a theological description of the relationships between relocators and their neighbours and is generative of positive societal and political change.

1.4 Mapping the Thesis

The process of orientation, disorientation and reorientation I outlined earlier provides a map for my overall thesis. Chapter Two is an orientation to the practice of relocation. By focusing upon the popular and academic written work of practitioners I introduce the four main motivations for relocating. I argue that whilst much attention is given to the ecclesial, missional and personal discipleship motivations, the societal and political are left largely unaddressed. The rest of the chapter is aimed at clearing the ground of unhelpful theological language currently used to describe the practice,

particularly the use of 'incarnational living'. Rather, I claim that a theology of participation in which the relocater participates with Christ in the neighbourhood provides a firmer Christological foundation for the practice.

Chapter Three outlines the disorientation of neighbourhood poverty. In this chapter I show the complex nature of how poverty is experienced within low-income neighbourhoods. By restricting the research to a particular city, Leeds, it is possible to more carefully construct a deep understanding of the lived experience of poverty and to show how this experience might engage with the political and societal structures of the wider city. I pay particular attention to the sociological frameworks of the ways in which neighbourhood life is interpreted, claiming that social capital is largely an unhelpful category. In its place I propose the importance of social citizenship, vulnerability and resilience as a way of negotiating the complexity and fragility of neighbourhood life.

Chapter Four begins by demonstrating how Samuel Wells's concept 'being with' might serve as orientating language for the relocater. I argue that its emphasis upon relationships, its Christological focus, and its reframing of poverty from deficit of resources to disconnection or isolation from others provides a faithful language for the relocater. However, I also argue that Wells's notion of 'being with' might be considered passive in the face of dehumanising structures, does not provide an adequate account of material goods and is inattentive to the specificity of suffering individuals. I suggest that this is because Wells does not acknowledge the limitations that inhibit relationships within a neighbourhood. In response I offer a revised notion of 'being with(in)' as a way that relocaters may extend this concept within their practice. The brackets represent the ambiguous nature of the relocater. In one sense

there is no need for a bracket. Relocators live within the neighbourhood and so are affected both positively and negatively by life there alongside their neighbours. They are within their neighbourhood. Yet, in another sense the brackets are necessary. Relocators have chosen to move into the neighbourhood with the specific intention of practising a particular ministry. The brackets reflect something of this intentionality to 'be with' and acknowledge that they may always be seen by some local people as 'incomers' to the neighbourhood.

Chapter Five explores alternative theological resources that enable a reorientation of 'being with(in)' to include challenging dehumanising structures. I draw upon the tradition of public theology in the United Kingdom, particularly Duncan Forrester's theological fragments and Elaine Graham's dialogical apologetics, to show how the relocator may speak theologically. By incorporating this into 'being with(in)' I show how a further dimension develops. This I call 'cries'. It is practised by the relocator through 'deep listening' to the experiences of neighbours before turning this hearing into speech. I argue that 'cries' breaks down dehumanising structures when this speech is offered by local people themselves.

Chapter Six begins by claiming that the frameworks of post-liberal and public theologies can become obsessed by the influence of the state. I argue that public theologians are often too interested in influencing public policy whilst post-liberal theologians seek to resist it. In doing so they risk developing a simplistic understanding of society in which the state overrides all other aspects. By complexifying society and drawing upon Dorothy Day's understanding of the mystical body of Christ, I show how 'being with(in)' might be reoriented to include economic and political dimensions that go beyond influencing the state or resisting it. In

developing this, 'being with(in)' is expanded to include two further dimensions. The first is a theology of 'gifts'. This responds to what I consider is the lack of an account of material goods within Wells's account. I argue that it is imperative that a relocater theologically understands how they might use their material goods within the neighbourhood so that they are neither a mechanism of control, nor are they withheld from neighbours. The second element responds to what I deem is an inattentiveness by Wells to the specificity of either an individual's or a neighbourhood's experiences of suffering. Rather, I argue for the importance of attentiveness to suffering by framing it through the theological lens of 'wounds'. My argument is that in building relationships that are honest about the wound of poverty on a personal and societal level and that are bound together by gift exchange, the relocater may make possible new and localised economic, political and societal structures and responses to poverty.

The thesis concludes by affirming 'being with(in)' as appropriate orientating language for the practice of relocation. I argue that this has implications for the relocater in terms of how they seek to build relationships in their neighbourhood, for organisations and church denominations in supporting the practice to flourish, for theology as relocators become part of a new generation of practical, public theologians, and for wider society in enabling local people to engage in public discourse.

2. An Orientation to the Practice of Relocation

Living incarnationally among the poor has always been controversial. On the one hand those who shared their lives with the poor, like Francis of Assisi, Dorothy Day and Mother Theresa, have always been fiercely admired. But incarnational workers among the poor have also been ridiculed and condemned for exposing their lives and those of their children to the dangerous conditions of the poor. (Hayes 2007: 65)

Relocating to live amongst the poor, described in the quote above as living incarnationally, has been practised throughout the history of the church. Exponents are found from within a wide variety of traditions and hold a range of theological positions. In this chapter, I will be focusing specifically on how this has been practised over the past thirty years by relocators who would broadly describe themselves as coming from the evangelical tradition. Although not all would call themselves 'relocators' or use the relocation metaphor, I am adopting this phrase as I believe it is the most inclusive term available. As I shall explain, other options that are used by many of the groups, for instance incarnational living, are inadequate descriptions that limit the theological understanding and practice of the relocators. To understand its practice, this 'movement' has increasingly drawn from wider church history for sources of inspiration and theological frameworks.⁷ Relocation is not a centrally coordinated movement, although a number of mission agencies have developed both within and across denominations to help support teams, communities and individuals. Often these agencies are informally connected with one another and on occasion have developed collective identities (for instance New Monasticism in the United

⁷ In Chapter Six I will draw from Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement.

States).⁸ Relocation is practised worldwide with groups and individuals relocating to places as varied as the slums of Phnom Penh to the council estates of Manchester. As we shall see, relocators describe this activity in a number of ways. From the literature that I will be addressing, descriptions include ‘immersion’ (Bessenecker 2006: 125), ‘making home’ (Wilson 2005: 32), being a ‘Christian incomer’ (Keeble 2013: 2), a ‘learner’ (Pears 2013: 101), to ‘sub-merge’ (Hayes 2007), and ‘being among the poor’ (Davey 2010: 85). These descriptions demonstrate the holistic nature of the practice and something of its ecclesial, missional, spiritual and societal motivations.

The main purpose of this chapter is to establish how relocators understand their own practice. I will pay particularly close attention to the language used within their own literature to describe the practice of relocation. I will argue that some of the terms they employ distort the nature of the practice of relocation, and furthermore, may inadvertently add to the stigma associated with poverty and unhelpfully limit the relocators’ theological imagination. Specifically, I argue that understanding the practice through the lens of incarnational living is restrictive. Thus, my aim in this chapter is to show that other theological language which is more faithful to the practice is necessary. This language will help the relocator to appropriately approach mission within their neighbourhood, provide a framework for sustainable ministry and enable the relocators and their neighbours to communicate within a number of contexts including the church, neighbourhood and society.

⁸ <http://www.communityofcommunities.info> [accessed 21 January 2019].

2.1 Literature about the Practice of Relocation

The literature I am about to discuss has been written by relocators themselves. In many respects it documents the experiences of the practice to which the rest of the thesis responds. It can be broadly divided into two categories: popular and academic. The popular writings are predominantly the narratives of a particular person or agency involved in relocating. On the whole, they primarily seek to inspire the wider church about the practice of relocation. In doing so they also offer broad theological frameworks as to how relocation might be understood. Although not all authors use the term relocation, the act of relocating to low-income areas is the fundamental uniting feature of their practice. The literature spans four decades, with some older books, for instance Viv Grigg's *Companion to the Poor*, having an almost 'canon'-type influence upon more recent writers.⁹ The literature is representative of a number of movements, agencies and individuals who are practising relocation. These include those primarily focused upon neighbourhoods in the Western world and others that are focused upon slums within two-thirds world contexts. Those orientated towards the West include the New Monasticism movement within Northern America;¹⁰ Urban Expression,¹¹ The Eden Network¹² and the Salvation Army 614 initiatives within the United Kingdom; and individuals, such as Paul Keeble, who are seeking to be a presence in a neighbourhood without any formal affiliation to a Christian organisation.

⁹ As well as *Companion to the Poor* (Grigg 2004), the first edition of which was published in 1984, I would include *Community and Growth* (Vanier 1989), *Resurrecting Hope* (Perkins 1995) and *The Meaning of the City* (Ellul 1970) as canonical texts for relocators.

¹⁰ New Monasticism in the North American context includes groups such as The Simple Way (www.thesimpleway.org), Rutba House (<https://emerging-communities.com/tag/rutba-house>) and New Jerusalem Now (<http://newjerusalemnow.org>). Influential people within this movement include Shane Claiborne, Jonathan Wilson-Hargrove and Nate Buchanan. Many of these groups developed 12 marks that are features of this movement, with each mark as the focus of a chapter in *Schools for Conversion: 12 Marks of the New Monasticism*.

¹¹ www.urbanexpression.org. Key people within this network include Stuart Murray, Juliet and Jim Kilpin and Mike Pears.

¹² <http://joineden.org>. Matt Wilson and Anna Ruddick both worked for Eden in national roles.

Those operating in a two-thirds world context include the New Friar's network,¹³ where two of the organisations who are part of this, Servants to Asia's Poor and InnerChange, also have groups based in the United Kingdom. Many of the works that I will be citing are linked to specific groups who practise relocation. For instance, Matt Wilson, Sam Ward and Chris Lane are reflecting upon the work of the Eden Network specifically, whereas Stuart Murray and Juliet Kilpin consider Urban Expression.

As this practice has developed, the understanding of the practitioners has matured. Notably, recent works by Lane and Keeble weave together their experiences of relocation with theory developed through their own MA studies. The themes I explore in this chapter are inevitably generalised. However, I have sought where possible to nuance the argument by making it clear how understanding has changed over time.

Academic research is a more recent development within the practice. A number of practitioners of relocation to low-income neighbourhoods have recently completed doctoral work in this area. Some of this research has focused on the practice itself. Ashley Barker's thesis looks at the practice of relocation to slum communities within the two-thirds world. In particular, he seeks to define the term 'incarnational living' as a theological framework for understanding the practice of relocation. Anna Ruddick's research on the Eden Network proposes Missional Pastoral Care as an appropriate way to understand their practice.¹⁴ In this chapter I will build upon aspects of her research that highlight some of the assumptions Eden team members made about

¹³ Agencies that are a part of the New Friars movement include Servants to Asia's Poor (<http://www.servantsasia.org>); InnerChange (<http://www.innerchange.org>); Word Made Flesh (<http://www.wordmadeflesh.org>); Servant Partners (<http://www.servantpartners.org>); and Urban Neighbours of Hope (<http://www.unoh.org>) [all accessed 21 January 2019]. Scott Bessenecker's book *The New Friars* develops the distinctive of the movement and *Living Mission: The Vision and Voices of the New Friars* includes chapters by many of the organisation's leaders. Viv Grigg helped establish Servants to Asia's Poor.

¹⁴ Eden is a network of teams that have relocated to low-income areas in UK cities. www.joineden.org [accessed 21 January 2019].

their practice. Samuel Thomas's ethnographic work on 'incarnational geographies' is primarily based upon his research of a team based on a large estate in Oldham. This team was jointly overseen by a partnership between The Salvation Army and the Eden Network. Whilst written in the discipline of social geography, Thomas's thesis helps draw out how we might interpret life within a low-income neighbourhood.

Whilst not focusing specifically on relocation, two recent doctoral theses have influenced my research. Both authors, Mike Pears and Alastair Barrett, were practitioners of relocation at the time of their doctoral studies. Pears seeks to develop a theological understanding of place, with specific reference to the low-income neighbourhood he lived in as part of an Urban Expression team. Barrett's thesis is particularly pertinent to my own. Drawing upon his experiences as a vicar within an outer Birmingham estate, he develops a political Christology that emphasises radical receptivity. By that he means the church both gives and, crucially, receives Christ within the neighbourhood. He writes:

A church which is 'radically receptive to the gifts and challenges' of the agency of others, therefore, would allow that agency [...] to 'question or re-envision' the 'arrangements of power' at work in the church's own identity, its 'performances', and its relationships with its 'others'. (Barrett 2017: 14)

I believe that the academic writing of people within the movement gives an indication of how the movement is maturing in practice and theory. It is primarily for this community that my thesis seeks to deepen further an understanding of the practice of relocation by initially questioning the language that is assumed, before proposing alternative possibilities.

2.2 Motivations for Relocation

It is clear that the 'relocation movement' is based upon a theological assumption that the Christian faith has a bias towards the poor. Gary Bishop writes, 'a commitment to the poor is integral to the Christian faith, paramount in the teaching of Jesus and inherently part of the character of God' (Bishop 2007: 54). My interest at this point is not to interrogate the rationale for a commitment to the poor, or provide a theological definition of how relocators understand poverty. It is enough to recognise that the literature primarily discusses material forms of poverty. Presently, I want to focus upon why relocators believe living within a low-income area is necessary to respond to this theological imperative. I have organised the motivations for relocating into four categories: missional, ecclesial, personal discipleship and societal. Often within the literature the boundaries between these categories are blurred and it should be assumed that, although I treat the categories discretely, I recognise that the motivations are interrelated. My purpose in outlining them is to reveal some of the common language used by practitioners and in doing so, to expose some of the assumptions of theology and practice they make.

2.2.1 Missional Motivations

In *Church Planting in the Inner City* Juliet Kilpin and Murray (2007: 14) say that 'in joining Urban Expression, they [teams who have relocated to inner city neighbourhoods] have become missionaries'. They argue that teams find themselves in a cross-cultural context in a similar way to missionaries who have been sent from Britain to developing world contexts. Kilpin and Murray (2007: 15) continue, 'we are in a missionary context – the sooner British Christians recognise this, the better'. Bishop picks up this theme in reflecting upon his experience of relocating to Manchester. Bishop (2007: 62) writes that it was like moving 'to another country, as

we learn new customs, new values, get used to a new diet and in some cases a new language'. If mission is to be understood in cross-cultural terms, it is assumed relocating provides the greatest possible exposure to understanding and engaging with the context. In the act of relocating, the relocator begins to relate directly with the local culture.

Relating to culture alone does not fully articulate the missional motive for relocation. Part of Bishop's rationale for relocating was to 'remind [local] people that they are valuable, worth bothering with' (Bishop 2007: 64). By spending time with, serving and valuing local people Bishop (2007: 64) believes that they will 'come a little closer to knowing that there is a God who loves and values them'. This also highlights something of an assumption that evangelism undergirds the missional motivation. This motive is shared by many of the writers and the organisations of which they are members. In other words, a focus for the relocator is to seek the conversion of individuals within the neighbourhood. Evangelism is often framed within a wider understanding of 'transformation'.¹⁵ Bishop claims that relocators are 'transformation people in the heart of Darkest England, where need is all around and comes in many guises' (Bishop 2007: 81). Matt Wilson calls this 'the proximity principle.' In combining physical and relational proximity, 'the potential for transformation increases exponentially' (Wilson 2012: 116). The Eden Network understand this as holistic transformation. One of their stated 'distinctives' is that the 'people of God are expected to play an active role in his [God's] restoration plan' (Wilson 2012: 213). Thus, Eden looks at the whole person, seeking to 'develop innovative responses meeting a wide range of relational, recreational, educational, emotional and spiritual

¹⁵ For instance, chapter four 'Be the Message' in *Eden: Called to the Streets* (Wilson 2005), seeks to recognise the importance of incarnational evangelism – a combination of speaking about Jesus and living differently in order to bring change. This is both reflective of and, in a sense, pre-emptive to current conversations within evangelicalism.

needs' (Wilson 2012: 213). Although personal conversion is important, it is understood within a broader, holistic horizon.

For the Eden Network, the way mission is understood and embodied within their practice has developed over time. Wilson notes that after a few years they realised that young people and families were becoming dependent upon the relocators for practical, social and spiritual support. In part they believed this was because team members had understood their mission as something they did 'to' other people. Over time this progressed to doing things 'for' people in their neighbourhoods. However, having realised that 'by doing something for them that they can be helped to do themselves' might reduce the dignity of the person, they replaced doing 'for' by doing mission 'with' people (Wilson 2012: 144). Through this 'we open ourselves up to the possibility that we might learn from those we thought we'd be teaching, and may be blessed by those we thought we'd be blessing' (Wilson 2012: 144). In his MPhil dissertation Paul Keeble outlines 'mission with' as an 'appropriate model of mission that encompasses [his] personal experience as a mission practitioner' (Keeble 2013: 4). He argues that a pre-requisite to identifying with neighbours is to be a 'presence among' them (Keeble 2013: 91). Initiatives and projects may then emerge aimed at addressing the shared concerns of both the local community and the relocator. Fundamental to how Keeble understands the relocator's calling is to 'be there'. Keeble (2013: 180) comments:

Being part of a community, being a resident, being a Christian who is 'present-among.' The mission is first of all in that personal praxis, not in a role, task or project. Such projects that have come about have been born directly out of that shared life and a shared desire to take action on shared concerns.

The practice of relocation has enabled a more holistic understanding of mission to emerge for relocators. Relocators partner with others in a neighbourhood to bring

change. Thus, relocators emphasise the importance of ‘with’ as part of how they do mission.

2.2.2 Ecclesial Motivations

The literature on relocation highlights a number of ecclesial aspects that motivate Christians to relocate to low-income neighbourhoods. A significant influence is the inspiration of the wider missional church movement in the western, evangelical church.¹⁶ Missiologists have sought to catalyse a missional as opposed to a pastoral focus to church life. The backdrop of this is partly understood as the waning of the Christendom era. Stuart Murray describes Post-Christendom as ‘the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence’ (Murray 2018: 21). Its transitions include the shift from ‘control to witness’, from ‘maintenance to mission’ and from ‘institution to movement’ (Murray 2018: 22). Murray argues that faithful influence moves away from maintaining the status quo within society and the church to witnessing to our story and its implications within a contested environment as a Christian movement not an institution. Missional church advocates argue that this requires planting new churches that are formed around mission. For many of our relocators, this forms part of an ecclesial motivation within their practice.

¹⁶ A number of movements, groups and individuals have actively sought to encourage a missional focus of church life. These have included internationally the Forge Network founded by Alan Hirsch and Mike Frost. We will discuss one of their most influential works *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Frost and Hirsch 2003) later in this chapter. Influential writers in the United Kingdom include Stuart Murray *Post-Christendom* (Murray 2018) and Martin Robinson *Invading Secular Space* (Robinson and Smith 2004), alongside the work of Fresh Expressions (for instance their report *Mission-Shaped Church* (Williams 2004)) and the Church Mission Society (<https://churchmissionsociety.org/partnership-missional-church>).

Much of the literature argues that Post-Christendom is most advanced within low-income areas where the church seems institutionally weak. Relocation is thus understood as redressing what they see as the failure of the church to engage there. Samuel Thomas (2013: 75) argues that recently, 'a reflexive resurgent critique from within Christian networks has prompted the Western church to question how it relates to the poor'. He draws upon Bishop's critique of The Salvation Army which he suggests is based upon a 'two-fold contradiction' of the Christian faith's 'central narratives' (Thomas 2013: 76). On the one hand, the church has allowed the physical distance to grow between churches and the marginalised. On the other, the mode of 'working with' marginalised communities is such that the church often breezes-in and breezes-out resulting in relationships that lack 'both real permanence and solidarity' (Thomas 2013: 76). Thus, it is argued, churches and denominations struggle to build meaningful community within these areas. Laurie Green (2010: 5) suggests one of the problems results from urban mission being too focused upon 'building up and enlarging the Body of Christ'. He argues that urban mission should not be about winning our 'spiritual market share' but giving ourselves away in the same way that Jesus on the cross gives himself away (Green 2010: 5). Kilpin and Murray (2007: 4) suggest that Urban Expression started as a response to a particular frustration that 'church planting, popular in the 1990s, was making little impact in the inner city'. Thus, Urban Expression initially became an agency that sought to develop contextually attentive ways of church planting amongst low-income neighbourhoods.

A further motivation may be the development of new Christian communities that renew the church in similar ways to more traditional monastic movements.¹⁷ Under

¹⁷ For an outline of the New Friars movement see *The New Friars: The Emerging Movement Serving the World's Poor* (Bessenecker 2006) and of New Monasticism see *School(s) for Conversion: 12 Marks of a New Monasticism* (Rutba House 2005).

the labels of New Monasticism and the New Friars, groups adopt some of the spiritual and missional practices of traditional communities in seeking to engage in the neighbourhood. Whether it be through church planting,¹⁸ youth work alongside existing churches,¹⁹ or new monastic communities, much of the literature aims to show both directly and indirectly how relocation brings renewal to the church. However, there is little development of a consistent ecclesiology within the literature. I would claim that although there is an awareness that the practice of relocation speaks provocatively into the life of the wider church, the relocation movement has an ‘ecclesiological ambiguity’. Yet, I would also claim relocating provides opportunities to create, as David Ford terms it, ‘wisdom-seeking communities’ that enable renewal in some way within the wider church (Ford 2007: 352).

2.2.3 Personal Discipleship Motivations

Throughout the literature there is a clear emphasis on following Christ as a motivation for relocation. Several of the authors suggest that the act of living amongst the poor is an imitation of Christ. More specifically, as we shall examine later in this chapter, parallels are drawn between the incarnation and the practice of relocation. Thus, the very act of relocation may be seen as a specific spiritual practice.

The literature also shows how living amongst the poor creates the possibility of expressing spiritual practices in other ways. Firstly, through discovering Christ in the lives of neighbours. As Keeble (2017: 113) suggests:

¹⁸ For instance *Church Planting in the Inner City: The Urban Expression Story* (Kilpin and Murray 2007) and *Darkest England and the Way Back In* (Bishop 2007).

¹⁹ For instance *Eden: Called to the Streets* (Wilson 2005).

Presence-among is with a missional intent, balanced by a recognition that the missionary is there as a learner and as one who finds God already ahead of them. Any genuine relationship changes both parties and is an end in itself.

Secondly, people are motivated to relocate by a desire to practice spiritual disciplines that are specific to the context. In 'Relocation to the Abandoned Places of Empire', Sister Margaret M. McKenna outlines practices that have been inspired by the desert fathers and mothers which are being practiced by new monastic communities located across North America (McKenna 2005). Finally, as Andrew Davey (2010: 85) says 'being among the poor, like Christ, brings dissatisfaction with pervading social and economic orders'. McKenna (2005: 21) relates to what she describes as a 'personal and communal conversion in the form of disciplined resistance' to the 'issues of our time, such as militarism, nuclearism, poverty, homelessness, and ecological problems'. By relocating to live amongst the poor one determines not to be 'intimidated by the "Powers" of Empire' even though low-income neighbourhoods can be unpredictable (McKenna 2005: 21).

The unpredictability of low-income neighbourhoods is a crucial dynamic that the relocater encounters within their practice. It requires wisdom to negotiate it. In her chapter on 'Spiritual Practices and the Search for a Wisdom Epistemology' Kathleen A. Cahalan argues that practical wisdom should be understood as discernment, humility and unknowing. Cahalan (2016: 315) defines 'discernment as phronesis, as knowledge of one's motives and intentions, humility as a true sense of one's self and of God, and unknowing as the encounter of the limits of all knowledge'. She particularly focuses upon the practice of unknowing, claiming the importance of practices that place ourselves in situations where the *telos* is unknown (Cahalan 2016: 317). In many respects the unpredictability of low-income areas coupled with the evolving nature of much of the practice of groups who have relocated is an

expression of this spirituality. However, this is not abstract wisdom. Rather, as Cahalan says, it 'is born in the concreteness of daily, bodily, economic, communal life' (Cahalan 2016: 319). I argue that any language that informs the practice of relocation has to incorporate this unknowing with deep-rooted reflections upon mystery.

2.2.4 Societal Motivations

My final category as to why people might relocate looks beyond the impact within the neighbourhood and explores the motivation to bring social change to wider society. It may be argued that if you want to do this, it is better to work with people in positions of leadership at a city-wide or national level. Therefore, if an aspect of following Christ is to make a positive change to society, it follows that it is better to work with the powerful than live within a low-income area. Viv Grigg counters this argument in three ways. Arguing that relocation should be the starting point, Grigg (2004: 161-62) writes:

First, mass movements from the grassroots eventually produce changes in the top of society. [...] Second, the assumption that the centre of power is the Prime Minister or the President is based on a non-Christian concept of power [...] Poor but wise people, unable to be bought by wealth or power, are key to godly societies [...] Third, we work with the poor rather than the rich because of the example of Jesus.

Grigg is exhorting the relocators to be attentive to the societal and political implications of their practice. The inference is that a mass movement may be catalysed from the grass roots by relocating. For Grigg, relocation is itself a political action (Grigg 2004: 174). Yet, the literature on relocation provides very little acknowledgment of this aspect of the practice. This is particularly the case within the popular literature where with a few exceptions, most notably Keeble's reflections on community organising, it

is seldom addressed (Keeble 2017: 72, 134, 63). In the academic writing societal and political change is more of a focus. Samuel Thomas's analysis of relocation as the practising of theo-ethical incarnational values (Thomas 2013: 81), and Barrett's doctoral thesis (2017), are examples of this. A major focus of my thesis is to further explore what the political and societal aspects of relocation might be. Through the practice of relocation, local wisdom may be heard and harnessed to enable, as Grigg envisioned, a grass-roots movement. Thus, the language that frames the practice should be one that is intelligible in the public square. At the same time, this wisdom must be intelligible within the neighbourhood.

Ethically great care is needed by the relocator when recognising the political and societal aspects of the practice. In particular the *telos* of the practice should not shift from transformation in the neighbourhood to wider societal change. If it does, local people may be utilised as a means to achieve what is perceived to be a greater good. Rather, I will argue that the political and societal change should flow from transformation within the neighbourhood. Localised practices that embody new forms of politics and economics will enable local people to offer alternatives for wider society. Thus, a key feature of my proposal is that if wisdom is to be created through the practice of relocation, it is the neighbours of the relocator who should be speaking of it within the public square.

From this brief outlining of the motivations of relocators I have identified a number of key aspects of any language that describes their practice. Firstly, it must emphasise working alongside and with the local community. Secondly, it should challenge the wider church in how it engages in issues of poverty. Thirdly, it should take account of mystery – in particular recognising the unknowing of mission within a low-income

neighbourhood. Fourthly, it recognises that there should be reciprocity within the relationships that are made with neighbours. Fifthly, it should be able to speak intelligibly within the public square.

One further feature of the practice should also be noted. Whilst groups emphasise different aspects of the reasons for relocation I have outlined, Pears argues that a key commonality is that relocation is about embodiment. Describing them as convictional communities Pears (2013: 87-88) says:

the critical characteristic of these communities is the intentional embodiment of values within the community itself; where 'values' are not simply a list of desirable lifestyle choices, but are precisely the virtues that the Christian community understands as descriptive of Jesus himself. [...] Important elements give [these communities] shape: eating and sharing meals [...] with relationship and hospitality being frequently held values... deeply connected to their local area [...] rhythms of prayer, reflection and Bible reading inspired by monastic and Celtic traditions.

The generally held belief within these convictional communities is that relationship proceeds programme for these communities and, as such, listening to the local community is a necessary starting point. Scott Bessenecker (2006: 90-91) describes this as entering 'into the ministry of sitting around'. I would like to take this further by suggesting that the embodied nature of this practice has epistemological relevance. Miller-McLemore (2016: 222) writes, 'bodies are not mere mediums; they are sources of knowledge. They do not just convey meanings; they contain and create them'. Thus, the relocater experiences the effects of poverty in a bodily way as they observe the effects of poverty. This 'observing' is not done in a detached manner way but through relationships with those who are directly experiencing poverty; the impacts of poverty are experienced emotionally, spiritually and intellectually by the relocater. Not that they necessarily experience poverty itself. Rather, they experience in an embodied way what it is like to be in relationship with one who experiences poverty.

This does not pitch the body against the mind. It is more that the body and mind are brought together to become 'a holistic understanding of one sense-perceiving organism acting the world' (Scharen 2008: 267). For Scharen (2008: 267), this knowledge is phronesis 'in which one does "quickly" the "right thing, in the right way, and at the right time."' Therefore, relocation provides a unique place from which to speak, and its language needs to account for the situated nature of where it speaks from.

2.3 Incarnational Living: A Limiting Framework

So far in this chapter I have outlined some of the characteristics of the 'relocation movement'. I have suggested that what motivates people to relocate can be divided into four categories – missional, ecclesial, personal discipleship and societal. A theological framework that is used consistently within the literature relates to the incarnation. It is assumed that in some way relocating parallels the incarnation. My argument is that other language should be used as incarnational living unhelpfully simplifies the complexity of the context, distorts the relocators' understanding of their role and develops a reductionist Christology. To demonstrate this, I will firstly outline how incarnational living is understood by relocators.

Incarnational language is used in a variety of ways within the literature – notably 'incarnational mission,' 'incarnational ministry' and 'incarnational living'. Throughout this thesis I will use the term incarnational living as it includes aspects of all the other terms.²⁰ Incarnational language has been central to the missional church movement

²⁰ It is also important to distinguish relocators' use of the term from how it was used in the late 19th Century by a group of Anglicans who developed an incarnational consensus. This group, notably including Charles Gore, R.C. Moberly and H. Scott Holland, sought to show how the incarnation was compatible with scientific and political developments. On the incarnation Charles Gore wrote that 'the best theology is that which is moulded, as simply and as closely as may be, upon that which has

over the past fifteen years. In particular incarnational forms of missional engagement are pitted against what Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch call ‘attractational approaches’. In their seminal book *The Shaping of Things to Come* the attractational approach is when ‘the traditional church plants itself within a particular community, neighbourhood, or locale and expects that people will come to it to meet God and find fellowship with others’ (Frost and Hirsch 2003: 18-19). This is contrasted with the incarnational approach in which the missional church draws ‘inspiration and motivation from that unique act whereby God entered into our world and into the human condition in the person of Jesus Christ’ (Frost and Hirsch 2003: 35). Thus, the authors appeal to the doctrine of the incarnation as, in some senses, a model for mission.

The relocation movement extends the incarnational approach further by adding a cross-cultural dimension. By addressing three definitions of incarnation used by different groups of relocators we see how this is understood. The Eden Network’s first distinctive is ‘we are incarnational’. Their explanation reads:

We are devoted to the communities that we have adopted as home. This is far more than simply being a good neighbour or even being a willing local volunteer. We have a sense of calling and commitment to live long-term as salt and light, fleshing out the grace of God. (Wilson 2012: 213)

For Servants to Asia’s Poor their first principle is incarnation. It reads:

We intentionally live with the urban poor, learning from them, building genuine relationships, participating in their lives and struggles, learning their language and their culture, and working out how Jesus’ love can best be shown in their context. (Servants to Asia’s Poor 2016)

In describing the beginnings of Urban Expression, Kilpin and Murray (2007: 4) write:

been disclosed’ (Gore 1903). Whilst sharing some similarities with the relocators, e.g. the insistence that Christ may be discovered in the world, there are key differences, e.g. the centrality of the church and its sacraments.

We would recruit teams to pioneer contextual churches in inner-city communities – incarnational teams that belonged to their communities, ‘working with’ rather than for them, listening carefully to understand their character, culture and needs, not imposing culturally irrelevant churches.

From these three descriptions we discover a sense of the dimensions of how relocators understand their mission as incarnational. Firstly, the act of relocation itself is incarnational. Relocators belong to the neighbourhood, living and making home there. Secondly, relocators take time to learn about the local culture rather than importing their own. Thirdly, they work alongside neighbours, with them rather than for them. Fourthly, they seek to embody the love of Christ by being salt and light as an expression of mission. Two scriptural passages are referred to regularly within the literature that support the use of this language – John 1:14 and Philippians 2:5-11.²¹ From the gospel passage, emphasis is placed upon ‘the word becoming flesh and moving into the neighbourhood’, as the Message paraphrases it. The relocator is to put flesh on to the gospel, inspired by Christ who lived amongst people. From the Philippians passage a fifth dimension of incarnational living is articulated. The kenotic movement of Christ’s self-emptying love is paralleled with the limitations relocators accept by moving into a neighbourhood.

John Hayes, the director of InnerChange, a New Friars organisation, understands incarnational living as building upon the model of Christ. Moving into a neighbourhood not only binds us to local people but ‘it helps bind us to our Saviour and His kingdom’ (Hayes 2007: 116). Furthermore, for Hayes, incarnational living is a method. By living amongst the poor we understand the culture of those we are trying to reach and demonstrate to them that ‘we are for real’ (Hayes 2007: 116). The message of

²¹ For instance, *Darkest England and the Way Back In* (Bishop 2007: 63); *Eden: Called to the Streets* (Wilson 2005: 79); and *Sub-merge* (Hayes 2007: 119).

incarnational living is characterised by costly love, that helps to raise low self-esteem, where the workers serve and learn from local people and where the relocater accepts that it is all right to be human (Hayes 2007: 117-18). Finally, for Hayes, incarnational living should be understood as a spiritual discipline where the relocater depends upon God and practises justice and mercy among the poor (Hayes 2007: 119).

In his doctoral thesis, 'Enfleshed Hope', Ashley Barker describes Hayes's understanding of incarnational ministry as a literal interpretation of the term. He places Hayes alongside veterans of the movement, John Perkins and Dave Andrews, who 'take seriously the idea of following Jesus as a pattern for mission' but also make 'incarnational mission a specific methodology' (Barker 2012: 131). He argues those who adopt a literal translation of incarnational ministry see relocation as essential for mission in low-income neighbourhoods. In doing so, several important aspects of missiology are highlighted, including the importance of locality, praxis, lifestyle priorities, sociocultural barriers that need to be overcome, and Christ's life, mission priorities and sacrificial service (Barker 2012: 148-49). Barker acknowledges the weaknesses of literal interpretations of incarnational living. He prefers to offer a more figurative approach where it is 'one component in a moral compass' or, in other words, as a value than 'can be used with other values to help direct Christians in how to respond to needs' (Barker 2012: 154). He argues that this is based upon a Trinitarian understanding of incarnation in which all three persons of the Trinity incarnate in the world in specific ways.²² Yet, this creates theological complications. If the incarnation means putting on flesh, how might the Spirit be understood to do that?

²² Barker (2012: 164-65) explains his incarnation of the Trinity, 'as 'the Creator incarnates' we join Him in the transformation of slums as we anticipate God's promised final future. As 'the Redeemer incarnates' we follow 'the risen Jesus who advances the kingdom of God [...] [so that we may] en flesh Christian hope in urban slums.' Finally, as the 'Spirit Incarnates' we are empowered to 'participate with God' so that despite the despair and demonic oppression of the slums 'even death has the potential to be transformed'.

It would seem that a potential reason for Barker seeking a theological justification for incarnational living is to continue to use the term to describe this practice. Incarnational language seems to offer a theological foundation to the practice that he does not want to lose. My argument is that it is unnecessary to use the language of incarnational living to witness to the theological validity of the practice of relocation. Other potential theological language is available. Before exploring these alternatives, I will outline the main problems with the language of incarnational living. Although these challenges might be equally applicable to how the terms are used more generally within the missional church, I want to suggest that the particular nature of relocating to a low-income neighbourhood exaggerates the impact of mis-labelling the practice in this way. I want to be clear here that what is at stake is not the validity of the practice, but the language by which we describe it. The practice of relocation needs theological language that will be faithful to the practice and able to convey its gifts to church, society and world as we will see. Viewing relocation through the lens of incarnation does not achieve this. I offer support for this claim by addressing how the term unhelpfully simplifies the complexity of the context, distorts the relocators' understanding of their role and develops a reductionist Christology.

2.3.1 Incarnational Living Unhelpfully Simplifies the Complexity of the Context

My claim is that framing the practice of relocation with the term 'incarnational living' hinders the understanding of the particular context into which someone is relocating. Berdine van den Toren-Lekkerkerker and Benno van den Toren were missionaries to Africa who argue that the incarnational framing of relocation is not appropriate within a globalising world. Van den Toren-Lekkerkerker and van den Toren (2015: 84) say that the incarnational method 'presupposes that the host culture [is] relatively isolated and a relatively homogenous reality'. The authors are primarily addressing a notion

of incarnational living that seeks to identify with the host community. They recognise Hudson Taylor as an exemplar of this as he 'chose to wear Chinese clothes and adapted his lifestyle in order to affirm local culture' (van den Toren-Lekkerkerker and van den Toren 2015: 83). Although the authors are primarily reflecting upon missionaries who engage in the two-thirds world, the principle still holds for western contexts. Taking the language of incarnational living as implying that the relocater merely seeks to identify with their local culture is only helpful in so far as there is one culture within a given neighbourhood. However, as we will see in Chapter Three, this is too simplistic an understanding of neighbourhoods. Their point is that globalisation has meant communities are in constant flux and that there is no such thing as a single monochrome culture within a given geography. Furthermore, they argue that the incarnational model presupposes a static, modernistic understanding of culture rather than one that is changing (van den Toren-Lekkerkerker and van den Toren 2015: 86).

Within the literature on United Kingdom relocators, all too often there are assumptions that neighbourhoods have one homogenous culture. The tendency within a United Kingdom context towards this may be to assume that a neighbourhood is working class. Ruddick's statement 'the working-class recipients of middle-class evangelical mission' is indicative of this allusion (Ruddick 2016: 31). Generalisations such as these lead to unhelpfully simplifying the complexity of the practice of relocation and, whilst the point about middle-class evangelical mission is understood against the broader trajectory of evangelical history, the category of working class is unhelpful to describe a neighbourhood. In the first place we should not assume that all people living within a low-income area are working class. Secondly, in a post-industrial context, working class is not a defined category of people that has sufficient clarity or identity to be meaningful. Thirdly, comparing classes may create unhelpful ways of

'othering' people within the neighbourhood. Rather than focusing on commonalities, they are treated as entirely other in ways that could easily become stigmatising. This may be compounded by unwittingly portraying a neighbourhood in negative language. For example, *Unfinished* tells the 'stories of changed lives and communities from across the Eden Network' (Ward 2017b). This collection of stories helpfully recognises that the relationships the team members are building and the restoration of the communities they are living within are unfinished. However, in all but two of the stories featured, the focus is upon the deprived nature of a person's background – be it drugs, addiction, or crime – being transformed by the gospel. The point here is not to question the validity of such stories but to point out a concern that this may lead to caricaturing the neighbourhoods in question as riddled with crime and addiction. In doing so, this unintentionally adds to the stereotyping of low-income neighbourhoods. Furthermore, it risks developing a view of the neighbourhood as simply a collection of individuals and does not enable theological reflection upon the collective political and societal structures.

If we are to develop a theological language to describe the practice of relocation, then we must, as Mike Pears and Paul Cloke state, urge for greater attentiveness to what is actually happening within a neighbourhood. Pears and Cloke (2016: 1) write:

Our frank concern is that without thoughtful consideration of the mechanisms that sustain marginalisation and exclusion in our everyday places, Christians involved in mission will inevitably find themselves, at least to some extent, collaborating with the very structures of society and patterns of living that tend to maintain or even increase the marginalisation of the poor.

Their contention is that 'complex and unjust societal patterns' are confronted if a more 'contextual approach to mission' is to be adopted. Imperative to this is that the relocater understands the spatiality of low-income neighbourhoods. They argue that

the models of urban mission which were typified in *Faith in the City* (1985) and which have continued over the past three decades are too 'rigidly framed around the deeply rooted notion of the problematic inner city' (Pears and Cloke 2016: 17). For them, 'globalization and its attendant neoliberal politics have inexorably re-formed urban problematics' producing 'far more complex and splintered spatialities across the city' (Pears and Cloke 2016: 17). Their conclusion is that urban theology has been overtaken by events, and 'stands bereft of a clear and critical analytical framework with which to understand and respond to the changing geographical and ideological landscape of the city' (Pears and Cloke 2016: 18).

In his doctoral thesis, Pears (2015: 234) urges that mission involves 'participation in the formulation of places in order to enable increased levels of inter-subjective relationship and even the possible transformation of places'. Inter-subjective relationships become the organising principle for the creation of, what Pears calls, redemptive places. By inter-subjective he means relationships that are formed between the self and the other that overcome the cultural, social and spatial arrangements that separate (Pears 2015: 129). These relationships soften the hard boundaries between different social groups, challenging marginalisation and transforming normative understandings of place (Pears 2015: 198-200). This requires vulnerability and risk on the part of the relocater where the crucial skill of negotiation between place, powers and people is necessary (Pears 2015: 215-18). Pears believes this to be the work of the Spirit and that it holds the eschatological sense of Jesus' prayer 'on earth as it is in heaven' (Pears 2015: 242). Crucially, Pears is moving beyond the theological language of incarnation to frame how the neighbourhood is understood. By using other frameworks, a more nuanced understanding of cross-cultural mission is proposed that is able to respond to the

complexity and fluidity of local neighbourhoods. We will discuss this further in Chapter Three.

2.3.2 Incarnational Living Distorts the Relocator's Understanding of their Role

Van den Toren-Lekkerkerker and van den Toren (2015: 82) also argue that the language of incarnational mission causes its proponents to experience guilt and unnecessary burden. They believe that 'misappropriation of the term can lead to unwarranted demands on the missionary' as the model is unrealistic for ministry (van den Toren-Lekkerkerker and van den Toren 2015: 83). Its goal of becoming one with neighbours is, at best, unhelpful and, at worst, destructive. This is the case for a number of reasons. Firstly, relocators are unable to completely share their lives with local people. Incarnational living implies that nothing other than complete identification with people within the host community is acceptable. Yet, unlike many of their neighbours relocators will always have the option to move away from the area. Van den Toren-Lekkerkerker and van den Toren (2015: 84) reflected that during civil unrest, they had been evacuated from Bangui by the French army. Secondly, a problem for many members of teams and communities who have relocated in a United Kingdom context is that many of them have had to find employment to support their ministry within the neighbourhood. Often their place of work is outside the neighbourhood. This may cause concern for them as they are only incarnational when in the neighbourhood and not when they are at their place of work. Yet, surely their employment is also a place where the gospel may be encountered. Thirdly, van den Toren-Lekkerkerker and van den Toren (2015: 84) claim the language may be dishonest. The relocator is never completely part of the host community. For instance, they often have access to resources beyond the neighbourhood. This might be in the form of material resources or connections with others who have influence. This

access to resources gives the relocator a form of power. In patristic literature about poverty there is often recognition of the power of those with wealth. Both Clement of Alexandria in *Who is the Rich Man That is Being Saved?* and Basil of Caesarea in his homilies at the time of the Cappadocian famine, include contemplation about the ethics of wealth within their outlining of the problem of poverty. For them, one cannot be addressed without the other. However, in the literature about relocation, there is very little discussion about the wealth of the relocator and how this might affect relationships built with people in the neighbourhood.

Underlying each of these concerns is a claim that the term incarnational living creates confusion between what is the role of God and what is the role of the relocator within the practice. J. Todd Billings asks ‘am I assuming in this model that my own presence rather than that of Christ is redemptive?’ (Billings 2011: 123). We will address the Christological implications of this later in the chapter, but now I want to focus upon the significant challenges this raises for how the relocator understands their practice. A danger of using the language of incarnational living is that the relocator might, as Barker (2012: 151) terms it, believe they are part of a ‘messianic elite’. This appeals towards the potentially heroic understanding that the relocator has of themselves. I would suggest that if this image is left unchecked, it can lead to unhealthy relationships being developed with local people where the relocator’s perception is that they are their neighbourhood’s rescuer. Furthermore, it is doctrinally problematic.

The heroic is a foundational narrative within twenty-first century western society. Through film, music and television, the media emphasise the importance of heroes and heroines as role models that imbue virtue. Twenty-first century evangelicalism often adopts this sense of the heroic, celebrating heroes of the faith who embody how

the faith should be lived. I want to contend that it is problematic for the relocators to see themselves as the hero for the neighbourhood they move into. This is not often explicitly stated within the literature. However, it is implied. For instance, Matt Wilson (2005) challenges readers to join Eden teams in a chapter he titles 'Calling all the Heroes'. This approach places the relocator at the centre of the story. To illustrate this, I will address one specific group: The Eden Network.

In 'Holy Sofas', Anna Ruddick (nee Thompson) states that a key expectation for Eden workers in the first years of the network was that revival would come to their neighbourhood. By this, they expected 'a dramatic and visible change in whole communities' (Thompson 2012: 53). This expectation was nurtured in the Christian festival environments where many team members were recruited to join Eden. She writes about a team member who commented that at a large evangelical youth event 'we were sold this big vision of Eden you know "come in we're going to see loads of young people get saved and everything's gonna change and we're gonna see revival"'. However, as the team member stated, 'the nitty gritty of Eden... hasn't been like that' (Thompson 2012: 53). Ruddick comments that the realisation that the 'heroic' act of relocation did not result in revival prompted challenges for both team members and the network as a whole.

Revival was a truth they were sent with, however their encounters have led to a discovery of truth, a new perception of God's activity in urban communities [...] For Eden teams an understanding of success was linked intrinsically to the prophetic expectation of revival. (Thompson 2012: 53-54)

Ruddick picks this theme up within her doctoral thesis by suggesting that this led teams to question whether they were doing something wrong (Ruddick 2016: 12). She explores how charismatic evangelicalism had been interpreted by Eden and describes how other theological resources, for instance urban mission writers like

David Sheppard, Laurie Green and *Faith in the City*, became a helpful resource for teams to understand their practice as they engaged in their neighbourhoods (Ruddick 2016: 56-57). Through this she concludes that Eden did not believe 'the promise [of revival] was not fulfilled at all, but simply misunderstood' (Ruddick 2016: 60).

Ruddick argues that the emphasis that was initially placed on the lostness of individuals and the world was unhelpful as it increased dualistic patterns of thinking (Ruddick 2016: 104). Similarly she critiques the primacy of conversion within the theology of salvation and suggests that notions of 'progress and success' are not only unhelpful, but irrelevant (Ruddick 2016: 105). The point here is that this growing understanding, based upon the lived experience of relocation and the practice of theological reflection, moves the self-understanding of the relocater on from the hero who brings revival to a place to a mode of missional living. Ruddick calls this mode Missional Pastoral Care (Ruddick 2016: 135). Here, the encounter with the other (defined here as local people) brings change to the life of the relocater as their worldview is challenged (Ruddick 2016: 67-70).

The Eden model of relocation recognises the importance of coming alongside urban people and by including incarnation and holism in its Distinctives demonstrates awareness of these as transformative elements of the Eden way of life. However, rather than being the end point for Eden's development, the reflexive process of engagement with the urban other, enabled by relocation and characterised by embodiment and holism, provides a starting point for a new ministry to emerge. (Ruddick 2016: 71)

That said, simply jettisoning the narrative of revival may not mean that the heroic is lost.

A subtler concern is raised by Nate Buchanan. Nate is a member of the New Jerusalem Now community that is part of the New Monasticism network in the United

States. In 'Changing the Story of Change' he reflects upon how youth groups came to his community and experienced what he calls 'poverty tourism' (Buchanan 2009). During one such visit a neighbourhood member told her painful story. As he listened, he realised that rather than being at the centre of the day's activities she was being marginalised. The real focus was on giving the suburban visitors a good experience. Furthermore, he recognised that he himself is a suburban kid and that the New Monasticism movement was uncritically adopting a position where they were central to the story. Commenting on *School(s) for Conversion*, a book written by the new monastic communities to discuss their common practices, Buchanan (2009) writes:

The 12 marks lead us to a radical lifestyle, but at a closer reading, they assume privilege. Their audience is middle-class Christians, and their language decidedly leaves poor people somewhere other than at the core of the community. It's appropriate for privileged people of conscience to figure out how we should live, but the problem is that we always end up at the centre of the story.

Prominent leaders within New Monasticism responded to his article warning that the critique should not lead to judgmentalism of the movement (Wilson-Hartgrove 2009). In effect, they argued, relocation was the only way that anything could be done to change the power dynamics (Claiborne 2009). Nate responded by suggesting that 'our altruism be balanced with honesty; if we see ourselves as servants of others, it requires that on some level we need to see others as needy. This can perpetuate the injustices we've grown up in' (Wilson-Hartgrove 2009). This critique is extremely helpful if relocators are to understand themselves in such a way that enables flourishing within their neighbourhoods. A crusading tendency, in which the relocators' power is left unchecked and the heroic is emphasised could potentially increase injustices experienced within a given neighbourhood.

Whilst it would be unfair to suggest that all relocators consider themselves heroic, for instance Paul Keeble (2017: 46) explicitly claims that no one does, I am suggesting that the language of incarnational living might give rise to this tendency. By believing they are imitating Christ through incarnational living, there is a sense through which they are doing the heroic thing. Here Samuel Wells's reflection that we are called to be saints not heroes may be helpful. For Wells (2004: 43), unlike the hero, the saint is not called to be centre stage. The saint rejoices in faith not valour, embraces failure rather than fearing it and recognises their need of others instead of depending entirely on themselves (Wells 2004: 44). My proposal is that the social imaginary of relocators should focus upon the saint and not the hero. In doing this they might practise the humility, as we noted earlier with Cahalan, that enables practical wisdom to flourish.

Van den Lekkerkerker-Toren and van den Toren propose that the language of incarnation is not lost altogether but that the relocator's understanding is that they are an incarnational guest. The metaphor of guest implies mutual respect for both host community and relocator. It recognises that the relocator is dependent upon the host community (van den Toren-Lekkerkerker and van den Toren 2015: 88-89). In making this move they argue that the life of the relocator does not only focus upon the work of Christ, but the work of the Holy Spirit who is at work in people. Furthermore, as guest, the relocator is always aware that they are an outsider. This avoids disingenuous assertions that the relocator is an insider, and at the same time enables the relocator to retain the space to critique the host community (van den Toren-Lekkerkerker and van den Toren 2015: 92).

Whilst accepting the metaphor of guest is more accurate in describing the practice of relocation, I would want to push this further by suggesting that the term incarnational

should be lost altogether. Van den Lekkerkerker-Toren and van den Toren correctly identify that it is the Spirit who is at work in the neighbourhood. God's presence within the world beyond the church is the work of the Holy Spirit. Unlike Barker, I do not think that we can simply adopt the language of incarnation for the Spirit. Doctrinally I would contend that incarnation is specifically about embodiment within human form. Although the Spirit is at work in people, it is not incarnated in the same way that Christ was. Furthermore, the language of incarnation implies that the relocater is the sole bringer of good news into the area. It does not adequately acknowledge that the Holy Spirit has been at work within the neighbourhood throughout history. As Ruddick said, for Eden team members 'their encounters have led to a discovery of a truth, a new perception of God's activity in urban communities' (Thompson 2012: 53). The role of the relocater is therefore not to incarnate the gospel, but to see where the Spirit is at work, participating with her as they partner in the life of the neighbourhood. This requires self-reflection in discerning the difference between their role and God's. To develop this further, I will address my claim that using the term also produces a limited Christology.

2.3.3 Incarnational Living Develops a Reductionist Christology

The application of incarnational living to describe the practice of relocation creates a Christological problem. In using the term as an adjective to describe a ministry, the incarnation itself becomes an abstract principle that governs all other Christological reflection rather than the specific event of the Word becoming flesh. Within the literature there is a tendency to reduce all aspects of Christ's life to the incarnation rather than allowing a richer Christology to develop. In so doing, claims are made of the incarnation that are more suited to other aspects of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. By using the incarnation as shorthand to describe how Christ was with

people, we lose some of the other ways he was also for and with them. Too restrictive a focus upon the incarnation is simply not enough to describe the practice of relocation nor develop the theological imagination of what it means for the relocator to follow Christ. By seeking to enrich the Christology of the relocator they may be better prepared for engagement within the neighbourhood.

The focus upon the incarnation can also distort the event of Christ's incarnation as well. Is it appropriate to parallel the act of relocating to a low-income area with the Word taking on flesh? In doing so, do we parallel the divine nature with the context we are moving from and, at the same time, consider the low-income neighbourhood as equivalent to human nature? Using the incarnation in this way is problematic. Firstly, as I have already stated, it strengthens the stigma surrounding low-income neighbourhoods by perceiving they are lesser than the place where the relocator has moved from. Secondly, and more importantly, it creates a distorted understanding of the human nature within Christology. Christ does not take on a deprived form of human nature. Rather, he is exemplifying what full humanity is. In his life, death and resurrection we see how full humanity is embodied and are called to imitate this, not only the event of the incarnation. Using the language of incarnation to describe relocation reduces the mystery of the whole of the Christ event. Quoting Chalcedon, 'Christ was truly God and truly man.'

Using the term incarnational living reduces the way in which Christ is present in the world. The inference is that we are taking Christ into the neighbourhood as we relocate. In a sense, we are embodying the gospel. As I have already argued, not only does that create a challenge in the self-understanding of the relocator, but also risks a Christology that is separated from the Trinity. Christ is already present within

the neighbourhoods to which the relocater moves. He is present in his church and through the Holy Spirit.

A Christology that is expanded beyond the incarnation will enable a more faithful language to develop that describes the practice of relocation. Central to this language is accepting that the relocater is sent by the Holy Spirit to witness to Christ within the neighbourhood. Billings seeks to develop a theology based upon union with Christ as an alternative to the language of incarnational living. Following Paul in 1 Corinthians 9, he argues union with Christ provides a more concrete pattern for the relocater to imitate, one that is mindful that we do not redeem but are united with Christ the servant who does. Furthermore, it is God's lavish love which is revealed by the Holy Spirit that indigenises the gospel and calls forth transformation. 'Participation Ministry' as Billings calls it, responds to many of the concerns we have outlined with the term incarnational living. It does not rely upon the context as being a static, homogenous entity. Rather, participation ministry recognises there are often cultural differences between the neighbourhood and the relocater and acknowledges that it is the role of the Spirit to bridge these. It is clear that the relocater does not embody the gospel, rather they are to witness to the Christ who does. Finally, it enables a fuller Christology that is open both to the wider work of the Trinity, and the eschatological dimension of Christ. Billings (2011: 153) writes:

in identifying with people of diverse cultures, becoming "all things to all people," there is not only an ethical dimension of conformity to Christ the servant but an eschatological dimension as well: discovering the new humanity in union with Christ.

Rather than being a passive witnessing, this enables the relocater's theological imagination to be opened beyond the questions of how to embody the gospel to discover what the new societal, economic and political practices and structures the

Spirit is stirring within the neighbourhood. It is a Christology that acknowledges the event of the incarnation is in the past, and that the practice of relocation is witnessing to this event and, in the power of the Spirit, it also points towards being with Christ at the eschaton. As we will see, the acknowledgement that this is mission 'with' Christ is fundamental to the overall argument of my thesis.

I have argued that although incarnational living is a term that most relocators and organisations use to describe the practice of relocation, it is limiting. Primarily this is because culture is not homogenous as the term implies; incarnational living provides confusion between the work of God and the relocator; and incarnational living offers a limited Christology. My argument is that by attending to other theological categories, for instance pneumatology and eschatology, we might develop a language for relocation that is more nuanced and appropriate for engagement in places of poverty. Furthermore, it will open up possibilities for ecclesiology, mission and societal change.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to provide an orientation to the practice of relocation. Initially I sought to describe the different motivations as to why people relocate. I have argued that this is in order to engage in mission, develop spiritual practices, offer ecclesial alternatives and bring societal change. I stated that these categories also operated as characteristics within the practice of relocation and that the societal changes were underdeveloped within this. The rest of the chapter has been spent clearing the ground of language that is neither adequate to describe the practice, nor generative in opening new possibilities for societal and political change. For this, I explained how incarnational living is unhelpful in framing the context in which the

relocator lives, how it confuses the role of the relocator with the work of Holy Spirit and how it produces a limited Christology. In its place I began to develop a Christology of participation. Here, the relocator is not the hero of the story who brings Christ into the neighbourhood. Rather, the relocator is called to participate with Christ in a context where he is already present in the presence of the church and through the work of the Holy Spirit. The next chapter continues to clear the ground for developing the theological language of the practice by complexifying how the relocator understands their neighbourhood.

3. The Disorientation of Neighbourhood Poverty

In the last chapter I argued that the language of incarnational living was unhelpful partly because it oversimplifies the lived experience of poverty within a neighbourhood. I claimed it relied on a depiction of low-income neighbourhoods that was mono-cultural and static. In this chapter I will offer a richer description of life in a low-income neighbourhood. It is my contention that relocators should use appropriate frameworks to interpret the neighbourhood wisely if they are to construct faithful language to articulate their practice. It is vital that they avoid adopting 'readings' of neighbourhoods, for instance one centred from the perspective of social capital, that do not pay careful attention to the complexity or the uniqueness of the lived experience of poverty within different contexts. The aim of this chapter is to propose social citizenship, vulnerability and resilience as frameworks that express the lived experience of poverty within low-income neighbourhoods. Through examining how these frameworks act as viable descriptors within low-income neighbourhoods, we will be in a position to articulate theologically how relocators should practice their mission.

In this chapter I argue that poverty in a neighbourhood should be defined through a relational lens. Doreen Massey (2004) argues that just as individual identities are relational, spatial identities are also. By adopting a relational framework, I believe we will recognise that the complexity of poverty in neighbourhoods does not operate in isolation from wider geographies. Massey argues that to believe otherwise, polarises the local as good and the global as bad (Massey 2004: 9). Our depictions of the lived experience of poverty should avoid the temptation to elevate the local in this way. It

should seek to describe the factors that enable and disable relationships there. With this in mind I have chosen to primarily assess research that has been carried out in low-income neighbourhoods within the city of Leeds. I have chosen to do this for three reasons. Firstly, it limits the number of factors at play. For instance, by using neighbourhoods within the same local authority, I limit the variation in the impact of local government policy. Secondly, this thesis arises out of previous research I have done into relocation at King's College, London that focused upon how relocators conceptualised their 'mission' to low-income neighbourhoods within Leeds. The research concluded that the foundation of mission for them was relationship building.²³ Finally, by looking at Leeds I can add my own experience of living in a low-income neighbourhood towards the goal of understanding the lived experience of poverty. I recognise that the knowledge gained through my experience is partial, dynamic and temporal. However, it is continually 'at work' as I read and reflect upon theoretical sources and, as such, provides an empirical sieve for understanding the applicability of theoretical positions.

So that I may develop an understanding of the lived experience of poverty within neighbourhoods I will assess a number of different ways in which it is defined. Initially I will address government statistics alongside Leeds City Council policy. This will help paint a broad picture of poverty and inequality within the city of Leeds. Following this I will use four academic frameworks to help disclose the experience of poverty in Leeds. The frameworks are social capital, social citizenship, vulnerability and resilience. For each of these areas I will provide a definition of how they are understood in the disciplines of social geography and sociology. Then I will explore

²³ I initially began my DThM at King's College, London. The structure of this course included a Ministerial Formation Study (MFS) in the third year. My MFS was based upon qualitative research carried out with eight relocators from within Leeds. It explored what the relocators thought were the key practices they carried out within their ministry.

how these concepts frame the understanding gained within a number of academic research projects about poverty in Leeds. The four research projects I focus upon are *Margins Within the City* (Unsworth 2011), 'Fixing Broken Promises' (Crawford 2006), *For Whose Benefit?* (Patrick 2017) and 'Recession, it's all the same to us son' (Emmel and Hughes 2010). My intention is to bring these concepts into dialogue with the voices of people who have direct experience of poverty in order to critically evaluate their contribution. For this I will use published evidence either in the research or on the website of the Leeds Poverty Truth Commission, alongside a documentary film about life within a neighbourhood in Leeds (Tomalin 2012).²⁴ Finally, I will in each case assess how they may help the relocater understand both their context and their relationship building responsibilities.

3.1 Leeds: A Multi-Speed City

Leeds is now one of Britain's most successful cities. It has transformed itself from a mainly industrial city into a broadly-based commercial centre, the most important financial, legal and business services centre in the country outside London. (The Leeds Initiative 2004: 10)

This quote from the Leeds Initiative's 'Vision for Leeds: 2004-2020' strategy document epitomises the positive, growing and dynamic image of Leeds that city authorities seek to present. As Sara Gonzales and Stijn Oosterlynck illustrate, in the 1990s and 2000s Leeds had a fast-growing economy based on deliberate investment within the financial services industry; an emphasis upon property-led regeneration developing new opportunities for city living; and an aim to be the northern capital for shopping and retail (Gonzalez and Oosterlynck 2014: 3167). Leeds has a strong and persuasive narrative of a successful city. Yet, evidence from the Indices of Multiple

²⁴ The film is produced by Lippy People, <http://www.lippypeople.info>, and, like many of their films, they address social issues particularly in the north of England.

Deprivation suggests that this might not be an accurate description for the whole of the city. Tables 1a and 1b show the Leeds statistics from the last 4 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) reports.²⁵

Table 1a. Number of Lower Level Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Leeds between 2004 and 2015

Number of LSOAs within Leeds in the:	2004	2007	2010	2015
Most Deprived 20% nationally	151	133	138	148
Wealthiest 20% nationally	66	73	69	81
Total Number of LSOAs in Leeds	476	476	476	486

Table 1b. Percentage of Lower Level Super Output Areas in Leeds between 2004 and 2015

Percentage of LSOAs within Leeds in the:	2004	2007	2010	2015
Most Deprived 20% nationally	32%	28%	29%	30%
Wealthiest 20% nationally	14%	15%	14%	17%

The tables expose an issue that is pertinent to this study. Since 2007 the percentage of LSOAs in Leeds that are found within the most deprived 20% nationally (i.e. most deprived LSOAs in England) is steadily increasing, up to 3 in every 10 LSOAs come

²⁵ The IMD gathers data approximately every four years for the 32,486 Lower Level Super Output Areas (LSOAs) within England. Each LSOA comprises of around 400 households or 1500 people and data for each one is found for 7 different domains: income deprivation, employment deprivation, health deprivation and disability, education skills and training deprivation, barriers to housing and services, living environment deprivation, and crime. A weighted aggregate of these domains enables all LSOAs to be ranked throughout the country.

into this category within Leeds by 2015. The proportion of LSOAs in the wealthiest 20% nationally has also increased (an increase of three percentage points in the last five years). This suggests that inequality between rich and poor in Leeds is increasing as proportionally the number of LSOAs in the most and least deprived 20% nationally increases.²⁶

Inequality in Leeds is acknowledged within Leeds City Council policy. The 'Vision for Leeds' strategy, referred to above, had three aims. Notably these included 'narrowing the gap between the most disadvantaged people and communities and the rest of the city' (The Leeds Initiative 2004: 21).²⁷ Measures for the success of this aim included 'reducing the number of children in poverty' and 'narrowing the gap in life expectancy between the areas of Leeds'. Statistics for these measures suggest inequality has increased in Leeds.²⁸ A further measure for narrowing the gap was 'increasing the number of community projects run by local people' (The Leeds Initiative 2004: 55).²⁹ The underlying assumption of this measure is that greater participation in the neighbourhood by local people will reduce poverty in a neighbourhood. There are no definitive statistics to measure whether there has been an increase in this area.

²⁶ Thus approximately 15000 more people live in deprived neighbourhoods between 2010 and 2015 with 18000 more people living in wealthy areas.

²⁷ The three aims of The Leeds Initiative, *Vision for Leeds: 2004-2020*.

- Going up a league as a city making Leeds an internationally competitive city - the best place in the country to live, work and learn, with a high quality of life for everyone.
- Narrowing the gap between the most disadvantaged people and communities and the rest of the city.
- Developing Leeds's role as the regional capital, contributing to the national economy as a competitive European city, supporting and supported by a region that is becoming increasingly prosperous.

²⁸ Although male life expectancy at birth for 2012-2014 in City and Hunslet Ward increased by 1.6 years from 2008-2010 to 74.1, in Harewood Ward it increased 3 years to 84.3. This information is from Public Health Information Team, Leeds City Council cited on <http://observatory.leeds.gov.uk/dataviews/tabular?viewId=506&geoid=27&subsetId=>[accessed 3 June 2016].

²⁹ Other measures were increasing the fitness and health of children and reducing the number of children under four who go into hospital with an infectious disease or severe injury; people living longer without long-term illness affecting them; reducing the need for people to go back into hospital due to emergency mental health problems; reducing the number of drug-related deaths; and increasing the number of people responding to local health surveys.

However, the 2011/12 annual report by Leeds Tenants Federation suggests that there was a 20% reduction in the number of Tenants and Residents Associations (TARA) across the city.³⁰ As TARAs are only one way in which local groups are established, we cannot say categorically that there has been a reduction in the number of local groups. Yet, it does seem to suggest that there was possibly a failure to achieve greater levels of local participation through associational life.

By the time of the updated version of 'Vision for Leeds: 2011-2030', the language of 'narrowing the gap' had been omitted. Dealing with the city's inequality and poverty was now implicit, rather than explicit within the report. Two of its three new aims were that 'Leeds will be fair, open and welcoming' and 'all communities will be successful' (The Leeds Initiative 2011: 6). Although systemic analysis of the underlying causes of poverty was acknowledged as the new strategy sought to understand 'the causes of unfairness', the use of the language of fairness exposed an approach to tackling poverty within the report that was primarily about giving individuals opportunities to get out of it (The Leeds Initiative 2011: 8).

Although the image of Leeds presented to the wider world is of a growing city, the statistics we have considered suggest that the distribution of economic growth is not to all areas of the city. Some have suggested that Leeds is a two-speed city (Douglas, Bramham, and Wagg 2009: 55), others have called it a multi-speed city (Stillwell and Shepherd 2004: 139), and some conclude 'it is simply impossible for Leeds to narrow the gap' (Hodkinson and Chatterton 2007: 128). Gonzales and Oosterlynck suggest that a reason for this is that even though the economy of Leeds has grown, it has

³⁰ http://www.leedstenants.org.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/articles/Annual_Report_2011-2012.pdf, p3 [accessed 20th March 2014].

done so largely through multi-national and national organisations. Therefore, as money spreads internationally it leaks out of the local economy (Gonzalez and Oosterlynck 2014: 3170). Even after the financial crisis of 2008, they report that although finance sector jobs were lost, these were at a much slower rate than those in construction, accommodation and food services, wholesale and retail, and manufacturing (Gonzalez and Oosterlynck 2014: 3172-73).

This brief discussion of the narrative of Leeds through council strategy and government statistics is important within the context of this thesis for three reasons. Firstly, statistics are one of the tools relocators are encouraged to use when researching a neighbourhood either before they relocate or soon after.³¹ Secondly, it helps place specific low-income neighbourhoods within the wider context of the city's realities and narratives. The danger, as Massey alludes to, is that one becomes so focused upon responding to poverty within a neighbourhood that we detach it from its wider, geographic and sociological context (Massey 2004: 11). Finally, it begins to identify some of the challenges of how we speak about the complexities of poverty. Specifically, in the Leeds context we have seen how the narrative of Leeds as a growing city betrays the reality that whilst some areas of the city are thriving, there are many neighbourhoods that are struggling. In responding to this I argue we should be attentive to the language we use about low-income neighbourhoods and their residents. Too often dehumanising language is used. The Leeds Poverty Truth Humanifesto states, 'when you're experiencing poverty, what really grinds you down is the way other people perceive you' (Leeds Poverty Truth Commission 2018). Describing a neighbourhood as deprived, as in the government's Indices of Multiple

³¹ For instance *Planting Churches* (Murray 2008: 91-92) and *Darkest England and the Way Back In* (Bishop 2007: 33-36).

Deprivation, contributes to the stigmatisation of both place and people. Having presented the overarching narrative of the city and witnessed the contradictions in it, we can begin to explore more closely the relationship between a low-income neighbourhood and the wider city. This might be broken down into two distinct yet, interconnected sub-questions. What is the relationship between the people living in a low-income neighbourhood and society in general? How does power operate in relationships both within and without the neighbourhood?

In the rest of this chapter we will evaluate the merits of four specific theoretical lenses that a relocater might use to frame their descriptions of the lived experience of poverty. These lenses are used in academic research on low-income neighbourhoods in Leeds. The first of these lenses, social capital, has been a significant framework to understand and interpret relationships within a specific area over the past twenty years in the United Kingdom. However, I will show that although it increases the relocater's awareness of the different kinds of relationship that should be built both within and without their neighbourhood, as a whole it is unhelpful in framing the lived experience of poverty. Rejecting social capital as an unhelpful lens for describing neighbourhood poverty clears the way for us to consider three other lenses: social citizenship, vulnerability and resilience. I argue these provide the possibility for developing a generative language that makes clear the lived experience of poverty and ensures that relationships are built that are humanising. I will address each lens in turn by providing a definition for them, outlining how they are used in the literature and suggesting what this means for the relocater.

Three issues are important to note at the beginning of this exploration. As I said at the outset of this chapter, I will adopt a relational frame. This means that at times

there will be a need to focus upon the individual and, at other times, the whole. This introduces something of the complexity of neighbourhood life as threats, challenges and possibilities shape both individuals and place alike. Secondly, I am aware that what constitutes a neighbourhood is disputed academically. Other writers have explored this issue at length (Pears 2015). Whereas I recognise the contested nature of this, my interest here is exploring the nature of a collective lived experience of poverty, rather than addressing the identity of a particular neighbourhood. Thirdly, I recognise that the relationship between theology and social science is problematic. However, I agree with Nicholas Healy who argues that ‘all forms of social science are useful [...] However, since they examine religious bodies in a variety of ways, they cannot be useful in quite the same way, and none of them is ever normative’ (Healy 2000: 155). It is my intention that engagement with sociological studies in this chapter will help me to raise theological questions about the kind of language that is appropriate within relocation. As Healy concludes in discussing how this might happen, ‘the point is to discern the movement of the Spirit in our midst so as to improve our witness and discipleship’ (Healy 2000: 166).

3.2 Critical Conversations with Social Capital

John Field claims that social capital demonstrates ‘relationships matter’ (Field 2003: 1). Whereas, in the broad sense this may be true, in this section I will assess whether social capital is a helpful framework to understand the lived experience of poverty. Most popular readings of social capital operant within the United Kingdom are influenced by Robert Putnam, an American sociologist. His version of social capital influences and informs the development of policies of government,³² the creation of

³² Andrew Tallon argues that alongside Amitai Etzioni’s communitarianism, Putnam’s social capital was the ideology behind the regeneration programme of New Labour (Tallon 2013: 145).

health strategies, for example the *Social Action for Health* report (Health Education Authority 2000), and is evident within community development textbooks.³³ Putnam contrasts social capital with physical and human forms of capital. He writes:

Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them [...] A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital. (Putnam 2000: 19)

His argument is essentially that for neighbourhoods to flourish, the social capital of residents must be increased. Putnam organises social capital into two categories: bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital exists within networks of homogeneous groups, and bridging capital crosses divides within society. Putnam (2000: 22-23) writes, 'bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD-40'. In addition to this, Michael Woolcock (2001: 13-14) adds a third category, linking social capital, that 'reaches out to unlike people in dissimilar situations, such as those who are entirely outside of the community, thus enabling members to leverage a far wider range of resources than are available in the community'. The different categories of social capital help to illustrate the diversity of relationships that are at work within and out-with a neighbourhood. The thesis is that for a neighbourhood to become more cohesive, growth of social capital in all three forms is necessary. For the relocator, this is an important feature that social capital highlights which they should be aware of in their relationship building. It is not enough to focus only on bonding relationships between people within the neighbourhood. A key responsibility is to provide opportunities for neighbours to engage with people and institutions from outside the

³³ For instance *The Well-Connected Community* (Gilchrist 2009).

neighbourhood. As we shall see, this connectedness is important for responses to poverty to flourish.

Martti Siisiainen (2003: 4-5) argues that within Putnam's conceptualising of social capital a virtuous circle is created between trust and voluntary associations. Building strong associations increases levels of trust in people which, in turn, positively develop associations. However, this assumes there are voluntary associations embedded and accessible within a neighbourhood. Siisiainen argues that, for Putnam, a consensus is formed that is built upon the moral obligations and norms of a society. Yet, we might ask whether a consensus understood in this way is always a good thing. If the norms and obligations of a society discriminate against a group within society then reinforcing this consensus through increasing social capital is problematic. Indeed, it may continue to perpetuate the conditions where the existence of poverty is accepted rather than challenged. If social capital is to be a suitable category for us to talk about poverty, it will need the moral potency to challenge established obligations and norms. If not, it may unwittingly stigmatise those who are unable to engage within society. Here, Pierre Bourdieu's reading of social capital provides a helpful counterpoint to Putnam.

Bourdieu's understanding of social capital is situated within his wider project of challenging globalisation and neoliberalism. His aim is to identify how individuals and communities may develop their agency. For Bourdieu, capital takes on different forms. Economic capital is at the root of the other forms. However, social and cultural capital are not meant to be subservient to it. Rather, they should challenge it by offering other ways of agency that are not purely determined by economic capability (Hepworth and Stitt 2007: 900-01). Bourdieu (2011: 86) writes:

The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilise and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected.

Thus, for Bourdieu, people or communities who have little volume of capital in its various forms will struggle to have agency within society.

Siisiainen contrasts Putnam and Bourdieu's approaches to social capital arguing that Putnam's tendency is towards integration with society whereas Bourdieu highlights conflict. Siisiainen (2003: 23) concludes that 'in the last analysis, the choice between Putnam and Bourdieu depends; first, on what problems you are interested in and second, on our position concerning the dispute between the sociology of integration and the sociology of conflict'. The purpose of this chapter is to find language that enables the relocater to understand their context and appropriately frame their practice. As an important concern of the thesis is to address societal and political implications it seems natural to adopt the description of social capital Bourdieu offers. However, we should not reject Putnam's strand, as by identifying bridging and linking relationships, the power imbalances that are prevalent in the neighbourhood may be reduced. This is crucial for the relocator.

3.2.1 Social Capital in the Literature about Leeds

Having established that social capital identifies relationships the relocater may need to explore both within and out-with their neighbourhoods I will now discuss how academic research based on low-income neighbourhoods in Leeds may help us understand the nature of these relationships. I will be particularly attentive to the flows of power within these relationships.

In “Fixing Broken Promises?: Neighbourhood Wardens and Social Capital’, Adam Crawford (2006: 959) argues it is often presumed that responses to the contemporary fragmentation of urban neighbourhoods include ‘more neighbourliness, civic virtue and social capital’. If social cohesion is the problem within neighbourhoods, then increasing social capital is seen as an appropriate response. Crawford charts the successes and weaknesses of a neighbourhood warden scheme in building relationships within a number of neighbourhoods in Leeds. The wardens were meant to be intermediary actors within the neighbourhood between local people and the public sector, with sufficient authority to be able to act as ‘agents of social control and promote civility’ (Crawford 2006: 965). The scheme showed a degree of effectiveness in responding to environmental issues which, in the best cases, could ‘promote social interaction and public contacts’ (Crawford 2006: 967). However, the research highlighted that the role became more about policing the environment than developing social interaction between people. Rather than being intermediaries between the public sector and local people, the wardens became barriers to effective relationship building between the different parties. For Crawford, this is an example of a common problem within public policy. His conception of social capital is developed by adopting aspects of Mark Granovetter’s network theory (Granovetter 1973). Strong ties are relationships that ‘exist among groups of people that share similar values, interests and backgrounds’ (Crawford 2006: 962). In many respects they are akin to Putnam’s bonding social capital. Although strong ties are important, Crawford argues greater attention should be given to weak ties, akin to bridging and linking forms of social capital. Doing so facilitates quicker communication that has more reach and develops community resilience. In short, weak ties develop cohesion, strong ties fragmentation. Thus, for Crawford, policy interventions within ‘deprived’ neighbourhoods often focus too much on developing strong ties and too little on

generating weak ties 'that stretch across social groups and extend beyond the neighbourhood [...] Porous, outward-looking neighbourhoods rather than solid, introspective communities may be more conducive to tolerance, respect for difference, trust and an absence of prejudice' (Crawford 2006: 963-64).³⁴ In the example of the wardens, although strong ties were fostered through some of the activities, weak tie relationships that connect people within the neighbourhood to other sources of power within the city were not developed.

A consequence of the approach adopted by the wardens was that they were distrusted by local people. Young people tended to view the wardens as 'grasses'. The warden's 'work hours' (9am–5pm) meant that they were unavailable in the evenings and at weekends when they may have been needed most (Crawford 2006: 967). Earlier I stated that an underlying value for social capital is trust. The research showed that in many respects trust has been eroded over many generations. As Crawford says:

The legacy of broken promises breeds a perception of defeatism and powerlessness to effect change. It is less the absence of social networks that marks out such neighbourhoods and more the lack of a capacity and confidence on the part of individuals to intervene in a way that effects change because they believe (often on the basis of past experience) that their efforts will make little or no difference to their plight. (Crawford 2006: 968)

Here I suggest that there is a danger as to how trust is defined. If the warden imposes their own definition, it may be impossible for local people to live up to it. Furthermore, failure to acknowledge the historical acts that have led to 'mistrust' may increase stigma within local neighbourhoods.

³⁴ Other writers such as Vicky Cattell, in her discussion on the relationship between poor health and poverty, agree with Crawford. Cattell writes, 'If weak ties are prerequisites for social cohesion (Granovetter 1973), then today's neighbourhoods require policy interventions perhaps which can increase opportunities for forming bridging ties between different groups' (Cattell 2001: 1514).

If we were to use Putnam's strategy for social capital, when there are low levels of trust within an area, the role and profile of local associations and organisations should be strengthened. In turn, this will build greater levels of trust. Yet, another study of a low-income area in Leeds, *Margins within the City*, revealed that there was a lack of institutions and associations there. The research project, led by a cross-disciplinary group of geographers, architects, community development specialists and environmentalists, aimed to assess a particular residential district within the 'rim' of the city centre. They defined the rim as communities within a one-mile radius of the railway station. The research focused upon the Richmond Hill area of Leeds which includes the neighbourhoods of Cross Green and East End Park, the place where my family and I had relocated. Their thesis was that the communities could change if they realised their 'under-utilised' and 'under-appreciated' potential (Unsworth 2011: 183, 86). Yet, this was to be understood against a backdrop that the area had been, and was being, 'hollowed out'.

Margins within the City argued that the hollowing out of Richmond Hill was evidenced in three ways – the closing of community gathering points, the reduction of service provision and the decline in local businesses. The researchers reported that there were fourteen pubs and clubs at the time of the research. All of them had 'experienced some decline [in customers] and although they continue to sustain social networks, largely amongst older men, these networks are poorly integrated into the wider life of the community' (Unsworth 2011: 192). Since this research, twelve of these pubs have closed. The report also noted that there was a reduction in service provision within the area. For instance, 'an elderly care home as well as the local authority-run elderly day centre had recently closed, the future of the local library was in serious doubt'

(Unsworth 2011: 192). Since this research, the library has indeed closed, as well as a hostel for families and a medical centre. The research also describes that the places of work for whose workers the neighbourhood was built to house in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have long gone (Unsworth and Nathan 2006: 3-4, 6). Furthermore, as Nick Williams and Colin C. Williams (2011) argue, neighbourhoods such as Richmond Hill are difficult for entrepreneurs to operate within and do not readily attract new businesses.

One of the ways the closure of business was felt by local people in Richmond Hill was in the lack of shops in the area. A resident on *Over to the East* (Tomalin 2012), a film about the neighbourhood, says that in the past, 'you'd no need to go to town to do any shopping, there was every shop you could mention – pork butchers, paper shops, food shops, dress shops, hat shops, gents outfitters'. The closure of public gathering spaces, places of employment and commerce raises serious concerns about relying upon the framework of social capital prescribed by Putnam to reinvigorate neighbourhoods. Institutions cannot be relied on to replenish trust if there are only a few of them and the vast majority of residents do not engage with those that do exist.

I claim the hollowing out of organisations, work places, shops and community gathering points within low-income neighbourhoods is experienced by local people as loss. As a growing body of research shows, the abandoning of buildings and spaces has a damaging psychological effect on local people.³⁵ Once again in *Over to the East* (Tomalin 2012) a resident comments, they 'closed the post office, they closed the shops, they knocked down the school. They, the government or whoever

³⁵ There is a body of literature that draws a link between the mental health of residents and the physical condition of the neighbourhood. These include the standard and density of housing in 'The Impact of the Physical and Urban Environment on Mental Well-Being' (Guite, Clark, and Ackrill 2006) and the impact of derelict or vacant space in 'The Collapse of Place' (Maantay 2013).

made the decisions for our area, took our community away'. The film shows how local people perceive that they are unable to affect decisions. This leaves them feeling 'done to' and believing they are powerless. There are several reasons as to how this perception is developed. Firstly, decisions are made about the neighbourhood with little involvement of local people. In a study into city-centre living within Leeds, Rachel Unsworth and Max Nathan (2006) discovered that building new apartment blocks effectively grew the city centre and encroached on the boundaries of long-established neighbourhoods. Local residents expressed anxiety that they eventually would have to move away as they perceived it was inevitable that their houses would be demolished for future gentrification (Unsworth and Nathan 2006: 12). Residents felt 'out of control' of these developments as there was limited consultation with people in the area (Unsworth 2007: 737). Feeling 'out of control' has led local people to disengage from democratic processes. In the Burmantofts and Richmond Hill Ward the voting turnout in 2018 council elections was half that of another ward in the city (24.8% compared with 49.7%).³⁶

Secondly, empowerment strategies aimed at increasing local people's power often fail as they are too hierarchical. One of the conclusions of *Margins within the City* was that the council should empower local people. The report states:

The subjective aspect of empowerment relates to a sense of efficacy and is measured by the extent to which people feel that they can influence local or national conditions and decisions. The objective aspect relates to whether people truly have and use power and is measured by the extent to which people actually participate in and influence their local or national conditions and decisions (Communities and Local Government, 2009, p. 4). In Richmond Hill and other places like it, there is a low level of both senses of empowerment. (Unsworth 2011: 103)

³⁶ For a full list of voter turnout for the 2018 council elections in Leeds see <https://odileeds.org/blog/2018-04-14-local-elections> [accessed 30th June 2018].

The report correctly diagnoses that the lived experience of poverty within Richmond Hill is characterised by disempowerment. Yet, the language used within this proposal, rather than solving the problem, might inadvertently compound it. Although it calls for authorities to give permission within an area, it assumes that the local authority in some way, 'owns the area' and that local people are 'its subjects'. I believe this further divides the different elements of estate life – for instance, the political sphere, service provision, neighbourly interactions – and creates a hierarchical model out of the constituent parts. In this model the local authority is at the top of the hierarchy. When cast within this model, the participation of residents is couched within terms such as empowerment by the authorities who 'allow' local people to be involved. This highlights the 'deficit of power' residents experience.

3.2.2 Is Social Capital a Helpful Lens for the Relocator?

It is my conclusion that whilst social capital offers some help in framing a relocator's understanding of the neighbourhood, it should not be adopted without recognising its limitations and undermining some of its presumptions. Positively, social capital does remind the relocator of a number of important issues when building relationships in the neighbourhood. Firstly, it highlights the importance of building relationships between local people and others outside of the neighbourhood. Secondly, the lack of trust local people had for agencies within Crawford's research reminds the relocator they cannot assume they will be trusted by local people, but that this will take time to develop. However, unlike the neighbourhood wardens who worked set hours, by living in the neighbourhood the opportunity to build trust over time is increased. Finally, Bourdieu's understanding of social capital recognises the importance of building agency within people and communities to be able to take responsibility. I

would argue that this is vital for the neighbourhoods researched, as a deficit of power is part of the lived experience of poverty.

Even though social capital helps the relocater to be mindful of these important issues, I do not think it is helpful for the relocater to adopt its usage wholly. This is for three reasons: the language of social capital is theologically dubious, social capital oversimplifies the context, and social capital does not generate alternatives for neighbourhood life. In *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, Luke Bretherton argues that social capital has 'limited currency for a theological analysis' (Bretherton 2010: 37). Rather, freedom is identified with private interest and thus 'economics becomes the sovereign knowledge pertaining to the welfare of the community as a whole' (Bretherton 2010: 40). He concludes that 'the use of the term is to perpetuate a distorting mirror that ontologizes capitalism as a natural or necessary reality rather than a contingent one' (Bretherton 2010: 41). The danger he outlines is that the imaginary of our relationships is entirely dominated by lenses in which our sociality is subservient to economic interests. It follows that the social is constantly referencing the economic and, as such, its distinctive societal contribution is lost (Fine and Lapavistas 2004: 31). Participation becomes commodified and primarily only has worth if it can be equated to a monetary value. For instance, community groups are often asked by funding bodies to match fund the grant. This is done by equating the number of hours volunteers offer a project when charged at a 'volunteers' hourly rate' to the finances the funding body is providing. Participation through volunteering in these terms is commodified as part of a financial equation, rather than celebrated as a contribution towards the common good. Thus, relationship building is interpreted through an economic lens. A theological reading of relationships is at best, limited by adopting the terms of social capital, and at worst impoverished.

The language of social capital also oversimplifies the context of the local neighbourhood. The problem with social capital as a general term is that it suggests that simply by accruing more social capital, solutions to the neighbourhood's problems will be found. However, it is not clear from where it is proposed this social capital is to be generated. In effect, it may be akin to saying that the problem of poverty will be overcome by everyone having more money without ever stipulating how this money is to be obtained. Furthermore, social capital seems to adopt normative qualities that are then transposed onto whatever the object of research is. Ben Fine and Costas Lapavitsas write, 'precisely because social capital is an ahistorical and asocial category, it is insensitive to specificities and contexts' (Fine and Lapavitsas 2004: 31). I believe that this lack of attentiveness to the specifics of a given neighbourhood make it problematic as a way of framing the lived experience of poverty within a specific place.

Finally, I argue that the concept of social capital does not promote alternative possibilities for local neighbourhoods. As I have shown, social capital emphasises the importance of local institutions and incorporated groups to foster relationships, and yet associational membership is decreasing in many low-income areas of Leeds. Therefore, social capital is limited in generating new possibilities for social relationship building in these areas. In addition, physical spaces where neighbours can meet are needed for relationship building. If these places no longer exist, then new forms of building relationships will need to be discovered. Not only does this mean that social capital theory does not produce new relationships but a further consequence may be that it does not imagine new economic narratives for a neighbourhood. Fine and Lapavitsas (2004: 28) ask 'what is social and what is capital'

within the use of the term social capital? They argue that it cannot readily be distinguished where social begins and capital ends. Fine and Lapavitsas (2004: 29) write:

It is profoundly misleading to interpret the cultural, educational, familial, hierarchical and other relations observed in capitalist reproduction as so much capital at society's disposal [...] When social relations are indiscriminately collapsed into capital, the result is that nothing and everything is capital, and so capital cannot be perceived as a set of exploitative and authoritarian relations.

Their concern is that social capital, like globalisation, has a 'gargantuan appetite' in that it not only consumes all sociological dialogue about social relationships but also becomes the underlying narrative for interpretation (Fine and Lapavitsas 2004: 30-31). Fine and Lapavitsas (2004: 31) claim it does this 'without questioning economic power'. Exponents of social capital claim that it is a mechanism for bringing the social into the discourse of economics, however Fine and Lapavitsas argue that the social has always been found within economic discourse and that social capital does not challenge the 'theoretical foundations of neoclassical economics'. They contend that

it is also necessary to provide an alternative economics itself, a well-founded political economy of capitalism, something social capital has never attempted [...] The issue is not so much to rehearse the case for and against the market... as to establish a political economy with which the market is to be understood. (Fine and Lapavitsas 2004: 32)

We have seen through this engagement with the concept of social capital that it does not offer a framework that adequately renders a helpful understanding of poverty. Although it does remind the relocator of the need to build trust and relationships within and without the neighbourhood, it is based upon a commitment to a status quo that does not sufficiently change the power dynamics at work in the neighbourhood. In discovering this, we have cleared the way to address other, more fruitful, theoretical lenses for understanding neighbourhood poverty.

3.3 Social Citizenship

A frequent criticism of Putnam's version of social capital is that, as Nathan Manning and Mary Holmes (2013: 481) claim, it fails to ask the question 'why people have disengaged from politics'. In their study they argue that white-working-class people in the north of England have disengaged from politics because they are cynical about politicians who do not seem interested in, nor understanding of the realities of their economic disadvantage. Rather than focus on institutional decline, as social capital does, society must contend with this perception of being unrepresented if it is to increase the level of people's engagement (Manning and Holmes 2013: 488). Over the past fifteen years there have been a number of studies that have turned to social citizenship as a helpful framework to explore this disengagement. Many of these have been based on research from neighbourhoods within the north of England. To show how social citizenship is a more helpful lens for understanding the lived experience of poverty than social capital, I will firstly provide a definition for social citizenship, then outline how this emerges from within research about Leeds, before proposing how this helps the relocator.

The term, social citizenship was first used by T.H. Marshall as one of three aspects of citizenship – the others being civil and political. For Marshall, civil citizenship included the liberties of speech and association, and political citizenship was based upon engagement within an electoral system. T.H. Marshall and Tom Bottomore (1992: 8) say that social rights range from 'the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society'.

In her seminal work *Poverty*, Ruth Lister (2004: 163-64) explores the relationship between social citizenship and poverty, claiming that they are 'indivisible and interdependent'. For Lister, and others who have followed her lead in associating social citizenship with poverty, the concern is that two tiers of citizenship are emerging. People experiencing poverty are perceived as second-class citizens as they appear to be excluded from aspects of society (Lister 2004: 165). Peter Dwyer (2002: 189) argues that people are excluded if they are understood as not contributing to society. Ruth Patrick (2017: 197) claims the primary duty of the citizen is commonly assumed to be paid work and so, if one is unemployed for whatever reason, they may perceive themselves or be perceived by others as second class. This sense is further compounded by a welfare system that emphasises conditionality. In this context conditionality is understood as fulfilling certain tasks in order to 'qualify' for benefits. As Daniel Edmiston (2017: 317) argues:

Welfare reforms seek to revise the choice architecture of individuals so that they pursue *rational* ends that are achieved through work, not welfare. To ensure individuals are 'better off in paid work' entails restricting the level, coverage or length of welfare entitlement, or increasing work incentives.

The logic that work is fundamental to citizenship means that claimants are entitled to benefits if they can prove they are seeking work. Failure to do so results in sanctions. Edmiston (2017: 317) continues, 'this comprises the promotion, and at times mandation of independent, autonomous citizenship through work-related conditions attached to social security provision'. Furthermore, political rhetoric such as David Cameron's identification of Broken Britain as people on benefits and media programming like *Benefit's Street* also contribute to this problem (Cameron 2013). Not only does it reinforce the message that people and neighbourhoods experiencing poverty are sub-standard, but they risk the danger of scapegoating these people as the main problem within society.

Welfare policy that is based on conditionality mixed with political rhetoric and media programming that stigmatises people who experience poverty, might be understood as social citizenship from above. Yet, much of the research that has been carried out using social citizenship as a framework to understand the lived experience of welfare benefits is more interested in exploring a definition from below. By this, commentators mean how people who are poor understand citizenship both in concept and practice. I would add a further dimension by defining citizenship horizontally not just vertically. My argument here is that top down versus bottom up arguments will largely focus upon what the human rights of the individual are within citizenship. Although this is an important feature, my interest here, both practically and theologically, is not primarily about the relationship a citizen has with the state, but the relationships citizens have with one another. Thus, as I explain the ways in which social citizenship is used within literature about Leeds, I will seek to interpret the research through the relationships it fosters between citizens.

3.3.1 Social Citizenship in the Literature about Leeds

Ruth Patrick's *For Whose Benefit?* focuses upon the lived experience of a number of welfare claimants living in a neighbourhood of Leeds. The research was conducted over a number of years, enabling her to chart the dynamic changes of individuals' relationships with welfare over time. Social citizenship is the theoretical lens she views this through. Patrick (2017: 13) maintains that

[if it] is to retain its emancipatory potential, the recent subversion of social citizenship as a tool of social control must be challenged and resisted and the 'everyday world' of citizenship – individual lived realities – given far more prominence in theoretical and political accounts.

For this to be enacted she argues that we should move beyond a discourse based on rights and resources, to one that includes participation, recognition, respect and voice (Patrick 2017: 21).

Patrick uses her research to expose what she calls, 'the everyday realities of out-of-work benefits receipt' (Patrick 2017: 57). She found that for the participants, poverty was understood as a dynamic experience rather than a static one. Some of the participants escaped from poverty during the period of the research only to fall back into it at a later date. However, she concluded that poverty was a semi-permanent state for all respondents (Patrick 2017: 63). Secondly, there was a clear relationship between the material and social aspects of poverty. Patrick (2017: 66) explains how a participant would not attend a support group as 'meeting in a place where a cup of tea's £1.75 [... they would] want a hundred tea bags and 2 pints of milk for that'. Thirdly, stigma was experienced acutely in a number of ways. There was personal stigma in that poverty made you 'feel like a bum' (Patrick 2017: 147). Participants experienced stigma from all aspects of the media including social media (Patrick 2017: 151) and through the dehumanising experiences of interacting with the welfare system (Patrick 2017: 153). The research reveals that strategies to manage the stigma complexify the lived experience of poverty as participants may in turn stigmatise other groups as part of the problem. In *Over to the East*, the film about Richmond Hill, people seeking asylum and refugees were seen by some longer-term residents as the problem as they claimed 'all the benefits'.

Patrick's research argues that the way benefit claimants viewed themselves provided a barrier to them engaging as citizens. In a sense, being a claimant, although not a lifestyle choice, becomes the way that one interprets oneself. This is to the extent that

many of the participants' aspirations were to simply 'get off' benefits (Patrick 2017: 80). Thus, as a whole, the participants were politically disengaged. Where there was a sense of contributing to society, it was often in the high levels of volunteering that participants enjoyed. Yet, participants felt that volunteering was often viewed by the benefits agencies as a distraction from gaining employment. In short, hours spent volunteering were hours that were not being spent looking for employment. Thus, that which was an act of citizenship in contributing to wider society, had been devalued as such (Patrick 2017: 205).

3.3.2 Is Social Citizenship a Helpful Lens for the Relocator?

Before outlining the positive reasons that social citizenship offers the relocator in understanding the lived experience of poverty, I want to outline a number of concerns in adopting it as the only lens. In the first place is its association with individual rights. Although there is the possibility of rendering citizenship in communal terms with a social right as a label for that which enables community to flourish, this is not automatically the case. Secondly, it could be argued that developing citizenship discourse along community lines relies upon a common vision of life together within a place. For the relocator to operate within this will require careful handling as it cannot be assumed that the common good is coterminous with a theological vision. As we recognised in Chapter Two, our post-Christendom context implies that the Christian faith narrative is not shared as truth by all within society. Therefore, the relocator will need to offer their theological claims with humility. Finally, there is a danger that although social citizenship offers a diagnosis of the problem of participation, it does not offer a clear remedy. Therefore, the relocator must be careful of any claims that are made. That said, Patrick does offer a few suggestions of how to move towards a more inclusive social citizenship. I will use several of her

suggestions to elucidate the positive contribution social citizenship might make in helping the relocater understand the experience of poverty.

Firstly, Patrick (2017: 210) claims ‘there is a pressing need to re-emphasise the foundational principle of social citizenship [...] the need to treat one’s fellow citizens with dignity and respect’. This, she argues, will help the benefit system and, I would argue, society as a whole to break down the divisions between ‘them’ and ‘us’ (Patrick 2017: 213). The practice of relocation embodies something of the blurring of these boundaries and seeks to develop a culture of interdependency. Secondly, Patrick (2017: 210) claims there is a need to discover what a ‘shame-proofed social security system would look like’. Here the relocater may draw from rich theological language that addresses scapegoating and seek to help society to deal with the shame of poverty.³⁷ Thirdly, Patrick argues for a change of language in how welfare benefits are understood. She argues that social security is a much better frame as this takes the discourse away from conditionality to receive benefits and, as we have seen, a perception of a second-class citizenship, and moves it towards a safety-net for all citizens within a nation. This move reminds the relocater of the importance of developing appropriate language about poverty and, significantly, how responses to poverty are understood.³⁸ Finally, Patrick (2017: 219) argues that ‘it is only by closely listening to lived experiences that we can better understand the everyday realities of benefits receipt and begin to construct a more solidaristic and egalitarian conceptualisation of social citizenship’. I contend that the relocater is strategically

³⁷ For instance, Rene Girard’s insistence that generalised violence in every society tends towards looking for a victim as a scapegoat. Jesus rejects the myth of violence and in his death as an innocent victim, he shares the status of the scapegoat with all who have been oppressed (Girard 1989).

³⁸ A number of reports by Christian organisations make the point that the safety net must be restated within the social security system. These include the Church Action on Poverty ‘Below the Breadline’ report (Cooper, Purcell, and Jackson 2014).

placed to do this by attentive listening to the wisdom of neighbours. Through this the relocater might be aware of the particularities of the circumstances each neighbour faces and recognise the complexity of poverty and its effects. At the same time the relocater might consider how new forms of communal life might enable the neighbours to contribute as citizens. I will return to this in my discussion of 'gifts' and 'wounds' in Chapter Six.

My claim is that social citizenship is a better framework through which to understand the lived experience of poverty within low-income neighbourhoods than that of social capital. It illustrates something of the complex and dynamic nature of poverty that affects individuals and neighbourhoods. It demonstrates that for some people poverty is temporary, whilst others are trapped in it. Social citizenship also links material and social aspects of poverty. Finally, it displays a further level of complexity in that people who experience poverty cannot simply be labelled as the oppressed. Different groups who experience poverty may stigmatise other groups as undeserving of support. Social citizenship provides a lens through which relocators view neighbours as equal citizens who should be enabled to actively engage in society.

3.4 Vulnerability and Resilience

So far in this chapter I have assessed the helpfulness of social capital and social citizenship as frameworks for understanding neighbourhood poverty. We have found that, although social capital enables description of different types of relationship building, it is an unhelpful theological frame for our purposes as it oversimplifies the context. I argued that social citizenship more appropriately described why individuals and neighbourhoods may be trapped in cycles of poverty. By addressing poverty through this lens, we might be able to begin to address some of the power imbalances

experienced within these communities. Yet although I have begun to name how people who experience poverty understand their experiences, this is by no means complete. To thicken this description, I will address two further lenses offered by the literature: vulnerability and resilience. I will treat both concepts together.

Within academic literature there is a great deal of conjecture as to whether vulnerability should be understood as a synonym for poverty. Robert Chambers suggests that the opposite of vulnerability is security. Vulnerability is experienced both externally, in its exposure to risks, shocks and stresses, and internally, in the lack of means to be able to cope (Chambers 2006: 33). He argues that both poverty and vulnerability are complex subjects in that there is not a consistent set of issues that are present in the same measure in every situation. One person's situation of poverty is never identical to someone else's (Chambers 2006: 35).

To illustrate how vulnerability is complex and unique within every given situation, Michael Watts and Hans Bohle developed a triangular map relating vulnerability to poverty, hunger and famine. For them, vulnerability is the process by which poverty becomes more likely (Watts and Bohle 1993: 44). Each of the sides of the triangle represent different approaches and causal forces for vulnerability – entitlement, empowerment and political economy (Watts and Bohle 1993: 52). They argue these approaches represent 'a network of ideas' carrying 'important complementarities and areas of overlap'. To understand the vulnerability of a situation, these approaches should be considered in relation to one another.

In the first approach, 'entitlement and capability', vulnerability is understood from an economic and juridical standpoint. Starvation is inevitable if a person or community

neither possesses the resources needed to purchase or exchange goods for food (Watts and Bohle 1993: 46). In this regard Watts and Bohle (1993: 48) say, 'vulnerability delimits those groups of society who are most exposed to market failures, whose coping capacity with respect to unfavourable terms of exchange is low and who are insufficiently integrated into social security arrangements'. This lack of entitlement makes one vulnerable. The second approach agrees with the first in the need to increase entitlements but understands this as an 'exercise of political power' (Watts and Bohle 1993: 49). It questions how rules and rights are 'defined, legitimated and contested' and argues that vulnerability is increased when the vulnerable have limited capacity to make claims over how resources are allocated (Watts and Bohle 1993: 50). In the final approach that Watts and Bohle call 'class and crisis', vulnerability is understood as a form of 'class knowledge'. Here vulnerability is an expression of 'capacity, specifically class capacity defined by the social relations of production in which individuals and households participate [... thus poverty becomes] an historically localised expression of fundamental class processes' (Watts and Bohle 1993: 52). Vulnerability is not understood as an abstract condition, but one that has been produced over time and is historically contingent.

I claim that 'spaces of vulnerability' is helpful in interpreting the experience of poverty. To illustrate, I will consider how it relates to the practice of welfare sanctions. Here a claimant's benefit is stopped if they have not been seen to comply with the rules of the system. Thus, a person's 'endowment entitlement' is limited, resulting in an increase in their vulnerability as they are unable to exchange for basic necessities. Reflecting upon being sanctioned, a Leeds Poverty Truth Commissioner said, 'at the Job Centre it's criteria not people. You are not treated as a person. They don't care if

you have no tea. They go home for their tea. They always have their tea.’³⁹ Limiting entitlements through benefit sanctions may be understood as a political act. Furthermore, at a time where the institutional membership is low, particularly for many within low-income neighbourhoods, it is difficult to see how an individual might be ‘empowered’ to engage with negotiations around the limiting of entitlement. As Martin Voss (2008: 40-41) writes:

An important factor for vulnerability, no matter whether human-or eco-system, is, that in the past the vulnerable of today had no “voice” or no representatives to give them a voice. Their world-views, their needs, their cognitive patterns and their interests did not find the adequate form of articulation, and nobody listened. At the same time the people with the loudest “voices” increased their influence and their property. The voices of the vulnerable were, and are, excluded or silenced on different levels and through a variety of means [...] This “exclusion” happens mostly covertly, so to speak through “microphysics of power” (Michel Foucault). This fundamental dimension of vulnerability – I call it the “participative capacity” – needs to be included within an integrative framework, encompassing economic, social and ecological factors.

Voss persuasively argues that the voices of the vulnerable should not be mediated through organisations, such as Non-Governmental Organisations, but that the vulnerable should be empowered to understand the nature of the situation and develop ‘the best strategy to protect themselves’ (Voss 2008: 45). So, in our example of benefit sanctions, vulnerability is increased as access to ‘entitlements’ are reduced, and the possibility of empowerment is limited. If the relocater is to help neighbours to respond to this vulnerability, it is crucial that they increase the confidence of local people in responding to the conditions of their vulnerability.

Another term that is often related to vulnerability by sociologists and geographers alike within the research into deprived neighbourhoods in Leeds is resilience. As

³⁹ <http://www.leedspovertytruth.org.uk/2016/07/22/geoffs-truth/> [accessed 20th June 2018].

Béné et al outline, there is an inevitable overlap between the two, however they are also discrete concepts. For the practitioner the link between the two, Béné et al. (2012: 15) suggest, is 'trying to move from a state of vulnerability to one of resilience'. In order to avoid a circular argument where 'a system lacks resilience in that it is vulnerable; it is vulnerable because it lacks resilience' they propose focussing upon a particular situation or issue to address (Béné et al. 2012: 16). In other words, strategies of resilience should be developed in response to a specific disturbance that has made a particular group vulnerable. Initially resilience was a subject addressed within the field of ecology. However, it has expanded to include wider aspects of resilience, including the social. Markus Keck and Patrick Sakdapolrak (2013: 14) argue that this is still a concept in the making.

Dorothy Bottrell urges careful attention as to who defines what resilience looks like within a particular situation. She argues that the behaviour of some of the girls within the neighbourhood she was researching was often interpreted as rebellion against cultural norms. However, she claims it is better understood as resilience. Bottrell (2009: 331) writes, 'reframing resistances as resilience recognises the significance of social identities and collective experience to young people's positive adaptation'. If the authorities treat specific behaviour as rebellion rather than resilience a punitive strategy is likely to be adopted. Bottrell (2009: 331) continues, 'when young people's collective experience is relatively bounded by others' ascriptions, their resilience may go unrecognised, re-inscribed instead as an identifiable group of 'problem' individuals'. Once again this is an example of how the language of poverty is defined by a set of cultural norms codified by others rather than those who are struggling

against it.⁴⁰ Thus, strategies by local people to respond to poverty may be unnoticed or misinterpreted. Bottrell believes that resilience work should challenge cultural norms. To do this, resilience theory should consider the collective experiences of people within a community and not only focus upon individuals. Failure to do this may result in resilience simply being incorporated into a broader neoliberal agenda (Bottrell 2009: 334). However, by ‘working with’ their collective groups, wider cultural norms and their underlying philosophies are challenged. This, she argues, means that advocacy may be developed for, and with, those who face adversity (Bottrell 2009: 334).

3.4.1 Vulnerability and Resilience in the Literature about Leeds

Nick Emmel and Kahryn Hughes conducted a longitudinal study over ten years charting the impact of deprivation on the lived experience of residents within a Leeds estate. People in the estate struggled with a number of issues including high levels of unemployment, invalidity and a large proportion of young people who were not in education, employment or training.⁴¹ Emmel and Hughes (2010: 174) argued that the estate displayed ‘long term vulnerability within and across households’. Complex needs were experienced that were not static but constantly changing over time (Emmel and Hughes 2010: 177). For instance, ‘participants describe “lending a nappy for the day” to a daughter with the expectation that this will be returned when benefit payments were received’ (Emmel and Hughes 2010: 174). The relationship between different forms of poverty and how they create vulnerability was also a theme within Patrick’s research. She notes a participant who described themselves as ‘constantly

⁴⁰ Maia Green’s journal article ‘Representing Poverty and Attacking Representations’ helpfully shows that its definitions for poverty are often written by governments and community development organisations rather than people who struggle against it (Green 2006).

⁴¹ Young people aged 16-25 who are not in education, employment or training are often referred to as NEETS. I purposely avoid using the term as it increases the stigma associated with their situation.

juggling' the cost of food and fuel (Patrick 2017: 65). Emmel and Hughes contend that vulnerability is increased by uncertain and inconsistent service provision. Here service providers might 'listen or not listen, act or not act' (Emmel and Hughes 2010: 177). This inconsistency was also being acknowledged within the Leeds Poverty Truth Commission. Yvonne, a commissioner, reflected upon the fragile relationship between agencies and organisations that provided services to her estate. She recalls, 'many agencies deal with each case by the text book and not as individual cases, forgetting we are all different [...] There are issues with agency workers themselves in as much as they disappear just as they are getting to know the community and its needs'.⁴² Interestingly for our study of relocators, she concludes, 'what is required are people who live in the community and who know that community and its needs'.⁴³

In the literature around poverty within Leeds, resilience is a regular theme. Within official papers and strategies of many public-sector organisations, including West Yorkshire Police, Leeds South and East Clinical Commissioning Group and Leeds City Council, as well as community-led initiatives, resilience covers a wide range of subjects including environmental, economic, health and community.⁴⁴ It is seen as an aspiration for neighbourhoods and individuals. Gonzalez and Oosterlynck (2014: 3172-73) concede that there is a danger in using the term without being specific about the type of resilience that one is speaking of since a general use may be assumed to cover all. They refer to the economic resilience of Leeds and concede that even within this, it is only in reference to a particular ideological view of what economic resilience may look like.

⁴² Leeds Poverty Truth Report, 19.

⁴³ Leeds Poverty Truth Report, 19.

⁴⁴ <https://www.bshf.org/world-habitat-awards/winners-and-finalists/lilac-low-impact-living-affordable-community> [accessed 20th September 2018].

Margins within the City concludes that ‘given more scope to determine their own futures and realise and manage these assets, communities in the rim have real potential to create their own resilience strategies’ (Unsworth 2011: 101). Yet although this potential exists within the neighbourhood, it will only be realised if ‘existing social networks, skills and physical assets can be consolidated and developed [...] in the face of the pressing environmental and economic changes that lie ahead’ (Unsworth 2011: 13). Resiliency is helpful in these terms as it recognises a sense of resistance within people in the neighbourhood and emphasises the importance that poverty has physical material challenges and not just social ones. Patrick also recognised the importance of resilience strategies. She argued that these developed over time and that they operated at different levels for the participants. She cautioned against an over-romantic view of resilience that celebrates it and does not address the structures that mean it is necessary (Patrick 2017: 73-6).

3.4.2 Are Vulnerability and Resilience Helpful Lenses for the Relocator?

Vulnerability and resilience seem to offer more than social capital in understanding the nature of relationships. In the first place they recognise the complex factors that cause poverty and allow them to operate dynamically with one another. In particular the model proposed in ‘spaces of vulnerability’ highlights the causal factors that make a particular neighbourhood vulnerable towards poverty. Furthermore, it recognises how external factors, including the built environment, affect the structure of relationships within a neighbourhood. Thus, the relocator is better equipped to understand the specifics of the issues within their particular context. Furthermore, vulnerability may also offer a more theologically rich language with which a neighbourhood may be understood. The word vulnerable is derived from the Latin word ‘vulnus’. Taken literally this means a ‘wound’. I will argue in Chapter Six that in

addressing poverty as a wound, the relocater will not only be attentive to the woundedness of their neighbour, but also their own sense of woundedness. Furthermore, I will argue that the presence of poverty is a wound for wider society. Mary McClintock Fulkerson claims that a task within practical theology is to attend to a 'wound of obliviousness' or 'of not seeing' (Fulkerson 2007: 19). It is my argument that low-income neighbourhoods are unseen by wider society and thus, the practice of relocation is one way in which we may attend to this wound. This wound is not static, but changes over time as it interacts and is conditioned by social, cultural, economic and political circumstances. I will argue that the theological tradition has something to contribute to this understanding of poverty that is commutable to other disciplines. In addition, the practice of relocation becomes a theological expression of vulnerability in that the relocater places themselves within a shared 'space of vulnerability'.

Vulnerability and resilience challenge the underlying assumptions prevalent within the stigma that is attached to poverty. Vulnerability recognises that issues of entitlement are political and that a moral challenge of cultural norms is necessary. Resilience accepts that people experiencing poverty may have employed resilient strategies in the past and are capable of creating them in the future. Whilst recognising that there is a danger in romanticising these strategies, the relocater should seek to harness these strategies and address the political structures that limit the flourishing of the neighbourhood. They should also accept their own vulnerability, realising that they are not to 'work for' local people, but to be alongside them. Thus, relationships of solidarity and reciprocity are formed.

Vulnerability and resilience also acknowledge the deficit of power that is faced by people experiencing poverty. They recognise that for lasting change to happen, the vulnerable must strengthen their power by developing their 'participatory capacity'. This will enable people in neighbourhoods to reach beyond their 'class knowledge' in seeking to develop their own transformative strategies. As Bottrell reminds us, these resilient strategies should be developed in community rather than focusing on individuals. This is important for relocators to remember. Often organisations and groups who promote relocation focus more on the transformation of the individual. For instance, the Eden Network in seeking to affirm the changes that local people make, may in effect celebrate individuals over communities. The report on the Eden website of their Urban Heroes Awards, says 'every award winner has an inspirational story of how they have triumphed over personal adversity, or are making a positive difference in the lives of others in their local community'.⁴⁵ This is not new for evangelical movements to prioritise 'working with' individuals within low-income areas. For instance, William Booth (2014: 252) in his book *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, claims he is writing for 'the lost, for the outcast, for the disinherited of the world'. The scheme he develops sees the reformed person rescued from the city and set to work either in a farm colony in the United Kingdom or overseas. As Victor Bailey (1984: 151) argues, 'without question, a strong anti-urbanism runs through Darkest England, not least in the prefatory chart [the accompanying picture], where the city is obviously the source of evil and the countryside "the way out"'. It is my argument that if we are to develop a theology for the practice of relocation that seeks to recognise the redemptive qualities of the neighbourhood, we must, as the theory

⁴⁵ <http://www.message.org.uk/2013/06/27/this-saturday-we-present-our-sixth-annual-urban-hero-awards/> [accessed 16th April 2016].

of resilience does, acknowledge the collective potential within the neighbourhood and seek to participate within this.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to provide an understanding of the lived experience of poverty within low-income neighbourhoods in Leeds. I have argued that relationships within a neighbourhood are complex and dynamic and that the neighbourhood itself should not be treated in isolation from its surroundings. Neighbourhood poverty is exacerbated by disconnection from wider society. I have shown that in many of the neighbours there is a sense of loss. This is experienced through the hollowing out of neighbourhood facilities, workplaces and institutions and the sense that some of its residents understand themselves as second-class citizens. Low-income neighbourhoods are fragile places, both in the sense that they are vulnerable, but also that they have beauty in the resilient strategies local people develop. The poverty experienced by neighbourhoods is not static but transforms over time and is vulnerable to political, social, economic and cultural changes.

An important claim running throughout the chapter is to ensure that relocators should seek to adopt sociological and geographical frameworks that adequately describe the lived experience of poverty. I argued that social capital was unhelpful as, amongst other things, it reduced relationships to economic terms. That said, it does show the importance of building weak-tie relationships that enable connections to be made across diverse groups within and beyond the neighbourhood. Social citizenship was more helpful in that it highlighted the importance of developing social bonds between people that enable local people to act as citizens. This is often in spite of political and media discourses that seek to reduce benefit claimants in particular to second-class

citizens. Finally, I claim that the language of vulnerability and resilience has a particular resonance, not only with the lived experience of neighbourhoods, but theologically.

These conclusions have implications for how the relocater should respond to poverty in their neighbourhood. In the first place it acknowledges that relocators should seek to enable neighbours to establish weak-tie relationships with organisations and people outside the neighbourhood. This will enable the neighbourhood to be connected to the wider context of the city and enable new flows of power. Secondly, it alerts the relocater to the important task of building belief in local people that they have a contribution to make to society. Thirdly, the relocater should recognise that although many within the neighbourhood have faced difficulties that might have left them vulnerable, it is likely that they have developed resilient strategies that need encouragement. The nature of building relationships in this way will take time. As we have seen, trust is understandably hard won in many of these neighbourhoods. Yet, a key aspect of the practice of relocation should be to build relationships of solidarity that enable the voice of those with direct experience of poverty to be heard within society. In the next three chapters I will seek to develop theological language that facilitates this.

4. *Finding Orientation in the Language of 'Being With(in)'*

In the second chapter of this thesis I outlined the intentions and assumptions of relocators. I argued that emphasis on the language of incarnational living not only created theological problems in understanding the practice, but also limited the theological horizon of its practitioners. In the previous chapter I sought to develop a richer, thicker description and analysis of the neighbourhood context in which relocators minister. I claimed that poverty is a complex phenomenon that may be articulated, amongst other things, by a sense of vulnerability and resilience within residents and the neighbourhood as a whole. In this chapter I will begin to develop a language that will expand the theological horizon of how relocators might understand the lived experience of poverty and enable them to respond to it.

My central claim in this chapter is that Samuel Wells's trope of 'being with' provides orientating language for the practice of relocation.⁴⁶ Unlike the limited Christology the term incarnational living produced, 'being with' enables the relocator to appropriately relate their practice to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It also implies a definition for poverty that is consistent with how we understood the lived experience of poverty. However, I will argue that the language of 'being with' does not go far enough in response to the deficit in social citizenship experienced by many residents of low-income neighbourhoods. I argue this is because it over-relies on a series of unhelpful binaries. By pitting isolation against mortality as the problem of the human condition, the response to poverty of 'being with' as opposed to 'working with',

⁴⁶ When I first heard Wells speak about 'being with,' the language felt like a reorientation as it seemed to offer language that was true to my experience and faithful to my understanding of the gospel.

neighbourhood assets against neighbourhood deficits, and ecclesial against societal renderings of justice, Wells over-rejects the impact that limits have on people who find themselves in poverty and thus does not account for the resulting loss that individuals and neighbourhoods experience. I claim this leads to the accusation that 'being with' is passive about dehumanising structures, does not give a detailed account of material goods and does not pay attention to the specific suffering of the individual. Furthermore, 'being with' does not fully articulate the relationship relocators have with their neighbourhood. By relocating they are in some senses 'in' the neighbourhood not entirely distinct from it as 'being with' might imply. Additionally, by living within the neighbourhood, the relocater experiences some of the deficits of the neighbourhood alongside other residents. Therefore, any orientating language used to define the practice should accept that the relocater is part of the neighbourhood. To incorporate this, I am proposing 'being with(in)' as a reorientation of this language for the practice. As I will explain, the brackets reflect the ambiguous identity of the relocater. They are a resident of the neighbourhood, yet, at the same time, they are an 'incomer' who has intentionally relocated into the neighbourhood to 'be with' local people.

The chapter begins with an introduction to Samuel Wells to establish why his work may be applicable to this study. I then describe the framework through which he defines poverty and how the church might faithfully and theologically respond to poverty when understood this way. Following this I outline how it might be helpful for the relocater in providing orientating language for the practice before discussing some of what I believe Wells overlooks and over-rejects. In particular I will show how rejection of many of these elements means that the citizenship of local residents is not enhanced. Finally, I will introduce my proposal of 'being with(in)' as a way of

reincorporating these lost elements in order to develop further the societal and political implications of the practice.

Two brief comments on style. Firstly, Wells does not italicise or use quotations for 'being with' as he argues that it should be ordinary language for approaching theological and ethical questions (Wells 2015: 13-14). However, for clarity within this thesis I have chosen to use quotations for 'being with' and the related categories of 'working for', 'being for' and 'working with'. Secondly, although Wells is not writing specifically for the relocater, for ease of reading when using examples, I will adopt the language of relocater to denote the person who is 'being' and neighbour to denote the person who the relocater is 'being with'. Neighbour may also be understood as the individual or collectively as neighbours within a given geographic area.

4.1 Introducing Samuel Wells

Wells is important to this study of relocation as a practitioner and a theological ethicist. Since ordination as an Anglican priest in 1991, he has served in parishes within Newcastle, North Earlham (Norwich) and Newnham (Cambridge), as Dean of Duke Chapel (North Carolina) and Rector at St Martins-in-the-Fields (London). In Norwich he helped establish the North Earlham, Larkman and Marlpit Development Trust as a community-led project within the United Kingdom government's New Deals for Community initiative. For Wells this was formative in understanding the contribution the church may make to regeneration within a parish.⁴⁷ At Duke Chapel he developed links between the chapel, university and wider city particularly through the Religious Coalition for a Nonviolent Durham. It was during this time that his reflections on 'being

⁴⁷ See *Community-led Regeneration and the Local Church* (Wells 2003) and 'No Abiding Inner City: A New Deal for the Church' in (Nation and Wells 2000).

with' began to formulate. Through engagement with the homeless, and the public and political opportunities within his current appointment at St Martins-in-the-Fields, this understanding has been further developed.⁴⁸

Wells's ministry within low-income neighbourhoods has informed his writing in ways that are consistent with how I have described the lived experience of poverty in Chapter Three. In 'Generation, Degeneration, Regeneration: The Theological Architecture and Horticulture of a Deprived Housing Estate' Wells highlights the importance of using humanising language. Wells (2002: 238-39) writes:

The tendency is for the language used about a housing estate to concentrate on what an outsider perceives it lacks, rather than on what an insider perceives it has. 'Deprived' suggests an estate is entitled to something but that thing has been taken away from it. 'Disadvantaged' suggests that other communities have a head start, whereas this estate has, through no fault of its own, some kind of a handicap. 'Priority', 'challenging' or 'tough' tend to be words of professional outsiders, reflecting on their perceptions of the intractable problems of the community; meanwhile other outsiders tend to use more direct language such as 'rough' or even 'bad'.

He suggests that descriptions of this nature produce shame within the community. He postulates that if regeneration is to have long-term effect, 'it must be built on the positive aspects of the culture that already exists' (Wells 2002: 239). Rather than focusing upon what a neighbourhood lacks, Wells describes such neighbourhoods 'as sources of remarkable resourcefulness' whose resilience has enabled life to thrive despite their limited access to 'emotional or financial security and stability' (Wells 2003: 4). He affirms that estates are more dynamic than the language used to describe them implies. Even the word estate 'implies a static model of society' (Wells 2003: 18). Wells's reflection upon North Earlham develops these themes further.

⁴⁸ Wells's public platform includes regular contributions on BBC Radio 4's 'Thought for the Day'.

The culture of North Earlham is dominated by one institution only: the extended family. Participation in institutions outside the family – clubs, unions, churches – is low. There are thus relatively few places where a common story is established and rehearsed. The principal shared experience is that of the City Council as landlord, and of the co-dependent relationship that has developed between corporate landlord and individual tenant. The people I know here are much more cautious than the people I knew in the North-East when it comes to articulating a shared story. The consequence of a reluctance to articulate a story is that the present tense is elevated in significance: meanwhile the past is something of a foreign country and the future a closed book. Life for many people is largely a matter of survival, and the tools of the future – diaries, bank accounts and formal education – are accordingly downgraded. (Nation and Wells 2000: 125)

A key theme within this description is the general distrust that local people had for institutions. This is manifest most clearly in his comment about the city council that seemed to reduce the relationship with local people to co-dependency around a specific function. There are clear parallels here with the challenging relationship between local people and institutional and associational life outlined in Chapter Three. Furthermore, Wells also emphasises the contextual specificity of neighbourhoods. He speaks of the difference between North Earlham and the North East by recognising that although contexts may share some similarities, differences should also be acknowledged.

We see from these comments how Wells is beginning to articulate what a faithful response to poverty looks like. He recognised that because local people had such a deep-rooted suspicion of institutions, it was crucial that the church learned to approach the neighbourhood as a child rather than as a parent. Commenting on neighbours in North Earlham, he concludes ‘no-one would listen to the parent’ (Nation and Wells 2000: 124). Therefore, the church needed to respond to poverty not by simply leading relief programmes or providing care for local people. It had to look beyond this default response that he goes on to later describe as ‘working for’.

Wells's academic work is informed by his experiences as a vicar. His academic writing includes 'conventional academic monographs and works in a more homiletic vein, introductory works to ethics and other subjects, and more provocative and exploratory works in new areas' (Wells 2015: 12). His doctoral work focused upon the theological ethics of Stanley Hauerwas.⁴⁹ Since then, Wells states that he has published three substantial works that outline his approach to ethics. In *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics*, Wells (2004) emphasis is on theological ethics as understood through embodiment. He argues that the metaphor of theatrical improvisation enables the imagination, is not reliant upon being original and requires a posture that is open to receiving from context and giving back to it (Wells 2004: 68, 76, 80). In *God's Companions: Reimagining Christian Ethics* he develops these themes further with specific reference to his experience in the North Earlham parish. He emphasises the centrality of the body of Christ, as Jesus, church and eucharist within the practice of Christian ethics. *God's Companions* provides the clearest understanding of what he means by ecclesial ethics. Here he builds upon Aristotle's understanding of ethics, Thomas Aquinas's work on the virtues, Karl Barth's conception of faithful witness and Stanley Hauerwas's Christological rendering of the church and the world. The final work he describes as substantive is *A Nazareth Manifesto*. It is through this work that Wells develops his theoretical basis for 'being with'.

It is important to briefly note that Wells offers three other types of writing. Firstly, Wells has co-edited textbooks on Christians ethics.⁵⁰ Secondly, he has also published articles within a wide range of academic journals, the titles of which demonstrate the

⁴⁹ Published in book form as *Transforming Fate into Destiny* (Wells 1998).

⁵⁰ See *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics* (Hauerwas and Wells 2011) and *Introducing Christian Ethics* (Wells and Quash 2017).

wide application of his writing.⁵¹ Thirdly, he has written a number of books aimed at the wider church. Many of these are collections of sermons based upon themes from his academic work. Like Hauerwas, who defied traditional categories ‘by preaching when I lecture and lecturing when I preach’ (Hauerwas 2011), Wells forms a reciprocal relationship between his sermons and his academic work. Both inform one another and help develop theory and practice. It is this relationship between academic theology, ecclesial ethics and ministering in low-income neighbourhoods that that is the reason why Wells is my primary dialogue partner in this thesis. The theological themes he explores are informed by his practice and his practice is informed by his theological reflection. This is a crucial combination if we are to develop theologically rich and practically applicable language to understand relocation.

4.2 Framing Poverty

For Wells, the language of ‘being with’ is the result of a particular anthropological framing of the human predicament and a specific theological interpretation of God’s activity with humankind. Combined, these provide the foundation for his proposition of ‘being with’ as a theological response to poverty which the church should embody. Before outlining his understanding of ‘being with’ I will explore both of these theoretical frameworks.

4.2.1 Anthropological Framing: The Human Predicament

Wells claims that the popular understanding of the human predicament in the late modern period is mortality. He writes, ‘it seems all are agreed that the key project of

⁵¹ A brief survey of where Wells’s articles are published demonstrate the different categories of writing that I am outlining. These include academic journals, such as *Political Theology*, *International Journal of Systematic Theology*; and journals in church leadership (worship and ministry), such as *Christian Century*, *Journal for Preachers* and *Interpretation*.

our species is the alleviation, overcoming, and transcendence of mortality' (Wells 2015: 37). Within this perspective, anything that limits life is perceived as a problem to be overcome and conquered. Viewed in this way, we might consider poverty an extreme limitation that causes a lack in those who struggle against it (Wells 2015: 43). Wells claims that poverty understood from this viewpoint may be characterised through 'metaphors of deficit'. He offers three such metaphors: poverty as a desert, poverty as defeat and poverty as dragnet. In poverty as a desert the limiting factor is that the poor do not have enough access to resources. In poverty as a defeat, the limit is the poor themselves in that 'their deficiencies' are responsible for their own poverty. In poverty as a dragnet the limit is the ability to escape from poverty (Wells 2015: 38-40). In all three of these metaphors the problem of poverty needs solving for the person who experiences it by overcoming a specific limit.

Wells rejects the grounds for the metaphors of deficit at a fundamental level. He argues they are flawed because they are founded on an incorrect understanding of the human predicament. He proposes an alternative to this foundation, arguing the human predicament is about isolation not mortality. He argues that people's greatest fear is to be alone (Wells 2011: 140). Rather than overcoming limits, individuals and communities must learn how to flourish through connection. In doing this they will thrive within the confines of that which limits them in similar ways to my discussion on resilience in Chapter Three. He offers three corresponding 'metaphors of dislocation' based on this foundation. The first is poverty as a dungeon. Poverty is not about the scarcity of resources but about the sinfulness of humankind that leads to some being kept poor by a 'widening circle of exploiters' (Wells 2015: 41). Secondly, poverty is a disease. For Wells, the sickness of poverty lies in relationships, communities and societies rather than individuals (Wells 2015: 41). Finally, poverty

is about desolation. It recognises that communities and individuals experiencing poverty often have few relationships with people they can trust 'resulting in vulnerability to the forces of exploitation' (Wells 2015: 41-42).

By shifting an anthropological reading of the human condition from mortality to isolation and constructing metaphors of dislocation as opposed to metaphors of deficit, Wells is now able to address how poverty should be responded to. If poverty is about deficit then a response to poverty means resources should be invested in increasing skills to overcome limiting factors. However, if poverty is about dislocation, responses to poverty should seek to bring greater connectivity and harness strong relationships for those who struggle with it (Wells 2015: 43). Not only that but, Wells argues, focusing upon overcoming limits actually increases isolation and, by extension, responses that attempt to provide solutions to problems do not alleviate poverty but increase it (Wells 2015: 45-46). Although he does recognise that a lack of money influences the experience of poverty, he does not see it as foundational to it. Wells (2015: 46-47) concludes 'poverty is not fundamentally about the absence of money, or about the lack of conventional forms of power. It is about the impoverishment, the instrumentalization, the manipulation, the breakdown, or the perversion of relationship'. Therefore, a foundational response to poverty is enabling those who experience it to re-imagine community. Or, as Wells (2006: 7) reflects upon his experience in North Earlham, poverty 'is about having no idea what to do and/ or having no one with whom to do it'.

Poverty as dislocation has much in common with the experiences of vulnerability we outlined in the previous chapter. For instance, the wound of poverty might be

understood in similar ways to the metaphors of disease and desolation.⁵² Furthermore, poverty as dislocation has resonance with the depiction of people perceiving they are second-class citizens. This is important for my thesis as Wells's framing of poverty is then able to dialogue with the lived experience of poverty as we have portrayed it. Yet, I argue that reframing poverty exclusively in this way is problematic. In particular, a series of unresolved binaries begin to emerge as limitations are not addressed because Wells understands them primarily as constitutive of the anthropology of mortality which he is rejecting. As we will explore later in the chapter, for 'being with' to be considered a faithful response to the lived experience of poverty, factors that limit opportunities to build relationships must be reincorporated within it. Thus, that which causes the dislocation is not fully attended to in Wells's scheme. This over-looked element of empirical evidence may partly emerge from the manner in which his anthropology develops. It is not primarily an empirical anthropology. Rather, it is a theological anthropology where Wells's understanding of the Christian faith is the lens through which he perceives the world. Consequently, how Wells interprets and understands the Christian narrative is vitally important if we are to understand his anthropology. We will now discuss his theological framing of poverty.

4.2.2 Theological Framing: God with Us

Having argued that the human predicament is isolation, Wells seeks to establish a theological foundation based on the statement 'God with us'. Wells (2015: 7) writes:

These words express the character of God, the identity of Jesus, the work of the Spirit. They are the Christian testimony about the past, witness in the

⁵² We will explore further theological implications of understanding poverty this way in Chapters Five and Six.

present, and hope for the future. Each word offers itself as the heart of the gospel.

Wells contends that the whole of salvation history reveals a God who is with us. In fact, 'God with us' is intrinsic to the very nature of the Trinity and has implications for all aspects of theology. A theology of creation is no longer caught in the quandary between whether God created for humankind or for himself. Rather, God creates in order that he may be with us (Wells 2015: 231-32). Similarly, the 'at-one-ment' should be reconfigured the 're-with-ment' as, more than being re-united with God, we are 'restored to God's company' (Wells 2015: 239). Finally, the eschatological revelation of a new heaven and a new earth is where we discover that God's joy is with us as we share everlasting life with him (Wells 2015: 244-46).

For Wells, Jesus is the clearest revelation of 'God with us'. Though we may perceive that resources are scarce, in Jesus we discover the 'enough of God'. This abundance characterises both Jesus' miracles, for example the wedding at Cana, and his teaching, for instance the widow's mite. Reflecting upon Luke's treatment of meals within his gospel, Wells (2006: 27) comments:

They invariably begin in scarcity – the economy of farmed taxation, the hunger of the crowd, the Pharisaic obsession with ritual details, the experience of impurity and debilitating illness. They become occasions of abundance – the filled crowd and baskets of leftovers, the new life for the sick man, the limitless forgiveness toward the sinful woman, the new-found bounty of Zacchaeus. These meals are a paradigm of the Gospel, epitomized by Jesus' words in celebration of the sixth story, "Today salvation has come to this house".

Salvation and grace, for Wells, is an overflowing of the abundance of God. In Jesus, scarcity, sin and alienation are countered by abundance, imagination and companionship. Meals in the gospels are not to be eaten alone, rather they are an expression of abundance that imaginatively draws people together to form companionship with one another. Therefore, if poverty is understood as a lack of

imagination and alienation as opposed to lack of resources, the churches' response is companionship. This is made possible as God gives his people everything that they need so that they may be able to 'worship him, to be his friends, and to eat with him' (Wells 2006: 8). It follows that, for the relocators, companionship should be both the goal and means of their practice. The meal table becomes a place where companionship is fostered and the God of abundance and imagination is celebrated.

4.3 From 'Working For' to 'Being With'

Having established how Wells understands poverty and the theoretical claims that underpin a theological response to poverty, we are now able to articulate how he envisages 'being with'. In *Living Without Enemies* Wells and Marcia Owen outline four possible models of engagement in situations of marginalisation that the church might adopt. These models, termed elsewhere as 'options' (Wells and Owen 2011: 23) and 'approaches' (Wells and Owen 2011: 32), are not derived from specific empirical research, nor are they directly adopted from a particular theory. Although they operate in a similar way to an 'ideal type' in that they serve 'as a mental model that can be widely shared' and contain essential features of a particular phenomenon (Ritzer 2007: 2201-02), they also contain a quality that is both within and beyond the phenomenon in question. Thus, I understand them more as 'tropes' as they describe in simplified terms the practices by which Christians might respond to poverty and, at the same time, are inspired and infused by the life, death and resurrection of Christ. The four tropes are as follows: 'working for', 'being for', 'working with' and 'being with'.

Wells describes the 'working for' model that 'dominates contemporary notions of welfare' as a scenario where the church seeks to provide a solution it delivers for those struggling with poverty (Wells and Owen 2011: 33). The 'being for' model is

when the church chooses to advocate on issues, for instance homelessness, through formal or informal channels without ever building relationship with those who face the issue. Rather than seeking to deliver services for the poor, the 'working with' model seeks to work alongside the poor to develop appropriate solutions to the problem together. Whilst acknowledging that these three approaches to poverty are necessary at times, Wells claims that the fourth, 'being with' is the most faithful response to Christian witness and mission. Wells and Owen (2011: 30) summarise this approach by saying it 'is less given to programmes and movements and is more to be found in piecemeal initiatives and small-scale relationships. This is because 'being with' is not fundamentally about finding solutions, but about companionship amid struggle and distress'. 'Being with' responds directly to poverty as understood through Wells's anthropological and theological frames. It reduces the isolation that is at the heart of the human predicament and witnesses to a 'God with us'. Wells (2015: 23) believes that 'being with' is 'both incarnationally faithful to the manifestation of God in Christ and eschatologically anticipatory of the destiny of all things in God'. If the church is to be authentic to its own story amidst situations of conflict and poverty, then its main purpose should be to provide friendship with those feeling the alienation of their context.

Wells argues that 'being with' has a Trinitarian shape. The 'inner interrelationship' of the Trinity is God being with God, and the outer relationship is God 'being with' us. Wells writes, 'here is the direction, the fixed purpose, and the orientating goal of the ordering of God's life: to be with *us*' (Wells 2015: 8). Jesus is the clearest expression of the Trinity's 'being with'. In his life, death and resurrection, Jesus shows the solidarity of God with his people. In his death he experiences the fullness of alienation from his friends and, evidenced by the cry of dereliction, with God (Wells 2015: 80).

Yet, his resurrection confirms the promise that through Jesus, God is with us. Wells acknowledges there are instances in the life of Jesus where he operates within the other tropes. For instance, his ministry in Galilee might be considered 'working with' and the passion narrative in Jerusalem may be considered 'working for'. Similarly, some of the boundaries between models are more permeable than others – in particular that between 'working with' and 'being with' (Wells 2015: 136). However, all flow from and are orientated around the 'being with' life of Jesus of Nazareth. For Wells there is no 'for without a with' and no working that is not initially derived from being. If there are limitations to 'being with', these are matched and intensified within the other three tropes (Wells 2018: 112). Thus, 'being with' is essential to the gospel. Wells repeats throughout that reconciliation is not a preparation for the gospel; rather it is the gospel itself (Wells 2015: 33, 52, 60, 62).

Wells seeks to bring greater definition to 'being with' in the only chapter of *A Nazareth Manifesto* that he describes as definitive as opposed to speculative and polemic. In 'God being with God', Wells outlines eight dimensions of 'being with' that the Trinity express internally and externally (Wells 2015: 13). The ethical implications for practising 'being with' are based on this and are explored throughout the rest of *A Nazareth Manifesto* and in his later works *Incarnational Mission* and *Incarnational Ministry*. Each of these aspects acts as a layer that 'rests and builds upon the layers below it' (Wells 2015: 125). The dimensions of 'being with' are presence, attention, mystery, delight, participation, partnership, enjoyment and glory. Attentiveness to these aspects are 'our clue to how to imitate God' (Wells 2015: 28). I will return to these dimensions, in particular attention, participation and partnership, throughout the rest of the thesis as I seek to expand 'being with' to 'being with(in)'.

4.3.1 'Being With' as Orientating Language for Relocators

A central claim of my thesis is that 'being with' may act as orientating language for the practice of relocation. By orientating I mean that it points the relocator in the direction of the purpose, the primary activity and the *telos* of their practice. 'Being with' also acts as a corrective to some of the misconceptions relocators have about their ministry as outlined in Chapter Two. In particular it is a suitable alternative to incarnational living, as it makes clear the distinction between the actions of the relocator and God, it enables the neighbour to bear witness to Christ to the relocator and develops a broader Christological framework for the practice. The resonant use of 'being with' by relocators is something Wells acknowledges in *Incarnational Ministry* (Wells 2017: 19). A possible reason for this is that 'being with' weaves together several of the motivations for relocation that I outlined earlier.⁵³ Most notably, 'being with' emphasises the importance of relationship building. This was the foundation that, in my previous research at King's College, London, relocators identified as fundamental to their practice. Furthermore, it has clear missional connotations. From the eight aspects of 'being with' the presupposition of presence, the recognition of participation and partnership demonstrate something of the missional motivations of the relocator. Mystery and delight emphasise contemplating God through the witness of the other and provide fertile ground for developing personal discipleship through relocation. Together, the practice of 'being with' has implications for the shape and dimensions of church within a given context. Furthermore, by paying attention the relocator may begin to discern some of the societal problems within their context.

⁵³ For example, Paul Keeble's notion of 'mission with' (Keeble 2013: 4) and the shift in the Eden networks understanding of mission as 'doing for' to 'doing with' local people (Wilson 2012: 144).

Although Wells recognises the importance of the practice of relocation, he also raises concerns with it. He suggests there is the danger that relocators make the neighbourhood into their own image (Wells 2018: 222-23). Underlining this concern is an appeal that Christians do not lose their distinctiveness when engaging in mission. In a discussion about 'being with' organisations, he emphasises that being immersed in the context should not lead to being submerged within it (Wells 2018: 147-48). By this he means that the worker should not be totally governed by their work and subsumed within the culture of the organisation. They should maintain a critical distance. Similarly, the danger for relocators is that their distinctiveness may be lost as they build connections and relationships within the neighbourhood. Here Elaine Graham's claim that the post-liberal desire for the church to remain distinctive can lead it to become exclusive is worth noting (Graham 2013: 117). I will return to her argument in the next chapter. For now, the concern that the relocator may become submerged within the neighbourhood highlights something of the ambiguous nature of the role of the relocator. They are not simply seeking to be just another neighbour, they are also called to witness to the gospel. Yet, at the same time, their primary activity is 'being with' neighbours and building relationships. If we are to adopt 'being with' as orientating language for the practice, it should contain the resources to negotiate this paradox. I claim that 'being with' does this by providing correctives to how the relocator understands their role, by enabling the relocator to receive Christ within the neighbourhood and by expanding their Christology beyond focusing upon the incarnation.

In Chapter Two I argued that the language of incarnational living can distort the understanding the relocator has of their role. In seeking to imitate Christ, I argued that they may see relocation as a heroic act. In the main this is not explicitly stated within

the relocators' literature I explored earlier. Yet, language such as teams that 'bring transformation to their neighbourhoods' may be unhelpful (Eden Network 2018). Furthermore, this may be undergirded by a misreading of scripture. For instance, it is often assumed that in Jesus' parable, the church is called to be the Good Samaritan. Building upon Augustine's interpretation of the parable, Wells challenges this. On the one hand he argues that the church is often unwilling to see themselves despised like the Samaritans. On the other, the church assumes they are the agents of salvation stewarding all the resources necessary to build the kingdom. Consequently, the heart of the gospel is missed within this interpretation (Wells 2015: 92-93). According to Wells, Jesus' intention for the parable was that Israel and subsequently the church was to understand itself as the one robbed. Yahweh was represented as the Samaritan rescuer. Wells believes that the parable is told so that we may realise we are the one who is beaten up by the road side. Our rescuer comes to us in the guise of the despised other.

Reading the parable of the Good Samaritan challenges the heroic metaphor. It calls the relocator to be faithful to the gospel rather than seeking to bring 'quick and tangible results' (Wells 2003: 22). Wells and Owen (2011: 30) write, 'sometimes the obsession with finding solutions can get in the way of forming profound relationships of mutual understanding, and sometimes those relationships are more significant than solutions'. If the relocator recognises that their role is primarily not to provide solutions, they will be more attentive both to their neighbours and to what God is already doing within their lives. Thus, the language of 'being with' corrects the confusion between what is the relocator's role and what is God's.

A second corrective emerges through Wells's interpretation of the Good Samaritan in that the relocater's understanding of the neighbour is transformed. If the relocater perceives their neighbour to be 'the person who, through intrusion, manipulation, limitless need or infuriating invasion, presents us with impossible demands' then the heroic metaphor might return (Wells 2018: 120). Not only that, but they may feel heightened anxiety as they think they ought to respond to the neighbour's demand yet may be unsure as to whether they are able to respond appropriately. In Wells's reading and application of the Good Samaritan, the neighbour becomes a source of salvation rather than a problem to fix. The neighbour/relocator relationship is transformed into something that is mutually beneficial as Christ offers redemption for the relocater through the neighbour. Understood this way, relationships with neighbours become springs of inexhaustible wonder and abundance that open the relocator to the possibility of all God may have for them. For Wells, the incarnation is 'the heart of a mystery, not a solution of the problem' (Wells 2015: 232). Following Irenaeus, Wells (2015: 233) concludes that God is with us 'not primarily to do things for us, even to secure our salvation; God is with us because that is the purpose of creation. Immanuel is prior to Saviour'. The prioritising of relationship building over solution finding 'is eschatological, because it anticipates the communion of person with their environment, with one another, and with God that will be their joy forever' (Wells 2015: 132). Thus, genuine relationships are established where all parties may flourish and the relocater no longer sees themselves as the hero to their neighbours. Rather, they are called to be neighbours amongst neighbours, experiencing the grace of God and salvation through their neighbour as they practice 'being with'.

A third corrective 'being with' offers the relocater is that it expands what I earlier called the limited Christology of the language of incarnational living. Clearly the titles of

Incarnational Mission and *Incarnational Ministry* reveal that Wells is willing to draw connection between the incarnation and ministry and mission. However, in neither book does he adopt them solely for a particular type of ministry. Rather, it is a way of describing 'being with' in a variety of situations within and without the church. Neither does he give a clear rationale as to how he is using the terms incarnational mission and ministry. Wells (2015: 293) does suggest that presence in the context of mission is 'incarnational when it is intentional'. Yet, no explanation is given as to what he means by intentional. Thus, Wells is using incarnation in a more generalised way than the relocators use it, so we cannot simply say he is endorsing their use of this language.

Wells does not limit the resources he draws upon from within the life of Jesus to the incarnation. In his argument for 'being with' amidst suffering, Wells outlines three models for prayer – the resurrection, the incarnation and the transfiguration. The resurrection prayer is that which asks for a miracle. Whilst acknowledging the validity of this, Wells (2015: 293) argues that if this is the only prayer it may often lead to 'hopes dashed'. The prayer of incarnation recognises that 'human bodies and minds are fragile, frail, and sometimes feeble [...] [praying] give them patience to endure what lies ahead, hope to get through every trying day, and companions to show them your love' (Wells 2015: 294). However, Wells asserts that resurrection and incarnation are not the only types of prayer. Drawing on the account of the transfiguration he offers an alternative prayer that does not have the defiance of situations that the resurrection prayer has, nor the almost fatalism of the prayer of incarnation. The prayer of transfiguration accepts the circumstances of suffering but asks that through them the glory of God might be revealed. It goes beyond the incarnation by praying that those suffering will not only have been with God but

transformed by him. Thus, 'being with' draws upon aspects of Christ's life other than the incarnation to enable the relocator to engage in mission in a context of suffering.

Alongside highlighting aspects of the life, death and resurrection of Christ within his conceptualising of 'being with', Wells also emphasises the work of the Holy Spirit. In particular he recognises that the Holy Spirit is often at work through non-Christians who show the kingdom and that the gospel is not the church's possession but belongs to the Holy Spirit (Wells 2018: x, 20). This not only develops a broader theological canvas for relocation than the incarnation but also reflects development within his own work that seeks to understand mission beyond the church.

So far in this chapter I have sought to establish 'being with' as orientating language for the practice of relocation. I have argued that this corrects the deficiencies of incarnational living as it makes clear the roles of Christ and relocator, encourages the relocator to receive Christ from their neighbours and broadens the Christological foundation of the practice. 'Being with' operates in a similar way to the participation ministry proposed by J. Todd Billings that we noted in Chapter Two. It also develops a language that is neither exclusive to the church, as in Anna Ruddick's *Missional Pastoral Care*, or devoid of theological content.

4.4 Is 'Being With' Enough? Overlooking, Over-rejecting and Over-accepting

Having established 'being with' as orientating language I will now argue that Wells's conceptualisation of it does not go far enough to account for the practice of relocation. I will show how the analysis of neighbourhood poverty in Chapter Three reveals some of the weaknesses of his trope. In particular, I argue that 'being with' is passive about

dehumanising structures, does not give an adequate account of how material goods may be used and is inattentive to the impact of personal suffering. Primarily this is because his construction of 'being with' overlooks and over-rejects physical and social realities within a neighbourhood. In doing this, the political and societal implications of practising 'being with' are restricted. By over-accepting these overlooked and over-rejected elements, I will reincorporate them within the practice of relocation and propose that 'being with' is extended to 'being with(in)'. Wells (2015: 13) concedes that he is not offering a comprehensive analysis but painting 'broad brushstrokes that locate anomalies, highlight key questions, and point to fertile areas of development'. My intention here is to draw attention to areas in which the land has not yet been ploughed nor seeds planted.

To do this I will adopt aspects and language from the outline of the Christian ethics Wells offers in *Improvisation*. Here he explains that when actors improvise, they have to respond to the offers of their colleague actors. To block rejects the offer, to accept is to work with it. Good improvisers always accept and by inference, engaging in Christian ethics is to accept and work with that which the world offers us (Wells 2004: 106-7). Yet, what does this mean for gifts that do not appear good or may even be considered as human evil or flawed? How do we receive these gifts appropriately without blocking? Wells (2004: 133) claims that we should 'over-accept':

Overaccepting fits the remarks of the previous actor into a context enormously larger than his or her counterpart could have supposed. This is exactly what the Christian community does with offers that come to it from wider society. It overaccepts in the light of the church's tradition and story seen in eschatological perspective – a perspective much wider than urgent protagonists may have imagined. Conventional ethics, because it is so anxious to establish what is right for everyone, everywhere, at all times, plays down the distinctive claims of the Christian story. It assumes that Christians must accept the givens of the contemporary world and make decisions based on those givens. What I am suggesting, by contrast, is that Christians use their

imaginations to see how the gifts of creation and culture fit into the story of the way God deals with the world, given that the fundamental decision has already been made – God's decision for humanity and creation in Christ.

It is my intention to construct 'being with(in)' by over-accepting some of what I claim Wells' overlooks and, as it were, 'over-rejects' in his conceptualising of 'being with'. To do this I will address the dimension of attention within 'being with'. I will argue that through being attentive to the neighbourhood we might see clearly what Wells overlooks and over-rejects and begin to over-accept these flaws and reincorporate them within our responses to poverty.

4.4.1 Overlooking Deficits and Complexity

In *A Nazareth Manifesto*, Wells proposes ten principles of 'being with'. The fifth principle reads, '[a] community seeking regeneration has already within it most of what it needs for its own transformation' (Wells 2015: 29). This principle ensures the church does not assume its responsibility is to bring solutions to the neighbourhood. Rather, it should accept that neighbours and neighbourhoods 'elicit surprising surpluses to meet its more obvious deficits' (Wells 2015: 29). This is consistent with the findings of the *Margins within the City* research discussed in Chapter Three where it was recognised that Richmond Hill would change if it realised its 'under-utilised potential' (Unsworth 2011: 183). Wells correctly reminds the relocators of the agency of their neighbours and the assets possessed by the local neighbourhood. He draws upon John McKnight and Peter Block's notion of asset-based community development to support his argument. In *Abundant Community*, McKnight and Block seek to awaken the power of families and neighbourhoods. To do this they diagnose that consumer society has produced professional industries that feed off suffering and, as a result, 'infantilise, instrumentalist and impoverish the informal relationships that are fostered in communities and families' (Wells 2015: 252). In its place they suggest

that the abundant community should be developed whose tenets include 'what we have is enough' and 'we have the capacity to provide what we need in the face of the human condition' (McKnight and Block 2010: 66).

There is a clear synergy between McKnight and Block's concept of the abundant community and 'being with'. As an antidote to 'working for' people, the reminder about the agency of neighbours is crucial. Yet, by taking literally the assertion that a neighbourhood has nearly all it needs within it is problematic. I argue that to do this, one has to overlook the deficits of a neighbourhood. The assumption this is built on is that deficit models of interpreting a neighbourhood are contradictory to asset-based approaches. However, if the deficit is correctly understood as a barrier to nurturing assets, we can begin to see why focusing on one without the other overlooks the specificity of a particular neighbourhood. As I showed in Chapter Three, when neighbourhoods have been hollowed out and have lost their physical assets there are few places where people can build relationships and start to realise their potential. Furthermore, the abundant community and 'being with' rely heavily upon the existence of informal groups and associational life as ways of nurturing assets (Wells 2015: 256-57). However, as I also stated in Chapter Three, the number of local groups and participation in them by local people is decreasing. It would seem that Wells might have forgotten some of the lessons learnt within New Earlham where he acknowledged the suspicion towards organisations (Nation and Wells 2000: 125). By overlooking these deficits, we will not see clearly the challenges of the neighbourhood or the conditions in which a neighbourhood's primary assets, correctly identified by Wells, McKnight and Block as its residents, may flourish. Relocators need to be attentive to the specific barriers particular neighbourhoods face which restrict relationship building, if they are going to 'be with' local residents.

I argue that Wells, McKnight and Block's assertion that neighbourhoods have all they need also overlooks the complexity of places. In part, it assumes that neighbourhoods have definable borders. As we noted earlier, social scientists and urban geographers contest this notion. Thus, if boundaries are porous and ill-defined, to assert that a specific geography has almost all it needs becomes a meaningless statement. Furthermore, I have recognised the importance of connecting the neighbourhood to the wider city. The danger is that by treating a neighbourhood in isolation from its surroundings the flourishing of both city and neighbourhood is inhibited. To insist that a neighbourhood has all it needs without appreciating how wider economic and political processes have impacted it may result in increased isolation rather than reconnection. In short, neighbourhoods need a reciprocal relationship with their surroundings in order to support human flourishing. The neighbourhood, in Wells' terminology, needs to 'be with' the city and vice versa.

Having suggested areas where Wells overlooks the specificities of the neighbourhood, I now want to propose that he also overlooks the specificities of neighbours too. My argument is that he generalises the neighbour and, in doing so, fails to respond to nuances in relationships that are established. I believe he does this because he is once again concerned with challenging notions of 'working' that the relocater may hold. Wells (2015: 104) writes:

Working becomes a habit of mind [...] What becomes important is not so much that a person's well-being is enhanced, their suffering alleviated, their agency empowered, but that you yourself have played a crucial role [...] Working can be an elaborate exercise in avoiding the pathos of the world by limiting one's engagement in it to the places where one can make a positive, tangible, immediate, and financially rewarded impact.

Whilst accepting that the dangers of 'working for' or 'working with' may lead to viewing people more as problems to be solved than as humans to be in relationship with, and

that the habit of working may ultimately dehumanise the relocater, my concern is that Wells does not pay close enough attention to the particularities of each neighbour. More specifically 'being with' is built upon a basic assumption that the neighbour does not want relationships where people work for them.

In responding to the question as to why people are ungrateful when someone has helped them Wells (2015: 102) writes:

most likely because if almost every interaction in your life is one in which you are the client and source of distress, while the other person is the benefactor and source of salvation, you are not going to be looking for extra encounters that reinforce such humiliation.

Furthermore, Wells (2015: 186) argues that the structure of a 'being with' relationship is 'where, despite disjunction of power, privilege, influence, or social stability, both parties expect to discover glory through presence, attention, mystery, delight, participation, partnership, and enjoyment'. The use of both parties implies that this is what the local person is seeking. Whilst accepting that Wells may be being intentionally polemic upon this point, I argue that if a relocater was simply to accept this then they may risk dehumanising the neighbour in four ways. Firstly, by assuming that the neighbour does not want the relocater to help them. Secondly, by assuming that the local person has the desire and the capacity for a 'being with' relationship. Thirdly, by assuming that 'being with' relationships need to be established before 'working with' and that it is difficult or impossible for this to occur the other way around. Fourthly, by generalising the issues that poverty presents rather than recognising the specific issues people face that require responses. In summary, it raises the question, does the relocater want healing or relief for the specific suffering a neighbour may be facing? I argue that Wells maintains these assumptions by over-rejecting problem solving. Furthermore, this creates an unrealistic view of the neighbour that may

dehumanise both them and the relocator, rendering the agency of both within the relationship impotent.

4.4.2 Over-rejection: The Problem of Binaries

I have argued that Wells overlooks the deficits of a neighbourhood and the specificities of a neighbour's suffering. My proposal is Wells overlooks these because his argument is based upon clearly defined binaries that operate exclusively of one another. In doing this, he unnecessarily over-rejects theoretical concepts that are helpful in understanding both the lived experience of poverty and how the relocator might respond to it. The very construction of the four tropes rests upon two particular binaries, that of 'working' and 'being' and that of 'for' and 'with'. Whilst accepting that Wells recognises the permeable nature of some of the boundaries between different aspects, this construction still prompts a number of problems: namely, 'being' or 'working'; ecclesial or societal notions of justice; mortality or isolation as the human predicament. I will elucidate these further, explaining the specific issue that is over-rejected before outlining how my proposal of 'being with(in)' might over-accept these discarded fragments and reincorporate them into the practice of relocation.

4.4.2.1 *Being or Working*

In *A Nazareth Manifesto* Wells uses Paulo Freire and Saul Alinsky to illustrate 'working with'. Although he says there is much in their approaches that is helpful, his concern is that they still problematise the issues faced by those in poverty. Wells (2015: 114) writes:

In broad-based organising, the whole dynamic is to focus on a problem, isolate it, polarise in relation to it, and then bring together a short-term coalition of stakeholders to address it and resolve it. The process depends on the

energy released and momentum gained by problem solving. This can be inspiring and constructive and bonding and empowering. The question is, whether it is an end in itself. One might react with horror, and say, but when people are suffering, are oppressed, are discriminated against and marginalised and terrorised, what could be more important than helping them find the strength and the methods to find their own redemption? Of course: but as Freire points out, habits die hard, and the habits formed in addressing poverty and disadvantage may abide in other realms.

I believe that there are a number of problems with this conclusion. Firstly, he seems to be using Alinsky and Freire almost interchangeably as if they are advocating identical approaches. Although there are clearly areas of agreement in Alinsky and Freire in that they are concerned growing economic, social and political inequalities increase marginalisation, they approach this problem in different ways.⁵⁴ Secondly, and more crucially for my argument, it is unfair to say that their approaches were only about 'working with' and do not include elements of 'being with'. In terms of the broad-based community organising models derived from Alinsky, we could argue that the relationships formed between the different institutions within the organisation create an environment where people from a variety of backgrounds practice presence, attention and partnership in ways akin to Wells's description of 'being with'. Luke Bretherton argues that community organising develops a consociationalism, or 'mutual fellowship' between organisations and their members (Bretherton 2014: 6). Similarly, Freire's process of 'concientization' begins in building understanding of the world and developing solidarity between the educator and people experiencing

⁵⁴ Alinsky was an organiser of the poor. He would spend time in poor neighbourhoods, listening to the issues that they experienced before organising their institutions to collectively target and campaign against people who had the power to make changes. Fundamentally he was a pragmatist who developed a method of organising in which the end justified the means. The 'end' being to put more power in the hands of the poor. Like Alinsky, Freire understood that the answer to the problem rested within the people. Yet, rather than organising for change he educated for change. Through a process of 'concientization' that started with developing literacy around everyday objects, Freire would help the poor understand both the problem of oppression within society and their own psychological state that the oppression had produced. Through this learning they would be ready to transform reality and, rather than simply acquiring more power to change the 'here and now', they would begin to see a restructuring of society as a whole.

poverty in a way not dissimilar to participation. To claim that this is exclusively 'working with' seems imprecise, particularly when Wells cites the asset-based community development practice of McKnight and Block as an example of 'being with'. I would argue that there are at least as many aspects of 'working with' in their approach.

It may be that the challenge of Freire and Alinsky for Wells is their emphasis on power. 'Working', for Wells, seems almost synonymous with power. He articulates that one of the criticisms of 'being with' is that it is too soft. Wells (2015: 16) elucidates upon claims that 'being with' does 'not stand up to evil, expose power relations, or make the world a better place'. It seems to me that any perception of this as a problem is due to defining power in utilitarian terms. By addressing issues of power, one focuses on the end solution to the extent that you are willing to reach it regardless of the means used to get there. However, one might retort that whilst accepting this may be a danger it is not inevitable. A second challenge for Wells in terms of broad-based community organising seems to be around issues of self-interest. In seeking to build relationships of mutual self-interest Wells argues that the approach relies on avoiding difference in an attempt to work with (Wells 2018: 76). However, once again this does not need to be the case and, through recognising mutual ways in which self-interest is fostered, opportunities to explore difference may follow. Furthermore, the relocator is positioned to blur the boundary of 'being with' and 'working with' still further in that by living in the neighbourhood, they will also be affected by the power structures that impact the lives of people. 'Being with' means that attention must be given to the power structures, and asking why things are the way they are may be the first step towards generating positive responses together. My proposal is to maintain the language of 'being' but recognise that there is a continuum between purely 'being'

and purely 'working' that are valid for the relocator to take. I have resisted the temptation to name a particular place on the spectrum as the 'ideal' for the relocator to take as this would be as problematic as maintaining the distinction between 'being' and 'working'. Simply put, as I illustrated earlier in the specificities of neighbours, relationships are fluid and dynamic and will require moving along the 'being/ working' continuum for different people at different times. Yet, with Wells, I would want to argue that the relocator's orientation should be towards 'being' rather than 'working' and so I have chosen to retain being in my definition of 'being with(in)'.

4.4.2.2 Ecclesial or Societal Forms of Justice

In pitting ecclesial justice against societal notions of justice Wells forms a second problematic binary. He outlines two 'societal' forms of justice. On the one hand, some ethicists claim 'justice is about freedom' emphasising that the liberties of all humankind, in particular conscience, assembly, speech, holding property and earning a living, should by law be open to all. On the other hand, other ethicists argue 'justice is about rights'. Here justice is understood as defending human dignity against suppression and oppression. He characterises the former as justice for winners and the latter as justice for losers.

Wells suggests that these conventional explanations of justice are unsatisfactory. The church, he claims, offers an alternative by proclaiming that the only justice that matters is God's justice. Although this rightly places God and his mercy at the centre of what is meant by justice, the danger is that justice may turn towards piety and might be incomprehensible to wider society. He is aware of the many different perspectives on justice within the church. Wells (2015: 273) writes, either justice 'seems a

distraction from the real business of salvation; or it seems so much the centre of salvation that it obscures the traditional Christian language almost altogether'. Yet, he believes scripture offers a compelling vision of the potential space beyond justice the church is called to inhabit. Wells illustrates this by discussing Paul's letter to Philemon that concerns the fate of Onesimus, a slave who was accused of committing theft and had run away. If Onesimus were to remain a slave and be punished, the church would adopt the approach of justice as rights. If he were to be set free it would be because justice as freedom had been implemented. Paul petitions that the church should do neither. It should seek to find reconciliation between all parties. Through this, a third option is adopted, the way of relationship that is beyond conventional approaches to justice. Wells is not against talking of justice per se. Instead, he is offering an alternative that is founded upon the outcome of injustice being alienation for both perpetrator and victim. Therefore, to simply offer freedom or captivity as a consequence of injustice is not enough. The church should go beyond this and pursue reconciled relationships with one another. Yet, we may ask whether this ecclesial alternative is mutually exclusive of societal understandings of justice? If it is, the relocator practising 'being with' may not have the resources to be able to speak publicly about injustice. Furthermore, it may then be argued that Wells himself is passive about dehumanising structures, something he is critical of others for being (Wells 2013: 145).

Wells's understanding of justice seems to echo Thomas Aquinas's notion of commutative justice. This 'is concerned about the mutual dealings between two persons' and is part of Aquinas's account of particular justice (Aquinas: *S.T.* II-II, Q. 61, A. 1). Justice leads towards the theological virtue of *caritas* in which love of neighbour finds its ultimate source and *telos* within the person's love of God. For this

love to be realised, relationship between two persons must be re-established after an unjust act has been committed. Reconciled relationships are achieved through justice. Yet, how is this justice to be elicited? Here Aquinas's other aspect of particular justice is necessary. Aquinas argues that distributive justice 'which distributes common goods proportionately' is also a pre-requisite in order for reconciliation between people to be achieved (Aquinas: *S.T.* II-II, Q. 61, A. 1). This does not lead to a communist vision of society, rather a vision of the common good in which everyone is given what is rightfully theirs depending upon their status in society. Furthermore, it leads in the direction of general justice through which the common good is promoted within society. Aquinas (*S.T.* II-II, Q. 58, A. 5) writes:

It follows therefore that the good of any virtue, whether such virtue direct man in relation to himself, or in relation to certain other individual persons, is referable to the common good, to which justice directs: so that all acts of virtue can pertain to justice, in so far as it directs man to the common good. It is in this sense that justice is called a general virtue. And since it belongs to the law to direct to the common good, as stated above (I-II, Q. 90, A. 2), it follows that the justice which is in this way styled general, is called "legal justice," because thereby man is in harmony with the law which directs the acts of all the virtues to the common good.

In Aquinas's account, particular justice is related to general justice through a desire to uphold the common good. Yet, a problem develops when general justice, set by the law makers, may not uphold the good of all.

Esther Reed argues that by recognising a person's rights, 'a usefully detailed listing of the various aspects of human flourishing' for the common good is established. She continues, 'Aquinas' teaching about the common good implies an obligation to recognise collective as well as individual rights' (Reed 2001: 10). This may be related to an understanding of social citizenship discussed in the previous chapter where a social right for every individual is that they may be recognised by others as citizens.

Furthermore, Reed contends that this can be embodied not only by the church but also by other institutions that are seeking to build relationships based on solidarity, for instance trade unions (Reed 2001). We will consider what the basis is for rights within the next chapter, but Reed is arguing that the language of rights is not incompatible with a theological vision of justice as good relationship. Therefore, it may be that 'justice as rights', rejected as an unhelpful account of justice by Wells, may be reincorporated in 'being with(in)'. Firstly, by recognising that everyone has the right to be recognised as a citizen, it may be possible to challenge dehumanising structures that impede this. Secondly, it raises possibilities for how material goods may relate to the common good of society. Redistribution is necessary not only for the good of individuals, but because it creates a society where all can participate in relationship with one another. My argument is that by pitting societal against ecclesial conceptualisations of justice, Wells over-rejects crucial elements of the former. If relocators were to practise justice in this way, they may well be silent in the face of dehumanising structures. 'Being with(in)' should seek ways to reincorporate collective, social rights within its construction, so that relocators may be able to engage in justice-seeking where political and societal structures dehumanise their neighbours.⁵⁵

4.4.2.3 Mortality or Isolation

It is my argument that the binaries of 'being/ working' and 'ecclesial/ societal' forms of justice derive from a fundamental flaw in the way Wells understands the human predicament. By placing mortality and isolation in direct opposition to one another, he fails to see where aspects of the first may also be present in the second. In doing this,

⁵⁵ I have borrowed the term 'collective rights' from Esther Reed in 'Human Rights, the Churches and the Common Good' (Reed 2001) and will explore its meaning further in Chapter Five.

he overstates the distinction between material and social notions of poverty as he fails to differentiate between different kinds of limitations. On the one hand there are, as he states, limitations that are conquered in order to avoid death. On the other, there are societal limitations that not only reduce life, but also fragment community. For instance, the closure of a car boot sale where hundreds of people gathered every Sunday in order to use the site for a waste incinerator. Or the closure of pubs and public buildings as they are no longer economically viable. Or the sub-standard housing that has small rooms that do not enable families to entertain neighbours. Or the closure of NHS doctors' practices because the current practice has not reached the required standards and it is not economically viable for other surgeries to take it on. All four of these were limits we encountered in East End Park. All four might be understood as deficits. All four were limiting factors to 'being with'. Yet, if re-framed as barriers to building community that are marked by power imbalances and injustice against the social rights of individuals and neighbourhoods, attending to them will expand the practice of 'being with'.

It would be dehumanising to passively accept the loss felt by many low-income neighbourhoods. Similarly, waiting for a time when associational life will again be strong without attending to loss is not just. The relocater should seek to build the power of the neighbourhood and enable local voices to speak. To do this they must consider the relationship between material and social goods, something I will develop further in Chapter Six, and engage in justice-seeking alongside local people. The *telos* should always be deeper relationship, but this does not negate the need for neighbourhoods to overcome the physical and societal structures that limit this. By over-accepting aspects of the human predicament as mortality and re-incorporating

them into 'being with(in)', the conditions that create isolation within low-income neighbourhoods may be challenged.

4.4.2.4 Relocator and Neighbour

There is one final binary that I will address – the distinction between the relocator and their neighbour. In *A Nazareth Manifesto*, as I have already said, Wells establishes that the nature of 'being with' is found in the Trinity and expressed through Jesus. In *Incarnational Ministry* he claims that the church is called to the ministry of 'being with' and explains how its members are to be with one another. Finally, in *Incarnational Mission* he outlines how the church is then both collectively and individually sent to be with the world. In view of his overall programme of theological ethics we can assume that in all situations it is the church that is called to be the one who is 'being with'. The danger is in the way that the relocator may thus understand the church.

Nicholas Healy in *Church, World and the Christian Life* argues that blue-print ecclesiologies, which have an essential or theoretical core and an empirical secondary practice, have dominated theology within the last hundred years. The problem with this is that an idealised understanding of the church is envisioned. This is often denoted by a particular concept (e.g. the people of God) that the church should seek to faithfully express in its practice and relationships. Healy (2000: 37) argues, blueprint ecclesiologies undervalue 'the theological significance of the genuine struggles of the church's membership to live as disciples within the less-than-perfect church and within societies that are often unwilling to overlook the church's flaws'. Healy proposes that the identity of the church is 'ever-reconstructed' by the members of the church as they embody 'practices, beliefs and valuations' (Healy 2000: 5). He calls this a practical-prophetic ecclesiology, arguing that the church is orientated towards Christ and not itself in witness of its Lord (Healy 2000: 6, 18). Thus,

the church does not own truth, but points towards it. This is a reversal of the post-liberal position that if you want to see the gospel you should simply look at the practices conducted by and the relationships contained within the church (Healy 2000: 106-18). Crucially, Healy's proposal opens the church to being receptive to the truth which the world offers in order that we may 'help one another to receive the truth' (Healy 2000: 107).

My argument that 'being with(in)' understood through the lens of practical-prophetic ecclesiology may be expanded in two ways. Firstly, it is 'being with' God *in* the neighbourhood. As we discovered earlier in relation to incarnation, this recognises an important distinction between what the relocater is doing and the work of God. Secondly, it is by 'being with(in)' that the relocater and the neighbour receive God together. Here the boundaries between world and church are blurred to the point where Christ may be received through the relational engagement within the neighbourhood that the relocater undertakes. Similarly, the neighbour may practise, knowingly or unknowingly, the giving and receiving of Christ. What might start off as a clear relationship where the relocater seeks to be with the neighbour may, in time, become a complex, dynamic interplay of 'working for', 'being for', 'working with' and 'being with' as initiative is taken on both sides to build relationship with one another that responds to each other and the context together. Thus, the move from 'being with' to 'being with(in)' is established.⁵⁶

A potential alternative to 'being with(in)' is to claim that relocation is about 'being of'. Leonardo Boff and Pope Francis have both claimed that the church should be of the

⁵⁶ The etymology of the prefix *em* has its derivations in a borrowing from the Latin prefix 'in'. Thus embodied, embrace and empathy could all be understood in the practice of relocation as in body (presence), in-braces neighbours by in-suffering (pathos) alongside them.

poor.⁵⁷ However, for the practice of relocation I think it would be dangerous to construe relationships in this way. Firstly, for 'being of' to be applicable, the relocator must choose to become poor. Even if the relocator chooses to do this, I would maintain that the poverty chosen by the relocator is of a different order to that experienced by the neighbour. Therefore, we might question in what ways we are 'being of'. Secondly, it denies the differentials of power that are present in relationships. In particular it fails to recognise the brackets in 'being with(in)'. By this I mean that the relocator almost always has significant connections outside of the local neighbourhood and that this, rather than being something that should be denied, may become a gift to the neighbourhood in that they may enable stronger connections with the surrounding city.

4.5 Conclusion – Being With(in) and Relocators

In this chapter I have shown that 'being with' is appropriate orientating language for the practice of relocation. I have argued that Wells's reliance on binaries has meant that some aspects of the lived experience of poverty within the neighbourhood are at best overlooked, and at worst discarded. My proposal is that 'being with' should be extended to 'being with(in)' by reincorporating the discarded pieces that Wells overlooks or over-rejects. These include justice as collective social rights and the physical, societal and material limitations within the neighbourhood. My argument is that this over-accepting flows from 'being with'. In particular, the dimension of attention means the relocator cannot ignore what the neighbourhood lacks in the way of facilities or associations, is aware of the complexity of neighbourhood life and

⁵⁷ Here I am alluding to both Pope Francis's call to be a church that is poor (Davies 2013) and Leonardo Boff's claim in *Church: Charism and Power* that 'we are no longer speaking of a church for the poor but rather a church of and with the poor' (Boff 1985: 10).

realises that neighbours are all different in their expectations of and needs from relationships.

The relocater may respond to what a neighbourhood lacks by giving focused attention to the particular nature of its deficit and reincorporating it within a broader narrative. I propose that the way that local people endure the deficits of a neighbourhood is loss. People within a neighbourhood may mourn the closing of local industry, the shutting down of meeting places, and the sense by which the neighbourhood no longer contributes to wider society. This is experienced as a loss of neighbourhood assets. In the film *Over to the East* which consists of the reflections of local people in East End Park, an older lady comments that you used to be able to buy anything in the area. She then lists the different shops that there were around her street and finishes by saying forlornly that they are 'closed now'. Others in the film raise concerns that 'asylum seekers' and refugees were moving in to live there. Traditionally the residents of East End Park were 'white, working-class'. New-comers to the area challenged this identity, and some residents felt threatened as their collective identity was being lost.

Tom Wright's *The Cross and the Colliery* is a collection of his Easter week sermons preached in a Durham mining village, Easington Colliery. He addresses the loss experienced through a tragic pit accident in 1951 and the fracturing of social and community cohesion that has occurred following the closure of the mine. He reflects on this suffering in the light of the holy week story. Wright (2007: 25-26) comments:

Part of my prayer for this church, for this community, for all of you this week as together we worship and wonder, ponder and pray [...] is that our bringing of these pains before our loving Lord, and our folding of them into the story of his passion, may be part of the means by which new life may come.

By being attentive to the lack within a neighbourhood, the relocater may over-accept these fragments and reincorporate them as loss. Unlike 'being with' that overlooks the deficits of an area, 'being with(in)' helps the relocater experience the loss of a neighbourhood in order to help neighbours accept and embrace this loss as part of the neighbourhood's narrative.

Attentiveness should also be practised with regard to the relationships relocators build with neighbours. The relocater should be attentive to their neighbour by over-accepting the nature of relationship that the neighbour desires and over-accepting the gifts they offer. In the first instance, the relocater should not assume that the neighbour wants a 'being with' relationship. For example, the neighbour may have personality disorders that limit capacity through past experiences. Relationships may thus be perceived as an opportunity for personal gain. Similarly, the relocater when engaging with activists in the neighbourhood may need to 'work with' initially in order to build trust before 'being with' is possible. Alternatively, the neighbour may be seeking asylum and be unable to speak to authorities about their situation. They may need the relocater to 'work for' them in this situation. Secondly, I would argue that over-accepting the neighbour's gift means not underestimating their power or desire to transform us and establish 'being with' relationships on their terms. They are not passive within relationship building neither are they necessarily followers. Over-accepting 'being with' means that the power and agency of the local person can humanise the relocater even when they have 'working for' assumptions.

'Being with(in)' takes seriously Wells's concern that the relocater does not assume their responsibility is to find solutions to the problems of a neighbourhood. Yet neither should they be passive. Rather than a polarised binary in which one chooses 'working'

or 'being', the relocator recognises there is a spectrum that includes both. Like Wells, I believe that 'being' is the orientation for a faithful response to poverty. However, I accept the generative nature of this being leads people to produce together authentic responses to the limitations that are placed upon them. I do not see this as contradiction of Wells's trope, rather an extension of it.

By reincorporating justice as collective, social rights within the framework of 'being with(in)', the relocator is enabled to work with others within the neighbourhood to name what is unjust and seek justice for the neighbourhood as a whole. Attentiveness within relocation not only recognises the various deficits that a neighbourhood has but realises that, in some way, the relocator as a resident is personally subjected to this lack. Therefore, 'being with(in)' means attending to these deficits together and the binary between 'working' and 'being with' is collapsed. 'Being with(in)' achieves this because it does not accept that limits are only in the domain of mortality, but that they are real and present in isolation. 'Being with(in)' seeks relationships in which limitations that restrict human flourishing can be addressed together. Thus, as I show in the next chapter, it is not passive about dehumanising structures. Rather, the relocator is able to engage publicly around issues of injustice that affect the neighbourhood precisely because they are with-in the neighbourhood and so these limitations affect them personally.

5. From the Disorientation of Dehumanising Structures to the Reorientation of ‘Cries’

My claim in Chapter Four was to show that Wells’s trope of ‘being with’ could be adopted as orientating language for the practice of relocation. However, I also argued that the embedded position of the relocator within the neighbourhood extends this framework to what I am calling ‘being with(in)’. Primarily this was made possible by over-accepting what might be considered limitations for building relationships within low-income neighbourhoods. Rather than overlooking and over-rejecting them as I claim Wells does, through attentiveness to the specificities of what the neighbourhood lacks, limitations may be transformed from a barrier to community into a fruitful opportunity for relationship building. Yet, we might ask, what happens when the deficit within the neighbourhood is the product of economic processes, public policy or societal structures? Should relocators engage in seeking justice within this situation? If so, ‘being with(in)’ may move closer to the ‘working with’ pole on the continuum between ‘working’ and ‘being’. More importantly, how might it not default into practices that are more ‘for’ than ‘with’? Finally, can ‘being with(in)’ incorporate a notion of humanising justice that unites justice as good relationships with justice as rights?

As we saw in Chapter Three, the lived experience of poverty involves a sense of disconnection from wider society. In particular, I showed that residents of low-income neighbourhoods feel and, to some extent, are treated like second-class citizens. Therefore, in this chapter I will show how ‘being with(in)’ can include relocators and neighbours in engaging in political and societal debate. More specifically, I will argue that there is an imperative for people who experience poverty to address the barriers

that limit their engagement within society. An aspect of the relocators's practice should be to enable them to address perceived barriers in the public square. To explore how this might be achieved, I will draw upon the public theology of Elaine Graham and Duncan Forrester.

Public theology has a rich tradition in the United Kingdom of addressing social issues, Although it operates in some ways very differently from the post-liberal approach of Wells, I will show how Forrester's theological fragments and Graham's model of theology as dialogical speech enable the voice of relocators and neighbours to become intelligible within the public square. In doing this I respond to the criticism I make that 'being with' is passive about dehumanising structures which isolate people, by arguing that poverty should be framed through the lenses of injustice. In doing this, the notion of 'being with(in)' will be expanded and developed to include a further dimension that I call, 'cries' which is established through the practices of 'deep listening' and 'hearing to speech'. In conclusion, I will show how the 'cries' dimension of 'being with(in)' not only extends the practice of relocation but marks potential challenges for public theology. I will argue that relocators may form part of a new generation of public theologians whose imagination is less fixated upon policy change than their predecessors, who enable new forms of associational life to develop within a neighbourhood and consequently narrow the gap between local voices and public pronouncement.

5.1 Why Public Theology?

Before progressing with my argument, I want to establish why I have chosen public theology as a resource in expanding my concept of 'being with(in)'. Essentially there are two main reasons. Firstly, public theology claims to enable the church to speak

theologically in public. If this is the case, then it may equip relocators and neighbours to be able to engage in political and societal debate. Secondly, public theology has a long history of speaking about poverty and destitution. I will now expand upon these reasons by developing a definition for public theology specifically for this thesis and outlining a brief history of its development in the United Kingdom.

Public theology is a broad family covering a wide range of interpretations, methodologies and theological positions. Yet, at the same time it was only as recently as 1974 that the term was used for the first time when Martin Marty described the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr as 'public theology' (Marty 1974). Dirkie Smit (2007: 443) claims 'the complexity of the idea of public theology corresponds to the many meanings and uses of the notion of public; there exists no single and authoritative meaning of public theology and no single normative way of doing public theology'. Most public theologians seek to reject the dualism that confines faith to the private realm. They argue that Christian theology stakes a public claim about truth. Hak Joon Lee argues that although there is a variety of 'public theologies,' public theologians share core convictions. Primarily they see it as an apologetic task in their desire to 'offer a reasonable account' of what they believe 'to those outside [their] faith community' (Lee 2015: 47-48). David Tracy in his seminal work, *The Analogical Imagination*, claims that all theology is intrinsically public addressing 'three distinct and related social realities: the wider society, the academy, and the church' (Tracy 1981: 5). Whilst in principle this may be so, there is a tendency for most theologians to lean in one direction or another. We might argue that post-liberal theology, as in Wells, takes the church as its primary public for theology. The public theologians we are focusing upon in this chapter, Elaine Graham and Duncan Forrester, primarily, though not exclusively, address wider society. In focusing upon them I hope to show

how 'being with(in)' may be able to speak beyond the church and into political and societal discourse.

William Storrar understands public theology to be 'a collaborative exercise in theological reflection on public issues which is prompted by disruptive social experiences that call for our thoughtful and faithful response' (Storrar 2007: 6). These disruptive experiences might be personal experiences, 'happenings' within pastoral ministry, political change, and world events.⁵⁸ The public is therefore understood as a dynamic and fluid place and the theologian must 'respond to a very different framework for addressing public issues' (Storrar 2007: 20). I claim that we should treat the encounter with people who face poverty as a disruptive event that challenges our theological position and provokes us to speak theologically within the public sphere. Summarising from this brief sketch of public theology, I am taking public theology to mean theology that offers a faithful and intelligible account of public issues that are prompted by the disruption of poverty. I am intentionally focusing upon how this is embodied within wider society drawing upon the tradition of public theology in the United Kingdom.

The tradition of public theology in the United Kingdom might be considered to begin in the late nineteenth century with clergy and theologians from liberal Anglican, Christian socialist and Anglo-Catholic traditions that sought to understand the role of the church within the modern nation state. These authors influenced many, including William Temple who became Archbishop of both York and Canterbury, and is one of the most important United Kingdom public theologians of the twentieth century. He

⁵⁸ William Storrar argues that the political environment he faced when he became director of the Centre for Theology and Public Issues in 2001 was very different from what it was when the centre was established 17 years earlier. Thatcherism had been replaced by 'New Labour' who were committed to partnership with research institutions, in order to reduce poverty.

developed a theory of national community in which the state was the organ of community and Anglicanism its national church (Temple 1915). Practical experiences also shaped his thinking.⁵⁹ During the great depression of the 1920s when unemployment was high, he helped write the *Men Without Work* report (Temple 2014). Matthew Grimley (2004: 178) comments that the report ‘was particularly concerned that the peculiarities of the benefit system meant that some men with families were better off on the dole than in work. The challenge then, was to [...] revive their sense of citizenship’. It would seem that for Temple this sense of citizenship was key in contributing to wider society. Community was not something that you joined; rather it was a fundamental state of being.

Temple’s most influential book, *Christianity and the Social Order* directly influenced R.H. Tawney and William Beveridge as they constructed the welfare state. Throughout the book, Temple outlines three principles – freedom, fellowship and service – that are derived from the Christian faith and may be found within society in general (Temple 1976: 77). He then outlines a vision of society where all its citizens are enabled to flourish through practising these principles. This approach to speaking publicly, standing between theological concepts and common vernacular, dominated Anglican social theology for much of the twentieth century. It remains an important model for how the church may speak intelligibly in public debate. Furthermore, *Christianity and Social Order* reveals how Temple understands poverty primarily as an issue of justice. In this understanding, all are equal in relationship with God. Therefore where there is inequality, justice should be sought by seeking to re-establish the natural order of equality with God (Temple 1976: 37-38).

⁵⁹ One was whilst a student in Oxford, his tutor encouraged him along with R.H. Tawney and William Beveridge to ‘discover why poverty coexisted with so much wealth in England’ and what could be done about it (Dennis and Halsey 1988: 153). Thus, they spent time in the slums of East London living in the university settlements.

In *Anglican Social Theology*, Alan Suggate maps out a family tree for UK public theology from William Temple to the current day (Suggate 2014). He argues that contemporary writers such as Laurie Green, John Atherton and Elaine Graham continue the tradition infusing it with elements of practical theology. In this chapter, I will focus upon the work of Elaine Graham as a receiver and modifier of this tradition. I will also look beyond Anglican public theology by addressing the work of the Church of Scotland minister and theologian Duncan Forrester. I believe both Forrester and Graham are exemplars of the tradition of public theology. They particularly emphasise the primacy of the local context as a catalyst for public speech,⁶⁰ have engaged in public reflection upon urban issues and welfare,⁶¹ and crucially within the context of this thesis, are amongst the public theologians most sympathetic to constructive dialogue with post-liberal theology. For instance, not only did Forrester teach Wells in Edinburgh but he also draws upon post-liberal theologians like Stanley Hauerwas in his understanding of theology more as a story than a statement (Forrester 2005: 6). Graham, in ways not dissimilar from Wells, considers the notion that theology is embodied within particular contexts (Graham 2009). Where they differ is, as stated earlier, that the primary context for Wells is the church and for Graham it is the political, economic and social spheres.

⁶⁰ Graham is a Canon at Chester Cathedral and pays close attention to the parish system within her writings. Duncan Forrester was a Church of Scotland presbyter in South India.

⁶¹ Graham was a member of the Commission for Urban Life and Faith. Forrester established the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at the University of Edinburgh in 1984 that should equip 'interested advocates and policy makers to make changes in the public sphere consistent with their theological convictions.' <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/divinity/research/centres/theology-public-issues/about> [accessed 30 August, 2015].

Although both Forrester and Graham have written widely on a variety of subjects and within diverse theological disciplines⁶², I will focus upon Graham's most recent books *Beyond a Rock and a Hard Place* (2013) and *Apologetics without Apology* (2017), and on Forrester's work that directly addresses poverty and welfare, alongside his most developed theological approach in *Theological Fragments* (2005). In doing this, I will establish how theological speech is made possible within their theological accounts and discuss the ways in which they speak about poverty, before considering how this enhances our understanding of 'being with(in)'.

5.2 How Might Theology Speak Publicly?

As we have seen, Wells claims the church speaks publicly primarily through practices that embody its faithful narrative. Through this, the church bears witness to the faith she confesses. I argued that Wells is in danger of creating too great a distinction between church and world. This is further complicated as Wells claims that poverty is a mystery to behold rather than a problem to be solved. If poverty is only understood as a mystery, the church may have little interest in seeking to influence public policy. Furthermore, if the church does not see poverty as a problem to be solved its message about poverty may be rendered incomprehensible by society. In the last chapter I began to argue how these categorical distinctions may be overcome in order to make theological dialogue about justice possible in public discourse. Using Forrester and Graham, I will now show how this may be expressed. I claim in a post-secular context that faithfulness to speaking about the particular rather than claiming abstract truths may, alongside the recognition that truth belongs to God and not to the church, blur the boundary between society and church so that the relocator and

⁶² Graham and Forrester have written in the field of practical theology with the former also addressing methodological considerations alongside feminist critique whilst the latter has brought liberation theology, moral theology and Christian ethics into dialogue with one another.

their neighbours may be able to engage theologically in public debate about poverty.

5.2.1 Theological Fragments: Duncan Forrester

In *Christian Justice and Public Policy* Forrester recognises the challenges to theology that a society struggling to speak coherently about ethical issues poses (Forrester 1997: 10). He outlines how theology has always been present in public and suggests that 'theology might have, even in a pluralist, secular society, a modest but constructive and questioning contribution to make both to the theoretical discussions which undergird policy and to policy-making itself' (Forrester 1997: 36). However, the terms upon which the church should speak are not to be solely in its own interest. Rather, the church should speak on behalf of others, in particular for those who struggle against poverty. In order to do this, the church should be engaged in the public environment in which it seeks to be heard (Forrester 1997: 61).

Forrester calls his methodology for achieving public dialogue 'theological fragments'. The influence of Soren Kierkegaard's philosophical fragments is clear as Forrester seeks to develop a theological equivalent (Forrester 1997: 201-04). Both Kierkegaard and Forrester argue that universal systems seem flawed within a fragmented society (Forrester 2005: 4-5). They sympathise with post-modern critiques that are suspicious of systematic conclusions (Forrester 2005: 7-8). For Forrester, theology is a story, not a statement, that arises out of love. Thus, fragments of this story may address specific issues at particular times (Forrester 2005: 7). Treating theology in this way means that the fragmentation of society offers potential opportunities for the gospel to speak on critical issues. He concludes that fragments may act 'as irritants, as illuminations, as road metal, as lenses, as fossils, reminders of the past, and ultimately, perhaps as building blocks once again' (Forrester 2005: 19).

Critics of the approach of theological fragments ask whether the whole gospel will ever be heard. Forrester (2005: 8) himself cites Michael Northcott's argument that theological fragments carry with it 'the clear implication that theologians have no business to tell the story of the Gospel in the public square'. Forrester's response is to assert that the gospel does not have to be confrontational of culture and so it is not necessary to give the whole gospel all the time (Forrester 2005: 8-9). He suggests that through the hard work of excavating from the quarries of the Bible and Christian tradition we may discover these fragments that are new gems of faith to be offered within the public square (Forrester 2005: 20).

Theological fragments offer an extension to 'being with(in)' in two ways. Firstly, this approach gets beyond the binary between mystery and solution finding which I argued was implicit within Wells's framing of poverty. On the one hand, by recognising the fragmentary nature of theological speech there is no need to claim that all aspects of poverty are problems to be solved. On the other, it does not claim that because aspects of poverty are mystery, then nothing can be solved. Thus, it creates an opportunity to identify where theology might speak against dehumanising structures by offering practical possibilities aimed at alleviating suffering. At the same time, it still maintains the recognition that poverty is not simply an issue to be solved. Wisdom is needed to discern between the two.

Secondly, I argue that theological fragments may enable closer attentiveness to the specifics of poverty within a particular place. Theological speech is always partial. By focusing on the given realities of a place, the relocater may be able to speak both specifically and provisionally about the particular circumstances they encounter. As

with Wells, it is important that the relocater does not overlook circumstances or over-reject conceptual realities in order to maintain this theological approach. By accepting the fragmentary nature of theological speech in public, a more accurate reading of the nature of poverty within a given area may be offered. As Forrester (2003: 117) confesses, theologians should not be ashamed of offering ‘no more than “fragments” of insight’. Their responsibility is to draw attention to ‘specific issues, situations in which people are hurting and being oppressed’ (Forrester 2003: 116). Yet, it would seem to me that public theology is not only about making public pronouncements, it needs to engage in the discourse of public life. Therefore, these fragments need to be offered in a conversational way that encompasses listening as well as speaking. As we shall see, Graham constructs an understanding of public theology where this is possible.

5.2.2 Dialogical Speech: Elaine Graham

As with other public theologians, Graham argues that post-secular theory provides the basis for understanding the world into which theology should speak.⁶³ Jurgen Habermas was one of the first sociologists to coin this term. He argued that the secular thesis which had insisted religion was in decline and was losing its influence on public life had been found wanting. Habermas (2008: 18) claims:

Above all, three overlapping phenomena converge to create the impression of a worldwide “resurgence of religion”: the missionary expansion; a fundamentalist radicalization; and the political instrumentization of the potential for violence innate in many of the world religions.

This three-fold contradiction of what he describes as a euro-centric argument for secularism recognises that religion cannot be reduced to the private sphere. Religion

⁶³ For instance see *Christianity and the New Social Order* (Atherton, Baker, and Reader 2011).

is a public faith and must be taken seriously as such. John Atherton, Chris Baker and John Reader build on this by claiming that for faith to engage in society, it must be intelligible to society (Atherton, Baker, and Reader 2011: 10-11). They write:

The very language that we employ when we talk about religion and the public square itself needs to be examined critically and questioningly in order to clarify whether or not it is a constraining or an enabling structure. If it is the former, as seems more likely, then we need to challenge and move beyond it in order to develop a view that acknowledges the entanglements that better represent the reality of the world and to see how changes in belief and practice do and can happen in the world, where humans are not quite as in control as we like to imagine. (Atherton, Baker, and Reader 2011: 20-21)

Rather than believing that religion's influence on society is waning, Atherton, Baker and Reader recognise that if religion is to speak publicly, some of the new challenges the world is facing need to be negotiated. That said, as the church is no longer at the centre of society but on the margins, theology should be spoken in public with humility (Murray 2004: 243).

Graham does not see post-secularism as a reversal of secularisation (Graham 2013: 31). In *Beyond a Rock and a Hard Place* she states that her intention is to work with the post-secular hypothesis 'as an awkward and contradictory space, where particularly in relation to religion and public life, significant aspects of the new context are not easily or comfortably reconcilable' (Graham 2013: 53). She envisages a dynamic picture of society that has not achieved a fixed state and cannot be predictably negotiated. Society is oscillating, changing how we understand old divisions including those between public and private. Theological practices that seek to negotiate this space should embrace different dimensions of its dynamism. Post-secularity understood in this way is not a particular period of history, rather it is a concept through which we might interpret society. As Graham argues, it is a 'heuristic concept', one through which we think, rather than a 'categorical one' (Graham 2017:

54). She acknowledges that Forrester's method of offering theological fragments may be a way of negotiating this, although she prefers a more dialogical method (Graham 2013: 101). Graham (2013: 97) writes:

Public Theology is not simply concerned about the public, but concerns itself with a particular kind of theological method in relation to the public [...] Public theology is public because, methodologically it observes procedural criteria associated with dialogue within a public sphere.

Therefore she defends liberalism against its post-liberal accusers as she believes it is 'better suited to addressing a plural, post-secular context through its enduring principles of bilingualism, mediation and apologetics' (Graham 2013: 139). For Graham, public theology stands within a strong tradition of faith that places it at the edge of the world in, what John Reader calls, 'blurred encounters' (Reader 2005).

Graham's description of the context as an awkward and contradictory space raises important challenges to ecclesial understandings that seem to propose more defined boundaries between church and the world. Reflecting upon this, she outlines a distinction between theologies of discipleship and theologies of citizenship, aligning post-liberal with the former and public theology with the latter. She suggests these two ideal types 'have consistently informed Christian theological debate' and are not mutually exclusive of each other but must be held in tension (Graham and Lowe 2009:

3). Graham states:

At the heart of the matter is the question of the extent to which public theology should 'translate' its language of origin into speech acceptable and intelligible to a non-Christian audience in order to make any significant impact. This in turn rests on a particular theological understanding of the nature of revelation and common grace, and of the possibility of a shared space in which rational communication about the ends, aims and substance of public life can be conducted. (Graham 2013: 107)

Graham's public theology is dependent upon recognising that the divine is revealed

within the world's structures and society. As God is already active in the world, it is possible to speak theologically in a language that is understandable by all. Here we detect traces of mid-twentieth century public theology arguments about intelligibility as finding a mid-point between cultural and theological language.⁶⁴ Yet, Graham does not propose that the relationship with society is uncritical. She proposes a new kind of Christian realism⁶⁵ 'that trusts in the necessity of human institutions (civil, secular and ecclesial) and political processes, yet exercises necessary caution over their limitations, in order to maintain that balance between authenticity and participation' (Graham 2008: 156). The awkward and contradictory space thus includes relationships between organisations that are not fixed but express a sense of critical solidarity in seeking the common good. As she concludes, 'a renewed Christian Realism in relation to the limitations and the virtues [...] may be one of the most significant contributions of such a "public theology"' (Graham 2008: 156).

Graham develops further her understanding of dialogical speech in *Apologetics without Apology*. She describes the Christian apologist as operating at the borderlands between church and world as a mediator, ambassador and advocate, and demonstrates how this has been the case within the New Testament, early church fathers and scholastics (Graham 2017: 95). Her conclusion is that Christian practice and belief is always in dialogue with culture. Graham (2017: 119) writes:

Christian identity, practice, and belief has always developed in constructive engagement with the cultures in which it has been embedded [...] In response to the post-liberal critique, therefore, contemporary theologians are turning to the conventions of public theology to make a robust case for apologetic,

⁶⁴ In fact, in *What Makes a Good City* Graham and Lowe reflect that the development of the Good City within *Faithful Cities* adopted the middle axiom approach (Graham and Lowe 2009: 36).

⁶⁵ Christian Realism significantly influenced a wide variety of public theologians. Its originator, Reinhold Niebuhr, was responding to the social gospel's optimism that the kingdom of God could be realised in society. His theological anthropology focused upon the sinfulness of people and as such 'all social co-operation on a larger scale than the most intimate socio group requires a measure of coercion' (Niebuhr 2013: 3).

dialogical reasoning at the heart of theological discourse.

My argument is that the relocator is an apologist. By recognising themselves as mediators between languages, they are enabled to understand how the gospel might be understood in the neighbourhood and how it sheds new light on the gospel. Rather than focusing upon the distinctiveness of faith and theology to the degree that they become exclusive of the world, they seek to become bilingual. This provides an opportunity for the relocator to navigate the rapidly changing world and enables 'being with(in)' to be extended to include speaking faithfully in public.

From our discussions so far, a method has been developed as to how the relocator might speak in the public realm. Graham and Forrester's insights recognise the dynamic, shifting nature of the context as both fragmentary and post-secular. This echoes something of the nature of low-income neighbourhoods as we examined in Chapter Three. By engaging in society, the relocator's speech is dialogical as they offer theological fragments and listen carefully to other traditions and standpoints that may shed new light upon theological understanding. The self-reflexive nature of this approach emphasises a posture of humility that is necessary within a post-Christendom context. An understanding of dialogical speech enables the binary between world and church to become blurred. By intentionally placing themselves outside of the domain of what is usually recognised as church and living as neighbours in the world, the relocator is uniquely positioned to engage in such dialogue. As such, it is vital that they recognise that this dialogue is integral to what they are doing. Learning self-reflexivity through dialogue enlarges the understanding of what 'being with(in)' is all about. Having established how theology is able to speak publicly, I will now consider what might be said about poverty. In order to do this, I will consider how Forrester frames his understanding of poverty.

5.3 Poverty as Injustice

In Forrester's understanding of poverty, definitions, responses and 'our fundamental values and beliefs are inextricably intertwined' (Forrester 1997: 86). The prologue of *On Human Worth* includes a reflection upon an encounter Forrester had with a beggar in India. This powerful experience caused him to consider and re-consider three elements of life: what it meant to be 'neighbours'; how people of difference are kept apart within society; and what kind of society we want (Forrester 2001: 1-8). After a brief outline of some of the theoretical assumptions behind the work, Forrester turns in the middle of the first chapter to 'Erica', who tells how her life was blighted by poverty in Scotland. Forrester is clear in both his writing and through the work of the Centre for Theology and Public Issues that reflections upon poverty should begin with those who experience it.⁶⁶ By approaching poverty in this way it acts as a disruption to wider society and, according to the definition stated earlier in section 5.1, creates an event through which theology might be public.

Forrester operates within a framework of relative poverty. He argues that we cannot compare how poverty is experienced either in different places in the world or in the same place across time. An inner-city area in 1930s Britain may not have as many material resources as the same area has in the late twentieth century. However, there is a poverty experienced through a loss of solidarity between residents within the neighbourhood (Forrester 1997: 95). In *Christian Justice and Public Policy* he argues that there are three common approaches to addressing poverty (Forrester 1997: 99-103). Firstly, the nineteenth-century belief that there were undeserving and deserving

⁶⁶ For more information on Centre for Theology and Public Issues see <https://www.ed.ac.uk/divinity/research/centres/theology-public-issues> [accessed 24th February 2016].

poor meant that the former was responsible for their plight and should be encouraged to find their own way out of poverty. Interestingly, when Forrester was writing in 1997 he argued that this was not a commonly held belief. Yet, as we saw in Chapter Three, the practice of conditionality and associated sanctions within current benefit policy has given rise to a recapitulation of these categories. The second response is to treat poverty as a problem in isolation from wider society. Therefore, interventions are to focus upon the situations of poverty themselves. A drawback of this approach is that the people in poverty see themselves as the problem and are consequently stigmatised. The final response is to see those experiencing poverty as the victims of unjust processes. It follows that a just society needs restructuring in such a way that all benefit. Forrester responds to the dangers of all three approaches by offering theological fragments about poverty to reframe the discussion. As we will see, these fragments echo some of Wells's concerns that the world operates from deficit models of poverty and prompt similar theological responses. Thus, I argue that Forrester's theological fragments concerning poverty not only reinforce 'being with' as a theological response to poverty but help extend this to 'being with(in)'.

Forrester argues the poor are blessed by God. Thus, any response should recognise that people who experience poverty are not a problem to be solved, but a place of salvation, specifically to those who are rich.⁶⁷ In many respects this shares similarities to the delight, enjoyment and mystery dimensions of Wells's 'being with'. However, crucially Forrester takes this in a different direction as he argues that theologically we cannot discuss the issue of poverty without addressing wealth. People will not be freed from the burden of poverty unless 'the rich are at the same time emancipated

⁶⁷ Forrester is influenced by liberation theology. In particular, his assertion that God is on the side of the poor (Forrester 2001: 156-62).

from the diseases – physical, moral and spiritual – of their wealth’ (Forrester 1997: 105).⁶⁸ There is a danger in this proposal that it may turn towards piety and make the rich the centre of the discussion. Forrester avoids this by offering a way of viewing poverty within the context of a wider society that he believes requires change. Poverty exposes the weaknesses in society’s structure and, crucially, reveals wide imbalances of power. This is particularly important as Forrester fundamentally understands poverty as an issue of injustice (Forrester 1997: 104). He challenges ecclesial approaches to poverty that suggest the church is the place where justice is found. In his view, the church can be a part of the problem in that it may marginalise people struggling against poverty (Forrester 1997: 106).

Forrester also confronts political and societal approaches that view poverty as an isolated problem that requires compassionate programmes rather than systemic change (Forrester 1997: 102-03). He argues that God’s will is for justice for the poor and that the presence of the poor challenges the church and uncovers the power dynamics operating within society. When viewed together, these theological fragments enable relocators to draw alongside people experiencing poverty with the mutuality and reciprocity of ‘being with’, and at the same time not to simply ignore the wider societal issues that poverty presents. Thus, the relocator may be able to engage in public debate about poverty in language that is theological and yet may still be understood by general society. Forrester’s claims about poverty rely upon a theological account of justice. We should now explore how he understands this, before developing an account of justice that is compatible with ‘being with(in)’.

⁶⁸ Patriarchs such as Clement of Alexandria and Basil of Caesarea argued that the problem of poverty was as much about wealth as poverty *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society* (Holman 2008), *Faith and Wealth* (González 2002) and *The Hungry are Dying* (Holman 2001).

5.4 Towards an Account of Justice

In *Christian Justice and Public Policy*, Forrester makes a number of theological claims about justice. He suggests that justice attends to the voices of the victims, that the church should embody the justice it declares, and that justice contains theological implications that should influence public policy (Forrester 1997: 56-60). Furthermore, he argues that 'Christians believe that justice is to do with relationships. Good relationships are expressed and strengthened by a just distribution of material things' (Forrester 1997: 104). His contention is that society does not possess a clear account of justice and argues that justice as fairness, a perspective largely influenced by John Rawls, is not sufficient. If individual people focus upon fairness for themselves, rather than fairness for others, society will be 'impoverished and inhumane' (Forrester 1997: 139). For Forrester, this means going beyond fairness to discover justice that is 'in some obvious sense an expression of love'. For both Forrester and Wells, the theological virtue into which justice flows is *caritas*. Justice is expressed through good relationships. This reading of justice challenges societal norms by incorporating generosity, mercy and forgiveness as essential to its formation. Generosity detaches justice from its ties to fairness and makes mercy and forgiveness possible as they seek the 'reconciliation, healing and the restoration of community' (Forrester 1997: 232). Thus 'systems of justice and just behaviour' should ensure this goal is in mind within their judgements and, in turn, forgiveness may be introduced into politics. In a pluralist context, Forrester concedes there are different accounts of forgiveness and so further theological work is necessary to understand how this might be embodied in policy. Yet, what is being developed here is a theological rendering of justice that critiques public understandings and begins to offer alternative fragments.

Essential for creating the conditions for this vision of good relationship is the close

association Forrester develops between equality and justice. In *Theological Fragments*, Forrester (2005: 27) writes:

The Imago Dei speaks both of the importance of equal relationships and of the need to give equal respect, treatment and indeed *reverence* to all, for all bear the image, even if now only in partial and broken form. Equality is ascribed by God in the work of creation; it is not a human achievement or an empirical characteristic of human beings.

Elsewhere he claims that the Christian faith is the 'major source' of the way in which equality has been emphasised and understood in the modern world (Forrester 2001: 79-80). He argues that human beings are created as equal (Forrester 2001: 86), that 'God's loving generosity' comes equally to all (Forrester 2001: 97) and that in the early church equality was the necessary condition for and aim of *koinonia* being established (Forrester 2001: 100). He makes a direct link between his focus on equality and the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in which 'all human beings are born free and equal, in dignity and in rights' (Forrester 2001: 134). Forrester's (2001: 134) claim is that theology has shaped human rights discourse and, as such, lays 'a continuing responsibility on Christians for the sustaining and support of human equality'.

Forrester seems to be reconciling two often distinct theories of justice within his own account of justice. Using the categories John D. Carlson (2016) outlines, we might say Forrester is bringing 'justice as right order' into relationship with a 'justice as right' approach. The former is derived from a classical philosophical position that maintains that justice is principally concerned with the end, or the *telos* of the community, a position closest to Wells's concept of ecclesial justice (Wells 2015: 279). Justice here relies upon a common understanding of the goal of humanity and is comprehended as a virtue through which that goal is realised. Through the enlightenment this sense

of a common vision for humanity began to become fragmented and, with it, a new understanding of justice became necessary. As Daniel Bell Jr says, 'liberalism re-imagined society as a teeming mass of individuals, each with their own interests, ends, and conceptions of what constitutes the good life' (Bell Jr 2006: 183). Bell outlines how the theory of justice shifted from the communal good, to the rights of the individual as a human being. This resulted in a more procedural account of justice in which the rights of the individual are of paramount importance.

Theological ethicists have often chosen between 'justice as rights' or 'justice as right order'.⁶⁹ Rather than making this choice, Forrester seeks to develop an account of justice that includes aspects of both. Although I think he is correct in arguing that both approaches have a part to play within an adequate conception of justice, I contend that his account needs developing further. Firstly, I want to emphasise the *telos* of justice. I will argue that a *telos* for collective humanity enables us to find a clearer articulation of what the right might be that is inherent to being human. Unlike Forrester, I want to avoid the language of human rights that might diminish the relational aspects of humanity. I am suspicious of notions of humanity that reduce people to autonomous individuals whose right to justice is based solely on their dignity as an individual. Rather, I want to continue to set human identity within the communal frame that an eschatological perspective offers for justice. Secondly, and building from this, I argue that an essential aspect of humanity is the ability to communicate with others. This, I maintain, is a social, or to borrow Esther Reed's phrase, 'a collective right' (Reed 2001: 10). On these grounds, not only is there a *telos* to justice, but justice seeking becomes the action of communicating to one another about an

⁶⁹ For example John D. Carlson in 'Rights versus Right Order: Two Theological Traditions of justice and Their Implications for Christian Ethics and Pluralistic Polities,' argues that Max Stackhouse, Esther Reed and Nicholas Wolterstoff are examples of justice as rights theologians, and Oliver and Joan O'Donovan are representatives of the 'justice as right order' standpoint (Carlson 2016).

injustice in order to re-establish good relationships. In doing this, both parties may be rehumanised. I will now elucidate on these two points further in order to make clear how I am defining justice.

In her work addressing Thomas Aquinas's account of justice, Jean Porter argues that justice is grounded in a conception of the good, that perfects the will and leads towards relationships of love. As Aquinas states, 'justice is a habit in accordance with which someone, through a constant and perpetual will, renders his right to each one' (Aquinas: *S.T. II-II, Q. 58, A. 1*). Within the classical conception of justice which is foundational for Aquinas, justice is divided into general and particular aspects. The general heads towards the common goods of community. The particular is further subdivided into distributive justice, namely the equity of distribution of communal goods, and commutative justice, that is concerned with good relations between private individuals. According to Porter, it is the latter that gives greatest content to justice in that it 'perfects men and women by humanising them, in the fullest sense, orientating them rightly toward one another and the human world they share' (Porter 2016: 116). Thus, the relational priority of justice is established whose *telos*, for Aquinas, is the eschatological vision (Phillips 2015: 278). Seen in this way, justice orientates people towards their fullest state of humanity and enables relationships to be humanised. In terms of particular justice this is of fundamental importance. It calls for practices of restorative justice in which all, including oppressors, are to be treated as human beings. Furthermore, as Forrester himself recognises, it enables forgiveness and generosity to be brought into relationship with justice. Thus far, Forrester's account of justice agrees with this. However, the difference between Forrester's and Aquinas's accounts of justice begins to emerge as one considers how they approach the language of rights.

Porter argues that readings of Aquinas often do not acknowledge the role that the right fulfils within his account of justice. She argues that in addition to the classical ethical positions of Aristotle, Aquinas was also influenced by Roman jurisprudence that recognised the claim one person had on another (Porter 2016: 132-43). By drawing on recent historical research that has shown how the natural right to do good and avoid evil was present in the work of thirteenth century jurors, she argues this would have influenced how Aquinas articulated the inclinations of a rational creature (Porter 2016: 148-50). For Aquinas, at this point the communal vision of a good society and the natural right share a mutuality. Right is understood here not as a collection of abstract principles about the dignity of humanity that, in turn, form procedural rules through which justice might be administered as in human rights. Rather, it is the natural predisposition of our shared humanity to seek to do good towards others. This understanding of right, when joined with an eschatological vision, creates a circularity for justice-seeking. Our shared humanity calls us to do good within relationships in order to anticipate the eschaton where God is with us and we are with one another. In doing this we are reminded of a vision of our shared humanity. It is here that particular and general forms of justice are re-united. Political authority is necessary, as Porter outlines, to limit what can be asked of and by an individual in order to ensure the common good. Thus, both general and particular justice 'express the ideals of equity that are fundamental to political life and enable men and women to live freely in accordance with those ideals' (Porter 2016: 169).

Building from this account of the *telos* of justice, the relational context in which it is framed highlights a particular reading of the *imago dei* to which it is necessary to draw attention at this point. As humankind is created in God's image for relationship with

one another, with creation and with God, it follows that we are by nature communicative. Rowan Williams claims that the foundation of inalienable human rights is the communicative human body. The body is not an item of property as it is inextricably linked to the soul and is the medium by which we communicate (Williams 2012: 152). Williams (2012: 152) writes, 'the body is the organ of the soul's meaning: it is the medium in which the conscious subject communicates, and there is no communication without it'. It follows then that the body is foundational to human rights in particular as a vehicle of the person's communication, and to deny this is 'the ultimate form of slavery' (Williams 2012: 152). It may be that by displacing equality of dignity as the central concern of human rights and replacing it with the communicative body, the possibility of including justice as collective, social rights in 'being with(in)' is strengthened. As Williams notes, theologically speaking the body is sacred in that it is 'related to its maker and saviour before it is related to any human systems of power' (Williams 2012: 154). Furthermore, communication is a two-way process and so in protecting the body's right to speak its own messages, not only do I allow myself to grow in speaking, but also in receiving the communication of the other. Williams (2012: 156-57) claims:

Not every human other is a fellow-member of the Body of Christ in the biblical sense; but the universal command to preach the gospel to all prohibits any conclusion that this or that person is incapable of ever hearing and answering God's invitation, and therefore mandates an attitude of receptivity towards them. Not silencing the other or forcing their communication into your own agenda is part of remaining open to the communication of God – which may come even though the human other who is most repellent or opaque to sympathy. The recognition of a dignity that grounds the right to be heard is the recognition of my own need to receive as fully as I can what is being communicated to me by another being made by God.

On these grounds, justice is enacted as the victim and oppressor become fully present to one another and are able to seek reconciliation. Thus, a theological

rendering of justice places humanity at its centre and seeks to combat that which dehumanises in order to express the eschatological vision of full humanity. As this vision of humanity requires the communication of all, then those who suffer the injustice should be heard when seeking justice. It then follows that for someone in poverty, injustice prevails if they are not listened to.

This account of justice has a number of implications for 'being with(in)'. It continues the work we began in the previous chapter of developing the terms that will enable relocators and neighbours to speak in the public square about the injustices they experience. It shares with Wells a vision of justice that points towards good relationships. However, it argues that the church is not the only community where this justice is embodied. Precisely because humanity is created for community, collective, social rights should be upheld in wider society for those who suffer injustice. In doing this, we reorient society in the direction of an eschatological vision of full humanity being with God and with one another. Poverty, in this account, continues to be understood as dislocation. However, there is now a rationale through which barriers that disable people from relationship with one another, the limits that were noted in Chapter Three, may be challenged. Thus, the relocator and their neighbours are able to engage in public discourse by making claims for justice built upon collective, social rights. These claims are made about the particular but should impact general forms of justice. It means that relocators and neighbours might offer fragments of wisdom, formed through a theological vision of community, into debates about public policy and social practice. I believe that this reorients justice to become part of 'being with(in)' as it attends to the human condition as isolation, and theologically is an aspect of God with us.

5.5 How Public Theology Enhances ‘Being With(in)’.

So far within this chapter I have outlined the tradition of public theology that engages with issues of poverty in a United Kingdom context. I have argued that Elaine Graham and Duncan Forrester offer a way of speaking theology in public that is characterised by its fragmentary and dialogical nature. I have also shown how ‘being with(in)’ may incorporate an understanding of justice that has implications for wider society. Injustice, framed in this way, is increased when good relationships are restricted because those who experience poverty are unheard in public discourse. I am now able to outline some practices that public theology offers that will enhance my notion of ‘being with(in)’. In particular I am going to focus upon two dimensions of Wells’s ‘being with’ – presence and partnership. For Wells, ‘presence means being in the same physical space as the person with whom you are engaging’, and partnership is being ‘prepared to see how respective gifts can, when appropriately harnessed, together enable a team to reach a common goal’ (Wells 2018: 14-15). Whilst other dimensions may offer further reflections about injustice, I believe these are the two that are fundamental to how a relocater may pursue justice on these lines, as the practice of living within the neighbourhood clearly effects the embodiment of presence and the characteristics of partnership. Yet, my argument is that by exploring how justice may be practised, both of these dimensions are enlarged to the degree that a new dimension emerges which is both interconnected and distinct. This new dimension is characterised by humanising justice through a ‘deep listening’ and ‘hearing to speech’ that I call ‘cries’. To show how this dimension emerges I will firstly explore how presence and partnership are enhanced, before outlining my definition of ‘cries’.

5.5.1 Presence and Partnership

In *Between a Rock and a Hard Place* Graham outlines an 'apologetics of presence'. She argues that apologetics 'points not to propositional, but transformational truth' (Graham 2013: 214). The church must prepare its members to embody this apologetic by developing habits that shape how they interpret the world and act within it. Elsewhere, Graham (1999: 454) states that the praxis of faith communities should be seen as *phronesis*, a practical wisdom that is

mediated and embodied in the stories of the living human documents; and is the only vocabulary by which practising and faithful communities can articulate their visions and values. The word is made flesh in the relationships and activities of care, worship, social action, formation and initiation, stewardship and decision-making.

At this point, this rendering of apologetics seems very similar to what Wells calls presence.

Graham develops three motifs for her apologetics of presence. The first is that through 'seeking the welfare of the city' we are reminded that the central concern of Christian ethics or public theology is not the church but the world. She is critical of post-liberal approaches that overemphasise the distinctiveness of the faith that the church should embody to the point where it becomes exclusive. Although Graham (2013: 117) acknowledges 'the boundaries between Christian identity and values and those of others may not be so absolute', in actual practice her concern is that post-liberals are not clear how virtues for civic life may be cultivated (Graham 2013: 122-23). She suggests that radical orthodoxy indeed offers a cultural criticism but does not show how transformation might take place beyond the church. Graham (2013: 129) argues, 'clearly, [Graham] Ward intends the entirety of his diagnosis of contemporary culture to be normative and theological; but are there no redeeming virtues in the prevailing *Zeitgeist*; nothing to be celebrated about life outwith the

sacred canopy?’ She charges post-liberal theology with suffering from an ‘allergy to the particular’, wondering whether, although it claims to speak for the church, we might ask ‘which church?’ For Graham (2013: 136), ‘the problem comes when the life of the Church loses its moorings in the sufferings of the world, and the cultivation of ecclesial virtue becomes too self-sufficient or introverted such that this fuller vocation to the world is discounted’. This account of Christian presence requires practices of partnership to embody it.

Graham proposes that we must look to a theology of mission where God, not the church, is central (Graham 2013: 221-22). She calls public theology to hold its nerve in keeping creation, incarnation and common grace central so that ‘the salvation of the world, and not the survival of the Church’ may be its guiding principle (Graham 2013: 223). This is entirely possible within Graham’s scheme as a goal of her public theology is not only that the church may become more the church, but that its members may be equipped in civic virtue in order to engage with the world. By seeking to develop Ambassadors for Christ in the world, her third motif within her apologetics of presence, the church must equip its members in Christian formation that is directed towards citizenship. To do this it will need to develop new forms of Christian education that are less focused on teaching doctrine and more centred on ‘enabling lay people to become fluent practitioners and ambassadors for a public faith: as voters, employers and employees, consumers and neighbours’ (Graham 2013: 231). Thus, the church participates within the world both collectively and individually.

In our study of relocators, Graham’s proposal for ambassadors of public faith highlights a particularly important aspect of what it means to presence justice within

a neighbourhood. Consequently 'being with(in)' is expanded as the relocater seeks to cultivate civic virtue within the lives of neighbours and society more generally. In doing so the perception that some are second-class citizens might be challenged. Through presence and partnership, the relocater and neighbour learn how to practise the virtue of justice together in such a way as to enable human flourishing. Graham emphasises the importance of local institutions in fostering civic virtue. As we saw earlier, in many low-income neighbourhoods there has been a hollowing out of their resources and associational life is waning. Furthermore, local people feel that decisions about their neighbourhoods are made without their input and thus, as Bourdieu argues in his account of social capital, their sense of their own agency is lost. Therefore, the necessity for relocators to learn how to cultivate civic virtue is vital if they are to see their neighbours flourish.

A practice through which the relocater may develop civic virtue is found in Graham's second motif of her apologetics of presence. Public theology should speak truth to power. By drawing upon the example of Bishop James Jones's chairing of the Hillsborough Independent Panel, Graham concludes that 'the combination of local presence in every neighbourhood and the constitutional access to government granted by Establishment has, since *Faith in the City*, been one of the most powerful examples of contemporary public theology' (Graham 2013: 227). She recognises that there were two aspects to the Bishop's role. Firstly, it was pastoral through the care he offered the families of victims. Secondly, it was prophetic through calling the authorities to account for their actions. Thus, by practising both aspects, the Bishop had relational integrity with those who were experiencing suffering in order to authentically speak truth to power. That said, the danger of emphasising this example is that in order to speak truth to power, one has to be situated in or near to the

establishment. This highlights two challenges for public theology. Firstly, the majority of voices are Anglican and so have a specific relationship with societal structures that offers an easier route to speak truth to power than those of other traditions. Secondly, the Bishop was a mediator in holding the authorities to account and as such he was acting on behalf of others. Inadvertently, it is possible that this may have diminished the humanity of those who had directly faced the injustice as, using Williams' terminology, the communicative bodies that faced injustice were not directly heard within the process that was specifically designed to bring them justice. This illustrates a weakness in how public theology is often practised. We have already established that relationship and the ability and impulse to communicate are at the core of humanity. Thus, to be dehumanised is to be denied the opportunity to speak when one has something to communicate. Applied to this scenario we might conclude that although justice may have appeared to be done, those who had suffered most within the tragedy would have been further humanised if they had the opportunity to speak. It is here that our new dimension of 'being with(in)' emerges. It is a response to the dehumanising structures that people who struggle with poverty face. It grows out of the relocators' practices of presence and partnership extending them to a point where a new dimension of 'being with(in)' should be articulated. I will now seek to clarify what is meant by this new dimension.

5.5.2 Cries: Humanising Justice

Through our exploration of public theology, I have sought to reincorporate societal justice within our conception of 'being with(in)'. My claim is that this leads us to focus upon justice that enables those who experience poverty to be heard in public discourse. Furthermore, I will argue that it should be people with the direct experience who speak. In doing this, a further dimension of being with(in) is developed that I am calling 'cries'. 'Cries' has two stages within it. Initially it involves 'deep listening' to the

cries of those who are experiencing poverty. Secondly, it enables those with these experiences to cry out to wider society. Forrester leads us part of the way towards this. Likening his method to Habermas's discourse ethics, Forrester (2001: 103) claims public theology 'is not simply our expressing ourselves; essentially it is an effort to achieve shared understanding'. He seeks an 'ideal speech situation' where inherent power imbalances are neutralised so that all may make their contribution. To achieve this, listening becomes a skill that needs to be cultivated by the public theologian if we are to 'better understand, explain and cut through [...] the subtle ideological distortions we so often face' (Forrester 2001: 212). Andrew Morton suggests that Forrester's approach is 'both persuasive speaking, focusing on the other's ear, and attentive listening, focusing on one's own ear' (Storrar and Morton 2004: 27). As with the practice of relocation, Forrester recognises the need to be in close proximity to people experiencing poverty if one is to hear clearly.

Forrester cites Bob Holman as an exemplar of 'deep listening'. He was Professor of Social Policy at Bath University before relocating to become a community worker in Easterhouse, a large, deprived housing scheme on the outskirts of Glasgow. Forrester (2001: 178) says of Holman:

His renunciation of status has enabled in a small area at least the breaking down of some serious barriers to communication so that ordinary people are enabled to speak without fear of coercion or ridicule, and academics and clergy are enabled to attend to people in such a way as to appreciate the human meaning of social problems.

Holman practised 'deep listening' in order to speak authentically about poverty. Yet, as I have already argued, the relocater should seek to go beyond speaking themselves and enable those with direct experience of poverty to speak. This marks the move from 'deep listening' to 'hearing to speech' that produces humanising justice

in that the communicative body, as Williams describes it, is freed to be able to deliver its own message. Here, I speak not only of the individual but more figuratively of all who experience poverty whose voice may be collectively ignored within society.

My concern at this point is that although Forrester claims that the voice of poverty speaks in his writing, this is done infrequently and when it is, only illustrates his own argument rather creating its own. For instance, in *On Human Worth*, 'Erica' speaks clearly and extensively within the first chapter. However, her account is seldom returned to in the rest of the book and we are left unaware as to whether she had opportunity to dialogue with the argument that Forrester develops from her lived experience. It would be unfair to say that the lived experience of poverty has no impact upon Forrester's theory. However, it seems that the creator of the theology is the professional theologian and not necessarily the person in poverty. There seems to be little, if any, co-theologising. This is also implicit within the trope of 'being with'. Wells develops a scheme whereby, in the terms of this study, the relocater may have a theology that enables engagement rather than a theology that is changed, developed and articulated through engagement within the neighbourhood.

To move beyond hearing the voices of those with direct experience of poverty only as illustrative of theological insight rather than as generators of it, I reintroduce Graham's concept of dialogical speech. Graham argued that since God is present in the world through people and institutions, theology may be received as well as offered by the public theologian through engagement with others. For the relocater this is a moment where the brackets of 'being with(in)' are erased as theology becomes a communal discipline with neighbours. I acknowledge here that there is a weakness in my own thesis in that my methodology is more on the trajectory of Wells and

Forrester than offering a dialogical approach. I accept that often the theological reflection has been carried out alone. The voices of particular neighbours may have more explicitly been seen to contribute to my theological development. However, I argue that my immersion as a relocator has meant that much of this has been done through an iterative process of engagement within the neighbourhood. I believe the dimension of 'cries' seeks to enable 'being with(in)' to go beyond the weaknesses of Wells's approach at this point. By enabling the voices of neighbours to speak and co-theologise a richer, more contextual theology may be developed.

If the relocator is going to practise this dimension of 'cries', then four things must be considered. First, that it will take long-term commitment to an area. Trust will need to be built over a long period of time. Secondly, as the cries of local people often refer to a sense of loss, opportunities should be created for public lament. Thirdly, the insight that is spoken should be offered with reference to particularity. A danger to be avoided is that one does not generalise all locations to be saying the same thing in order to have something coherent to say within the public sphere. Fourthly, the insight that is generated operates as a kind of practical wisdom. In calling this dimension 'cries', I am intentionally evoking Proverbs 1:20-21:

Wisdom cries aloud in the street;
in the markets she raises her voice;
on the top of the walls she cries out;
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks.

In *Christian Wisdom* David Ford argues that Christian Wisdom is discerned within the earshot of cries that arise from the intensities of life. As Ford (2007: 5) states, these cries alert us 'to the cries of Jesus. Doing justice to diverse cries is at the heart of this theological wisdom. The insistence of the cries lends urgency to the search for wisdom'. For Ford, wisdom is primarily concerned with attentiveness to the cries of

those who are suffering (Ford 2007: 20). Thus, the act of listening is fundamental both to wisdom-seeking and relocating. It is in the act of listening that the relocater hears the cries of their neighbourhood. Mary Grey argues that through this, a new theological map may be discovered. This map connects previously separate dualisms through the work of the Holy Spirit. It brings to speech the wisdom of others who are not heard, and forges new reflections upon forgiveness and justice (Grey 1999: 344). Grey (1993: 84) writes, 'in the hearing into speech of the forgotten wisdom of connected knowing would lie the healing of the land'. I argue that these characteristics are necessary for the development of theology that seeks to be attentive to the 'cries' of those in poverty. This wisdom is something that has a wide variety of implications for church, government, society and locality. It is often fragile and vulnerable and so great care should be taken both to nurture understanding of it and to nurture those who are bearers of it.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to show how 'being with(in)' might respond to dehumanising structures. Initially I established how theology might be able to speak publicly in a way that is both faithful to the gospel, yet clearly understood by society. I then outlined how public theology specifically might enrich the discussion around poverty. In particular I claimed that by incorporating an understanding of justice that is framed by relationship and communication within our construction of 'being with(in)', a further dimension emerges. This dimension, called 'cries', begins with 'deep listening' to the wisdom of those who are experiencing poverty, before co-creating with them opportunities for their wisdom to be heard.

This approach not only has implications for relocators through their understanding of

'being with(in)' but also public theology more generally. My claim is that relocators may be part of a new generation of public theologians. In the first place, I argue they close the gap between public pronouncement and local engagement. A potential problem of public theology is that local narratives are only used as examples in and case studies for the theologian's theory. Doug Gay in his doctoral thesis argues that although Forrester claims to prioritise the voice of those who are in poverty within the practice of the Centre for Theology and Public Issues, this was seldom the case. Academics or church leaders provided the vast majority of speakers and wrote all of the publications (Gay 2006: 228). Theology crafted in dialogue with neighbours challenges this. The relocator's proximity to the experience of poverty enables opportunities for the voice of first-hand experience to be heard. Thus, public theology practised by relocators will enable new voices to regularly disrupt the theological enterprise. Secondly, this practice will seek to reach beyond the obsession that public theology has with influencing policy. Although public theologians recognise society as broader than government and the state, there is a tendency towards seeking a William Temple-like influence upon policy concerning social welfare. We will explore this further in Chapter Six. Thirdly, relocation is an opportunity for new relationships to be developed between church structures and local practice. In seeking to provide opportunities for the voice of people in poverty to be heard, the relocator will need to be connected to institutional structures that may provide support in facilitating this. By connecting local voices with institutional structures, the practice of relocation becomes a new and innovative location for fostering public theology.

6. From the Disorientation of Suffering to the Reorientation of 'Gifts' and 'Wounds'

I outlined in Chapter Two the missional, ecclesial, spiritual and societal motivations for relocators. I suggested that much of the literature and practice of relocation focused on the first three of these motivations and that it was my primary intention to address the fourth. Despite the clarity with which relocators state their motivations, I suggested that the potential outcomes and implications for Christian ministry within the neighbourhood were less clear. I claimed that this should be understood positively as it is an inevitable consequence of engagement in a dynamically changing post-industrial neighbourhood. I demonstrated that the diverse nature of 'low-income' neighbourhoods within one city meant it was unhelpful to have pre-described outcomes before engaging in life within the neighbourhood of another city. Doing this might add to the problems within the neighbourhood rather than alleviating them. By adopting 'being with' as orientating language, I have argued that, although this emphasises starting with relationship building, it is inadequate in a number of ways. In particular it could be seen as passive with regard to dehumanising societal structures, that it does not give an account of the use of material goods within relationships and does not pay enough attention to the suffering of individuals. By responding to these points my aim is to show that the practice of relocation extends 'being with' to 'being with(in)'.

In the previous chapter I began to respond to the perceived passivity in 'being with' about dehumanising structures. I proposed a further dimension of 'being with(in)' which I called 'cries' that referred to a process that enables the experience of local people to be heard within wider society. In this chapter I want to take this further. I will

argue that as the voice of poverty is heard within society, new possibilities for economic and political relationships begin to emerge. Crucial to achieving this is dismantling what I perceive to be a weakness in how both public theology and post-liberal theology depict society. My argument is that in both accounts, society is too easily reduced to the state. In public theology the emphasis placed upon seeking to influence the state can leave the theological imagination in regard to society open to being colonised by the state. By seeking to resist the power and influence of the state, post-liberal theologies of society are dominated by the state in a similar way. I will contend that if new economic and political relationships are going to emerge within low-income neighbourhoods, we must develop a more complex understanding of society that gives account for the impact of a wider range of factors, acknowledges the goods the state offers, and recognises that the local is not only shaped by wider society but can contribute positively and uniquely to it.

Having established a complex understanding of society, I will look at how the relocater might understand participation within the neighbourhood. Wells's definition of participation emphasises that through participation with neighbours we participate with the Trinity (Wells 2015: 133-35). Thus, participation becomes an act of worship in which the relocater might give and receive. I will develop this further by exploring how the mystical body of Christ may be a helpful framework for understanding how to participate with people who are experiencing poverty. To do this I will draw upon the witness of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement who, as twentieth-century relocators, engaged in society and politics intentionally in a way that was explicitly theological.⁷⁰ Through this I will thicken the description of participation to the point where two new dimensions of 'being with(in)' emerge – 'gifts' and 'wounds'.

⁷⁰ For more information on the Catholic Worker visit <https://www.catholicworker.org/index.html>.

'Gifts' articulates an activity of 'being with(in)'. I will claim that through open-handed giving, relationships flourish. This is not to assume that participation becomes 'working for' as it recognises that gifts are both received and offered by the relocator. 'Gifts' also has political and societal implications since localised gift economies act as resistance to universal globalised economies.

'Wounds' frames a further dimension of 'being with(in)'. My argument is that to participate with the divine through encounter with the other, the relocator shares in the suffering of others. Framing this through the mystical body of Christ means that we accept the wounds of the wider world. In particular we acknowledge and accept the sin that has created the conditions for poverty, seek penance for where we are complicit with this and, through active participation, tend to the wounds both of others and ourselves. Taken together, 'gifts' and 'wounds' articulate an ontology of 'being with(in)'. This is not a passive 'being' in which the relocator is inactive and wholly dependent upon the leadership of neighbours. On the contrary, it enables the relocator to express their agency as they give and receive within the neighbourhood. Neither is it a 'being' with a pre-described agenda that aims towards a particular outcome. Rather, it understands that the *telos* of the practice is deep relationship with neighbours and so recognises that this will take on a variety of forms and structures. Nor is it a kenotic 'being' that seeks to be stripped of identity and agenda. It is through participation that the relocator recognises that as part of the mystical body of Christ we share in the suffering of all. Or, to put it another way, the relocator does not lose their identity in order to participate, but through relationship building they discover their true identity as they participate with Christ.

Through this chapter I will seek to respond to the criticisms of 'being with' that I outlined earlier. 'Gifts' is a framing of how material goods can be exchanged in such a way as to be consistent with 'being with(in)'. By accepting that all experience the wound of poverty in different ways, the relocater may be attentive to the suffering of others and, at the same time, encounter healing. In placing this within a wider frame of society as a whole, I will also show how both offer alternative ways to the societal norms for the economy and politics. This enables the response I began to outline in the previous chapter to the criticism that 'being with' is passive about bringing change to the structures that exacerbate poverty, to flourish and take on concrete form.

6.1 Complexifying Society

The relationship public theology wants to establish with the state seems to be relatively straightforward. Public theologians seek opportunities for the church and theology to influence public policy. However, this is not the case with post-liberal theology. Its main focus is upon talk about God and the church. The ethical and political stances post-liberal theology forms are primarily related to doctrine rather than theologising about the state. My argument is that in seeking to embody Christian doctrine within the church, the state is often caricatured as something to be resisted. By doing so, the state can be over emphasised in the way post-liberal theology imagines society. Rather than seeking to influence the state as in public theology, post-liberal theology emphasises resistance to the state. To illustrate this, I will focus upon William Cavanaugh who has written particularly sharply upon the relationship between church and state. Cavanaugh's connection with Wells is particularly clear through both their writings as each borrows concepts from one another. It would be misleading to presume that Cavanaugh's understanding is adopted entirely by Wells, but it has been influential within Wells's own conceptualising of church and world. In

For Good, Samuel Wells, Russell Rook and David Barclay (2017: 17) claims that the role of the state is ‘alleviating the deficits of society’ whereas the church is ‘better placed than the state to cultivate society’s assets’. As we shall see, this shows similarities to some of Cavanaugh’s early claims about church and state.

Crucial to understanding Cavanaugh’s political theology are his concerns with the state. In *Migrations of the Holy* he suggests that contemporary understandings of the state are built upon three assumptions: that the state is natural; that society gives rise to the state; and that the state is separate from society (Cavanaugh 2011: 8). These assumptions colonise the imaginations of citizens by elevating the primacy of the state over all aspects of society.⁷¹ Thus, as he argues in earlier work, the state prioritises universal principles and action over the complexities of local communities (Cavanaugh 1999). It does this in two ways. Firstly, the state sets the terms and conditions for how society is to function and in doing so, civil society is co-opted by the state (Cavanaugh 2011). Secondly, the state reduces citizens’ interaction with society to primarily focus upon the individual’s relationship with the state.⁷² Therefore, as civil society is thinned out and co-opted, the power of the state is increased. As a result, Cavanaugh argues, the church in liberal theology is reduced to a member of this withering civil society.⁷³ The danger for theology conceived upon these lines is that it is not ‘public’ enough in proposing an alternative to the state. Foundational to his overall argument is that theology holds the potential for resistance if embodied by

⁷¹ The understanding of the nation–state builds upon a modern notion of the state. In this understanding, unlike classical definitions, the state is separate from the ‘people.’ It is also removed from the ‘government’ in that it is the apparatus through which society might function. This means that, for instance, the courts may decide to limit the powers of the government within a particular situation and the government may not be able to challenge this. The nation–state is thus the drawing together this understanding of one state with one nation. Obviously, the United Kingdom is anomaly within this as it is technically four nations within the state.

⁷² For more see *Torture and Eucharist* (Cavanaugh 1998) and the reflections on the work of John Locke in *Migrations of the Holy* (Cavanaugh 2011: 21-23).

⁷³ Cavanaugh details this further in discussion of Murray and Marty in ‘The World in a Wafer’ (Cavanaugh 1999).

the church. To do this, it must make clear that the relatively recent development of the nation-state is not a natural phenomenon. Neither is the nation-state equivalent to classical definitions of the state.

Christopher Insole challenges Cavanaugh's understanding of the state. He argues that the state is not a single, absolutising entity to be rejected. Society and citizens may receive good things from the state, notably the constitution and the law (Insole 2006: 325). He accuses Cavanaugh of reifying the pre-liberal period as the golden age of the manner in which the state and church should function within a nation. He asks whether it was better that power was held by an individual or family, as in pre-enlightenment times, or held in a liberal democracy where there is accountability across a number of institutions (Insole 2006: 327-28). This accusation may have merit. In 'From One City to Two', Cavanaugh argues that Augustine's City of God displays two cities that are performed within the same arena as simultaneously tragic and comedic plays. He draws upon Wells's improvisational ethics to show how the church might incorporate the tragedy of the earthly city within its own performance of the gospel. However, Insole takes exception to this, suggesting that it absolutises both the church and the state who become parasitic upon one another in order to 'sustain the illusion of their own existence in their own projected shadows' (Insole 2006: 330). Although his disclaimer is that Cavanaugh's approach only evokes or suggests such an image, nonetheless it pervades the overall impression of the relationship between church and state within his political theology (Insole 2006: 330). A further criticism Insole holds is that Cavanaugh creates a binary between insider and outsider as only those within the church have the possibility of performing the comedy (Insole 2006: 333).

In his more recent work Cavanaugh seems to be responding to some of these accusations. In *Migrations of the Holy* he attempts to get beyond the contrast between a public theology that seeks to influence the state and a post-liberal theology that resists it. He outlines a politics of vulnerability which he situates somewhere between Rawls, on the one hand, and MacIntyre, on the other. He does this by thickening the description of society, arguing that it does not simply oscillate between a focus on the local or the state as two disconnected poles (Cavanaugh 2011: 184). Local communities should not be addressed on their own 'but must always be refracted through complex trans local connections' (Cavanaugh 2011: 188). In other words, the local is not only shaped by the national, but is also, to some degree, a shaper of the national. This underscores the importance of enabling local voices to speak within public discourse about poverty. If indeed, the local shapes the national, it is vital that neighbourhoods which are often marginalised are able to make a positive contribution to society. Thus, simple conceptions of either resisting or engaging with the state should be left behind by 'participating in other networks of connectivity that leave the imagination of a dominant society behind' (Cavanaugh 2011: 189).

Cavanaugh is complexifying how society is understood by recognising the importance of the local and broadening the conversation that political and ecclesial bodies should engage with. For instance, his themes within *Field Hospital* include the markets, economics, liberty and violence. Yet, I do not consider that it goes far enough in puncturing an imagination that the state operates above all other institutions within society. All other forms of societal living, economics, associations and business seem to be primarily expressed through their relationship with the state. The state simply develops pacts with other institutions, for instance the markets, that continue to do violence to the local. Essentially the state does not escape from a demonising myth

that it embodies the evils of the world. Cavanaugh is guilty of, to borrow Ivan Petrella's term, gigantism, in that our imagination is never free from the state (Petrella 2008). This is problematic in two-ways. Firstly, this does not concede how the state may, at times, enable the possibilities of the local. Secondly, it does not provide a nuanced understanding of the various functions of the state and their interaction with one another and with society as a whole. For example, in Leeds the apparatus of the state includes the national government, local city council, national health service, and West Yorkshire Police. All of these institutions are, to some degree, independent of one another and yet, at the same, are interrelated. Similarly, each have different kinds of relationships with local people in local neighbourhoods and offer different goods that may enable or disable the flourishing of that place. My point here is that if we slip into too simplistic characterisations of the state, it is impossible to fully articulate and appreciate the complex power relationships at work in a given neighbourhood.

What I have been seeking to do here is show that the understanding of society that post-liberal and public theologies operate within is too simplistic. As I have shown in Chapter Three, this is further complexified in low-income neighbourhoods where the power structures of relationship that contribute towards creating conditions in which poverty is endemic are complex. If relocators are to participate in this, they need to understand how to navigate this complexity successfully. David Snowden's work on the Cynefin framework illustrates the difference between complicated and complex systems. David Snowden and Mary Boone (2007: 3) write, 'complicated contexts, unlike simple ones, may contain multiple right answers, and though there is a clear relationship between cause and effect, not everyone can see it'. If a neighbourhood is viewed as a complicated context, the aim of applying this frame would be to isolate what would be perceived as the specific causes of poverty and thus target the right

institutions or people with the right strategies to bring the required change. However, as I argued, a neighbourhood is not a complicated system it is a complex one. In a complex context, 'right answers can't be ferreted out' (Snowden and Boone 2007: 5). By taking the rainforest as an example of a complex system, he illustrates how these contexts are always in flux, that they are in the realm of the 'unknown unknowns' and that the whole is far more than the sum of its parts. If the relocater is to participate within their local neighbourhood, they must accept this complexity and, rather than see it as a problem, discern within it opportunities for innovation, experimentation and creativity (Snowden and Boone 2007: 5). Therefore, at times they will seek to influence the various institutions and organisations and at other times, resist them. Participation will include alliances with different institutions. These alliances will be dynamic and should not need to be long-term. The complexity of power within a place will mean that the relocator's posture in establishing relationships with institutions, be they national or local government, business or voluntary sector, should always be as a critical friend. The ambiguous nature of the relocator as well, particularly in terms of whether they are insider or outsider within the neighbourhood, complexifies further how participation develops. The relocator often brings resources, connections and the opportunity to make certain choices that distinguish them from local people. Yet, as I have argued, this does not mean that they are not 'with(in)' the neighbourhood, but that the 'in' is purposely bracketed. The fluid identity of the relocator embodies a complexity that, handled well, may enable rather than disable them to participate in the life of the neighbourhood. Yet, it is crucial that the relocator is attentive to understanding the nature of participation in order to deal with this complexity.

6.2 The Participation Dimension of 'Being With(in)'

To explore participation, I want to focus upon four questions. With whom is the relocator participating? What is the relocator's ontology within participation? What should the relocator do with their own material resources? How should they participate when faced with suffering? In the terms of this thesis, the first question refers to the 'with(in)' and the subsequent three focus upon the 'being'. Through responding to these questions, we will understand further the societal implications of the relocator's practice.

For Wells, participation is a dimension of 'being with'. Wells (2018: 221) writes:

The encounter of 'being with' begins with presence and participation. Poverty, discrimination, disadvantage, hunger, homelessness, migrancy: these are not problems to be fixed for a person, they are conditions to be shared with a person, and the sharing with may go a long way to overcome the isolation that in large part constitutes the real issue. Jesus addressed our isolation from God by coming to be with us; the church addresses social isolation by 'being with' those who are alone in their troubles.

For Wells, participation is the dimension that is most related to the 'with' of 'being with'. It draws greatest attention to (Wells 2015: 180), is the essence of (Wells 2017: 58) and celebrates what is meant by 'with' (Wells 2017: 37). Poverty as dislocation means that participation should primarily be with those who are isolated. First and foremost, for the relocator, participation is with their neighbours and not with organisations and institutions that are working in their neighbourhood.

In 'being with' participation has a theological nature. It is rooted in the Trinity as all three persons participate with one another in their activity (Wells 2015: 134). It also has an eschatological perspective as participating together anticipates the eschaton (Wells 2015: 134). Wells (2017: 37) claims 'participation names the closeness of

God'. Thus, in relation to the relocator, as they participate in the life of the neighbourhood they are participating with God. By drawing upon Martin Buber's I-Thou relationship, Wells states that every encounter with the other is an encounter with the divine Thou (Wells 2015: 135). Thus, we are enabled to celebrate the other as we participate with them because we are, at the same time, celebrating Christ. Rather than participating in order to effect an outcome either for the other person or for the wider neighbourhood, participation is, according to Wells, good for its own sake (Wells 2018: 209). It does not need an outcome to validate it as it is in itself an act of worship. Thus, if the answer to the question 'with whom is the relocator participating' is the Trinity, this frames the ontology of the relocator first and foremost as a worshipper. By participating with the Trinity in the neighbourhood, the relocator is open to receiving Christ through the relationships they form there. Alastair Barrett calls this 'radical receptivity'. He argues that the missional flow of the church out into the world should be interrupted in order for the church to receive from the world. Therefore, the relocator is 'receptive to the initiatives of their "others", either understood primarily as "performing" a "receptive Christ", or as a receptivity to the gifts and challenges of Christ as "other"' (Barrett 2017: 187). Their practice is simultaneously participation with Christ in the neighbourhood and receiving Christ from the neighbourhood. It is characterised by the generosity of the Trinity as they are opened to giving and receiving from others. It raises questions of spiritual practice and formation as to how this approach is maintained. In particular how the unknowns of the neighbourhood and the mystery of the Spirit's work there may be discerned. However, this falls outside my sphere of interest for this thesis.

My argument so far in this section is that Wells understands participation within the neighbourhood as participation with the Trinity. In these terms, participation becomes

an act of worship. Wells extends this by linking participation with the practices of the church in two ways. Firstly, participation is akin to communion through which we are unified with God.⁷⁴ The sacraments are a celebration of participating with the Trinity as God's people (Wells 2017: 37-38). Secondly, in the church's intercession we participate with the wider church. Through prayer we share in solidarity with others in places of struggle and hostility (Wells 2018: 112). Yet, this stress on the church may be evidence of Graham's insistence that post-liberal theologians often emphasise distinctiveness between church and world to the point where it becomes exclusiveness (Graham 2013: 117). What initially was participation with the Trinity as we participate with neighbours begins to assume an ecclesial form that may disable engagement with neighbours in everyday life. It is here that I want to suggest that reflection on the mystical body of Christ might help us see beyond the division between church and world and illuminate further what participation means for a relocator as I develop the notion of 'being with(in)'.⁷⁵

6.2.1 The Mystical Body of Christ

Dorothy Day comprehended the mystical body of Christ as the *telos* of the Catholic Worker's engagement with people in poverty. Commentators have claimed that this doctrine was behind all the efforts of the Catholic Worker (Miller 1973: 15). It 'supported, deepened, enhanced, and beautified' their ethic of caring (O'Connor 1991: 61) and that through it, they were enabled to discover Christ in the other (Merriman 1994: 81). In *From Union Square to Rome*, Day reflects upon how she

⁷⁴ This account shows similarities with J. Todd Billings's 'Participation Ministry' that I outlined in Chapter Two (Billings 2011).

⁷⁵ The mystical body of Christ does not operate in this thesis in the way that Nicholas Healy describes it as a blueprint ecclesiology in *Church, World and the Christian Life* (Healy 2000). Rather I am using it as a way of widening the ecclesiological lens so that the boundaries between church and world are purposefully blurred.

understands those who come to the Catholic Worker for support. Day (2006: 18) writes:

After all, the experiences that I have had are more or less universal. Suffering, sadness, repentance, love, we all have known these. They are easiest to bear when one remembers their universality, when we remember that we are all members or potential members of the Mystical Body of Christ.

In claiming this, Day makes little distinction between themselves as workers and the guests they serve. All humanity is infused with the potentiality of membership within the mystical body of Christ. Therefore, differences that might divide into binaries of church and world, host and guest, believer and non-believer are subsumed into a larger category. Christ wills all to be members of his mystical body and so participation is assumed to be with Christ as all are treated as potential members. The Catholic Worker was greatly influenced by the French philosophy of personalism. This claimed a new social order would develop if the person was the starting point rather than political and societal structures. With this understanding, the mystical body of Christ was no longer an abstract concept but became a joining together in the suffering and joys of one another. A radical love was enabled that resisted the dehumanising control of nationalism and capitalism. It was opposed to the 'procedural and pragmatic character of history' by seeking to embody a new way of living (Miller 1973: 8). Consequently, unlike the social gospel, the Catholic Worker saw a clear distinction between politics and religion and 'that the most authentic kind of Christian life meant rejecting power' (Piehl and Maurin 1982: 138). This was not to the exclusion of engaging within political and societal structures. Rather, their starting point was from the suffering of individuals. Their radical love enabled them to influence government by the acts of resistance they embodied together.

Cavanaugh appeals to the mystical body of Christ as an attempt to develop a 'radical democratic practice of post secular politics' (Cavanaugh 2016: 100). Through considering the work of Henri de Lubac, he argues that the doctrine should neither be viewed as a transcendence that tends towards a fictional understanding of the body. Nor, should it be understood purely in immanent terms, through the visibility of the church (Cavanaugh 2016: 114-17). Rather, it is paradoxically and simultaneously both immanent and transcendent, meaning that politics is not left within the realms of control, but is always open to the mystical (Cavanaugh 2016: 106). This is crucial in helping to negotiate the complexity of society. By recognising that the relocator cannot control their environments, they must seek to build mutual relationships of reciprocity that are always sublimated within the mystery of God. Here Cavanaugh argues for Day's radical love as it 'assumes that the sins of the antagonist are one's own sins, and the sins of all become radically commutable' (Cavanaugh 2016: 260). Quoting Day, Cavanaugh (2016: 260) writes, 'we are those who are sinned against and those who are sinning. We are identified with Him, one with Him, we are members of His Mystical Body.' Cavanaugh continues, 'if we are part of the same body, then the sins as well as the merits – both the sufferings and the joys [...] – are shared by all.' Thus, as he concludes, the mystical body of Christ moves the actions of the Catholic Workers beyond the merely ethical, towards the ontological (Cavanaugh 2016: 261). This has consequences for the relocator and our understanding of 'being with(in)'. Participation, framed by the doctrine of the mystical body of Christ, enables relocators to discern the nature of the 'being' of 'being with(in)'. It is primarily a 'being with' Christ within the context of the neighbourhood. A being that is involved in the activity of Christ through sharing with the suffering and joys of neighbours. Thus, it goes beyond performing acts of mercy because we feel compassion to recognising

that the relocator experiences the wounds of neighbours as if they were their own wounds. Thus, the wound is 'with(in)' them.

The purpose of this section has been to respond to the first two questions I posed earlier: with whom is the relocator participating and what is the relocator's ontology within participation? In the first instance I have said that participation in the neighbourhood is with the Trinity. Following this, the answer to the second question is that the relocator participates as a worshipper. The language of the mystical body of Christ enables the possibility of radical receptivity in that the relocator both gives and receives from neighbours. As invitation to membership within the mystical body of Christ is for all, the boundaries between church and world begin to blur. Having established this, we are now in a position to respond to the third and fourth questions posed at the start of this section. What should the relocator do with their own material resources? How should they participate when faced with suffering?

6.3 Participation Extended: Gifts and Wounds

I contend that this approach to participation enables the relocator to use their material goods and respond to suffering in such a way that is consistent with our understanding of 'being with(in)'. However, I believe that in doing this, participation is extended to such a degree that two further dimensions of 'being with(in)' emerge – 'gifts' and 'wounds'. 'Gifts' is a response to the question about what the relocator does with their material resources. As the relocator participates with the Trinity in the neighbourhood they become part of a divine gift economy. This gift economy has its source within the Trinity who is constantly blessing creation by giving to it an abundance of goods. 'Wounds' refers to how the relocator might understand what it means to be confronted by suffering. The relocator participates in the neighbourhood

as a member of the mystical body of Christ and treats neighbours as fellow members of that body. In so doing, the relocater experiences the suffering of others. Their 'wounds' become the relocater's 'wounds'. The relocater's 'wounds' become their 'wounds' and so we participate in the struggle to find healing both with and for one another. Having established a platform for the dimensions of 'gifts' and 'wounds', I will now define how I am understanding them before outlining their societal implications in practice.

6.3.1 Gifts

A potential problem with the additional dimension of 'gifts' as part of our notion of 'being with(in)' is that it could easily become 'working with(in)' rather than 'being with(in)'. It might well be argued that if the relocater is to give material goods to neighbours then at what point are they doing for or 'working for' rather than simply 'being with' them. For instance, at what point does the sharing of a meal become an act of 'working for' rather than simply a generous act between neighbours? Yet, to avoid consideration of the economic dimensions of relationship building within low-income neighbourhoods in order to maintain the purity of the concept of 'being with' is equally problematic. There is little account of goods within Wells's ethical approach. His idea in *Improvisation* that we should accept rather than block the offer of others highlights a posture of receptivity within Christian ethics. Yet, he does not develop this further with specific reference to goods. Neither is it developed within the conceptual framework of 'being with' that we are primarily concerned about. In *For Good*, Wells reflects upon the goods that the church offers society. However, these are mainly talked about as social goods not material. It is vital to consider how material goods might be understood for the relocater within our definition of 'being with(in)'. I will argue that by considering them within a complex system of gift-

exchange means that rather than increasing separation, acts of giving and receiving form a relational glue through which there is mutual benefit. This does not deny the receptivity that Wells calls for but takes it further by considering how this might be embodied in economic terms. Here I will outline the way in which I understand the concept of 'gifts'.

The notion of the 'pure gift' was an important feature within twentieth-century continental philosophy. Jacques Derrida (1992: 23) argued:

From the moment the gift would appear as gift, as such, as what it is, in its phenomenon, its sense and its essence, it would be engaged in a symbolic, sacrificial, or economic structure that would annul the gift in the ritual circle of the debt. The simple intention to give, insofar as it carries the intentional meaning of the gift, suffices to make a return payment to oneself. The simple consciousness of the gift right away sends itself back the gratifying image of goodness or generosity, of the giving being who, knowing itself to be such, recognizes itself in a circular, specular fashion, in a sort of auto-recognition, self-approval, and narcissistic gratitude.

In other words, he claims that a gift should be given anonymously otherwise it may elicit a counter-gift that nullifies the initial gift. For a gift to be a gift, he argues, it should receive nothing in return. Yet, what does this imply for relationships between the giver and receiver? Is the gift in a sense hidden from the relationship and the relationship hidden from the gift?

John Milbank contests Derrida's notion of pure gift. His argument is founded on a belief that relationships are at the heart of gift giving and receiving (Milbank 2006a: 444). The reciprocal nature of the gift, though not necessarily equivalent or symmetrical, enables social bonds to deepen and thereby encourages friendship (Milbank 1999: 35). Thus, that which disqualifies gift in Derrida, qualifies it within Milbank. The focus is not only upon the gift itself, but in the strengthening of the

relationship between giver and receiver. Gift therefore is neither a straight line or a closed circle, rather:

It is a spiral or a strange loop [...] it spirals on and on, and there is no first free gift, because to give to one another one must have received at least her presence. Likewise one cannot be grateful without a gesture, which is already a counter gift. (Milbank 2006b: 20)

Crucially, within the context of this study, this relies upon three foundations. Firstly, gift exchange relies primarily on a close proximity of producer and consumer. Thus, it develops new local economies that are ordered around gift rather than contract. This does not mean that they exist in a silo outside of the wider economy. For Milbank, importing some goods is still necessary, though they should be limited to items that cannot be produced locally and be sourced through wider patterns of trans-local gift exchange (Milbank 2006b: 14). Secondly, it is built upon a theological ethic that accounts for the economic. Milbank (2006b: 14-15) argues that Paul's understanding of virtue is both economic and political in that it is 'of a new "social" in the middle realm between *polis* and *oikos* that is equally concerned with political just distribution and with domestic care and nurture'. Thus, the virtue of practical wisdom is expressed more as giver and receiver than, as in Aristotle, the mean between reason and passion. Theologically we might say that the practice of gift exchange incorporates the development of new forms of economy or, more accurately, new economic relationships. Finally, and growing from the first two points, the focus of this gift exchange should be the common good and not the total good of cumulative wealth (Milbank 2013: 38). In contrast to the Gross Domestic Product measures used by governments and economists, gift exchange economies would prioritise the good, seeking to develop a relationally shared understanding of what it is in order to define and subordinate all financial exchanges by it and to it. Milbank's situatedness within the Catholic tradition means he sees the whole of creation expressing the glory of

God. The church is an intensification of this. Therefore, gift exchange is possible not only in a church context but should be expressed within a locality or region. In a similar way to the manner in which I defined the mystical body of Christ earlier, he argues that as we are sons and daughters in Christ, and as all objects are rendered sacred by God's love, we may give and receive even with strangers (Milbank 2006b: 19-20).

These foundations of geographic proximity between consumers and producers, new economic relationships, and the *telos* of a common good, provide 'being with(in)' with the possibility of re-incorporating material goods. The Catholic Worker's Houses of Hospitality are an example of how this might work in practice. The shared space where people lived, ate and spent time with one another created a close proximity for a new economic model to emerge. This model was not built upon a service culture in which the workers 'worked' for the guests. To resist this, the workers took a vow of voluntary poverty. They were not employed by the Catholic Worker as this would hinder the workers from offering themselves as gift. Living this way meant that they did not 'hold on to anything', nor did they protest when people took their time or privacy (Day and Ellsberg 2005: 107). The shared low standard of living was, as Mel Piehl puts it, 'a cohesive source of identity and discipline' (Piehl and Maurin 1982: 98). It also enabled them to recognise the generosity of those who through no choice of their own experienced poverty. Reflecting upon an encounter with a lady who took in a 22-year-old Puerto-Rican and her two children, Day and Maurin (1963: 72-73) write, 'but the poor are like that. Always room, always enough for one more – everyone just takes a little less'. Commenting on the Houses of Hospitality, Piehl says that 'workers and their "guests" shared whatever space was available [...] Meals were prepared in a common kitchen. Where possible, regular residents ate communally with others who came for food' (Piehl and Maurin 1982: 98). The gifts shared within

the Houses of Hospitality took a number of forms. There was the material – room and spaces shared; meals enjoyed with one another from food that was often generously donated by others outside of the houses. Skills and resources were shared. The abilities to organise by the workers themselves were matched by the cooking and generosity of the ‘guests’. Spiritual gifts not only flowed from worker to guest but vice versa as the relationships they formed became the vessel through which gifts could flow. The Catholic Worker’s Houses of Hospitality became, among many other things, an arena for a new gift economy. Their goal was to make visible the mystical body of Christ through which the common good of all was paramount.

From these explorations of ‘gifts’ I conclude that the relocater should be free to use their material resources for others. By recognising that gifts bond relationships together and that the posture of radical receptivity should be adopted, the goods exchanged are transformed from something that aids ‘working for’, to an expression of ‘being with(in)’. Furthermore, as they engage within this they are participating with Christ. As Wells argues, the sharing of meals reminds the relocater of the abundance of God not the scarcity of resources. It is transferred from a ‘working for’ action, to an act of worship (Wells 2006: 8). To ensure that this is the case, relocators must consider some of the barriers that may hinder this. It may not mean, as for the Catholic Workers, that they should take a vow of voluntary poverty, but that they are careful to ensure that any employment or leadership role they have is not a hindrance to the mutuality of giving and receiving. As we will discover, viewing material goods as gifts that may be exchanged develops new possibilities for economic relationships that offer alternatives to societal norms.

6.3.2 Wounds

Having sought to explain how 'gifts' become a dimension of 'being with(in)' that enables the relocator to respond to need with their own material resources, I will now address how the relocator might participate with neighbours who are suffering. My argument is that Wells does not pay enough attention to the specificity of the suffering that individuals may face. For a relocator it raises the question, do we want healing and relief of suffering for our neighbour?

Mary McClintock Fulkerson argues that the first task of practical theology is to describe the situation. This is not purely a sociological task as theology is already engaged as 'a sensibility that initiates the inquiry at the outset' (Fulkerson 2007: 13). In her ethnographic study of a North American congregation, she identifies several fractures that are evident within the congregation, including race and disability. These fractures are not necessarily specific to the situation alone but are impacted by, and are symbolic of, the wounds of wider society. Rather than understanding the wound as something to be avoided, McClintock argues that attentiveness to the wound may be generative in addressing the 'social segregations' experienced by congregational members. She confesses her own sense of woundedness in the 'obliviousness' or 'not seeing' that often leads to aversive action to avoid engagement (Fulkerson 2007: 19). Fulkerson (2007: 21) writes, 'the wounds of those victimised by obliviousness are not identical [to those who experience the segregation], but complexly experienced'. Crucially she is arguing that all experience woundedness when in a context of marginalisation. Her response is that ways must be found for each of these wounds to be made visible. It is my contention that in seeking to be 'with(in)', the relocator is made aware of the wounds of neighbours and the neighbourhood as a whole and, at the same time, they realise their own woundedness and the ways in

which society in general is wounded. Part of their practice should be to find ways in which these wounds are made visible. For Cavanaugh, the world is wounded and, throughout *Field Hospital* he explores the wounds of the economy, politics and violence (Cavanaugh 2016: 6). Thus, the wounds of poverty are wide and far-reaching.

Frederick Bauerschmidt theologically outlines two types of wound: the wound of violence and its antithesis, the wound of love. The wound of violence is 'characterised by presence and not absence' (Bauerschmidt 1991: 87). By using the analogy of an injury caused by a nail, Bauerschmidt argues that the nail fills the wound by its effect even when physically it has been removed. He argues that evil is not simply the privation of the good but something that is present as a force in the world. Evil, Bauerschmidt (1991: 87) claims, 'invades and fills every empty space with itself and suffocates all possibility'. In this sense, poverty is a wound of violence. The wound of love, on the other hand, is characterised by self-opening and self-emptying. Bauerschmidt (1991: 87) writes, 'it is a wound because it is an opening of the smooth, self-contained surface of divinity so that power, life, and beauty flow out'. Crucially, the wounds are not kept separate, as in Christ's death the wound of violence and the wound of love meet. This is not a dialectical relation between the two, rather in the Crucified Christ we find 'the eternal overcoming of violence with love' (Bauerschmidt 1991: 88).

Before defining how poverty may be understood as a wound by both those who experience it as well as by wider society, I want to clarify my use of the term. It is true that all of humanity is wounded in some way. Yet, at the same time, it is caused, suffered and experienced in many different ways. It may be caused biologically,

through illness or infirmity, or through interactions with people who we may, or may not have intended to wound. The wound may find healing or remain unhealed, and that may be a process that happens over different durations of time.

Poverty as a wound has two particular dimensions to it. Firstly, the wound is experienced by those who live in poverty. Secondly, the wound is experienced by wider society as within it there are members afflicted by poverty. It is important to note that these two types of wounds are different. The first is experienced personally, the second only corporately. Here we might draw analogy to the difference between suffering and affliction in the work of Simone Weil. She suggests that there are three types of suffering: physical, psychological and social (Soelle 1989: 13). However, it is when these combine that affliction occurs.⁷⁶ By distinguishing between the 'ordinariness of suffering' and the 'horror of affliction' she creates a crucial distinction that might help us to understand in what ways poverty may be considered a wound. Affliction goes beyond the psychological state to 'a pulverization of the soul by the mechanical brutality of circumstances' (Panichas 1981: 462). This often renders the afflicted with a sense that they have little agency to overcome their suffering. In Weil's schema, those who experience poverty are afflicted whereas the wound of poverty for 'non-poor' citizens and society in general is a form of suffering. To argue that society is afflicted by poverty runs the risk of trivialising the experiences of those who are directly struggling against poverty. Thus, the non-poor are only indirectly wounded in a collective sense as citizens of society. I am not claiming that only people in poverty are afflicted or directly wounded. An aspect of the human experience is that

⁷⁶ One of the potential consequences of affliction is wounding. Although this is not inevitable, in the way that I am approaching wounds it is synonymous with it.

all are wounded for various reasons in some way. Rather, the wound of poverty is only directly experienced as affliction by those with a lived experience of poverty.

Poverty as a wound is consistent with Wells's theory of poverty. It fits with his insistence that the human condition is characterised by dislocation. Yet, I want to extend this along the same trajectory of 'being with(in)' that I have outlined so far. A response limited to 'being with' may only be attentive to acknowledging the wound experienced by the person. As has been noted before albeit with different words, what such a response does not do is attend to the conditions that have contributed to the wounding. A danger is that tacitly we are saying that the person should 'put up and cope with it'. Dorothee Soelle argues that this kind of implicit attitude has two implications. It results in personal masochism through which the person grins and bears it. It affirms society and serves to 'stabilize existing conditions' rather than challenging them (Soelle and Oliver 2006: 115). In many respects we become complicit within what Weil describes as a political process of denial. 'Being with(in)' refuses to ignore the societal factors that have contributed to the wound. Through the practices of 'deep listening' and 'hearing to speech' which I characterised as 'cries' within the last chapter, society becomes attentive to the lived experience of the wounds and seeks to respond.

There are two major theological risks in addressing poverty as wounds. On the one hand, we might argue that the wounded are categorised solely or primarily as suffering victims. This is too simplistic in that even though someone may be wounded, it does not mean that they do not have the potential to either transcend their own wounds or to wound others. On the other hand, it runs the risk of affirming woundedness as a positive experience. For Weil, suffering cannot be redeemed or

'put to use' within this life. Yet, as Bauerschmidt argues, on the cross the wound of violence is overcome by the wound of love. So, it may be possible that poverty is a wound of violence for the person experiencing poverty and, at the same time, a wound of love for society as a whole. My claim is that this can only be so if, in some way, the wound of violence becomes transformative for the individual themselves. Logically, the wound can only be transformative for society if its essence can be transformed in the life of the person.

Theological transformation is possible if the wound is understood as sharing in the wounds of Christ. In her reflections upon the John of the Cross's *Dark Night of the Soul*, Soelle believes that this is the case. Soelle (2001: 143) writes that 'John of the Cross weaves into language what dolorous mysticism deeply yearned for, namely stigmatization, Christ's wounds breaking forth in one's own body'. This also shows how wounds are related to stigma. The origins of the word stigma are the branding of Greek and Roman slaves for identification. Thus, the wound experienced is a stigma that not only identifies you but joins you in some sort of union with the body of Christ. Through the cross, the wound of violence is overcome by the wound of love. Yet, the gospel accounts reveal how Christ's wounds are still present within the resurrected body. In a sense, God chooses to take the eternal form of woundedness even when the wound of violence has been overcome. As Erika Murphy (2013: 18) states:

Christ offers a unique site of vulnerability that opens up and pours forth, entering into the world while remaining radically enclosed in mystery. Categories of inner and outer, divine and human both conspire and dissolve. It is here, within the interstitial somatic spaces that seem to offer a space for connecting with Christ both as God and as the manifestation of our own wounded humanity. But it is a humanity that finds its potential as human through and with the world and the divine.

Thus, the trauma that may have caused the wound of violence is not forgotten as it remains visible within the body. It is reframed within the possibility of new life and may become a source of reconciliation and transformation for the individual. The wound itself has a *telos* of resurrection, and, at the same time, becomes a space through which humanity may experience salvation. As the wound is transformed for the individual, the wound of poverty may now be attended to by society. Its salvific nature not only transforms the individual but enables society to discover grace through the wound of poverty. As Bauerschmidt (1991: 97) argues:

Christ is especially present in the poor not only because they share his wound of violence, but also because in their wound his wound of love seeks in a particular way to enact its healing. The wound of love is drawn by compassion to the wound of violence; from its own otherness it calls out to the otherness of that wound and is impelled by its own fecund nature to draw that wound into itself so that it might be healed and reborn.

For Bauerschmidt, as for Dorothy Day, recognising that through Christ we are not simply individual bodies, but are part of the corporate body of Christ, provides the possibility of healing for one another. He concludes, 'as the body of the crucified, we bear both wounds of love and wounds of violence' (Bauerschmidt 1991: 97).

Dorothy Day's practice of radical love is an expression of the encounter between the wounds of love and violence. The poor are understood as the victims of systemic injustice (Klejment and Roberts 1996: 5). Thus, the system has inflicted a wound of violence upon them. However, Day is also aware of how she was complicit within this system. In her reflections upon the Chicago massacre of 1937, in which ten steel workers were killed by police during a strike, she asks who is to blame for the deaths. Her argument is that all are complicit within these deaths 'as we have not "gone to the workingman" as the Holy Father pleads and repeats' (Day 2015: 227). She then pleads for forgiveness to Christ whose 'precious blood was shed even for that

policeman whose cudgel smashed again and again the skull of that poor striker' (Day 2015: 227). Yet, the Catholic Worker's response to those who have experienced the wound of violence was not to fix them, but to love them (Day and Ellsberg 2005: 97-98). To do the former would be to fill the wound with their own presence and through doing so potentially compound the violence. Rather, by attentiveness alongside them, the wound of love might overcome the wound of violence. This both required, and produced, a revolution of love (O'Connor 1991: 91-94) and an enlarging of the heart of the Catholic Worker (Merriman 1994: 222). It is held together, for Day, by the vision of the mystical body of Christ (Day and Ellsberg 2005: 91). It is a sharing in the suffering of others and allowing the wounds of others to expose our own.

From these reflections on poverty as wound a number of important implications for the relocater practising 'being with(in)' have been highlighted. In the first place, the relocater is choosing to attend to the wounds of others. Relocators are, to use Deborah Nelson's phrase, 'drawn to suffering as a problem to be explored' (Nelson 2017: 8). Their understanding of the wound is intensified by their proximity to, and relationship building with, those who experience it first-hand. Secondly, it is crucial that relocators are self-reflexive. Proximity to the wounds of poverty will reveal ways in which the relocator themselves are wounded. These should be acknowledged and seen as providing the possibility of empathy and solidarity with neighbours. However, it is important to recognise that these are not equivalent to the wounds of poverty. They are of a different order and attempting to equate them may itself wound others. A further aspect of reflexivity is the recognition that directly and indirectly the relocater has been and is complicit within the violence experienced by others. Finally, Day's personalism reminds us that all wounds may be caused, suffered and experienced in ways unique to that person. By expressing radical love, relocators are able to draw

near and experience how the wound is reframed by the resurrected Christ. Their neighbours and neighbourhoods become places of potentiality where the wounds of society may find salvation, and, at the same time, they may discover healing for their own wounds.

6.4 Economic and Political Implications of ‘Gifts’ and ‘Wounds’

So far, in this chapter I outlined that a simplistic understanding of society in which the state dominates is unhelpful for the relocater in understanding how to participate politically and societally in a neighbourhood. By addressing an ecclesiological outlook that emphasises the mystical body of Christ, participation is enhanced and expanded to such a degree that the dimensions of ‘gifts’ and ‘wounds’ emerge. I will now draw these potentially divergent strands together by arguing that new kinds of economic, political and societal relationships are formed and performed by practising gift giving and by being attentive to wounds. In effect, these create new and more localised forms of economics and politics. To show this, I will outline how both dimensions reframe economics and politics before raising possibilities for the role of the relocators, outlining examples of how these new framings and roles might be practised. Importantly, these may become examples of how low-income neighbourhoods may contribute to wider society. These experiments in alternative forms of economy and politics are temporal, partial and particular. They may not yet be fully developed but give an insight into how society may navigate complexity in the future. In many respects they are experiments in ‘innovation, experimentation and creativity’ that we noted were necessary in complex situations (Snowden and Boone 2007: 193). It is important to remember that participation in this way is not outcome-focused for the relocater, but an act of worship as a member of the mystical body of Christ.

6.4.1 Gifts: Alternative Economic Practice

It is my claim, along with Milbank and the Catholic Worker movement, that through the giving and receiving of gifts relationships flourish. The practice of gift giving creates spaces where the dominant, capitalist, market-driven economy is subverted by open-handed relationships, a key component of which is the necessary close proximity of relationship that enables the gifts expressed to be relationally interconnected. The gifts exchanged may be material, for example food, a skill, like carpentry, or educative. As a dimension of 'being with(in)', the gifts must be shared relationally in order to enhance reciprocity and delight in one another.

To help outline how this might appear in the practice of a relocater I will give an example from our experience in East End Park. In one particular part of our neighbourhood there were a few streets of houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs). The households often comprised of upwards of five men, who claimed welfare benefits and often struggled against multiple and complex challenges. Mary, a close friend of ours, lived on one of these streets. She was known as a caring and considerate neighbour and some of the men would often knock on her door to ask her for help. This often included asking for food. For a number of months, we ensured that her basement was stocked with food that she would be able to give to her neighbours.

After a while, Mary thought it would be a good idea to have a meal every week with her neighbours. She asked my wife and I to help her and we decided that the small community room in the church across the road would be a suitable venue. Our concern was that we did not establish a 'soup kitchen' to which neighbours would simply turn up, eat their food and leave. Rather, we wanted it to become akin to a

family meal together. Consequently, there was not to be any written impersonal publicity. Rather, Mary would visit everyone and invite them personally. Also, we would invite them to be there when we were setting up so that, if they wanted, they could help make the food and decide what should be on the menu. Soon, people started coming to the meals. The room was often cold as the heating sometimes did not work. At the start our cooking implements were electric camping stoves and a mini oven. It was basic, but relationships started to form. A highlight was when one of the neighbours invited someone in and said, 'don't be scared – we're family'.

An offshoot of the meal developed when Mary and a few neighbours managed to secure the use of some derelict land. Over six months, they transformed the space into a little garden area where they grew their own food. Four years on, a poly-tunnel later and an appearance on BBC Radio 4's Gardeners' World, this little growing group meet every week, on one day to eat and on the next day to garden together.

The gifts in this story are many. The presence of Mary, the food that is shared, the washing up that is done, the soil that is turned over, and the relationships that hold these gift exchanges together. This might not challenge the dominance of capitalism internationally, but for a couple of moments in the week, in a strange corner of east Leeds, the giving of gifts to one another creates an alternative economics. Our role as relocators should also be reflected upon within this example. We were not necessarily there to do the meals for Mary and her neighbours. Rather, we used our agency to ensure that the church would trust us all to run the meals. We supported Mary in taking the lead, and we received way more than we gave from those who attended. Furthermore, the confidence that was developed by Mary and her

neighbours through the meal meant that we were not needed in any way when it came to develop the growing project.

A capitalist imagination is often applied to responding to issues of food poverty. Foodbanks that rely on referrals continue a logic of the 'deserving' poor and, in the process, may dehumanise those who are struggling.⁷⁷ Creative responses that prioritise relationships by practising gift exchange subvert the economic norms. Initially these economies of gift exchange will be localised and small. However, the work of the Focolare movement that started in Trent, Northern Italy and has spread to other towns in Europe and to other continents, is evidence that the potential of gift exchange to complexify and exist within a broader economic practice is possible (Gold 2010).⁷⁸

6.4.2 Wounds: Alternative Political Practice

I have claimed that poverty within neighbourhoods can be understood as a wound of violence. Furthermore, I argued that this wound is experienced directly by those who experience poverty, and indirectly by wider society. Soelle argues that an effect of affliction may be that the one who is experiencing it becomes silent. This may be understood collectively as well as for individuals. Commenting on workers within a German factory who were experiencing terrible working conditions, Soelle (1989: 66) writes, 'among the young workers this fear finds expression in a fear of talking to one another. A part of the burden of suffering is that folks don't talk to one another'. In

⁷⁷ Charles Pemberton has argued for this in 'Between Ecclesiology and Ontology: A Response to Christ Allen on British Foodbanks' (2018).

⁷⁸ The Focolore movement developed the 'Economy of Communion' that draws together entrepreneurs, workers, directors, citizens, scholars, economists to promote an economic culture imprinted on communion, gratuity and reciprocity. See <http://www.edc-online.org/en/eoc/about-eoc.html> [accessed 22nd January 2019].

turn, this further isolates those who are suffering both from society as a whole and from one another. She suggests that there are three phases to overcoming this suffering. The first phase is muteness, and a prerequisite for the person to move on from this, which 'is the conviction that we live a world that can be changed' (Soelle 1989: 70). I would suggest that this is the first responsibility of the relocater, to help the neighbour by gently challenging the inevitability of their circumstances. In phase two, a language must be found 'that leads out of the uncomprehended suffering [...] a language of lament, of crying, of pain, a language that at least says what the situation is' (Soelle 1989: 70). Phase three for Soelle is liberation from the suffering. Soelle (1989: 74) writes, 'the way leads out of isolated suffering though communication (by lament) to the solidarity in which change occurs'. Through this solidarity, action commences through which change can occur.

In this process Soelle reflects a liberation theology approach to social change. Solidarity is built between those who are oppressed to the point where they seek to challenge the oppressive system. More often than not, this is the government. However, as I sought to show earlier in the chapter, this is too simplistic a reading of society and the powers that are at work within them. Furthermore, the wound of poverty to which the wider society should be attentive demands that a less combative approach is necessary. By developing places where links of solidarity can be formed between people experiencing poverty and individuals from organisations that explicitly or implicitly have contributed to the wound of poverty, a new political arena may be formed. This builds upon the account of justice I developed in the last chapter. The vision of the political arena is to embody good relationships, and this can only be done when, to use Rowan Williams's phrase, the 'communicative body' of all

participants is realised (Williams 2012: 152). I will illustrate how a relocater may practise this political alternative by reflecting on my own experience.

Every Good Friday in East End Park we would walk to places in our neighbourhood where loss had been experienced. The destinations included derelict factories, closed-down pubs, and waste land where housing once stood. The 'stations' also included sites of crime and places where people had committed suicide. We would spend time at each venue, praying a liturgy that focused upon a specific loss that the particular place symbolised.⁷⁹ It was an opportunity for neighbours to lament the loss that was part of the woundedness of the neighbourhood. On one particular Good Friday I walked with Mary. As we talked about the loss, I was aware of the need for people like Mary to be able to communicate about it to others within the city who had the power to make a difference. It was from this conversation, and others like it, that the idea of the Leeds Poverty Truth Commission developed. In February 2018, four years after its launch, the commission published its Humanifesto. The twenty-nine commissioners, some who were civic and business leaders, others who had a direct experience of poverty, all agreed that poverty dehumanises everyone in the city. A key way in which this took place was the isolation experienced by people who found themselves financially poor. The commissioners believed a downward spiral between

⁷⁹ This is an example of our Good Friday liturgies. This particular prayer was prayed outside a disused pub.

In an area that used to boast the end of the Leeds' pub crawl we recognise that many of the gathering places have been lost. In 7 years, 7 local pubs have closed in the area. The third places of conversation, where people shared life and built friendships have one by one closed down until we are left with the bare minimum. Many older people in East End Park remind us that 'you used to be able to buy anything here.' The boarded up and disused shops are evidence of this. We acknowledge that the lack of access to basic necessities and healthy food is a loss to this neighbourhood.

Father, we consider it loss that there are few places to meet with others in East End Park and Cross Green. We find it difficult to meet new people and those who have been here for years feel the loss of not having anywhere to be with old friends. As we join our neighbours in grieving this loss, as East End Park and Cross Green groan that there are only a few places to meet together, we gather this loss with vulnerability and give it to you.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

poverty and isolation was formed that led to low self-esteem, depression and a sense of being disconnected from wider society. Key to subverting this was to overcome the 'them and us' that they argued characterised society. The commissioners believed that through building relationships with each across societal divides, they were no longer divided but were united in wanting to bring change. As one business leader claimed, 'we have become the community that Leeds needs to be'.

It is my contention that a community was formed as numerous wounds were acknowledged and shared by the injured parties. Whether that is the wound of poverty, the wound of not being able to 'fix' poverty, or the fear of falling into poverty. These wounds of violence were acknowledged and addressed in such a way that together the commissioners had sought to overcome them as a body. The commission will not eradicate poverty in Leeds. However, it has created an alternative political space where relationships are formed across the divides, difficult issues are addressed, and localised change might begin to happen. The role of the relocater within this example was simply to identify the wounds in their neighbourhood, be attentive to others and provide a space where the wounds could be acknowledged by leaders within the city.

One valid concern that the dimensions of gifts and wounds may provoke is whether there is a danger that they become idealised. The theory of both may promote a purist understanding of how gift exchange and attentiveness to wounds might be practised. For example, I am not claiming that the relocater should always give material goods regardless of the situation. Following Millbank's argument that gift exchange is the bond of relationship I would conclude that to continue to offer gifts when the neighbour has come to expect them and offers nothing in return is binding oneself to a

relationship that has potentially grown unhealthy. The relationship has become one of donor and recipient and so to continue to operate in this way will strengthen the power imbalance. Clearly, discernment to know when this is the case is an important habit that the relocater should develop.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to further extend and enhance the understanding of 'being with(in)'. In doing this I have shown how 'being with(in)' responds to the three criticisms of 'being with' I outlined within the introduction. By thickening the description of political and societal change beyond an obsession with government I have sought to outline how the relocater may participate within the life of a neighbourhood. Looking through the theological lens of the mystical body of Christ, participation births two further dimensions of 'being with(in)', 'gifts' and 'wounds'. Focusing upon gifts enables 'being with(in)' to express how goods and resources may be used within a neighbourhood framework that is consistent with, and developing of, other dimensions. Being attentive to wounds enables the relocater to help neighbours articulate the suffering of poverty and provides opportunities to build solidarity with people both inside and outside the neighbourhood. It is my conclusion that new forms of economics and politics may emerge from these dimensions that have the potential to disrupt the status quo.

7. Conclusion

In this thesis I have addressed the theological practice of people who have intentionally relocated to low-income neighbourhoods within the United Kingdom. My particular focus has been to develop a theological language that provides a description of the practice and provokes the relocater to consider the hitherto underdeveloped societal and political implications of relocation. I have argued that the reason this potential has not previously been reached is primarily because of deficiencies within the theological and sociological language used by relocators. By outlining my proposal of 'being with(in)' I offer a language that responds to this by orientating the relocator to build relationships of radical reciprocity with their neighbours. These relationships enable both relocator and neighbour to overcome barriers that limit their participations as citizens. I have also claimed that the practice of relocation might enable the unheard wisdom of local people to be heard in political and societal discourse about poverty.

In this final chapter I will initially summarise the conclusions of my thesis before outlining what I consider to be the limitations of my research. The main limitation I identify is that whilst the argument of this thesis has opened up the possibility for the voices of local people from low-income neighbourhoods to be heard in wider society, I have not offered the substance of what they are saying. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, much of what might be said is context specific and so, in the long term, focusing on process might enable a plethora of voices to be heard from a range of neighbourhoods. Secondly, the focus of this study is the practice of relocation. Although I am interested in the wisdom that will be generated from within the neighbourhood, this is a by-product of the practice I am examining. Having outlined

the limitations of the thesis I will conclude by putting forward the implications of my research for the practice, for theology, and for the church and society, and proposing possibilities for further research.

7.1 Summary of Conclusions

Initially the thesis highlighted the motivations that relocators have for moving to low-income neighbourhoods. I argued that although the ecclesial, missional and personal discipleship motivations are well developed within the literature about the practice, the political and societal implications are not. In order to construct a theological language that not only describes this, but is generative to its possibilities, I began to clear the ground of theological and sociological language that relocators were using which I considered restrictive. In the first place, I focused upon the term incarnational living that is used by many practitioners. I discussed how this was unhelpful as it implied a static understanding of a 'monochrome' culture within a neighbourhood; it confused the role of the relocator with that of Christ and the Holy Spirit; and it portrayed a reductionist Christology. Underlying my concerns was that the manner in which the terms was used did not give enough theological consideration to the incarnation as a particular event in history and, as such, was not and could not be repeated or imitated by people. Instead I proposed that the relocator participates with Christ, a theme that recurs throughout my thesis.

In the third chapter I sought to develop the lived experience of neighbourhood poverty. By focusing on neighbourhoods in Leeds, I argued that the relocator should carefully adopt sociological and geographical frameworks that challenge the status quo of politics and society. I showed how relationships within a neighbourhood are constantly in flux and that relationship building for the relocator should not be limited

only to people within it but should seek to be a way of connecting to the wider city. I described low-income neighbourhoods as experiencing a 'hollowing out' in which services, institutions and work places have closed. This damages a neighbourhood's economic, social and relational infrastructure. By interpreting this hollowing out through the lens of social citizenship, the relocator will realise that new ways of relating need to be developed to replace this loss. However, the suspicion felt towards institutions may mean that the relocator will need to focus upon informal relationships at first. In doing this, the vulnerability of neighbours should be recognised but not accepted as a total description of their identity. Rather, there is a strong sense of resilience where people and place continue to survive despite the challenges that they face. Thus, the relocator should begin to challenge stereotypes of their neighbourhood by seeking to emphasise the positive and unique contribution neighbours make.

Having cleared the ground of limiting language and begun to offer frameworks for interpreting the neighbourhood, I made the main proposal of the thesis, that 'being with(in)' describes the nature of the practice of relocation and contains generative possibilities for politics and society more widely. I accept and acknowledge the significant contribution that Samuel Wells's trope of 'being with' makes to understanding the practice of relocators. I argued that it orientates the relocator to seek out relationships that do not turn their neighbourhood into a problem to be solved, but a place where Christ may be experienced through one another. Although I accepted Wells's description of the human predicament as isolation, I claimed his description of it over-rejects the limitations, both practical and theoretical, that inhibit relationships. Rather than simply working inside the parameters of these limitations, the relocator must seek to challenge them and overcome them with their neighbours.

In particular, I focused upon the sense of loss experienced by the neighbourhood following processes that have hollowed it out. In doing this I developed a proposal that 'being with' is extended to 'being with'(in). The 'in' means that as residents of the neighbourhood, the relocators experiences its limitations alongside their neighbours. Therefore, the practice contains within it a sense of solidarity with neighbours to challenge societal and political barriers together. The brackets around the 'in' are there to denote the ambiguity of the practice. On one hand the relocator is as much a resident as anyone else. On the other, they also bring a different set of experiences, skills and, most crucially, relational connectedness with others outside the neighbourhood than may previously have been there. Used well, this sense of agency may encourage their neighbours to engage in overcoming the social and political barriers.

The rest of the thesis responded primarily to three concerns I raised about 'being with'. These concerns were that 'being with' is passive in the face of dehumanising structures, that it does not give an adequate account of material goods, and it is ambivalent to the specific suffering neighbours encounter. In doing this, I extended and expanded my articulation of 'being with(in)' by engaging initially with public theology. Through the practices of 'deep listening' and 'hearing to speech', a further dimension of 'being with(in)' was established. I called this 'cries'. This is attentive to the lived experience of neighbours and seeks to develop places of public theology where the cries of local people might be heard first hand in societal discourse. I also sought to show how both public theology and post-liberal theology might go beyond focusing on the state and, in the process, developed two further dimensions of 'being with(in)' – gifts and wounds. Through creating opportunities for gift exchange within the neighbourhood, new economic alternatives stimulate the local economy in such

a way that relationships between neighbours are strengthened. Wounds relates to an acknowledgment of the specific suffering faced by people who experience poverty and more generally, the wound of poverty in society as a whole. I argued that both sets of wounds require attentiveness for all people and, through creating spaces for this to happen, the relocator may be well positioned to initiate new political relationships alongside economic ones.

An important claim I make within the thesis is that relocators are a new generation of practical, public theologians. I argue that they have a unique contribution to make to theology and to the public. In *Radical Help*, Hilary Cottam seeks to propose how new relationships might be made between citizens and the welfare state. She argues that the system established seventy years ago does not account for twenty-first century challenges such as an ageing population and low pay for workers. She diagnoses the problem as a breakdown in relationships. She writes, ‘this paucity of relationships affects our understandings of the world, our rich enjoyment and our material chances since now, more than ever, whom we know affects who we can be and what we can do’ (Cottam 2018: 42). Crucially she argues that this exposes a fatal flaw within how the welfare state was originally conceived. This was not unacknowledged by its main architect, William Beveridge who’s third report, *Voluntary Action*, recognises that in his influencing of the welfare state he had overlooked and limited the power of the citizen and of communities. Notably he concludes, ‘with the passage from class rule to representative democracy, little can be done except by influencing directly, not a few leaders, but the mass of the people’ (Beveridge 2014: 322). My argument is that relocators are positioned to reconnect citizens and communities from some of the most marginalised communities with society, church and politics. This is a necessary action for any practical, public theology.

7.2 Limitations, implications and further research

A number of the limiting factors of this thesis stem from the disorientating and reorientating nature of the practice itself. This has been exemplified in my own journey of relocation and, more latterly, dislocation with and from low-income neighbourhoods. As I stated in Chapter One, relocating to East End Park was marked by several moments of disorientation and reorientation. These have often paralleled my doctoral research and so, the precise nature of my thesis has, at times, seemed something like a moving feast. Thus, early on, and especially following my Ministerial Formation Study at King's College, London, I decided not to conduct any further empirical research with relocators themselves. Whilst this decision enabled me to focus upon the published material of relocators, it has meant that it is often the voices of leaders of groups and support agencies that are most clearly heard. Thus, the voice of relocators is only partial. More crucially for my thesis, the disorientating process of relocation alongside my doctoral research meant that the early decision not to conduct research amongst neighbourhood members may have limited the research. If hearing the cries of local people is a major concern, as indeed it is, it would have been valuable to hear directly what the particular cries are. Although some of the sociological research addressed in Chapter Three provides some of this, it may well have been beneficial to develop some more explicitly ethnographic data from people themselves. Whilst recognising the validity of both of these concerns, what I have sought to develop is an understanding of the practice that will act as a provocation to practitioners to pay close attention to and participate with ways in which the voices of people with a direct experience of poverty may be heard. In some ways I would argue that developing a theological rationale for relocators to enable local people to engage within wider society is of greater service to the practice and, as I have already concluded, to theology and society more generally. These processes may help a

multitude of voices to be heard rather than a few specific voices from particular situations. If this is the case, there are a number of important implications of this study for the practice itself, for theology, for the church and for society.

7.2.1 Implications and Further Research for the Practice of Relocation

The primary purpose of this research has been to develop a language for the practice that enables relocators to faithfully engage in relationship building in their neighbourhoods. In the introduction I suggested that arising from relocators' descriptions of their practice, there were five key criteria this language should consider if it is to be faithful to the relocators' motivations. They were that it emphasised working alongside and with the local community; that it challenged the wider church as to how it engages in issues of poverty; that it takes account of mystery; that it recognises the reciprocity in relationships with neighbours; and that it enables the relocator to engage in public debates about poverty. I have shown throughout the thesis that 'being with(in)' is appropriate orientating language that satisfies these criteria. Furthermore, I suggest that by practising their mission as outlined within the dimensions of 'being with(in)' means that the relocator will be attentive to the neighbour in such a way that they enable the neighbour to engage in political and societal dialogue. A potential metaphor for this is that the relocator becomes the midwife for the practical wisdom neighbours might offer.⁸⁰ Mary Grey argues that this metaphor, rather than owning or controlling wisdom, nurtures it to birth. She argues for a 'connected knowing' that understands God's revelation through relationship with others and with creation, that listens to 'discourses forgotten, ignored and as yet undiscovered' (Grey 1993: 63). I argue that this is precisely what

⁸⁰ The metaphor of midwife was also used by Ivan Illich to describe the church's role within mission (Illich 1970: 105).

the relocator should be doing in their practice. They should be attentive to the lives of others and not passive observers, bringing their own wisdom, and that of the tradition, as a participant in the birthing of new expressions of practical wisdom. This wisdom is often neglected by church and society. Undergirding this is a belief that, as Grey puts it, 'in the hearing into speech of the forgotten wisdom of connected knowing would lie the healing of the land' (Grey 1993: 84).

There are several potential weaknesses in using this metaphor. One is that the midwife, in a sense, is not co-creational. However, it might be argued that the Spirit is the creative force within this wisdom rather than the relocator themselves. It may also be argued that the metaphor means that the relocator is always distinct from others within the neighbourhood. I argue that the relocator's broader range of experience, the ontology of their practice and their theological purpose for living there mean that, by definition, they are distinct. Yet, whilst acknowledging this metaphor is not the only way of understanding this practice, it is a helpful lens through which some of the limitations of theological language used by relocators can be viewed.

I suggest that there is further research that may be conducted that will further develop the practice of relocation. A key area would be in addressing the nature of leadership within low-income neighbourhoods. Linked with this is how associational living might be stimulated in such a way that it enables local leadership to develop and embodies the political voice of residents. With regard to the relocator themselves, I am aware that I have not discussed spiritual practices that will support their political and societal engagement. Some constructive work may be carried out around how the relocator flourishes within the unknowns of the neighbourhood and the unknowns of their ministry.

7.2.2 Implications and Further Research for Theology

In this thesis I have focused primarily on three schools of theology: practical, post-liberal and public. I argue that my thesis has implications for each of these schools in different ways. For practical theology it responds to Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore's concerns that practical theologians 'have emphasised our contributions to methodology or how to go about theology' above the content that it produces (Miller-McLemore 2016: 176). I believe that my research helps theological reflection on the practice of relocation by bringing theological voices into dialogue with one another. Further research upon the practice of relocation will strengthen the contribution of relocation to the wider discipline. In particular, ethnographic research alongside relocators which enables greater clarity of understanding of the lived experience of poverty and its consequences would be beneficial. It may also include an examination of the ecclesiological implications of the practice that are under-developed in my own thesis. Ethnographic research may also have implications for post-liberal theology in that it might question further some of the divisions between world, society, state and the church. I have argued that it is possible to hold to a post-liberal position and develop a response to dehumanising structures as an extension of this position. Justice as embodied by the church and justice within society can be united if one reframes what a neighbourhood lacks as a limitation on collective, social rights. Through this, virtue may be developed within the neighbourhood in such a way that it might offer practical wisdom to wider society. Finally, relocators offer practical wisdom by developing a public theology whose imagination is less fixated upon policy change and more on helping the country as a whole make better moral choices; a public theology that allows new forms of associational life to develop within neighbourhoods; and a public theology that narrows the gap between local voices and public pronouncement. I am aware that further research is needed to show the

specific practices through which relocators might develop public theology in these ways.

7.2.3 Implications and Further Research for the Wider Church

The main contribution I believe this thesis makes for the wider church is to highlight the vital contribution the practice of relocation makes to the church's mission in low-income neighbourhoods. For those organisations and denominations who support people to relocate, the thesis provides language to understand the model of ministry that is being practised. Furthermore, the language of 'being with(in)' has potential implications for other practices within marginalised communities. A key hope is that I have enlarged the language of 'being with' in such a way that it remains coherent and increases its impact. Further work is necessary to discover what mechanisms might close the gap between the public pronouncements of the church on poverty, the relocators and their neighbours.

7.2.4 Implications for Society

The practice of relocation enables often unheard voices to be heard by society through catalysing the voice of local people to share their own wisdom. By recognising themselves as citizens, neighbours realise they have a contribution to make to society. The nature of this contribution is wisdom that is based upon an embodied reality as it develops new economic and political relationships which offer society possible approaches to addressing the marginalisation many low-income neighbourhoods experience. For the most part, this wisdom has been forgotten. As Mary Grey says, 'this wisdom of connected knowing would challenge the logic which allowed the exploitation of the earth' (Grey 1993: 84).

7.3 Just Friendships

Within the limitations of this study I hope to have developed a hope-filled horizon for relocators and for the neighbourhoods they live within. I am aware that I have not at any point commented on the title of the thesis – ‘Just Friendship’. I have saved this for the last word. The title originates in an experience I had at a meeting of providers of care and support for people living with multiple and complex needs within East End Park. In general, this was shorthand for people living with addictions of various kinds. At the meeting were public and third sector representatives. Their worlds were dominated by outcomes, outputs, key performance indicators and measurables. They referred to those they were supporting as clients or customers. As the meeting progressed, I grew increasingly irritated. The language being used about some of my neighbours seemed dehumanising. After a while, I was asked to talk about the weekly meal we had where many of the people we were considering in the meeting came to cook and eat together.⁸¹ A leading authority on addiction within the city asked me what the goal of our meal was. My reply was ‘just friendship’. My answer seemed to annoy the questioner, so she clarified her question. ‘No, what do you want to happen for those who attend?’ she asked. ‘Just friendship with us and one another’, I replied. In some ways, that one story sums up this whole thesis. Relocators should not reduce their neighbours to being identified by their specific problems. Rather, they are potential friends because, as they are invited to be members of the mystical body of Christ, they are companions of Christ. Therefore, our relationships should be formed out of the hope of friendship with one another. Yet, there is a ‘just’ dynamic to this friendship. ‘Just Friendship’ contains an understanding of justice whose eschatological vision of good relationships means that those who struggle against poverty are able to speak truth to power. In East End Park, this has led to one resident

⁸¹ In the previous chapter I used this meal as an example of what I meant by ‘gifts’.

offering her 'cries' in the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in Westminster and through prayers in St. Peter's, Vatican City. That person was not one of our team of relocators. Rather, they were a friend who was a long-term resident of East End Park with whom we just had a friendship.

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