If it looks like religion, smells like religion and tastes like religion, is it religion? A study into why people bring their infant child to baptism when they do not attend Church.

A thesis submitted for the degree of PHD

4th July 2019

Richard W. Bunday

Department of Religious Studies

Lancaster University

CONTENTS

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

The thesis presented is entirely my own work and has not been previously presented for the award of a higher degree anywhere. The views expressed here are those of the author and not of Lancaster University.

Richard W. Bunday

4th July 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many people I need to thank, the list is endless and I do not wish to give a roll of names. However, I am indebted to Professor Andrew Dawson whose academic guidance and personal empathy have been outstanding.

I also wish to thank The Cleaver Trust and Christ Church, Oxford for their financial support of this Project.

It would be remiss of me not to thank the families whom agreed to be part of this research and shared with me some of their inmost thoughts and feelings. Therefore, this study is dedicated to them.

ABSTRACT

This thesis draws upon empirical data from fifty semi-structured interviews, participant observation and living alongside the community of Kirkham, Lancashire to answer the question 'Why do people bring their infant child to baptism when they do not attend Church?' The study concluded that the participants brought their children to be baptised for ritualistic, personalised and often secular motifs that were subjectively constructed through a sense of memory, place and aesthetics.

The research engages and illuminates lived religion in a northern market town through the lens of infant baptism. This thesis dismantles the assumption that people who bring their infant child to baptism do so for orthodox religious reasons. At the heart of this study lies an interaction between people whose lives are lived away from institutional religion yet seek a ritual provided by the very same institution. The Kirkham Project affirms the turn to the self, which both encompasses a personalised sense of autonomy and acknowledges the centrality of the relational.

This research positions infant baptism, for those who do not attend Church, as an important rite of passage that is actively re-configured by the participants in this study. It challenges the concept of individualism and underscores the significance of a personalised and relational approach to meaning-making.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis will begin to answer the primary research question: Why do people bring their infant child to baptism when they do not attend Church? The research is borne out of twenty years' experience of being both an Anglican priest and an academic, coupled with a practical desire to understand what motivates people to engage with the Church in this manner. Similar questions have percolated through my mind in respect of funerals and weddings, though nothing has intrigued me more than the decision to have new life celebrated through the ancient rite of baptism whilst not attending Services. Is this symbolic of a deeply seated Christian spirituality? Or, is it a contradictory undertaking? My experience has led me to initially concur with David Tacey, that people have a regard for the 'sacredness of life' and that many approaches, but in particular infant baptism, help to create 'meaning and purpose' on that journey (2003:38). Throughout my professional life, I have always believed that people bring their infant child to baptism in order to ritually signify a form of 'meaning and purpose', and the following thesis would indeed support this assertion. However, what they would regard as sacred and spiritual may be evolving and changing. Incorporation of secular, religious and spiritual motifs are all at play when seeking the ritual of infant baptism whilst not attending Church. This raises the question of why are people behaving in such a manner, when academics such as Jean-Francois Lyotard proclaim an end to engagement with 'master narratives' in a post-modern world (1979). However, is it the grand narrative of the Church that people are seeking or is it something far more nuanced and sophisticated? As David Voas and Steve Bruce would suggest is the 'sacred giving way to the secular' (2010:59)? Or, as Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead argue are people more akin to being interested in spirituality 'without the baggage' of religion (2005:90)? I will explore such complexities through the lens of those who bring their infant children to baptism whilst not attending Church.

This will be achieved through qualitative research and a robust methodology which uses semi-structured interviews and participant observation. In this thesis I will focus upon how individuals nurture and evolve personal credos that 'give meaning to their own frame of mind, interests, aspirations, and experience' through the ritual of infant baptism (Hervieu-Léger:2006). I will also look closely at the interface between the Church of England, as provider of public ritual such as infant baptism, and the request for such ministrations from those who appear to live relatively secular lives. I would concur with Hervieu-Léger that the postmodern world has a 'do-it-yourself approach to religious belief and practice', which is something I will investigate within this thesis (2006). On the one hand religious institutions are waning in membership throughout the West, yet there are still those who seek to engage with the ritual of baptism. Whilst there has been significant decline in the influence of the Church, in particular in England, I would argue that this does not indicate a 'decline of conventional religious traditions, because they have lost their cultural relevance', but rather that religious institutions such as the Church have become 'symbolic repositories of meaning, available for individuals to subjectively use and reuse in different ways' (Hervieu-Léger:2006). Throughout this thesis I will give considerable consideration to these claims, because at the heartbeat of this research is the aspiration to understand how the ritual of infant baptism offered by the Church, relates to, and is entangled with, the desire to construct one's own personal meaning.

CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE SCENE

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter One of this thesis I set the scene of the empirical research that took place at the Anglican Parish Church of Kirkham, St Michael, Lancashire. This piece of research centres on fifty families who brought their infant child to be baptised between August 2010 and April 2011. Using qualitative research techniques I seek to answer the question 'Why do people bring their infant child to baptism when they do not attend Church?' In this Chapter I give an overview of how the research questions were formed by commenting on my professional experience as an Anglican minister and my research concerning those who brought their infant child to baptism at the Anglican Parish Church of Marton, St Paul, Blackpool in 2004. These two experiences are the bedrock of my interest in the issues surrounding infant baptism and have become the key drivers that have forged my working questions and hypotheses. After commenting on the social history of Kirkham and its relevance to the research question, I offer some initial observations on how Kirkham Parish Church relates to its context. I conclude Chapter One by looking at infant baptism in respect of the baptismal policy, theology and statistics at Kirkham Parish Church and the wider Church of England.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE AND INTEREST

Why do people bring their infant child to baptism when they do not attend Church? This question, for me, has emerged over nineteen years' experience as an ordained Anglican minister. During those nineteen years I have conducted over fifteen hundred infant baptisms in four very different contexts. I spent my first year of ordained ministry at Redcar Parish Church, St Peter, Teeside before moving to Marton Parish Church, St Paul, Blackpool where I served for three years. In both places I worked as an Assistant Curate and did not have sole responsibility for the respective parishes. In 2004 I became the Vicar of Ashton-on-Ribble, St Michael with St Mark, Preston and from 2010 I have been the Vicar of Kirkham. The phenomenon of parents bringing their infant child to baptism, yet having little or no interface with Church activity, has been something that has intrigued me ever since I was ordained.

Over the last nineteen years I have observed people bringing their infant child to baptism in four distinctive social settings: post-industrial Teeside, suburban Blackpool, inner city Preston and in the rural market town of Kirkham. Whilst working in these places I have noticed a common pattern of behaviour across the four parochial areas: a significant number of families, who have no interaction with Church, still seeking infant baptism for the newly born members of their family. It was during my time at Marton that I began to take an academic interest, whilst studying for a Master of Arts degree, in the issues surrounding infant baptism and particularly what motivates people to bring their infant child to baptism without this overt or covert engagement with Church life. The title of the thesis which was submitted for the degree of Master of Arts was entitled 'The Persistence of Religion in a Secular Society'[1]. This small scale empirical study at Marton was based on qualitative methodology and sought to address the question: 'Why do people bring their infant child to baptism in a time of no religion?' This is a different question to the one I explore in this doctoral research, though it embodied some relevant experiences, not least the skill of listening to people articulate how and why they use Church ritual, when having little or no contact with the Church.

Throughout the years I have been ordained I have always visited families before and after the baptism of their infant child. I have also had privileged access, in my role as an Anglican minister, to listen carefully to people's life journey at transitional points such as birth, marriage and death. I recognise that the dialogue with those that I visited will have been shaped by my role. However, the conversations still stand as a significant contribution in offering a personal backdrop to

[1] The MA degree was awarded by Lancaster University in 2004.

the research conducted in Kirkham. I will explore the issues of my researcher bias in respect of Kirkham in Chapter Two of this thesis. Therefore, the richness of my pastoral experience no doubt informs this thesis. In the course of my work, I have visited families after the baptism service, but this was not to encourage them to come along to Church or hand them literature concerning what is required for the Christian life. On the contrary, I have met with families to ask them what their experience of Church was like and specifically how they felt on the day of the baptism. This has been done in order to enlighten my professional practice and to ensure that what I am offering has some degree of resonance. Over the years the responses have been varied, largely informed by social context and the difference in local Church practices. Nevertheless, one observable shift in thinking from those with whom I have spoken has been a gradual movement away from a notional recognition of baptism as a rite of initiation, based upon a nominal belief in an external deity, to a more subtle explanation. This attitudinal change, which I have observed in my professional capacity, is captured in a slow, subtle and gentle movement away from nominally held theistic beliefs of infant baptism towards a more subjectivised understanding, examples of which will be given as we analyse the findings in the Data Presentation Chapter.

This research will build upon the subjectivisation thesis. The subjectivisation thesis explores and explains why it is that people no longer conform to an external form of authority in order to plough their own spiritual path. Furthermore, the subjectivisation thesis underpins the principle that people will be involved with forms of the sacred which according to Tamney are 'consistent with their on-going values and beliefs' (2002:227). From my professional experience, the individual who seeks infant baptism for their child is developing a complex yet highly personalised understanding of the sacrament fused together with significant value and meaning. I have observed this sense of individualism in my professional capacity and it can be seen by the way in which parents construct their own understanding of what baptism means for them with no reference to the Church's narrative. The observations made through my working practice suggest that there is little or no corporate identification with what the Church of England teaches about baptism. The nominal relationship with Church is often on their terms because it possesses something they want and in many respects Church and the sacrament of baptism becomes a utility. The decision to have one's infant child baptised is often a small, but significant, segment of an individual's or family's spiritual landscape. This landscape is often made up of a variety of different theistic and non-theistic worldviews that help make them feel, in some way, whole and complete.

Woodhead and Heelas (2004) formulated the notion of subjective-life-spirituality in the light of the Kendal Project. This is primarily concerned with the celebration of life as an end in itself and what feels right for the individual as an autonomous being. Whilst this is an important insight, there is a significant emphasis on the individual, whereas the Kirkham research draws out personalised meaning-making in a relational and communal context. This does not negate the importance of the autonomous individual but rather centres it around family, friends, place and ritual. Roof (1999), from the American context, argues that the search for spirituality within the modern world is a longing to re-engage and re-build our inner self. From my professional experience, this form of subjective-life-spirituality is present when speaking with people who have had their infant child baptised. The essence of subjective-life-spirituality is concerned with the whole person: mind, body and spirit and its full integration in relationship with one another. Personal meaning-making, based upon the integration of various ideologies, theologies, spiritualities, experiences and secular choices, which can often be at variance with the Church's narrative, finds expression through the rite of infant baptism. It could perhaps be an error of judgement, therefore, to assume that those who have their infant child baptised, with an apparent absence of interaction with Church, are doing so without personal intrinsic meaning, that may or may not include the spiritual. I would evidence such assumptions from remarks made by parishioners during the last twenty years. The following remarks are what I have commonly heard said by parishioners at Kirkham: "they're only coming to have a booze up afterwards", "it's all about the party and nothing to do with the christening", "you would've thought they could have put some clothes on; they look like they're going for a night out, not coming to church" or "you can see her knickers when she sits down on the pew, her skirt is so short".

INITIAL RESEARCH CONCERNS

In commencing this thesis I am mindful of the apparent paradox that presents itself, as it could be said either that we are a nation that is religiously waning or a nation holding strong to religious belief: 71.6 % of UK 2001 Census respondents self-identified as Christian but by the UK 2011 Census this had fallen to only 59.3 %. Participation in the utmost significant Christian rites has been marked by hastened decline during the past 50 to 100 years (Brierley 2001; Gill, Hadaway and Marler 1999). Bearing this in mind, only 1 % of the families whose infant children were baptised at Kirkham in 2011 were attendees at Kirkham Parish Church for worship with more frequency than once a quarter and there were no families who had their child baptised whose names were on the Electoral Roll of Kirkham Parish Church. However, the above paradox becomes even more complex in light of the research at Kirkham, because non-attendees of Church seek the classical rite of Christian initiation but with little or no engagement with Church life.

Stark (1999) and Davie (1994) have cogently argued that to understand religion we ought to broaden our definition of 'religion' away from a belief in an external deity with set doctrine framed in an institutional format. The research at Kirkham will support the argument that belief in an external God and the institutional framing of such a belief is waning, and that the autonomy of the individual is the ultimate reference point when it comes to beliefs and use of infant baptism. For others within the academy such as Bruce, Britain is almost entirely secular but with some residual elements of the Christian tradition still visible (1995; 2002). Other scholars such as Woodhead and Heelas (2005) and Wuthnow (2001) believe that new spiritualties are emerging which are perceivably experiential and subjective when it comes to relating to and with the divine. This thesis argues that those who have been interviewed after having their infant child baptised at Kirkham articulate a spirituality that is individualised, subjectivised and secular; yet choose to use the Christian ritual of baptism to signify the preciousness of human life coupled with an identification with place and community life. Another approach within the sociology of religion is that people are Christian or have a nominal belief in God, even though they do not practice their faith. Davie is the great proponent of the thesis that people 'believe without belonging' and that 'some sort of belief persists' (1994:107). Davie's thesis relied particularly on quantitative measurement but her work has since turned towards a more qualitative and more subtle methodological approach. She has been acutely aware that the contemporary religious landscape in Western Europe has evolved and changed with modernity. In Davie's (2000) book she develops the concept of 'vicarious religion'. Davie states that Europeans are grateful that 'Churches perform, vicariously, a number of tasks on behalf of the population as a whole' (2000:59). Davie also develops her thesis by arguing that at specific times, Churches or Church leaders are 'asked to articulate the sacred' on behalf of individuals, families or society. Davie suggests that whilst European citizens may not practice religion on a daily basis, there is a regard for the worth of religion and at crucial times society may need to tap into what it offers for their 'individual or collective lives' (2002:19). Thus, religion needs to continue offering its occasional offices (the name given within the Church of England to baptisms, weddings and funerals) in order to provide such vicarious religion as is required. This is pertinent for this thesis because participants involved in the Kirkham research have articulated a worldview that has regard for a morality that is framed in a higher humanity, which encompasses values that serve the greater good as opposed to selfish motives, but with little reference to the Church as a provider of the sacred. In respect of the Kirkham research and particularly infant baptism, the Church has been perceived as a utility, not to communicate the divine, but rather as a vehicle for expressing a personalised and relational sense of meaning.

INFANT BAPTISM AT MARTON, BLACKPOOL

The study that was undertaken in Marton during 2004 involved me journeying with 30 sets of parents from a pre-baptism visit to the day of the baptism itself. I became a participant observer, spending significant time listening, planning and then observing the baptism itself. During the pre-baptism visits at Marton I acquainted myself with the family and explained the practicalities of the day on which their child would be baptised. I also asked prior to the visit whether they would like to be

involved in my research and explained that I had a short semi-structured conversation comprising five questions: 1. Why is baptism important for you? 2. Is it important that baptism happens in Church? 3. Who made the decision to have the child baptised? 4. Has baptism got anything to do with God? 5. Does baptism lead to anything in terms of Church commitment? All those that I asked were keen to be involved and invariably commented that it was the 'first time they had thought about infant baptism'. There was no post-baptism interview or clerical follow-up due to the limited nature of the study.

It has to be noted that the research at Marton had considerable researcher bias due to my role being one of Anglican minister and researcher. I never felt these roles to be in conflict with one another, but being so pastorally involved brought a dimension to the research that I wanted to be clearer about for future studies. This taught me that a greater degree of differentiation was needed in terms of combining a semi-structured interview with the pre-baptism visit. Hence one of the reasons why I decided to split the interview and pre-baptism visit in Kirkham. In Kirkham the semi-structured interview took place three to six weeks after the baptism. Nevertheless, it gave me an angle into thinking through and looking at what parents thought was happening at baptism. The research generated rich discourse and data. The qualitative nature of the data brought to light a disparity between the spirituality of those interviewed and the orthodox Anglican tradition of baptism. The people involved in the research at Marton talked about having their child baptised in terms of subscribing to a higher humanity working towards values that seek the common good. For example, a single mother of 24 said: 'Well, Vicar, this christening thing is all about nodding in the right direction. I don't believe all the fairy stories in the Bible, but I do believe in love and caring for others. That's what matters and what the Church should stand for.' Thus, baptism was being seen by some as a public ritual that marked out the values and virtues of love, care, compassion and empathy, rather than an overt religious act of commitment. It was not the content of what was being said that I found intriguing, but rather people not using Church as a reference point in explaining what they thought baptism was about. I found this professionally and theologically difficult to process, partly due to the naive expectations that I had as a relatively newly ordained minister, and the influence of being trained in a conservative evangelical theological college (Cranmer Hall, St John's College, University of Durham). However, this traditional understanding of infant baptism entwined with a certain degree of cultural expectation fascinated me. It also opened up a series of questions about what rationale is employed in order to motivate someone to bring their infant child to baptism.

From personal experience and from the research at Marton, the familiar traits of people wanting the Church to profess and proclaim the values of a higher humanity are present in the parents who bring their child to baptism. In theological terms six parents in Marton made a correlation between the person of Jesus and the values of 'love, care, compassion and forgiveness'. This was, however, rarely seen as being the essence of a divine being that existed beyond time and space, but rather qualities that enrich relationships with reference to God being in you. These positive personal traits were also seen in terms of self- improvement and overall well-being. Certainly, the culture of going to the gym in order to attend not only fitness sessions but meditation and yoga classes were popular recreational pastimes in Marton. This latter form of self-cultivation was perceived as being concerned with becoming 'less stressful' and 'giving one's self some time and space away from everything'.

In Marton the recreational pastime of attending the gym for the purposes of having 'time for one's self' is practised by families who were semi-skilled/skilled professionals and who lived in the detached and semi-detached housing stock surrounding Stanley Park, Blackpool. There were a significant number of these people, 17 out of a total research sample of 30, who attended Church in Marton at major Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter, but at no other point. However, it is of interest to note that those who brought their infant child to baptism in Marton lived predominantly in the more affluent area of the parish, whereas, in Kirkham the geographical spread of those bringing their infant child to baptism is peppered evenly across the parish[2]. In Kirkham the sense of relationship with 'place' and 'community' came from a broad cross-section of the town, rather than being dominated by one particular area within the parish. This may well play a key role in

[2] I will consider this in greater depth in Chapter Two

understanding what process of rationale and meaning is at play when bringing a child to baptism. This is something that I comment on in the analysis of the data in Chapter Four.

What appeared to come to the fore at Marton was people's willingness to talk about what they personally thought about baptism, Church and how little impact that has upon their daily lives. Whilst little recognition was given to the classical theology of baptism for their infant child, the rite of passage was an assumed part of the fabric of what was expected from family and friends. Once the conversation had opened up in the visit prior to the baptism the participants were articulating an understanding of baptism that was entwined in the expression 'it is what you do when you have a kid'. In other words baptism was seen by many as a rite of passage that is associated with new life and doing the 'right thing'.

It is a commonly accepted belief that baptism is a Christian sacrament: a religious rite. However, in my experience it is not as straightforward as it may first appear. In the thesis I wrote concerning Marton I argued that 'cultural changes in society' affected the 'meaning and significance of baptism' (2004:20). The research at Marton pointed to a number of explanations for people having their infant child baptised, though not one participant spoke about baptism being a sacrament and 'dying to sin and rising to new life'[3]. The overarching meaning and repeated comment was that baptism 'felt like the right thing to do because it celebrates new life'. Whilst the research in Marton was limited it has become a platform that has generated an enthusiasm to understand how people are constructing meaning in respect of baptism and how that is placed within a broader framework of their spirituality. This thesis will aim to discover whether there are common patterns and themes that run through the spiritual constitution of those I have engaged with in this research at Kirkham. I will also look at whether or not there are common traits and a shared story that overlap in the lives of those that have brought their infant child to be baptised at Kirkham Parish Church.

Lessons Learned From the Research At Marton

The research at Marton I drew heavily upon the methodological tool of participant observation, this is explored in depth in the Chapter on Methodology. I took on the role of participant observer in the baptism service and in the conversation that I had with each family in the week prior to the baptism. The research, therefore, fitted into two distinctive areas: first, the conversations prior to the baptism and secondly the observation of the baptism service, during which I sat in the congregation whilst the vicar presided over the ceremony. Dawson states that the methodological tool of participant observation is increasing in 'popularity' as a means of capturing 'qualitative data' within the 'disciplines of social science and religious studies' (2010:174). The role of participant observer in respect of the research at Kirkham was quite complex, as I did not enter the empirical study without past experience or some pre-existing ideas concerning the pastoral aspects of infant baptism and the community of Kirkham. Strong argues that it is unrealistic for the participant observer not to 'influence the data' (1979:229). In this respect I accept that the research at Kirkham was influenced by my professional position as vicar and the experience of living within Kirkham. I comment in detail on this aspect of my research in Chapter Two.

During the pre-baptism visit I was expecting my role as an ordained Anglican minister to have a considerable bearing upon the dialogue with the participants. I assumed that they would tell me what they thought I wanted to hear about their belief in God, however dormant, in order to get their child baptised. Yet, the 19 participants out of 30 families who were expressing no belief in a higher being were doing so without inhibition and in dialogue with someone who was about to conduct a religious ceremony. This left me with the question: If such a high percentage of respondents were conveying little or no belief in God, to what extent would there have been a larger proportion if I had not been in my role as the Anglican minister along with all the associated cultural and historic presumptions? This question is crucial as it has gently guided me to consider how I may best glean qualitative data for the current research at Kirkham. Indeed, it has meant employing a dual approach to the methodology; made up of semi-structured interview and participant observation (see Chapter Two).

[3] See: Common Worship: Christian Initiation (2006:67)

The informality of the conversation during the pre-baptism visit at Marton did lead to a wider conversation about Church, even though the primary purpose of the visit was concerned with going over the practical details of the day of the baptism and looking at following the semi-structured conversational format. Almost without exception the pre- baptism visit touched upon the question: why have you chosen to get your child baptised? This question emerged whilst talking about whether or not the promises made by the parents and godparents resonated with their own particular worldview. This brought about some fascinating responses and not least the realisation, on my part, that some people were seeking baptism for their infant child often without a theistic belief. This of course generated a whole series of questions on both a professional and academic level such as: what is an authentic baptism? Am I compromised as a practitioner of religion in baptising children when the parents do not have a Christian faith? Is there a pursuit on the part of the parents for something spiritual? Is the sacrament of baptism being reconfigured by a post-modern generation? Is the ritual and meaning of baptism changing as society evolves?

As I look back to 2004, I had not appreciated the extent to which the ritual of baptism was still a powerful rite of passage, even when there was no apparent subscription to a classical understanding of baptism or the tenets of the Christian faith. For example, when I asked the parents of every family whether they wanted a Service of Thanksgiving for their newly born child, rather than the Christian initiation of baptism, all thirty families were adamant that they wanted it 'done properly'. Parents articulated the importance of the outward and visible signs of baptism such as water, oil and candles. These physical symbols of the ritual appeared to constitute the baptism being 'done properly' and were evidently a crucial element to the experience. This stands in contrast to a verbal affirmation of the Christian faith via the process of questions and answers posed to the parents and godparents, which is seen by the Church as being the hub of the ritual itself[4].

A large proportion of those families who came to get their infant child baptised at Marton were actively taking the public rite of passage of baptism and placing their own interpretation upon what they thought it represented. In the Marton thesis I argued that there was a highly personalised and reconfiguring understanding of baptism based on principles of a higher humanity rather than a corporate sharing of the Church's meta-narrative. Baptism was in some way being used as a platform for expressing a highly subjective and nuanced form of understanding in respect of the role it plays. At the time I thought that this dominant attitude from the people I spoke with was a result of people not having the traditional religious language to articulate a belief in a Christian God. In retrospect I think that I was mistaken in this interpretation as it was perhaps something I wanted to believe given my ecclesiastical position. I also found sacralisation theories a little too attractive in explaining people's rationale for using the Church for infant baptism. Sacralisation theory states that religion is as significant as it ever was within societies across the globe and that the notion people are living in a secularised world is a false assumption. Sacralisation theory argues that religious communities which have resisted modernity and secularity have thrived and grown, especially those religious traditions that Berger argues are 'dripping with reactionary supernaturalism' (1999:4).

One of the principal aspects of sacralisation theory, and what still resonates with me from the research at Marton and Kirkham, is the turn away from traditional forms of religious authority toward an emphasis upon the individual and their own autonomy. One of the truly noteworthy characteristics of the research at Marton and Kirkham has been this turn to the self as the author of what constitutes absolute truth in respect of infant baptism. Bellah illustrates this well when he argues that religion in modern times is concerned with the 'internalisation of authority' (1991:223). It is this sense of internalisation combined with the use of a traditional rite of passage that came to the surface from the research at Marton and which I will demonstrate is a feature of those interviewed in Kirkham.

[4] Common Worship (2000) Question one: Do you turn to Christ? Parents/Godparents: I turn to Christ. Question two: Do you repent of your sins? Parents/Godparents: I repent of my sins. Question three: Do you renounce evil? Parents and Godparents: I renounce evil.

QUESTIONS AND WORKING HYPOTHESES FOR THE CURRENT PROJECT

I have already touched upon a number of questions that have come to the surface as a result of my professional experience and research at Marton. The research at Kirkham was initiated in order to ask the fundamental question of this thesis which is:

●Why is it that people who have little or no interaction with the life of the Church want their infant child baptised?
● What are people doing away from the Church to cultivate their own sense of meaning?
● Is that sense of spirituality made up of secular or theistic beliefs or is it a paradoxical and sophisticated nuanced blend of the two?
● Is seeking infant baptism for a new addition to the family part of a common feature of a highly personalised sense of spirituality or more to do with a corporate identity?
● Why do people seek infant baptism for their child whilst living an otherwise secular life away from Church?
● To what extent is religion or specifically Christianity part of the residual consciousness of the people within Kirkham who bring their infant children to baptism?

I am keen to explore how people use infant baptism and subjectively reconstruct it, in order to make meaning. This involves looking at the ritual in its broadest sense alongside community identity, aesthetics and setting of the Church building in Kirkham.

I have four distinctive working hypotheses. First, people who bring their infant child to baptism could possess a theistic belief or be doing so for overtly religious reasons. Second, people may be bringing their infant child to baptism for a variety of non-religious reasons, and these could be for the utmost spiritually significant reasons and peppered with intrinsic meaning. Third, I will explore whether the Church and the ritual of baptism is woven deeply into the subconscious of people's sense of identity and belonging, even if the theology and beliefs expressed in the ritual have no resonance or connection with people's daily lives. Fourth, the Church of England, as the established Church, may need to rediscover the power of ritual as expressed in rites of passage such as infant baptism in order to re-connect with those who live in a secular environment and yet seek baptism for their infant child. I return to these in my Conclusion.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE THESIS

Bruce suggests that in pre-industrial Britain 'the life cycle of the individual and the community was glossed by religious ritual' and 'pervaded by a Christian worldview' (2008: 53). In this thesis I consider to what extent the life-cycle of the individual and community in Kirkham is shaped by the ritual of infant baptism in the twenty-first century. The number of infant and child baptisms within the Church of England has decreased from 135,000 in 2009 to just below 93,000 in 2017[5]. I argue in this thesis that the physical elements of the baptismal liturgy such as the pouring of water, the use of holy oil and the act of lighting candles, are all integral parts of ritualising, expressing and communicating individualised and secularised values in a public domain. These desirable, historical and ritualistic acts resonate with certain features of contemporary life. Those who took part in the research at Kirkham were never seeking to change the baptismal ritual in order for it to fit their daily living, but rather started with their personal experience and placed meaning upon the ritual from lives lived away from the meta-narrative of the Church. Whilst not wishing to pre-empt the findings of the data, the following example offers a pertinent insight which gently sets the tone: during interview two at Kirkham a 22 year old mother of one looked at her male partner of the same age and said 'I loved that bit in the Service where you lit the candle gave it to the godparents and then got us and the godparents to light candles. Lighting candles reminds me of Friday night when Charles goes over to your mum's and we get some special time together. We light candles around the bath and on the stairs'. This example is not insignificant, as it points towards relatedness between the special

[5] See Statista.com/statistics/369110/churchofenglandtimelinebaptisms

occasion of baptism and what the mother regarded as precious moments in her personal life. In many respects it was her way of making sense of the ritual and connecting with the physical action in the baptismal ceremony.

I argue that the communal significance of infant baptism fails to act as social glue in the sense that it holds together a common community of believers. This is evidenced, from the Kirkham research, in the non-attendance at Church of those families who have brought their infant child to baptism. Nevertheless, the ritual of infant baptism remains a common thread amongst this dispersed group of people who hold a variety of worldviews. This thesis argues that the common thread is to be found in those seeking values based on the common good whilst embracing personalised and subjective life. The baptismal service has in some respects, to a greater or lesser degree, become the vehicle by which such values are affirmed and relationships ritualised and expressed using a familiar rite of passage.

SECULARISATION AND THE CONTINUED USE OF INFANT BAPTISM

In this thesis I argue that secularisation is a dominant social trend in Britain today and is primarily evidenced by the continued decline in Church membership (Brierley 2000). The research in Kirkham, however, seeks to address through qualitative methodology what is happening, beyond the statistical data of decline, in the lives of those who still choose to use the Church for infant baptism. This does not negate or ignore the increasingly secularised environment in which people live, but seeks to unwrap what drives people to still use Church, even with decreasing numbers in Church attendance and fewer people wanting to use the sacrament of baptism. Bruce argues that 'until the 1980s most social scientists supposed that the modern world was becoming increasingly godless' (2001:87). Secularisation is a process of transformation in society from a close identification with religious values and institutions toward non-religious values and secular institutions. The secularisation thesis refers to the belief that as societies evolve particularly through industrialisation, modernisation and rationalisation, religion loses its authority in all aspects of social life and political oversight. Bruce argues cogently that modernisation, individualism and the diversity of religion have undermined the position and popularity of religion (2011).

One must be cautious in assuming that those who live secularised lives wish to dismiss Church and the rites of passage that it has to offer. Furthermore, I would argue that it is important to guard against offering simplistic explanations to why people engage in rites of passage, such as infant baptism, in a secular environment. Martin suggests that the use of residual rites of passage such as infant baptism, are often due to 'group pressure' in the 1960's (1966: 354). This now dated argument is unconvincing today, not least because the research at Kirkham over 50 years later suggests a more subtle and nuanced rationale, one based upon values that have been fostered away from the life of the Church. The contribution this thesis makes to the debate on secularisation is important as it asserts that Church is not absent from being involved in people's lives at transitional moments. In light of the research at Kirkham and my professional experience, I argue that the Church does not play an influential role in shaping the value systems of those families that the Church baptises, but is a provider of ritual for those who choose to use it as part of a subjective and creative process of meaning-making. As a result of the Church hosting and administering infant baptism, it affirms the crossover of secular and Christian values in what was once regarded as a Christian rite of passage by those seeking it.

This thesis also focuses on the celebration of relationships as an integral part of the experience that parents have when they bring their infant children to baptism. I pose the argument that the sacrament of baptism can become what the consumer desires it to be within certain boundaries. If baptismal liturgies cease to adjust and come in line with market forces that tell us the embrace of subjective-life could be partly accountable for congregational decline, Christian baptisms will also find themselves sidelined. Indeed, the research at both Marton and Kirkham point towards a new spirituality where the understanding of baptism as a rite of passage is being re-configured by society.

This sense of turn to the self for authority in deciding what baptism is going to mean resonates with subjective-life-spirituality and challenges the Church to consider what it is that needs

to be included in the liturgy. In this thesis I argue that this turn to the self certainly has a relational aspect to it and also includes some recurring themes and reasons that have come to the fore throughout the research at Kirkham. It is my conviction that parents wish to bring their relationships into the public domain at baptism, not to sacralise, as I argued in my Master's thesis, but rather to ritualise and celebrate what it means to be a human being, through the vehicle of baptism that is provided by traditional religion (2004:39).

THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE KIRKHAM RESEARCH

The challenge of the research at Kirkham is made on lots of different levels for the Church of England but the principal challenge for the Church is the notion that many parents are seeking infant baptism for non-religious reasons. This in turn generates a series of questions for the Church of England in respect of the distinctiveness of its initiation ceremony. Does the Church embrace the activity of infant baptism from families that have no theistic belief secure in the knowledge that they are enabling people to cultivate their own spiritual path? Or, by so doing, is the Church compromising the rite of baptism as a divine activity of regeneration and membership of the Christian Church? This thesis contributes significantly to the debate within the Church of England concerning infant baptism and how it informs and shapes its mission activity. On a wider perspective this thesis highlights the need for the Church of England to think more broadly about its identity as the Established Church and its statutory obligations. This becomes even more acute when there is increasing pressure from a more strident and conservative evangelical element within the Church that may find statutory obligations, such as baptising infants, at variance with a more conservative theology[6].

KIRKHAM

I will offer a brief history of Kirkham and how it has evolved, as this will give a sense of location and social make-up of the town. I now turn my attention to the context of the research as it will go some way towards informing the thesis and how people construct relationships with one another, the Church and other institutions in the town such as the schools. Kirkham has a history that is infused with the Christian tradition and is inextricably linked with the social tapestry of the town from the Roman period onwards. Therefore, it is clear to see that Kirkham has a social fabric that is connected through past association to the Christian tradition and specifically to Kirkham Parish Church. My experience of dealing with people of the town leads me to suggest that there is a prevailing culture that appears on the surface to be conservative in nature.

Kirkham is an ancient town on rural Fylde[7]. There is evidence to suggest that there were settlers in what is now known as Kirkham during the Roman occupation. Indeed the Romans were first based in Kirkham at Carr Hill and on the southerly edge of the town, where the remains of a Roman road and Fort are to be found. However, it is not until the Doomsday Book of 1086 that the name Kirkham appears for the first time. The name Kirkham is broken down into two Norman words: both Norse (Kirk) and Anglian (ham). In Doomsday it is written 'Chircheham', but thereafter appears as Kyrkham. The name means Church town which suggests that there was a Church building present before 1086. Indeed, there is archaeological evidence that a Church existed at Kirkham in 684 CE[8]. Singleton suggests that there was a 'Church at Mill Hill about 650' (1980:23).

In 1296 Kirkham was granted a charter to set up a market and fair by the then Lord of the Manor who was the Abbot of Abbey Vale Royal in Cheshire. After the 16th Century English Reformation the Lordship was transferred to Cardinal Wolsey's foundation, Christ Church, Oxford.

[6] This can be evidenced in the appointment of Justin Welby as Archbishop of Canterbury on 4th February 2013, a conservative evangelical, alongside the 26 bishops who sit in the House of Lords, who individually and collectively hold a conservative position on doctrine and ethics.

[7] See Appendix 1 for map of Kirkham

[8] See stmichaelskirkham.org.uk

In 1872 the Christ Church authorities sold the manorial rights to the Birley family, but retained the patronage of Kirkham Parish Church. The present Church in Kirkham dates back to 1822 but there has been a Church on the current site since the Doomsday Book. Whilst the clerics at Kirkham belonged to the De Kirkham family who farmed their rights from Shrewsbury Abbey it was not until 1280 that a Vicar was appointed by Vale Royal. It can, thus, be seen that the social and geographical positioning of Kirkham Parish Church has deep roots in the establishment of the land, even up until the present day, where the patronage of the Church is still overseen by Christ Church, Oxford.

The Parish Church of Kirkham was extraordinarily large for the 16th century and encompassed fifteen townships[9]. From these fifteen townships were elected 30 men (two men from each township) to form a vestry to run the affairs of the parish. These 30 men exercised oversight and control of Kirkham Grammar School. The Grammar School was closely connected to the Church and this can be evidenced today with the Vicar of the town having a statutory right to be a Director of the School. Once again it is clear to see the historical link being present today and the relevance of the relationship between Kirkham Parish Church and the Grammar School in the town. The activities of the thirty men of Kirkham who helped establish Kirkham Grammar School and engage with social and charitable causes came to end an in 1845 when the parish was divided into separate and distinctive ecclesiastical parishes. However, the legacy of the thirty men of Kirkham is still celebrated today when a Civic Founders' Day Service is held in honour of the thirty men of Kirkham at the parish Church on the 26th March every year. Once again it can be seen that the two establishments and their connectedness to the local community and civic life are entwined in the social fabric of Kirkham.

Industry in Kirkham

From the time of the Charter being initiated until 1700 Kirkham was primarily regarded as a small rural market town with a powerful ecclesiastical presence that served a significant area. Singleton states that apart from farming being the dominant occupation 'many houses had a spinning wheel and a handloom where yarn was spun from wool or flax' (1980:44). This is significant because after the Civil War, Kirkham became a place that traded in flax via docks on the Wyre to the West Indies and Baltic countries. This was the beginning of industry in Kirkham and continued in the making and exporting of sailcloth and cordage to the New World.

Flax merchants who traded from Kirkham found it increasingly difficult to trade from Kirkham with the many cobbled farm roads, but by 1840 a railway had been constructed between Preston and the port of Fleetwood. By the nineteenth century Kirkham had its own railway station and was the central point of the system. This addition to the infrastructure of Kirkham increased productivity and trade to various destinations. A number of cotton mills were also erected in Kirkham and thrived but which now, in the 21st century, stand derelict, demolished or used as warehouses. Like many cotton mills and related industries in Lancashire during the late 1950s onwards, Kirkham became a victim of global economics and the emergence of competition. Singleton writes that this competition came from 'Commonwealth countries, such as India, Pakistan and Hong Kong, and this led to a painful retreat for Lancashire in both home and export markets' (2009:46).

During the 19th century the housing stock surrounding the mills consisted of rows of terraced houses[10]. These houses had insanitary conditions and still remain with toilet facilities in the yard at the back of the house[11]. The population of the town in the 19th century fluctuated between 1200 and 2000 people. This was dependent upon mills opening and closing. Immediately after the Second World War the population was in excess of four thousand people which remained somewhat unchanged from the census of 1931 when there were 4084 people living in the town according to the Town Guide of 2003. Soon after 1940 there was a strategic building plan which consisted of privately

[9] Hambleton, Singleton, Little Eccleston with Larbrick, Weeton with Preece, Greenhalgh with Thistleton, Medlar with Wesham, Treales, Roseacre, Wharles, Westby with Plumpton, Ribby with Wrea, Bryning with Kellamergh, Warton, Freckleton, Newton with Scales and Clifton with Salwick

[10] See Appendix 1 for examples of terraced housing: Marsden Street, Freckleton Street, Station Road

[11] Many of these houses still have no lavatory in the main body of the house.

owned dwellings of detached and semi-detached housing stock on, for example Myrtle Drive, Manor Drive and Nans Flat Road in Dowbridge and a large council estate to the south of Marsden Street[12]. Private residential building has continued in Kirkham throughout the mid and late 1970s, 1980s and mid 1990s in small areas such as Crown Mews, The Conifers, the East side of Church Street and between the Grammar School and the Westerly Bypass.

Due to the continued building of private residences in the 1970s and the steady increase in population, Carr Hill High School was built. Many of the students come from the outlying villages as well as Kirkham Parish Church's primary school. Most significantly the population was boosted from the 1930s through to the late 1950s with the RAF base located on the outskirts of the town. When this camp was disbanded in the late 1950s the base was converted into HMP Kirkham which functions as an open prison. The Kirkham Town Guide states that the loss of RAF Kirkham had a profound effect upon the economy and many of the independent shops on Poulton Street became unsustainable (2003:9). It could be said that Kirkham was up until the late 1960s self-dependent. In the 21st century the town has, however, become a dormitory town, whilst still maintaining its rural market town image, for those who work and spend their recreational time in large towns and cities such as Preston, Blackpool, Bolton and Manchester.

THE AESTHETIC ATTRACTION OF CHURCH AND PLACE

It is important to take into consideration the geographical positioning of Kirkham Parish Church alongside the presentation of the Grade II* listed building[13]. The Church building is the dominant feature of the town: set within attractive grounds next to St Michael's Primary School and at the side of an immaculately kept Memorial Park, with war graves from conflicts in the last one hundred years. It is the garrison Church for Weeton Barracks and has the Royal Standard of the Seventh Battalion of the Lancashire Loyal Regiment laid up in the Church. The aesthetic of the Church is inextricably linked to civic and military pride. Furthermore, the church building has special significance to many local families due to funerals of young military personnel being held in the Church. At Christmas the Church receives four figure cheques for the upkeep of the Church from local military families, who have no weekly or monthly contact with the Church, that have had loved ones buried at Kirkham Parish Church.

The Parish Church of Kirkham is the town's corporate meeting place and through continued use of the building for civic and significant moments in the life of the community, maintains its social standing in the community. On the other hand the aesthetic of the Church building through its vast expanse of interior conjures up a sense of awe and wonder, coupled with an opulence that was once prevalent. For example, the Church has a reredos from the workshop of Kempe and a grand early seventeenth century candle lit chandelier that dominates the centre of the Church. All this translates into the overall effect of people, who were part of the baptismal research, articulating experiences of being 'connected to the past' or 'enjoying being in a holy place which made the christening more special'. I further explore the relationship between the Church building in Kirkham, immediate surroundings and shared social history which have informed and contributed to the meaningfulness and significance of the baptismal experience.

Kirkham Parish Church is physically and indissolubly connected to the history of a town that has a sense of civic pride. This was most recently evidenced on 21st June 2010 when the Second Battalion of the Yorkshire Regiment paraded through Kirkham town centre and concluded with a Service in Kirkham Parish Church (after a six month tour of duty in Afghanistan). Over 4000 people lined the main street of Kirkham to welcome the battalion back home on that day. This shows what role Kirkham Parish Church has to play within the town and how people perceive its function. In many respects this latest civic celebration of home coming and previous military funerals underlines the function of the Church in Kirkham as being what Phillip Larkin describes as a 'serious house on a serious earth'[14].

[12] See Appendix 1
[13] See: stmichaelskirkham.org.uk
[14] See: artofeurope.com/larkin

KIRKHAM IN THE 2001 and 2011 CENSUS

The parish boundary of Kirkham, where the research has been conducted, comprises two wards: that of Kirkham South and North[15]. The population from the 2001 census stood at 7127 people, with little change in the 2011 Census to 7194, with an almost even split of males to females in both censuses. According to the 2011 Census employment for the population in Kirkham is marginally above the national average. Unemployment is under one per cent of the national average. Educationally the census informs us that there is an above national average of people attaining level four and five qualifications. Many of these people are employed at British Aerospace, HMP Kirkham and Springfield Nuclear Recycling Plant, which are all located within a three mile radius of Kirkham town centre. There is significant home ownership within Kirkham which is six per cent above the national average, with rental properties significantly under the national average both in terms of private and council rental[16]. The Mayor of Kirkham stated at a Fylde Borough Council meeting in March 2011, where I was acting as the Mayoral Chaplain, that in light of the census of 2001 it would be fair to describe 'the population of Kirkham as being relatively conservative, affluent and buoyant'. This opinion has been stated several times on subsequent occasions in the last ten years. Indeed, it appears to be the common rhetoric used to describe Kirkham by the councillors. This localised viewpoint is also shared by Mark Menzies MP, member for Fylde, who recently shared this view with me during the summer of 2018. It could be surmised from this description, alongside the statistics and data gathered from baptism families, that Kirkham is a traditional market town which has become a desirable place to live.

The statistics point towards the population of Kirkham being more socially mobile than it once was due to the very nature of the employment. The influx of people from elsewhere within the country is tangible and in part a result of specific skill sets needed to work at British Aerospace, Springfield's and HMP Kirkham. A substantial number I have met during the course of the research at Kirkham have moved into the area immediately after reading for a variety of engineering and science degrees[17]. Others have been employed by British Aerospace after serving in the Royal Air Force. However, it is interesting to note that the research in Kirkham has unveiled a significant number of children from professional families being baptised for reasons pertaining to gaining access to receive education from the Church school.

Although education is a prized asset among a noteworthy number of the professional people I interviewed, one can see from the statistics that home ownership is also above national average. This is in part due to the relative affluence from the income generated from the three major employers. This gives the community of Kirkham a degree of continuity and consistency, as there are few employees that have an immediate transferable skill base due to the highly specialised nature of their employment. If those at British Aerospace and Springfield's are made redundant they either have to move away from the area to find employment or retrain[18]. This means that those who settle and live in Kirkham, and have families, remain attached to the town very often for the duration of their working life[19].

THE RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHIC OF KIRKHAM

The 2001 Census states that 86.12% of people in Kirkham North regarded themselves as Christian, whereas by 2011 there had been a marked decrease to only 68.8%. This might in part be due to new categorisation which allowed people to state 'No religion' and which was not there in 2001. Indeed, in the 2011 Census, those who stated 'No religion' totalled 16.6% which may go some way to

[15] When I refer to Kirkham, I am commenting upon both wards.
[16] See: neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk
[17] 47% of those families interviewed either worked or were in related employment to BAe Systems or Springfields.
[18] This information was given by members of the Human Resources staff at BAe Systems and Springfield's on 9th March 2012 in two separate telephone conversations.
[19] Information provided by the Human Resources Department of BAe Systems and Springfield's during two telephone conversations that took place on 10th March 2012.

explaining the decrease in those describing themselves as Christian. In Kirkham South, 82.81% of inhabitants referred to themselves as Christian in 2001. In the 2011 Census, this was 73.03% and those categorised as 'No religion' were 19.24%. This sense of personal religiosity may have something to do with the deep association of 'place' as the percentages who regard themselves as Christian in the census is not reflected in the Church-going practice within Kirkham. Indeed, Kirkham Parish Church has an average of 140 worshippers on a Sunday and this is by far the greatest number of people attending one single denomination in the town. According to the 2011 Census the closest group after those who describe themselves as Christian are the non-religious, who stand at 16.6% non-religious plus 12.34% religion not stated, for Kirkham North and 19.24% non-religious and 12.34% religion not stated, for Kirkham South. Other religious traditions over and above those with Christian and non-religious convictions are represented by the Muslim, Hindu, Jewish and Sikh religions along with the category 'religion not stated'. It can, therefore, be concluded that although there is decline from 2001 to the census of 2011, the people of Kirkham overwhelmingly describe themselves as Christian. What does this mean and is this the entire picture?

It can be seen from those who bring their infant children to baptism at Kirkham Parish Church that there is no apparent geographical pattern from within the town[20]. An obvious uniting factor amongst those infants baptised is that at least one member of every family interviewed had attended the Church school[21]. The appreciation and recognition of place and belonging is an occurring theme in this thesis. For, whether it be a school or Church building, it is clear to see that a relational sense of identity to significant community establishments appears to be a feature for those interviewed in Kirkham. This sense of community identity may at first appear paradoxical when those interviewed have articulated a personalised rationale for infant baptism. However, this could not be further from the truth as the participants' positive regard for community life has been rooted in nostalgic memories of the past but with little involvement in the present. One third of those involved in the research have re-rooted themselves in Kirkham, after graduating and working elsewhere in the country. Those who have gone back to live in Kirkham have done so because of the small market town identity.

Social Demographic of Kirkham

Kirkham is a market town positioned within the North-West region and possesses an identity of its own, rooted in history, and proud of being the inland rural market town for the Fylde Coast. In order to offer a generic picture of the social demographic of the area in which Kirkham is located, I offer in the tables below an overview of the type of inhabitants and social makeup of Kirkham along with the context and region within which it is set. The tables illustrate the relative affluence of Kirkham. The tables below contain data taken from the 2011 Census. In Chapter Two, where I present the methodology, I offer, in detail, a social and personal profile of those I interviewed. This will in turn set the sample of interviewees against the broader town context.

Social grade is a classification based on occupation and it enables a household and all its members to be classified according to the job of the main income earner. Kirkham has 20% more Higher and Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional households than the national average.

AB	27.57%	20.16%	22.96%
C1	33.83%	30.05%	30.92%
C2	17.63%	22.60%	20.64%
DE	20.97%	27.19%	25.49%

[20] See Appendix 2

[21] This will be further explored in Chapter Four of this thesis.

The table of statistics below is for the highest level education obtained by the residents of Kirkham. Kirkham has a lower level of residents with either no qualifications or qualifications equal to 1 or more GCSE at grade D or below, than the national average. Kirkham has a higher level of residents with a higher education qualification (level 4) than the national average, suggesting that the residents of Kirkham are better educated than the national average.

No Qualifications	21.2%	23.6%	22.5%
Level 1	12%	13%	13.3%
Level 2	16.6%	15.8%	15.2%
Apprenticeship	4.2%	4.5%	3.6%
Level 3	12.3%	13.6%	12.4%
Level 4	29.8%	25%	27.4%
Other	4%	4.5%	5.7%

Since Kirkham has a higher level of residents born in the UK than the national average and a lower rate of residents either born in other EU countries or outside the EU, it does not have a significant immigrant population.

United Kingdom	95%	93.5%	86.2%
Republic of Ireland	0.6%	0.5%	0.7%
Other EU Countries	2%	1.9%	3.7%
Outside the EU	2.4%	4.1%	9.4%

The figures below indicate those claiming benefits and are sourced from the Department for Work & Pensions. The rate of unemployment in Kirkham is both lower than the average for Lancashire and lower than the national average. The rate of claiming any benefit (which includes in work benefits) is more than 10% lower in Kirkham than the national average, suggesting higher salaries than the average in the area.

Jobseekers Allowance (only)	2.1%	2.8%	3.3%
Incapacity Benefits (IB or ESA)	2.3%	2.9%	2.4%
Any Benefit (includes in work benefits)	11.8%	14.3%	13.5%

Owned	40.7%	35.7%	30.6%
Mortgage	32.7%	35.3%	32.8%
Shared	0.4%	0.5%	0.8%
Social Rented (Council)	1.4%	4.2%	9.4%
Social Rented (Housing Assoc)	6%	7.9%	8.3%
Private Rented	15.5%	13.7%	15.4%
Other	1.9%	1.4%	1.4%
Rent Free	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%

The population of Kirkham as a whole, is older than the national average. The population of Kirkham is also older than the Lancashire average, making Kirkham an older persons' location.

Age 0 to 4	4.8%	5.9%	6.3%
Age 5 to 9	4.7%	5.4%	5.6%
Age 10 to14	5.3%	5.8%	5.8%
Age 15 to 17	3.4%	3.7%	3.7%
Age 18 to 24	6.5%	9.5%	9.4%
Age 25 to 29	4.7%	5.9%	6.9%
Age 30 to 44	17.1%	18.9%	20.6%
Age 45 to 59	21.7%	20.1%	19.4%
Age 60 to 64	7.5%	6.7%	6%
Age 65 to 74	12.1%	9.7%	8.6%
Age 75 to 84	8.6%	6%	5.5%
Age 85 and over	3.5%	2.4%	2.3%
Mean Age	44.9	40.5	39.3
Median Age	47	41	39

The respondents to the 2011 Census were asked to rate their health. The percentage of residents in Kirkham rating their health as 'very good' is less than the national average. Also the percentage of residents in Kirkham rating their health as 'very bad' is more than the national average, suggesting that the health of the residents of Kirkham is generally worse than the national average.

Very Good	44.64%	45.95%	47.17%
Good	33.78%	33.66%	34.22%
Fair	15.34%	14.14%	13.12%
Bad	4.87%	4.88%	4.25%
Very Bad	1.37%	1.38%	1.25%

The statistics tell us that Kirkham is above national average when it comes to the people educated to degree level. This is something that I have experienced when interviewing families for this research, as many have been able to construct, articulate and express intricate rationales for having their child baptised. It has also been noticeable that the participants have been older parents, often after establishing themselves in a career. The average age of those I interviewed was thirty three. Furthermore, the statistics inform us that the average age in Kirkham is forty which is marginally above national average. When these two statistics are combined with an above national average of home ownership and low unemployment the social demographic of a relatively thriving town begins to appear. Therefore, the research concerning infant baptism is being conducted in a town environment that is socially buoyant and with relatively little deprivation.

THE PARISH CHURCH OF KIRKHAM, ST MICHAEL IN THE 21st CENTURY

It has been shown that Kirkham Parish Church has deep historical roots in the town, not least in terms of its interface with St Michael's Primary School and Kirkham Grammar School. The relationship between Kirkham Parish Church and these two educational establishments is the strongest example of the Church's link to the town. On a practical level both schools use the Church building as a rehearsal and performance venue for drama and music. Likewise the Church uses the respective school buildings for fund raising events.

This practical expression of collaborative working with the Grammar School is something that has been fostered and nurtured since the late 16th century. Whilst harmonious relations are visible and mutually beneficial, the compulsory attendance at worship on a Sunday morning for all boarding school students ended in 2004 when the long-standing headmaster retired. With the advent of attending Church becoming optional, the attendance of boarding school students at Sunday morning worship reduced to zero. The Grammar School describes itself in its mission statement as a 'broadly Christian school'[22]. This is evidenced by the relationship between the governing body of the school and the Vicar of the town in as much as he coordinates the Founders' Day Service, Christmas Carol Services and the occasional memorial service for pupils that have died. In many respects this is a good example of Davie's concept of vicarious religion, as the Church still plays a role within the school, but only when it is expedient for the institution (2007:23). This in turn fosters and instils in the next generation an expectation for Church to be available on a utility basis.

The local rhetoric associated with Kirkham Grammar School is captured in the remark that it is a 'faith school'. This view, I believe, is misrepresentative. Though, one can see the hallmarks of Christianity imprinted in the constitution of the school, I observe a very contemporary, modern and secular institution that works extremely effectively without the administrations of the state Church. The residue of Christianity remains in the school, as cited by the few examples I have given above, but the direction of the school is not influenced by the Established Church. There is a certain nostalgic and romantic perception of the school in the local psyche of those who have had families or relatives in the town. However, that is not based on the reality of a modern Grammar School that

[22] See: kirkhamgrammarschool.co.uk

seeks to carve a specific academic niche in the marketplace of the independent sector. Indeed, the very opening lines of the school's mission statement states that it prides itself on being a school which 'provides a caring, secure environment where the highest priority is given to the pursuit of academic excellence and the fulfilment of each pupil's potential'[23]. I would argue that the values of care and security are prized assets for the foundations of living a successful life. Indeed, this sense of a prized higher humanity was also perceived by many participants in Marton as being the core values of what the Church ought to represent and affirm at baptism.

Kirkham Parish Church provides and hosts a crèche and coffee morning for young families on a Wednesday. This form of social action is replicated by members of the Church working in St Michael's Primary School at the after school club. There is also representation on the governing body of St Michael's Primary School. Others from within the congregation of the Church provide a 'listening ear' scheme at two of the local nursing homes. It would be a fair assessment of the Church to say that the interaction with the town comes from a commitment to the educational provision and in a smaller part the emphasis of care and social outreach.

Kirkham Parish Church: Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

Kirkham Parish Church provides 'Occasional Offices' to the people within the parish. In 2011, during the period of this research, Kirkham Parish Church hosted and conducted 52 baptisms, 68 funerals and 11 weddings. There is a legal obligation on behalf of the local Anglican Parish Church to conduct the marriages, baptisms and funerals of those residents in the parish who request such ministrations. This has placed me, as the minister, in a privileged position of accompanying people at significant transitional moments in their life and offering a religious ritual to mark such an event.

I do not wish to get embroiled in the issues surrounding Church and marriage. However, it worth noting that marriage in a parish Church within the Church of England is down from 52,700 in 2009 to only 38,000 in 2017[24]. Nevertheless, weddings at Kirkham Parish Church have increased fourfold from 2007 when three marriages were conducted, to fifteen marriages being booked for 2016. One significant reason for this increase is my willingness to marry divorced people, in accordance with the Church of England legislation, in the Parish Church. The previous three ministers at Kirkham Parish Church would not preside at the marriage of a divorced person. Therefore, until 2010, when I became the resident minister, there had been no marriage of a divorced person at Kirkham Parish Church. Whilst this position of marrying a divorced person in Church is far from theologically innovative, it does illustrate the conservative nature of the incumbents at Kirkham and the sense of control exercised, even in the face of declining Church membership.

When it comes to considering infant baptism and the rationale of those who choose such a ceremony at Kirkham, the attitude of those who are divorced and do not attend, yet seek marriage in Church, may shed some light on the issue of those seeking baptism for their infant child. One third of those getting married at Kirkham Parish Church between the years 2012 and 2016 will have been divorced. Not one couple out of the 15 who reserved a date to be married in Church during 2012 either attended Church or have been present at Christmas celebrations. Furthermore, when I met couples to book their wedding date in 2012 and subsequent years, I asked out of interest and in light of this current research, the question: do you have a belief in a higher being? One third of the women expressed a belief in a higher being, whilst a quarter of the men said they were ambivalent or agnostic. The remaining articulated a secular worldview but spoke of Church being a 'special' or 'beautiful' place that had 'atmosphere' and 'ambience'. Many of the couples requested a liturgy similar to that of 'Will and Kate's wedding'[25]. However, when I explained to the respective couples that the liturgy for 'Will and Kate's wedding' was from the 1928 Book of Common Prayer and used antiquated language, one bride commented 'it didn't matter, the whole thing was so moving from the uniforms and dress to the robes and processions' and from another bride 'the old language made it proper and traditional'. Although there is rich data in the conversations that took place, this pastoral

[23] See: kirkhamgrammarschool.co.uk/mission-statement

[24] See: churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/research-and-statistics

[25] The wedding of HRH Prince William and Miss Catherine Middleton on 29th April 2011 at Westminster Abbey.

observation has underlined one significant thing for this thesis: the Church of England must be cautious in placing too greater emphasis upon contemporary liturgy, and inadvertently eroding the power of ritual to generate a sense of awe and wonder from those of a secular perspective[26].

Funerals also play an important role in the life of the parish Church at Kirkham. In a similar way to baptisms and weddings, the ordained ministers in the Church will visit the family concerned prior to the funeral, conduct the funeral and then conduct a post-funeral visit if required. This pattern of pastoral contact is something that has remained unchanged since 1980, when the Parochial Church Council (PCC) regarded this as an integral part of the role of the Vicar. In many respects this was articulated in order to ensure a provision of care that had been missing during a twenty-four year incumbency[27].

The mechanics of the funeral service remained the same at Kirkham Parish Church from 1980 to 1992, as the Vicar of the time would conduct funerals using the rite according to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. In this liturgy the name of the deceased person is not mentioned, nor is there a place for a personal eulogy. This changed between 1992 and 2008 with the following incumbent who used the Alternative Service Book of 1980 and latterly Common Worship from 2000. During this period of time popular music was refused at all funerals but a personal eulogy was conceded. In respect of funerals in the parish, one can see a conservative position that has slowly mutated in various guises from 1980. This observation dovetails with my earlier remarks about the town being conservative in ethos.

Whilst those who engage with Kirkham Parish Church for Occasional Offices are looking for a traditional experience of liturgy at a funeral service in Kirkham, the language content of such liturgy must not be mistaken as a reflection of individual beliefs. I took a funeral of a well-respected local electrician aged fifty-seven on 18th November 2010 in Kirkham Parish Church. During the eulogy which was delivered by his best friend he said 'Steven is alive, not in a distant other worldly place, but in the hearts and memories of those who loved him. He's alive in the things that jog our memories: the football pitch, The Stable and his passion for this town, of which this Church building represents the town. He would say 'you know you're come home when you turn off the M55 and see the spire'[28]. The family of the deceased requested that the funeral service 'was traditional but modern' and remarked how excellent the eulogy was due to it not being 'full of Churchy mumbo-jumbo'. I would argue that we are at the heart of my thesis, as we see a reconfigured use of Church and in this case a funeral rite. The attitude of those who engage is clear to be seen in the example of the eulogy, especially alongside what may appear to be at first glance a contradiction between the requests for a traditional expression of Church and yet a rejection of the theology it espouses. However, it would be wrong to dismiss this contradiction, but it is rather an underlining of the 'turn to the self', where the personal construction of spirituality is paramount and influenced heavily by individual experience and sense of place. We will see this personal construction of meaning-making and identities unfold in the baptismal study within Kirkham.

Baptism at Kirkham Parish Church: Policy and Outworking

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) at Kirkham has an open baptism policy, by which I mean if anybody requests baptism for their infant child the Church will accommodate. Indeed, those who are outside of the parish boundaries are also accommodated if they request baptism. Whilst this is not Church of England protocol, the PCC wish to affirm anybody who desires contact with the Church, and therefore, ensures those who engage are not met with theological or ecclesiastical obstacles. I am convinced that this is one of the reasons why the research at Kirkham has had such a rich and candid cross-section of opinions concerning infant baptism. If the research had been conducted in a Church where people had to attend baptismal preparation courses, attend Church and make a Christian

[26] See: churchofengland.org/prayer-worship

[27] As a humorous aside the parish records and PCC minutes of May 1978 state 'The Vicar was unable to take the Good Friday Service due to picking up his new Bentley car'! Thus, a certain degree of professionalism was being requested by the congregation and PCC after this incumbency.

[28] 'The Stable' is a public house in Kirkham.

commitment of faith before the baptism, the research material would have, no doubt, looked very different. The practical process of someone enquiring about an infant baptism at Kirkham Parish Church is simple and straightforward. When a person makes a request, usually by telephone, to book a baptism for their child, the minister taking the phone call will ask which Sunday they would like and then place it into the Church diary. The Church has a policy of one child per baptism, in order to make the Church experience personal for the family concerned. Baptisms take place at noon on a Sunday. After the baptism has been booked, the minister will arrange to meet the family in order to acquaint themselves with the various characters who will be taking place in the ceremony. This visit is purely a matter of going through the Service, so that they know what to do and where to stand. Once the ceremony has been conducted the cleric will arrange an informal meeting with the family, so that the relationship with the Church is consolidated. It is the policy of the ministers in the parish not to initiate and ask personal questions of faith. Questions and enquiries of such a nature are answered and discussed if the families wish to do so. We make this explicit when the telephone enquiry is made, so that nobody feels as though they are going to get a series of investigations concerning their faith, this is something that I have done in every parish where I have had sole charge. This approach has engendered honest conversations and has removed for the individual a feeling of needing to convince the cleric as to the extent and validity of their faith, so that the child may be baptised. Over the years, families have initiated, more often than not, conversations about spirituality and what they believe to be of intrinsic importance.

Kirkham Parish Church has its baptism policy on the Church website and outlines the practical process of baptism, the administration of the Church and the four things that the local Church believes characterise the Christian way of life: sacrificial love, forgiveness, care and empathy[29]. It is made explicit in the baptismal material on Kirkham Parish Church's website that baptism is about joining a Church community and shaping one's life, and the life of the child, with the values above.

BAPTISM STATISTICS OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND KIRKHAM PARISH CHURCH

Canon B21 of the Church of England states: 'It is desirable that every minister having a cure of souls shall normally administer the sacrament of Holy Baptism on Sundays at public worship when the most number of people come together, that the congregation there present may witness the receiving of them that be newly baptised into Christ's Church, and be put in remembrance of their own profession made to God in their baptism' (2000:42). Canon B22 also states that 'no minister shall refuse or delay to baptise any infant in his cure who is brought to the Church to be baptised'. Imbedded in the very structure and framework of the Church of England is the obligation of every minister to baptise infant children within their parish. I mention these two extracts from ecclesiastical canon law, as they highlight a differing approach to what occurs at Kirkham Parish Church. Whilst nobody is ever refused baptism at Kirkham Parish Church, there is most certainly a deliberate act, by the ministers, to have all baptisms on a separate occasion from the principal public act of worship on a Sunday morning. The rationale for this is twofold: from my professional experience many families have expressed that they feel very uncomfortable having their child baptised in a service that is alien to them. Secondly, by having private baptism for infants it can make the occasion more personal and the symbols that are being used can be explained in an accessible way.

In the practical theology book commissioned by the Church of England, which is still frequently referenced, there is a clear recognition that the place of baptism has changed greatly in the last century (Earey et al 2007:21). In the book there is a sense of wanting to assert the distinctiveness of baptism as a counter cultural rite of passage. Earey affirms the position of the Church of England's liturgical commission in asserting that baptism has a fourfold framework: 'separation from this world – that is, the world alienated from God, and reception into a universal community centred on God, within which his children can grow into the fullness of the pattern of Christ, and a community whose mission is to serve God's spirit in redeeming the world' (2007:21). Throughout this book it is clear to

[29] See: stmichaelskirkham.org.uk

see a particular conservative and protestant theology that perceives baptism as setting aside the participant as being separate and different to the world. Furthermore, the book questions the practice of infant baptism and its provision in the Church of England.

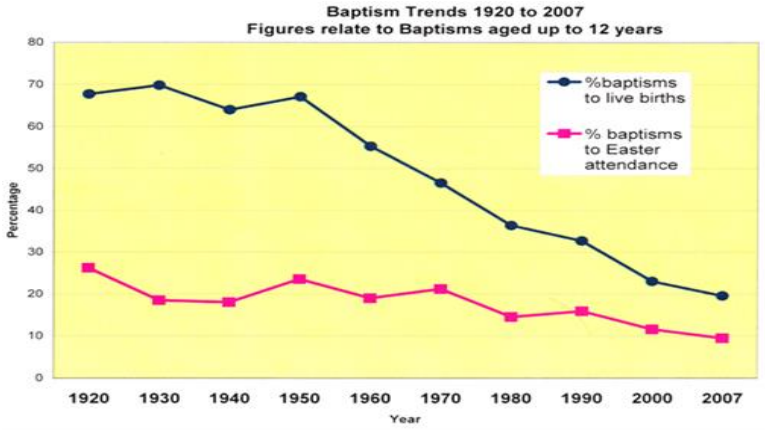
Earey makes the distinction between 'civic infant baptisms' as opposed to those infant baptisms that take place from amongst families that are believers (2007:9). I would argue there is a contradiction in making a distinction between 'civic infant baptisms' and baptism from those who are Christian believers, because from the Anglican tradition the efficacy of the sacrament is not based upon the belief of the individual or feelings of the parents but on the administration of the sacrament. This can be seen in the Lambeth Report concerning baptism where it states that the sacrament does not 'lie in the effects of the individual's feelings' (1978:73). However, Earey's theological commentary illustrates a contemporary separatist mentality. The only argument within the book for defending the practice of infant baptism comes from the premise that infant baptism represents a missionary opportunity for the Church to affirm the parents' relationship, and thus be a vehicle to promote marriage. This approach that is being promoted in the contemporary Anglican Church appears defensive, for rather than seeking engagement, it is at variance with a relational spirituality where baptism is a marker post for those embarking upon a meaningful life journey that has a spiritual aspect. One could argue that the desire of the Church to be missionary in its endeavours runs contrary to the sense of integration, inclusivity and accessibility which is at the heart of being the Established Church. In Chapter Five I look more closely at the character of the Established Church and the role it could play in fostering and nurturing new life through a reconfigured understanding of infant baptism.

The Church of England's Baptism Statistics since 2000

Church of England statistics show that between 2002 and 2009 infant baptisms have increased by 10%[30]. Kirkham Parish Church's increased requests for infant baptism may be a reflection of a relaxation on the requirements for infant baptism. It also worth noting that there is a significant number of infant children being brought forward for baptism in all denominations. This is not to suggest that there is a revival, as the overall picture is one of an 80% decline since 1900, but there is still a need to understand what attitudes and motivations, beyond the quantitative data, are shaping some people's lives[31].

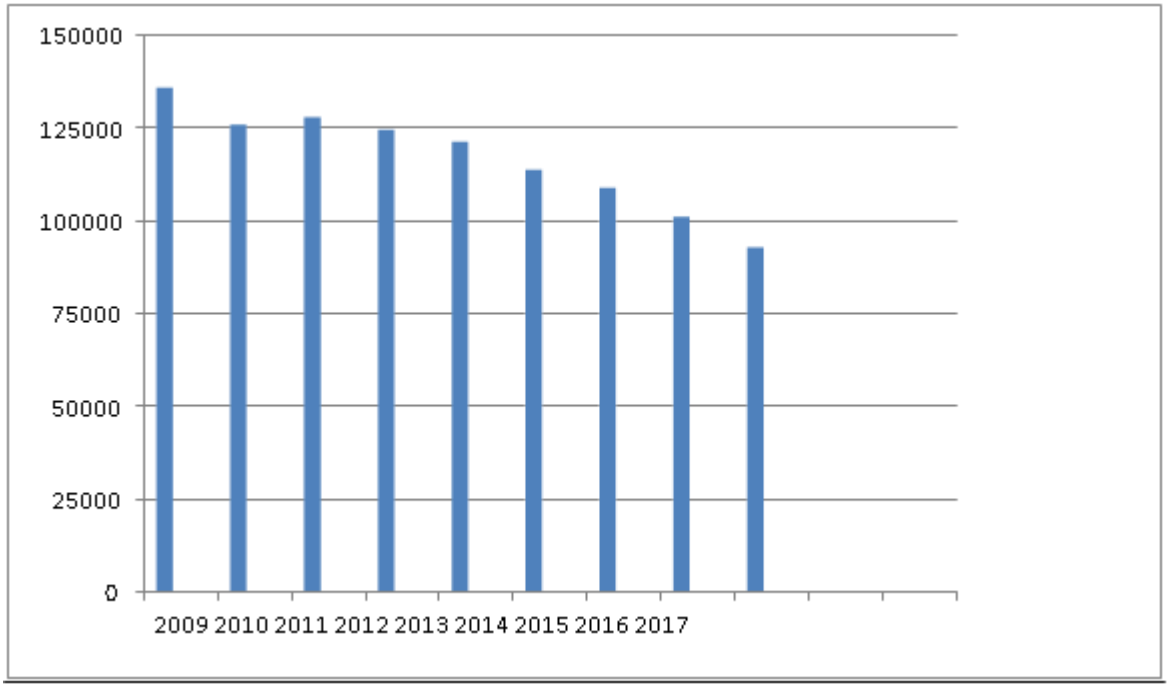
Graph One, below, sets baptism against live births and the number of live births includes people of other religious traditions. Graph one also uses a consistent measure of Easter communicants (Christmas statistics over the same period of time are not available) against baptisms from the Church of England. The second and third graph offers a wider picture of all who have been baptised between 2002 and 2017.

Graph 1: Baptism Trends 1920-2007

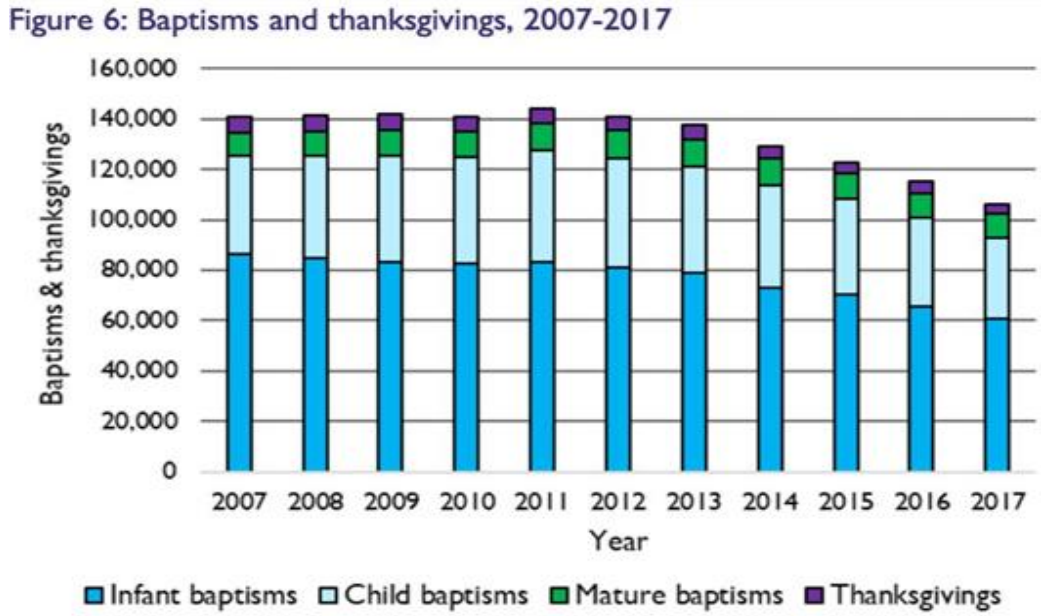


[30] See: baptism.org.uk/statistics
[31] See: baptism.org.uk/statistics

Graph 2: Number of Church of England Infant and Child Baptisms 2009-2017



Graph 3

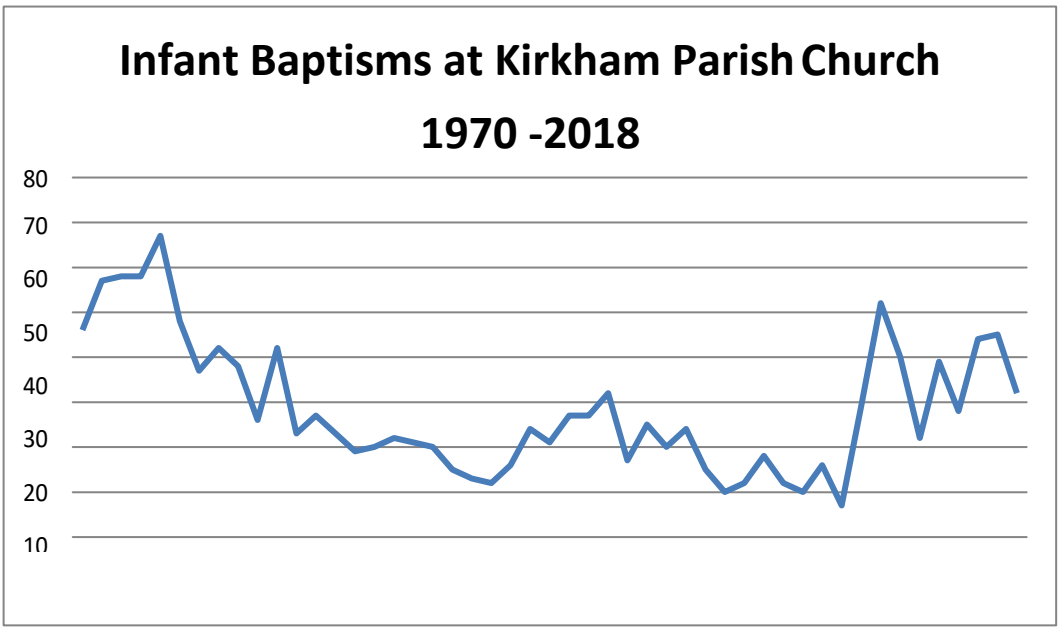


According to national statistics the birth rate for England and Wales has fallen minimally, by 0.2%, to 63.6 (that is, 63.6 live births per 1,000 women of childbearing age). There were 706,248 live births in 2009 compared to 708,711 the previous year. Despite this drop, the birth rate has been rising steadily over the past decade. In 1999, there were 621,872 live births, which equates to a birth rate of 57.8 and a fertility rate of 1.7 children per woman. The fertility rate now stands at 1.95.On a local

level there were 621 live births on the Fylde Coast in 2009[32]. The population of the Fylde Coast, according to the 2001 census stands at 26,840[33]. Therefore, bearing in mind the population of Kirkham is 7,126, proportionally Kirkham shares just under a quarter of all live births for the Fylde Coast.

Kirkham Parish Church is part of the Diocese of Blackburn and according to the latest statistics, out of every 1000 live births 174 infant children were baptised in an Anglican parish Church within the Diocese of Blackburn[34]. In the graph below one can see the statistical evidence for the number of infant baptisms at Kirkham Parish Church.

Graph 4



There were 51 infant baptisms during 2010 and 2011 at Kirkham Parish Church. The research undertaken for this thesis focuses on fifty of those families who brought their infant child to be baptised. It is worth noting that the steep decline in baptisms after 2010 and 2011 was due to increased responsibility being given to me by the Diocese of Blackburn, which meant therefore, I was unable to continue meeting the same level of requests for baptism. In the graph, above, one can see the overall decline in the numbers of those who have brought their infant child for baptism in the last thirty one years. These statistics could also be used to echo and support the narrative of secularisation. Whilst the statistics could arguably be a strong indicator in supporting theories of secularisation this thesis goes beyond the quantitative data to explore how and why infant baptism features in the families' worldview.

The principal mainstream Christian denominations within Kirkham are the Willows Roman Catholic Church, the United Reformed Church (URC) and the Methodist Church. The Willows Roman Catholic Church hosted 25 infant baptisms in 2011 and the URC had 3 and the Methodist Church held 8. In total the number of infant baptisms in 2011 across the denominations in Kirkham amounted to 68. Whilst the number of baptisms hosted between the denominations is not numerically large it still suggests a demand for baptism services. When one takes into account the subjectivised and reconfigured understanding of baptism, coupled with the demand for baptism, is this an indication of Church becoming a utility that people choose to use on their terms? This is something that is explored and addressed throughout this thesis.

[32] See National Statistics Table: guardian.co.uk
[33] See: econym.org.uk
[34] See: churchofengland.org

CONCLUSION

The historical context of Kirkham has been immersed in Christianity, not least in terms of establishment and industry. Kirkham is a conservative community and an initial observation of the town may suggest that this conservative attitude would appear to be carried over into the community's sense of religiosity and place. Do the numbers who use Kirkham Parish Church for their family's infant baptism suggest a religiously conservative community or something else? Beyond the quantitative data, the Kirkham research takes into account the cultural shifts of post-modernity and the subjective life turn. The research has brought to the fore the following questions: Why are the ministrations of the Church still sought by people who do not subscribe to the traditional narrative of the Church? Does the Church still have a role to play, with integrity, in administering the sacrament of baptism? Are people not believing but vicariously and nostalgically belonging to the town? Is there no sense of belonging in a corporate sense, but rather a personalised and subjective manner? Is the ritual of infant baptism seen as a common thread that supports a romantic notion of community, but with no common roots in a Christian belief system? This thesis attempts to disentangle these complex questions with an emphasis on looking at how people are using infant baptism in the process of constructing their own sense of meaning and spirituality. I now turn my attention to Chapter Two where I outline in detail how the research question has been addressed through the research methods of semi-structured interview and participant observation.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

In this Chapter I comment on both the methodological process and qualitative research techniques I have used in order to address the primary research question: 'Why do people bring their infant child to baptism when they do not attend Church'? This research has focussed on fifty families who brought their infant child to baptism at Kirkham Parish Church (KPC) between 2010 and 2011. The research is empirical and qualitative in nature and comprises a thick description of those who bring their infant child to baptism at KPC. The empirical data has been gathered through listening, recording, observing and participating in the lives of those being studied (see, for example: McHugh 2001; Flick 2002). I found several empirical studies helpful (Stacey 1960; Ellen 1984; Burdick 1993; Jenkins 1999) whilst I planned the fieldwork, as these works underscore the primacy of the relationship between researcher and participants when conducting qualitative research.

The relationship between researcher and participant is crucial in this study. The importance of which is underscored in Roni Berger's article where he asserts 'reflexivity in qualitative research' and that 'the researcher is part of the researched and shares the participants' experience' (2015: 219). This is certainly true of the Kirkham Project. Therefore I commence this Chapter by looking closely at what is involved with an empirical study. I will then turn my attention to the participants at Kirkham, how they became involved, ethical considerations of recruitment and the issues surrounding researcher bias. This will be used as a foundation for considering the advantages, disadvantages and rationale for the use of both participant observation and semi-structured interview. In light of commenting upon semi-structured interviewing, I will remark on how the interview questions were formulated and the subsequent data analysed.

ROLE OF RESEARCHER AT KIRKHAM

Gill and Johnson state that empirical research 'takes place in the natural setting of the everyday activities of the subjects under investigation' (1991:124). This has certainly been true for the Kirkham project. Throughout this research I have been immersed in the socio-cultural environment where the participants live their lives. My daily life as vicar is rooted in the context of Kirkham and was to remain so for the next eight years, thus enabling my empirical research to be richly informed by being an 'outsider' on the 'inside'. My daily routine involves walking my children to school, meeting other parents, having chance encounters with those for whom I have conducted occasional offices, interacting with those shopping on the main high street, meeting people in the local coffee shop. Hammersley and Atkinson state that the empiricist is involved in 'participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions and collecting whatever data are available' to shed light on the issues that are the attention of the research (1995:1). The researcher, therefore, seeks to describe and interpret a culture or social group by observing patterns of behaviour, customs, and ways of life. This reflects the very nature of the research at Kirkham. I have overtly immersed myself, as researcher, into the social and community context of the town, in order to observe patterns of behaviour and listening carefully to the attitudes of those bringing their infant child to baptism at KPC. I have had a distinct advantage in gaining access to those who have brought their infant children to baptism through my public position as vicar of the town. Bryman recognises that 'gaining access to a social setting' is often 'difficult' for the researcher (2008:403). This difficulty has not arisen for me in respect of the Kirkham Project, yet living and working in the context has presented challenges. I identify these challenges later in this Chapter, commenting specifically on my own researcher bias.

The Kirkham research is particularly concerned with seeking to understand the cultural significance of why people bring their infant child to baptism whilst living in an increasingly secular environment. Thus, electing to use an empirical approach for this research is important, because by its very nature it has an intrinsic concern for culture, through its evolution and emergence from the

discipline of anthropology. Ingold states that the aim of anthropology 'is to seek a generous, comparative but nevertheless critical understanding of human beings and knowing in the one world in which we live' (2007:1). Ingold would suggest that empirical research, on the other hand, describes the 'lives of people other than ourselves with an accuracy and sensitivity, honed by detailed observation, and prolonged first-hand experience' (2007:1). This first-hand experience and in-depth observation is at the heart of the Kirkham Project. The Kirkham research has sought to sensitively observe people's stories, ritualistic behaviour, myths, culture and life-style choices and how these things inform the decision to have an infant child baptised.

Throughout this research I have had to be acutely aware of the shift in role between my public position as vicar and that of researcher. For example, when I conducted the semi- structured interviews I did not wear my clerical collar, in order to show the shift in interaction between Church and research. Furthermore, I have had to take into consideration my role as Chair of Governors of St Michael's Church of England Primary School. This was a factor I had not initially considered when looking at my public role, nevertheless, it was highlighted to me when four participants made an unfounded connection between baptism and the gaining of a place for their child at St Michael's School. The awareness of shifting roles in empirical research is well documented. Indeed, McCall and Simmons comment that being aware of changing roles, as researcher, is crucial in ethnographic studies as it adds depth to the quality of the fieldwork and can determine 'what he [or she] will be able to learn' (1969:29). In light of my research at Kirkham I would argue that differing roles can also become fluid as one adapts to the changing interaction with the participants. Berger would argue that this in turn affords the capacity to 'better understand the role of the self in the creation of knowledge' and to 'carefully self-monitor the impact of their biases, beliefs and personal experiences on their research' (2015:220). I would argue that this continued sense of self-awareness and reflexivity is needed in qualitative research, such as the Kirkham Project, as it adds a true sense of transparency and integrity. Also, being aware of the power dynamics involved in my public position and of people potentially telling me what they think I want to hear, as vicar, in order to get their child baptised, was something that I had to be constantly attentive to. Indeed, due to the personal and social connections with the context at Kirkham this has had an inevitable influence on the process. Indeed, Davies comments that it is not just the process by which the empirical researcher has an influence upon the study but also the 'initial selecting of the topic' and the 'personal history' of the researcher (2012:4-5). For these reasons alone I commenced Chapter One by outlining my personal history and reasons for this study.

I have already highlighted that research at Kirkham has involved becoming immersed in the social context. The fieldwork, at times, has not unfolded as I expected, due to my own failures in relating to certain situations that presented themselves. For example, three of the first ten interviews that I conducted did not flow as I had hoped and it was only when the mother in the third interview told me I was 'assuming what she believed', that I modified subsequent interviews. It was clear to see, on reflection, that I had hindered the first three interviews by implicitly and arrogantly projecting my own thoughts about what people believed in respect of infant baptism. More crucially, I was unintentionally placing my own belief system on those participants, thus, compromising my acceptance and trusted status as an empirical researcher. However, I believe it is the ability to evolve, listen, adapt and articulate one's influences which gives the research an organic credibility. Indeed, it is impossible to ignore or suggest that the human interface involved in empirical research does not have a bearing. For example Briggs (1970), in her seminal book, presented an ethnographic study about the Inuit community. This research showed Brigg's ability to be intuitively reflexive to a situation when she accidently offended a member of the community and was subsequently ostracised for three months. It was her ability as a reflexive practitioner that enabled her to think through her own reaction, as researcher, and to develop a deep analytical empathy for the Inuit's emotional response to her actions. Brigg's reflexivity is illustrated by her ability to empathise with her participants, reflect on her position, think through the issues that led to her mistake and adapt her approach accordingly to continue with the study. I would suggest that this is an example of high quality research, not least due to her self-awareness, and something that I have sought to bring to the work at Kirkham, in order for the data to be rich in texture and for my qualities as a researcher to be honed.

Recruitment of Participants

Having already discussed the importance of electing to use an empirical approach to my research at Kirkham, I will now turn my attention to how I first engaged with the participants in this study. The initial engagement with the participants occurred when they enquired about booking a baptism. The system of booking a baptism for an infant child at KPC has been deliberately constructed by the Parochial Church Council to be unfussy and an accessible option for all sections of the community. As a result, the process for booking a baptism at KPC is not bureaucratically laced with procedure, as can often be found in conservative Churches that desire to keep baptism for family members of Christian believers. I have commented in Chapter One that it is the legal right, in England, for parents or guardians to request that their infant child is baptised in the Anglican parish Church where they reside. Therefore, whilst some conservative Anglican Churches have complex procedural application processes for infant baptism, KPC does not.

The process by which someone books a baptism at KPC involves a phone call to the vicarage, usually by the mother of the child, or one of the parents coming to Church after the principal service on a Sunday morning to request a 'christening'. However, it is the norm for the baptism to be booked by telephone. It is unusual for the family to come to Church and book a baptism, though it does happen. Only six of the families involved in the research booked the baptism after the main act of worship on a Sunday morning. After the date and time of the baptism had been arranged with a member of the nuclear family, and during the same conversation, I informed the person making the enquiry that I was engaged in research, concerning infant baptism, at Lancaster University. The reason I told the baptismal enquirer that I was engaged in research after the booking of the baptism, was to ensure that participation in the research was not perceived to be a pre-requisite to having the child baptized. I then informed the enquirer that the research was something separate to the booking of the baptism, but if they would like to be involved in the project they would be welcome to do so. I was also explicit in my explanation that participating in the research was not compulsory or a prerequisite for having the infant child being baptised. I made it clear that the research would involve participant observation and an interview within a six week period after the baptism. Furthermore, I explained what I meant by participant observation and that it would be non-intrusive. Every parent with whom I spoke agreed to be involved in the research. During the period of time when the interviews were taking place it generated a considerable amount of community intrigue to the extent that two of the families, who know one another, have requested a public presentation on the outcome of the research once it is complete. All participants were informed, whilst signing the consent forms, that they could withdraw their data at any point during the research; however, none of the participants withdrew from the project. I also gave participants the chance to debrief at the end of the study in order to discuss any issues that may have arisen for them. However, none of the participants took the opportunity to debrief in respect of the research.

After the initial contact had been made and a mutually convenient time had been arranged for the baptism to take place, I requested that all participants complete two forms: one outlining specific details needed for the Church registers, and one relating to my research[35]. The former has given me a good amount of quantitative information concerning age of parents, occupations, address and age of child being baptised and the latter offers qualitative data that compliments in-depth interviews. I refer to this in more depth during Chapter Four, where I will analyse the research findings. Anonymising qualitative research in respect of this study presented a challenge as personalised stories can be sensitive to deal with when living in a relatively small community where I may have heard competing accounts of the same narrative as pastoral agent. However, my twenty years as a parish priest have stood me in good stead for maintaining privacy and holding confidences on the most intimate of matters. I have ensured that the primary data used in this thesis cannot be traced back to individuals or families by changing names and deliberately omitting stories, however good the content would be for evidencing my thesis, in order to keep safe individuals and families from identification.

[35] See Appendix 3a: This form is completed by every person who has a child baptised and not solely those participants in the research. Appendix 4: Research Consent Form.

After the forms had been completed I arranged a meeting with the family, in their own home, so I could meet the child being baptised and talk through any issues or concerns that they may have about the day of the baptism. Coordinating a pre-baptism meeting is usual professional practice in the Church of England. During the pre-baptism meetings I focused primarily on the practical implications concerning the day of the baptism. I did not change my approach or style to the pre-baptism meeting with the family. Throughout the pre-baptism meetings I did not discuss what the Church of England believes about baptism, but explored in broad terms the significance of the day and how they were hoping to celebrate. This has been my practice for many years as it enables a conversation that is affable, builds relationships and makes public religious ritual accessible. It is worth noting that I avoided initiating any dialogue about my research. This was done in order to keep the conversation organic and focused on their day of celebration. I recall only six occasions when the baptism family asked about the research and all six questions concerned nothing other than putting a date in the diary for the interview.

Anonymisation of the Data

Anonymisation of the data at Kirkham was important, not least, because it is a relatively small town where people are socially and familiarly interconnected (Ellis 1995 and Walford 2005). Karen Kaiser suggests that 'anonymity' is closely related to 'confidentiality'. I was mindful, as researcher, that it was necessary to ensure that the confidential data provided by interview and observation was treated with respect and that participants' identity should remain undisclosed (2009). This was a challenging task as there was discussion and intrigue within the community at the Vicar 'interviewing people'. It would, therefore, be naive to assume no content from the interviews was shared between participants within the community, nor was it something that could be policed. Will Van den Hoonard argues such anonymity is in many respects an 'unachievable goal' with qualitative research (2003:141). Confidentiality and anonymity with the data, on the other hand, is something where I could set clear ethical boundaries. This can be seen in the consent form (see appendix 4) that I invited people to sign if they were agreeable to taking part in the research. The consent form was also designed to give participants confidence, protection and assurance of anonymity. I made it explicitly clear at the end of every interview all names, places of work and any relatives or families cited would be anonymous and confidentiality upheld. This was particularly important and reassuring for the participants because they shared sensative information with me. Such precious information was shared by many due to the trust they had in me as a result of previous pastoral encounters in my role as Vicar. Therefore, it made the situation doubly imperative that identities were not traceable, as the Kirkham Project had both my professional and researcher role were enabling the unearthing of data.

Research Participants

There were fifty participants that engaged with the Kirkham Project and who lived within the parochial boundaries. This comprised of thirty-three of the interviews being with the mother of the baptised child, seven with the father, with the remainder being with both. I was mindful that interviews with multiple participants, especially two parents, create a different dynamic to a one-on-one interview. Nevertheless, I had to be reflexive to the encounters that presented themselves whilst still being aware of issues around confidentiality, interplay of conversation and my interaction with a group as opposed to one individual. I had expected to find geographical groupings from the postal addresses that were supplied at the time of booking the baptism, however there were no significant groupings or socio-indicators that united people. However, one noteworthy observation is that five separate clusters of families, comprising twelve households, occur in the south of Kirkham (Appendix 2). These clusters can be categorised as neighbours living on the same street with a number of observable common denominators, including that all the parents had at least one child who had previously been baptised at Kirkham Parish Church. Notwithstanding this cluster, there was an even spread of postal addresses across the parochial setting of Kirkham. The distinct yet cohesive themes emerge from stories told in the interviews and I draw upon the tables below as and when appropriate. The information within them adds a useful reference point for the richness of the narratives told by the participants. In order to identify emerging themes, I made notes immediately

after each encounter at the baptisms and listened carefully to the recordings of the interviews. Certain clear themes emerged through repetitive remarks by the participants which resonated with one another. I was acutely aware that being a participant observer is distinctively different to being a direct observer.

The tables give an overview of the participants' lives and relationship with Kirkham Parish Church. The analysis of parental marital status shown in Table 1 reveals that the overwhelming numbers were in a committed relationship. Table 2 shows that all of the participants in this study were employed, with a large proportion being in semi-skilled, skilled or professional occupations. According to the United Kingdom 2011 Census the rate of unemployment in Kirkham is both lower than the average for Lancashire and lower than the national average[36]. Table 2a sets the research statistics presented in Table 2 against the backdrop of the national, regional and town statistics for occupations. It can be seen from both tables that a degree of parity exists. Table 3 displays the importance of friendships when it comes to choosing who will be godparents to the infant child, combined with an indication that those friends are often living locally. It can be seen in Table 4 that the majority of participants have some relationship with Kirkham Parish Church, although not for reasons of worship. Over two-thirds of those married and cohabiting couples themselves had more than one sibling who had been baptised at Kirkham Parish Church. Evidently, those parents who do not attend Church but seek infant baptism for their newly born are doing so generationally and consistently.

Crucial factors appear to be historic family reasons for choosing Kirkham Parish Church for the baptism of the infant child, the importance of Occasional Offices and the local nature of the Church. Table 5 indicates, once again, the generational continuity of baptism in respect of choosing this sacrament for the infant child. However, as this thesis is demonstrating, and will further illustrate when it comes to the interpretation of the data, the participants were not necessarily bringing their infant children to baptism for overt or covert religious reasons.

Table 1 - Marital Status

Married Parents	Single Male Parents	Single Female Parents	Cohabiting Parents
16	1	7	26

Table 2 – Total Number of Occupation of Parents

	Unemployed	**C1/C2**	**DE**	**AB**
Male (Father)	**0**	**4**	**28**	**18**
Female (Mother)	**0**	**7**	**18**	**25**

Table 2a – Occupations

Grade	**Fylde**	**Lancashire**	**National**
AB	**27.57%**	**20.16%**	**22.96%**
C1	**33.83%**	**30.05%**	**30.92%**
C2	**17.63%**	**22.60%**	**20.64%**
DE	**20.97%**	**27.19%**	**25.49%**

[36] See Appendix 5

Table 3 – The relationship of godparents to parents by percentage

	Family Member or Relative	Friend	Postal address of godparents in Kirkham	Postal address of godparents outside of Kirkham
Godparents	**31%**	**69%**	**58%**	**42%**

Table 4 - Relationship of the 50 participants with Kirkham Parish Church

	Worshipper	Occasional Attendee	Family Church	Relative buried in Churchyard	Married in the Church	Local Church in the area
Male (Father)	**0**	**6**	**11**	**11**	**4**	**14**
Female (Mother)	**0**	**6**	**10**	**22**	**4**	**8**

Table 5 – Parents baptised at Kirkham Parish Church

	Baptised	Baptised in a different Church	Not Baptised
Male (Father)	**37**	**2**	**11**
Female (Mother)	**42**	**5**	**3**

INFORMANT AND RESEARCHER BIAS

I would suggest that qualitative research carries with it a degree of researcher bias. During the Kirkham Project I have aimed to keep the pastoral and academic elements distinct, so that there are clear lines of demarcation between my academic interests and professional role as vicar. However, as I have already illustrated, these boundaries have at times become blurred due to the grounded nature of the methodology. Thus, it is of the utmost importance that I recognise both my own researcher bias and that of the respondents, not least so that the variables involved in the methodology can be taken into consideration when analysing the data. Rajendran states that qualitative researchers have

wrestled with the knowledge that their own 'prejudices and attitudes' can bias the data that is generated (2001:2). Therefore, it is good practice for the researcher to have an awareness of the effect of their own subjectivity on the data and sense of 'positionality' during the research. Dawson states that positionality 'has come to be increasingly used as a means of exploring the variegated nature of the interaction which occurs during fieldwork between the researcher and the researched' (2010:174). For example, during one interview for the Kirkham Project I had to manage my own role as pastoral agent, as did the informant in her own role. The interview took place in the lounge of the informant's house. The pre-interview situation was a relaxed social situation. The social aspect of the situation was drawn to a close when I placed the digital recorder into the centre of the coffee table and said 'I'll put my drink down as we need to move into the interview scenario or you'll be here all evening'. The interview commenced and once the interview had come to a close the informant re-negotiated the situation when she said 'I enjoyed that more than I imagined, but now the deep intellectual stuff is done and dusted, when you get a minute, could you pop into the Vic [Blackpool Hospital] to see my dad'. This example illustrates an understanding, responsibility and negotiation of both my own role as pastoral agent and the interviewee's appropriateness and recognition of my changing roles and her positioning within that situation. In many respects the fieldwork researcher can be positioned through a range of factors relating both to oneself and the research environment. During fieldwork one's positionality can potentially become fluid, with the researcher negotiating and renegotiating one's own interface and identity with the research context (see, for example: Sultana, 2007, 304-318; Merriam et al, 2001, 405-416). Self-awareness is, therefore, absolutely key if one is to manage meaningful relationships with the participants and generate quality data.

I worked hard to put respondents at their ease by meeting them in their own homes prior to the baptism and conducting the interviews in their own familiar surroundings after the baptism. Each interview that I conducted was preceded by a social time when we had a conversation about generic issues pertaining to their daily life and work. Due to living in the community and seeing many of the families in a variety of other town and social settings I had the advantage of previous social interactions with everyone that took part in the study. As a result of these previous interactions I was keenly aware of potential familiarity. I thus worked hard at keeping the interviews professional by avoiding engaging with anecdotal responses that were not sufficiently focused.

My initial thoughts surrounding this research made me reflect on my pastoral encounters within the parish. In many ways I have had to be aware, as pastoral agent, that I was initially looking at the parochial interactions through the prism of my Christian beliefs and actively looking for residual elements of Christian belief within the community. Before commencing this research I would have shared many of Davie's assertions as expressed in her concept of 'vicarious religion' where she claims that religion is 'performed by an active minority but on behalf of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand, but, quite clearly, approve of what the minority is doing' (2007:22).Vicarious religion is further captured in Davie's argument that:

'Churches and Church leaders perform ritual on behalf of others, believe on behalf of others, embody moral codes on behalf of others and provide a space for the vicarious debate of unresolved issues in modern society to take place' (2007: 23).

In terms of researcher bias I was implicitly looking for evidence of vicarious religion, as I pastorally believed it to be true, and academically perceived it to be an accurate account of what I had experienced since my ordination in 2000. In light of my fieldwork, the suggestion of vicarious religion has less resonance with me, but nevertheless has significant academic merit. The notion of vicarious religion has influenced my thinking and, no doubt, had some bearing upon my initial interviewing and observations. I offer an in-depth analysis on the notion of vicarious religion in Chapters Three and Four and how it relates to my research findings.

I have ascertained from numerous pastoral encounters over the last nine years that people in the town are confident in expressing their worldviews without reference to Christian belief, yet still want the ministrations of the vicar, but not always for religious solace. It was said to me during one interview that 'the funeral you took for our mam was lovely and so was the christening. I don't believe all the religious stuff, not many do, but when I go, I want it [the funeral] done properly, like

mam's'. Such comments highlighted my need to be aware of my role and the overlap of researcher and pastoral agent, because the participant took a pastoral situation and offered his thoughts based upon the pastoral encounter. The work of participant observation in the Kirkham Project was informed by the pastoral work and local knowledge of the community. Therefore, I now turn my attention to commenting upon the primary methodology of this thesis which is participant observation. Furthermore, I comment on how this methodology imbued the relationship between researcher and participants with trust and integrity.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Participant observation is a qualitative methodology which has its origins in ethnographic research. Douglas maintains that participant observation is concerned with 'the experience of people, the way that they think, feel and act' and that the most 'reliable, complete and simple way of getting that information is to share their experience' (1976:112). I would thus concur with Gill and Johnson that participant observation involves the researcher participating 'fully in the lives and activities of subjects and thus becoming a member of their group, organisation or community' (2002:144). In many ways I would argue that participant observation is about developing a deep empathy for what is being observed. The fieldwork at Kirkham has drawn heavily upon participant observation so that both empathy and involvement could develop and richly inform the data. Delbridge and Kirkpatrick remark that participant observation is an immersion into the 'research setting, with the objective of sharing in people's lives while attempting to learn their symbolic world' (1994:37). Participant observation is a key methodological tool that informs qualitative study as it seeks to understand a particular culture, social setting or organisation, but a means of engaging with the subtle and nuanced life stories of people in their everyday setting. The key methodological objective of participant observation, for the Kirkham Project, has been to observe and listen carefully to those who have brought their infant child to baptism at Kirkham Parish Church, in order to discern any common patterns of thought, reason, opinion, emotion, spirituality, ritual or experience.

There is a close relationship between participant observation and empirical study. Participant observation can, in many ways, be described through reference to points on a spectrum. Classifications based on observation are provided by Gold (1958) and Spradley (1980). Gold defines the participant observer as 'full participant', 'participant as observer', 'observer as participant', or 'complete observer' (1958:217-223). Similarly, Spradley provides a typology of 'non-participative', 'passively', 'moderately', 'actively', and 'completely participative observation' (1980:58-62). Other more recent approaches, however, give less emphasis to the observational and a greater stress on the involvement of the researcher, for example, Adler and Adler's categorisation of complete 'member researcher', 'active member researcher', and 'peripheral member researcher' (1994:377-392). The construction of these different roles and their adoption by individual researchers rest in part on the way that observation is understood and the differing values placed on perceived knowledge and knowledge generated by the lived experience of the researcher.

For the purpose of this thesis I will use Gold's category of 'participant as observer' to describe the methodological role used at Kirkham (1958:218). I used Gold's category as it afforded me full participation in the social situation of Kirkham, whilst at the same time disclosing and being open with the participants about the development of relationships for the purposes of the research. Merriam suggests that the participant as observer conducts fieldwork when they 'are known to the group' and 'are subordinate to the researcher's role as a participant' (2009:124). My research role at Kirkham had both consent by the participants and was given consent by the baptismal family before every baptism and I also informed the congregation what I was doing, in terms of research, prior to the service. As a result of my central involvement in the baptismal ceremony of the 50 families involved in the research, I would be regarded by Adler and Adler as inhabiting an 'active membership role' within the research due to my integral immersion within the setting (1998:85). I found the experience of being a participant observer challenging as one has to maintain a degree of detachment in order to be objective and as Merriam states not be 'totally absorbed in the activity' (2009:126). Indeed, my personal experience of fieldwork research at Kirkham resonates with that of Gans when he states:

'The temptation to become involved was ever-present. I had to fight the urge to shed the emotional hand-cuffs that bind the researcher, and to react spontaneously to the situation, to relate to people as a person and to derive pleasure rather than data from the situation. Often, I carried on an internal tug of war, to decide how much spontaneous participation was possible without missing something as a researcher' (1982:54).

Choosing participant observation was challenging but a natural choice, for the research at Kirkham, given the personally interactive and relational nature of this methodology. It is worth noting that the research technique of participant observation was, in part, chosen on the basis of my pastoral experience of the people in the town, and the quality of relationship with the parents of those I had previously baptised. Choosing participant observation as a methodological tool was enlightening as I had the dawning realisation that some of my relationships within the community were not always faith-based, but more often than not rooted in what I could ritualistically provide. If I had not chosen the methodological tool of participant observer I am uncertain whether I would have been able to pick up the nuances in conversation with baptism families that brought me to this conclusion. A good example of this was when a godparent said 'we like the christenings at St Michael's: they're personal and done properly. I just don't believe the whole God thing but to be honest, I don't. I do love all the pomp and tradition of it all'.

Rationale for Using Participant Observation

The function and expectations of a vicar in Kirkham are deeply contextual and have had significant bearing upon my role as participant observer. I, therefore, want to begin this section by commenting upon my own situatedness and the relationship I have with the people of Kirkham. From my experience of working in four very different parochial settings I would regard the role and expectation of the vicar as being highly dependent upon context. What was socially expected of me as a minister in post-industrial Teeside is very different to the expectations of being a minister in the relatively affluent market town of Kirkham, Lancashire. The social composition is different and the response to those social differences has to be delivered accordingly. Yet one constant remains that transcends context: for those who seek it, the Anglican minister, irrespective of geographical area, is one person amongst others in a community who offers 'ritual' to mark significant transitional life events such as birth, death and marriage. Indeed, I had previous pastoral contact with 31 of the families that were involved in the research at Kirkham through previous Occasional Offices, counselling and pastoral visits to elderly family members which brought about a trust and regard for me as an individual. This represents just under two thirds of the participants in this research. Furthermore, my role within the town, as vicar, is bound together through daily social interaction as well as being the person who presides at significant community rituals that are intrinsically important to the town. One example of this wider community role occurred in 2011 when Kirkham Town Council asked me to conduct the funeral of a baby boy that was found in the locale when the police were unable to locate the parents[37]. Consequently my role as an observational researcher in this baptismal study is peppered with previous, meaningful interactions as a provider of publically available ritual to the wider community via my role as a public figure.

The observational fieldwork I have undertaken at Kirkham is partly coloured with the perception that I am 'one of them', not least because I physically live in the community and fulfil some of their expectations in respect of providing ritual. During the research, for example, an older father of a child I baptised said 'this research you're doing doesn't make any of us feel like guinea pigs being observed in a laboratory: you live here and muck in, vicar'. I would, therefore, argue that a significant degree of trust and openness was in existence during the research and has consequently given my role as participant observer an organic dynamic. In light of this and numerous examples of qualitative research involving participant observation (see, for example: Duneier 2000; Liebou 2003;

[37] See: bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire

Whyte 1993), I have been attentive to the development of my contextual relationships, not least because I did not want to lose my analytical objectivity as a researcher.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Participant Observation

DeMunck and Sobo offer several advantages for using participant observation and not least the benefit of acquiring data that is richly infused with meaningful interactions when the participant observer gains access to the 'backstage culture' of a particular context (1998:43). Thus, the use of participant observation has provided me with a picture of those bringing their infant children to baptism that is laced with individual and corporate patterns of meaning. In light of this richly textured data I would concur with DeWalt and DeWalt that choosing participant observation has allowed me, the researcher, to continually improve the quality of 'data collection and develop new research questions or hypotheses' throughout the research (2002:8). For example, the use of participant observation forged a number of on-going questions concerning the role, function and engagement of godparents in the ritual of baptism. I had not fully considered these characteristics of the research as my focus was primarily on the baptism family and the subsequent interview after the ceremony. Thus, participant observation enabled me to take into account important aspects that inform the core research questions.

Merriam suggests that with participant observation the researcher needs to have clarity about the research questions, because the actions of those being observed 'cannot be determined ahead of time' (1998:97). In many ways there is fluidity to this form of methodology but it needs to remain focussed upon the research questions in order to keep clarity to the research. A particular advantage of the Kirkham project was that I had relevant experience and familiarity with participant observation, as this was one of the primary methodological tools that I used at Marton, Blackpool in 2004. Thus, I was aware of the usefulness of participant observation in being able to extract qualitative data through using a more person-centred methodological tool. Throughout the participant observation at Kirkham I had the distinct advantage of having both a pastorally and ritually significant relationship with the participants[38]. This gave me the ability to observe ritualistic patterns of behaviour and to analyse how or if ritual had any resonance with the individual and corporate narratives that the participants shared with me.

One of the most significant advantages of participant observation in relation to the Kirkham project was the longevity of the study. This gave me, as researcher, the ability to observe reoccurring behaviour patterns with different baptism families. For example, after nine baptism ceremonies I became aware, more often than not, that the Kirkham congregation were offering gifts to the parents at the Church door. These offerings were then placed in front of the Lady Chapel altar to be collected a day later. I gleaned from observation and conversation with a mother of a child being baptised that this was done to keep the presents in 'a safe and special place so that they did not get damaged at the party afterwards, as nobody would steal anything from a Church'. This naïve and yet sincere comment reflected a perception of the Church as a sacred holding place for those gifts. Without having the flexibility of participant observation over a specific time-span I would not have had the ability to discern the nuance of this behaviour. The example I have just given illustrates Dewalt and Dewalt's argument that participant observation provides opportunities for viewing and participating in unscheduled events which 'improves the quality of data collection' (2002:8).

I now turn my attention to some of the limitations of participant observation in relation to the Kirkham Project. DeWalt and DeWalt note that male and female researchers have access to different information, as they have access to different people, 'situations, and pools of knowledge' (2002:8). Indeed, it has been essential that I have understood my own role and that of the informants in terms of 'appearance, ethnicity, age, gender, and class'(Schensul, Schensul, and Lecompte, 1999:93). During the research I have been mindful of such issues and the potential influence on the data. For example, I identified that the interactions were predominantly with the females at the booking of the baptism, ceremony and interview. I sought to limit this gender bias by requesting both mother and

[38] Wolcott (2001) places a high regard on fieldwork researchers adapting their methodological approach to achieve learning outcomes and make the best use of the opportunity presented.

father at the interview in order to give the research a broader spectrum of opinion. This request made little difference to the male attendance at interviews, as I had seventeen men present from the fifty interviews I conducted. This figure could have been considerably fewer if I had not made the request. I was also aware of the way in which, at times, I was excluded or hindered by the community from the research I was conducting. For example, if I was in close proximity to a small group after the baptism service, the conversation often changed or they would physically move away so that I would be out of audible range. This was something that I noted and became increasingly aware of as the research progressed, in some measure due to my experience of previous baptism services and increased attentiveness to what was occurring around me. Therefore, the extent to which my role as participant observer was influenced was in some measure due to my positioning 'in a network of relationships' indeed, the qualitative researcher who uses participant observation ought to expect a certain amount of positioning relative to the role (Vidich, 1995:354).

A potential limitation of participant observation is highlighted by DeWalt, DeWalt, and Wayland as they propose that the researcher using participant observation may fail to report the 'negative aspects of those being studied' as it could compromise one's study (1998:329). Issues of moral integrity are central to qualitative methodologies and transparency is critically important due to the subjectivity of interpretation, hence the importance for critical self-awareness that is visible throughout this research. Indeed, Schensul, Schensul, and Lecompte suggest that participant observation needs to be 'filtered through the researcher's interpretive frames' and with a 'scrupulous attention to detail' (1999:95). One means of honing the technique of participant observation to keep it as objective as possible, is by using complementary forms of qualitative methodological techniques. Within the research project at Kirkham I have used semi-structured interviews in order to enrich the data generated by participant observation. I will now offer an appraisal and rationale of semi-structured interviews.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS AND THE RATIONALE FOR THEIR USE

I chose to use semi-structured interviews in order to complement the qualitative data that was gained through the use of participant observation. Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte state that 'semi-structured interviews consist of predetermined questions' that are 'related to domains of interest' (1999:149). The semi-structured interview in the context of empirical research has the flexibility to be both focussed and conversational. Patton suggests that this, in turn, leads to good quality semi-structured interviews as it lays open:

'Thoughts, feelings, knowledge and experience, not only to the interviewer but to the interviewee. The process of being taken through a directive, reflective process affects the persons being interviewed and leaves them knowing things about themselves that they didn't know-or at least were not fully aware of before the interview' (2002:405).

The semi-structured interview is not the sole means of capturing good qualitative material. However, the study at Kirkham was seeking to look closely at opinions, feelings and emotions in relation to infant baptism. Therefore, semi-structured interviewing gave a supple methodological approach that could flex around issues that presented themselves to be explored. There are of course other forms of interviewing that can be used in empirical research but it is highly dependent upon the data one is wishing to capture. For example, the unstructured interview can enable a more natural and unrestricted experience that reveals more about the participant. This form of interview can be likened to a guided conversation with particular areas of interest identified, by the interviewer, to explore (for examples of studies using unstructured interviews as a methodology see: Mead 1930; Malinowski 1932; Agar 1980). On the other hand structured interviews have a set of predetermined questions that the interviewer carefully selects prior to the interview, with the caveat that the question is only explained if the interviewee finds it confusing or unclear (for examples of qualitative studies that have used structured interviews as a methodology see: Morley 1994; Henderson and Whitmarsh 1995; Simpson and King 1999).

The principal benefit of semi-structured interviewing is that one gains the flexibility of unstructured interviews whilst retaining the focus of a structured interview, due to formulating specific open-ended questions prior. I employed the use of the semi-structured interviewing technique during the research at Kirkham as it afforded me the ability to explore the answers to the open-ended questions that I presented to the participants. Gray et al remark that open-ended questions allow a 'spontaneity' to the interviews which is 'one of the principal objectives of interviewing' (2007:152). However, one of the most important aspects of semi-structured interviews is the ability to listen attentively to what is being said so that the qualitative data, comprising opinions and feelings, can be accurately reflected. As a result of having face-to-face contact with the fifty families that were engaged in the research it gave me the opportunity to clarify any issues that arose from the participant observation. Furthermore, it also gave me the opportunity to explore research questions and hypotheses in a more in-depth manner. Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte note that this, in turn, gives an excellent 'qualitative base for the construction' of a richly informed study (1999:150). Also, Saeed states that semi-structured interviews allow the participants to freely express themselves and for them to 'explain issues of importance' relating to the research matter, in a secure environment (2007:163).

Gray et al suggest that the environment where the interview is to take place is crucial in creating a situation in which the interviewee 'feels as comfortable as possible' as it 'provides candid self-reports' (2007:153). The fieldwork of the Kirkham project involved 50 semi-structured interviews that all took place on a weekday evening in the homes of the participants. The location of the interview was suggested by me once the baptism families had agreed to take part in the research. This suggestion was met with approval by all the participants due to practical childcare arrangements[39]. Holding the interviews in the homes of the participants had the effect of putting the participants at ease, as they were in familiar and safe surroundings. All the interviews occurred in the lounge of the participants' house or flat. Once again this added to a more informal and conducive atmosphere. Once we were settled in the lounge I gave the participants a sheet of questions that I was going to ask. This enabled the participants to become aware of the subject areas that they were going to talk about. Before the interview commenced I took the questions from those taking part and asked permission for the interview to be recorded.

Qualitative interviewing in a social context has to be carefully constructed in respect of how that relates to the fieldwork techniques as a whole[40]. Once I had decided to use participant observation and semi-structured interviewing as a means of data collection, I commenced an informal series of eight pilot interviews with people outside of the fieldwork context. This in turn allowed me to hone the questions and to build up a feel of how the interviews would evolve and what topics may emerge. Polit et al suggest that it is crucial to have a pilot study in 'preparation' for any 'major study' (2001:467). Initiating a pilot study gave me the opportunity to reflect on whether the phrasing, ordering and formatting of the semi-structured interview was appropriate and understandable. Bryman states that pilot interviews have 'a role in ensuring that the research instrument as a whole functions well' (2008:247). The pilot study gave me the chance to assess the overall flow of the interview and whether the questions generated a focused dialogue in respect of the questions that were asked. Thus, I concur with Frankland and Bloor that pilot interviews provide the qualitative researcher with a 'clear definition of the focus of the study' (1999:154). Indeed, as a result of the pilot study I rephrased the content of three questions due to the participants seeking clarification of what was being asked.

Designing the questions for the interviews was complex and needed several revisions after the pilot interviews. One of the challenges I faced in the design of the questions was how to explore beliefs and spirituality without defining the term or leading the participant into overt language about religion; e.g. suggesting that certain experiences in respect of infant baptism were explicitly religious phenomena. I was acutely aware, through discussion with my supervisor, that I had to be careful in defining certain experiences as religious with issues surrounding eternity or the

[39] On a practical note, many of the participants commented on the convenience of having the interview in the home setting because it meant that someone else could care for the child or children in the same building.

[40] See Appendix 4 for interview questions

purpose of life as it is not always necessarily the case. This discussion influenced the language that I used in the interview and the composition of the questions, as I wanted to remain faithful to my research questions and remain focussed on teasing out what the participants truly believed to be occurring at infant baptism. Thus, I was keen, particularly with questions three, four, five and six of section two, to ensure that I did not impress upon the participants what I deemed to be secular or religious, hence the language of 'higher force' to describe the existence of a spiritual realm or supernatural entity.

Throughout this research I have been concerned with looking at how people create meaning and construct belief systems in relation to the use of infant baptism in Kirkham Parish Church. However, I recognised at the outset of this research that I must not presume that those bringing their infant child to baptism are doing so for religious reasons. Indeed, my initial research experience suggested that those bringing their child to baptism did not necessarily perceive the sacrament of baptism as a clear cut religious, spiritual or secular event, but always a meaningful experience. Day suggests that people find a 'public expression' for their beliefs, for example, 'attending Church' (2006:22). The data from my interviews would concur with this assertion but with the caveat that those beliefs, whether secular, religious or a mixture of the two, are often not in step with the provider of that public expression but are deeply personalised. This is something that I return to in Chapter Four.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Semi-structured Interviews

Unlike a questionnaire framework, where detailed questions are formulated ahead of time, the semi-structured interviewing technique allowed me to build up personal relationships and developed spontaneity of conversation. Indeed, during the interviews I was able to change the direction of the conversation when something interesting was brought up by the participant, which meant I was able to gather data that was both in-depth and detailed. This is something that Bryman highlights as a 'distinctive advantage' of semi-structured interviews (2008:389).

From my experience of the research at Kirkham I would subscribe to the belief that good value qualitative interviewing is quintessentially relational. The development of relationships away from the specific interview experience, at Kirkham, has in turn placed the participants at ease and enabled conversations to unfold. Thus, the nature of a semi-structured interview has been highly appropriate during my research as it has given me scope to explore concepts and themes that have arisen from conversation based upon both an evolving relationship with the participants and the qualitative semi-structured interviewing technique. I would argue that qualitative interviewing has been distinctly advantageous, in respect of my research at Kirkham, as it has allowed the participant's point of view to be heard and explored.

Within the process of qualitative interviewing that I employed there have been interviews where the participants wanted to talk around a particular topic. This is something that I allowed to happen as I have not wanted to constrain the interview experience for the participant. This has, in turn, been time consuming both for the fieldwork and the analysis, yet it has given a rich tapestry of data. There is a commonly held understanding amongst researchers that one of the principal disadvantages of semi-structured interviewing is that open ended questions are difficult to analyse. Mathers, Fox and Hunn state that this 'makes comparing the answers very difficult. In actual fact if we ask an open-ended question of lots of people we are likely to start building up some sort of pattern to the answers' (2002:18). For example, during one interview the mother of the child being baptised began to talk about her relative's infant child, who had been baptised in the URC Church at Lytham, Lancashire. Whilst this illustration took 15 minutes to recount I did not stop her doing so as she was explaining the difference between being involved at the centre of the ritual for her own child and being a ritual participant on the edges of the ceremony. The idea of being a ritual participant by virtue of being a guest to the event is a different dynamic than being the person who has initiated the ritual for their infant child. This interface between these two functions of ritual participation is something I return to during Chapter Four, as it highlights the dynamics of being involved in a baptism ceremony in differing roles.

As I outlined at the beginning of Chapter One, this research project is concerned with rich, detailed responses, whereas structured interviewing seeks to generate responses that can be coded and processed. Whilst I did not interview family members more than once due to the scale of the task, I recognise that I could have gone back to the same families on several occasions due to the nature of the methodology. This would be something that I would consider if I were to do the research again, but I would require a team of researchers. However, with my fieldwork, whilst time consuming, I had clarity about the methodology and what volume of data it was possible to capture. Therefore, going back to the participants was never an option at the planning stage of this research.

Qualitative interviewing can be dependent upon the approach taken by the interviewer. The unstructured interview uses notes to prompt them on a whole range of topics. For example, there may be just a single question that the interviewer asks and the interviewee then responds with unbridled freedom, with the interviewer responding to points that they deem appropriate to follow up. This form of methodology was not advantageous for the research at Kirkham as it appeared to lack a sense of focus in addressing the research questions I outlined in Chapter One. Whilst I am a strong proponent of the semi-structured interviewing technique, for the purpose of my research area I recognise that this methodology has disadvantages and not least the inability, like other forms of methodology, to guarantee the absolute honesty of the participants[41]. Though, I would argue that this is where the importance of developing authentic relationships with the participants comes into play, as it is hoped that this cultivates sincerity and transparency.

CONSTRUCTION OF SECTION ONE OF THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

I now turn my attention to how the semi-structured interview questions were constructed and assembled. The semi-structured interview that I constructed is split into two distinct sections. The first section of the interview focuses on the participants rationale for bringing their infant child to baptism and why specifically Kirkham Parish Church. The second section seeks to initially explore, in a broader context, the participants' rationale for desiring baptism for the infant child. Furthermore, this is used to look at the participants' sense of meaning-making and spirituality through the lens of bringing their child to baptism. The interview then concentrates on whether those being interviewed have a sense of a higher force and whether this has an interface with everyday living. I now turn my attention to offering a rationale for the interview questions in section one.

The opening question of the interview aimed to settle the interviewee with a general and yet candid question: 'Why did you choose to get your infant child baptised at Kirkham Parish Church?' This question was designed to set the scene for the primary research question: 'Why do people bring their infant child to baptism when they do not attend Church?' Furthermore, when I initially approached families to ask whether or not they would like to be involved in the research, I had given them the title of the thesis. Therefore, the first question is familiar territory and relates back to my opening question at the time when they were invited to be involved in the Kirkham project. The second question goes on to look at those whom the immediate family invited to the baptism. This slowly begins to build up the picture of the day and for me as researcher to ascertain who the key people were and what role they had to play. It was also important to work out whether the baptism had drawn people in from outside the nuclear and extended family and what the reasons were for inviting these people.

The third and fourth questions of the interview can be grouped together. The third question turned towards the baptism service itself and what were the most important aspects of the service. I was looking for what the interviewees could recall from the liturgy and what was meaningful to them. This question was followed up by a subsidiary query about the significance of the day and whether they had planned any activities outside of the Church setting that related to the baptism. I was particularly attentive to any emphasis being placed on specific aspects of the day and what was most significant to them. The third question also began to probe and open up any possible dialogue concerning the place of tradition, signs and symbols and where these derive from. The fourth question begins to explore whether the baptism has any overarching or guiding principles that, may

[41] This could however, be regarded as not being a disadvantage if shared with other methods.

or may not, forge and shape the lives of the immediate family. Implicit within this question is the notion that there may be a correlation between having your child baptised and certain ideals or principles that may be aspired to.

The fifth question ended section one and sought to engage with the issue of relationships in respect of choosing godparents for the infant child who was baptised. I was keen to establish whether the quality of relationship with either family member or friend was a determining factor in the choice of godparent. Furthermore, if the choice of godparent was informed by individual choice, as opposed to traditional patterns of choosing family members, I wanted to know what rationale or qualities were being applied or sought. This final question of section one stimulated much discussion and became the most time consuming part of the interview, as baptism families were not automatically choosing family members to be godparents. During one interview the mother remarked that godparents 'take an active part in your child's life. It took a long time to think about who to choose as godparents, because you have to think about their values and whether they complement your own'. This was not an uncommon sentiment throughout the interviews and underscored the importance of quality personalised relationships and the role they played in generating meaningful living. I deliberately use the term 'personalised' as opposed to 'individualised' because the participants expressed a sense of relationality in their personal meaning-making as opposed to an isolated individualism. Whilst not negating the autonomy of the individual and the celebration of the self, I do wish to underscore the inter-personalised aspect emerging from this research. This is explored further in Chapter Four where I analyse the data of the fifty interviews.

CONSTRUCTION OF SECTION TWO OF THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS[42]

Section Two of the interview aimed to change tack and look at the rationale for the participants bringing their infant child to baptism in a broader frame of reference. For example, the first question of section two asked the participants whether they recognised Kirkham Parish Church as being Anglican and, if so, whether it is important for the Church to provide baptism for everyone who seeks it. In thirteen of the interviews this question provided a discussion about past experiences of the Church of England and what it stood for in a multi-cultural society. Once again, I comment on this issue during Chapter Four. The second question of section two moved into the realms of the personal and experiential by asking the participant about their feelings in respect of the experience of having their infant child baptised. The question was also seeking to discern whether there was a sense of personal spirituality and meaning-making being articulated in the light of personal experience. I frequently followed up this question with gentle prompts, as the participants often struggled and grappled with language to explain what they had experienced. However, I was mindful not to guide these participants, with my prompts, along pathways that they did not wish to follow. I was ever mindful of the mother during an early interview who stated that I was 'assuming what she believed', and was, thus, acutely aware of my own influence during follow-up prompts to question two.

Question three builds on question two and yet moves the emphasis and focus from the participants' individual feelings, as elicited from the baptism experience, to whether the baptism had any correlation with a higher force. This question commenced a sequence of four questions that are distinct from the moral dimension of baptism as highlighted in questions four and five of section one. Questions three, four, five and six were all intrinsically concerned with whether the parent perceived bringing their infant child to baptism as having any association or resonance with belief in a higher being. Therefore, question four established whether or not there was a belief in a higher force and if so what role that had to play in the life of the participant. Furthermore, I sought to ascertain whether that belief had a relational aspect to it and if it influenced daily life. This question stimulated the most conversation and it was difficult, at times, to manage the participants in terms of keeping their comments connected to the question. Questions five and six can be grouped together as they pursued whether the participants perceived a connection between spiritual or religious activities and Kirkham Parish Church; and also whether the Church had a function in enabling a relationship with a higher

[42] See Appendix 3

force. These two questions generated significant conversation about the role of St Michael's Church as a venue that held important transitional moments in people's lives: baptisms, weddings and funerals. There was also significant dialogue about what was believed by those who use Church solely for Occasional Offices and who locally would regard themselves as 'St Michael's folk'. Therefore, questions five and six stimulated discussion about what it may mean to perceive oneself as belonging to or associated with St Michael's Church and whether that was linked with any form of religious or spiritual belief.

ANALYSING THE DATA OF THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

There are different approaches to analysing transcripts generated by semi-structured interviewing within a qualitative study. For example, some qualitative studies have used discourse analysis to look at the transcripts from interviews (see, for example: Agar 1973 and Jones 2005). There are various forms of discourse analysis but they all have a concern with analysing written or spoken interactions where the object of the analysis is to recognise any sequences embedded within sentences, propositions and metaphor. Wetherell et al list five core traditions inside the discourse analysis field, namely, sociolinguistics, conversation analysis, discursive psychology, critical discourse analysis and Foucauldian analysis (2002:ii). It would be far beyond the scope of this thesis to delineate all these approaches due to the vast field of literature pertaining to this subject (e.g. Jorgersen and Philips, 202; Schiffin et al, 2003, Rogers, 2004). Whilst I recognise that discourse analysis is a worthy tool in the kit bag of the qualitative researcher, I chose narrative analysis for analysing the data of the semi-structured interviews at Kirkham, primarily due to the personal stories as expressed in the responses that were given to my questions.

Bryman states that 'narrative analysis is a term that covers a wide variety of approaches that are concerned with the search for and analysis of the stories that people employ to understand their lives and the world around them' (2008:553). Due to the nature of the interviews at Kirkham being semi-structured, and in many respects being concerned with belief and ritual practice, I recognised early in the research that participants answered questions with illustrations from their life stories. For example, during one interview the father of the child being baptised said:

'I have been pushed from pillar to post all my life. I never knew my dad. Mum was incredible with what she did for me and my brothers. Mum never went to Church, apart from midnight mass. She always cried after that service. Church was important as she told us that it taught us right from wrong. She wasn't religious but believed that Church was a force for good. Having Kayleigh christened was important as I want to set her off in the right direction. When I held her [Kayleigh] at the christening it made me feel as though I was doing what my mum would have wanted. That christening was one of those moments where everything fitted into place'[43].

Narrative analysis involves being attentive to the life stories of the participants whilst engaged in the fieldwork research. Bryman comments that whilst there is little or no consensus about 'what narrative analysis entails' it does require the researcher to be sensitive to:

'The connections in people's accounts of past, present, and future events and states of affairs; people's sense of their place within those events and states of affairs; the stories they generate about them; and the significance of context for the unfolding of events and people's sense of their role within them' (2008:553).

It is these factors, as outlined above, that I have taken seriously whilst engaging with the interview transcripts. During the analysis of the transcripts it became clear that I was dealing specifically with personal stories and experience. Riessman has a concern with what I had identified and describes such transcripts as 'oral narratives of personal experience' (2005:5). I, therefore use of Riessman's typology of narrative analysis: 'thematic, structural, interactional and performative analysis' to

[43] Please note that names given to participants in this research project are all pseudonyms.

extrapolate themes and subjects that emerged from the data I gathered throughout the semi-structured interview process (2005:2-5). Nevertheless, I could have used other typologies that are models of narrative analysis (see, for example: Cortazzi, 2001; Mishler, 1995), yet the Riessman typology gave me clear lines of definition that were particularly suited to personal stories expressed in an ethnographic approach. During the process of coding I was able to identify emerging themes in my notes with words such as 'community', 'intimacy', 'personalised', 'ritual signification' and 'aesthetic'.

I will now outline the four categories within Riessman's typology in order to offer a clear picture of how I analysed the data from the semi-structured interviews (2005:2-5). Thematic analysis refers to the content of a text, 'what' is said more than 'how' it is said, the 'told' rather than the 'telling'. This approach is helpful for finding common thematic elements across research participants and the events they report. I have concentrated specifically on the content of participants' speech and the layers of meaning they have placed in a storied format. Dovetailed into Riessman's typology is the 'structural analysis' element that moves to the way a story is told. Although thematic content does not fade, focus is on form and how the participant makes a story persuasive. The third component of Riessman's typology is 'interactional analysis' which involves, in the context of semi-structured interviews, the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee. Attention to thematic content and narrative structure is not irrelevant in this approach, but the emphasis moves towards the participant's story as a process of mutual construction, where, in the situation of a semi- structured interview, interviewer and interviewee generate meaning collaboratively. The fourth element of Riessman's typology is 'performative analysis'. In many ways this is an extension of the interactional approach, where the stories that are shared can be seen as a performance stretching further than spoken words. Furthermore, one must consider the interaction of the participant with other characters in the story and how the story is interpreted. The researcher has to consider the participant's movement and gestures within the interview and how they correlate with the story being told. After every interview, during the Kirkham Project, and when I left the interviewee's home, I immediately wrote up the notes in a diary, in order to complement the transcribed recording when it came to analysis.

Michael Toolan describes narrative analysis as having its origins in a 'perceived sequence of nonrandomly connected events' (1988:7). I was mindful of this throughout the study, as the narrative analysis of the data was not a disconnected activity, away from the semi-structured interviews or participant observation, but rather an ongoing process throughout the research. To this end, I kept field notes and highlighted words, phrases or stories that began to emerge, in order to for me to continually compare and contrast these with the recordings from the semi-structured interviews. After each interview and baptism I physically noted the differences among the individuals, families, cultural attire and casual conversation. These notes sat alongside specific conversations directly pertaining to the research questions and gave me layers of background understanding and meaning that fed into the data analysis. Once I had started to colour code recurrent words and phrases, themes began to emerge and become more prominent. This in turn gave me much to compare, contrast and reflect upon as certain themes started to become familiar features on the research landscape.

CONCLUSION

In this Chapter I have established that this study is qualitative and is a detailed piece of research of those who have brought their infant child to baptism at Kirkham Parish Church but do not attend. I have engaged with the cultural context, behaviours, interactions, ritual, lives, stories and customs of the participants in this study. The data that I have captured through the qualitative methodologies of participant observation and semi-structured interviews have a rich depth and texture, in part, due to the participants unfolding their life stories to me in open conversation at the time of the baptism and more formally in the interview process. The academic research has been further enriched through my knowledge of the town in my capacity as vicar. I have also highlighted how the two roles of pastoral agent and academic researcher were managed. These two roles have been challenging as I have had to be reflexive in my approach to the methodologies and ensure that the participants have been aware of my changing roles.

Throughout this Chapter I have taken into account the positive and negative aspects of participant observation and semi-structured interviews in relation to the Kirkham research. Both qualitative methodologies were chosen in order to gain access and probe deeper into the opinions and stories of individuals. I have made clear throughout that this empirical study is infused with qualitative data. The data that has been generated is varied, nuanced and at times highly personalised through stories about belief, spirituality and religious practice. The construction of the interview questions was designed in such a way as to generate such data. To this end, the semi-structured interviews complemented and built upon the participant observation at the time of the baptism.

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews was undertaken by using the technique of narrative analysis. I believe this technique to be crucial as the participants frequently answered questions in a storied format. Thus, my knowledge of the locale, past experience of previous baptism families, and the content of the semi-structured interviews have built up a multi-layered picture of why people who do not attend Church bring their infant children to baptism. Having outlined the fieldwork methodology and its rationale I will now turn my attention to Chapter Three. In Chapter Three I set out a theoretical framework for the research that I have undertaken by looking closely at emerging themes and concepts that pertain to my area of research.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Chapters One and Two outlined the context in which my research was conducted and the methods I employed. Chapter Three reviews the background literature, current thinking around the contemporary issues raised by various authors whose work is of particular relevance such as Nancy Ammerman's (2013), Meredith McGuire (2008) and the contribution of Marion Bowman and Ülo Valk (2012). I will engage these particular authors, because each in their own way employs empirical research to explore people's interaction with religion and spirituality in everyday life. This will, in turn, offer a helpful backdrop and provide insight into the lives of the participants in the Kirkham Project.

Once I have engaged the broader field of religious and spiritual experience in the context of everyday life, I will consider the empirically based research known as the Kendal Project. The Kendal Project by Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas sought to explore and address the claim that 'traditional forms of religion, particularly Christianity, are giving way to holistic spirituality' (2005:x). The Kendal Project is framed within a much broader picture in respect of the emergence of 'spirituality', with its focus upon the cultivation of an individual's quest and choice for meaning and fulfilment from within or outside of a particular religious tradition (Roof 1999 and Wuthnow 1998). The emphasis, therefore, is upon the individual and the cultivation of the inner self as opposed to an autonomous deference towards a specific religious tradition. This research built upon the claims by academics such as Charles Taylor, that there has been 'a massive subjective turn of modern culture' over the last thirty years; consequently, the religious landscape has been shaped by these changes (1991:26). This will form a coherent starting point as I seek to construct a firm theoretical foundation on which to build my thesis, based upon empirically grounded fieldwork in a British market town.

The Chapter then engages with the work of Danièle Hervieu-Léger, Grace Davie, Wade Clark Roof, Richard Flory and Donald Miller. These key thinkers go some way to illuminating my research question: why do people bring their infant children to baptism when they do not attend Church? They offer essential insights into belonging, believing, ritual and the construction of individual and community spirituality, not least, because of the extensive qualitative fieldwork that underpins their respective studies. Furthermore, these academics are relentless in their quest to understand how religion and spirituality have interacted, evolved and are evolving, in the everyday lives of people in the late-twentieth and early- twenty-first century. The areas of debate that they bring to the fore are central to understanding the religious and social tapestry of the Kirkham Project and the conclusions that will be drawn. I will therefore, use this as the basis from which to consider recent thinking surrounding why people seek baptism for their infant child. This will then enable me to situate my research in the religious landscape of contemporary Britain, and to establish the important contribution that the Kirkham Project offers to the broader debate. These findings are used in Chapter Five to help interpret the qualitative data presented in Chapter Four.

Prior to individually exploring everyday religion, vernacular religion and lived religion, I wish to clarify what each of these terms mean as none of the three adequately describe the ethos and purpose of the Kirkham Project. Notwithstanding this, all three concepts play an important role in understanding the study at Kirkham. Vernacular religion is religion as people experience, understand and practice it and which shapes everyday culture. Everyday religion, on the other hand, is concerned with the embodied forms of spirituality that occur in everyday life and in pluralistic societies, with a keen eye on how religion is experienced by individuals and institutions. In contrast, lived religion focuses on the experiences of religious individuals in everyday life, considering the institutional aspects of religion with which they may engage. Most significantly for the Kirkham Project, lived religion suggests that people proactively, intuitively and spontaneously create, navigate and vary their own beliefs and practices.

EVERYDAY RELIGION

Scholars such as Peter Berger have asserted that there has been a worldwide 'resurgence' of religion (1999). Nancy Ammerman suggests there are a number of leading scholars from across the academy who take seriously the resurgence of religion in modern pluralistic and complex societies. Ammerman argues religion is flourishing and utilises a varied group of academics who critique and observe religious practice in action within modern daily life. Ammerman suggests that religion has a significant bearing upon cultural and organisational life through the political arena, family life, civic roles and modern communication (2007). Furthermore, 'everyday religion' occurs away from institutional arenas such as churches, synagogues or other formal religious organisations. Everyday religion therefore emphasises the importance of individual experiences and social context over and above rigid institutional viewpoints.

Ammerman seeks to understand the study of religion in the modern era by moving beyond quantitative data and the study of religious organisations by proposing three areas: 'Tradition Dislodged but not Lost', 'Religion out of Place' and 'Producing Everyday Religious Lives'. All three sections are useful for the purpose of the Kirkham research, as the contributor offer a commentary on religion that transcends 'formal religious institutions' and a religious experience that is not being restricted by the rigidity of formal organisations. Meredith McGuire states:

'We need to take seriously not merely the packages of religious narratives supplied by institutions but -more important- the myriad individual ways by which ordinary people remember, share, enact, adapt, create and combine the stories out of which they live' (2008:187).

This is particularly helpful, and something I am mindful of in respect of the Kirkham Project participants and their implicit and explicit 'everyday religion', as I seek to understand their religious and spiritual practices: mind, 'bodies', 'emotions', spirit and stories (2008:198).

Ammerman challenges the secularisation theorists such as Bruce (1992; 1996; 2002; 2006; 2007; 2010; 2011) and Voas (2010). Describing spirituality, as opposed to institutionally understood narratives of religion. Furthermore, she comments on the interplay between what has traditionally been perceived as sacred rather than secular (2013). Ammerman is relentless in her pursuit to tease out what lived religion looks like through qualitative and empirically sensitive methodological tools. This book commences with a Chapter which suggests religion is observable through individual spiritual stories lived in everyday life. Ammerman does not negate or ignore the complexity of modern life when observing religion or spirituality, but rather recognises the multilayered and cross-fertilisation of everyday religion lived between work, private and social spheres. Indeed, meaningful narratives often 'appear outside officially religious bounds' (2013:9). Ammerman has a deep awareness that people's religious or spiritual stories often appear in a variety of aspects within their life: 'all stories, narratives of everyday religion are complicated' (2013:9). The spirituality Ammerman and her team of researchers were discerning 'is neither a quest for a sacred centre that will orient all of life nor a supernatural force that will provide assistance or salvation' (2013:9), but rather a striving to 'recognise that something about it concerns the life of the spirit and the communities of discourse in which spiritual traditions are made real' (2013:9).

Ammerman's work of 2013highlight the methodological importance of listening to individual's variegated stories, particularly those manifesting themselves in a variety of spiritualities that by definition are not monochrome, but most importantly cultivated and 'situated in a context' (2013:10). The narrative-based methodological approach Ammerman proposes is helpful in studying religion outside of institutions, though one could critique Ammerman for drawing a number of her samples from religious organisations. One of the challenges of her work in respect of the Kirkham Project, is the methodological approach that Ammerman adopts beyond conducting semi-structured interviews; the use of photograph elicitation interviews. Respondents were given cameras and told to take pictures of five or six places then to explain the stories behind the pictures that were most important to them. Audio recorders were also issued so that respondents could record their ideas and experiences of everyday life for a week (2013:319). These methodological techniques were used to elicit and illuminate the telling of stories alongside daily diaries.

The techniques employed by Ammerman provide observations about religion in everyday life but also highlight some of the limitations that the semi-structured interviewing, participant observation and living in the Kirkham context imposed. Nevertheless, throughout the book Ammerman does show how spiritual narratives overlap and find expression in the everyday. Ammerman's work is laced with empirical insight and strives towards an integrated understanding of individual's religious lives that is not categorised by false dichotomies of 'sacred and profane' or 'religious and spiritual'. This is an aspect which I consider in Chapter Five.

Lived Religion

Much of McGuire's work is steeped in her extensive work with Catholic peace and justice campaigners in the 1960s and charismatic Catholics in the 1970s. McGuire draws upon holistic healing practices in the 1980s, and in more recent years, semi-structured interviews with Texas Latinas. McGuire uses her extensive fieldwork experience to focus upon the everyday life of the individual and how they implicitly and explicitly place spiritual understandings and ideas into everyday occurrences. Beyond McGuire's academic interest, she also draws heavily upon her own intellectual curiosity to 'comprehend individuals' and 'religions as practiced' (2008:5). McGuire cites and uses the work of Thomas Luckmann who has argued comprehensively that an individual's religious practice and religiosity may not correspond in totality with the creedal formula, practices and activities of an official religion (1967). McGuire underscores the importance of Luckmann's work and the need to move beyond the methodological processes of the 1970s that sought to understand religion through traditional models of enquiry such as 'survey questionnaires' (2008:17). McGuire recognises how getting a 'research instrument' that shines light upon the lived religion is required in order to understand the 'complexity' of 'contemporary individuals' religion' which is often 'nonofficial' and 'unrecognised' (2008:17).

McGuire explores the notion of 'popular religion' linked to Hispanic Catholics (2008:45). 'Popular religion' refers to 'non-official' religious activity that is non 'Church approved religion' also known as 'vernacular religion'. From her research field McGuire argues that 'people's religious practice is often informed by popular religious traditions as well as by Church traditions' (2008:48). This is further illustrated in Chapter Four where she comments upon and highlights the similarities of practice between 'southern white evangelicals' and Hispanic Catholics (2008:67). Michele Dillon also observes the importance of such 'parallel religious practices' (2009:925). Furthermore, McGuire argues that there is a connection between the Mexican American women and southern evangelical women who 'use popular religious objects to connect domestic space with divine and/or to use their home decor to make a religious statement to visitors' (2008:78): thus communicating something about their religious identity through space and artefacts.

The above is important background work to understand the Kirkham experience in terms of the unseen aspects of religiosity of the participants. Perhaps most importantly, McGuire helps point towards a fusion and mutation between inherited or experienced religious tradition and that of individual expression and understanding. The hub of McGuire's work however, is concerned with 'lived religion as embodied' (2008:118). She emphasises at many junctures that spirituality 'involves people's material bodies, not just their minds, or spirits' (2008:97). Indeed, McGuire challenges the separateness of medicine and religion, as she writes:

'Lived religion is, for many people, immediately connected with the well-being of their bodies and minds, because they do not experience their spiritual lives as separate from their physical/emotional lives' (2008:137).

McGuire argues for a holistic understanding of bodies in respect of lived religion. She draws attention to a spectrum of embodied spiritual practices in individual's everyday routines, for example, the laying on of hands, meditation, yoga, and the use of symbols. The integration visible in McGuire's work in respect of lived religion and the activities that bring about a sense of 'wholeness' experienced by the individual is a valuable observation (2008:140). McGuire contributes something very helpful to the field as she highlights the connectedness of lived religion and spirituality with

'embodied' experience. Furthermore, she underscores the eclectic practices and individual religiosity found outside religious institutions, yet how these often contradictory practices and multi-layered ideas interact with them but ultimately those institutions have little bearing upon practice in everyday life. I comment upon this in Chapter Five as this resonates with some of the data gleaned from my research.

Vernacular Religion

Bowman's and Valk's work focuses upon qualitative research and the study of religion in context (2012). The articles come under the overarching term 'vernacular religion', forged out of the work of Leonard Primiano, with a focus upon experienced and subjectivised religion in everyday life. In some respects similar to Ammerman and McGuire this collection of articles seeks to understand the individual's religious makeup away from institutional religion. There is an attention to meaning-making and what it represents for the individual. Another hallmark of the articles is the emphasis upon story and culture with many focussing on narrative and meaning. However, like Ammerman and McGuire there is no research upon individuals who seek to engage with institutional religion as an aspect of creating their own individual spirituality. This is where the Kirkham Project offers something unique to the broader debate of contemporary everyday religion.

Ammerman and McGuire propose five important aspects: 'Belief as Practice', 'Traditions of Narrated Belief', 'Relationships between Humans and Others', 'Creation and Maintenance of Community and Identity' and 'Theoretical Reflections and Manifestations of the Vernacular' (2012). The book is richly diverse in that the articles deal with vernacular religious practices from across the globe. The article most relevant to the Kirkham Project is written by Ingvild Sælid Gilhus on the subject of angels in Norway (2012:230-245). Gilhus begins the article by citing the activity of Norway's Princess Märtha Louise, who believes that she has 'psychic powers and can teach people to communicate with angels' (2012:230). Märtha Louise argues that she developed this ability whilst 'taking care of horses' (2012:230). The Princess subsequently set up an alternative therapy centre where she could teach others to encounter and interact with angels. Liselotte Frisk remarks on this phenomenon and suggests that this particular understanding of angels generated discussion on the subject of 'folk religion, institutional Christianity, and New Age traditions' (2014:110). Gilhus highlights the variety of experiences and ideas that individuals have of angels and recognises that the 'division between Church religiosity, popular beliefs and New Age/alternative spirituality is not easy to draw' (2012:236). One could argue that the ways in which people construct their spirituality are often an amalgam and matrix of beliefs, concepts, experiences and ideas that can be contradictory or non-contradictory, yet personally owned. Gilhus argues that 'popular religion' belonging to 'ordinary people' is a fusion and has its roots and 'impulses from Christianity on the one hand as well as from spokespersons for new religious movements/New Age/alternative spirituality on the other' (2012:236). This speaks from a Norwegian context but is nevertheless useful in understanding the Kirkham experience. The research resonates with the organic nature in which participants, throughout the Kirkham Project, construct meaning using a variety of rituals, ideologies, theologies and new age spiritual practices constructing a personalised belief system that can appear at first glance an amalgamation of competing narratives.

THE KENDAL PROJECT

I will now turn my attention to The Kendal Project, which explored different expressions of Christianity and the significance of alternative forms of spirituality. Most importantly for the purpose of the Kirkham research, it also explored the meaning and significance of religion and spirituality in people's lives. There are very few large scale empirical studies concerning religion as lived in northern England which focus on exploring the 'everyday context'. One of the most significant and large scale studies of contemporary religion in Britain was that conducted by Woodhead and Heelas in Kendal, Cumbria (2005). Indeed, Davie describes this piece of research as a 'landmark study' of recent times (2015:167). The Kendal Project related to, and focussed upon, community and religious affiliation. However, what it did not examine in depth was the use of rites of passage and the impact

of ritual on the lives of those who seek it. It is these latter aspects that I explore and have engaged with through the lens of those who bring their infant children to baptism though not attending Church.

Whilst the Kendal Project lacked regard for, or commentary on, the interaction of a Parish Church with those who seek Occasional Offices but do not normally attend, it is a thorough piece of qualitative research that highlights 'the turn to the self' in post-war Britain. This is a movement away from external authorities, including the institutional Church, with its relatively prescriptive fixed moral rules and religiosity, towards a personal, subjective and experiential approach to matters of life and faith. Thus, the autonomy of the individual is affirmed in matters religious or spiritual. Some of the conclusions from the Kendal Project would concur with Steve Bruce that institutional Christian Churches in Britain 'have shrunk to a level where reproduction is threatened' (2006:44). Nevertheless, there is significant divergence between Bruce and Woodhead and Heelas, as the latter pairing of academics seek to underscore two observable categories from their research: 'congregational domain' and the 'holistic milieu' (2005:31-32). These two categorisations are further underpinned by use of the 'subjectivisation thesis' (2005:78-82).

The 'subjectivisation thesis' asserts the subjective turn of modern culture which affirms the importance of 'the self' as the ultimate source of autonomy, significance and discernment. Woodhead and Heelas suggest that those who embrace and cultivate 'subjective-life' are more likely to be drawn towards forms of the sacred which prioritise 'subjective-life' as opposed to those which express themselves in forms of 'life-as beliefs and values' (2005:78). Woodhead and Heelas chart the changes in society that feed into the subjective-life worldview. For example, they comment on the popularity of TV shows that take a keen interest in life issues, such as the phenomena of reality TV and that in the realms of advertising the 'trend is towards the personalised'. Likewise, they draw attention to an 'ethic of subjectivity' in respect of 'self-expression and fulfilment'; doing 'what feels right', 'following your heart', 'being true to yourself' and 'respecting other people's feelings' (2005:80). They continue to give countless examples of the 'subjective-life turn' in the arenas of 'health care, education, employment and the business world' (2005:80-82).

The 'congregational domain' is concerned with traditional religion and what Woodhead and Heelas refer to as 'life as' culture, which in turn corresponds with notions of God as 'other', authority and hierarchy. One of the most significant observations made in Kendal in respect of the many different Churches and chapels was that attendees 'were being directed away from oneself towards something higher' (2005:13-14). The research in Kendal suggested the 'congregational domain' did much to direct others towards an external deity who was the author of goodness and truth. It was the attendee's responsibility to conform to this goodness as expressed in 'rules, in ideals, in art and music, and in visions of a family-based society, in concepts of God' (2005:14). Woodhead and Heelas suggest that authority within the 'congregational domain' is held in the realms of God as 'other'. Variations emerge within Woodhead and Heelas's 'congregational domain' category: subjective-life was not completely negated, and was most significantly embraced in charismatic Churches where God entered 'directly into subjective experience by the Holy Spirit' (2005:17). Furthermore, Woodhead and Heelas use their 'typology from 2000' to shed more light upon the subtleties and varieties of the 'congregational domain' (2005:17-19). Nevertheless, according to Woodhead and Heelas although different congregations have some degree of variety, they are unified by a 'common good' and 'higher authority' (2005:14).

Woodhead and Heelas suggest that those who inhabit the 'holistic milieu' embrace subjective lives which pivot upon 'emotions, passions, sensations, bodily experiences, dreams, feelings, inner conscience, and sentiments' (2005:4). They suggest that the 'holistic milieu' corresponds with a subjective-life culture out of which emerges a new spirituality. Those set within the 'holistic milieu' are linked with a range of individualistic activities such as 'reiki, yoga, tai chi, massage, homeopathy, counselling, healing and contemporary health groups' (2005:40). Holistic spiritualities of life evolve exponentially with those who 'attach value to subjective life as a primary source of significance' (2005:82). Woodhead and Heelas argue that subjective-life is regarded as unique, precious, and authoritative; the significance and orientation of life is ultimately situated in the autonomous self. Thus the wellbeing of the individual and how they feel, is of definitive importance, particularly when

considering how the 'sacred is experienced' (2005:82). This can be further illustrated by their following statement:

'Subjectively orientated selves seek forms of the sacred which enable them to monitor their progress in life by quality or authenticity of personal, experientially informed knowledge' (2005:83).

Ultimately the celebration of the individual, their experience and their unique place and positioning in the world is of utmost importance. Over and above the subscription to overarching belief systems that can suffocate freedom of expression and the prized distinctiveness of the self is what characterises the holistic milieu.

The assertion made by Woodhead and Heelas is that modern British culture and individual lives are shaped by subjective experiences as opposed to external expectations, duties and obligations. This is not to suggest that there has been a wholesale embracing of the 'subjective turn' towards spirituality. Indeed, Sheena Gandhi argues that like 'Bellah before them', Heelas and Woodhead are unable to make the claim that there has been a complete 'subjective turn towards spirituality' (2008:118). Robert Bellah observed and commented upon the rise of individualism and its interaction with what some may regard as declining religious communalism (1985). Notwithstanding this critique, it will become clear in Chapters Four and Five why this 'turn to the self' as the ultimate source of authority and the mode by which meaning making is created, help me develop an understanding of why people bring their infant children to baptism when they do not usually attend Church. This is not to overlook other larger scale research studies of contemporary religion such as Bowman's study of Glastonbury and her observations concerning the emergence of spirituality in what some would regard as a marketplace of religion (2003-2004; 2013; 2015). The Kendal Project, however, offers something specific in respect of the 'subjectivisation thesis' in relation to Church going. Furthermore, Kendal has some contextual similarities in respect of Kirkham.

One issue with the Kendal Project is that the analysis is too formatted as there appears to be no overlap between the two specific domains that are observed. For example, Woodhead and Heelas state that the 'congregational domain and holistic milieu constitute two largely separate and distinct worlds' (2005:32). I find this difficult to understand as the Kirkham Project suggests that those who bring their infant children to baptism but do not attend Church would be categorised using the Kendal Project firmly within the 'congregational domain'. Yet the participants in the Kirkham research displayed a variety of beliefs drawn from a range of often competing origins. The beliefs exhibited varied between orthodox and non orthodox religious belief, New Age practices and secular ethical frameworks that desire a public ritual concerned with place and belonging. Alan Billings draws attention to the Kendal Project's shortcomings in respect of engaging with those who still interact with Parish Churches but do not attend (2004)[44]. I comment further on this in Chapter Five as I highlight the variety of sources from which people construct meaning-making via a bricolage approach.

RELIGION AS A CHAIN OF MEMORY

Hervieu-Léger, in her book Religion as a Chain of Memory, is sympathetic to and supportive of Davie's notion of 'believing without belonging' (2000:105, 162). Davie has in turn drawn upon the work of Hervieu-Léger in the theoretical construction of her own work (2015:136, 140). It is therefore important to now turn my attention to Hervieu-Léger's work, namely her understanding of memory, *fil conducteur*, in respect of religious tradition, community and formation. Hervieu-Léger cites Luckmann, who comprehensively argued that the researching of religion and religiosity must not be confined to its institutional manifestations; rather religion must be studied away from organised religion. The principal thrust of Hervieu- Léger's argument is that a chain of memory and tradition forges and creates membership of a community, and so a heightened awareness of belonging to a line of believers becomes important. More specifically, religion becomes a symbolic and social

[44] The Kendal Project commenced in October 2000 and concluded in June 2002.

tool through which an individual belongs to other believers in the 'past, current and future' (2000:ix). From this foundation she argues cogently that the 'collective memory and imagination' enables a religious community to create a sense of identity that is 'legitimised' and shaped by 'tradition' and 'memory' (2000:4,101). I would argue that belonging to a group of people, as affirmed through ritual and tradition, has the hallmarks of religious community cohesion. Nevertheless, with the advent of modernity, and Western lives becoming increasingly individualised and subjectivised, this sense of identity is compromised and fractured. This undoubtedly goes some way to offering one explanation of the variety of beliefs and non- beliefs that I encountered in my fieldwork. However, it is in part limited, as it does not offer an insight into why non-subscribing members to the Church community seek baptism for their infant child in the Church, unless a residual memory of the baptismal ritual is subconsciously linked to the arrival of new life and the potential it offers. I will comment upon this further in Chapter Five.

Jakob Urbaniak draws attention to the importance of continuity in respect of ritual within the 'Christian context' as he argues that it 'transcends' history (2015). Indeed, within the context of tradition and ritual Hervieu-Léger argues that the recalling of the past 'gives meaning to the present and contains the future' (2000:125). The Kirkham Project suggests that those who seek infant baptism for their children and do not attend Church are influencing the Church and broader community's traditional understanding of baptism. Indeed, Hervieu- Léger would argue that a religious community understands itself through the past and present practices, by 'incorporating into its own tradition the innovations and reinterpretations demanded by the present', and so it could be argued that the tradition of baptism has the capacity to change (2000:87).

It is clear that Hervieu-Léger is shaped by the work of Durkheim and his understanding of religion, with particular reference to the notion of 'collective conscience' (2008). In other words the values and norms that people share constitute a 'collective consciousness' and a way of behaving and acting in the world that is often grounded in tradition and ritual. For Durkheim and more specifically Hervieu-Léger, this is not something that is static or stagnant but rather something that impacts upon people's lives, and most importantly is lived in relationship with one another in community with shared ideas and ideals. It is these shared ideas and ideals that I have been keen to uncover and explore through my fieldwork and what motivates those who do not attend Church to bring their infant child to baptism.

One of the most striking aspects of Hervieu-Léger's work is her observation that emotional religion is evolving in modern society, not least because of society's emphasis upon the individual and the significance of the subjective self. Hervieu-Léger argues that the erosion of tradition and community brought about by secularisaton, has left individuals desiring different modes of belonging. Indeed, Woodhead and Giuseppe Giorden draw upon and highlight Hervieu-Léger's work regarding individuals in contemporary society feeling 'isolated and in need of alternative models of belonging and community' (2015:73). Hervieu-Léger refers to modern community life being constructed by what she calls 'elective fraternities' (2000:149). In other words, groups of likeminded individuals make close knit emotional connections rooted in commonly held aims and objectives by elective choice. According to Hervieu-Léger the social glue that gels together a particular community is the emotional bonds held within the 'individual's emotive investment' in relationships (2000:150). She cites the community of people who congregate to celebrate the achievements of Jim Morrison, the lead singer of the popular music group The Doors, through re-enactments of songs and readings around his grave (2000:154-155). We will see in Chapter Five how the participants in the Kirkham Project have themselves created such a sense of community based on common forms of emotional religion and subjective life; frequently coming under the banner of what Woodhead and Heelas call the 'Holistic Milieu'. The unique contribution of this thesis however, is concerned with how and why this grouping are electing to engage the institutional Church for an ancient rite of baptism for their infant child, when their lives and relationships are far removed from 'life- as' religion.

Hervieu-Léger is aware of institutional religious decline and influence in Western society but, in part, argues that contemporary society experiences a form of 'collective amnesia' (1994:125-126). Nevertheless, Hervieu-Léger perceives the decline of religious traditions and their overarching meta-narrative as giving way to 'surrogate memories'. Flanagan and Jupp explain this as 'multiple, fragmented and separated from each other, but which permit the construction of collective identities

which allow competing or contradictory collective identities' (2016:110). Notwithstanding this, it is a sense of memory that interests me with regard to the participants in the Kirkham Project. Hervieu-Léger's notion of 'collective memory' has an organic connection that is tied to a sense of place (2000). This, of course, is compromised with industrialization and the movement of people from rural to urban environments. She recognises this phenomenon and acknowledges that this contributes to the disintegration of religious and collective memory, not least because it changes the integrated nature of community living, coupled with its signs and symbols. Indeed, Hervieu-Léger remarks that there are 'no longer societies of memory' in the West in a classical sense (2000:123). We will see that the sense of place and Church are important aspects of the baptismal experience for those who brought infant children to baptism at Kirkham. The sign and symbol of infant baptism may not be laced with joining a collective of people in any physical sense, but the collective memory, however residual, may be used as a catalyst for generating a sense of belonging.

BELIEVING WITHOUT BELONGING

I now turn my attention to Grace Davie's early work that sought to charter the changing religious and spiritual terrain, and how these impacted and interacted with community and individual life (1994). Davie's work of the early 1990s was one of the most significant contributions towards understanding the religious landscape within Britain in the last twenty five years[45]. Davie's work entitled Believing without Belonging was timely in respect of understanding religion in Britain, as the previous two decades had been influenced by theories of secularisation. Davie's notion of 'believing without belonging' asserts that there is a 'persistence of the sacred in contemporary society despite the undeniable decline in Churchgoing' (1994:94). In other words, she argued that there was a disconnect between religious belief and values and attending or belonging to an institution where these beliefs are expressed. This is supported by Ducker who states there is 'a profound mismatch between religious values that people professed (believing), and actual Churchgoing and religious practice (belonging)' (2011:1). Davie's work has been extensively critiqued from across the academy, especially by those who suggest that religion is waning and that a more secularised society is emerging.

Voas and Crockett, citing the British Social Attitudes Survey and the British Household Panel Survey, claim both a decline in society's belief in God and continued decline in Church attendance (2005). Bruce further critiques Davie by arguing that those who do not put aside time to attend Church have a declining sense of their own beliefs and convictions (2002). Davie counters the proponents of secularisaton by arguing that modernisation affects every society and that there are multiple modernities (2002). For example, the United States of America and the United Kingdom are modern societies, yet different patterns of religion exist, particularly in respect of Church attendance.

Further critique of Davie's work comes from Abby Day (2013). The notion of 'believing in belonging' emerges from Day's qualitative piece of work using a case study in Yorkshire to answer the question: 'what do people believe in and how do we find out?' (2006:7). The principal thrust of her argument is that 'people 'believe in' their human affective relationships in preference to Christian doctrinal beliefs, even when they claimed Christian identity on the census [2001]' (2009:264). The main thrust of Day's thesis, based on semi-structured interviews, surrounds 'belief' in 'everyday life'. Day's argument asserts people in the West have moved away from religious institutions that are authoritative, and in turn affirm a more autonomous and individual approach in matters religious. Day cites Davie's thesis of *Believing without Belonging* as an inadequate explanation of what she observed.

In all her writing, Davie is keen to establish the importance of context when seeking to understand religion, as she recognises the 'regional differences' in respect of religion (1994:100). Davie cites comments upon the differences within Wales in respect of Welsh speaking chapels in certain places, the difference of practices in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, as opposed to the

[45] Davie's article in 1990 introduced the concept of believing without belonging was entitled *Believing without belonging: Is this the future of religion in Britian?*

'higher levels of religious practice' in the southeast (1994:100). This sense of regional variation is further illustrated by Davie in her remarks concerning Ireland, where the 'west is predominantly Catholic in contrast to the more Protestant north east' (1994:100). Variation is also seen in England between 'one part of the country and another' (1994:100).

Davie presents the dilemma of definition when it comes to studying religion. It is a commonly held view amongst academics that the study of religion ought to 'include more than observations about its conventional or institutional practice' (1994:74). She cites the struggle to conceptualise the terms of reference when studying non-institutional religiosity. Indeed, I commenced this Chapter by drawing attention to these varied terms such as popular religion, folk religion, everyday religion, lived religion, vernacular religion which all seek to understand religion that is predominantly, but sometimes not exclusively, outside of institutional or organised religion. Nevertheless, Davie believes such non-institutional 'religiosity in contemporary Britain indicates an important area of investigation' (1994:74). Whilst the Kirkham research stands within this area of investigation, it is also subtly different as it looks at how non-institutional religiosity interfaces the institutional Church in order to cultivate personalised meaning and spirituality.

Davie's research is rooted in extensive fieldwork and ethnographic studies, not least, with the events surrounding the Hillsborough tragedy in during which football supporters died after being crushed in an overpopulated football terrace in Sheffield (1994:88). Davie engages the work of Tony Walter in his article 'The mourning after Hillsborough' to illustrate her notion of believing without belonging (1991). She does so with the caveat that reactions coming forth from the City of Liverpool, grieving families and friends were coloured by both 'conventional and common religion deriving from an exceptionally rich popular culture' (1994:89). Davie comments specifically upon the Anfield Pilgrimage and the enormous numbers of people who, twenty four hours after the disaster at Sheffield, went to pay their respects at the home of Liverpool Football Club. She draws attention to the response of people both corporately and individually with the manifestation of 'common religion' being evident and intermingling with conventional religion (1994:91). Davie concludes that whilst this case study, due to context, may represent an exception, even in Britain, it does underscore the 'mixture of common and conventional religiosity that continues to pervade contemporary British society' (1994:91). Nevertheless, Davie 'hesitates' to affirm this perception by arguing that a strong sense of 'belonging' in Liverpool counters some of the 'aspects of individualism in contemporary society' (1993:88).

In Davie's later work she writes that in matters of religion in the United Kingdom an 'ethic of consumption' has evolved as opposed to an 'ethic of obligation' (2002:148). It could be argued from the Kirkham Project that the consumption of religion, under the guise of people requesting infant baptism for their child, has some degree of resonance. Nevertheless, it may be prudent not to assume that such religion is of a traditional nature. Indeed, Voas and Crockett argue that those who are seldom 'religiously active' are unlikely to be orthodox in terms of religious affiliation and belief (2005:12). Indeed, one could argue that those who are 'consumers' of a religious ritual such as infant baptism do not necessarily have direct correlation with the consuming of religion in a traditional sense; rather that something far more personalised, nuanced and subtle is at play. This sense of not assuming people engage with Church for overtly traditional or orthodox religious reasons is at the core of my argument.

VICARIOUS RELIGION

Davie further develops her initial understanding of 'believing without belonging' when she states that 'both believing and belonging come in hard and soft versions' (2015:81). Davie posits that the argument hinges on the two notions of 'believing' and 'belonging' in relation to each other. The former rotates around a community of believers who attend Church on a quasi-regular basis, and a significantly larger constituency who attend Church infrequently but still have a belief. The latter had further misgivings in respect of 'believing without belonging' as she argues that this expression erroneously 'separates one kind of religiousness (belief) from another (belonging)' (2015:6). It was from these reflections that the idea of 'vicarious religion' began to emerge in Davie's thinking.

The work of Davie speaks directly into the context of the Kirkham study and is useful but not without limitations. This is something that I explore more fully in Chapter Five. In her early work Davie asserted that while there were fewer attendees in Church, people carry on 'believing' (1994), yet more recently (2007) she has observed that Christian religion in Britain has become 'vicarious'. Davie defines vicarious religion as the 'notion of religion performed by an active minority but on behalf of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand, but quite clearly approve, of what the minority is doing' (2007:22). In other words, churchgoers attend, perform the rituals and believe on behalf of others. Whilst this may have some credibility and offer insight into what may occur in some contexts, I find the observations and commentary of Janet Eccles extremely pertinent. She observes, through her own ethnographic study of churchgoing women, that they 'perform the rituals but hardly mention belief at all as part of their personal story' (2010:80-81). Furthermore, the parents whom I interviewed placed great emphasis upon the ritual of the baptism but commented very little about the beliefs of the Church in respect of their personal spirituality.

Underpinning Davie's work in respect of the concept of 'Vicarious Religion', is the idea that Church can be seen as a 'utility'. This is further supported by Max Pensky who argues that Davie's understanding of the Established Church is one of 'a public utility' rather than 'a free market concern' (2008:152). This idea brings with it a number of assertions that I believe need to be carefully handled. Davie argues that religion can function in a whole range of ways not least in respect of ritual, as she suggests that 'Vicarious Religion'; is evident when 'Churches and Church leaders perform ritual on behalf of others (at the time of birth or a death for instance)' (2015:6). Davie's understanding and grasp of the practical aspects of ministry in context is excellent; she seeks to illuminate and promote the notion of 'Vicarious Religion'. Davie makes some salient points in relation to the larger majority who seek Occasional Offices from the Church and are denied for one reason or another. She observes that it is those infrequent attendees of Church who do not receive the ministrations they have requested who state this 'disquiet most clearly' (2015:6). Davie uses this insight, along with the argument that the Church leader and Churchgoer experience criticism if they do not 'embody moral codes' expected of them by the infrequent attendee (2015:6). The least relevant aspect of Davie's notion of 'Vicarious Religion' for the purpose of this thesis is her assertion that 'Churches can at times offer space for the vicarious debate of unresolved issues in modern societies' (2015:82). This aspect of Davie's argument for vicarious religion is perhaps more pertinent and significantly apt for larger civic churches and cathedrals.

Davie comments that this public form of 'Vicarious Religion' is performed by a much smaller group of professional religious practitioners on behalf of a larger group of people.
Furthermore, she suggests that this phenomenon is analogous to an iceberg where little is seen above the water but much is subsurface. Davie cites two examples to illustrate her notion of 'vicarious religion'. The first is the events surrounding the death of Princess Diana in 1997 and the second, the Soham murders of two schoolgirls in 2002. Held within these two incidents Davie argues that 'individual mourning' was inadequate and that society turned towards the 'Established Church' for 'public ritual' (2010:127). The death of Princess Diana saw many Churches opening their doors for Services of Prayer or the signing of condolence books and the lighting of candles. She argues that Churches (in particular Anglican), were hubs that ordinary people revolved around. This Davie believes, was in some ways an expression of 'vicarious religion' and a 'version of what goes on in everyday lives of individuals and communities all the time' (2015:7). Davie argues that many communities experience untimely deaths and unanswered questions, both practical and existential, yet, unlike elsewhere, ordinary people in the United Kingdom often assume they can gravitate towards and access the ministrations of these Churches at pivotal points in life.

It is however the second example that Davie offers that I wish to comment upon; the Soham murders. This tragic set of circumstances involving two young schoolgirls murdered by their school caretaker is of some interest to me when observed through the lens of 'Vicarious Religion'. Davie argues that the role of the Vicar in the town became one of spokesperson for the family and community along with the Church building becoming central to the expression of public grief. The Vicar offered forms of 'comfort and ritual' to the whole town through public liturgy and ceremony over a number of weeks, culminating with the school community re-gathering on the school playing field with the Vicar in his symbolic role releasing two white doves. The entire tragic episode of

Soham offers for Davie an example of 'vicarious religion' in contemporary Britain. This interpretation of the events in Soham has much merit and insight and I compare and contrast this situation with a significant chain of events that affected the people of Kirkham in Chapter Five.

What underpins Davie's notion of 'Vicarious Religion' is the perception of the Church as a 'public utility' (2015:82). In other words, the Church exists and has a place within community life where provision is made available to mark the transitional moments of life, and if it fails to deliver, the public spotlight is shone upon it. Yet, Davie is clear that Churches and Church leaders do more than just provide a ritual of service to the general public. Most crucially they 'believe on behalf of others in the sense that they hold the faith for society as a whole' (2015:82). Davie supports this assertion by citing the ways in which people take an interest in debates around specific issues such as human sexuality and how if leaders and Churches do not affirm classically held positions they receive criticism. Davie argues that this is an example of 'vicarious religion' as a minority institution such as the Church ought not to galvanise such interest and commentary unless there is an implicit and explicit expectation being placed upon it. I comment upon this further in Chapter Five.

RELIGION AS A PERSISTENT PARADOX

Davie proposes the idea of Religion as a Persistent Paradox' pertinent in respect of the Kirkham Project, as she seeks to get under the skin of contemporary religion in British culture (2015). Davie suggests that there are six different factors at play in terms of religion in Britain today: 'cultural heritage', awareness that Churches have a 'place at particular moments in the lives of British people', 'obligation to consumption', 'new arrivals', 'reactions from the secular elite' and an understanding that 'religious life in Europe (Britain included) should be considered an exceptional case' (2015:3-4). These are all important aspects in understanding the broader place of religion in British Society. However, I will not comment upon 'New Arrivals' for unlike the other categories this is not relevant for this study. I therefore wish to comment on five of the six sections, as this will further situate the Kirkham Project.

The first of Davie's six distinctive areas is 'cultural heritage'. 'Cultural heritage' recognises the 'role of Christianity in shaping British Culture' (2015:4). Davie cites not only Christian festivals that punctuate the calendar but Church buildings that symbolically represent and retain some form of value for the populations that surround them. Davie argues that the latter has a place in the psyche of British people even if they do not attend or enter them. This, she argues, is further illustrated by the heritage of the parish system that serves both civic and religious functions. Whilst Davie could be criticised for over emphasising the importance of the inherited and established Church upon the religious terrain of England, she does recognise that the significance has 'diminished over time' (2015:4). Nevertheless, Davie asserts that the legacies of former times are 'embedded in both the physical and cultural environment' (2015:4).

The second factor that Davie highlights with regard to understanding the role of religion in contemporary Britain is the actual physical and cultural presence of the Churches. This second aspect of her six factors requires one to be mindful of 'vicarious religion', which I have already remarked upon. Notwithstanding this, Davie underscores the tension between different indicators of 'religiousness' as she suggests there are two indicators, namely, 'institutional life' and 'creedal statements' which interact closely with one another (2015:5). In other words, the Christian attends Church to express their 'belief' and receive 'affirmation' from the institution that they believe the right things. It could be argued that this understanding lacks a certain degree of perception in respect of what Churchgoers 'believe', but I will comment further on this assertion in my conclusions.

Davie draws attention to the continuance of secularisation and that although Christian Churches in the West continue to decline, issues surrounding religion in the public realm are very much at the fore. In her opening Chapter Davie speaks coherently about the notion of religion and Church attendance moving away from 'obligation' to 'consumption' (2015:7-8). This resonates with two aspects of Davie's assertions that the rite of baptism 'is changing in nature as it becomes increasingly a sign of initiation into a voluntary community rather a mark of Englishness' (2015:51). First, I would affirm that the rite of infant baptism is 'changing in nature' in Britain today but perhaps not in the way that Davie suggests. It may not have as much to do with entering and belonging to a

voluntary community as with being a vehicle to assert a personalised spirituality using corporate sign and symbols of ritual. I will comment further on this in Chapter Five. Second, is the question of what Davie means by 'Englishness'. My understanding would be that she regards the sacrament of baptism as interwoven with social and theological definitions of identity.

Davie speaks of there being a 'huge variation in baptism policies across the country leading to an understandable confusion' (2015:51). This is an observation that I made in Chapter One of this thesis but is noteworthy for the purpose of this literature review as it underscores the variegated nature of the Church of England. It also highlights the need to be cautious in using this thesis as a means of drawing broad conclusions in respect of the research question. The use of the data and conclusions that I will suggest ought to be used carefully, but most important contextually, in terms of place and tradition of the Church.

Within Davie's section concerning 'obligation and consumption' she comments upon two strands of religious organisations. First, the 'charismatic evangelical' Churches and second the 'cathedral and city-centre Churches' both of which have had a renaissance in recent times (2015:8). The former affirming the individual with a combination of conservative teaching and warm fellowship, whereas the latter attracts those who are more anonymous but have a deep connectedness to excellent music and architecture of the Church. Davie is keen to convey that both types of attractions set within the framework of 'consumption' have a strong 'experiential element, albeit very differently expressed' (2015:8).

Perhaps one of the most important things to grasp within this section is Davie's acceptance and recognition that large sections of the population in Britain today consider the term 'religious' to be 'negative' (2015:8). The term 'spiritual' which encompasses many classical and non-classical religious practices, has she argues grown and emerged. Indeed, Davie perceives not only the significance of the term 'spiritual' as crucial in understanding religion in Britain today, but also what she refers to as a 'tendency towards bricolage' (2015:8). I am attracted to the term 'bricolage' particularly in the manner that Davie uses it to describe a section of society that builds individual packages of belief and spirituality. This concept reflects the range of approaches to making sense of modern life that expresses both religious and spiritual ideas. I would want to go one step further and suggest the tendency towards 'bricolage' may also include non-religious and spiritual concepts that interact and are laced with meaning. I will comment on this in Chapter Five.

The penultimate section to this framework for discussion concerns 'Secular Reactions'. Davie is mindful that the increasing attention given to religion in public debate and the bearing this has on religion in modern Britain, has amplified and stirred those who hold secularist worldviews. Davie believes that it is important to grasp this secular viewpoint as she states 'it is impossible to study one without the other' (2015:10). Davie also recognises the contextual variety of these voices can be dependent upon demographic and physical geography. For example, Davie is keen to point out that the secularisaton process has manifested itself across Europe at different times and at a variety of paces. She uses France as an example of a country that is deeply suspicious of religion in the public realm, citing the historical situation of France and the tussle between a significantly clerical Catholic Church and a dominant secular state. Davie goes on to suggest that in France this suspicion about religion is not now directed towards the Catholic Church but the manifestation of strong Islamic ideology. On the other hand, Britain, Davie suggests, possesses a 'tolerance' towards religion. However, this may 'operate at different levels: individuals who are tolerant of religious difference may exist in societies that have difficulty with the idea' (2015:178). Notwithstanding the tolerance of other religious traditions in an increasingly multicultural Britain, Davie recognises the voices who lead a secularist worldview and the agenda that emerges from this position. Whilst Davie is aware of the minority position that the proponents of secularism inhabit she believes that it is worthy of comment when understanding religion in modern Britain, as people such as 'Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens' sell 'millions' of 'publications' in the quest to promote the secularist stance (2015:11).

The final element of Davie's framework concerns the European context of religion. This may seem strange at first sight given Davie is keen to look at religion, but she looks to explore what Europe (including Britain) is not, in terms of religious existence, rather than what it is. Engaging with the work of Roof, Davie states strongly that religious existence in Europe is not a 'market place' of

religious choice (1999). Nor is Europe a place where charismatic evangelicalism is growing at significant pace as leading academics such as José Casanova would suggest (1994). Davie suggests that Europe's 'relative secularity, might be an exceptional case in global terms' (2015:11). She continues by arguing that the premise of social science in Europe was that as societies modernise they become increasingly secular, thus, seeking to understand religion in other parts of the globe using a European model may not be as expedient as perhaps was thought. Furthermore, given the increasing complexity and diversity of religion in Britain today, Davie suggests the traditional working hypothesis of European social science may not be the most appropriate lens to look through 'nearer home given the intricacies of religious life' (2015:11).

Davie is clear in her assessment and evidence of religion in Britain today as being 'mixed in the sense that every statement requires qualification' (2015:223). According to Davie, it would be fair to say that Britain today has a diverse tapestry of belief detached from institutions, non-belief, indifference and an increasingly 'articulate secular' voice (2015:223). Perhaps one of the striking observations of Davie is that the uneven 'regional variations are considerable' (2015:223). Davie believes that religion in Britain is complex, and significantly influenced by Christianity, yet the centre of society is slowly but surely moving away from this religious tradition. One of the intriguing aspects of my research is the way in which those in Kirkham still engaged with infant baptism, as offered by this religious tradition, but without subscription to the orthodox Christian narrative.

THE BABY BOOMER GENERATION

Wade Clark Roof is a sociologist who is rooted and grounded in empirical research. Roof's work engages with the life stories of the baby boomer generation in order to explore that generation's spiritual and religious experience (1994). The methodological tools Roof employs in his research are similar to those used in the Kirkham Project underpinned by a shared desire to explore religion and spirituality away from institutional formats and taking seriously individual stories and how they relate to a sense of personalised meaning-making. Furthermore, the boomer generation are the grandparents of the infant children that were brought to baptism during the research at Kirkham. Roof's research with the baby boomer generation uncovered a religiosity that was flexible and autonomously individual (1994). The baby boomer generation includes those who were 'born over the span of years from 1946 to 1964' (1994:1) Roof's research does not suggest a generation that is spiritually impoverished or deprived, but rather a generation that is committed to searching for a meaningful spirituality, beyond the constraints of religious institutions such as Church. It is therefore, useful to gain an insight into how the post baby boomer generation have been cultivated and shaped by their parents in matters of religion and spirituality. This will in order, offer a backdrop to understanding something of the present day. I am mindful of the American context in which much of the research has been conducted and the issues surrounding transference into the United Kingdom scene.

Throughout Generation of Seekers there is a genuine inquisitiveness to uncover whether this generation, heavily influenced by the 1960s, are on a spiritual quest both picking and choosing in a spiritual marketplace. Roof argues that the 1960s was peppered with anti- authoritarian attitudes coupled with the affirmation of individualism and pluralism with all three notions running counter to 'tradition' or 'religion as' modes of operating (1994:67). Roof suggests that personal 'experience', over and above inherited norms, characterise the boomer generation (1994:83). Whilst Roof recognises the importance of individualism and experience amongst the boomers he also identifies the generation's desire and need for community, yet in a re-imagined way.

According to Roof the religious symbols and rituals experienced in childhood possess little or no resonance for the boomer generation. He takes time to explore how individualism has affected the creation of meaning and how it has moved away from being rooted in divine narrative enshrined in customs and tradition to being located in the boomer generation's experience and 'unfolding lives' (1994:261). The story telling and need to explore life away from formal religious narrative to be accepted and adhered to are characteristics of the boomer generation. Roof offers this sense of 'struggle' and quest for individual meaning and further more provides a landscape into which the post boomer generation emerge and begin to tell their story of life.

Spiritual Marketplace

Roof builds on his work introducing the concept of religion being a *Spiritual Marketplace,* as he introduces a thesis that is rooted and grounded in quantitative data, in-depth semi structured interviews, case studies and extensive fieldwork, in order to explore the baby boomer generation's quest for meaning and culture (1999). The religious landscape in the United States is complex and has an assortment of sacred and cultural customs and practices. Indeed, Roof uses the metaphor of a 'patchwork quilt' to describe the contemporary religious terrain in America (1999:290). As a result of which he suggests that this generation often fuse together many religious traditions in order to develop, express and cultivate a highly personal expression of spirituality, yet coupled with a degree of fluidity and movement throughout their lives (Bellah, 1985: Roof, 1993: Sperry and Shafranske, 2005). The principal thrust of Roof's thesis is to show:

'the boundaries of popular religious communities are now being redrawn, encouraged by the quests of the large, post-World War II generations, and facilitated by the rise of an expanded spiritual marketplace' (1999:10).

Roof argues there is a 'spiritual quest' culture held within the baby boomer generation (1999:16). Chapter One tracks five people who Roof has interviewed 'three times or more' over the period of a decade (1999:16). He has listened to their stories and discovered that 'their spiritual quests are at the heart of their own personal narratives, which in turn have grown out of their personal 'feelings, religious identities, their family life, and moral and ethical issues' (1999:17). Roof recognises that the five interviewees have very different stories that take diverse twists which offers both a challenge for analysis and most importantly, engages at depth with the impulses and intentions in matters of contemporary spirituality of the individuals involved. Similarly to the Kirkham research, careful listening to personal stories, particularly through interview, offers a unique insight into the internal aspect of an individual's 'experience and meaning, and show how those worlds connect with families and communities, with moral life and responsibility, and contemporary values' (1999:33). Roof suggests that many religious communities will become increasingly pluralistic as the baby boomer generation evolves and that such communities are going to have to become increasingly aware of the individualised spiritual quest of this generation as members 'reflect upon themselves as meaning-making creatures' and spirituality's 'deep groundings within an individual's experience' (1999:43). Throughout Roof's book he is keen to underscore the rise of personal choice in matters of spirituality, coining the phrase 'reflexive spirituality' to affirm the authenticity of individual autonomy within a culture of choice and options (1999:12). Roof broadens out the understanding of religiosity as confined to denominational boxes and recognises a religious culture that includes a multitude of ideas, places and artefacts. For example, he recognises that the religious landscape can have numerous features and variety such as:

'Belief in angels and reincarnation; the appeal of religious and quasi-religious shrines, retreat centres, and theme parks; interest in metaphysical and theosophical teachings, prosperity theology and possibility thinking' (1999:37).

This tapestry of choice and options is undergirded by the main thrust of Roof's thesis, namely, that the desire for inner meaningful spirituality may be found in the journey rather than the destination. The quest dimension to Roof's book engenders his second principal observation and assertion: 'religion has become a commodity to be sought' (1999:101). This fluidity and agility of the baby boomer generation is seen clearly in Roof's suggested categorisation of sub cultures within the consumerist religious landscape: born-again Christians, mainstream believers, metaphysical believers and seekers, dogmatists and secularists. Roof argues compellingly that Evangelical Christianity in America is particularly adept at using the entertainment industry as a driver for marketing a brand of Christianity. This can be seen in activities such as 'inspirational rallies in sports arenas playing soft Christian rock music' appealing specifically to those 'working out their feelings about themselves

and others' (1999:94). Roof argues that larger Evangelical Churches and 'born- again Christians are very good at working with 'small groups, creating a Church of options' in response to 'boomer culture of choice' (1999:95). 'Mainstream believers' represent a constituency where religious affiliation is intimately entwined in family heritage and loyalty to a particular denomination, whereas, 'metaphysical believers and seekers' do not accept a religious label but would be content to be described as possessing a 'spirituality' that 'implies an indwelling of the sacred' through a variety of practices (1999:203). When engaging Roof's work one must be mindful of his concepts being shaped in the context of the United States of America. Therefore, the cultural translation needs to be taken into consideration when using Roof's work as a lens to look at the Kirkham research.

The above category personifies the 'boomer religion' as they are those who reject outright a religious affiliation or label. Dogmatists, according to Roof, are least representative of boomer religion as they often resist the porous nature of religious and cultural borders. Roof suggests that 'secularists', on the other hand, are the 'least religious' (1999:213). This may seem overtly obvious on first glance yet Roof qualifies this by stating that he perceives 'secularists' as 'more ir-religious' or 'a-religious' than 'conventionally defined' (1999:213). Roof's argument is subtle as he suggests that 'secularists' are not 'really antireligious' but rather 'agnosticism and indifference are far more common' among 'secular boomers than hard core atheism' (1999:213).

What is clear from Roof's research is not just the useful mapping of the religious terrain of America and the five sub cultures that he identifies, but, for the purpose of this thesis, the diverse experiential and individualised spiritual paths that the boomer generation have embarked upon and nurtured. One of the questions that arises is to what extent the baby boomer generation have influenced Generation X (post-boomer generation); the generation who brought their children to baptism at Kirkham Parish Church whilst not attending?

THE POST-BOOMER GENERATION

I will begin this section of the literature review by commenting upon the work of Flory and Miller in their work concerning Generation X (2000). There initial work lays the foundation for their thesis entitled Finding Faith: The Spiritual Quest of the Post-Boomer Generation' (2008). The empirical research found in the latter work is deeply ethnographic in nature and echoes many of the methodological approaches that I employed. It should be noted that the fieldwork identifies a typology emerging from Christian contexts, unlike the Kirkham Project which is primarily focussed upon those who are outside of the religious community but seek its ministrations. Nevertheless, the work of Flory and Miller is exceedingly pertinent as they recognise from their study that 'individuals can construct any identity that they may desire' 'without having to rely on more traditional means' (2008:5). This will be useful to reflect upon in respect of those from Kirkham who seek interaction with the Church through baptism for their child but do not attend. I am also mindful of the similarity of methodologies, particularly because both Flory and Miller and the Kirkham research are seeking to understand the processes, thought, culture and impulses that drive those defined as Generation X, and who engage with Church life in what some would regard as a predominantly secular society.

Flory and Miller describe those who inhabit the term Generation X as being those born between 1961 and 1981. Whilst this does not represent the full range of ages that participated in the Kirkham research, it does represent 95% of the participants and is thus worthy of comment. Flory and Miller observe a 'deeply spiritual generation' which is illustrated in 11 case studies (2000:3). These 11 ethnographies range from the Urban Mosaic Night Club Church, the experiential and evangelical Harvest Rock Church, to an alternative and reconfigured Shabbat Service for the Generation X Jewish community. It could be argued that some of the ethnographies found within this book are niche or at least on the edges of the Generation X religious experience. Nevertheless, what I take away from this collection of ethnographies is Generation X's desire for meaningful experiences when encountering the spiritual. In the concluding Chapter, Flory points towards the need for Generation X to be part of a religious experience; in other words to participate, personally encounter and evolve new religious practices. What is clear throughout all the ethnographies is the need to be fully inclusive in respect of gender, sexuality and cultural heritage. This experiential and life affirming spirituality underpins some of the thinking around the qualitative research that is perceived by Flory

and Miller (2008). The emphasis is upon those who are not afraid to reconfigure older forms of religious expression and participate in an experiential and meaningful way. This has resonance with my professional experience with those who brought their infant child to baptism, not least because, without exception, the participants were proactive in wanting to creatively, not passively, engage with the ceremonial aspect of getting their child baptised. I will expand further on this during Chapters Four and Five.

The typology Flory and Miller propose will help to disentangle some of the ways in which the Kirkham participants have expressed and articulated their views about faith, spirituality, ritual and meaning making. It is also worth noting that Flory and Miller's work has been primarily qualitative; using interviews and participant observation, which has similarities to the research carried out in Kirkham. Nevertheless, I am aware of and will be sensitive to, the cultural, religious and contextual differences between their work in the United States and that of the British scene. Notwithstanding the cultural and national differences, I believe that they have some significant insights into how the 'Post Boomer Generation' deconstruct, reconstruct and embrace traditional forms of religion, particularly in respect of ritual and participation. This is of interest to me in terms of how the participants in my research interface with the Church's sacrament of baptism, and how aspects of this ancient rite of passage are discarded, reconfigured or affirmed through the parents of the infant child who do not attend Church.

Flory and Miller were keen to look closely at the 'embodied spirituality' of the post- boomers, but with particular concern for this generation's spiritual quest for unearthing and establishing a 'recovery of ritual' (2008:vii). They also state that post-boomers embark upon a journey of 'reinvigorating ancient symbols and rituals within their own religious traditions to borrowing from other traditions, and even creating their own rituals and symbols in the service of an embodied spiritual experience'. Flory and Miller's extensive qualitative fieldwork built upon and established a helpful typology which is categorised into four distinct headings: Innovators, Appropriators, Reclaimers and Resistors. I will comment upon all four categories in order to set the scene. I will in turn, spend time critiquing some of the aspects and characteristics of those categorised as Appropriators, Reclaimers and the sense of 'embodied spirituality' that encapsulates the typology (2008:168). Whilst this typology is useful it is important to recognise that all four types must not be understood as 'somehow having impermeable boundaries' (2008:163). Nevertheless, this typology is a helpful tool for unpicking and disentangling some of the impulses held by participants from the Kirkham Project. Furthermore, these categories will contribute to unfolding some of the rationale as to why people bring their infant child to baptism but do not attend Church.

Appropriators, Reclaimers, Resisters and Innovators

Flory and Miller suggest that the 'Innovators' are those who take the culture in which they are set seriously and creatively, working with what is around them in order to make meaningful connections 'organised around worship and building community' (2008:19). Innovators have an ability to respond to 'postmodern culture' and changing 'cultural currents' as they are not anchored into a static religious position but derive meaning from 'serving others as an expression of their spiritual commitments (2008:46). Alongside this ability to adapt, Innovators place an emphasis upon experiencing the spiritual life, cerebral belief is not enough; rather, Innovators are to be seen in smaller communities that may 'in fact have their own life span' but bring 'Church to the community' (2008:47).

The 'Appropriators' on the other hand have an innate ability to read 'the larger culture' and discover what is most 'appealing' and 'create a new product that successfully appeals to the younger generation of Christians': 'Appropriators' are interested in larger scale operations unlike 'Innovators' (2008:82). In many ways 'Appropriators' reflect what happens within mass culture. For example, merchandise such as T-shirts, cafes and music which offer identity is cloned from society and reconfigured within a Christian frame of reference. Flory and Miller suggest that 'Appropriators' have 'created a form of consumer Christianity' (2008:82). Perhaps most interesting is that 'Appropriators' adjust their product to 'the demands of the market' (2008:83). At the heart of Roof's thesis is that individuals have an array of choice in respect of choosing their spiritual path 'by the rise

of an expanded spiritual marketplace' (1999:10). Indeed, the Kirkham Project identifies a culture of consumerism in respect of those seeking baptism for their infant child.

The 'Reclaimers' offer something very different to the first two aspects of the Flory and Miller typology. Malinda Denton argues that 'Reclaimers' are to be found in small groups or Church communities that seek to preserve ancient ritual and to 'physically participate in these rituals' (2009:403). Flory and Miller suggest that 'Reclaimers', across the differing narratives, 'are drawn to the visual and ritualistic, in particular how this allows a physical embodiment of their beliefs and commitments' (2008:153). What makes the ritualistic element of their faith tradition particularly powerful is the importance that they place upon the ceremonial liturgy being in 'a long history of tradition' (2008:153). Thus, participation in this historically infused multi-sensory experience of worship becomes quintessential to the 'Reclaimers' spiritual journey.

The final category of this typology Flory and Miller refer to as 'Resisters'. 'Resisters' are in contrast to the three elements of the typology, as they seek to distance themselves from the experiential and participatory. 'Resisters' embrace the rational and intellectual approach to Christianity, they are particularly suspicious and questioning of those groups that value a more postmodern approach to matters of faith. 'Resisters' assert a 'rationalist Christian worldview' and seek to establish this as 'the dominant ideology in American society and culture' (2008:116,117). The 'Resisters' stand somewhat distant from the claim of 'embodied spirituality' with its encapsulation of experiential and intimate forms of spirituality and meaning making (2008:170).

Flory and Miller claim that the 'Reclaimers' and 'Innovators' seek after a spirituality that is rooted in the religious and wider community as opposed to an emphasis upon an 'individualistic spiritual quest' (2008:168). Flory and Miller comment that both the 'Innovators' and 'Reclaimers' have a high regard for 'personal spiritual' journeys (2008:168- 169). This has a degree of resonance for the Kirkham research as those who would not frame their spiritual journey in classical Christian terms would certainly prize the personal nature of such a journey by using the sacrament of infant baptism to affirm it in some way.

The Kirkham research relates well to Flory and Miller's 'embodied spirituality' as the participants had a significant regard for the experiential nature of the baptismal ceremony. Aspects and characteristics of the 'Innovators' and 'Reclaimers' were evident within my research, for example, parents wished to include favourite popular music before the Service, secular poems, water from holy places such as the Ganges river, India yet at the same time enjoying the traditional ritualistic elements such as the lighting of candles and use of incense as a symbol of prayer. The importance of the physical, visual and multi-sensory experiences in respect of the baptismal ceremony have resonance with the 'embodied form' of spirituality and reclaiming of 'ritual and symbols' as observed by Flory and Miller (2008:169). One of the conclusions that Flory and Miller draw upon is the term 'expressive communalism' (2008: 185). This aspect of their conclusions does not comprehensively resonate with the Kirkham research as it suggests that a 'new form of spirituality' for the post-boomer generation goes 'beyond the individualistic questing' (2008:185).

CONCLUSION

In this Chapter I have set the scene of my using relevant material in the study of religion and using relevant material in the study of religion that will help untangle the research question: why do people bring their infant child to baptism when they do not attend Church? The Chapter commenced with a commentary upon the work of Woodhead and Heelas in the town of Kendal. This is contextually useful as there are similarities with the demographic of Kirkham. Kendal is 49 miles north of Kirkham, both sharing ancient market town status and the integrated community function of the Church set within the north west of England. The conclusions that Woodhead and Heelas formulated regarding the 'subjective-life' turn will become crucial in understanding the lives and outlook of the Kirkham participants. Many of the participants in the Kirkham Project appear at first glance to have highly secular lives but this does not negate the research question but rather makes it all the more fascinating to explore why the sacrament of baptism is being accessed.

There is a vast array of material concerning secularisation and its various permutations that inform and offer insight into the lives of those participants in the Kirkham research. However

research concerning interaction and correlation between individual lives, 'everyday religion', infant baptism and personalised belief systems appears to be scarce. This literature review has sought to predominantly use themes and notions provided by Davie, because it has grown organically out of British based empirical research. I have used the typology offered by Flory and Miller as the research is outstanding in methodological approach and reflection in respect of the post-boomer generation. Notwithstanding the contextual differences, their research is both ethnographic and qualitative and an excellent example of discovering how 'everyday belief' is constructed.

This thesis is grounded in praxis and is given layers of meaning due to my role as both researcher and parish priest. The research was set within a time frame, the understanding of the people and being immersed in the context, offers something unique and continues to infuse the material. I recognise the importance of concepts and notions of everyday religion, lived religion and vernacular religion and the empirical methodologies which have been used as a tool to understand how differing communities and societies engage with religion in the contemporary world. This has been crucial in my quest to understand the stories and viewpoints of those living their daily lives away from institutional religion yet then deciding to engage such a religious institution for a traditional rite of passage. I have commented upon the Kendal Project, not least because of the location of the study in north-west England and some of its limitations which the Kirkham research addresses. I have engaged extensively with Grace Davie and the evolvement in her thinking. This thesis challenges her institutionally tilted understanding of contemporary religion. I have also engaged with Hervieu-Léger's ideas about the generation of collective memory and a sense of belonging which are pertinent to this study. I have cited and used the work of American sociologists of religion, Roof, Flory and Miller as their qualitative fieldwork is impressive and their ability to identify themes and patterns of religiosity from the personalised stories of the participants offer a comprehensive backdrop to the Kirkham research. I now turn my attention to Chapter Four which will build upon the findings of my empirical research and reflect some of the issues that have arisen from the Literature.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION

INTRODUCTION

The previous Chapter examined a variety of literature that illuminates this qualitative study. The Literature Review illustrates the significant contribution of this thesis in respect of contemporary religion and culture. In Chapter Four I present the fieldwork data that was quarried from the semi-structured interviews and participant observations. The data presents a lens to look at the weave of everyday meaning-making through the participants' experiences, understandings and musings based upon why they have chosen to bring their infant child to baptism whilst not attending Church. I clearly outlined and offered a comprehensive account and critique of the methodology I employed throughout this qualitative study in Chapter Two.

At the outset of this Chapter I will comment upon my role as vicar and pastoral agent, as this significantly enabled the richness of the data that follows. I then establish the themes that have emerged from the participants in order to identify significant patterns that may contribute towards painting a broader picture and analysis of the qualitative data. This data emerges from the interviews and observations and my immersion within the community in my role as pastoral agent. I would concur with Laurel Richardson and St Pierre who argue that although quantitative data has its place, as offered in Chapter Two, that the qualitative heartbeat and value of a thesis such as this is held within 'its entire text and unfolding narrative' (2005:959-60).

In this Chapter I introduce the seven themes that rise to the surface through narrative analysis, and the significance of the meanings they generate: family tradition and memory, making memories, not belonging, relationships and relationality, the importance of spiritual agency, Church as purveyor of public ritual, aesthetic of St Michael's Church building and rite of passage as consumption. Within each theme I introduce the subject, draw upon the interviews and observational material and present my analysis, viewing the latter and its subsequent interpretation in Chapter Five being more of an 'art than a science' as Colin Robson would suggest (2011:466). Throughout this Chapter, I use varying lengths of quotes and offer a variety of interviewee descriptors dependent upon relevance and whether they offer further nuance and texture to my overall argument. For example, age may be relevant if positioning the participants within a generational framework or occupation which may shed light upon and give background to the remarks that are made. Individuals are anonymised and name where I deemed this necessary to distinguish the different participants within conversations. The above in turn is used as a platform for Chapter Five where I set up a dialogue between the organic data and literature within the field, thus offering a distinctive contribution and response to the research question.

FAMILY TRADITION AND MEMORY

In this section I consider more closely the data that emerged in relation to the role of memory in the lives of those who are drawn to use the Church for infant baptism though not otherwise attending for divine worship. The importance of memory in relation to infant baptismal practice is a significant aspect of this analysis drawing upon both the participant observation and semi-structured interviews in equal measure. The role of family tradition and memory in respect of infant baptism and family life was evident and emerged both before and after many of the baptismal ceremonies, particularly with those who had an historic link to the town or Church. For example, I heard many grandparents reminiscing about whom in the family had been christened in the font and which Vicar it was who had presided. Sylvia, one such grandparent, in her mid-eighties, thus giving a multi-generational perspective, said:

'You know, I've lived in this town for over seventy years and I've never missed a christening of one of my own in this Church. Every baby in our family that I know of has been christened here and long

may it continue, it's right isn't it? I don't really know what the young ones believe now, and I'm not overly bothered, each to their own, but being part of the Church stands you in good stead for the rest of your life, teaches you right from wrong. I told them, Vicar, if they don't get her [the baby] christened they'll have me to answer to!'

The above illustrates the importance and role of the building within the life of the family as a place of meaning making. Furthermore, the quote explicitly and implicitly recognises that the parents of the child, who represented Generation X, have their own individualised views in respect of religious belief. Whilst the grandparent recognises the individuality of belief, there is still an innate view that infant baptism, is in some way a good thing as a cornerstone for building one's own personalised moral compass. The quote is also laced with expectation, delivered in a jovial sense but with serious meaning and undertone. The grandparent was an influential matriarchal figure within the life of the whole family. It was clear there was a great affection for what the grandmother believed to be precious, and the values she instilled across the generations. Here follows an extract from the interview with Catherine, her daughter:

> **Catherine:** We thoroughly enjoyed the christening day and having all the colourful characters around. Grandma, who I believe you had a long chat with, is amazing. I know she comes to Church on what she refers to as 'high days and holidays'. You know, I still have no idea what that means. I think that Grandma still thinks we have the same religious beliefs as her because we go to Church for Midnight Mass and have all the big occasions at St Michael's. Obviously we don't but there's no way I'm going to tell her otherwise! We do come to Midnight Mass because the whole Service, with the incense, candles, and carols is just so Christmassy. It is so special. You even put the heating on! As you've seen, we come as a whole family.

Richard: You might be surprised what your Grandma thinks. That's for another day. What did you mean when you said you don't have 'the same religious beliefs'?

Catherine: Going to Church and stuff. Mum and Grandma always brought us to Sunday School at St Michael's. I probably won't do that with Lilly [the child who was christened] as it's the only day that me and Mike get off together. Anyway, I don't want to be a complete hypocrite. Don't get me wrong, Church is important for my family and that's why we've got Lilly christened...It is a really good thing to do but we have our own personal thoughts about spiritual things, if there is one. Even though Lilly won't be going to Sunday School she will definitely be going to St Michael's School, as all the family have been there and Church schools, I think, are generally better, aren't they? St Michael's is certainly and has always been a traditional school... Lilly will definitely get taught how to behave properly there, and going to Church on a Wednesday morning will be really good as well. You still have the whole school in Church on a Wednesday, don't you?

Richard: Yes, we do.

Catherine: It's really good you still keep that going.

Richard: But what about this christening? What do you think a christening is?

Catherine: A christening is still a sort of spiritual thing to do even if I cannot explain why it is very well. It has to be, doesn't it, if it's in a Church? Then again maybe it doesn't. You've really got me thinking about all this but I have to be honest, I don't pray, don't come to Church, as you well know, but a christening is what the family, me included, expect and is what we do. It's just what we do, St Michael's School is where we all go and St Michael's Church is where we all come for the big occasions like christenings, weddings and funerals. I'm funny aren't I? I've probably contradicted myself loads. I definitely want to get married at St Michael's.

The perception of Church for Catherine is multi-faceted in many ways. She is keen to assert that St Michael's Church has something to do with the 'spiritual side of life' and that a christening is linked in some way to the spiritual, yet is also keen to underscore that she and her husband have their own individual views about the 'spiritual'. Whilst not claiming to be Church goers or actively engaged in spiritual activities such as prayer, the building and the school are ensconced in the psyche and practice of the nuclear and extended family unit. This sense of family tradition being linked to the use of St Michael's Church for Occasional Offices and attendance at St Michael's School was a significant feature of the study at Kirkham, though this must not be mistaken for religious activity in any overt classical sense because many of the participants were clear about not attending Church-led groups such as Sunday School. Furthermore, they were clear about the departure from theistic beliefs held by previous generations. Yet the ritual of baptism and wider Church ritual was still significant.

I further illustrate the significance of this data by remarking upon the contribution of what I name 'inherited family memory' when embracing the expectation of family tradition to have one's child baptised. This is illustrated by the following interview extract. Sandra was a single parent who had returned to live in Kirkham along with her husband in 2009. She separated from her partner when her first child was five months old. The interview was solely with her, and the father was not present either at the baptism or the interview. Interviewing the mother alone as opposed to with relatives or spouses of the infant child was a dominant feature of the Kirkham Project. Indeed, it is worth noting that I interviewed 33 mothers who were by themselves out of the 50 semi-structured interviews.

Richard: Why did you choose to get your child baptised at Kirkham Parish Church?

Sandra: My partner came from Kirkham and I lived in Newton [village next to Kirkham] until we both left to go to University. We met at Carr Hill High School and 'went out' with each other in the sixth form. We then got back together after leaving Uni... I had a job in Liverpool and Carl worked in Aintree and we lived together for six years before finding out we were pregnant. We then moved back to Kirkham because we had all our family around. In fact our grandparents and great-grandparents worked and lived in the mills at Kirkham. So really Kirkham's my home town as well. It's just so safe isn't it? Well, you know, as you've got two girls.

Richard: But, why did you get your child baptised at Kirkham Parish Church?

Sandra: Sorry, I've gone off on a tangent haven't I? What I'm saying is that Kirkham's in the DNA for me and Carl. We might have broken up but family and long standing friends have been fabulous.

Richard: What do you mean by friends? School friends or University?

Sandra: Neither really. Friends that span the age groups. Even my Great-Auntie looks after the little one once a week for a few hours and she's 81! But back to your question. There was an expectation from both family, friends and even myself to have Gillian christened as it is something we've always done. There are three generations of children who have been 'done' at St Michael's. It's like bunting flags on a string, if that doesn't sound weird... After the Service we did exactly what my sister and brother did with their children, as we went back to the Con Club [Conservative Club, Kirkham] and had a few drinks and a buffet. My mum tells me of the parties they had after christenings when they grew up. The parties were never at a Club, they couldn't afford it, but it was a family tradition to 'wet the baby's head' with a keg of ale from Thwaite's Brewery in Blackburn. I suppose not a lot has changed, as we still have our traditions but the parties just take place in the Club.

Sandra is an excellent example of a parent who moved back to Kirkham for family reasons and support. Sandra and Carl represent a sample of the 54% of those interviewed who moved back to Kirkham, often with historic family roots within the town and a network of extended family and friends woven into the community. The data shows that there is a correlation and dialogue between re-rooting into the town and inherited family practices such as infant baptism. This is further explored in Chapter Five. Hervieu-Léger suggests that there is indeed a community of memory in respect of

‘churchgoing’, thus transmitting ‘religion’ across and down the generations which subsequently develop a robust ‘chain of memory’ (2000). I would argue the ‘churchgoing’ to which she refers is equally applicable to the use of Occasional Offices such infant baptism, as this is an important aspect of the broader attendance at Church to which she refers. Hervieu-Léger uses the term ‘natural communities’ to describe families and villages where sincere ‘religious sociability’ has taken place and been embedded in the history of the people, although this is dispersing in Western Europe. I would concur with Janet Eccles’ suggestion that we should broaden the scope of the notion. However, I would add the caveat that the Kirkham Project illustrates there are still small, nevertheless significant pockets where 'family as history' and religious culture is passed on from one generation to another (2000:134). This can be illustrated in an interview with a godparent, Chloe, aged 31, who said,

‘What I believe one day can be different to what I believe next week depending on what’s gone on at work or at home. It’s not that I’m flaky but you can’t keep doggedly to one opinion if what you experience in your own life is a blatant contradiction.’

This quote beautifully expresses the movement of the post-boomer generation’s willingness to adapt and change set ideas in light of personal experiences that subjectively resonate with what is meaningful for the individual. Nevertheless, set alongside this is a reconfigured and quasi passing on of tradition from one generation to the next but in an individually personalised format.

A further observation of this familial connectedness can be seen in the following example which connects both new life and death through the rite of passage of infant baptism. It also underscores the inter-generational sense of meaning-making which is not confined solely to relationships that are with the living but also recognise the place of the deceased within the make-up of the family. An encased candle was transferred from the font to the grave of their firstborn child, along with a blue teddy bear that I had also allowed to sit wrapped around the paschal candle during the baptism. One can therefore see the connection of infant baptism transcending the immediate and touching upon relationships that are cherished after death.

Making Memories

In many respects I would argue that memory is our coherence, in that if you lose your individual memory you lose a basic connection with your own self identity. Memory based upon experience and relationship is particularly potent when held within a family tradition and pivoting upon an act of ritual such as a baptism. Throughout the research at Kirkham I often found participants saying they felt as though they were ‘contradicting themselves’ in an attempt to grapple with memories that had never been probed or questioned in this manner. In the searching of their memories one theme emerged that I believe sheds light upon a significant aspect of this research. This can be captured in one interview when a single professional mother, Zara, 26 years old, said:

‘Family christenings are great because they help us create an experience that’s part of my life story. I got my sister to take pictures on my iphone during the Service and I put them on Facebook, you know, on my timeline. A lot of my friends live away from Kirkham and are scattered across the South- East, so, it was a fabulous way of sharing the latest Chapter of mine and Jessica’s story’.

The data reveals that families were not necessarily ‘contradicting themselves’, but re-creating, reinterpreting, processing and grappling to understand, in the light of modernity, what they are doing with the family tradition in bringing their infant child to baptism. Thus, they were in turn reconfiguring why this inherited tradition is individually meaningful. This sense of individualised meaning-making is fully illustrated in this Chapter during an interview with a godparent who was critical of a Church where the baptism was in the principal Service. The godparent said ‘it doesn’t have anything, really, to do with them [congregation]’. This is in contrast to the Church’s traditional understanding of baptism as a communal activity and an entering into a community of believers.

Indeed, this is something that the Church of England still believes and promotes. Nevertheless, the data from the Kirkham Project suggests that those bringing their infant child to baptism are doing so in a variety of ways and for a multitude of individually instigated reasons. Indeed, I will now draw upon an interview from a married mother of two children, 29, that sheds light on the importance of infant baptism and underscores the importance of 'individual experience' with no overt intention or inclination that it is a communal ritual.

Richard: You talk a little about the family tradition of having your child christened. How important to you is family tradition?

Jayne: It's important because it makes my parents and grandparents happy that we are respecting how they brought us all up.

Richard: In a way the family tradition is about pleasing your parents and grandparents?

Jayne: Well, yes and no. Hey, I'm so contradictory it's funny. My friend had an interview with you and she said that the things you were asking she'd never thought about before. I know what she means now. I sound insane.

Richard: What do you mean by 'yes and no'?

Jayne: Family tradition has its place but it is not as important as the actual day and the feelings that I felt getting Jack christened. I was in tears for most of the Service because I was so happy. Jack means the world to us and we had to mark his arrival in some way, so why not a christening... It was great that I could be involved by pouring water in the font, using our own poems about Jack and allowing one of the godparents to say why Jack is so important to them... It felt like we had ownership of the whole service. It was a brilliant experience and it will definitely be a marker in Jack's life story and ours as well. We have put all the pictures over social media so that our friends can see how fab the day was... We always put our life experiences on Facebook... Whether it is a christening, Jack's first walk out in the buggy or his first match at Blackpool, though he did only last fifteen minutes at Bloomfield Road because it was Icelandic conditions!

Richard: Do you mean a little bit like the old fashioned 'scrap books'?

Jayne: That's exactly what I mean, Rick, but you don't have to go rooting through the loft in dirty boxes to find your memories. They're just there instantly and can give you a big 'pick me up' if you're ever feeling down... For most of the time I never look back at the pictures that I've put on Facebook as life just passes by so quickly these days.

There is a movement in both this interview and that of other participants engaging with the family tradition of baptism and respecting the guidance given by parents and grandparents alike. It can be seen from Jayne's remarks that she enjoyed a sense of 'ownership' and co-production in the Baptism Service. Furthermore, the use of her own poems in the Service highlights the need for making memories. It is clear from the data that the need for the Service of Baptism to be both personally experiential and intimate is clearly important. Christian Smith highlights the importance of subjective and emotional experience in Christian worship (2007). It can be seen from Jayne's interview that the use of personal poems and godparents publically speaking about the significance of the infant child resulted in the family having 'ownership' of the Service. This sense of emotional attachment to the baptismal rite of passage, involvement in the liturgy and to building a personalised bricolage of meaningfulness can be illustrated by two further examples. First, during the study one family brought a bottle of water from the Ganges to be placed into the font, having had a spiritual experience in India. The father believed this was an important aspect of their 'spiritual journey' and could not be ignored when celebrating the arrival of a 'new child'. The second example involves a family who brought Chinese lanterns to the baptism for immediate family and friends to send into the sky

immediately after the blessing in Church; being symbolic of the child being a 'free spirit'. The data from the Kirkham Project suggests this sense of participation in respect of involvement is no less important for those who engage in classically defined religious ritual such as baptism without any subscription to orthodox Christian belief.

Meredith McGuire suggests that the significance of 'personal beliefs and practices by which individual spiritual lives are shaped and transformed, expressed and experienced over time' are crucial in understanding contemporary lives and their interface with traditional or institutional religion (2000:99). This is further evidenced by the significance of the widespread practice at baptism of sharing pictures across social media. It appears to be the case that many participants set the experience within the context of a personal narrative either for the parent(s) or infant child. These storied experiences of baptism perhaps possess within them a transitory engagement, yet are preserved to be a comforting reassurance when life can be difficult. I come back to the issue of personal experience in relation to baptismal liturgy in Chapter Five where I tease out how the experiential has evolved. I also comment upon the data from this research that suggests the personal experience of baptism sits alongside a variety of other storied experiences in the lives of the participants.

BELIEVING, BELONGING AND VICARIOUS RELIGION

One of the principal observations made throughout the research, and which emerged from the observational notes I made after each baptismal ceremony, was the explicit and implicit idea that there was little connection between the sacrament of baptism and the sense that this was the gateway to belonging to a Christian community of believers. This was succinctly illustrated by a remark after the Service, made by Andrew, the Grandfather of the infant child that was baptised, who said:

'We don't come to Church... I know it is important for our Mandy, mind you she doesn't come to Church either but it's a really private thing getting your kids christened. Much like what you believe, it's nobody else's business unless you choose to tell them. People do it [christenings] for lots of reasons, no doubt, but it has nothing to do with anybody else other than yourself'.

This statement by Mandy's father intrigued me on two levels: First, baptism was disconnected from the beliefs of the Church, second, the rationale for having one's child baptised was privately forged and not viewed in relation to anybody else. Thus, the Church was seen to serve the needs of those who wish to publically ritualise the birth of a child through relatively familiar signs and symbols.

Below follows an extract of an interview with Mandy, 36, married with two children. The post-baptismal interview with Mandy was fascinating and captured the spirit and attitude that I came across through the interviews and observations made at the time of the baptismal ceremonies.

Richard: I had a good conversation with your dad after the Christening. He's quite a character and obviously adores your youngest. He was telling me that he hasn't ever really attended Church. Is that right?

Mandy: I think he did when he was in the Army, though I don't think he had much choice! He never made me or my sister go to Church.

Richard: Did you go at Christmas as a child?

Mandy: Not really, we went with school but that was about it.

Richard: Are you christened?

Mandy: Yes, of course I am. I wouldn't have got Bella christened if I'd not been.

Richard: Go on then, why did you have Bella christened?

Mandy: I know you were talking to my dad about this and he said it was really personal. I wouldn't say this very often but my dad is absolutely 'on the money' with this one. It really is a very private thing. Bella means the world to us and I wanted to make sure that we marked it in a special way. I know you put on christenings and Church is so beautiful it just had to be done.

Richard: You are avoiding the question!

Mandy: To be honest with you, Rick, Church is probably one of the last places I would want to be seen going. A christening is about the baby and its safe arrival. Everybody knows that you have a christening when a baby comes along. It's in part family tradition but without loads of the God stuff! It's also about me and Chris [husband] but nobody else. We want Bella to be her own person and getting her christened is a marker in the sand to say she's unique, a one off, yes, her own person and has arrived safe and well.

Richard: So, it is about other people in some way?

Mandy: The christening was all about Bella and celebrating her arrival. A christening is better than a naming ceremony, that's just dull and dry. A christening has meaning about it because it's been going on for centuries. What people believe has changed completely but the christening Service has stayed the same and I wanted to have that for Bella. You do know, Rick, that people will tell you that they believe in God just to get their baby christened at St Michael's... St Michael's Church is just gorgeous. It's an ideal place to celebrate a new baby coming into the world.

Richard: Thank you for being so candid! Do you think that baptism has anything to do with a higher force?

Mandy: You know that I don't believe in God in the same way as Vicars.

Richard: What do you mean by that?

Mandy: Well, you know. Praying to God and expecting things to change if they're not going right for you. Nobody believes that anymore. No offence like! It doesn't mean that Christian values are bad. They're really good. I want Bella to understand that 'treating others as you'd like to be treated yourself' is really, really important. It's what I live by. But as for praying hard enough and things happen, well, if that was the case my mum who died from cancer at 42 would still be here. I prayed so hard when I was 15 that if anything were out there they'd save mum. I wouldn't have cared which God it was as long as I could have kept my mum... So, I don't really believe at all but don't think that Church means nothing to me; because the values are good. If you stand for 'love' then I can buy that. You may not have noticed but all the godparents are people who got me and my family through mum's passing... They are all proper loving people who would phone at times they knew you were down even if it was in the early hours of the morning; they'd bring hot meals over to the house for us to eat. That's proper love isn't it? None of those go to Church, apart from one who is a Jehovah's Witness but he hasn't gone to his Church for years. Mind you, a Jehovah's Witness Church is really a bungalow with one room; it's not a proper Church.

Richard: You never told me you had a Jehovah's Witness as a godparent when you booked the christening?

Mandy: I sort of guessed you wouldn't mind! [Laughter] Anyway, I am ranting now, so I'll shut up. The bottom line is that St Michael's is where my mum was buried; it's where Bella and the youngest have been christened. It's a bonus you're not stiff but even if you were it wouldn't matter because St Michael's Church is where we go for important family occasions. You see, that's quite spiritual!

I have used such long extracts from this interview, which is richly peppered with meaning and signification that the participant neither subscribes to nor believes in an orthodox understanding of baptism or belongs to a community of believers, in order to underscore that christening and its location play a vital role. This interview was representative of several interviews and conveys a sense of belonging and not believing. For example, a father of a child whom I interviewed said 'I wouldn't have thought about going to any other Church to get Ben christened, as it's the main Church for miles around'. Another example to underscore the importance of the christening and the town comes from Bill, a grandfather who after the Baptism said:

'Walking up Church Street sends shivers down my spine because when you look at the magnificent building at the end of the road, with all its history, you know you've come to do something special in a special place'.

There is another important factor to the interview with Mandy which resonates with other interviews, and this is the use of Church as a 'utility'. The idea of Church as 'utility' is a key component in the work of Grace Davie as I commented upon in Chapter Three. Therefore, in light of the clear theme of 'not belonging and not believing' alongside the use of Church as 'utility' being evident in my fieldwork, I engage with Grace Davie's thesis in Chapter Five, as a differing, yet overlapping rationale for understanding the role of the Church. The following two examples come from a husband and wife who were acting as Godparents for close friends. In these two quotes we find two people who have thought carefully about what they do and do not believe yet have not rejected the Church's ritual and traditions as insignificant. Rather, they have no objection and find it useful as being a symbolic reminder of values that dovetail in with their own. Furthermore, what the Church offers in terms of ritual, and in the case of this research, infant baptism, can be seen as a product on offer that may or may not be useful in the construction of their own meaning-making. Peter an academic and godparent, aged 32, said:

'God would not enter my thinking at work or home. I would be worried if it did. What you don't believe in is as important as what you do believe in. I choose to live a life without believing or talking about God, but it does not mean to say Church has no role in society. It is a good counterbalance and I like rubbing up against it from time to time as its values aren't dissimilar to mine: respect, love and tolerance for our fellow human beings strikes me as key... I have no time for fundamentalist Christians, who my friends laugh at and call simpletons, cruel I know, but I would have nothing in common with these.'

His wife, an academic from UCLAN, aged 28, said:

'I don't pray but it doesn't mean to say I don't think deeply about my life and how I am living it. I do think carefully and map my course and having Ellie christened captures all the values I believe in: Love, care and compassion. A christening symbolises all the main things that religions speak about.'

RELATIONSHPS AND RELATIONALITY

The importance and role of godparents was a key aspect of the interview cited above but also other interviews. The traditional Christian understanding of the godparent role is that they make a Christian commitment, on behalf of the infant child, to follow Christ and nurture the child in the faith. However, when I asked godparents at the Services what was the most important part of being a godparent, they invariably referred to the relationship with the infant child's parents. I probed the interviewees about the role of godparents but only nine interviews referred to making overtly Christian promises on behalf of the child.

Below shows an encounter at a post-baptism interview when the parent of the child also had her best-friend and godparent in attendance. The godparent, aged 27, illustrates clearly the value placed upon the quality and importance of relationship between parent of the infant child and godparent, as opposed to the significance of the godparent's level of commitment to the Christian

faith. This sense of detachment from the Christian faith and community of believers can be further illustrated in the next exchange after a baptism with a godparent:

Richard: Did you enjoy the christening?

Paulette: Yes, it was great getting together with Kelly and Dave [parents of the infant child] for 'dos' like that.

Richard: Are you quite close then?

Paulette: Yes, definitely. We went to school together. We even went on a joint first date with our first boyfriends together. We had a joint 18th birthday party together. We're just that close. I didn't agree to be her birthing partner though! That would be going too far!

Richard: You're great friends. Were you surprised when she asked you to be a godparent?

Paulette: Why would I?

Richard: Well, is a christening a spiritual thing for you to bring Miles up in the Christian faith?

Paulette: No, not really like you think. I'm a good person and say I was a Christian. So, I can call myself a Christian by the way I treat others. You really don't have to believe in God, like you. You can be a good person and Christian and not go to Church. I don't think Kelly would have asked anybody else other than me and Dan to be godparents because our friendships are so strong. We've always been there for one another. We've got each other's backs.

Richard: Being a godparent is all about the friendship and being a good person then?

Paulette: Of course it is and I'm meant to be an example, I suppose, of being a Christian to Miles. Do you think I'm not a Christian because I don't believe in God and Jesus?

Richard: Not at all. As you know I'm doing some research about christenings and why people still choose to have their infant child christened but do not attend Church. So, I'm just interested.

Paulette: I bet that's dead interesting. Nobody I know goes to your Church, apart from my Grandma and some of her friends. But if it wasn't here [Church] it would be awful. I love the bells on a Sunday morning and the building being lit up at night. You can see the Church from the M55 at night and when you see it you know you're home. Oh, I like the odd christening and wedding! Mind you, those bells ringing every quarter of an hour finish me off. On the hour is fine. Even every half an hour would be ok, but every quarter of an hour is a bit much. I just love the Church, it's gorgeous, I am born and bred a Kirkhamer so I am biased. I'd hate the Church to go.

Richard: Don't worry because I don't intend the Church going anywhere soon! Are christenings important to you?

Paulette: Yes, like Kelly said 'it's a really special and individual thing isn't it'? I've been to lots of your christenings and one or two at Freckleton and Wrea Green and they do them in the middle of the Service with all the congregation there. I really don't like that very much. It feels a bit weird, as you don't know all the people in the Church and it doesn't have anything, really, to do with them, does it? That's why I came and got mine christened with you, because you do them on a Sunday afternoon with just family and friends. It's a bit more special and individual that way. It's much better than parading your baby about with people you don't know.

The exchange above highlights a number of themes but I wish to draw attention to the importance of long term friendship being a significant factor as a prominent feature of the data. For example, a male godparent, Joe, 29 years old, said:

'It's natural for me to be asked by David to be a godparent. We've known each other since Infant School. We had our first drink together when we were 18. Having a best mate who has asked you to be a godparent is the natural choice. David has been godparent for our two [children]. Neither of us go to Church apart from Midnight Mass when we've had a few sherbets [alcoholic drinks], but we would do anything for each other and that's what it is all about'.

To further underscore the importance of friendship being a primary driver for choice of godparent I will draw upon an encounter during the research with Amy, a 33 year old female who said:

'Sarah and me have been friends with one another for more years than I care to remember. Our small group of friends from school have asked one another to be godparents. It's a lovely thing to do for one another. It tells them they are special and will always be part of your life. None of them go to Church but they are good people, good Christians really'.

The theme of not belonging to a family of worshippers at St Michael's Church, though being baptised, is also a feature amidst the religious landscape of those who participated in the research. It would however, be remiss to suggest that the notion of belonging is insignificant, as the above interview suggests that the sense of belonging is relocated as opposed to being unimportant. For many of the participants St Michael's Church ceases to be the hub of community life where life is centred upon the person and story of Jesus Christ but rather the Church is a place that acts as a host and conduit for those seeking to ritually express the arrival of a newly born child. This is evident in the interview above where the godparent does not subscribe to a belief in God but places the emphasis upon her actions being kindly. The interview clearly shows that friendship and a universal maxim of 'treating others as you would like to be treated' is considered enough to describe oneself as a Christian person. Thus, kindness and goodness fulfil what is perceived as Christian. This idea of being a 'good person' directly translating into the category of being a Christian is visible throughout my observations and interviews and is something I will comment further upon in Chapter Five.

A further important aspect that emerges from the interview above was St Michael's Church being a symbolic presence of town identity with the godparent commenting upon the Church building being visible from the M55 motorway and the bells offering a background reminder of the Church's existence in the town. The aesthetic of the Church, coupled with the relationship between community and Church building, is evident in other interviews and symbolises a sense of ownership and belonging. For example, during the study, Connie, one grandmother of an infant child remarked:

'We're so proud to be part of this town. We have a great history for such a little place. St Michael's Church is the jewel in the crown of the town; from the bells, market place and beautiful Church Street to the old Roman port that was discovered, we don't do badly for a Lancashire town! I couldn't imagine living anywhere else or going to any other smaller Churches out in the sticks [small rural hamlets]. St Michael's has everything'.

Thus, in some respects the Church building is synonymous and intertwined with the understanding of being a 'Kirkhamer' and belonging to this locality in which St Michael's Church is situated. Interestingly, the interview also reflects a gap between the activity of having the infant child baptised and engaging with those who use the Church building as a place of worship. This can also be seen in comments from other interviews that speak about private baptisms being preferable and desirable. It can thus be suggested from the data that the importance and aesthetic of the building is a physical conductor for community life, and whilst not wishing to be part of the Church community or believe in what it espouses, the building represents a sense of secular and privatised belonging. However, this is wonderfully illustrated by Robert, the 30 year old father of a child baptised, who said:

‘My dad, his dad and my younger brother are all buried at St Michael’s. When you go in that building it just feels like coming home. The lights outside the Church, the millions of candles make it feels just so special. It’s our Church and I would not dream of getting Chris christened anywhere else. The place is stunning... I’m not religious but I know what feels special'. I comment further upon this in Chapter Five.

RITE OF PASSAGE AS CONSUMPTION

In this final section I turn my attention to the last of the emerging themes, namely, the baptismal rite of passage being perceived by the participants as that which Grace Davie would regard as a movement from ‘obligation’ to ‘consumption’ (2000). Much of what I have written is laced with twenty years of parochial experience as a priest; to ignore this aspect of my primary role as researcher would be negligent and I have highlighted this bias in Chapter Two. In this section I draw upon my experience to shed light on the issue of baptism becoming a ‘utility’ and commodity, in order to set in context the theme of ‘utility’ and ‘consumption’ before offering several extracts from the interviews to illustrate my observations.

In my experience those who wish to have their child baptised, in the first instance, phone the Vicarage and request a conversation with the priest. More often than not the venue for the reception will have been booked prior to the request for baptism. Thus, a date is sought for the ceremony after the arrangements for the reception. If the date is not possible for the Church the baptismal enquiry will often move onto another Church in the area irrespective of denomination. I have tracked this phenomenon over the years through ecumenical clergy gatherings that happen on a monthly basis. This would echo the view of Roof who crystallised what had already been recognised with the concept of contemporary culture being in a ‘spiritual marketplace’ (1999: 69-70, 96-109). As I have previously stated, this gets further attention in Chapter Five. The following interview captures this social economy of religion:

Richard: Why did you choose to get your child baptised at Kirkham Parish Church?

Sally: We had a few choices about where to get Teddy christened. The family is from Kirkham and we live on the edge of the parish. I suppose we could have got him christened either at Lund, Treales or the Catholic Church at Clifton... I know the Catholics are a bit stricter about things if you do not have family that are part of the Church. Though, my mum is a Catholic but not a very good one because she’s been married three times... I don’t think mum is allowed to go to Mass or something... Anyway, those three churches are beautiful little countryside churches and it was a conscious decision to come to Kirkham... It’s much easier to get to the Villa [hotel and restaurant at Wrea Green] from St Michael’s Church... People did not have to travel as far to get to the venue... You were so friendly when we made contact with your office and nothing was too much trouble when it came to getting one of the godparents christened so they could be a godparent[46]. Look, I am going to be truthful with you, Rick, we did enquire at Lytham Church about getting Teddy christened but the Administrator on the phone was so ‘stuffy’ and cold... It was as if they [Lytham Parish Church] were doing us a favour! You [the Church] can’t act like that anymore and expect people to come... It has to be treated a little bit like a business because, whether you like it or not, you have to attract customers.

Another example:

Richard: Is it important that the Church of England (C of E) provides baptism for everyone who seeks it? If so, why?

Jannette: I didn’t know it had to. I thought it was up to the Vicar who he hatched, matched and dispatched. I love that phrase, it’s the sort of thing my granddad would say... People think about St Michael’s Church being ‘their Church’ not who it belongs to... People think about Church being the

[46] It is a statutory obligation for all godparents to have been baptised.

Vicar and St Michael's... If you want a christening, or baptism like you said, you make sure you know the Vicar and make contact with him. A christening and baptism is the same thing isn't it?

Richard: Yes, it's the same thing but just a different name.

Jannette: You [the Vicar] are like the landlord at The Queens [Public House, Kirkham]. I've thought about this a lot, Vicar. You are not like the Headteacher as they don't live here. You live where your shop is... It's just your shop is prettier than The Queens [laughter]...

Richard: Are you saying it's a business?

Jannette: Yes and no. No, it's more than a business because like the Landlord people have to have a friendship with you to feel comfortable when you go in... When you are not paying for it [baptism] you've got to put some effort into the Church, otherwise it's just rude... Church is there for everybody and you have to cater for everybody... It's no different than the shops... You don't go into a shop if the person behind the counter is miserable. People have choice these days... People want to have their kids christened at St Michael's because it's beautiful and belongs to the town... People wouldn't go if you were hard work!

It can be seen from the two interview extracts that there is an implicit and explicit expectation of delivery in respect of baptism, irrespective of whether one attends Church or not. The choice of Church denomination does not appear to be overtly important, as the emphasis is upon the initial encounter with the Church representative or relationship with the vicar. It is clear that infant baptism is seen as a 'right' but not necessarily because of the obligations of the vicar in relation to the wider institution. Rather, St Michael's Church is seen as a purveyor of local ritual for local people who seek to choose it over and above other options. Alongside the importance of local ritual and choice, the interview with Jannette ties into many other quotes in this Chapter and the significance of the St Michael's aesthetic. Nevertheless, the data suggests that St Michael's Church is perceived to be set within what Roof would regard as a 'Spiritual Marketplace' of religion in contemporary culture. Thus, by default, the Established Church becomes the provider of ritual at the point of demand (1999). The theme of 'utility' and 'consumption' in relation to Roof's thesis becomes a key theme in Chapter Five.

PASTORAL AGENCY

It is worth underscoring that both the methodological approach and interaction with the participants were significantly enriched by my experience of living and working as Vicar of Kirkham since 2010. Whilst most certainly not going native it was a 'fine line' at points due to the relational nature of my role and ministry. Nevertheless, this role has afforded me a far richer experience of the town and its interaction with the institutional Church; from encounters through rites of passage such as funerals and weddings to involvement of extensive community work within the town.

Throughout my ministry I have taken an intentionally inclusive approach to Occasional Offices, not least with those who have previously had little or no interaction with Church. To this end I have worked hard to ensure such people have been made to feel genuinely welcomed, comfortable and safe to express their spirituality or non-religious meaning-making in an affirming environment. For example, I have encouraged those who have requested baptism for their infant child but do not attend Church to be actively involved with the liturgy of the sacrament by affirming their suggestions and incorporating the different ideas into the Service. On one occasion during the research the mother of an infant child brought red and white roses, placed them in the font, then after the baptism took the flowers and laid them on her mother's gravestone in the graveyard. This not only enabled the participants to be intimately involved and take ownership of the liturgy, but made the experience inter-generational by including the deceased in a ceremony that affirms life.

It is seen during this Chapter that my open pastoral approach has encouraged participants to share what at first glance may appear contradictory thoughts concerning infant baptism. Through my

pastoral experience I have observed individualised opinions concerning religion, spirituality and meaning-making being both sacred and secular or entirely separate. In many respects one of my principal observations of this study has been the participants' need to experience and become active meaning-makers, thus, constructing a bricolage of thoughts as 'involved' participants in rites of passage such as infant baptism. I further consider other examples of participants who became co-producers of religiosity and the impact inclusive pastoralia has on the experience and meaningfulness of infant baptism during this Chapter.

The Importance of Agency

In this section I consider the data that speaks clearly of agency. This will refer specifically to individuals taking responsibility for their own spirituality as opposed to adhering to a set of prescribed creedal formulas as embedded within traditional baptismal ritual. What makes this piece of research fascinating is the emergence of autonomous spiritual construction that is non-institutionally bound yet is using the institution and its offices to express the arrival of the newly born child. The research and examples that have emerged from the data at Kirkham highlight the importance of parents taking an active role in the baptism of their child and placing their individual hallmark upon the ritual. For example, it can be seen in the interview with Jayne that included personal poems in the Service. Further examples can be found earlier in this Chapter: the family who brought water from the Ganges to be poured into the font and the mother who brought roses and carried them to her own mother's graveside. These three examples all display a desire to take an active role and be co-producers of the ritual. What follows shows this dynamic being articulated both by families, those involved within the baptism ceremony and attendees.

The final baptism that I participated in as both celebrant and participant observer provided rich data to convey the overwhelming importance of 'autonomy'. After the ceremony I was speaking with the four godparents along with two sets of their parents. The godparents were aged between 25 and 29. It is also worth noting that the two sets of parents were related to the two male godparents. Karen, the mother of one of the godparent's said the following:

'I am delighted that Tristan agreed to be a godparent for his sister. He is very opinionated when he starts and has little time for organised religion and particularly the Church, I'm afraid to say. Tristan agreed with Charlotte [his sister] that he would put his thoughts to one side for the day and be involved. You would have been very impressed, Vicar, with the conversation I overheard in the kitchen last week between Tristan and his sister as it shows he thinks about spiritual things... Tristan thinks that people are each a precious gift from God but that God is you and I and we have to create our own path and do good things. I suppose it's a little bit like that verse Margaret Thatcher quoted when she became Prime Minister about us being the hands and feet of Christ[47]. I don't suppose he thinks we are the hands and feet of Christ but it's all about taking personal responsibility; so we have done something right.'

The above remark shows the importance of personal responsibility as a moral imperative but particularly when cultivating one's spiritual path. I took the opportunity to speak with Tristan once the photos of the baptism had been taken and preceding the conversation with his mother. Below is an outline of our conversation:

Richard: Your mum tells me that she overheard you and your sister talking about the christening and your role as godparent? You've obviously thought it through at depth?

Tristan: As a doctor I wouldn't do anything to compromise myself professionally and being a godparent for my niece is no different. The way you behave and the decisions you make come from

[47] The Prayer of St Francis of Assisi: Lord make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

the centre [pointing at his heart] and one's moral compass. I have my own thoughts on religion many of which I'm sure we would agree to disagree.

Richard: Quite possibly.

Tristan: I do believe that we are all divine in some way and it's our responsibility to make the world a better and more ethical place. I have no time for ideologies that say we are all divine pawns. In my late teens I spent time in India with Buddhist monks and they have probably helped my thinking. We each have our own spiritual journey to make and have to make our own roads. I see being a godparent as helping my niece develop into being an ethical person with a strong personal and enquiring mind... I can help guide her but the onus is on Charlotte's daughter herself. A christening is a good ceremony to mark the beginning of that journey and is part of what we British people do with our children... It's been really great to talk and I am sure the Anglican Church has accommodated godparents with far more maverick ideas than me!

A regard for 'the self' and the importance of autonomy in matters spiritual, religious or secular, or a blend of all three to a greater or lesser degree, bubbles to the surface throughout the interviews and observations from the Kirkham Project. I will now offer two examples; one from an interview and a quote that came from the observations, which will illustrate the high regard participants have of the 'self'. The first example comes from a 31 year old single mother of three, Carla, who has had all her children baptised at Kirkham Parish Church in the previous four years. Carla said:

'Being a spiritual person doesn't mean you go to Church. Being spiritual is something personal. You know, I carry a small medallion of Buddha in my pocket and that's linked to a medal of Saint Joseph who protects families, if you ask him. You might think that's weird but it's what I do and it works... I also light candles at home once the kids have gone to bed and think about stuff... So, Rick, I suppose you could call me spiritual but it's on my terms and I'm not into anybody telling me how to do it or like those street preachers in Manchester or the Pope from his little window. Those preachers in Manchester are mad aren't they Rick?'

The second example is taken from an interview with Aaja, an Indian mother aged 30 years old who said immediately after the Baptism whilst having photographs taken from around the font:

'I am pleased you let us have the christening here because you know what we think about organised religion. You have let us express ourselves and life journey. For this we will be hugely thankful. My parents and I are massively thankful for allowing my dad to read from the Vedas. I don't think anybody understood him [laughter] but that's not the point. Unlike David [husband and father] I am a true mixture of many beliefs and none but I love holding my own compass to get through life'.

The centrality of personal, secular and autonomous meaning making is clearly present in the attitudes and opinions of many from within the Kirkham study, yet what makes this thesis fascinating, and contributes significantly to further our knowledge of the contemporary religious landscape, is the participants engagement with the religious institution of the Church whilst often holding a plethora of beliefs, ideas and opinions. It would be an obvious conclusion to assume that those who bring their infant child to baptism are doing so for overtly religious impulses and rationale, yet the research appears to suggest something far more complex at play. One thing is clear, the individualisation of ritual activity can be observed from the data. One married mother, Agnes, aged 27, said:

'People come to St Michael's to get the children done [baptised] as it is oldie worldy and there are no expectations made of us and we can get involved with the Service and people are dead friendly; which is not the same with other Churches around and about'.

There are lots of threads in the quote above that resonate with my body of research and the important contribution of Roof; not least with the significance of choice, the importance of relationship and warmth, the aesthetics of the building and the inclusivity of the ceremony. I will return to these important factors in Chapter Five and the Conclusion of this thesis as explanations that go some way in answering the primary question of this research.

CHURCH AS PURVEYOR OF PUBLIC RITUAL

The Church of England provides public ritual for every community in England. It is important to note that the residents of any given community, irrespective of religious belief, have a legal right to ask the Church of the parish in which they are set to take a funeral, marriage (if criteria are met) or baptism. The following interview extract illustrates many things, but not least a sense of demand and service expected even when no financial transaction is present. Once the baptism is booked the most frequently asked question is: How much does it cost for a christening? Baptismal enquirers are often surprised to discover that there is no financial cost attached to the baptism, rather there is a clear expectation on the part of the enquirer that a financial cost will be incurred. When the expected transaction does not occur, the mindset still remains, i.e. the expectation of that the Church will deliver what has been requested remains the priority and is not lessened by the lack of requirement for a monetary transaction. Furthermore, the terms of reference in respect of baptism for the infant child are to be found and located in the desires of those bringing the child to baptism as opposed to what the Church is offering as a rationale. Thus, the data suggests that the request for baptism can be seen as a vehicle for expressing a personalised world view that may or may not include spiritual or religious orientation. I will now turn to the research in order to illustrate these professional observations by using interview extracts:

Nicola: 'I didn't know that we had a right to have Mia christened at the Church until you told me. Before moving from Bedford, for Dave to work at BAE, we wanted our youngest, David, christened in the local Church and they made us go once a week for six weeks. In truth, we called it a day after three weeks, as they were what my husband calls 'Bible bashing'. I thought that we'd gone to meet new parents and possibly make new friends as they'd called the evenings 'Christening Enquirers' with a strap line that said 'be made welcome and make new friends'... We went around a few other Churches to see what they were like. Not all of them were Church of England but we could not settle on one we liked. I know it might seem a little bit shallow but I did want Mia christened in a Church that looked like a Church with pews and that Churchy smell; like St Michael's... Also, your colleague was so warm and friendly. He made our first experience of coming to Church so good that we wanted to come back. Also, your website is so easy to use and it feels like you want people to come and use you and the Church. We should have got David christened at the same time as Mia.'

Richard: Well, we can arrange a christening for David at a later date?

Nicola: Thank you... Churches are businesses in some ways and you have to sell and promote the best aspects of yourselves to get people coming through the doors. I say this as someone who has been involved with marketing for the last ten years since graduating from UCLan. I'm not like some of my friends who get the children christened but don't believe any of it. I don't really come to Church but I believe in Jesus and that we'll be reincarnated.

Richard: The last thing you said isn't classically Christian.

Nicola: Isn't it? It's what I believe and I think if you live like Jesus said you will come back the next time as a better person. You could sell that idea along with your christenings if you like [laughter]. Seriously, thank you so much for making Mia's day so special. I know he's a little bit older but I'd really like to have David christened as well.

Most significantly, and captured clearly in the interview above, is not just the movement, questioning and embracing of the autonomous self in matters of religion and spirituality, but also the use of other ideas and concepts that emerge from different faith traditions. It is clear to see that St Michael's Church is not regarded as a significant sacred space for baptismal rituals, rather it is an aesthetically beautiful building with people choosing to use it for a variety of reasons. Yet what underpins that choice are not necessarily classical doctrinal notions of baptism relating to an external deity. The interviews appear to suggest that the choice of Church for holding a christening is done so through market forces. For example, when Nicola was in Bedford she shopped around several Churches until she got the right experience, aesthetic and personal interaction with the clergy. This dovetails into Roof's notion of people being in a 'market place of religion' where they choose what is most expedient (1999). I comment further on this aspect in Chapter Five.

The data suggests that the baptismal gown is an integral part of the physical ritual. Over 90% of those within the study dressed their child in a baptismal gown and spoke about it being 'special', 'passed down through the family', or the mother saying it was important because it was 'part of my wedding dress'. Indeed, the baptismal gown represents and reinforces the intergenerational nature and importance of memories as illustrated earlier in the Chapter. The baptismal gown became for many of the participants a connection to the importance of their own transitional life celebrations i.e. marriage, or, and perhaps most significantly, the gown was a link to deceased family members which made them present at the baptism. For example, Sophie, one mother said:

'The white gown that Jessica was wearing was worn by my mum, her mum and great-great grandma... Because they have all died and there is only me and my dad left I thought it would be a lovely reminder for him [father of the mother] to much happier times'.

Other participants spoke about the baptismal gown in relation to other physical aspects of the Service, yet, interestingly only one from the 50 baptism families talked about the words and promises that were made. The data suggests that the baptismal gown took its place alongside the other religious symbols used within the liturgy such as the oil of chrism, water and candles. For example, Carrie, one of the godparents commented when coming towards the end of the Service:

'This is just so unbelievably special. I love the smell [incense had burnt prior to the Service] and the part where you put oil on his head... I didn't know you did that sort of thing... Can we all [godparents] light candles in a minute because I don't know who I am praying to and what to say, but I always light a candle when remembering someone or saying thank you if I go into a Church'.

The data suggests that the ritual enactment and use of symbols by the priest, and the desire on behalf of those immediately involved to engage with the physical aspects of the baptism Service, are noteworthy and significant. The aesthetic is integral to the experience of the participants and can be seen in language that is used in relation to the Service such as 'this is unbelievably special' or the 'smell' of incense. This can be further illustrated in the interview with Mandy where she refers to the building as being 'gorgeous' and 'beautiful'. Once again, the interaction between the aesthetic, the use of such symbols and the interviewees' understanding, is highly individualised and is based upon a variety of ideas that are often un-connected to orthodox Christian belief. For example, during the research and after a baptism, Michaela, a 24 year old godparent said:

'I do not believe as the Church would want. I believe in something personal and for me but I do love some of the Church stuff like christenings with all the ceremonial stuff... I do believe in Vince [baby being baptised] becoming a confident person in his own right with good values'.

During an intriguing interview, Vince [the father] said,

'I have never been the religious sort, I don't pray, but it does not mean that Church means nothing to me. Where would you go for important times in life like beginnings and endings if not Church?

Humanist Services are seriously dull. Who wants a naming ceremony or celebration of life when you die? You want it done properly and the C of E is the people's Church isn't it and you don't have to be religious? You can tell I vote UKIP [laughter]. The C of E is part of this country for good or ill.'

Notwithstanding the intriguing relationship Vince perceives between voting UKIP and the Church of England, he highlights Davie's notion of utility which is facilitated by the Church of England being accommodating of views that are only nominally spiritual or secular for Occasional Offices. This was an opinion often expressed throughout the research in various guises. Indeed, it is worthy of comment as it highlights the disconnected nature of Church of England parishes with restrictive baptismal policies and those they have a statutory requirement to serve through their ministrations.

AESTHETIC OF ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH BUILDING

The data shows that St Michael's Church building symbolises much more than a primarily religious function. The Church building has a significant historical and contemporary role to play in terms of its architecture, prominence and position of the Church in relation to rural Fylde. I now offer data that supports and presents the use of St Michael's Church as an attractive venue yet in relationship to the participants 'self identity' within the community and town. I will also show how the building is perceived by the participants as a sacred space that accommodates and embraces religious, spiritual, secular beliefs and affirms human life.

Richard: How would you describe the experience and feelings of having your child baptised?

Kay: I felt excited about the day as we had planned it for the best part of six months. We had organised a hot buffet at Ribby Hall [local leisure and holiday park] for our guests, which was great. You were also really kind in letting us come the night before to decorate the Church with the same colours we had at our wedding. The Church really lends itself to bright flower displays because it so large. It's like walking into a bright cave.

Richard: Why do you say that?

Kay: The ceiling is incredible and has gold leaf between each red square[48]. It is really different because it has no pillars; which is why it looks like a highly decorated cave.

Richard: You can tell you are married to an Architect? How important is the building to you?

Kay: Very important as it's the building that dominates the skyline of Kirkham. As you know we got married at The Villa [local hotel and restaurant] because they did everything under one roof. I regret that in some ways as the pictures inside and outside of St Michael's would have been amazing. The pictures on my wedding day were a bit bland but you'll notice we made up for it with Charlie's christening... We hired a photographer, who is a friend, to take photographs in the Church and they are incredible.

Richard: Just going back to the question. How would you describe the experience and feelings of having your child baptised?

Kay: The experience of getting Charlie christened was just great. The Service was lovely but everything, including the Church and flowers and everything we organised around it made it an event. It was just a fantastic day for the family memory bank...What more can I say.

Richard: Do you think that baptism has anything to do with a higher force?

[48] See Appendix 6 for a picture of the church nave and ceiling.

Kay: By higher force do you mean God?

Richard: It can mean that if you wish?

Kay: I do believe in God but don't think about it a lot. When we go away I will light a candle if we go into a Church.

Richard: Is the candle lit for any reason?

Kay: I always light a candle in memory of dad. You'll make me cry in a minute. We went to Venice a couple of years ago. If you've not been you must go. I went into the famous Church in the square.

Richard: St Mark's.

Kay: I'm not sure what it's called but it's stunning. How can you walk into a building like that and not be moved to light a candle or say a prayer. It's a similar thing when I walk into St Michael's. There's something about the place. It [St Michael's Church] just speaks of peace.

Richard: Do you believe in God?

Kay: Probably, if you push me, but I find Church buildings peaceful. You just think about different things, don't you? The things that are important to you and that you don't speak about. Yes, it's something to do with what goes on inside them, I suppose, as well as the building. Church can be somewhere you think about the things you don't usually think about. If that's prayer, then it's prayer.

Prior to commenting on the above interview and analysing the emerging theme I will turn to a remark made during my observations that occurred with two fathers of infant children being baptised:

Mark: I remember walking up this Church path every Wednesday morning when we came over from school for assembly. There was a 'Church team' from school that would greet everybody at the door, another would ring the bell, another would turn the lights on, and another would light the candles. Everybody wanted the job of lighting the candles or ringing the bell... It's one of the reasons we moved back to Kirkham... When we became pregnant we obviously made plans to move here... It didn't happen straight away but we found somewhere in the end... We wanted Kyle to go to school at St Michael's and have proper roots; a place he could call home... It was only natural that we'd get him christened here... Everything about this place [Church building] is sort of homely but really grand... I hope Kyle feels the same way about this place when he gets older... It's great to belong to a town and not a suburb... Here is like putting a pair of old slippers on if you know what I mean.

Simon: The Company I worked for [a Kirkham building firm] when I left school did a job on St Michael's Church. I went to the Willows School [Roman Catholic School, Kirkham] so when I ended up working here it felt as though I had gone over to the other side! I don't think anybody is bothered about that sort of thing anymore; caring where you go to Church, if you do, died years ago... I hadn't realised or appreciated how incredible this Church is until I worked on it... I am going back now... It was something to do with the main arch inside the Church... I couldn't believe how many people came into St Michael's, particularly at lunch time. People would have their butties outside and might come into Church to light a candle. If it was raining there was a small group of girls, I think from the bank, who would eat on the back row of pews! It's always been the same at St Michael's... It's a hidden gem for locals and we do see it as our Church... I don't come [Church] as much as I should but why would you go to the Willows Church when you've got this on your doorstep... We just had to get Daisy christened here...

It can be seen from the interview and with other interviews in this Chapter, but in particular the interview with Kay and the remarks of Simon and Mark, that the Church building has a significant

role to play. It is also important to note the recognition from the participants of the role Church plays in the day to day living of those working within the town of Kirkham. St Michael's Church is integrated into the tapestry of personal history and daily living (though not necessarily for religious reasons) yet beautiful and precious enough to be regarded as a place for special occasions.

Throughout the interview with Kay there are echoes of the emerging themes of co- production in respect of the liturgy and the desire to make memories tangible. The former can be evidenced with the remarks Kay made about 'decorating the Church [for the baptism] with the same colours' as her wedding. Kay's regret that she did not get married at St Michael's because the photographs would have been 'amazing' point towards the importance of making special memories and the building being aesthetically important. I look more closely at the aesthetic of Church, the importance of choice and familiarity of use, in relation to the experience of what Nancy Ammerman refers to as 'Everyday Religion' (2013). Untangling and reflecting upon such dynamics in Chapter Five in turn cast light upon why people bring their infant children to baptism whilst not attending Church.

CONCLUSION

The following quote from Brittany, aged 23, a single mother of three children, gets to the very heart of this thesis and captures the principal themes that I highlight in this Chapter, namely the significance of personalised relationships, rejection of an external deity, the importance and affirmation of ritual and aesthetic and the significance of sacred space as a conduit for well-being:

'Bertie is the last one to be done [baptised]... The other two can't stand him; I think it's something to do with him not having the same dad... Mind you, that can't be true because the other two don't have the same dad either [laughter]... But I love him and want the best for him which is why I had him christened. I really, really love him. A christening is about love... Having a kid christened shows that you love them... You know I don't come to Church, Rick, but I care and graft doing three cleaning jobs... You know I'll never come to Church because I don't believe in God but it doesn't mean to say I don't think it's a special place. I just love the ceremony as well, yes, the Church and the ceremony are amazing... It is a place I can light a candle, get some peace and quiet... I am definitely a Christian but don't believe.'

In light of the above, in this Chapter I have highlighted key aspects that have emerged from the data: family tradition and memory, believing, belonging and vicarious religion, relationships and relationality, rite of passage as consumption, pastoral agency, the Church as purveyor of public ritual and the importance of aesthetics. I will use these seven themes in Chapter Five to structure the interpretation of the data and to initiate a dialogue with the relevant literature in Chapter Three. The themes I have highlighted are at the very core of my thesis, as they offer new insights into how the community in Kirkham engage with ritual offered by the Church. I have shown from the data that infant baptism is often reconfigured by a significantly individualised world view which celebrates the autonomy of 'the self'.

I have been mindful and explicitly clear throughout this Chapter about my own dual position as vicar and researcher. Whilst this had its challenges when interviewing in respect of remaining on task, I worked hard throughout the interviews to avoid them dissolving into a pastoral conversation. I believe I managed this with a high degree of self awareness and reflexivity. It would, however, be remiss and naive of me to ignore that such a dynamic was at play in some interviews. It is clear to see throughout this thesis and in particular this Chapter, that the data has been richly infused by my role within the community, not least because it often placed participants at ease due to past encounters outside of the baptism and research project itself.

I have commented on the emergence of personalised and autonomous meaning-making throughout the Chapter. I wish to underscore the importance of relationships within the experience of a having a child baptised. A good example of this would be in the choice of godparents: An overwhelming number of participants in the research spoke about choosing friends rather than immediate family as traditionally expected. Therefore, relationships remain important within the ritual of baptism but do not reflect a desire to link into the broader Church family or community.

Thus, the choice of godparents becomes an expression of a changed, individualised and immediate frame of reference.

I have distilled the most pertinent aspects from the interviews and observations which I in turn use to support my contribution to the research field of contemporary religion and culture. I now turn my attention to offering a nuanced and comprehensive argument which offers fresh insights into why we must not assume that people who bring their infant child to baptism and who do not attend Church are doing so from an innately religious impulse or rationale.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Three I considered and engaged with the relevant literature relating to this research project and in Chapter Four I presented the data of the Kirkham Project with appropriate analysis. I now turn my attention to the dialogue and interaction between the two. I initiate this by using the themes in Chapter Four to engage the literature with the themes and discussions, mirroring where possible the same structure as Chapter Four in order to give clarity of argument.

It became clear to me throughout the research that the participants who were bringing their infant children to baptism were doing so in a serious and intentional manner. Indeed, the data clearly shows that the participants' rationale for infant baptism was thought out and an active choice was being made to both have their infant child baptised and to do so in St Michael's Church. As a 28 year old father put it 'we could have chosen a naming ceremony for Jake but we didn't. We wanted that beautiful Church for my beautiful son'. In this statement, there is a sense of relationship between the preciousness of new life and the beautiful aesthetic of Church. Thus, the Church is seen as the cradle that holds and nurtures significant rites of passage. While such engagement may not be overtly religious, my research suggests that it is nevertheless an observable feature of the Kirkham religious terrain. In this Chapter, I look at the relationship between the emerging themes of Chapters Three and Four. I build upon the data of Chapter Four and offer a new insight which suggests an approach to infant baptism that is significantly subjective, relational and submerged in secular, religious and spiritual narratives.

There has been much dialogue and debate in respect of today's religious landscape. From the ideas of resacralisation to what has become known as the spiritual revolution (Tacey 2003; Heelas & Woodhead 2005). Over the last fifty years religion and society in the United Kingdom have evolved to become more individualised, subjective and spiritual. Indeed, there has been a clear movement away from individuals subscribing to inherited forms of religion. This Chapter will further develop understanding of the religious landscape, from the context of a northern Lancashire market town, by suggesting that individuals who engage with the institutional Church for Occasional Offices, but in particular those who choose infant baptism but do not attend Church, are doing so with a bricolage of personalised concepts, ideas, emotions and feelings which must not necessarily be categorised as religious. Throughout this Chapter the sense of personalisation and subjectivity, set alongside an eclectic blend of spiritualities, has forged 'meaning and purpose' in the lives of the participants (Tacey 2003: 38). With this in mind I now turn my attention to the concept of 'Everyday Religion' in relation to the community at Kirkham who choose St Michael's Church for infant baptism yet with little or no interaction with the Church community.

FAMILY TRADITION AND MEMORY

Hervieu-Léger's work, and in particular her notion of *fil conducteur* will be helpful in the following section as I explore the place of infant baptism in relation to those families who seek it and yet do not attend Church (2000). It has been established within this thesis that engaging infant baptism at St Michael's, Kirkham has a quality of belonging and generational continuity attached to it. More specifically, the sense of belonging that I speak of is not linked overtly to the community of believers in the Church but rather the connection is with the building and town, in so much as it plays one role among many in a person's tapestry of meaning-making.

Hervieu-Léger argues that a chain of memory created by tradition forges and enables membership of a community to emerge. The question arises who is the holder and keeper of this tradition? My research would suggest that such tradition of infant baptism is not necessarily to be found in the institution of the Church, even though they are the providers of the ritual. Rather, the Kirkham data suggests that the people who request infant baptism yet do not attend Church are the guardians of this tradition which is embedded in familial and communal memory. In the case of

infant baptism, a heightened awareness of belonging to a contextually historic and relationally centred community becomes an important aspect of tradition and memory through which people become connected and inextricably linked to other members of that community past, current and future. I would argue that a personalised and subjectivised, yet to some extent relational, process has the potential of creating an evolving and culturally rich ceremony with the meaning-making process located very much in the autonomous self. I would argue that the Church of England, by allowing people to bring their infant child to baptism whilst not attending Church, enables the residual memory of baptism to remain culturally present and rites of passage to be undertaken with ownership and honesty of meaning-making and reconfiguration of tradition. The residual memory no longer rotates around Church but is set deeply within families and their relationships. This familial and relational aspect does not negate the highly subjectivised and personalised process of meaning-making but rather reconfigures the orthodox understanding of infant baptism.

Hervieu-Léger observes a corrosion of tradition and faith community brought about by modernity, and that those in the West are looking for an alternative sense of belonging. Furthermore, Hervieu-Léger highlights individuals within contemporary society as seeking 'elective fraternities' where there are emotional ties that bind people together (2000:149). When this is used as a mirror to reflect upon the Kirkham Project it becomes clear that one feature of the participants was the creation of the kind of emotional community to which Hervieu-Léger refers, yet based upon subjective life experience and often wrapped up and expressed within what Woodhead and Heelas call the 'holistic milieu' (2005:156-8). The participants in the Kirkham Project often spoke about attending well-being classes such as yoga, pilates and meditation provided by various local gyms and leisure facilities. Signs and symbols brought from such experiences often informed and were incorporated into the ritual of infant baptism, such as joss sticks, background meditative music on entering Church and on occasion, silence was requested after lighting candles in memory of loved ones. It can therefore, be seen that the rite of baptism for such families is being reconfigured using familiar and meaningful symbols that is far removed from 'life as' religion. I would argue for those who seek the rite of baptism for their child whilst not attending, there still remains, at this juncture, a residual connectedness between Church and new life being brought into the world. Furthermore, it is possible to suggest that the ritual is slowly becoming, for Churches who wish to truly affirm the organic formation of individuals, a ceremony that is hewn from the Christian tradition but re-orientated through subjectively meaningful lives.

BELIEVING, BELONGING AND VICARIOUS RELIGION

Davie draws a correlation between decline in Church attendance and membership of other social organisations. Davie's 1994 thesis suggested a change in the way people hold their beliefs by arguing that people do not necessarily discard their belief but rather it changes by 'becoming immanent rather than transcendent'. Davie goes on to argue that once younger generations have loosened themselves from the institutional binding they tend to return to ritual. She cites evidence for this in countries such as Poland where marriages in Church have become increasingly popular.

This sense of immanence in respect of placing one's beliefs of the divine within a personal and internal location as opposed to relating and petitioning an external deity, ought to be given significant merit in light of a Church institution, structure and creed that, as Flory and Miller would argue, hold little or no sway for many post-baby boomers (2008). However, in contrast, the Kirkham research would suggest that an increase in numbers for infant baptism does not necessarily say anything about the individual's religious belief system but rather the contrary: indeed the importance of the individual and celebration of 'the self' in relation to the sacrament of baptism seem to be important elements but the affirmation and acceptance of what the Church teaches is not significant. It is clear from the research at Kirkham that the participants embraced and celebrated a sense of subjectivity based upon what Woodhead and Heelas regard as a 'turn to the self' (2004). What the Kirkham Project has to offer is piece of work that looks closely at the interface between how such a notion is expressed through traditional Church practices such as infant baptism. I am keenly aware of my own inclusive pastoral agency and the role this played in enabling the participants to feel

comfortable in articulating their sense of self in relationship to, and within, the ritual of baptism. I believe my pastoral approach had the causal effect of enhancing their experience.

I commented in Chapter Three on Davie's notion of 'vicarious religion' (2000:36). The concept of 'vicarious religion' was based on Davie's observations on the continent where she observed many Churches performing a variety of personal and public functions on behalf of others. Furthermore, Davie regarded significant numbers of Churches as a 'public utility'. Whilst Davie recognises this situation to be a very European phenomenon, it only rises to the surface when the future of such Churches may be threatened in some way. Following on from this idea of Church being a utility, is Davie's movement from obligation to consumption (2015:3- 4). Davie is very keen to draw attention to those Churches which are characterised by 'obligation' as being prone to further decline in the coming century, whereas those which are characterised by 'consumption' and celebrate the ability to choose could flourish.

From 2010 to 2017 infant baptisms at Kirkham Parish Church have seen an overall increase in comparison with the general decline from 1974 to 2009 illustrated in Chapter One. This is in part, due to my facilitating families' choices about how they can be involved in the liturgy in order to celebrate their ability to create personalised meaning using the traditional and cultural vehicle of baptism. Once I had established the pattern of encouraging families who sought infant baptism to be involved and become co-producers of the ceremony, parents often came with suggestions for inclusion in the Service as opposed to me in my role as pastoral agent stimulating the notion of choice. Another form of choice which correlates and interacts with the idea of consumption is the idea of the Church's aesthetic. People choose to engage with Kirkham Parish Church for multiple reasons, many of which are personal and individualistic. Participants in the Kirkham research were often looking for an aesthetic experience, for example in Chapter Four many remarks were made in relation to Saint Michael's Church being 'gorgeous', 'beautiful', and a place of 'memories'. This is most certainly the case for those who seek infant baptism yet do not attend Church. In other words, yet again, this is an illustration that those who have come for their infant child to be baptised have started taking responsibility; consuming and choosing what is on offer rather than going to another Church or none at all to express their subjectivity.

Davie reflects upon a variety of case studies from different parts of the world and draws a clear distinction between Churches being often perceived as a public utility in Europe as opposed to being more of a private concern of the individual elsewhere in the West, particularly in the USA (2002). There are two key aspects from Davie's book that are particularly important. First, Davie suggests that modernisation and industrialisation are the cause of faith traditions being reignited in other parts of the world. Second, and particularly relevant for the Kirkham research, she cites Europe as reacting conversely to such phenomena and that it has become increasingly secular. She goes on to suggest the beginning of secularisation included the breaking down of community, which was entwined in rural contexts, due to the advent of industrialisation. Davie argues in turn that the faith tradition of many people started to disperse due to the breakdown of community life within industrialised cities. The use of the term 'secular' is not always associated with religious or spiritual matters. Nevertheless, the participants within the Kirkham study desired secular writing or poetry during the Ceremony, often at complete variance with the content of the religious ritual. Further examples would be the releasing of balloons and drinking Champagne in the Church building after the Service in order to celebrate the occasion. During the latter example the grandfather said 'raising a glass is done at retirements, birthdays and achievements, so why not at a christening when we celebrate the product of our granddaughter [laughter]'.

The Kirkham study has highlighted a variety of impulses for people bringing their infant child to baptism yet not attending Church. This may appear at first sight as being contradictory or even oxymoronic but further investigation suggests there is something else at play, namely, secular motifs and ideas rubbing up against the evolving ritual of baptism. One of the observations that I have made and that emerged from the data is that there is evidence of some participants bringing a secular rationale to the sacrament of baptism.

RELATIONSHIPS AND RELATIONALITY

In Chapter Three I established the importance of studying what is known as 'everyday religion' and how the Kirkham Project contributes to this larger narrative and area of study. Nancy Ammerman highlights daily lived religion occurring away from institutional arenas such as Churches, synagogues or other formal religious organisations (2008). Importantly for the purpose of this Chapter, the study of everyday religion emphasises the importance of individual experiences and social context over and above rigid institutional viewpoints. Ammerman's study is helpful due to its focus away from institutional religion, with light instead being cast upon individuals and communities and how they produce religious meaning in context through 'embodied practices' (2008:187). Notwithstanding the helpfulness of Ammerman's shift in focus, the Kirkham study observes practices that require the ritual and ceremonies of a religious institution, i.e. the Church, to help in the process of their meaning-making. The Kirkham Project suggests that we must not assume that all those who require the ministration of infant baptism do so for overtly religious reasons but rather they are doing so to create layers of meaning and signification within their own personal narrative that is being constructed away from the institution of the Church.

Ammerman's working hypothesis is that religion can be observed through individual spiritual stories lived in everyday life (2013). Like Davie, Ammerman does not overlook the complexity of modern life when observing religion or spirituality, but acknowledges the interaction and overlap of everyday religion lived between work, private and social spheres. Above all else Ammerman and her research colleagues recognise that 'all stories, narratives of everyday religion are complicated' (2013:9). As with Davie, there is no reference to lives lived as secular set alongside an interaction with traditional religious ritual. I believe that this is a significant intersection where the Kirkham Project has a unique contribution to make, suggesting as it does that those who live predominantly secular lives do not altogether reject what the institution of the Church has to offer. Rather, they wish to re-engage and re-configure culturally familiar religious ritual, such as infant baptism, in a new and exciting way that incorporates a regard for geographical place, Church aesthetics, personal experience and narratives, individualised lives and historic ritual. Thus, I would argue that personal meaning-making, often, but not exclusively secular, is very much at the fore for those who bring their infant child to baptism but do not attend Church.

Bowman's and Valk's work bolsters and supports the work of Ammerman and McGuire with a further spotlight being shone upon experienced and subjectivised religion in everyday life (2012). Once again, Bowman and Valk along with Davie and Ammerman, focus upon culture and narrative in relation to everyday religion with great skill and accuracy. However, their respective research interests do not grapple with the idea of those outside religious organisations seeking its ritual: this is where the Kirkham Project offers a novel insight into such a phenomenon through the particular lens of people who bring their infant child to baptism but do not attend Church. The Kirkham Project uncovered amongst its participants, individuals with an eclectic blend of belief, practices and ideas that frequently embrace secular motifs as enshrined in their secular lives, yet who wish to express their meaning-making via the traditional rite of passage which is infant baptism. Whilst the idea of secular meaning-making has been clearly seen throughout the Kirkham Project, nevertheless, there was a noteworthy segment of the participants still responding to the question of the thesis in terms of spirituality and the supernatural. What is still prevalent amongst those who held something of the supernatural within their own personalised tapestry of meaning-making, was the need for it to be autonomous and defined by the 'self'. This approach is something shared between those participants who used the institution of the Church for infant baptism but had little or no acknowledgment of the divine in orthodox Christian terms, and those who embraced something of the supernatural. Thus, within the landscape of this thesis, it is crucial to recognise the importance of the personalised and subjectivised self in matters of meaning-making, both secular or spiritual, or a blend of the two.

Held within Bowman and Valk's collection of articles is a piece of work by Gilhus which draws attention to the variety of experiences and ideas that individuals have of angels and recognises that the 'division between Church religiosity, popular beliefs and New Age/alternative spirituality is not easy to draw' (2012:236). As presented in Chapter Three, Gilhus argues that 'popular religion'

belonging to 'ordinary people' is a fusion and has its roots and 'impulses from Christianity'. Though this may be true within the Norwegian context in which it was written, I would argue that the Kirkham data suggests two things: there is an echo of residual Christianity for some people within England, primarily driven by demographic and geographical location. If this was not the case the number of infants being baptised from families who do not attend Church would be much lower. Whilst the numbers being baptised reveals an awareness of Church being available for particular rites of passage, I would argue that the impulse for infant baptism does not come from Christianity. Rather, infant baptism for those who do not attend Church is based upon a desire to create personalised forms of meaning-making. Church provides a vehicle to be involved in a public ceremonial ritual steeped in heritage and symbolism which is valued but personally re-configured and shaped by personal narrative and the celebration of familial relationships.

I will now turn my attention to Meredith McGuire's work (2008). McGuire's thesis, as commented upon in Chapter Three of this research, explores the notion of 'popular religion' that is 'non Church approved' and regarded as 'vernacular religion' (2008:45, 48). For example, McGuire recognises that some of the Mexican American women and southern evangelical women whom she studied often used 'popular religious objects to connect domestic space with divine and/or to use their home decor to make a religious statement to visitors' (2008:78). This is particularly helpful in untangling some of the activity I observed performed by the participants of the Kirkham Project. Whilst McGuire's observations underscore her participants placing trinkets and artefacts in their homes to signify a connection between the divine and their personal space, conversely, the Kirkham participants used objects and symbols to create meaning and identity by bringing their non-institutional personal lives into a sacred space through secular and religious artefacts. For example, water from the Ganges was brought to be placed into the font and flowers and toys put at the side in order to be placed on the gravestone of a loved one after the baptism.

Such experience is explored by McGuire whose work shines light upon the importance of religious tradition and individual experience as lived. This aspect of her work is extremely helpful not least with the concept she has coined: 'lived religion as embodied' (2008:118). I unpacked this idea in Chapter Three but wish to draw attention to one specific observation that she has made, namely, the sense of 'wholeness' people experience through embodied spiritual practices such as 'laying on of hands, meditation, yoga, and the use of symbols. (2008:140). This can be further illustrated by the Kirkham research by the stories I have listened to in the pre-baptism visit, often surrounding birth, marriage and death. The latter being of utmost significance in relation to McGuire's understanding of wholeness as families would very often want the name of the deceased loved one to be incorporated into the baptism Service and a candle lit in memory. I would suggest that this illustrates a sense of healing, wholeness and 'embodied spiritual practice' but with the caveat based upon the Kirkham Project that such action is not necessarily in relation to the divine. McGuire regards this sense of interaction between lived religion and spirituality as 'embodied experience' but also notes the disparity between such practices and the principles of such activities.

McGuire illustrates a disconnection between institutional religion and personal activity by considering the adoption of practices promoting well-being and wholeness as unrestricted by the confines of institutional religion. Furthermore, this underscores participants' personal experience of meditation away from religious institutional life and the desire to incorporate their experience of promoting well-being within the Service. Once again this is an example of the secular being brought into traditionally understood religious ritual in order to create meaning for the participant. It is worth noting that I encouraged participants to be involved with the baptism service and to take ownership of the ceremony so that they could be co-producers of the baptismal experience of their child. This is something that has always been embraced by families where I have baptised their infant child during the last two decades of my ministry. Indeed a further illustration of McGuire's suggestion above would be one single mother who asked for the folk melody 'Greensleeves' to played on CD after the baptism of their daughter ending with the Lord's Prayer but excluding all intercessory prayer. It transpired that she often uses this music to enable her nightly meditation once the two children have gone to bed.

PERSISTENT PARADOX, RITE OF PASSAGE AND CONSUMPTION

I commented at length in Chapter Three in respect of Davie's observations concerning contemporary British religion (2015). Her work introduced the following six key areas that seek to address contemporary religion in British culture: 'cultural heritage', awareness that Churches have a 'place at particular moments in the lives of British people', 'obligation to consumption', 'new arrivals', 'reactions from the secular elite' and an understanding that 'religious life in Europe (Britain included) should be considered an exceptional case' (2015:3-4). I am now going to turn my attention to these six important aspects of Davie's thesis and look at how they exist alongside the research findings from Kirkham.

The first of Davie's six distinctive areas is 'cultural heritage'. Whilst I suggested in Chapter Three that this aspect of Davie's thesis has been over exaggerated, she recognises the waning of inherited religious practices across England involving the Established Church has 'diminished' (2015:4). Whilst the diminishing importance of inherited legacy is clear, this does not undermine or compromise the importance of infant baptism in a subjectivised, reconfigured and privatised way. It could be suggested that there is a correlation between my pastoral agency and numerical increase in numbers[49]. Irrespective of the increase, one must be careful not to make the correlation between an increase in numbers and a direct or indirect affirmation of classical Christian faith and doctrine. Indeed, the research at Kirkham suggests a blend of colours emerging from the canvas of those whom I interviewed and which I illustrated in Chapter Four. The Kirkham research would also indicate that there is still an element of historical legacy in respect of infant baptism held within the wider town community; yet it is far from a dominant feature on the religious landscape of the town. A direct connection between increase in baptismal numbers and subscription to the Christian faith as revealed by the Church of England's doctrine must not be drawn from this thesis because it would be inaccurate and diminish the multifaceted approach to meaning making.

'Cultural Heritage' recognises the 'role of Christianity in shaping British Culture' (2015:4) and Davie takes great care in making reference to the impact Christian festivals and Occasional Offices play in respect of the communities that are peppered around Church buildings. Alan Billings, from a complementary perspective, also shares this stance (2013). Billings argues that society seeks to understand British religion and Christianity in terms of those who attend and those who do not. Billings robustly argues that Churches are not remote environments, and even though the ministers may be relationally disconnected, those who attend occasionally and whose beliefs may be incoherent, are not necessarily uncomfortable or out of place in a Church milieu. Billings makes some salient points not least in respect of the ease in which infrequent attendees access occasions such as funerals, baptisms and marriages. In my pastoral experience, which extends beyond this research project, I have observed many people who do not attend Church other than for occasional offices or major festivals, being comfortable in the surroundings. This is coupled with an expectation of what I am to deliver, rather than people feeling required to be overly involved to the point of feeling uncomfortable or alienated by unfamiliar ritual. In light of this experience and the Kirkham research I would therefore concur with Billings, and whilst sharing Davie's viewpoint, I would argue that she presents a slightly over sentimentalised understanding of the Church of England's role in modern society. From my pastoral experience, whilst people are increasingly less au fait with the trappings of Church ritual as a result of generational non-attendance and an embracing of personal autonomy, the degree to which they expect the Church to provide at point of delivery is very much within the mind-set of those with whom I have interacted.

Davie cites not only Christian festivals as important punctuations in the calendar, but also that Church buildings symbolically represent and retain some form of value for the populations that surround them. Davie argues that the latter is a background noise for British people even if they do not attend or enter them. This, she argues, is further illustrated by the heritage of the parish system that serves both civic and religious functions. Whilst Davie could be criticised for over emphasising the importance of the inherited and Established Church upon the religious terrain of England, she does recognise that the significance has 'diminished over time' (2015:4). This became apparent at

[49] This, of course, would need a far greater timespan and different research project in order to address its observation.

many junctures within the fieldwork as participants sought to place the imprint of their own individuality and autonomy upon the understanding of infant baptism by introducing new aspects to the ritual, such as Ganges water, roses and balloons, to enhance the personalised and experiential process of meaning-making. For example, one father aged 32 said 'I remember us [siblings] being christened and it were stuffy but you can make christenings here [St Michael's Church] your own'. Davie also notes that legacies such as infant baptism are still part of the cultural and physical environment, however, I would argue that this is not in the classical format and sense which she promulgates.

In Chapter Three I commented upon two aspects of Davie's assertion in respect of occasional Church, namely, 'institutional life' and 'credal statements' (2015:5). Davie's argument highlights the difference between, and interaction of, individual 'belief' and the 'affirmation' being received from the institution in believing the 'right things'. There are numerous examples from the Kirkham research which would underscore the departure of participants from classical Christian orthodoxy, or a waning and diminishing cultural expectation to believe 'in the right way', i.e. believing without belonging. For example, a mother aged 25 said, 'I just can't believe the words on the service sheet but that doesn't mean I don't have my own beliefs which I think are equally valid'. Davie's argument can be queried in light of the data at Kirkham, as the evidence from the research suggests the participants were seeking affirmation of their own personal constructs through the symbolism of the ritual as opposed to the credal narrative of the Church. This was a significant feature of the research as it exposed the participants' regard for the ceremony as a means of publicly bringing before family and friends personal meaning-making as expressed through the familiar signs and symbols of baptism.

Davie argues that the rite of baptism 'is changing in nature as it becomes increasingly a sign of initiation into a voluntary community rather than a mark of Englishness'. To make such clear distinctions is not fully evidenced by the data and as I stated in Chapter Four, in respect of infant baptism in Britain today 'may not have as much to do with entering and belonging to a voluntary community as with being a vehicle to assert an individualised spirituality using corporate sign and symbols of ritual' (2015:51). Davie's assertion of baptism not being a mark of 'Englishness' could be to assume that the identity of being English is somehow wrapped up in the notion baptism being un-thoughtfully undertaken by virtue of what traditionally would have been expected. Whilst this remark is worthy of inclusion in this thesis, it is such a vast area of study that I believe exploring this would distract from answering my primary research question. Nevertheless, I would wish to highlight one point in relation to Davie's remark on Englishness, namely, my research appears to suggest individual autonomy, as opposed to the generational expectations and traditions that once characterised Englishness, to be the primary driver.

Davie talks about a 'huge variation in baptism policies across the country leading to an understandable confusion' (2015:51). This variation in baptism policy is not something new, due to the autonomy granted to individual incumbents and the variegated contexts that they serve. The nature of the local Anglican Church within England has traditionally been characterised by both an organic and local flavour; predominantly shaped by evolving history, changing demographics and local issues. Many parish Churches within the Church of England still retain the legacy of former times along with the customs and traditions that have forged parochial Church identity. However, the Church of England is now seeking to have a more corporate identity and approach to what they refer to as 'life events', which includes infant baptism, in direct tension with the individual identities of parish Churches, never mind the variance and engagement with the myriad of beliefs that are carried by those attending infant baptism[50]. I would further argue that the distinctiveness of parochial identities needs to be handled with care as they have grown in context and been infused with all the nuances of local understanding. Andrew Brown and Linda Woodhead suggest 'rituals and routine practices construct their own meanings' and this is something which ought not to be diminished, but rather celebrated, as the Kirkham project would suggest (2016:65). Indeed, the Kirkham thesis would embrace and argue in respect of infant baptism that religious rituals to a greater or lesser extent are

[50] See: churchofengland.org/life-events/christenings

‘enacted in ways that cannot be contained in words’ even though words are an important element (2016:67).

An important aspect of Davie’s thesis concerns what she refers to as ‘obligation and consumption’. Though she comments upon the ‘charismatic evangelical’ Churches and the ‘cathedral and city-centre Churches’ to illustrate her point that both formats of Church are set within the framework of ‘consumption’ and subsequently have a strong ‘experiential element, albeit very differently expressed’, the sense of ‘consumption’ to which Davie refers, and on which I have remarked in Chapter Three has a deep resonance with the Kirkham research (2015:8). Participants time and again requested involvement within the liturgy and baptismal rite ranging from readings, secular poems, signs and physical objects from life’s journey or symbols of signification relating to the child being baptised. The Kirkham data suggests only a negligible number of participants possessing any sense of ‘obligation’ attached to having one’s child baptised. The data did suggest a drive towards the experiential and the need to have baptism provided and consumed through negotiation in order to gain a personal and meaningful experience. One observation I would make in light of the Kirkham research is the need for those bringing their infant child to baptism to personally and experientially consume the ritual of the sacrament in order to enrich their own process of meaning-making. Absent from Davie’s thesis are observations concerning Occasional Offices such as baptism and their interaction specifically with those who do not attend Church. The Kirkham research to a greater or lesser degree supports Davie’s notion of ‘obligation and consumption’. It does so by underscoring the importance of the personal and the experiential aspect to those requesting and consuming baptism for their infant child in contemporary English society provided through the ministrations of the State Church.

Davie believes that religion in Britain today is characterised by the term ‘spiritual’, alongside people having a ‘tendency towards bricolage’ when constructing and building individual packages of belief and spirituality based upon religious and spiritual ideas (2015:8). The Kirkham Project would be nominally supportive of Davie’s use of the notion of ‘bricolage’. Davie’s approach recognises the complexity and variety of ideas, beliefs and concepts that can make up an individual’s belief system. On one level I would be supportive of this notion, but with the caveat that it does not articulate the whole story because it does not give sufficient regard to the secular impulses behind people’s desire to create meaning.The Kirkham study draws attention to people using traditional religious practices, such as infant baptism, for non-religious reasons that interact with traditional forms of religious practice. This interaction is intrinsically personal and meaningful in a way that enriches the experience of the individual. The Kirkham study suggests a process of secular and spiritual signification that encompasses, blends and creates a belief system that could be described as bricolage and underscores the importance of secular meaning-making.

In Chapter Three I remarked upon Davie’s category entitled ‘new arrivals’. Whilst this section of Davie’s thesis is not immediately relevant in its entirety, there are some nuggets held within this aspect of Davie’s work which help further exploration of the Kirkham data. Davie argues that many Britons perceive faith as being a ‘private matter’ whereas ‘new arrivals’ possess a markedly ‘different approach to matters of faith’ which are often visibly and physically more overt (2015:10). Matters of faith being ‘private’ and not necessarily lived out within traditional faith communities such as Church, resonate with the Kirkham study. For all of the participants the interviews were the first time they had ever articulated what they believed in respect of faith, Church and rites of passage.

Davie’s thesis has significant regard for what she refers to as ‘secular reactions’ in the public sphere within modern Britain. As cited in Chapter Three, Davie argues that Britain possesses a great ‘tolerance’ within a multicultural society coupled with a sympathy towards a more secularist position (2015:178,11). The secular position was articulated and a strand of thought that arose from the data. This can be seen in the quote by Peter, an academic and Godparent, in the section ‘Not Belonging’ in Chapter Four. One of the fascinating observations from the Kirkham research are those, like Peter, who hold a non-religious worldview and yet still choose to interact with Church on occasions such as infant baptisms. Secular values that overlap with the outworking of the Christian faith appear to be a driving force in choosing to be involved with infant baptism, whereas regard for the institution and creedal formulas rarely, if ever, were spoken about throughout the research. The question still persists: why choose infant baptism when you do not attend Church? The Kirkham data appears to

suggest that those participants with a secular ideology and outlook on life perceive Church as representing qualities that enable relationships to flourish, and tolerate the divine aspect of the occasion for which the Church takes ownership. Thus, for the participants the ritual and meaning of baptism evolves, mutates and realigns itself with the evolving beliefs and practices of society.

It could be said that participants within the Kirkham study are re-configuring the meaning of infant baptism in a highly diverse and personalised manner based on experiential modes of secular meaning making as expressed through a once overtly religious ritual. I would suggest that Davie's research does not pay enough attention to those who with secular views engage the ministrations of the Church through Occasional Offices. I would concur with Davie that society has an increasingly 'articulate secular' voice and that there is a variance of this position across the regions of Britain (2015:223). Davie argues cogently that the religious landscape of Britain is complex, but is slowly but surely moving away from this religious tradition. Whilst I would agree that there are regional variations in the secular voice and would not be inclined to draw broad sweeping conclusions from my contextually situated study, I do wonder, based upon the Kirkham Project, how slow the movement away from religious tradition truly is? The study would suggest when it comes to infant baptism, believing in classical Christian doctrine is not a significant factor. I would therefore argue the waning role of religious tradition may not be as pedestrian in its advance as Davie may implicitly suggest. The significance of the Kirkham study lies within the use of a religious institution to give meaning though holding quite contrary views to that of the Church.

THE KENDAL PROJECT

I commented upon The Kendal Project in Chapter Three, and the empirical study conducted by Woodhead and Heelas concerning religion as lived in everyday life (2005). The Kendal Project and its team of researchers focussed upon community and religious affiliation. Unlike the work of Davie, Ammerman, McGuire, Valk, Bowman et al who examine individual narrative, spirituality and religion lived away from forms of institutional religion, Woodhead and Heelas considered what kinds of spiritual and religious activities people were involved with in within Kendal and in turn offered a framework to understand such choices. The study did not, however, engage with rites of passage such as marriages, funerals, confirmation or baptism offered by Christian denominations. I believe this was an area of the research within the Kendal Project that could have been further explored. More specifically, the Anglican incumbents of Holy Trinity or Saint George's, Kendal were not approached throughout the research to shed light upon the religious and spiritual makeup of the users of Occasional Offices within the town. It is this aspect of the Kendal research where I believe the Kirkham study offers significant insight and provides further layers of understanding in matters concerning the use of ritual and religion in daily life.

There are significant overlaps where the data from the Kirkham study would offer support to their argument. Indeed 'the turn to the self' as observed by the Kendal researchers and further seen in the data from the Kirkham Project was personal, subjective and experiential in matters of religion and spirituality. The sense of autonomy found in the participants at Kendal was a prevailing theme that underpinned the thinking of the individual within the Kirkham Project. I would argue that self-governance in matters of religion and spirituality indicates not only a shift away from forms of institutional religion but that the Kirkham data also suggest an eagerness to shape one's own worldview imbued with personal meaning; subjectivised and based upon experience. Thus, the individualised meaning-making process is open to all forms of signification, both sacred and secular or a blend of the two. Significant for the Kirkham study was the autonomous secular meaning-making process of many of the participants who in turn sought rites of passage from an established institutional religious organisation. I would argue that the historical and cultural positioning of St Michael's Church is more important for the participants than orthodox Christian belief and indicates a clear movement away from traditionally formatted Christianity. In light of the Kirkham research it could be argued that one of the most important functions the institutional State Church can play in contemporary society is that of enabling people in their journey of meaning making to find ritual signification to express their autonomous self.

It was established in Chapter Three that the subjective turn of modern culture to which I refer, and affirm, underscores the importance of 'the self' as the place from which autonomy, significance and discernment emerges. Woodhead and Heelas remark on and categorise the embracing of subjective living as the 'subjective-life-turn', not least when observing 'self expression and fulfilment' being prized (2005:80). This approach to life in matters concerning personalised meaning making are illustrated time and again in the Kirkham research. For example, the personal involvement of the participants in planning the Service itself was regarded as almost mandatory, with personalised baptism booklets being created which included pictures of the baby and immediate family on the front cover and personal testimony from the parents and godparents to say how important the infant child was for them. I would argue that self expression and the fulfilment of hopes for the baptismal day are integral elements of the meaning-making process and that this is captured in Woodhead and Heelas's theory of the 'subjective-life-turn'.

Aspects of the typology coined and used by Woodhead and Heelas that I referred to in Chapter Three provide a useful inroad into understanding the Kirkham data and the themes that have emerged. Although Woodhead and Heelas' category of the 'congregational domain' related to many of the mainstream Christian denominations, this is of little relevance in shedding light upon the Kirkham research because it was largely connected, with some variations, to the attendee's responsibility to obey the 'rules, in ideals, in art and music, and in visions of a family-based society, in concepts of God' (2005:14). However, what is useful for the furtherance of my argument, is to engage Woodhead and Heelas' category of the 'holistic milieu' (2005:4). This is primarily concerned with those who live 'subjective lives' and how the 'holisic milieu' interacts with the former finding expression through individualistic activities such as 'reiki, yoga, tai chi, massage, homeopathy, counselling, healing and contemporary health groups' (2005:40).

However, such activities were central to many involved in the Kirkham research. I have also illustrated in Chapter Four that subscription to a belief system that has the divine as an external deity is of little or no interest when seeking baptism for an infant child but not attending Church. Therefore, the question must be raised: why did the participants engage with an organisation that overtly promotes belief in a divine entity that is based upon external expectations? The Kirkham data would suggest there is certainly an observable disconnect between the religious narrative of the Church and the beliefs of the participants. The ceremonial ritual as seen in the baptismal rite of passage for infants is laced with symbols and actions which take on great subjective meaning and resonance. For example, in Chapter One I cited the participant who appreciated the lighting of candles in the Service because it reminded her of intimate evenings with her partner when candles were placed and lit around the bath. This mother had made a correlation between the way in which candles are used in Church to symbolically signify the time as being special and the lighting of candles at home where she herself used them as a means of such signification.

The Kirkham research and Kendal Project would affirm and support the 'subjectivisation thesis' and is rooted and grounded in a sense of belonging to the kaleidoscope of town life. This is helpful as Kendal has some, though not extensive, contextual similarities in respect to Kirkham. I would be cautious in drawing broad conclusions from the Kirkham Project as it is heavily context based, and whilst on a much smaller scale to the Kendal Project, has similar limitations. I am keen to emphasis the regional nature of the Kirkham study and tentatively make remarks on the broader English religious landscape, as both towns possess a significant northern generational character. This is characterised in the Kirkham Project by the significance of the Church building in relationship to the people of the town. The participants of the Kirkham study used words and phrases such as 'gorgeous', 'beautiful', 'pretty', 'special', 'amazing', 'our family Church' and 'my Church' to describe the aesthetic and relational experience of St Michael's Church, Kirkham. There are many examples cited in Chapter Four under the heading Relationships and relationality that illustrate the interplay between the aesthetic of the building and its role in underscoring the importance of relationship. A combination of aesthetic beauty alongside personal and generational belonging can be seen within the project at Kirkham. This is a significant tool in the meaning-making process as such prevailing adjectives and statements are without overt religious overtures.
However, they are important motifs concerned with place and ownership of building through rites of passage and inter-generational ritual.

POST-BOOMER GENERATION

Flory and Miller state in their book Generation X that 'individuals can construct any identity that they may desire without having to rely on more traditional means' (2008:5). This is particularly the case in respect of the participants within the Kirkham research; their personal identity and relationship with the sacrament of infant baptism was not reliant upon a subscription to the orthodox Christian narrative but rather a subjective yearning after meaningful experiences whether secular, spiritual or a complex blend of the two. The Kirkham research would affirm aspects of Flory and Miller's work, particularly in respect of Generation X's desire for meaningful experiences when encountering the spiritual. The contribution my research offers to the debate is the use of orthodox religious ritual, in the form of infant baptism, as a conduit to forge and affirm individual processes of meaning- making. Therefore, the perception of encountering the spiritual through sacramental ritual must not necessarily be presumed. Perhaps more poignantly a Church community must not assume that people are bringing their infant children to baptism for overtly religious or spiritual reasons.

Flory suggests that Generation X needs to be part of a religious experience; and personally to generate new religious practices. The ethnographies cited by Flory underscore the importance of inclusivity in respect of gender, sexuality and cultural heritage. This is clearly expressed by Flory and Miller's (2008:10-12). The reconfiguring of older forms of religious expression has been important for the participants in the Kirkham research coupled with the need to participate in an experiential and meaningful way. This in turn affirms Flory and Miller's perception of the post-boomer generation's need to recover 'ritual' and reinvigorate 'ancient symbols and rituals within their own religious traditions to borrowing from other traditions, and even creating their own rituals and symbols in the service of an embodied spiritual experience' (2008:vii).

The Kirkham research relates well to Flory and Miller's 'embodied spirituality' as the participants had a significant regard for the experiential nature of the baptismal ceremony. Aspects and characteristics of the 'Innovators' and 'Reclaimers' were evident within my research, for example, in how parents wished to include favourite popular music before the Service, secular poems, or water from holy places such as the Ganges river, India, yet at the same time enjoying the traditional ritualistic elements such as the lighting of candles and use of incense as a symbol of prayer. This importance of physical, visual and multi-sensory experiences in respect of the baptismal ceremony has resonance with the 'embodied form' of spirituality and reclaiming of 'ritual and symbols' observed by Flory and Miller (2008:169). It is important not to miss their term 'expressive communalism' as this expresses elements of the Kirkham research. This can be seen in the way in which families acted in respect of the reclaiming of corporate rituals through significant family and close relationships going beyond the individualistic questing. An example of this would be godparents giving a short address during the ceremony outlining what the infant child meant to them.

CHURCH AS PURVEYOR OF PUBLIC RITUAL IN A SPIRITUAL MARKETPLACE

Building upon tradition and customs being re-configured in light of subjective experiences is significant and brushes up alongside the work of Roof's research, particularly in reference to the importance of the baby boomer generation's regard and deference to the autonomy of the individual being prized above all else (1994). My research enriches and affirms Roof's celebration of individual autonomy but also highlights the importance of personalised relationships. The baby boomer generation to which I refer are the parents of the participants in the Kirkham research. When considering the themes emerging from the Kirkham research I would argue that my experience of the participants suggests they implicitly perceive the option of having their child baptised as being a choice set within not just a 'spiritual' marketplace, as Roof would suggest, but also a secular one which offers alternatives such as naming or celebration of life ceremonies. Rather they wanted the environment, ritual and custom provided by St Michael's, even though subscription to the undergirding narrative was rarely embraced.

Roof speaks clearly about the baby boomer generation's quest for meaning and culture (1999). I have established in this thesis the diversity and tapestry of ideas and concepts that can

constitute an individual's mode of meaning making, not least for the baby boomer and post-boomer generation. There would be broad agreement from within the academy that the baby boomer generation and Generation X articulate and develop a highly subjective personal expression of spirituality, and have a high level of flexibility as new experiences and ideas are assimilated or recalibrated as appropriate (Bellah, 1985: Roof, 1993: Sperry and Shafranske, 2005). The fluidity of beliefs and experiences; spiritual, secular or combination of the two, was a feature emerging from the Kirkham data. Experiences that promoted well-being or gave a sense of meaningfulness were incorporated or expressed at interview and observations in and around the baptismal ceremony.

The importance of personal narrative is central to Roof's research and thesis in respect of the baby boomer generation. Furthermore, Roof remarks that the spiritual quest of a given individual is embedded in the stories which shape their lives. The Kirkham research affirms the importance of the participants' personalised stories couched in an autonomous drive for meaningfulness based upon highly subjectivised experiences. How do religious communities, such as the Church of England, respond to this generation and their children when they seek public ritual such as infant baptism? Roof strongly argues that religious communities need to become increasingly pluralistic and take seriously the desire of a culture to become 'meaning-making creatures' based upon 'individual experience' (1999:43). Roof observes that in matters of spirituality personal choice and the celebration of the autonomy of the individual is best captured by his term 'reflexive spirituality' (1999:12). This sense of 'reflexive spirituality' can incorporate a variety of concepts and life experiences. Above all the term captures the openness of Generation X to adapt and assimilate new experiences and ideas that enrich the bespoke journey of the individual to create meaning. Roof's thesis is very clear that there has been a movement away from subscribing to narratives promulgated by traditional religious denominations.

Roof argues coherently and convincingly that such an approach to matters of religion and spirituality has been replaced by the quest for autonomous meaningful spirituality that emphasises the content of one's life journey, as opposed to striving after the destination. The Kirkham research would support Roof's idea of 'reflexive spirituality', not least because significant numbers of participants displayed a rejection of formatted religious narratives to be accepted, coupled with the need to adapt an array of secular, spiritual and religious motifs. Notwithstanding the excellent contribution made by Roof, he does not however consider those who wish to engage with the ritual of institutional religion in order to give further meaning to their post-modern lives. This thesis however looks at such lives lived with a blended combination of spiritualities, ideas or beliefs that may, but often may not, complement the Christian narrative, yet whose adherents still wish to plug into the ritual of infant baptism in order to enrich and give meaning to their lives. Such qualitative data advances the field as it adds a fresh aspect by revealing the multifaceted blend of ideas, opinions, spiritualities that wish to find a ritualised expression through a familiar, heritage- based ceremony such as infant baptism. Thus, the interface between those who choose infant baptism and yet do not attend Church brings to light a dynamic that has not yet been quarried and reflected upon.

The second aspect of Roof's work argues that amongst 'metaphysical believers and seekers' 'religion has become a commodity to be sought' (1999:101, 203). Based upon my research, those non-attendees of Church who have sought infant baptism for their child have done so based upon a religious marketplace of choice. Within a one mile radius of Kirkham Parish Church, there are four Anglican Churches, one United Reformed Church, one Methodist and two Roman Catholic Churches to approach in respect of getting one's child baptised. However, people actively chose St Michael's Kirkham amidst multi denominational options and several secular venues that advertise naming ceremonies.

I would in some ways depart from Roof's research when he argues that people prefer the tag 'spirituality' as opposed to religious labels to describe their position because it 'implies an indwelling of the sacred' (1999:203)[51]. Whilst the term 'spirituality' is used in a widespread manner, my research suggests that it is not always used to express an indwelling of the sacred but also processes

[51] It would be remiss of me not to comment that Roof's research is set within the United States of America and therefore might not travel well into the British context.

of autonomously privatised modes of meaning-making that may or may not include ideas and concepts that are traditionally religious or secular. In other words, when participants referred to the term 'spiritual' or 'spirituality' when I further probed these terms during the interviews, the composition did not always refer to a higher force or the divine but to mixed processes of meaning-making inclusive of secular ideas. I found this both revealing, in the sense that I did not understand such terms in the manner in which they were being expressed, and challenging, in the juxtaposition between orthodox Christian narrative and the use of infant baptism with little reference to such a tradition. Therefore, the Kirkham research points towards the idea that the term 'spirituality' may be somewhat inadequate when referring directly to the 'indwelling of the sacred', but there may be a far more sophisticated and complex approach to the use of infant baptism.

Furthermore, Roof's argument is that 'secularists' are not 'really antireligious' but that 'agnosticism and indifference are far more common' among 'secular boomers' (1999:213). According to the Kirkham research, boomers and post-boomer generations, whilst distinct terms of reference, are clear about how they go about the use of infant baptism and what it means to them. It could be presumed that the participants uncritically and thoughtlessly embraced infant baptism, indeed members of St Michael's worshipping community often refer to those who bring their infant child to baptism without attending Church as 'just getting their children christened to have a party afterwards'. However, my research clearly suggests that irrespective of how mixed their motives may be, having a christening simply 'for a party' is not something that I uncovered as a theme but rather something far more complex.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored why parents bring their children to baptism whilst not attending Church. Chapter Five has taken the Kirkham data found in Chapter Four and engaged the relevant literature as explored in Chapter Three. Several significant themes have emerged from the Kirkham data, borne out of a deeply rich contextual qualitative piece of work, which reveal a myriad of threads; not least concerning the mix of individual and personalised motives and cultural impulses that motivate such engagement with the Church. I have argued that people bring their infant children to baptism for eclectic reasons that include secular, spiritual and religious components that can be complementary, contradictory and often at variance with the orthodox narrative of the Church. Nevertheless, there remains the need to create personal and contextual significance using the heritage of baptismal ritual which is still subconsciously culturally embedded. This in turn generates an autonomous narrative of meaning-making. I now turn my attention to the conclusions which offer an answer to the question of this thesis.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

THE RITUAL BEING RECONFIGURED

The participants in the Kirkham Project engaged creatively with the ceremonial ritual of the baptism. Throughout my professional experience there have been hints and pointers to parents becoming increasingly involved with the ritual act. Outside of this research project, I have often been approached by parents to include secular readings or asked whether godparents can speak about what it means to them to be a godparent. Other examples which led to my inquisitiveness and subsequent research would include requests for teddy bears to be placed at the foot of the font or to use water from a special place. Therefore, to observe such phenomenon in this sample of participants concurred with and affirmed what I already suspected to be true. The data from the Kirkham research provided me with ample examples and illustrations of people bringing items, both secular and quasi-religious, and incorporating them into the baptismal ceremony. I have cited those families who brought water from the Ganges, parents who enjoyed lighting candles as it related to intimate moments at home, or the ashes of Grandad being placed at the side of the font and then burying them after the Service. Other examples include flowers being put on the font and then placed on the graveside of a loved one in the burial ground, remarks about oil and lighting candles on the candle stand. The inclusion of people delivering readings, requests from family or friends to pour the water in the font or hired photographers to capture the baptism Service itself all provide further illustrations.

My ministerial role as pastoral agent and the data quarried from the research have provided extensive examples of the above. I would argue that many of the participants had a desire to make their experience of their child's baptism both bespoke and experiential. Furthermore, there was also the need to take responsibility and place their imprint upon the ritual: they did not want to be told what to do or asked to subscribe to an orthodox narrative but rather wanted to take ownership and retain principal symbols, such as candles, water and oil, whilst reconfiguring the sacramental act to reflect something of themselves and their lived lives. It was interesting to note that the promises made by godparents and parents were not a hallmark of the baptismal experience; it was the sensory symbols and personal involvement that were a valued hallmark of the ritual for participants. For example, Chelle, a godparent said:

'I love all the fancy stuff, your robes, candles and all the things you do... It marks it out as special and you can remember it... Most of the words just fly over my head... People do say that actions speak louder than words'.

There has been much written by those within the academy about 'spirituality' and how it is characterised by the cultivation of one's internal life through an individual quest for meaning (for example, Roof 1993; 1999; 2002; Wuthnow 2001; 2003). It can be seen that the individual need to create meaning is evident in the data of my research, yet the importance of ritual does not necessarily correlate and equate to a purely spiritual endeavour. The use of ancient and historic ritual such as infant baptism is prized but being massaged and moulded through a drive for the experiential into something far more personally meaningful. The Kirkham data affirms the subjective life turn of modern culture yet suggests something more is at play as highlighted below. Woodhead and Heelas argue traditional Christian expressions are set to give way to more New Age forms of spirituality (2004). Whilst this cogent argument has much merit and worth, my data suggests that the traditional Christian expression through infant baptism is not being lessened or diminished but being reconfigured through the broader cultural shifts of modern subjective society.

One of the principal themes to emerge from this research is that one must not assume that people who bring their infant children to baptism are doing so for orthodox Christian reasons. Indeed, this is something that has been accepted for many years. The contribution this thesis offers is in suggesting that those who do not attend Church but bring their infant children to baptism are doing so for personally significant reasons with their rationale being a mixture of motifs that are often secular yet have great personal, ritual, generational and aesthetic signification. Whilst individualisation and subjective life turn are features of my research, they do not tell the whole story because personal

relationships, stories and sense of place are important features on the landscape. Many of the research participants on the one hand referred to themselves as Christian but then qualified it by saying they did not believe in God. I would resist the temptation to refer to such activity as the 'secular supernatural' as Day suggests, as the use of such a term seems unhelpful in respect of what the Kirkham data suggests about the participants (2013). I would prefer to speak of blended meaning-making, based upon secular, spiritual, ritual and aesthetic motifs. Furthermore, Day argues that religious beliefs, ritual and doctrine are less important to people than religious identity and belonging (2013:47-73). My role as pastoral agent and research data suggest that ritual and symbols remain a key process of signification to those bringing their infant child to baptism, even if they do not subscribe to the institution, traditional narrative or God as an external deity. The Kirkham research points towards a highly personalised approach to the use of ritual, as the participants were more concerned with what they could experience and how they could contribute to the baptismal ceremony rather than adhering to religious corporate identity or disregarding the significance of the ritual.

PERSONAL SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE

One key feature of the Kirkham Project has been the subjective and experiential manner in which participants have approached infant baptism. This does not negate or lessen the significance of the relational aspect of this research but highlights the way in which the sacrament of infant baptism is encountered by those who are given the opportunity to creatively engage and become co-producers of the ritual experience (Dawson:2014). I believe this research, coupled with my open baptism policy and inclusive pastoral agency, has given an invaluable insight into the lives of those who do not attend Church but wish to have their infant child baptised. The participants clearly embraced and celebrated their own autonomy and the opportunity given to express that ritually. The interface was fascinating and more often than not led the people to consider how their own lives and experience resonate, blend, contradict or affirm the content of the baptismal ceremony. For example, the subjective was most clearly seen in the opportunity to ritually express themselves and was further underscored during the interviews, as there was little mention made of the promises by parents and godparents to affirm the orthodoxy of Christian faith. Much has been said throughout this thesis about the importance of individual experience and the centrality of the autonomous self. The research data from Kirkham suggests that the participants do not believe the orthodox Christian narrative, nor wish to belong by subscribing to the terms of reference of the institution or want others religious officials to believe on their behalf. My research suggests that people still wish to use the ritual of infant baptism with its signs and symbols to convey something of themselves by using an ancient rite of passage that is rooted and grounded in context, history, aesthetics and celebration of significant relationships both imminent and transcendent.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONAL IDENTITY

One of the revealing characteristics of the research at Kirkham has been the discovery of the importance of ritual in the form of infant baptism and generational transfer. I have illustrated across this thesis, particularly within Chapter Four, the significance of familial relationships and their interface with the sacrament of infant baptism. It could be argued that infant baptism, for those who do attend Church, remains an invisible bond, however personalised and subjectivised, that signifies and re-affirms the meaningfulness of relationship. For example, this can be illustrated time and again by participants who were keen to involve godparents whom they had close knit friendships irrespective of their 'spirituality' or 'religious affiliation'. Furthermore, the inter-generational aspect of which I refer to could be seen in the attention and need to visit gravesides after the baptism with artefacts or flowers. Such observations and examples resonate in my pastoral experiences as a ras an Anglcan minister for nearly twenty years.

In the ritual of infant baptism the participants not only have the capacity to celebrate important relationships, both from within the family and in the choosing of godparents, but were co-producers in the ceremony itself. This in turn meant that many of the families took ownership of what was happening within the ritual, but also contributed to the process of signification that the ritual was

providing. I am acutely aware that my role as pastoral agent facilitated and encouraged families to be involved and bring their own creativity to the baptismal ceremony. Such conversations concerning the construction of a bespoke ceremony were as equally important as the permission granted by me in my role as pastoral agent in this process. A sense of blended meaning-making was a key feature of the research, yet does not negate the significance and importance of the baptismal ritual. This can be evidenced by the participants within the research, all of whom were offered a Service of Thanksgiving for their child, yet favoured a traditional baptism.

There has been an observable connection in this research between participants' need to create meaning using the sacrament of baptism as a vehicle to physically signify what is most precious to them and the need to do so in the public domain. This is an interesting juxtaposition as much of what was articulated focused clearly upon the subjective and experiential, as opposed to the corporate acclamation of subscription to the orthodox identity provided through baptism. Therefore, what may appear at first sight to be at variance, is not so, as the use of infant baptism's traditional signs and symbols by those who do not attend Church has become a public expression of their own autonomous approach to life. I have observed throughout this research that traditional signs and symbols are held in the residual memory of the community. The locale of residual memory in respect of infant baptism is, I would argue, no longer to be found simply in the institutional Church but in the lives and narratives of the people who make up the community.

THE AESTHETIC OF ST MICHAELS

St Michael's Church building is imbued with history, community and individually significant moments in people's lives. The ambience of the internal and external structure of the building is clearly important. In the early stages of this research I had not appreciated how significant the building is to people. Throughout the interviews St Michael's was referred to as 'beautiful', 'gorgeous' and 'stunning'. When such comments are set alongside subjective remarks about the interior of the building such as 'peaceful', 'tranquil', 'calm' one can see the significance of the aesthetic at St Michael's Church in the process of individual and corporate meaning making. Once again it can be seen from the interviews and observations that they did not see themselves as inhabiting the Christian narrative but nevertheless wanted to relate to the building. For many of the participants, they had buried deceased loved ones in the graveyard at St Michael's, and to a lesser extent, were people who had been married at the Church. Locally, the latter is in part due to what some would regard as restrictive marriage policy as opposed to a lack of desire to be married in the building[52]. I think it is important not to underestimate the role a physical structure such as St Michael's may play in the life of a community. The ancient ecclesiastical history is embedded in the psyche of the local community and whilst there is not identification with the ecclesia, there is a deep respect and regard for the role the Church plays through Occasional Offices in the town. This became apparent during the interviews when participants spoke of nuclear and extended family who had been involved with the rites of passage offered by St Michael's.

Notwithstanding the entwined nature of the aesthetical and historical aspect of St Michael's Church, it would be fair to say, that St Michael's finds itself in a marketplace in which it competes with both spiritual and secular establishments. I have been acutely reminded of the importance of choice in my role as pastoral agent. Indeed, using the example above, if marriages had been an option for many who bought their infant children for baptism having been divorced, they would have chosen St Michael's Church. In respect of infant baptism St Michael's was chosen over and above corporate, secular venues where naming ceremonies are offered.

[52] A significant number of participants had been previously married. The two previous incumbents would not marry divorcees.

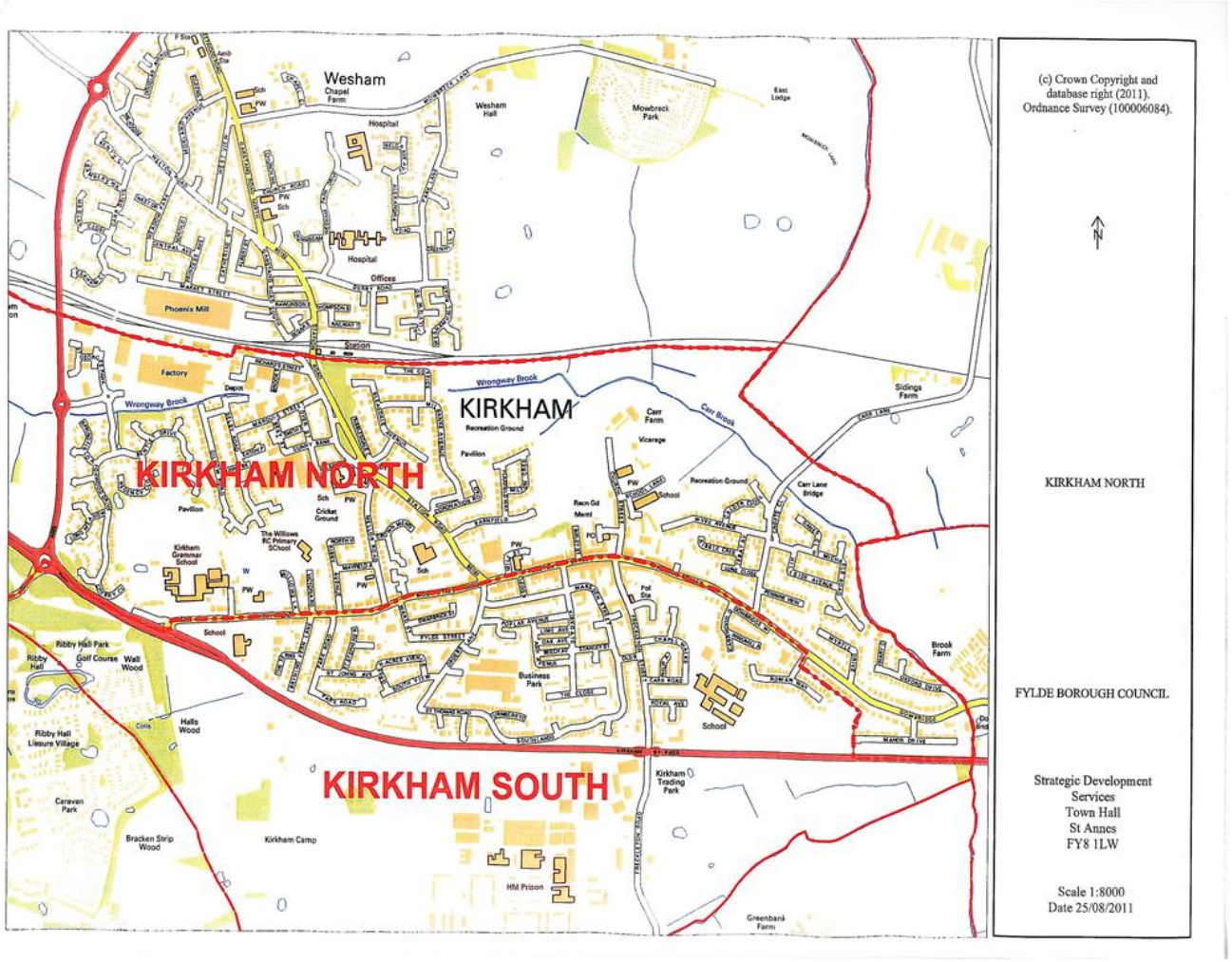
CONCLUSION

I conclude by referring to my experience as Area Dean of Fylde during which time I had oversight of eighteen different Churches, contexts and traditions. In light of this role and my research data I would argue that those Churches with a more restrictive baptismal policy and an insistence for parents to attend orthodox baptismal instruction, miss out on fully understanding and appreciating the authentic and seriously considered modes of meaning-making. One of the overarching observations arising from this research is that the Church must be cautious when assuming people are bringing their infant child to baptism for religious reasons or motives that have not been fully considered or intentional. I will end with the words a godparent said to me at the time of the baptism:

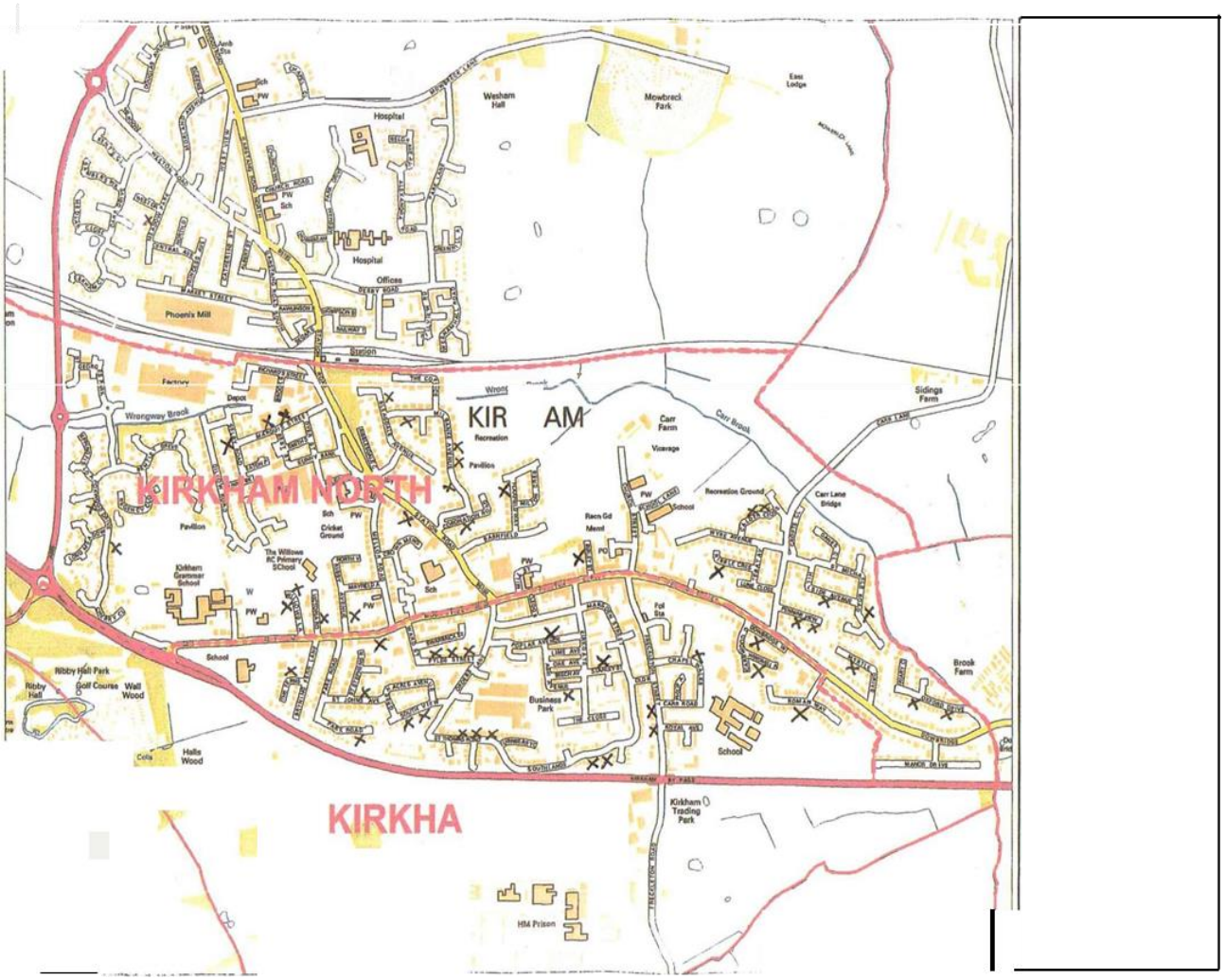
'I'm not religious and those two aren't [pointing at the parents of the child], but what better place to give my support than in this gorgeous Church. I love this place, I'm a Kirkhamer, you have your own beliefs and I have mine, but I would not have missed this for the world.'

This quote goes to the heart of the organic, earthy and qualitative nature of the Kirkham Project. It highlights some of the key themes that have emerged in relation to the research, namely, sense of place, community identity, personalised beliefs, ritual and aesthetics. I would argue such themes ought to be significant considerations when an individual presents at Church, who does not attend but wishes to have their infant child baptised. Looking at the carefully and intricately woven tapestry of individual meaning making and should have equal weighting with those who assent to an orthodox Christian faith. Perhaps the ritual of infant baptism for those who do not attend church has evolved beyond Christian orthodoxy.

APPENDIX 1


Wesham
KIRKHAM
KIRKHAM NORTH
KIRKHAM SOUTH
(c) Crown Copyright and database right (2011). Ordnance Survey (100006084).
KIRKHAM NORTH
FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL
Strategic Development Services
Town Hall
St Annes
FY8 1LW
Scale 1:8000
Date 25/08/2011

APPENDIX 2


KIRKHAM NORTH
KIR AM
KIRKHA
Hospital
Offices
Phoenix Mill
Station
Depot
Factory
Wesham Hall
Mowbreck Park
Sidings Farm
Carr Farm
Carr Brook
Recreation Ground
Carr Lane Bridge
Brook Farm
Business Park
Kirkham Trading Park
HM Prison
Kirkham Grammar School
The Willows RC Primary School
Cricket Ground
Pavilion
Recreation
Ribby Hall
Ribby Hall Park
Golf Course
Well Wood
Hall's Wood
Wrongway Brook

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Section One

Question 1

Why did you choose to get your child baptised at Kirkham Parish Church?

Question 2

Who did you invite to the baptism?

If so, Did you have any particular reasons for inviting certain people?

Question 3

What was the most important aspect of the baptism service?

What activities did you have linked to the day?

Question 4

Does having your child baptised mean that you have certain principles by which you wish to raise your child? If so, what principles are these?

Question 5

Did you choose family members or friends as godparents?

What factors, if any, determined your choice of godparent?

Section Two

Question 1

Is it important that the Church of England (C of E) provides baptism for everyone who seeks it? If so, why?

Question 2

How would you describe the experience and feelings of having your child baptised?

Question 3

Do you think that baptism has anything to do with a higher force?

Question 4

Do you believe in a higher force? If so, in what way, if at all, does this belief influence your life? Would you describe any interactions with this higher force as a kind of relationship?

Is this relationship part of your everyday life?

Question 5

Do you attend KPC or have any other involvement which may be described as spiritual or religious activities?

Question 6

Does KPC help sustain and cultivate your relationship with a higher force? If so, how?

APPENDIX 3a

The Parish of Kirkham, St Michael
Application for Baptism

Proposed Date of Baptism			Time		
Christian Names of Child					
Surname of Child					
Address					
			Date of Birth		
Telephone		E-Mail			
Christian Names of Father					
Surname of Father (if different)					
Father's Occupation					
Has the Father been Baptised?	Yes	No	Has the Father been Confirmed?	Yes	No
Christian Names of Mother					
Surname of Mother (if different)					
Mother's Occupation					
Has the Mother been Baptised?	Yes	No	Has the Mother been Confirmed?	Yes	No
Full Names of Godparent 1					
Has this Godparent been Baptised?	Yes	No	Has this Godparent been Confirmed?	Yes	No
Full Names of Godparent 2					
Has this Godparent been Baptised?	Yes	No	Has this Godparent been Confirmed?	Yes	No
Full Names of Godparent 3					
Has this Godparent been Baptised?	Yes	No	Has this Godparent been Confirmed?	Yes	No
Full Names of Godparent 4 (Optional)					
Has this Godparent been Baptised?	*Yes*	*No*	*Has this Godparent been Confirmed?*	*Yes*	*No*

Our Child has not been Baptised before and we undertake to bring Him/Her up as a practising member of the Church and will help Him/Her to be regular in public worship and private prayer not only by our teaching, but also by our example and prayers. We will also encourage Him/Her to come to Confirmation and Communion in due time.

APPENDIX 4

Title of Thesis: Why do people bring their infant child to baptism when they do not attend church?

Name of Researcher: Richard Bunday

PhD Student

Department Politics, Philosophy & Religion, University of Lancaster

Supervisor: Dr Andrew Dawson

Please sign below

1. **I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated May 2011 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.**

2. **I understand that my participation in this interview is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.**

3. **I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, articles or presentations by the researcher.**

4. **I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations.**

5. **I agree to take part in the above study and interview.**

Name of Participant	**Date**	**Signature**
Researcher	**Date**	**Signature**

APPENDIX 5

KIRKHAM BENEFITS & UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

These are taken from the United Kingdom Census, 2011. The rate of unemployment in Kirkham is both lower than the average for Lancashire and lower than the national average.

Jobseekers Allowance (only)	2.1%	2.8%	3.3%
Incapacity Benefits (IB or ESA)	2.3%	2.9%	2.4%
Any Benefit (includes in work benefits)	11.8%	14.3%	13.5%

APPENDIX 6

Nave of Kirkham Parish Church

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adler, P. and Adler, P. (1994). Observational techniques. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, pp 377-392. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Agar, M. (1973). *Ripping and Running: A Formal Ethnography of Urban Heroin Addicts.* New York, NY: Seminar Press.

Agar, M. (1980). *The Professional Stranger*. San-Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Aldridge, A. (2000). *Religion in the Contemporary World.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Aldridge, A. (2007). *Religion in the Contemporary World: A Sociological Introduction* (2nd Ed). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ammerman, N. (Ed.) (2007). *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ammerman, N. (2008). *Everyday Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ammerman, N. (2013). *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Axinn, W.G. and Pearce, L.D. (2006). *Mixed Method Data Collection Strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Babbie, E.R. (1992). *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont: Wadsworth.

Baird, R.D. (1971). *Category Formation and the History of Religions*. The Hague: Mouton.

Beckford, J.A. and Demerath, N.J. (Eds) (2007). *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Religion.* London: SAGE.

Bell, C. (1992). *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. Bell, D. (1999). *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Bell, E. (2006). Whose side are they on? Patterns of religious resource mobilization in British industrial mission. In *Management & Organizational History*, 1(4), pp 331-347.

Bell, C. (2010). *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press; Reissue edition.

Bellah, R.N. (1985). *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Berger, P.L. (1973). *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Berger, P.L. (1973). *The Social Reality of Religion.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Berger, P.L. (1990). *The Sacred Canopy: A Sociological Theory of Religion.* New York, NY: Anchor Books.
Berger, P.L. (Ed.) (1999). *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co.
Berger, P.L. (2005). Religion and the West. *The National Interest*, 80, pp 112-119. Berger, P., Davie, G. and Fokas, E. (2008). *Religious America, Secular Europe? A Theme and Variations.* Aldershot: Ashgate.
Billings, A. (2002). *Dying and Grieving: A Guide to Pastoral Ministry.* London: SPCK Publishing.
Billings, A. (2004). *Secular Lives, Sacred Hearts.* London: SPCK Publishing.
Billings, A. (2009). *God and Community Cohesion.* London: SPCK Publishing.
Billings, A. (2010). *Making God Possible.* London: SPCK Publishing.
Billington, R. (2002). *Religion Without God.* London: Routledge.
Binney, M. and Burman, P. (1977). *Change and Decay – The Future of Our Churches.* London: Studio Vista.
Bogdan, R. and Biklen, S.K. (1982). *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
Borg, M.J. (2004). *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith.* San Francisco, CA: Harper.
Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Bowman, M. (2003-2004). Taking Stories Seriously: Vernacular Religion, Contemporary Spirituality and the Myth of Jesus in Glastonbury. *Temenos,* 39-40, pp 125-142.
Bowman, M. (2004). Procession and possession in Glastonbury: Continuity, change and the manipulation of tradition. *Folklore*, 115:3, pp 273–285.
Bowman, M. (2005). Ancient Avalon, New Jerusalem, Heart Chakra of Planet Earth: Localisation and Globalisation in Glastonbury. *Numen,* 52(2), pp 157–190.
Bowman, M. (2006). The Holy Thorn Ceremony: Revival, rivalry and civil religion in Glastonbury. *Folklore,* 117(2), pp 123–140.
Bowman, M. (2013). Valuing spirituality: Commodification, consumption and community in Glastonbury. *Religion in a Consumer Society: Brands, Consumers and Markets,* Francois Gauthier and Tuomas Martikainen (Eds), pp 207-224. Farnham: Ashgate.
Bowman, M. (2015). Christianity, plurality and vernacular religion in early twentieth century Glastonbury: A sign of things to come? *Christianity and Religious Plurality: Studies in*

Church History 51, C. Methuen, A. Spicer and J. Wolfe (Eds). Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer.

Bowman, M. and Valk, Ü. (Eds) (2012). *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life: Expressions of Belief*. Sheffield, Oakville CT: Equinox.

Brierley, P.W. (1991a). '*Christian' England: What the 1989 English Church Census Reveals.* London: MARC Europe.

Brierley, P.W. (2000). *The Tide is Running Out: What the English Church Attendance Survey Reveals.* London: Christian Research.

Brierley, P.W. (2001). *UK Christian Handbook Religious Trends 3.* London: Christian Research.

Brierley, P.W. (2006). *Pulling out of the Nose Dive – A Contemporary Picture of Churchgoing - What the 2005 English Church Census Reveals.* London: Christian Research. Briggs, J.L. (1970). *Never in Anger: Portrait of an Eskimo Family.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods* (2nd Ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Brown, C.G. (2006). *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain.* London: Longman.

Brown, C.G. (2009) *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* (2nd Ed.). London and New York, NY: Routledge.

Bruce, S. (Ed.) (1992). *Religion and Modernization.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. Bruce, S. (1996). *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bruce, S. (2002a). *God is Dead: Secularisaton in the West.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Bruce, S. (2006). Secularization and the impotence of individualised religion. *The Hedgehog Review,* 8(1-2), pp 35-45.

Bruce, S. (2007). *Fundamentalism (Key Concepts)* (2nd Ed.). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bruce, S. & Voas, D. (2010). Vicarious religion: An examination and critique. *Journal of Contemporary Religion,* 25, pp 243-259.

Bruce, S. (2011). *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. (2004). *Social Research Methods* (2nd Ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burns, R.B. (2000). *Introduction to Research Methods*. London: Sage.

Burdick, J. (1993). *Looking for God in Brazil: The Progressive Catholic Church in Urban Brazil's Religious Arena.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Cambridge City Council (2008). *Cambridge Environment Strategy.* Cambridge City Council.
Casanova, J. (1994). *Public Religions in the Modern World.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Christiano, K.J., Swatos, W.H. and Kivisto, P. (2008). *Sociology of Religion: Contemporary Developments* (2nd Ed.). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
Cicero, M. *De Natura Deorum.*
Clarke, P.B. (Ed.) (2008). *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Classen, C. (1993). *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures*. London: Routledge.
Cohen, A.B. and Hill, P.C. (2007). Religion as culture: Religious individualism and collectivism among American Catholics, Jews, and Protestants. *Journal of Personality,* 75(4), pp 709–742.
Collins, P. (2005). Thirteen ways of looking at 'ritual'. *Journal of Contemporary Religion,* 20.3, pp 323–342.
Collins, P. (Ed.). *Religion, Identity and Change.* Aldershot: Ashgate.
Common Worship, (2006). *Common Worship: Christian Initiation.* Church House Publishing.
Cortazzi, M. (2001). Narrative analysis in ethnography. In P. Atkinson, A.Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland and L. Lofland (Eds), *Handbook of Ethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Creswell, J.W. (2008). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
Creswell, J.W. and Plano-Clark, V.L. (2010). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
Cupitt, D. (1997). *Mysticism After Modernity (Religion and Spirituality in the Modern World).* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
Cupitt, D. (1998). *The Religion of Being.* London: SCM.
Davies, C. (2012). *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*. London; New York, NY: Routledge.
Davie, G. (1990). *Believing without Belonging: Is this the Future of Religion in Britain? Social Compass,* 37(4), pp 455-469.

Davie, G. (1994). *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing without Belonging (Making Contemporary Britain).* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
Davie, G. (2000). *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates (European Societies).* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Davie, G. (2002). *Europe: the Exceptional Case. Parameters of Faith in the Modern World.* London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd.
Davie, G. (2007). *The Sociology of Religion.* London: Sage.
Davie, G. (2007). Vicarious religion: A methodological challenge. In N.T. Ammerman (Ed.), *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*, pp 21-35. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Davie, G. (2013). *The Sociology of Religion: A Critical Agenda*. London: SAGE. Davie, G. (1992). *You'll Never Walk Alone: The Anfield Pilgrimage*. In T. Walter and I. Reader (Eds), *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture.* London: MacMillan.
Davie, G. (1993). Religion and modernity in Britain. *International Journal of Comparative Religion,* 1(1).
Davie, G. (1993). Believing without belonging. A Liverpool case study/Croyance sans appartenance. Le cas de Liverpool. *Archives des sciences sociales des religions.* N. 81, pp 79-89.
Davie, G. (2006). Is Europe an exceptional case? *The Hedgehog Review* (Spring and Summer), pp 23-34.
Davie, G. (2010). Vicarious Religion: A response. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, (25.2), pp 261-266.
Davie, G. (2015). *Religion in Britain Today: A Persistent Paradox.* Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.
Davie, G., Heelas, P. and Woodhead, L. (Eds) (2008). *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
Dawson, A. (2010). Positionality and role-identity in a new religious context: Participant observation at Ceu do Mapia. *Elsevier Journal*, 40(3), pp 173-181.
Dawson, A. (2011). *Sociology of Religion*. London: SCM Press.
Dawson, A. (2014). Religion, globalization and modernity: From macro-processes to micro-dynamics. *Estudios de religiao,* 28(2), pp 31-58.
Day, A. (2006). *Believing in Belonging in Contemporary Britain: a case study from Yorkshire*. PhD Thesis, University of Lancaster.

Day, A. (2009). Believing in belonging: An ethnography of young people's constructions of belief. *Culture and Religion*, 10(3), pp 263–278.
Day, A. (2013). *Believing in Belonging – Belief and Identity in the Modern World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Delbrige, R. and Kirkpatrick, I. (1994). Theory and practice of participant observation. In V. Wass and P. Wells (Eds), *Principles and Practice in Business and Management Research*. Aldershot: Dartmouth.
DeWalt, K.M., DeWalt, B.R. and Wayland (1998). Participant observation. In H. Russell Bernard (Ed.), *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
DeWalt, K. M. and DeWalt, B.R. (2002). *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers.* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
Dillon, M. (Ed.) (2003). *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Dillon, M. (2009). Lived religion: Faith and practice in everyday life. *American Journal of Sociology*, 115(3), pp 924-926.
Dobbelaere, K. (1985). Secularisaton theories and sociological paradigms: A reformulation of the private-public dichotomy and the problem of social integration. *Sociological Analysis*, 46, pp 377-387.
Dobbelaere, K. (1987). Some trends in European sociology of religion: The secularisaton debate. *Sociological Analysis.* 48, pp 107-137.
Dobbelaere, K. (1999). Towards an integrated perspective of the processes related to the descriptive concept of secularisaton. *Sociology of Religion.* 60(3), pp 229-247.
Dohrenwend and Richardson, S.A. (2003). Analysis of the interviewer's behavior. *Human Organization.* 15(2) (1956), pp 29-32. Republished in N. Fielding (Ed.) *Interviewing III*. London: SAGE Publications.
Douglas (1976). *Investigative Social Research*. London: Sage Publications.
Drane, J. (2000). *The McDonaldization of the Church*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd.
Ducker, C. (2011). Believing in Grace Davie: what does she bring to an understanding of mission in Europe? *Encounters Mission Journal*, 36(3), pp 1-12.
Duneier, M. (2000). *Sidewalk*. New York, NY: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.
Duffy, E. (1992). *The Stripping of the Altars*. Newhaven, CT; London: Yale University Press.

Dupuis, J. (2002). *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism.* New York, NY: Orbis.

Durkheim, E. (Author), Cladis, M. (Editor) and Cosman, C. (Translator) (2008). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Oxford World's Classics). Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks.

Durkheim, E. (1893). *The Division of Labour in Society*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Durkheim, E. (2008). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life.* New York, NY: Dover Publications.

Ecklund, E.H. and Scheitle, C.P. (2007). Religion among academic scientists: Distinctions, disciplines, and demographics. *Social Problems,* 54(2), pp 289–307.

Earey, M., Lloyd, T. and Tarrant, I. (Eds) (2007). *Connecting with Baptism*. London: Church House Publishing.

Eliade, M. (1959). *The Sacred and the Profane*. New York, NY: Harcourt.

Eliade, M. (1992). *Myth of the Eternal Return: Cosmos and History.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Eliade, M. (1991). *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism* (Mythos: The Princeton-Bollingen Series in World Mythology). Princeton,NJ: Princeton University Press.

Ellen, R. (1984). *Ethnographic Research: A Guide to General Conduct.* London: Academic Press

Ellis C. (1995) *Emotional and ethical quagmire in returning to the field. Journal of Contemporary Ethnography 24*: 68–98.

Finke, R. and Stark, R. (1992). *The Churching of America*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Finke, R. and Iannaccone, L.R. (1993). The illusion of shifting demand: Supply-side explanations for trends and change in the American religious market place. *Annals of the American Association of Political and Social Science,* 527(May), pp 27-39.

Finke, R. and Stark, R. (2000). *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*, Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press.

Flick, U. (2002). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research.* London: Sage Publications.

Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge.* London: Tavistock.

Foucault, M. (2001). *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (2nd Ed.). London: Routledge.

Flanagan K. and Jupp P. (2010). *A Sociology of Spirituality*. Farnham: Ashgate. Flanagan K. and Jupp P. (Eds) (2016). *Postmodernity, Sociology and Religion*. London: Palgrave Macmillian.

Flory, R. and Miller, D. (2000). *Generation X.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Flory, R. and Miller, D. (2008). *Finding Faith: The Spiritual Quest of the Post-Boomer Generation.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
Flory, R. and Miller, D. (2007). *Expressive Communalism: The Embodied Spirituality of the Post-Boomer Generations*. Available at http://alban.org/conversation (Accessed: 4 July 2019).
Frankland, J. and Bloor, M. (1999). Some issues arising in the systematic analysis of focus group material. In R. Barbour and J. Kitzinger (Eds), *Developing Focus Group Research: Politics, Theory & Practice*. London: Sage.
Gallagher, J. (1991). *Roman Kirkham & The Fylde.* Kirkham: Fylde Guides Publishing.
Gandhi, S. (2008). Review of Spiritual Revolution. *Sociology of Religion*, 69 (1), pp 117-118.
Gans, H. (1982). *The Urban Villagers*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays.* New York, NY: Basic Books.
Gennop, V.A. (2010). *The Rites of Passage*. London: Routledge.
Gibbons, B. (2001). *Spirituality and the Occult: From the Renaissance to the Modern Age.* London; New York, NY: Routledge.
Gill, J. and Johnson, P. (2002). *Research Methods for Managers* (3rd Ed.). London: Sage.
Giordan, G. and Woodhead, L. (2015). *A Sociology of Prayer*. Farnham: Ashgate.
Gold, R. (1958). Roles in sociological field observations. *Social Forces*, 36(3), pp 217-223.
Grbich, C. (1999). *Qualitative Research in Health: An Introduction*. London: Sage.
Gray, P.S. (Et al.) (2007). *The Research Imagination: An Introduction to Qualitative and Quantitative Methods.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Greeley, A. (2003). *Religion in Europe at the End of the Second Millennium.* New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
Hadden, J. (1987). Toward desacralizing secularization theory. *Social Forces.* 65(3), pp 587-611.
Hagopian, F. (2000). Political development, revisited. *Comparative Political Studies*, 33(6/7), pp 880-911.
Hall, D. (Ed.) (1997). *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press
Hall, S. (2001). Foucault: power, knowledge and discourse. In M. Wetherell., S. Taylor and S.J. Yates (Eds), *Discourse Theory and Practice.* London: Sage.
Hamilton, M. (2001). *The Sociology of Religion* (2nd Ed.). London: Routledge.

Hargrove, B. (1989). *The Sociology of Religion: Classical and Contemporary Approaches* (2nd Ed.). Arlington, WA: Harlan Davidson.
Harrison, V. (2007). *Religion and Modern Thought.* London: SCM Press.
Hay, D. (1990). *Religious Experience Today*. London: Mowbray.
Hay, D. and Nye, R. (2006). *The Spirit of the Child* (Rev. Ed.). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
Hay, D. (2006). *Something There: The Biology of the Human Spirit*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd.
Hay, D. (2007). *Why Spirituality is difficult for Westerners*. Exeter: Societas.
Heelas, P. (1996). *The New Age Movement*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
Heelas, P. (Ed.) (1998). *Religion, Modernity and Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
Heelas, P. and Woodhead, L. (2005). *The Spiritual Revolution.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
Heelas, P. (2008). *Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism* (Religion and Spirituality in the Modern World). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. Henderson, J. and Whitmarsh, J. (1995). Women and illicit drugs: Sexuality and crack cocaine. *Health Care for Women International,* 16(2), pp 113-114.
Hervieu-Leger, D. (1994). Religion, memory and Catholic identity: Young people in France and the 'New Evangelisation of Europe'. In J. Fulton and P. Gee (Eds), *Religion in Contemporary Europe*, pp 125-138. Lewiston Queenston and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press.
Hervieu-Leger, D. (2006). *Religion as a Chain of Memory.* Oxford: Polity Press.
Hervieu-Leger, D. (2006). *The Role of Religion in Establishing Social Cohesion*. http:/www.eurozine.com/articles/2006-08-17-hervieuleger-en.html (Accessed 30 January 2018).
Hick, J. (1993). *The Metaphor of God Incarnate*. London: SCM Press.
Hout, M., Greeley, A. and Wilde, M. (2001). The demographic imperative in religious change in the United States. *American Journal of Sociology*, 107(2), pp 468-500.
Hunt, S.J. (2002). *Religion in Western Society*. London: Palgrave.
Hunt, S. (2005). *Religion and Everyday Life (The New Sociology)*. London: Routledge. Ingold, I. (2007). *Ethnography not Anthropology* – Lecture delivered at the British Academy, London on 14 March 2007.
Jackson, M. (1989). *Paths Towards a Clearing: Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Inquiry*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Jenkins, T. (1999). *Religion in English Everyday Life: An Ethnographic Approach.* New York, NY and Oxford: Berghan Books.

Johnstone, R.L. (2007). *Religion in Society: A Sociology of Religion* (8th Ed.). New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall.

Jolly, K. (1996). *Popular religion in Late Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press.

Jones, R. (2005). Mediated addiction: The drug discourses of Hong Kong youth. *Health, Risk and Society,* 7(1), pp 25-45.

Jørgensen, M. and Phillips, L.J. (2002). *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London: Sage.

Kaiser K. (2009) *Protecting respondent confidentiality in qualitative research. Qualitative Health Research 19(11)*: 1632–1641.

Kepel, G. (1993). *The Revenge of God: Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kvale, S. and Brinkmann, S. (2008). *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Lemmen, M. (1990). *Max Weber's Sociology of Religion*. Heerlen, The Netherlands: UPT-Katernen.

Liebow, E. (2003). *Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men*. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Lima, C. (2010). *Are Ethnography and Discourse Analysis Compatible*? London: Open University.

Luckmann, T. (1967). *The Invisible Religion*. London: Collier-Macmillan.

Luckmann, T. and Berger, P. (Eds) (1991). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Lynch, G. (2007). *The New Spirituality: An Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty First Century.* London: I.B. Tauris & Company Ltd.

Lyotard J.F. (1979). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Les Editions de minuit.

Mair, J. (2012). Review of 'Believing in Belonging, Religion and Society'. *Advances in Research,* 3(1), pp 211-241.

Malinowski, B. (1932). *Argonauts of the Western Pacific.* London: G. Routledge & Sons.

Martin, D. (1966). *The British Journal of Sociology*, 17(4), pp 353-359.

Martin, D. (1978). *A General Theory of Secularization*. Oxford: Blackwell

Martin, D. (1979). *A Sociology of English Religion*. London: Heinemann.

Martin, D. (2005). *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Mathers, N., Fox, N. and Hunn, A. (2002). *Using Interviews in a Research Project*. Trent Focus Group.

Macdonald, A. (Ed.). (1972). *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary*. Edinburgh: Chambers.

MacCulloch, D. (1996). *Thomas Cranmer: A Life.* London: Yale University Press.

McCall, G. and Simmons, J. (Eds) (1969). *Issues in Participant Observation*. Reading, MA.: Addison Wesley.

McCauley, R. and Whitehouse, H. (Eds) (2005). *Mind and Religion: Psychological and Cognitive Foundations of Religion*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

McGrath, A. and Collicutt, J. (2007). *The Dawkins Delusion*. London: SPCK.

McGuire, M. (2001). *Religion: The Social Context* (5th Ed.). London: Wadsworth.

McGuire, M. (2007). Embodied practices: Negotiation and resistence. In N. Ammerman (Ed.), *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*, pp 197-200. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

McGuire, M. (2008). *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

McHugh, E. (2001). *Love and Honour in the Himalayas: Coming to Know Another Culture*. Philadelphia, PE: University of Pennsylvannia Press.

Mead, M. (1930). *Coming of Age in Samoa*. New York, NY: William Morrow.

Merriam, S., Johnson-Bailey, J., Ming-Yeh, L., Youngwha, K., Ntseane G. and Muhamad, M. (2001). Power and positionality: negotiating insider/outsider status within and across cultures. *International Journal of Lifelong Education,* 20(5).

Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley Publications.

Merton, R. and Kendall, P. (2003). The Focused Interview. *American Journal of Sociology,* 5 (1946) 541-57. Republished in N. Fielding (Ed.) *Interviewing I*. London: SAGE Publications.

Mishler, E.G. (1995). Models of narrative analysis: A typology. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 5(2), pp 87-123.

Momen, M. (1999). *The Phenomenon of Religion a Thematic Approach.* England: Oneworld Publications.

Morley, R. (1994). Wife beating and modernization: The case of Papua New Guinea. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 25(1), pp 25-52.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2002). *Phenomenology of Perception* (2nd Ed.). London: Routledge.

Muskett, J.A. (2015). Reflections on the shop windows of the Church of England: Anglican cathedrals and vicarious religion. *Journal of Contemporary Religion,* 30(2), pp 273-289.

O'Brien, M. (1982). Religious faith and adjustment to long-term haemodialysis. *Journal of Religion and Health,* 21(1), pp 68-80.

Ortner, S. (2005). Subjectivity and cultural critique. *Anthropological Theory*, 5(1), pp 31 – 52.

Partridge, C. (2004). *Encyclopedia of New Religions: New Religious Movements, Sects and Alternative Spiritualities* (1st Paperback Ed.). Oxford: Lion Books.

Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative and Evaluation methods* (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

Pensky, M. (2008). *Ends of Solidarity: The Discourse Theory in Ethics and Politics, p 152.* New York, NY: State University of New York Press.

Percy, M. (2004). Losing our space, finding our place. In S. Coleman and P. Collins (Eds), *Religion, Identity and Change*, pp 26-41. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Polit, D.F., Beck, C.T. and Hungler, B.P (2001). *Essentials of Nursing Research: Methods, Appraisal and Utilization* (5th Ed.). Philadelphia, PE: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Primiano, L. (1995). Vernacular religion and the search for method in religious folklife. *Western Folklore*, 54(1), pp 37-56.

Rajendran, R. (2001). *Dealing with Biases Qualitative: A Balancing Act for Researchers*. Available at www.nsrajendran.com (Accessed 4 July 2019).

Ratner, C. (2002). Subjectivity and objectivity in qualitative methodology. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 3(3), Art.16. Available at: qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-02/3-02ratner-e.htm (Accessed 5 April 2005).

Riessman, C. (2004). *Narrative Analysis.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Riessman, C. (2005). Narrative analysis. *Narrative, Memory & Everyday Life*, pp 1-7.

Robson, C. (2002). *Real World Research* (2nd Ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.

Rogers, R. (2004). *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Roof, W.C. (1993). *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generations*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Roof, W.C. (1999). *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion*. Princeton, PE: Princeton University Press.

Robinson, J. (1963). *Honest to God*. London: SCM Press.
Robinson, J. (1965). *The New Reformation*. London: SCM Press.
Robinson, J. (1967). *But that I Can't Believe.* London: Fontana Press.
Robinson, J. (1968). *In the End God.* London: Fontana Press.
Saeed, A. (2007). Northern Racism: A Pilot Study of Racism in Sunderland. In C. Ehland, (Ed.) (2007), *Thinking Northern: Textures of Identity in the North of England*, pp 163-192. Amsterdam/New York, NY: Rodopi Press.
Salmond, A. (1982). Theoretical landscapes: On a cross-cultural conception of knowledge. In D. Parkin (Ed.), *Semantic Anthropology*, pp 65-88. London: Academic Press.
Schensul, S., Schensul, J. and LeCompte, M. (1999). *Essential Ethnographic Methods: Observations, Interviews, and Questionnaire*. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.
Schiffrin, D., Tannen, D., and Hamilton, H.E. (2003). *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
Seligman, A., Weller, R., Puett, M. and Bennett, S. (2008). *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Seligman, A. (2009). Ritual, the self and sincerity. *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 76(4), Winter 2009, pp 1073 -1096.
Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analyzing Talk, Text and Interaction* (3rd Ed.). London: Sage Publications Ltd.
Silverman, D. (2009). *Doing Qualitative Research* (3rd Ed.). London: Sage Publications Ltd.
Simpson, M. and King, M. (1999). God brought all these Churches together: Issues in developing religion-health partnerships in an Appalachian community. *Public Health Nursing*, 16(1), pp 41–49.
Singleton, F. (1982). Kirkham – A Short History. *Kirkham & District Local History Society.*
Smith, T. (1992). Are conservative Churches really growing? *Review of Religious Research*, 33, pp 305-29.
Sperry, L. and Shafranske, E.P. (2005). *A Psychoanalytic Approach to Spirituality Oriented Psychotherapy*, pp 105-130. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
Spradley, J. (1980). *Participant Observation*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace.
Stacey, M. (1960). *Tradition and change: A Study of Banbury.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Stake, R. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*. London: Sage.
Stark, R. and Bainbridge, W. (1985). A supply-side reinterpretation of the 'secularisaton' of Europe'. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 33, pp 230-52.

Stark, R. and Bainbridge, W. (1987). *A Theory of Religion*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
Stark, R. (1999). '*Secularisaton, RIP' Sociology of Religion.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
Stark, R. and Finke, R. (2000). *Acts of Faith*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
Strong, P. (1979). *The Ceremonial Order of the Clinic*. London: Routledge.
Sultana, F. (2007). Reflexivity, positionality and participatory ethics: Negotiating fieldwork dilemmas in international research. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 6(3), pp 374-385.
Swidler, A. (1986). Culture in action: Symbols and strategies. *American Sociological Review*, 51(2), pp 273–286.
Tait, C. (2005). Spiritual bonds, social bonds: Baptism and Godparenthood in Ireland, 1530–1690. *Cultural and Social History*, 2(3), pp 301-327.
Tamney, J. (2002). *The Resilience of Conservative Religion; The Case of Popular, Conservative Protestant Congregations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Tacey, D. (2003). *The Spirituality Revolution, The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*. London: Harper Collins.
Taylor, C. (1991). *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Thevenaz, P. (2000). *What Is Phenomenology? And Other Essays.* Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books.
Thomas, A.B. (2003). *Controversies in Management: Issues, Debate, Answers.* London: Routledge.
Toolan M. 1988. *Narrative: A Critical Lingustic Introduction*, London: Routledge
Trzebiatowska, M. and Bruce, S. (2012). *Why are Women more Religious than Men?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Tschannen, O. (1991). The secularisaton paradigm. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 30, pp 395-415.
Turner, B.S. (Ed.) (2010). *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
Turner, V. (1995). *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine Transaction.
Udeani, C.C., Nimanong, V., Shipeng, Z. and Malik, M. (2008). *Communication Across Cultures: The Hermeneutics of Cultures and Religions in a Global Age*. Washington, WA: CRVP.

Urbaniak, J. (2015). Religion as memory: How has the continuity of tradition produced collective meanings? – Part one. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 71(3). Available at http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i3.2815 (Accessed 4 July 2019).

Van Den Hoonaard W. (2003) *Is anonymity an artifact in ethnographic research? Journal of Academic Ethics 1(2)*: 141–151.

Van Der Veer, P. (1996). *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity (Zones of Religion*). New York, NY: Routledge.

Verweij, J., Ester, P. and Nauta, R. (1997). Secularisaton as an economic and cultural phenomenon: A cross-national analysis. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* 36(2), pp 309-324.

Vidich, A. (1995). Participant observation and the collection and interpretation of data. *American Journal of Sociology*, 60(4).

Voas, D. and Crockett, A. (2005). Religion in Britain: Neither believing nor belonging. *Sociology*, 39(1), pp 11–28.

Voas, D. and Crocket, A. (2007). The spiritual revolution: Another false dawn for the sacred. In K. Flanagan K. and C. Jupp (Eds), *A Sociology of Spirituality*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Vrijhof, P. and Waardenburg, J. (1979). *Official and Popular Religion: Analysis of a Theme for Religious Studies*. The Hague: Mouton Publishers.

Walford G. (2005) *Research ethical guidelines and anonymity. International Journal of Research & Method in Education 28(1)*: 83–93.

Weber, M. (1922). *The Sociology of Religion.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Walter, A. (1991). The mourning after Hillsborough. *Sociological Review*, 39, pp 599-625.

Warner, R.S. (1988). *New Wine in Old Wineskins*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Warner, R.S. (1993). Work in progress toward a new paradigm in the sociology of religion. *American Journal of Sociology*, 98(5), pp 1044-1093.

Wilson, B. (1994). If religion declines, will the social order survive? *Onze Alma Mater*, 48, pp 85-96.

Wilson, B. (1998). The Secularization Thesis: Criticisms and rebuttals. In R. Laermans, B. Wilson and J. Billiet (Eds). *Secularization and Social Integration*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

Woodhead, L. and Heelas, P. (2005). *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Wuthnow, R. (1998). *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950's*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Wuthnow, R. (2001). *Creative Spirituality: The Way of the Artist*. Berkeley and Los Angeles,

CA: University of California Press.

Wuthnow, R. (2003). *All in Sync: How Music and Art are Revitalizing American Religion*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
Ward, K. (2006). *Is Religion Dangerous?* Oxford: Lion.
Weber, M. [1904] 1930. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* New York, NY: Scribner.
Weber, M. 1993 [1922]. *Sociology of Religion.* Boston: Beacon Press.
Wetherell, M., Taylor, S. and Yates, S.J. (2001). *Discourse as Data.* London: Sage.
White, S. (1994). *Don Cupitt and the future of Christian Doctrine.* London: SCM Press.
Whitehouse, H. and Laidlaw, J. (2004). *Ritual and Memory: Toward a Comparative Anthropology of Religion*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
Whyte, W.F. (1993). *Street Corner Society: Social Structure of an Italian Slum* (4th Ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
Wilber, K. (2007). *Integral Spirituality: A Startling New Role for Religion in the Modern and Postmodern World*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications Inc.
Wilson, B. (1966). *Religion in Secular Society.* London: C.A. Watts.
Wilson, B. (1982). *Religion in Sociological Perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Wilson, J. (2010). *Whose Model of Spirituality Should Be Used in the Spiritual Development of School Children?* London: Routledge.
Wood, M. (2007). *Possession, Power and the New Age: Ambiguities of Authority in Neoliberal Societies.* Aldershot: Ashgate.
Woodhead, L., Fletcher, P., Kawanami, H. and Smith, D. (Eds) (2002). *Religions in the Modern World.* London: Routledge.
Woodhead, L. and Heelas, P. (Eds) (2000). *Religion in Modern Times*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
Wright Mills, C. (1959). *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Wright, D.F. (2005). *What Has Infant Baptism Done to Baptism? An Enquiry at the End of Christendom*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster.
Wright, D.F. (2007). *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster.
Wuthnow, R. (1988). *The Restructuring of American Religion.* Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
Wuthnow, R. (1996). *Sharing the Journey: Support Groups and America's New Quest for Community*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
Wuthnow, R. (1999). *Christianity in the 21st Century: Reflections on the Challenges Ahead*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wuthnow, R. (2001). Spirituality and spiritual practice. In R.K. Fenn (Ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion,* pp.306-320. Oxford: Blackwell.
Wuthnow, R. (2007). *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- And Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion*. New Jersey: Princetown University Press.
Yamane, D. (2015). Sacred stories, spiritual tribes: Finding religion in everyday life. *The American Journal of Sociology,* 120(4), pp 1252 -1253.
Yin, R. (2008). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Yoder, D. (1974). Toward a Definition of Folk Religion. *Western Folklore*, 33(1), June 20, 2012, pp 2–15.