

**GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE,
THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**

**FROM CHURCH WORK TO SOCIAL WORK AND BEYOND:
A STUDY OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE CHURCHES IN THE SOCIAL
WORK PROFESSION IN BRITAIN**

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ABSTRACT

The study is an examination of the professional social work carried out under the auspices of the churches in Britain. Research is based on a literature review, a small number of unpublished documents and for the most part on material obtained from 28 interviews with church social workers and church social work managers, some of whom are now retired, many of whom are still active in their places of work. The time frame is within the living memory of the interviewees, the last 40 years or so, although the study is very much concerned with how the earlier history shaped different aspects of the work.

Part One begins, through the literature review, by tracing the origins of church social work in late 19th and early 20th Century church philanthropy. It moves on to survey what is suggested was the core manifestation of church social work in Britain in the mid 20th Century, moral welfare work. The review concludes with an examination of what has happened to church social work since the demise of moral welfare work. Published material on church social work dries up after the early 1970s. A central aim of the study is therefore to provide updated information on the current situation and the second chapter, a collection of extended interview extracts, allows space for church social workers to do this themselves.

Part Two of the study consists of analysis of four different aspects of church social work: its reputation, its organisation, its theology and its place within modern society. Material drawn from the interviews is used to supplement and update analysis of published works.

Part Three is a review of the study. It contains an outline of the methodological framework and a self-critique of choices made. A final chapter draws together the conclusions of the study.

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INTRODUCTION

This study is an examination of the course of professional social work undertaken under the auspices of the churches in Britain in the 20th Century. From amongst the great army of volunteers involved in church philanthropy at the end of the 19th Century a generation emerged, almost all of whom were women, who made a career for themselves in church social work. This effort faltered during and after the 1960s so that by the end of the 20th Century comparatively little in the way of church social work remained.

The study uses 28 interviews (plus four pilot interviews) mostly with senior church social workers, many of whom have given a lifetime of service to the profession and to their churches. It is an opportunity for them to sum up their experiences of church social work and to bring the study of church social work up to date. It is also intended that the analysis of one branch of the social work profession will be relevant to scholars of the profession as a whole.

I. Terms and Boundaries

The title of the study is derived from the title of Kathleen Woodroffe's well-known book *From Charity to Social Work in England and the United States* (1962). The phrase "church work" was used by those Victorians who carried out their philanthropy under the auspices of the churches (Cox, 1982: 269). The philanthropy of the late 19th Century and early 20th Century is studied in regard to its influence in the formation of the profession. Modern day voluntary activity in the churches is not the focus of the study¹ apart from the question of how the on-going presence of volunteers shapes professional practice. "Social work" is here simply taken to be the paid activity of trained professionals.² The term "church social work" is used throughout the text and it describes social work done directly under the auspices of

¹ For that see Harris (1995).

² The debate surrounding the professional status of social work as found in Halmos (1965) and Richan and Mendelsohn (1973) amongst many others is part of the backdrop for the issues raised but it is no part of this study to further that debate.

own social work projects, or region/diocese/nation-wide work run by a church with some form of central organisation. It has to be accepted, however, that the term “church social work” is problematic. One of the trends described in the study is of churches attempting to distance themselves from their own social work, often by making church social work agencies into independent charities. Nevertheless, the decision has been made not to include in the study the large charities that either still have or have in the past had some connection with the churches, for example, The Children’s Society and National Children’s Homes. The reason for this is that in each case the extent to which the charity was or is under the auspices of the parent church varied considerably and to try and generalise about them would not have been meaningful. The reader is referred to the various internally produced histories of these charities.

To many Christians the concept of “churches” is anathema. They would say that there is only one universal Church and various religious organisations are either part of it or not. Many Anglicans, for example, when they refer to “The Church” would claim not just to mean their church³. The phrase “The Church” is indeed occasionally used in the text with this specific meaning. However, this is a theoretical position which does not match up to the real world in which there certainly are churches. This study aims for a multi-denominational approach and studies a number of different churches and religious organisations engaged in professional social work.

A separate and certainly feasible study would be to consider the effects of religions of all sorts on social work in Britain, taking into account the more recent past in which Britain has become a multi -faith society. This, however, is a different subject which is not dealt with here.

“Britain” is interpreted as mainland Britain. The involvement of the churches in social work in Northern Ireland has not been considered.

³ For a theological exposition of this position see A.R. Vidler, 1947: 210-214

II. The Field

This research is concerned with the nature rather than the extent of Church Social Work in contemporary Britain.. However a brief examination of the available statistics is informative. They show that even though church social work makes up only a small part of the overall amount of social work undertaken in contemporary Britain, its contribution is not negligible.

The Salvation Army Yearbook for 2002 lists 88 different services as part of its social programme, the majority being hostels for single homeless people but also including substance misuse centres, centres for people with learning disabilities and family centres . According to their 2002 employee review document 34% of their 4,100 employees were working in care and social work. In 2001 the Church of Scotland Board of Social Responsibility Directory of Social Care Services listed 87 different services, the great majority of which were residential services, and their publicity material stated that they employ 1,600 full-time staff and 700 part-time and sessional workers. The *Catholic Directory 2003* states that there are 18 Roman Catholic Diocesan Social Work Teams in England and Wales working mostly with children. The Directory does not provide details on the total number of workers.

Apart from this solid factual information, almost all other calculations of numbers involved in church social work are vague and involve estimates. The Church of England, which is certainly still one of the churches most heavily involved in social work in England, is the biggest culprit in this regard. Up until the 1980s there was a nominated person at Church House in Westminster with the responsibility of keeping information up to date on the Church's social work activities. Also, each year a Church of England Social Work/Social Services Directory was produced with a list of social work contacts. The last was published in 1984. Since then there has been no accurate record of exactly how much social work the Church of England does. The Anglican Principal Social Workers group did an informal survey in 2000 and found 23 Church of England dioceses that had some form of church-run social work taking place within them. They did not discover the number of social workers employed. A Diocesan Director of Social Work admitted to

me in interview that they had no idea how many other social workers, besides those in the diocesan teams, might be employed in the parishes in their diocese. They said that the need to count and map the social work in each diocese was being recognised if not yet done.

The Anglican Church in Wales has a clearer picture of its own social work perhaps because it is so much smaller. Four out of the six dioceses have social work projects, several of which are actually managed by diocesan social responsibility officers.

The Non Conformist churches, apart from The Church of Scotland and The Salvation Army, do not keep central records of their social work and the central administration of the Baptist Union, The Methodist Church, The Elim Pentecostal Church, The United Reformed Church, The Assemblies of God movement were all unable to provide figures on the amount of social work performed by their churches.

It is consistent with my thesis (see below) concerning the half-hearted manner of this churches' involvement in social work that a number of the denominations have failed to keep proper figures on the social work in which they are involved. The true extent of the social work carried out by the churches in Britain is, therefore, unknown.

III. Methodology

Essentially the study employs a straightforward historical approach, using qualitative analysis of published materials and interview extracts. The interviews are treated as oral histories and the research techniques commonly employed by oral historians, such as the use of extended verbatim extracts, are followed. The only changes to interview extracts have been made to ensure the anonymity of interviewees. See Chapter 7 for an expanded discussion on methodology, particularly how methodological choices contributed to the content of the study.

IV. Structure

The study is split into three parts. The first part consists of a literature review/historical overview and a series of descriptions of church social work drawn from the interviews. The literature review is itself split into three sections; the first

section examining the philanthropic origins and precursors of church social work, the second section reviewing the literature of moral welfare work which was the core manifestation of church social work in the mid-20th Century in England and Wales although not in Scotland⁴, and the third part studies material on the course of church social work and its various offspring in the last 40 years since the demise of moral welfare work. The second chapter provides a series of examples from the interviews which supplement the material in the third section of the literature review.

The structure of second part of the study has been derived from assertions made by Kathleen Heasman⁵ in her book *Christians and Social Work*. Discussing the phrase “do-gooder” she notes:

“This term is still, unfortunately, used with regard to workers who are connected with the churches and religious organisations and Christian Social Workers often have to live it down.

...This critical attitude may have been a contributory cause to the relative decline in social work under specifically Christian auspices which has taken place in the present century, though the decline can also be attributed to the greatly reduced number of practising Christians, and to lack of interest of the churches in social work.” (Heasman, 1965: p.29)

After making these points Heasman does not go on to analyse them in any detail. Here they are used as the bones of this part of the study. A chapter on professional matters takes a close look at church social work’s poor reputation. Two further chapters examine the lack of interest in the churches with one chapter examining the theological roots of the churches indifference to social work whilst another shows how the lack of interest or, at best, half-hearted interested can be seen in the structures and organisation of the work. A final chapter in this section discusses Heasman point about the decline in church social work being related to the general decline of the churches and it also looks at the place of church social work in modern society. In each of the chapters in this part of the study the thoughts of writers and commentators from the literature are supplemented and brought up to date with

⁴ The patterns of church social work found in Scotland, especially in The Church of Scotland, are quite different from those found south of the border. See Cameron (1971).

⁵ Heasman can be regarded as the doyenne of academic work on church social work in Britain having produced three books on the subject covering both the history and the contemporary scene (1962, 1965 and 1979).

quotations drawn from the research interviews.

Having said that Heasman's ideas are central, her concept of the decline of church social work is not broad enough or current enough. As well as a decline there has been a diversification, with church social work turning into other activities or at least to other definitions of the work. This is being characterised as the moved "beyond" social work. The study looks briefly at those other activities and what they owe to their church social work origins.

The third part of the study consists of a review, with a self-critique focusing on methodology, and finally the conclusions of the study.

V. Thesis

The thesis, in essence, is that church social work has fallen between two stools. It has endured the disdain of the rest of the social work profession without ever enjoying the wholehearted support of the churches themselves. It was and to an extent still is a forlorn and isolated entity. This unfortunate state of affairs has always been discernible but it has become increasingly obvious over the last 40 years. The root cause of the problem is that there was a faulty transfer from church work to social work, that is from a philanthropic approach to a professional approach. Far too much of the philanthropic baggage, ideological and theological, was carried over into the churches' attempts to involve themselves in the development of social work as a profession. The effects of this fault were held in abeyance as long as social work in Britain was a series of specialisms with moral welfare work holding its own alongside hospital almoning, psychiatric social work etc. However, once social work in Britain went over to a generic model in the late 1960/ early 70s the weaknesses embedded within church social work from its earliest days meant that it was in a very vulnerable position. Once this is fully appreciated, the course that church social work has taken, including its serious decline in the 1970s and 80s, can be better understood. In out-dated social work terminology it was a child who failed to thrive, receiving nourishment from neither new thinking in social work which it ignored nor from radical theology in the churches which ignored it. Thus isolated, it atrophied and lacked the vigour and flexibility necessary to cope with rapid change in society.

This thesis applies most pertinently to the Church of England, particularly at

the time of the demise of its moral welfare work, but it can also be applied to varying degrees to other British churches. Those church social work institutions that have survived have done so by linking themselves more closely either to their church or to the profession. The ideal position, that of maintaining a creative tension at the centre, has rarely been achieved.

The study examines the consequences of the lack of will for social work within the churches. There have always been those in the churches who have seen professional social work as a malign, secularising influence which in the past deliberately attempted to take over 'church work,' and they have claimed that for much of the 20th Century the secular state has been prejudiced against the churches' efforts in the social work field (Pringle, 1937: p.131ff. Bowpitt, 1989: p.15). I do not intend to engage directly with this argument or take a view on how much prejudice the churches faced. Instead I hope to focus on the churches' own efforts and how they attempted to overcome obstacles, whatever they might have been. The argument that the churches have been elbowed out of social work is relevant, however, in that it can be seen as an aspect of the defensiveness, insularity and isolationism found in the churches which sometimes prevented them doing a good social work job. As shall be seen in Chapter 5, Evangelicalism, particularly its theological foundation, separatist tendencies and judgmental outlook, played an important part here in hindering co-operation with so-called secular social work. In such an atmosphere the churches' own social work has been viewed by some as sleeping with the enemy.

The Church of Scotland and The Salvation Army are the only two church organisations in Britain to openly embrace their own social work, indeed to define themselves, in part, by their social work. The other churches have displayed much more ambiguity towards their own social work and the primary focus of this study is how this ambiguity has affected the work itself.

PART ONE: ACCOUNTS

Chapter 1

Literature Review and Historical Overview

This review is split into three sections as intimated in the title of the whole study. The first section briefly surveys the philanthropic origins of church social work. The second section focuses particularly on the period when, in England and Wales although not in Scotland, church social work was virtually synonymous with moral welfare work. The final section examines the question of what has become of church social work since the demise of moral welfare work.

Section 1: Church Work, 1860s-1920s

Sources

The fact, as shall be seen, that so much church work was done in city slums affects the availability of primary sources. Slum clearances and the continual changes in the landscape of the inner city often meant old churches were knocked down and records of philanthropic activity lost. For example, according to church historian Roger Lloyd (1966: p.168) the parish of St. George's in the East (London) carried out some of the best organised and best documented church philanthropy in the early years of the 20th Century. St. George's was bombed in the Blitz and its records lost. Slum churches that have survived and do maintain archives (a notable example is St. Alban's, Holborn) have tended not to keep extensive records of their philanthropic activity.

The main sources of information available are autobiography and biography of leading figures of the time (such as Barnett, 1918; Potter 1929), accounts of the histories of particular churches or denominations (Bagwell 1987; Unsworth 1954), associations (Pringle 1937) or of a particular city or locale (Wickham 1957; Cox 1982). The overall contribution of the churches to late 19th and early 20th Century philanthropy has also been written about extensively by historians of social work (Heasman 1962; Hall and Howes 1965 chapters 1 to 3; Prochaska 1988).

It should be noted, however, that there is a tendency among generalist writers on social work history to hive off religious influences and place them in a separate chapter (Young and Ashton, 1956: chapter 2) or as in the case of Owen's magisterial

survey to issue a disclaimer that religious philanthropy is not their field (Owen, 1965: 3) These trends are mirrored in the writings of church historians in which social questions are placed in separate chapters (Hastings, 1986 and Lloyd, 1966) and Norman's seminal study on the history of church and society begins with a disclaimer that he is not writing up 200 years of church social work (Norman, 1976: 6). Reinhold Niebuhr (1932) is the only theologian to have written specifically about the history of social work but his book is of limited value to this study not least because of his North American focus and his preoccupation at the time of writing with Soviet style utopias⁶.

Having noted these limitations in the literature, it should be made clear that this section of the review has a specific focus. Only the briefest of overviews of church philanthropy is offered and some basic questions addressed. Emphasis is placed on those aspects of church philanthropy that may be considered to be significant precursors of subsequent professional church social work.

I. The Nature and Scope of Church Work

i. When did church work take place?

The dates above (1860s-1920s) are, of course, somewhat arbitrary. . Many writers have emphasised that church work was not a 19th Century invention. The Christian Church had been involved in caring for those both inside and outside its own community since its earliest days (H. Chadwick 1967: 57-58). The high medieval period in particular has been eulogised as a period of Christian care for the community practised especially by the religious orders. Some (Tawny, 1938; Bunion, 1931) have claimed that the Protestant Reformation led to a reduction in church philanthropic activity. Nevertheless the churches have always performed philanthropy although not in any sort of organised, systematic fashion in Britain until the latter part of the 18th Century with the emergence of such organisations as the Methodist Strangers' Friend Society which was founded in 1785. Thomas Chalmers' visiting activity in Glasgow in the 1820s was carefully co-ordinated and strictly

⁶ This book has been championed by a PhD student (Amato-Von Hemert, 1995) as a worthy basis for a theology of social work but even she has little to praise in Niebuhr's contribution to church social work history.

regimented. Chalmers' work was eventually to become regarded as a model (Moffat, 1962) but visiting was not immediately taken up by the churches as an appropriate activity. Russell in his book *The Clerical Profession* details the gradual acceptance of visiting as an activity that bishops felt able to endorse to their clergy:

“J.B. Sumner [Bishop of Chester and later Archbishop of Canterbury] commended it to his clergy in his Charge of 1829 on the model of Chalmers' organisation in Glasgow. By 1830, Bishop Blomfield [of London] had overcome his suspicions and cautiously recommended the practice, but it was not until 1843 that he was prepared to accept the presidency of The Metropolitan Visiting and Relief Association.” (Russell, 1984: p.119)

There is general agreement amongst scholars that philanthropy peaked in Britain, in terms of activity if not donations, in the second half of the 19th Century (Owen, 1965; Woodroffe, 1962: p.21). This period was also the era of the beginnings of social work as a profession and the relationship between the two, philanthropy and professional social work, was at its most intense during this period.

The dates at the beginning of the section are also not intended to imply that church philanthropy ended in 1920. Prochaska (1988, *passim*) has made the point that philanthropy was not a purely 19th Century phenomenon but persisted throughout the 20th Century. Indeed he criticises those who see philanthropy only as a stepping stone to a welfare state or to professional social work. Whilst accepting that point and that the arbitrary cut off point of 1920 may perpetuate such a false idea, it remains the case that the emergence of the welfare state and of social work as a profession clearly had a significant impact on philanthropic activity both inside and outside the churches. Furthermore this section of the study is principally interested in the influence of church philanthropy on subsequent professional social work activity. As shall be seen, after 1920, whilst church philanthropy continued, professional social work/casework emerged within the churches and church philanthropy's influence over professional activity in the churches was subsequently negligible.

ii. Where did church work take place?

Late 19th and early 20th Century church philanthropy was an urban phenomenon. Such relief as the churches had provided for the poor in the countryside continued during the period but it has been hardly acknowledged. Rather, the great

philanthropic effort of the churches became concentrated on ameliorating the suffering experienced by that great mass of people who, during the 19th Century, moved from the countryside into the cities seeking work. Wickham (1957: p.112-113) and Russell (1984: p.82-83) both noted how the antiquated parish system in the Church of England was very slow to accommodate itself to these changes in populations with the result that the parishes in the centres of cities were invariably ill prepared for the influx of thousands of people. The parish (or the local chapel/mission in the case of non-conformists) remained the essential unit for the performance of church philanthropy. Thus church philanthropy was a localised activity and this local emphasis was often claimed to be its basic strength (Pringle, 1937: p.175). Even the large church charities that formed in this period, (for example The Boys Brigade), invariably relied on local parishes to be the location for their work.

iii. What was Church Work?

Church work included a number of different activities that would be found within a parish. The following are just some of the services that were provided:

Clubs

Church work at its most basic used what the churches had, locations and personnel. Revd. Samuel Barnett ran a Men's Club in his first curacy, at St. Mary's Bryanstone Square, London, which was ostensibly just a room in a house where he met socially with local working men in the evenings:

“Just a place where they could sit and talk, with a table or two for draughts, dominoes or chess if they liked to learn it. That was all, no cards, no drink.”
(H. Barnett 1918 Vol. I: 27 quoting a Mr. Young.)

This was the settlement movement in embryo (Barnett went on to be the first Warden of the first Settlement, Toynbee Hall). It was simple provision of facilities and time. When the Barnetts took over their own parish, they extended this aspect of their work considerably. Mrs. Barnett began a prolonged period of work with girls from the area through girls' clubs. A leaflet produced for prospective volunteers gives an accurate portrayal of the impressive extent of this work:

“Many women would like to help girls of East London, if they could hope by such help to sweeten and raise character.

“Connected with St. Jude’s Parish helpful efforts are being made, every effort being purposely kept within small limits, so that each girl, her needs and aspirations may be known, helped, and strengthened,

“A GIRLS’ CLUB, where working girls meet every evening under the care of different ladies, who give their time to amuse, teach, and guide the members.

“AN EVENING HOME, where girls find a welcome after the close of their long day’s work, in match or jam factories, rope walks, or at sack making.

“A BAND OF WHITE AND GOLD and A GUILD OF HOPE AND PITY for children who need to be lovingly taught the virtues of purity and honesty, temperance and mercy.

“The ST. JUDE’S GUILD for uniting and keeping together the elder girls after they leave school.

“THE DAISY GUILD for working girls and servants, who each do something to purify life, and help the weak and fallen.

“A GYMNASIUM to which girls go and get physical exercise. ... There are also two GIRLS’ HOMES [one for the ‘feeble-minded’], where sixteen girls are received, and scolded and loved into training. ” (Barnett, 1918: 122)

This list of activities is superficially very impressive but it is also an indication that the work done by these groups must inevitably have been at best intermittent and at worst shallow. Almost invariably these different clubs were all seeking to use the same space. Hatton, who had extensive knowledge of the Lads club scene, writes:

“ It is obvious that little clubs held in round the corner church halls must suffer from insufficient scope due to lack of funds and accommodation. The church hall is probably only available for the Boys’ Club one evening per week; there are the Girl Guides, the Mothers Union, the Band of Hope, etc. all to have their weekly meetings in the same hall and consequently any real work with the lads is impossible, other than the ordinary games night, and that, as has been shown, is entirely ineffectual.” (Hatton, 1931: 84-85)

Implicit in all club work was the idea of the efficacy of socialisation, that if parishioners only but play draughts or something similar with the curate, Christian virtues and values would be learned by osmosis. Hatton, at least, was clearly not satisfied with this approach.

Hostels and Soup Kitchens

As the poverty and deprivation experienced in the cities became more severe, it became obvious to many in the churches that meeting the need for company and self-improvement was not enough. Many churches realised the necessity for the provision of even more basic human essentials, like food and shelter. The Goschen Minute (1869) advised charities to leave the absolutely destitute to the provisions of the Poor Law, such as they were. Consequently food and accommodation could not be provided for free, some token charge had to be made.

For those who had a roof over their heads but little else, the churches provided cheap food, most popularly for school children in the form of so-called penny breakfasts. For example, Thomas Jackson, a Primitive Methodist minister in Clapton, ran a penny breakfast service from his church hall, providing 300 breakfasts every morning through the hard winter of 1888 and in subsequent years (Potter op. cit: 43-45).

For those without even a slum dwelling to call their own the churches moved into the provision of temporary accommodation. The Salvation Army, of course, is the most well known instigator of this form of church work. Rider Haggard wrote a survey of Salvation Army work in which he describes visiting a Salvation Army hostel in London:

“Of the 462 men accommodated daily, 311 pay 3*d* for their night’s lodging, and the remainder 5*d*. The threepenny charge entitles the tenant to the use of a bunk bedstead with sheets and an American cloth cover. If the extra 2*d* is provided the wanderer is provided with a proper bed, fitted with a wire spring hospital frame and provided with a mattress, sheets, pillow, and blankets....

For an extra charge of 1*d* the inmates are provided with a good supper consisting of a pint of soup and a large piece of bread, or of jam and tea, or of potato pie. A second penny supplies them with breakfast on the following morning.” (Haggard, 1910: p.18, 20)

Despite these charges the hostels were usually run at a loss which explains why the service was on such a large scale in each location, as an attempt to minimise losses.

District Visiting

For those who would not or who could not come to the church and the social services the churches offered on their premises, the churches went out to them.

Prochaska suggests that one of the important changes that has occurred in philanthropy is that in the 19th Century church workers would have still had access to every home and hearth in the parish, especially in times of extreme need. This access was lost at some point during the 20th Century:

“Much attention has been given to Darwinism and the decline of Christianity, but chloroform and chemotherapy were probably more important to it. As medical treatment improved with the introduction of new drugs and painkillers, Christianity lost some of its transforming power.... The separation of the living from the dying, which became more common as sick and terminal patients were removed from their homes into hospitals and institutions, broke the cycle of domestic Christianity and reduced the number of those ritual visits of family and neighbours around the domestic sick-bed.”(Prochaska, 1988: p.75)

It should not be thought that only the sick and dying were visited. Visiting was also a technique in the attempted alleviation of the symptoms of chronic poverty. All the services described thus far might be called indiscriminate. No sifting process would take place at the club or the hostel or the soup kitchen. District visiting, however, was philanthropy's attempt at more targeted and preventative work. At its most exhaustively thorough, as performed by Thomas Chalmers and his deacons in Glasgow in the 1820s, an essential part of the visiting task was to assess those resources to which the family in need might have had access . Such resources could include self-help, wider family help, neighbourhood help amongst their fellow poor and then and only then, the philanthropic assistance of the rich, carefully targeted. Once all these channels had been tried and found wanting, Chalmers held a small parish fund which was used to provide minimal assistance always allowing that the relief had a specific purpose (Young and Ashton 1956: p.113). Clearly this comprehensive system might be described as the philanthropic ancestor of modern-day assessment and case work with individuals. Equally clearly, less rigorous visiting would have taken place where victims would endure trite advice on domestic management in order to receive a dole of a few pennies (see Chapter 3).

Cox has written of district visiting:

“It was the most notable Victorian response to the anxiety produced by the separation of the classes - more important than the familiar COS and the much discussed settlement movement because far more extensive, less visible to historians because decentralised (and because the social significance of religious institutions has been ignored).” (1982: p65)

Hall (in Hancock and Willmott (eds.), 1965: 9) agrees with this estimation and emphasises that district visiting was the particular preferred method of Evangelicals.

Rescue Work and Church Penitentiaries

Another form of church work was with so-called fallen women. As Unsworth notes:

“There was also the undeniable fact that in those days [late 19th Century] unemployed and starving women threatened with eviction had hardly an alternative to prostitution save the workhouse. It seemed almost that they had to ‘fall’ before welfare organisations would take any interest in them - and then only too often treat them as beings of a different order from themselves.” (Unsworth, op. cit: 2)

The origins of the churches’ connection with this work are found much earlier in the century as Hall and Howes describe:

“...in 1848 an article criticising the lack of co-ordination between the various charities in London and the provinces appeared in the London Quarterly Review. It called attention to the overlapping and waste of money which had resulted from the unrelated efforts to meet the needs of the unmarried mother and the prostitute, and in making the further point that the Church has no hold upon the Penitentiaries’ it raised a new issue, that of the role of the institutional church in controlling and guiding what had hitherto been largely spontaneous and individual efforts.

“The article may well have been one of the influences which led to the formation of the Church Penitentiary Association three years later. From the time of its formation this association had strong links with the Tractarian and Anglo Catholic wing of the Church.” (Hall and Howes, op. cit: p.19)

The purpose of rescue work was not always clear. It was certainly at least as much to punish as to reform. Unsworth records that in 1884:

“The young, inexperienced ‘superintendent’ [Mrs. Bramwell Booth] was making a deep study of her new task. With dismay she learned of the very meagre results attending other people’s efforts at rescue - until she visited one or two of the ‘homes’ when the results seemed obvious. No-one over twenty-five was admitted; no girl with a baby, of whatever age. Young women were kept in these places for one, two and even three years. Bolts and bars; bare, dismal rooms; high walls; no occupation except laundry work; she ‘could not imagine herself becoming any better for a long stay in similar surroundings’. And if the girls failed to run well on passing out, they were never given a second chance.” (Unsworth, op cit: pp.37-38)

This was not the whole story and even in the 19th Century some more enlightened work was carried out not least by the Salvation Army. Hall and Howes go on to describe another organisation, Evangelical in origin, called The Female Mission to the Fallen which:

“...despite its forbidding title, ...proved to be a far seeing and imaginative body which sponsored new developments in rescue work. Two of these, the appointment of paid ‘street missionaries’ and the provision of accommodation for mothers and their babies, were of special importance.”

(Hall and Howes, op. cit: p.20)

Moral welfare work, the subject of the next section, may usefully be thought of as a conflation of these last two types of church work, as work with rescue works’ clientele using district visiting methods.

iv. Who did Church Work?

Prochaska (1980), Lewis (1984) and Heeney (1988) all make claims about 19th Century philanthropy providing women with roles in public life, possibly the beginnings of a leadership role and Prochaska even finds some organisations run entirely by women. Within the churches however, the fact that philanthropy operated through parish/local chapel systems meant that male clergy were very much in control of the work. To what extent the clergy actually did the church work as well as preaching about it and delegating volunteers to do it is another question. Russell describes the process whereby the more extensive a parish district visiting programme became the more a parish priest adopted a supervisory role:

“The clergyman became increasingly the controller and co-ordinator of the efforts of others in the field of general visiting, and went himself only in cases of sickness or some other particular necessity which a visitor might report to him.” (Russell, op. cit: p.121).

The vast majority of church workers were female volunteers and as Steadman Jones (1971) has noted they often had to travel into the slums to do their philanthropy as the middle classes no longer lived so close to the very poorest, hence the practice that became known as “slumming” .

Whilst it is being emphasised that the late 19th Century was philanthropy’s Golden Age, the churches were also starting to pay people to do its social work

during this period. Heeney (op cit.) finds five groups of women paid for their work: Raynard Biblewomen, Parochial Mission Women, Church Army Sisters, Anglican Sisterhoods (not strictly speaking paid but certainly full time workers) and Deaconesses. He describes the work of Raynard Biblewomen, which was much more than simply selling cheap bibles, and notes that their particular task was to reach and assist that “class of persons below the decent poor”:

“Biblewomen came from the poorer classes themselves; their mission was to the even poorer.” (Heeney op. cit: 47)

“The number of biblewomen connected with the Raynard Mission in London in 1858 was about seven; it rapidly and yearly rose to 234 by 1867.... In this early period the salary of a biblewoman seems to have been ten shillings a week for a five day week of five hours per day, although by 1894 this rose to 12s 6d.

“It was a basic principle of the London Female and Domestic Mission ...that its agents must be poor women who were paid for their work, while the general rules of the organisation provided that ‘each biblewoman will be placed under the careful superintendence of a Lady who may be found willing to undertake the work and who is a resident in the district or within reasonable distance from it.’... These lady superintendents numbered 143 in 1874.” (Heeney *ibid*: p.48)

It is important to note that these workers had to be “poor women” and that they were supervised by amateurs of a higher social status. The amateur spirit was seen as the ideal and paid work as something inferior and subordinate to it. This was certainly not the most propitious of beginnings for what was to become professional church social work and, as shall be described in Chapter 3, led to serious problems. Raynard Bible women, however, managed to stay “independent of male ecclesiastical or other control in the disposition of funds.” (Heeney *ibid*: p48) until after the First World War but then “...parish priests obtained clear supervisory powers, and bishops and other clergymen appeared on the Raynard Council.” (*ibid*: p.49) and it moved from being a non-denominational organisation into being an adjunct of the Church of England.

A similar organisation which was always Anglican was the parochial mission scheme founded by Caroline Jane Talbot:

“Mrs Talbot evidently picked up the idea of parochial mission women from a letter in the *Guardian* of 4 July 1860 in which the writer pointed to the need for Biblewomen who were firmly attached to the parish structure of the Church. Shortly thereafter some six women were at work, and a new organisation for

the employment of poor women under church auspices was launched. ...

As was the case with Biblewomen, the numbers of parochial mission women grew rapidly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. By 1884 there were 187 parochial church mission women and in the late 1880s the number rose to over 200, something never again achieved after 1890 although the Official Year-book of the Church of England continues to list the organisation until 1922 when there were about 38 active agents left, nearly all in the diocese of London and Southwark.” (Heeney, *ibid*: pp.53-54)

Heeney also notes the work of Church Army Sisters⁷ and that their role was not the full one played by male Church Army Officers. He compares this unfavourably with the Salvation Army where gender equality in the division of labour was present from the beginning. (*ibid*: p.55)

Heeney goes on to consider the work of the Anglican religious, nuns in particular and notes that “By 1875 there were eighteen [Anglican] sisterhoods in no less than ninety five centres.” (*ibid*: p.63). As an example of the activities of sisters he notes that:

“ Revd. Bryan King testified before a parliamentary committee in the 1850s to the value of his Sisters in the “St. George’s in the East” mission. They apparently lived within the parish where they operated a refuge for prostitutes: they also acted as district visitors and ‘they nurse people during sickness, and take charge of their children in the schools, and that opens the way to the clergy.’”(*ibid*: p.66)⁸

Sisterhoods (Catholic) and Church Army Sisters (Evangelical) did very similar work. It would depend on the churchmanship of the local clergy as to which were used. Church Army Sisters, however, were generally submissive to the male authority figures in their organisation and in the wider Church. Sisterhoods, by contrast, were private, independent organisations and many of them managed to avoid the strictures of the male hierarchy and were often regarded by that hierarchy as troublesome (Heeney, *ibid*: p.67 and Mimms, 1996 : Chapter 5).

⁷ The Church Army has played an important role throughout the history of the Church of England’s social work. They became involved in early probation work as Police Court Missioners with the Church of England Temperance Society and a number of Church Army sisters trained and worked as moral welfare workers. This helped to maintain the Evangelical spirit of the work. Comparatively recently (within the last 10 years) the Church Army decided to pull out of social work provision and it now concentrates on evangelism. Unfortunately its archive is closed to non Church Army personnel.

⁸ For a detailed history of a particular sisterhood, including their early ‘social work’ activities see Sister Catherine Louise SSM (1996).

The final group of women paid to do church work were Deaconesses. There was a great deal of controversy about the role and position of these women after the first of them was commissioned or ordained in 1861 (the word chosen would indicate a position on the question of the ordination of women.) and Heeney notes that in the 20th Century, whilst many of the women in this role were modest and deferential, the discussion about their role became an arena for the debate about the advancement of women in the church. In the period towards the end of the 19th Century, however, Deaconesses were notable for the length of their training (two years) and that they took their place within the parochial system, under the authority of a clergyman. It is also worthwhile to compare Deaconesses in the Church of England with their counterparts in the Church of Scotland (Cameron 1971: Chapter 2) where they were nurses of a sort.

v. How Many People were Involved in Church Work?

Complete figures are not available but the statistics from Heeney above suggests that there were around 600 paid church relief workers in London in the 1880s. In regard to volunteers in 1889 the Church of England Yearbook contained a table listing the district visitors of 80% of the parishes in England and Wales. The total was 47,112. In 1909 -10 the figure for the Church of England as a whole was 74,009:

“Whatever the exact numbers, observers were aware of a vast volunteer enterprise, predominantly female in composition, clearly forming a major part of late Victorian women’s ‘Church work’ and persisting well into the twentieth century.” (Heeney, *op. cit.*: p.27 - Church of England yearbook figures cited on the same page)

Local examples provide useful illustrations of the formidable scale of the work. Cox discovered that the parish of St. John the Divine in Lambeth, which was one that focused on church work, employed 10 clergymen in 1902 (*op. cit.*: p.181). According to Wickham:

“Sheffield had over a thousand ‘district visitors’ up to the ‘twenties, and,...a vigorous parish like St. Mary’s, Bramall Lane, had fifty lay workers visiting in the parish.” (1957: p.265).

vi. Why was Church Work Carried Out?

The question of motivation is too big to be covered thoroughly in a preliminary section. It will be discussed in more detail elsewhere in the study. Briefly however, three possible reasons for church work being carried out are immediately obvious, although it should be remembered that they probably blended together, with other reasons, in the thinking of individual church workers. Firstly, and most simply, altruism is a spontaneous human response in the face of suffering and so great was the suffering in late 19th Century industrial Britain⁹ that groups of people in the churches simply responded naturally to what they saw, and church work became the way in which that compassion was organised and systematised. A second possible reason that has been suggested (Cox, op. cit: 221, Lorenz, 1994: 42) is that the churches wished to maintain their prominent position in civic society and being involved in philanthropy helped them to do that. The third possible reason is that philanthropy was a Trojan horse for an evangelistic gospel message. This third reason is suggestive because of the number of Evangelicals involved in philanthropy.

II. Characteristics of church work that shaped subsequent professional church social work

i) The Predominance of Evangelicals in Church Work

In her book on the subject Heasman provided a definition of those she considers to be included within the Evangelical fold:

“The term ‘Evangelical’ is usually used to describe those Protestants who believe that the essential part of the Gospel consists in salvation by faith through the atoning death of Christ....Thus, in this context, The Evangelicals include those who were members of the so-called ‘Low’ Church of England as well as of the Non- conformist denominations..” (Heasman, 1962: p15, 17)

⁹ See for example Steadman Jones’ descriptions of Bread riots in London in the 1860s (op. cit: 241-242) and Wickham’s descriptions of the effects of unemployment in Sheffield in the 1870s and 80s (1957: 160).

The subject of the doctrine of the atonement as the defining doctrine for Evangelicals will be discussed in chapter 5 on theology. Heasman also calculated the proportion of Evangelicals involved in church work. She did this by examining the Charities Register and Digest of the Charity Organisation Society (C.O.S.) seeking the names of prominent Evangelicals and she cross checks it with those charities that were listed in *The Christian*, which was an exclusively Evangelical weekly publication. From this she concludes:

“... only a rough generalisation can be given, but it does appear that as many as three quarters of the total number of voluntary charitable organisations in the second half of the nineteenth century can be regarded as Evangelical in character and control. The greater proportion of these were formed in the decades immediately after the mid century, many of them as a result of the revival of that time.”(ibid: p.13-14)

Much later in the book, after briefly reviewing the work of other Christians, she concludes:

“Despite the important contributions made by these other groups, the part played by the Evangelicals was markedly predominant.” (ibid: p. 286)

In recent years some effort has been made to examine the endeavours of others in the churches, besides the Evangelicals, who were involved in 19th Century philanthropy, in particular the so-called slum priests (Markwell 1991, Reed 1996). None of this contradicts Heasman’s point about Evangelical numerical domination and other scholars are in agreement with her on this. (for example Gill, 1989: p. 40).

ii) Consequent Ubiquitous Evangelicalism

Numerical domination also had the effect that the tone and language of Evangelicalism became compulsory in philanthropic endeavour, whatever the religious affiliation of the practitioner. This is true even of the sectarian opponents of the Evangelicals, the Anglo-Catholic slum priests. Markwell describes the variety of styles of service at the Anglo-Catholic citadel, St. Alban’s, Holborn:

“At high mass on Sunday morning the emphasis was communal; the people of God were gathered together in the presence of the Lord of Hosts. On Monday evenings the individual sinner was encouraged to develop in his heart a one-to-one relationship with his personal saviour, Jesus Christ. These Monday evening services were often conducted by Father Arthur Stanton, an avid social reformer who remained at St. Alban’s slum parish as an unpaid

curate for fifty years. ...

“Stanton’s rhetorical style reflects the influence of the Evangelicals; he preached from the heart to the heart, eschewing the decent sobriety that had characterised so much previous High Church preaching. But the Evangelical influence went beyond rhetoric. Stanton’s great themes were personal conversion and continuing sanctification through the redeeming merits of Jesus Christ. The forms of piety he encouraged were “Catholic”, but the basic message could have been delivered by John Wesley or, even, John Newton.” (Markwell, 1991: pp.42-43)

Samuel Barnett, who was certainly not an Evangelical, had a framed piece of embroidery on his desk in Toynbee Hall spelling out what might be termed the Evangelical credo “ONE BY ONE” and this phrase was quoted in an obituary of him (Briggs and Macartney, 1984: p.25 citing *Stepney Welfare* reprinted in *Toynbee Hall Annual Report 1913: p.21*).

This Evangelical influence was even felt outside of religious philanthropy. Lewis (1984: p.89) describes how feminists of the late 19th Century who wanted to gain influence on society by being active in philanthropy, were aware that whilst for the most part they had little sympathy with Evangelical values or attitudes, so all pervasive was the tone and language of Evangelicalism in the philanthropic world that they were obliged to adopt that tone and language in order to gain access to the field. In a nutshell this tone and language was, as Markwell says above, that of personal and moral redemption and regeneration. The consequences of the dominance of this tone and language for church social work will be dealt with in Chapter 5.

iii) Conflict With the Secularists

Graham Bowpitt, in a series of writings (1989, 1998, and 2000) has emphasised the conflict between Evangelical philanthropists and the emerging forces of professional social work, principally the Charity Organisation Society (hereinafter the C.O.S.), which he consistently characterises as militantly secular and out to discredit church work:

“While the iron fist sought to discredit Christian charity, the velvet glove sought its co-operation.” (1989: p.15)

It is certainly true that Helen Bosanquet, an early historian of the C.O.S. (and an actor

in the scene she describes¹⁰), allows plenty of space in her 1914 account for criticisms of the philanthropic scene in London as encountered by the founders of the C.O.S. in 1869 and in particular the failings of the church philanthropists. The criticisms were based on the grounds that relief was indiscriminate¹¹, and either inadequate or duplicated. Bosanquet quotes from J.R. Green:

“The greater number of the East End clergy have converted themselves to relieving officers. Sums of enormous magnitude are annually collected and dispensed by them personally or through district visitors, nine tenths of whom are women, and the bulk silly and ignorant women. A hundred different agencies for the relief of distress are at work over the same ground, without concert or co-operation, or the slightest information as to the other’s exertions, and the result is an unparalleled growth in the imposition, mendacity and sheer shameless pauperism.” (J. R. Green *Pauperism in the East End of London* 1868 quoted in Bosanquet, H. 1914: p12)

Moreover, much of Cox’s book (1982) on church activity in Lambeth provides supportive evidence for Bowpitt’s position by describing the rivalry between secular and church philanthropy which was extremely intense in that part of London in the late 19th Century. Cox cites the first principal of the Women’s University Settlement in Southwark who saw the *raison d’être* of the settlement as an attempt to wipe out the indiscriminate giving of the churches in the area. (op. cit: p.199). However, Cox does depict a scene more complex than that suggested by Bowpitt with eight Anglican parishes in Lambeth submitting their visiting arrangements to the

¹⁰ For a more even-handed appraisal of the work of the C.O.S. see Roofff (1972), particularly chapter 16

¹¹ Frank Prochaska in his book *The Voluntary Impulse: Philanthropy in Modern Britain* (1988) is an eloquent defender of those groups who were criticised by the C.O.S. as indiscriminate givers. He emphasises the urgency and immediacy of their work:

“Nineteenth-century poverty and disease were so immediate and overwhelming that abstract debates about the underlying causes of poverty and the value of philanthropy seemed little more than an irrelevance to those on the ground. Unlike social theorists, who had rarely held the hand of a child dying in a hovel, philanthropists had to clean up the mess. They did not always have the time or detachment to question the nature or the ultimate result of their benevolence. Confronted with a scale of pain, dying and death nowadays unimaginable, they were not going to be reasoned out of their humanity by the likes of Harriet Martineau or socialists promising utopia tomorrow. They could not wait for an overhaul of the social structure or the rise of a welfare state. Many philanthropists encouraged state assistance in such areas as sanitation and housing, but they had to deal with conditions as they were, not as they might be.”(Prochaska 1988: 51)

This distinction between the activists and the theorists, that Prochaska emphasises here in regard to 19th Century philanthropy, is also one of the most distinctive features of 20th Century church-based social intervention. It is crude to say Evangelicals were the doers and Catholics were the theorists but as shall be demonstrated in Chapter 5, this contains more than a grain of truth.

supervision of the C.O.S. (ibid: p.69). This corresponds with the writing of Pringle describing a period some time later where he goes into detail about the involvement of Anglican clergy in C.O.S. activities:

“Innumerable parochial clergy and Church workers have been, and are, staunch disciples of Loch. This well known fact hardly needs illustration. The present Bishop of Southwell - the Right Reverend Dr. Henry Mosley - always insisted, when Rector of Poplar, and later of Hackney, that every junior clergyman and Church worker passing through his hands should take part in the work of the local C.O.S. Committee. The same is true of Lord Wenlock in his service of the Eton Mission, Hackney Wick, at St. Andrew’s, Bethnal Green, and at St. John at Hackney (1881-1911). His influence has long outlived him. A visitor to the Hackney C.O.S. Committee in June 1937 found the Rector, and two of his curates as well, besides the Vicar of Homerton, present and taking an effective part.” (Pringle, 1937: pp.101-102).

Cox, writing about the late 19th Century period goes on to comment:

“The real enemies of the C.O.S. were not the often exasperating Anglican clergymen so much as the philanthropic anarchists of the Non-conformist societies and mission halls who alarmed the C.O.S. and others with their extravagant claims.” (Cox, op. cit: p.67)

Clearly, the C.O.S. objected to what they saw as sloppy work, for example poor accounting or indiscriminate giving, on the part of a number of Christian organisations. However it was the sloppiness that they objected to, rather than the Christianity *per se*.

Bosanquet wishes to present the C.O.S. as pristine and fresh in its approach, not suffering from the sentimental vices of the churches. Bowpitt sees the work of the Evangelical churches as under attack from outside secular forces. However, it is striking that Evangelical philanthropy and so-called secular C.O.S. activity had one very important feature in common. Both were individualistic¹², seeking to solve the problems of society by working case by case and neither made any acknowledgement of wider influences and shifts such as economic depressions. Both had an impact on

¹² There are other more complex interpretations of the late 19th Century history of the C.O.S. Both Steadman Jones (1971) and Harrison (1976) refer to groups of conservative individualists and progressive collectivists vying for power and influence within the organisation. It was certainly the case, however, especially in its early years, that the individualists had the upper hand.

the development of case work and to emphasise the one does not necessarily mean that the other must be dismissed. By highlighting the hostility Bowpitt misses this commonality.

Whether or not the C.O.S. was directly opposed to church philanthropy, certainly there were other organisations that were much more openly antagonistic. Lloyd writes:

“...in 1884 the Fabian Society was founded, which did all it could to put pressure on successive governments to drive the church out of social relief. No government has been known to refuse to listen to those who suggest it should increase its power, and, with the turn of the century, its own instrument of a wholly mechanised social service was fast overtaking that of the Church. In the Education Act of 1906 there was a clause making the schools rather than the churches responsible for the feeding of children. Two years later, when the first Old Age Pension Act was being debated, the victorious party in Parliament expressly ridiculed the idea that the parochial clergy might usefully help administer it. The Church was, in fact, being driven right out of the field of public poor relief, and being confined to the small corner which purely private, unrecognised relief could still occupy. On the whole, the people in need of such services preferred to receive them from the state; and when this rather unpleasant fact was recorded and accepted, the excuse was made that the modern curate had never learned ‘to do a decent job of casework’.” (Lloyd op.cit:165-167)

It is important to note that many in the churches did feel and still do feel that they were elbowed out of mainstream social service. This feeling gets in the way of proper analysis of how good church services actually were. In this passage from Lloyd there is no recognition that it might actually be best for schools to feed their own pupils.

iv. The Failure of Church Work

The final and possibly most important aspect to emphasise about the philanthropic origins of church social work is that the great philanthropic effort of the late 19th and early 20th Century eventually failed. Whether this failure was due to the churches being elbowed out or to church work’s own inherent inadequacies is not the central issue. Whatever the causes Owen comments:

“The Nathan Committee [A House of Commons committee from the early 1950s investigating the future of charity work] was not stretching the point when it described the attempt to create by private effort a series of universal

social services as ‘one of the magnificent failures of our history.’

“Beyond doubt it was a failure, however magnificent.” (Owen, op. cit: p.5)

Cox’s book already cited above is primarily concerned with the concept of the failure of the churches. His assessment is that the churches ultimately failed in their efforts to alleviate distress. He quotes from the manuscripts of Ernest Aves, one of Charles Booth’s assistants on *Life and Labour* who comments about one particular church, St. John’s Kennington:

“Perhaps it is worth noting that, since the work of St. John the Divine began in quite early days in the whole of this area, the character of this particular district would appear to have been acquired despite all the energy of this centre of Anglo-Catholic churchmanship. Some local influences making for degradation were apparently too strong alike for Mr. Teasdale and Mr. Brooke [successive clergymen].’ There was probably not a working class parish in England with a stronger parochial machinery, more funds or more clergymen than St. John the Divine, and the church had begun its work when the district was first built over. Yet streets of desperate poverty remained. The churches had failed.”(op.cit:181+182, date of manuscript entry not recorded)

What Cox means, and this is his constant theme, is that the churches failed only on their own terms in the task they had set themselves, which was providing social services for millions of poor urban dwellers. He argues that if the enormity of that task is properly appreciated, as well as the fact that for the churches this was just one task amongst many others, church work can be seen in terms of its achievements rather than its ultimate failure.

Nevertheless Cox notes that by the 1920s :

“The churches had in fact become irrelevant. The philanthropic apparatus... had disappeared or was in the process of being dismantled.... The government, the London County Council, the relatively new Lambeth Borough Council, and private but professional philanthropic societies had begun to provide social services in a systematic fashion. Even more important, it was assumed that they had responsibility for these things even if they did not. The churches were left with little to do and even less to say, since ‘church work’ had been a central justification of their existence....It was a particularly British transformation which reduced the importance of Lambeth’s churches only because they had chosen to invest so heavily in philanthropy as they competed for influence in Victorian society.” (op cit: p. 273+274)

It was almost as if the churches were exhausted by their efforts. Full control or abdication of responsibility appeared to be the only possible positions. Unrelenting

competition with secular forces meant that the idea of co-operation with “the winners” was anathema. The failure of the philanthropic effort was to haunt subsequent more modest efforts. However, the truth had to be faced that the churches clearly could not do it all alone, that they had to relent, just do some and do it in a different manner. That different manner, in England and Wales at least, was to be professional moral welfare work¹³.

Section 2: Social Work (a.k.a. Moral Welfare Work) 1920-1972

Sources

The main sources used in this section are Kathleen Heasman’s history of Josephine Butler Memorial House (1979), (hereinafter JBMH), the autobiography of Jessie Higson (1955), first warden of JBMH and a senior figure in moral welfare circles, Penelope Hall and Ismene Howes’ survey of moral welfare work (1965), Evelyn Magnass’s internal follow-up survey (circa 1969) and the professional journal of moral welfare titled consecutively *The Quarterly Newsletter*, *The Quarterly Review*, *Moral Welfare* and *Crucible*. Manuscripts and documents from the JBMH archive kept at the Sidney Jones Library, University of Liverpool, have also been used. Attempts to gain access to diocesan moral welfare records proved unsuccessful and once again I suspect much documentation is lost.

I. Josephine Butler Memorial House

The dates for this section are firm ones unlike those provided in the other two sections which are only guides. The reason why these dates are fixed is that they correspond to the opening and closure of Josephine Butler Memorial House/ College, the Church of England’s training establishment for moral welfare workers and its only training college for professional social work of any kind. There had been some

¹³ The only serious rival to moral welfare work as the core social work activity of the churches was the work of the Police Court Missioners (PCMs), employed by The Church of England Temperance Society, The Salvation Army and the Church Army. These were men working in magistrates courts as early probation officers. The CETs worked in this field from the mid-1880s until the mid-1930s when the state took over probation work completely. The work of PCMs has not been well covered by historians (with the exception of McWilliams, 1986). The work of PCMs is not discussed in any depth here although aspects of McWilliams’ analysis are taken up in chapter 5.

training before JBMH opened (at St. Agnes's College), there were other moral welfare courses that existed concurrently with JBMH, notably the so-called London Course, and moral welfare limped on for a few years after JBMH closed. Nevertheless these dates still represent the years of viability for moral welfare work in the churches in Britain (not only in the Church of England as JBMH accepted students from all denominations.)

The name the house was given was significant. Heasman (1979) claims that the fact that the House was named after Josephine Butler was indicative of the feminist and campaigning emphasis for which the founders were hoping. Social reform was as much a part of the agenda as social welfare. Indeed the founding charter contained an abolitionist clause (Butler's main cause, the abolition of the Contagious Diseases Acts). Heasman quotes a comment of an early (1920s?) student at the House:

“Beneath all the practical work of our day to day training, we were slowly absorbing the principles upon which the lifework of Josephine Butler was based; her passion for justice as a right for everyone, including the socially outcast;” (1979: p.24)

Heasman's book attempts to describe the ordinary life of the students at the house and inevitably paints a somewhat idyllic picture of earnest young women hard at work in a residential environment that was serene and supportive. In order to obtain a fuller picture of moral welfare work, this book needs to be read in conjunction with the autobiography of the first warden of the House, Jessie Higson.

Higson's book (1955) covers the whole of her working life. Also, because of the positions she held, it is something of an inside view of moral welfare in the Church of England in the first half of the century. The bare bones of her career are that she was the first Organising Secretary for Moral and Preventative Work for the Anglican diocese of Liverpool from 1907 to 1918. She also had charge of St. Monica's Refuge during this period. From 1918 to 1920 she was the first Central Organising Secretary for Moral Welfare in the Church of England. In 1920 she returned to Liverpool to be the first Warden of Josephine Butler Memorial House, the Church's training college for moral welfare workers, and stayed there until 1928. She was then appointed the first Lecturer for the Church of England Moral Welfare

Council and stayed in this post until her retirement in 1942. After her retirement she continued to be involved in committee work at JBMH and was generally considered the doyenne of moral welfare. Indeed Higson was possibly the central figure in the transformation of the last generation of district visitors into moral welfare workers, turning some of them from philanthropists into professionals.

II. An Unwelcome Guest

The tone of Higson's book is determinedly cheerful but in its midst are a number of stories that tell of the difficulties that moral welfare work faced. Many of these difficulties were related to just how unwelcome moral welfare was within the Church of England itself. After recalling how local cab drivers clubbed together to support St. Monica's refuge, she writes:

“How different was the attitude of a leading official of the church we wished to attend, who wrote, ‘I beg to inform you that it is my intention to prevent your Rescue Home attending ... Church. I shall be obliged therefore if you will refrain from being present on Sunday next’! Needless to say we were there.” (Higson, 1955: p.5)

She also provides another account of clerical animosity towards the work:

“Soon after Randall Davidson's appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury, he sent out a questionnaire in 1904 to a large Diocese. Here is a specimen of the questions and replies.

(1) Is there any Rescue work, whether Church of England, Nonconformist, or Roman Catholic being done in your neighbourhood?

Answer: No

(2) If not, do you consider there is a need for a Worker who shall devote herself to Preventive and Rescue work?

Answer: No

(3) Is there any Ladies Association existing in your neighbourhood for the care of friendless girls or of those in dangerous surroundings?

Answer: No. Should any case arise it should be treated parochially or through St. Mary's Home, Stone.” (ibid: p.17)

Some of the most enlightening passages in the book in regard to the Church of England's lack of commitment to moral welfare describe how Higson was paid or not paid by the church to do the work (see chapter 4 for details). As Higson spent much

of her time trawling the country looking for suitable recruits for the moral welfare structures that she was helping to create nationally, one wonders if she had any qualms about bringing women into a working set-up that was clearly on very shaky financial foundations with many in the churches not at all convinced that women should be paid to do this work, which in their minds had previously been done perfectly well by volunteers.

Higson allows generous space to others in the book and some of the most interesting details are provided by other writers. A speech given by Canon T. Pym to the 1924 Annual Conference of Principals and Vice-Principals of Theological Colleges is included in full as an Appendix. In it he practically begs for a chance to be allowed to give one or two lectures on rescue and preventive work to ordinands and laments the ignorance of most clergy about purity (moral welfare) work. This absence of an adequate working relationship with the clergy was perhaps moral welfare's biggest handicap.

III. A Service Established

Despite its unenthusiastic welcome moral welfare doggedly established itself in the country. As well as in the Church of England, a number of Roman Catholic dioceses set up moral welfare teams. In Scotland The Episcopal Church of Scotland instituted a Social Service Board "To have under its purview 'Rescue and Penitentiary, Temperance and other such social work as the Board may elect to take up.'" (founding document cited by Balfour Melville in *Moral Welfare* October 1953: 9). The Board, as its main piece of social work, ran a Training Home for up to 30 "girls" on the outskirts of Edinburgh, staffed by the Sisters of the Community of St. Peter's, Horbury. The Home was open from 1921 until 1953 when, as a sign of the times, an insufficient number of girls could be found willing to submit to the training. The development of moral welfare in Wales is described by Leslie K. Long, Diocesan Organising Secretary for the Diocese of Monmouth:

"I knew it [Welsh Moral Welfare Work] first in 1925 when the successful experiment in sex education in the Day Schools was being made by the Llandaff Organising Secretary in conjunction with the Worker for the Alliance of Honour.

English Moral Welfare work was only then firmly established, but in Wales

there were only two Diocesan Associations. Llandaff, the pioneer diocese, and Monmouth then newly formed. The St. Asaph, Bangor, Swansea and Brecon and St. Davids Associations came into being however within the next few years. and from that time the work developed steadily if slowly.” (Long in *The Quarterly Review* October 1948: p.4)

By the 1930s the work was being practiced by trained professionals across the length and breadth of Britain and the label “moral welfare” was widely accepted (Higson, op. cit. 61).

IV. Outdoor Work - Progressive, Indoor Work - Punitive.

Ron Walton in his book *Women in Social Work* has written:

“Within the beginnings of the moral welfare movement one can distinguish the process of the voluntary committee work and visiting gradually being supplanted by paid visitors and organising secretaries. Religious commitment was a vital motivation, revealing, however, an ambivalence in action, leading to reprobation and severity as well as kindness and friendly advice.” (1975: p.43)

In practice however this ambivalence or ambiguity was reduced because the two different attitudes were found not within the same workers but in different workers in different places. Outdoor moral welfare workers who were receiving an average of two years training, many of them taking social science courses at the nearby university, could hardly but fail to complete their training either holding themselves or at least being familiar with the most progressive ideas in social care of the time. The following section from Higson’s book is actually written by Miss Lila Retallack who was one of Higson’s successors as General Secretary and Central Organiser, from 1934 to 1944. It shows that far from being part of a conservative bulwark, outdoor moral welfare workers were sensitive to the winds of change in social provision. She writes:

“The striking progress in infant health and welfare during these years was of particular interest to moral welfare workers. The result of the improved health conditions, however, was not always what the moral welfare worker desired: for intensive study of the subject of illegitimacy, combined with other factors, tended to give impetus to child adoption, with the consequent separation of unmarried mothers from their children. In former days they had been separated because the mother was ‘immoral’; now she was considered socially inadequate. The welfare of the child became paramount; and while an older generation of social worker - the feminist, shall we say -

were still contending for 'the rights of the unmarried mother', and, with that, the responsibility of the father, a newer group, perhaps more psychologically minded, concentrated upon the child's need of a settled home and two (adoptive) parents. Thus they commended the mother who relinquished her baby for that end, rather than the one who struggled and toiled to keep him.

"This forces us to admit a certain confusion of mind and purpose in some moral welfare work. What were we really getting at? When we talked and how we talked- about keeping mother and child together, were we sub-consciously influenced by a feeling, consciously denied, that the parents ought not to get off Scot free? Was there sometimes a personal and possessive desire to hang on to a mother in order to help her? Were we always ready to study the changing situation with the honesty and flexibility it required?" (Higson, op.cit: p.135)

By contrast residential workers were completely untrained almost throughout the fifty years plus of moral welfare's existence¹⁴, and therefore were often mired in past ways of thinking. Retellack goes on:

"The same conservatism, or confusion, hampered some of the work in residential Homes. We aimed at re-education, and many of the homes achieved amazing things in the face of endless difficulty. But some establishments found it hard to break with the idea that there ought to be some punishment somewhere - a legacy of grim penitentiary days - so that when the war introduced us to new groups of social workers and welfare workers, their criticism was neither surprising nor unfitting." (ibid: p.135-136)

Within the literature of the moral welfare profession there is precious little material on residential work. Indoor workers did not usually have a high standard of education and did not write about their work. Moral welfare work as found in the journals/professional literature can virtually be taken to mean outdoor moral welfare or field work. Residential work was a dark, neglected corner. This covers up the truth that these two groups of workers were dealing with the same people/clients. Often, although not always, what the outdoor moral welfare worker had to offer to the single mother, or in the early history of the work to the prostitute, was a stay in a residential home of some kind. Mrs. Booth's account of bolts and bars and dismal rooms in the late 19th Century has already been cited. There is precious little evidence that this situation improved even as outdoor moral welfare work professionalized. The following is an anonymous account of a visit to a Roman Catholic Training Home

¹⁴ JBMH started to run courses for residential staff in the late 1960s, just before it closed (information from Interview 12).

published in *The Quarterly Review* almost thirty years after the founding of JBMH:

“Many social workers who have helped to persuade a girl that a stay in a Training Home would help her to make a fresh start, wonder sadly, when they have to try to fit her into the world from which she has been secluded for six to twelve months, just how much the Home takes into account the conditions of that world which is changing so rapidly. Methods of training often need to be adapted considerably if they are to help to the fullest extent the girl of the present day, not in order to “spoil her” or to pander to her increasing demands for liberty, but because it is to the world of 1948 that she has to return on the completion of her training. ... When a girl fails it is usual to blame her, whereas it might be a good thing if the home would consider the cause of the failure and whether other methods might have produced better results. Girls cannot all be made to fit the pattern by which a Home may work.

“Difficulties of building and tradition are sometimes considered insuperable obstacles to change, but it was a real pleasure to visit the R. C. Training Home where the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity have effected radical changes, many of them not dependent on structural alterations or fresh equipment. This Home takes about 50 girls over school leaving age for periods of six to twelve months. In the dining room small tables of three or four, each with its own tea-pot, tea-set, table napkins and vase of flowers, look so much less formal than do long tables. As wood for structural alterations was unobtainable, the large dormitories have been divided by patterned curtains into rooms for three or four, with ordinary bedroom furniture, and consequently look much less institutional. Indeed they were more attractive than some of the staff rooms still to be found in some other homes....

“The girls wear their own clothes and their appearance in the laundry was similar to that of any other set of girls in a good commercial laundry. A subdued wireless set, and the absence of silent work, also contributed to the normality of the scene. Each girl receives an allowance after a probationary period and from this she is expected to buy her own clothes, to provide her own amusements, such as the cinema and excursions, and also, if she wishes, cosmetics.” (January 1949: p.9-10).

It almost goes without saying that whilst the changes made in this one home are praised, the implication is that elsewhere uniforms, silent laundry work and other accoutrements of Victorian penitentiaries were still common in the late 1940s in Britain.

Another significant difference between indoor and outdoor work was in the amount of overt religious content in the work. Hall and Howes write:

“In his foreword to the 1959 annual report the chairman of the diocesan board

of moral welfare in one of the dioceses surveyed first listed the number of cases helped during the year, then added: 'The Church has to remember that they are not cases, but people they must try and bring to the knowledge and forgiveness and grace of our Lord.' This quotation could, moreover, be paralleled by similar quotations we noted in diocesan or annual reports from all parts of the country, some of which were accompanied by an overt statement, or carried the hidden implication, that it is here that the difference between church work and social work carried out under secular auspices is to be found. It was repeatedly emphasised that the end of the work done in the name of the church is not merely material assistance or even social rehabilitation, although these things may be assumed to be part of it, it is spiritual redemption.

"In practice...we found little evidence, either in avenues of referral, types of case referred, character of the relationship established or the type of care or treatment given, of a specifically spiritual or religious approach in the outdoor work of the two dioceses surveyed. ... the fact that they were employed by the Church and acting in its name appeared to make little difference to the worker's day to day handling of concrete situations or to their relationships with more than perhaps a small number of clients, and this was, in fact, admitted by more than one worker in informal conversation." (Hall and Howes, op. cit: p.241)

Hall and Howes had earlier made a distinction between indoor and outdoor work in this respect. An overt religious position was much more common within residential homes, so much so that the subject of religious "blackmail" and the possibility of the requirement of "pseudo -conversions" was broached with care staff in Mother and Baby homes. Hall and Howes claim to have found no evidence of these practices but do not leave the matter there and point to the background difficulty in the church holding a monopoly of provision:

"The fact that there is no effective alternative places church homes in a privileged position, of which we feel members of staff should always be aware when dealing with girls who are unwilling to conform to the accepted pattern. As long as the Church has a monopoly or near monopoly of any kind of social work, those responsible for it are under a moral obligation to respect the spiritual freedom as well as what they regard as the spiritual welfare of those for whom the service is provided." (ibid: p.244).

How little this spiritual freedom was actually respected is shown by Evelyn Magnass, one of Higson and Retellack's de facto successors as Secretary of the Church of England Committee for Diocesan Moral and Social Welfare Councils. In 1968 she conducted a survey of moral welfare work in the dioceses which included a series of visits to diocesan residential homes, by then mostly Mother and Baby homes. She

found 14 out of 76 of the homes visited were still holding compulsory daily prayer meetings (four of those twice daily). In a further 34 of the homes residents were expected to attend or were as she puts it “captive”. In another 11 homes attendance at prayers was still expected but there was “constructive acceptance of objections”. In only two homes was choice about attending prayers entirely free and in 14 homes no corporate prayer meetings were held at all (all figures Magnass, c.1969: p.42).

The fact that these two forms of moral welfare, indoor and outdoor work, remained virtually distinct from each other is telling. The progressives in outdoor work were obviously either disinclined to or unable to exert a pressure for change and reform on the indoor work. Residential work remained backward looking and isolated.

V. “Forty Three Different Patterns of Working.”

The separation of indoor and outdoor work was not the only or even the most serious form of isolationism prevalent within moral welfare. In the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church moral welfare work was organised along diocesan lines. Each diocese had its own team of moral welfare workers. This system remained unchanged throughout moral welfare’s history. In 1965 all 43 dioceses in the Church of England still had their own teams (Hall and Howes, op. cit: passim).

Heasman’s account of the history of JBMH includes an illuminating section on the work of the House’s warden in the late 1940s and 1950s, Christabel Blackburn. What Blackburn had, which was rare indeed at that time, was a strategic sense of the state of moral welfare work and the direction it needed to move to strengthen its position both within the churches and within the wider social work profession. In 1952 Blackburn addressed the internal problems of trying to run a social work service as part of the Church and produced a document entitled *Strategy and Priorities in Moral Welfare Work*. Heasman summarises as follows:

“Here her concern was with lack of co-ordination between dioceses. Most of them seemed to carry on in complete isolation, without any real reference to what another diocese, even a neighbouring one was doing. Under these conditions it was difficult to place students in appropriate jobs because there was no overall picture of where they were needed or what sort of work was available. ...

“Miss Blackburn had here put her finger on the problem of the fifties -

the fact that moral welfare was now recognised as a special form of social work, and yet it was too circumscribed by its diocesan structure. It had reached the point where it needed a carefully planned strategy, which included a dispassionate review of its existing pattern of work, of its financial resources and of its manpower in relation to the statutory services. It also needed a clear rethinking of the essential nature of the work itself and the prevailing conditions in which that work was being done.” (Heasman 1979: pp.70-71)

The fundamental point is that the national coverage of church social work in the Church of England was not strategic. A diocese with a surplus of moral welfare workers might have a neighbour with a shortage. The system was hardly a system at all. It was decentralised to the point of being almost wilfully isolationist. The reasons for the isolationism need to be more closely examined. Blackburn, was able to critique the situation but she had no real power and indeed part of the critique was that there was nobody with the real power to make the necessary changes. None of the changes which Blackburn so clear-sightedly foresaw as necessary were implemented in time. The changes recommended in Hall and Howes’s study, published in 1965, were apparently shrugged off by many because they were drawn from analysis of only two dioceses and this allowed some to comfort themselves with the idea that these criticisms did not apply to them, as Magnass noted in the published record of her 1968-69 survey (1970: p.36). She despairingly commented:

“All the dioceses in these two provinces were running a service (and the 43rd, Sodor and Man, participating in an ecumenical service), and the forty three dioceses had virtually forty three different patterns of working.” (ibid: p.36)

VI. A 1950s plateau

Despite these organisational problems the 1950s appears to have been a reasonably smooth period for moral welfare workers working alongside other specialists such as almoners and psychiatric social workers. There is some evidence of reasonable mutual co-existence. Long (op cit: 5) commends the quality of the relationship between church and statutory social workers in North Wales in the 1940s. In 1943 a Ministry of Health Circular No. 2866 had encouraged local authorities to issue grants to Church moral welfare agencies. Eileen Younghusband includes moral welfare in her extensive survey of British social work (1951: 59-62).

The Moral Welfare Workers Association was a founder member of the British Association of Social Workers during this period. Christabel Blackburn, the Warden of JBMH at this time, attempted to play her part in facilitating co-operation. In a paper entitled *The Practical Side of Moral Welfare Work* she:

“...recommended more emphasis on family casework, and more co-ordination with the local authority children’s department, the youth employment bureaux, child guidance clinics and approved schools and hostels. It resulted in a three-day conference with supervisors of students, which not only helped them to re-think, but forged a far closer connection between the House and other social workers and led to regular conferences with supervisors.” (Heasman, 1979: p.69)

Nevertheless, at bottom, the relationship between state and church social workers remained at best nebulous. At the end of her book Higson concludes

“We need all the learning and research which can be brought to bear upon the problems of today, so that we may bear our part in the Welfare State...” (op.cit:p.143)

Yet how neatly moral welfare work fitted into the welfare state or even if the framers of that state had even given it a moment’s thought was not at all clear. Within only a few years the organisation of social work and indeed the whole of British society had changed so that moral welfare was no longer felt to be required and the true brittleness of the churches’ hold on social work was revealed.

VII. Rapid Decline

At the end of their chapter reviewing “Moral Welfare Work Today” in their 1965 book Hall and Howes note that over time moral welfare work had narrowed and atrophied, losing for example its educational and preventative aspect and ceasing to do any direct work with prostitutes. They describe it as a static activity which to a certain extent had been sidelined by recent developments in social work. Despite its “fine tradition” and continuing stabilising effect they conclude that it had to show itself capable of change if it were to survive. (op.cit: pp.258-259). Where Hall and Howes are perhaps more honest than other writers on this subject is in recognising the inadequacies of moral welfare work at that time. Moral welfare as a discrete social work activity is recognised as moribund:

“We reached the conclusion that the reasons for the current specialism are largely historical, and that the special features of the situation which in the last century led the church to undertake work with a particular category of social outcasts, as ‘fallen women’ then were, have largely disappeared, while the compassion for them which moved the pioneers in this field has become more generally diffused throughout society and is being expressed by means of widespread statutory care.” (Hall and Howes, op.cit: p.264)

In her article published in *Crucible* in 1970, Magnass appraises the situation facing church social workers and one of the most interesting aspects of the article is that she provides statistics to show how rapid the decline actually was:

“Of the seventy six mother and baby homes visited, thirty have subsequently closed. The sudden dramatic decrease in demand [following the introduction of the Abortion Act] for this form of residential care from mid 1968 to the end of 1969 made the homes economically unviable so rapidly that some of the governing bodies were unable to plan any useful change of purpose.” (1970: p.38)

She goes on to conclude:

“Undoubtedly within the next decade the moral welfare service, as it now is, covering virtually the whole of the country will cease to exist because it will have fulfilled its function.... A particular job is about to have reached completion. There are many, particularly within diocesan boards of finance and among the realists as well as the righteous who will say, ‘Thank goodness.’” (ibid: p.39)

Some further statistics on the speed of decline are provided by the Anglican Association of Social Responsibility. Their website cites an internal Church of England audit which noted:

“New cases accepted by diocesan social workers went down from 31,200 in 1964 to 8,791 in 1976, with total numbers of staff down from 948 in 1964 to 436 in 1976.” (Anglican Association of Social Responsibility Website <<http://www..socialresponsibilityassoc.org/main/.htm>>. Attempts to locate this internal document have proven unsuccessful.)

VIII. The End of Moral Welfare

Heasman’s book on Josephine Butler Memorial House goes into some detail concerning the complicated situation moral welfare workers faced in the late 1960s. It is worth quoting from this chapter at some length to get the full picture:

“In this country the demand for moral welfare workers had reached its

peak in 1966-1968, when there were around 100 homes and 350 social workers as well as ancillary staff dealing with an average of 24,000 families a year; and dioceses, which were registered as adoption agencies, were making a total of some 2,500 placements a year, But after 1968 many significant changes took place. The 'pill' was more easily obtainable, abortion in certain specified circumstances had been made legal and the illegitimacy rate had begun to fall....

“The Planning Group [at JBMH] was faced with the consequences of the implementation of the Seebohm Report, which recommended that the personal social services should be organised on a family rather than a specialist basis, and so automatically brought all unmarried mothers within the statutory services provided for the family. The Local Authority Social Services Act of 1970 set up social services departments throughout the country and brought personal social services, including that of unmarried mothers, under its surveillance...

“This on its own would have been a severe set back to moral welfare work. But in addition, a basic or generic course for all social workers was required, which had to be recognised by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work. Josephine Butler College applied several times for such recognition, but failed to obtain it on the grounds that too much time was being given to theological study, and that the size of the college was too small to warrant adequate teaching. This failure to gain recognition was very serious, because it meant that local authority grants for students were no longer forthcoming. It made it financially impossible for the college to carry on with training students.” (Heasman, 1979: pp.88-89)¹⁵

It must be appreciated that, for much of the 20th Century, moral welfare work was the churches' core social work activity. Work in inner city parishes amongst the very poorest people continued throughout this period in a very ad hoc fashion but such work never had a college to support its work and it was never organised on a diocesan level. That said, the Church of England hierarchy did not support the college financially or in any other tangible way. A good deal of Heasman's book (1979) is an account of the JBMH's history in terms of financial stringency as it struggled for much of the period of its existence to keep itself on a financially viable

¹⁵ Two of the interviewees in this present research were members of this planning group and both spoke of the sense of frustration and powerlessness in the group in the face of the changes in the profession and also their inability to control or influence what was happening across the dioceses. Additionally, something that Heasman does not mention is that Sister Flynn, the final Warden died suddenly in this period. Penelope Hall, long-time chair of the Selection Committee and liaison between the College and Liverpool University had also died in 1966. Church social work had relied too long on charismatic and forceful leaders. Ultimately they were no substitute for proper, integrated structures and organisation.

footing. If the Church of England had chosen to it could certainly have invested in its social work training college.¹⁶ That it chose not to and the enterprise eventually foundered says a great deal about prevailing attitudes to social work in that church.

Section 3: Social Work and Beyond, 1960s - the present

The history of church social work in Britain over the last forty years or so can be seen as an attempt by many in the churches, particularly in the Church of England, to rid themselves of their associations with moral welfare and move on to clearer ground. The various new trends that have occurred in church social intervention, such as the social responsibility movement and church community work, all need to be understood in part as reactions against moral welfare ways and means. I have allowed a 10 year overlap period in estimating the dates of this activity because in church social work as in so much else the 1960s was a period of radical re-examination, whilst at the same time, as has been described, also being the peak of moral welfare activity.

Sources

Sources such as annual reports have been found to have a narrow focus and to be not especially enlightening on the overall situation facing church social work. Biographical material and autobiographical material is not as readily available on modern-day church social workers as it is on church philanthropists or even moral welfare workers. Woodroffe (op. cit: p. 215) notes the reluctance of British social workers to tell their stores and articulate their concerns about the profession. This is certainly true of church social workers with Beasley (1997) being the one partial exception included here. Otherwise sources have been drawn from writers who are on the whole critical of church social work ranging from church community workers (Lovell, G., 1980) to advocates of social justice (Lovell, D., 2001).

¹⁶ The JBMH archive documents contain a number of accounts of courageous and rather pathetic attempts to raise funds or save money. One quotation from the Standing Committee minutes will suffice to give a flavour:

“Miss Higson thought that the students should have adequate light even if nothing could be done about the heating, and suggested higher power bulbs.” (Box No. JBMH 2/10)

I. Permeation

What happened to the hundreds of workers still working in moral welfare teams at the end of the 1960s? Magnass intimated (1970: p.36) that a large number were approaching retirement age but for the rest and for newly qualified Christian social workers in this period there was viewpoint developing over a number of years (Wickham 1962, Heasman 1965, Hall and Howes, 1965) that urged Christians to see that The State was not a rival to The Church in social work provision. These writers had begun to suggest that the proper place for the Christian in Social Work was not in another kind of separate church-run social work agency but within the state sector acting as representatives of Christianity and The Church. Wickham, the Anglican Bishop of Middleton, wrote in an important and often cited article:

“...for the church is not to be understood in a purely institutional way. She *is* at work through the laity dispersed into their secular callings.” (Wickham, 1962: 269)¹⁷

He goes on to suggest that the possibility of Christians “leavening” statutory social service is the best one on offer, not least because it can serve as:

“...a bulwark against clericalism and ecclesiasticism” (ibid: 269)

Similarly much later, Paul Ballard refers to “the scattered presence” (Ballard in Ballard [Ed.] 1990: p.28) of The Church in the world of work in general, emphasising that The Church is nothing more than the totality of its members, wherever they are to be found.

II. Diversification into the Gaps

It is noticeable, however, that Wickham along with Hall and Howes, whilst for all intents and purposes abandoning moral welfare and suggesting state social work as an alternative, were not prepared to give up altogether what they saw as the right of the churches to be involved in some direct form of social provision. Hall and Howes had seen the continuation of some sort of church social work as essential for the credibility of the Church’s voice on social matters. They write about The Church

¹⁷ See also Sykes, N., 1961: p. 116 for an example of an expansion of this position

maintaining a “bridgehead” in professional social work as part of its corporate activity in order to maintain the connection between church leaders and secular social workers and administrators. Without this bridgehead in the world of social work the general “witness for social righteousness would be less convincing and easy to sustain.”(Hall and Howes, op cit: p. 268)

One of the most common themes in church social work literature has been that the churches can act as pioneers moving into areas where social work has not previously been tried (Niebuhr, 1932: p.16) but both Hall and Howes and Wickham initially were thinking not about entirely new frontiers but about work in line with what had previously been a church specialty, possibly making use of existing resources and experience. They were still urging work with a so-called moral element to it:

“It may well be, however, that the Church will always find opportunities for giving special care to those individuals and groups whose conduct comes within the mistily defined sphere of what is ‘unlawful’ but not necessarily criminal, for example, prostitutes, homosexuals, alcoholics and potential suicides, to which list some would undoubtedly add unmarried parents and their children. In the social care of these categories of people and others like them, moral and spiritual issues lie very close to the surface, and spiritual as well as psychological help may be needed to affect a cure.” (Hall and Howes, op cit: pp.264-265)

In a very similar vein, Wickham had written:

“The rough criteria for the appropriateness for the Church’s undertaking such [social] work might include the following:
...where the element of spiritual and moral care is primary and a re-orientation of the mind is an essential part of meeting the need (e.g. work with alcoholics, the suicide prone, homosexuals and prostitutes, unmarried mothers, shelter care, etc.)” (Wickham, 1962: pp.269).

It is noteworthy how many of the potential recipients of care in both lists are included for reasons of sexuality or perceived sexual sins. See Chapter 5 for a discussion of this emphasis within church social work.

A practical attempt to make something more of moral welfare work is described by Heasman in her book *Christians and Social Work*. The Boreham Wood Experiment involved employment of a Church Army Sister, trained in moral welfare, to live and work on a newly-built estate. It was basically an attempt to salvage moral

welfare work by adding other social work to it:

“...in the first year only fifteen out of the sixty families which she [the worker] helped had problems of illegitimacy. Instead she was regarded as a worker on the parochial staff, who could be consulted on every type of trouble or difficulty.”(Heasman, 1965: pp.103-104)

In effect her role was similar to that of the late 19th Century parochial mission women although the main difference was that her professional status was recognised both by the clergy and by local authority social workers. The Boreham Wood Experiment lasted for six years and seems to have been successful for the most part because of the professionalism and diplomacy of the worker.

It quickly became apparent, however, that such thinking was shot. Moral welfare work could not be added to. As a basis for practice it had to be abandoned. Not only that, the churches needed to address their systems of social work provision because there were fundamental faults within them. A comment in *Crucible* after a period of consultation and soul searching concluded:

“There was a general recognition, however, that the direct provision of a service is not the only way, or even the best way, of expressing a shared concern.” (Editorial July-Sept 1974: p.88)

Despite this conclusion and the general drift away from direct provision, it should not be forgotten that some remaining church social work associations did manage to cling on and persevere without undergoing radical transformations. Church social work's most common ongoing manifestation was in adoption work or some other “family social work” type of activity, often on the fringes of state provision such as respite care work.

III. Broader Diversification

Several other forms and expressions of church social intervention emerged during the 1960s and 70s and they often contained within them implicit criticisms of the faults to be found within church social work.

i. Church Community Work

One such new form was church community work. As far back as 1933 E.

Wight Bakke had conducted a study of unemployed men in the Greenwich area of London. As part of the study he looked at the efforts of the churches to alleviate the plight of these men. His comments were based on observation of 37 churches, chapels and missions in Greenwich and interviews with 5 Ministers. He concluded:

“The impression one gains is that the religious institutions of Greenwich are not dominant factors in the life of that borough. The problems and promises which are the focus of churchgoers’ attention are not of dominant community interest. They are special problems and interests of a few members of the community. If anything is clear it is that the churches in Greenwich do not represent a community force finding expression in community institutions and filling a community function. Neither from the point of view of its dominant influence in the lives of the majority of the individuals nor of its wrestling with the problems which to a majority of the citizens seem important as objects of united action can the church life of Greenwich be described as a community activity.... The business of managing Greenwich community problems is carried out without much resort to religious sanctions. The voluntary activity on behalf of the unfit and unable is the closest approach to community action. Even here, however, the sporadic nature of the assistance suffers unfavourably in comparison with the consecutive and continued assistance on the part of the state and local authorities.” (Wight-Bakke, 1933: pp.207-208)

These criticisms were resurrected by advocates of church community work forty years later. According to them Church social work was not properly engaged in local communities, grounded in local issues or particularly relevant to local needs.

George Lovell wrote a text book on church community work. He begins with a definition:

“Community development is basically about helping people of all ages to develop and mature by and through assisting them to decide, plan and take action to improve their physical environment and their social amenities. It is about (a) what ordinary people in local situations can do to improve their lives and (b) what happens when they do this. The primary emphasis in a community development project, is not what people do for others or for themselves, but what the doing does for all the people involved.

“Community development workers try to help people to build communities by working with rather than for them.”(Lovell, G. 1980: pp.4-5)

Reading between the lines church social work stands condemned as a service that has been for rather than with the people. It is thought to be an imposed solution to one almost random aspect of a community’s social problems as perceived by people living elsewhere. White comes up with a similar critique:

“Broadly speaking, the social work stream of Christian organisations has tried

to work from the top down, with structures that are not dissimilar to their statutory counterparts; the communal stream has always worked from a small group of committed people outwards. It has eschewed bureaucracies at every turn.”

(White, 1986: p.84)

If church community work's central criticism of church social work was structural and organisational, there were others making even more basic and fundamental criticisms.

ii. Social Responsibility

In 1965 Heasman wrote *Christians and Social Work*. She begins this book with a chapter entitled “Social Responsibility” which is a philosophical examination of the nature of human responsibility in society, starting with basic human needs, in a similar vein to Charlotte Towle's book *Common Human Needs* and expanding to consider what exactly the basis of social work intervention is. That a book on social work should begin with a very broad examination of how human beings should act as they attempt to live in community with one another indicates that Heasman was attempting to reach beyond the fairly narrow confines of church social work.

“Furthermore, the Christian has his duty as a citizen to quicken the social conscience whenever this is needed. He cannot allow conditions to prevail which are entirely out of keeping with the principles of his religion, nor turn a blind eye when social evils are allowed to continue.” (Heasman, 1965: p.18)

In some ways this chapter catches the spirit of contemporary social thought in the churches and predicts what was to come, both in its title and content. To Heasman none of the points that she raises about general social responsibility interferes with the feasibility of the church continuing to do social work, but many in the churches in the following twenty years or so would seek to emphasise social responsibility, by which they meant combating social evils through political means, at the expense of practical church social work. Ruth Badger, a very experienced worker in the social responsibility field, wrote:

“Social Responsibility is concerned with not only comforting the distressed but also distressing the comfortable.”(Badger, 2001: p.224)

In fact it became almost entirely concerned with the latter; the former was either derided or, more usually, simply dropped.

This position was rarely stated openly and came about gradually. The Church of England Board of Social Responsibility Journal *Crucible* provides in itself documentation of the Church of England's steady rejection of its own social work. Up until the end of 1961 the journal was called *Moral Welfare* and was the professional journal of moral welfare workers. But an editorial in October 1961 declared:

“Beginning with the first issue for 1962, this magazine will be entitled *Crucible* - a symbolic word, speaking of a vessel in which the elemental insights of theology, sociology, and social case-work are fused.” (*Crucible* 1961: p.106)

Predictably, however, the insights of social casework appear less and less often in the journal in the years to follow. Full articles on church social work become increasingly rare. Kathleen Heasman did write a regular column entitled “social work notes” for a number of years up until the early 1970s when it mysteriously disappeared from the journal. The February 1970 is a special edition on diocesan social work and it contains two articles on church social work but it is clear from the editorial of this and another similar edition in 1974 that the editorial committee are attempting to deal with this subject so that it can properly be shelved. Indeed after 1974 church social work and even social work as a whole are no longer a regular topics for debate or discussion within *Crucible*. They slip into the background.

iii. Social Justice

Advocates of social responsibility appeared to want to forget all about their church social work heritage. Others, however, were more direct and possibly more honest in their criticisms. A firmer and more easily defined position than that of social responsibility is that taken by the advocates of social justice. David Lovell's unpublished paper, “Social Justice for Children and Young People.” (2001) is a strong piece of writing on these themes. It is a Children's Society document looking at the development of social justice in the Children's Society. Although I stated at the beginning of this study that it was not covering charities associated with the churches and was rather concentrated on the social work more closely connected to church structures, this document is nonetheless relevant because it chimes with much of the thinking in the social justice movement and elsewhere that has been critical of church

social work.

Lovell argues that there is a large area of agreement between the theory of social justice and much Christian theology. Indeed he cites Isaiah chapter 1 verses 18-20:

“Learn to do good, search for justice
Help the oppressed
Do justice to the orphan
Plead for the widow.

It is crystal clear what God wants. Thus for the Children’s Society to say it is a Christian, social justice organisation is a tautology. The two go together like peaches and cream.” (Lovell, D. 2001: p.44 citing Revised Standard Version.)

However, Lovell’s central distinction is between social welfare and social justice. The separation of the two is not new. Higson was aware of it in her book and quoted one time Bishop of Oxford Charles Gore:

“The Church has constantly been occupied in picking up the wounded on the battlefield of life, in providing medicine and staunching wounds when she should have been thundering at the gates of tyranny.” (Gore in Higson, op. cit. 16, origin of original quotation not cited or found)

Notwithstanding this quotation Higson clearly believed that in the absence of thunder the staunching operation must continue and be properly organised. Lovell, on the other hand had come to see that the staunching was actually preventing the thunder and was thereby positively harmful:

“The hypothesis of this paper is that Social Justice and Social Welfare are two entirely different enterprises and in many ways antithetical. We need to disabuse ourselves of the belief that our welfare state and its systems can do no harm....

“But over time it is clear that many services do not even help the particular individual but sustains and deepens their devalued status and on occasions too many to mention causes them to be harmed in some way.”

(Lovell, D. op. cit: p.7)

Lovell goes on to describe how this harm and stigmatisation comes about, drawing on the writings of Goffmann, Illich and McKnight amongst others. He describes what

he calls the pathological approach to problem solving. Ideally, with McKnight, he would like to see all social welfare work cease:

“At this point the dangerous idea that human service professionals can do harm becomes even more dangerous. It is the idea that welfare professionals should stop what they are doing not only because it is harmful it is also ineffective and does not achieve social justice...But it will be extremely difficult to get welfare professionals to stand down but it is possible and right that they should change or as the social anthropologist would say ‘reconstruct’ themselves.” (ibid: p.21)

There can be no doubt that Lovell would place almost all the social work of the churches in the 20th Century in the social welfare camp. The reconstruction that he envisages involves workers perceiving themselves as liberators rather than imperialists or colonisers. He is referring, of course, to the colonisation of thought or opinion:

“ A major anti social justice characteristic of human service professionalism is the presumption to speak for others from its own perspectives, experiences, concerns and values...Rather social justice demands that human service workers need to see their role as finding ways to reconstruct and represent the voices and experiences of people they are working alongside....The project then becomes one not of normalising, curing or fixing the client but of joining with people who are stigmatised and powerless in the assertion of their experience and voice in social discourse and relationships as both relevant and powerful.” (ibid: 23)

This clearly involves the worker as tool, amplifier for the voice of the powerless, for whatever they want to say. There can be no censure of that voice. This involves an acceptance of pluralism, that all or almost all views are valid and entitled to be heard. Indeed Lovell comments:

“Unless the value system is pluralistic it is my hypothesis that the service outcome cannot be focused on the celebration of difference. It is my further hypothesis that the celebration of difference is an essential defining characteristic of a socially just human service.” (ibid: 21)

This is where, clearly, there is some area of conflict between Christianity and social justice theories that advocate pluralism, in that Christianity historically has claimed to be the sole possessor of truth and the only way to God. Lovell notes that this issue has been a serious difficulty in formulating policy in The Children’s Society. It is a

circle that cannot be squared. The advocacy of Christian values and Christian social work in a pluralistic society will be enlarged upon elsewhere in the study.

iv. Christian Social Work

Throughout the period of the dominance of moral welfare work of the church social work scene in England and Wales the Evangelical movement in the churches chose not to play a role in church social concerns. This is what Moberg has called *The Great Reversal* (1972) and it affected Evangelical churches in North America and Britain. Evangelical churches in Britain, with the exception of The Salvation Army and The Church of Scotland, dropped out of social work in the 20th Century. In recent years, however, the Evangelical movement has returned to involvement in social work / social care. A good account of such an effort is provided by Steve Chalke in his book *Faithworks* (2001) in which he describes the emergence of the organisation he founded - The Oasis Trust. It is important to point out at this stage that Christian social work is usually distinct from church social work in that it is not reliant on old denominational structures.

IV. Disenchantment with Permeation

At the same time as community work, social responsibility, and social justice platforms were being constructed within the churches, a generation of Christian social workers were attempting to follow the advice of Heasman, Wickham and others and be The Church within the state social work system. In recent years some literature has been produced by Christian social workers who attempted to work within this system. A common theme is considerable disenchantment with the values or lack of values found in statutory social work settings particularly in regard to the decision making process (see principally Beasley 1997 and also Bowpitt 1998). White (1986) writes a similar critique of secular social work values from a Christian perspective although White himself did not work in secular social work. These writers have claimed that the values of secular social work have become incompatible with Christian values to such an extent that they are suggesting that the secular social work field is no place for a Christian and they are again urging separate systems of provision.

Beasley's book is, in part, an autobiography of a social worker who moved from working for the state to working under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church. The central themes of the book are the limitations that structures automatically impose, both the structures of professional social work and of the conventional theology of church culture and hierarchy, and the possibility of liberation once one steps outside of those structures onto the margins of society (Beasley 1997: p.94).

Beasley rejects the term "social work" (ibid: p.16) for her work because of what she sees, in common with David Lovell, as the limitations of social work's problem-centred approach and because of the distance that professionalism creates between the helper and the helped, which she sees as unnecessary and unchristian. In addition as a local authority social worker she had seen how many of the "street people" that she worked with fell through the safety net of state provision especially when there was no immediate crisis. She goes on to describe several instances of this happening and analyses how a problem-centred approach fails to do justice to such people:

"Those involved in social work and counselling are primarily concerned with people who are an integral part of society; they presume that a link exists, that there is a single problem and that, when resolved, the person is able to function within, and be supported by, society again. Such agencies are therefore part of the dominant social structure enabling that structure and those within it, to function according to its norms. It is not their role to question the underlying causes of such problems and whether the structure itself might be at fault. Street people on the other hand, do not belong within the mainstream of society, and lack the normal social and economic links with it. Their 'problem' is the lack of such links, rather than the symptoms of this alienation" (Beasley op.cit: pp.30-31)

In addition she sees the 'professionalism' of social work as a potential encumbrance to those trying to bring help:

"... where there is a need, not only to solve a problem, but to establish relationships which will compensate for the lack of affirmation, particularly in childhood, this distance between professional and client in professional, problem centred agencies are not the same as a relationship engaging the whole person. Indeed the very setting in which such contact takes place emphasises the distance, with one sitting behind a desk, often surrounded by the trappings of status and power.

"'I am too powerful to do that' is a comment I have heard among

social workers anxious to establish that their role is that of a professional, not someone doing the more mundane tasks. Yet Jesus was not too qualified to touch lepers. There must be a willingness to touch people if those in pain are to be reached.” (ibid: p. 26)

The reply to this is that surely professionalism need not necessarily mean distance or barriers even if it has meant those things in the past. In fact it is not professionalism *per se* that she is describing but insecurity surrounding the process of professionalization within social work.¹⁸

She describes in the second chapter her attempts to encourage the churches to form links with street people and how, as General Booth found, people in the churches are happier doing something “for” people, preferably at a safe distance, than actually socialising “with” them. Beasley follows General Booth in commenting that people on the margins are often perceived as a threat¹⁹, and that much of this is to do with the “cultural baggage” of the churches rather than true religion²⁰.

V. Advocacy of a New Separatism

With Bowpitt (2000: p.357, 362 and also 1998: p.689) Beasley advocates the creation of Christian communities in which the voluntarily and involuntarily marginalized can live together, as an alternative to church-based social work. Both Bowpitt and Beasley cite the L’Arche communities for people with learning disabilities, founded by Jean Vanier, as an example of the way forward for the churches. This is the separatist trend that is here being characterised as the move “beyond” social work. How exactly these communities might be brought about or arranged neither Beasley nor Bowpitt examines in any depth.

Life in one of these communities is described in some detail in Keith White’s 1986 essay “Residential Social Work”. White lives and works at the Mill Grove Christian Residential Home. It is necessary to quote at length to give a true depiction of White’s position. He begins:

¹⁸ See N. Toren 1972 chapters 1 and 5 and K. Woodroffe *op. cit.*: 224 -225 for examination of the way the quest for professional status has distorted social work and hampered any reforming agenda.

¹⁹ See also Woodroffe (*op. cit.*), chapter 1.

²⁰ See also Niebuhr (1932). chapter 2.

“At the present time Christian Residential Care seems to be running in two rather separate streams. In the one are a vast range of communities seeking to work out, in daily communal living, aspects of the Christian faith that are at variance with the rest of society (chastity, poverty and obedience, for example); in the other are those organisations trying to work in close partnership with the ‘formal’ social work sector and which tend to operate within categories determined by client-group, lifestage or method of work. Although both streams can be traced back to a common source, they have for so long gone their separate ways that they are usually assumed to flow from separate springs. Throughout this chapter, the first is termed the ‘communal’ stream; the second, the ‘social work’ stream.

This false and artificial division between different types of residential experience has had deep effects on the practice of those Christian organisations closest to formal social work. They have tended to accommodate themselves to, and be shaped by, social work models and categories, at the expense of the Christian faith.

...Much of what follows is an attempt to divert or ship water from the first stream to the second.”(White, 1986: p.75)

Much of the rest of the article is a critique of the so-called social work stream and an endorsement of the communal stream (by which he means truly Christian stream). So for example on the topic of families White writes:

“Whereas social work for the most part seems to have overlooked some of the structural problems of the family posed by R.D. Laing and D. Cooper, Christians have not always been so starry-eyed. ...the biblical norms for the family are centred on relationships and bonding, rather than on place, a private sphere separated from neighbours, and the consumer-orientated nature of family living.” (ibid: p.78)

On the concept of community:

“The relationships which are the sine qua non of community must be given time and space to grow....

“Rarely has social work been able to afford the time or the space to allow real communities to grow. Instead it has attempted ‘purpose-built units’, ‘care and treatment in a planned environment’, always seeking to pin down the precise objectives of a place, and to define the method of work. A Christian perspective is timely and appropriate as a counter- balance to this conscious planning and attempted quantification,” (ibid: p.79)

The most difficult problem in reviewing this article is that White fails to

make clear who or what it is that he is actually criticising. He lists a number of institutions that belong in the first 'communal' stream including Mill Grove itself, the Richmond Fellowship, L'Arche and St. Christopher's Hospice but he does not give a single example of an institution belonging to the second "social work stream" possibly because he does not want his criticisms to be too pointed. Somebody, he is saying, has "sold out" but he won't say who. White's criticisms are probably directed mainly at the large charities with church connections, such as National Children's Homes and The Children's Society, that were then (less so now - particularly for the Children's Society) involved in residential social work. Certainly if any groups had accommodated and shaped themselves in relation to developments in social work it was these organisations and the church connection for some of them can be seen to have weakened. However, one of the consequences of White not being clear about which organisations he is criticising is that the essay becomes a critique not of Christian organisations that have accepted what he calls secular social work values but of those values *per se*.

White writes at the end of this article:

"Social work will have a contribution to make to residential situations but it does not provide an adequate base, in and of itself, for the creation of living communities. Their origin lies elsewhere, their boundaries extend far beyond the parameters of social work. The detailed work integrating policy and practice, time and place, Christian insights and social work structures has to be done at ground level and in the context of real life situations. If this article does no more than create an awareness of the existence of two streams and help to remove a little of that which keeps them apart, it will have served a purpose, but it is of course, written with the conviction that the living water of residential work comes ultimately only from God. It is a gift, not something that can be bought or constructed, and that is no easy truth for secular social work to grasp." (ibid: p.92)

The last two sentences of this paragraph reveal White's true position. He wants to reunite these two streams but only on his terms. His assumption all the way through the article is that secularised social work is responsible for any split, that it has been drawn away from the straight and narrow path. White is urging Church social work to be more Christian, more aware of its Christian heritage and system of nourishing theological roots. He, as do Bowpitt and Beasley, suspect that this can only be done in an exclusively Christian atmosphere.

Beasley, Bowpitt, and White have all effectively given up on state social work and are advocating various forms of separatist position where, for the sake of principle and purity, Christians do their work apart.

VI. Summary

The device used in structuring this overview, that of splitting up the history of church social work in Britain into separate sections with a different emphasis in each section, has been just that, a device. There would be plenty of available evidence to contradict such a view of the history, for example the enduring traditions and continuity within long lasting philanthropic societies and adoption agencies. In many ways one is doing violence to the tradition to cut it up in this way. Nevertheless, it has been shown that this device is meaningful and that the understanding of church social work is furthered through the use of it. Firstly the moral welfare period, the middle period of church social work, forms a distinct entity. Secondly, it is the two transition periods into and out of the middle period that are key to understanding the thesis of the study. The first transition period was the two decades of the 20th Century when failing church philanthropy blighted future professional church social work; the second transition period was the 1950s and 60s when the need for the reform or transformation of moral welfare was ignored and was thus followed by a period of rapid decline and failure of nerve on the part of the churches and the Church of England in particular to make something more of its own social work. All the rest was and is scrabbling around for meaning.

The remainder of this study picks up and analyses in greater depth themes only touched on in this review. Before that however, it has been clear in this last section, that the most recent generation of church social workers have not had their voices heard. The next chapter attempts to redress this balance by permitting church social workers themselves to tell their own stories about the history of church social work over the last forty years or so.

Chapter Two

Interview Accounts: Experiences of Perseverance, Adaptation and Renewal

Chapter 1 noted that printed material on the recent history of church social work, that is since the 1960s, is scarce. This chapter attempts to augment that material with extended quotations from the research interviews. The subject is either the interviewee's own work experience or what they know about the recent history of their own church social work organisation. The accounts are not meant to be representative or symbolic, simply to provide examples of the kinds of journeys church social work agencies have travelled over the last forty years or so. They are included because even after reading the first chapter the reader may still not have a firm grasp of what exactly church social work is. The inclusion of these concrete examples is intended to provide some further clarification. The accounts are not analysed in any great depth although the same material may be referred to again in other chapters. I have chosen to emphasise one phrase which appears to be at the heart of each account.

I. "You tried to get her before anybody else did."

The following is a description of the practical work undertaken at Josephine Butler Memorial House in the mid-1950s. Chronologically, it is the earliest work recalled from personal experience. The interviewee, who went on to a career as a Moral Welfare Worker, is now in her seventies.

"I did a stint in St. Helens and a very short stint in Liverpool where I was taken down to meet the early morning ferry from Ireland where the girls came over to work in England and were very easily picked up to be taken into prostitution, so the idea was that somebody went down and if you saw a girl with a brown paper parcel and not a new suitcase you tried to get her before anybody else did and offer some accommodation. But in actual fact that had been quite a significant piece of work in the Liverpool docks but it was just coming to an end when I did it.... It wasn't taking the mothers to mother and baby homes it was trying to avoid them being exploited.

Or give them some counselling or well I mean what they found was put a social worker there and all sorts of problems come out.” (Interview 19)

The above is obviously preventative work. One of the criticisms of moral welfare work made by Hall and Howes (1965: 259) was that by that time it had narrowed its focus and lost its preventative element.

II. “...it was a bit like the old concept of almoning”

The following is a description of the social work of an Anglican city centre church in the 1960s. The interviewee is male and in his late fifties/early sixties.

“When I joined [in 1965] I think I was called a welfare officer and that might give you a clue to what it was like....

I was one of the people who came on board, and I think we went up to something like a dozen on the whole staff of whom seven or eight would have been involved in what we simply called interviewing, and it was interviewing with a sort of welfare edge to it. So it was um I suppose, you know there was a fund and out of that fund we were able to give people material help and if instead of material help they wanted time or listening to, we were reasonably free to do that. Um demand always exceeded supply and so you tried to keep open for the whole session. And the day would be divided into three sessions, morning and afternoon and evening and we were kept very busy ...and we would typically get 20 or 25 people in the course of a session and sometimes the requests were very slight, very humble. I mean it was like a complement to what was then called the national assistance. And I think we probably saw ourselves as being for non-starter people, either that they had been turned down or were not eligible or there might be some technical reason why they couldn't be helped. I mean a lot of it was just very simple sticking plaster sort of stuff, a bus ticket to visit a probation officer. Or - ”

R.W. “Did you have good relations with the National Assistance Board? Presumably you could discuss with them whether you could help a client or they could help a

client.”

“Yes that’s right. At that time there wasn’t really an issue of confidentiality. You know you didn’t worry about that. You just rang up the NAB and said hello I’m from St. John’s. There’s a guy here who says he’s got to get to Scotland and he says you can’t help. Is that true? They might say no we didn’t actually say that or yes it was true and it was resolved on that sort of basis. Yeah, quite a lot of our funding went towards giving help in kind. Another example would be in those days if you didn’t have an address, I think you had a legal right to claim benefit but you had no practical right to benefit because your benefit turned on your address and the cost of your housing so if you didn’t have an address and a cost of housing to pin it to, 99 times out of 100 the assistance board would not assist. So for people to actually claim benefit, they needed an address and if you didn’t have any money you couldn’t get the sort of address that would enable you to claim benefit. It was absolutely Catch 22. You would have to stay in one of the old government reception centres, some kind of night shelter where there was no payment involved, so there was no bed ticket. And that was the key to the system. Getting that piece of paper which said X slept here last night. This is his address. He can stay here another night. And once he got that the system would clunk into effect. So in those days we used to spend quite a lot of money for people to stay in hostels, Charles House, Salvation Army, Church Army and a few local authority places. There were a few local authority places and they were run if anything as commercial activities providing very stripped down basic accommodation. Which I think people on the whole accepted it as just that was it. That was what accommodation was back then. And you know with hindsight you can say that really was feeding people’s sense of anomie, I mean they lived in places where they couldn’t leave clothing at night or couldn’t leave valuables because unlike this room the partition didn’t go up to the ceiling so people would lean over the top with a straightened out coat hanger, you know all that sort of very insecure, very unpleasant, inadequate sort of arrangement. There was a lot of that. And that was really what we were responding to. We were enabling people to use that system and hopefully to move along from it....”

“What we did have in common with that old fashioned charity was we had our own capability for providing for folk and also in those days people used to give tokens of one sort or another to people doing social work, care of any sort. So if you were seen as a trustworthy person, um who was it, the ex-Services people for example would say we are going to give you a hundred pounds to spend on clothing for ex-servicemen or um when I started they were still giving bread and coal vouchers I think or we might have stopped giving out coal by the time I started. I forget now who it was, one of the worshipful companies in the city I think which would give us a whole stack of vouchers and each would be worth 10 shillings worth of coal. And that was still going on.” (Interview 4)

It hardly needs to be stated that the above is an example of how unchanging church social work was over a long period of time.

The following three accounts provide different answers to the question “What happened to Moral Welfare Work?”

III. “... the adoption bandwagon.”

This account is provided by a male manager of a Church of England Diocesan Social Work Team in the South of England. He had worked for the organisation for more than twenty years.

“All the diocesan work, I’ll think you’ll find around this, moral welfare became the large movement. From what I can see when I look through the history of our association... what seems to have happened is up to a point various bits of the diocese might have started initiatives, and they would probably be children’s homes, what they called outdoor work and so on and so forth and somehow in the thirties this moral welfare work was a way of bringing it all together. I mean different dispersed projects got put into one overall main [word unclear] and much more organised within the church. And it was organised on a church basis so that the deaneries had their workers and they had their support committees... and the association had 27 or 28 workers working within this diocese and the adoption part of that must have been

a factor with adoption coming in into the fifties and sixties. When we became registered as an adoption agency in 53 or 54, it may have been pressure from the workers, but it seems as if the work went over to adoption very fast...That was what they wanted to do. It was good. It was a rewarding sort of work. Most of the workers seem to have been Church Army sisters and they were trained by the Church Army and then employed in this dioceses.

R.W. So basically they got on the adoption bandwagon

“Yeah, and it was seen as an adoption agency. That’s what it was although it wasn’t strictly... I mean it was an agency that did adoption work but it also did some welfare work and ran some shelters and mother and baby homes, a big one in Waterby and one in Figby...”

“I inherited this adoption team which were all older Church Army sisters, all due up for retirement and the work was - we were still doing all of West Endshire’s work and some in East but East were doing their own...”

“But I can tell you that this agency in 1963 placed 250 kids for adoption and by 73 that was down to 25. A huge drop in numbers but with still 200 people waiting to adopt and that was partly due to East Endshire opening up but it was mostly to do with a decrease in the number of babies available for adoption: the pill, social stigma, abortion. And I suppose what is so difficult to understand is why did the church get so tied in to that adoption thing and so when that was in demise or in decline shall we say, they went into decline with it...”

“Just to finish our bit, in the end West Endshire asked us to enter into a contract to do their adoption work, I think it was for 12 years, this was in the 70s, and I brought it back to my council and they wouldn’t commit to going that far ahead - they said they could do three years and then we’ll look again and basically they said [the local authority] ‘we’ll do it ourselves’ and so we lost that and that was the final bit of the adoption team, the throughput would have been so small and so at that point we decided to get out.” (Interview 5).

It is sometimes stated that the state elbowed the church out of social work. It is noteworthy that the adoption work of this diocese came to an end because of a crisis of confidence on the part of the diocese itself.

IV. "...I was in a hatchet job."

The next description is of the work of a Director of Social Work in a Church of England diocese in the north of England during the 1970s. The interviewee is male and in his late fifties/early sixties. It is included as a very clear example of the forms of diversification discussed in section three of Chapter 1. Before this extract begins he has stated that the diocese employed 12 moral welfare officers:

"They all had their case committees of which I was an ex officio member. So I had to wander around all these committees trying to professionalize them and also at times trying to close them down, because I was in a hatchet job, there was no doubt by the 70s it became a hatchet job...."

"We had four Mother and Baby Homes at that time in the diocese, some very good ones, we had an ailing adoption society which really I had to make the decision either to close it down or to revise it . And I revised it with the local authority. Midshire social services had just come in at that time and they were happy to use me as an agency because they had got too much on their plate at that time. So we actually divided off the adoption society and they funded the adoption society quite heavily and I employed two new social workers to actually run the adoption agency and they did an excellent job...."

"I closed two of the Mother and Baby Homes within my first six months because they were just ailing and money was being poured into them and it was haemorrhaging really badly. So we closed them and I did a deal with a local group to turn them into flatlet schemes which we did and then eventually we set up a housing association within the diocese and we started taking large vicarages that were no

longer suitable for housing clergy and converting them... and they were all for unmarried mothers who had decided to keep their babies, I mean the places were not big enough to take more than just a mother and her child....”

“Also we also moved out into community development work. We recognised five problem estates within Northdean and it was our brief to actually put on a social worker, maybe two or three social workers into these estates and to actually begin to identify problems and work with the communities to identify problems and work at problems. Their brief was very much to involve the local church. So they would have been housed in the local church, that would have been their office and they would work with volunteers, that was another part of the work, work with volunteers and to increase the social involvement in the life of the church....”

“I believed and I still believe that the church is here to initiate and pioneer new avenues of social work, not just to hold onto the past for the sake of holding on to it, and I suppose I changed the face of moral welfare, I won't say I closed it down but I changed the face of it in both dioceses I worked in. In that we moved away from just working with unmarried mothers. And that's what I took over. Just moral welfare. Nothing else.”

R.W. “Can we just go back to the moral welfare officers that you had there. What happened with those? How did that pan out?”

(Big sigh.) “Some of them moved. Some of them were up for retirement. Some were ready for early retirement. I've got to confess that I took on a pretty low ship. And the workers were not happy as a team. The morale had gone. And I don't think it was - it was certainly something that I was not proud of professionally and I needed to sort of very gently lose them and then re-appoint. Having said that the moral welfare team which of course was called by a different name by that time numbered about 12 by the time that I left. We lost and then we built back up again.” (Interview 12)

V. “We do assessments and rehabilitation and training um where families have really come to the end of the line.”

The following is a description of the development of the social work of a Midlands Church of England diocese. It is a good example of an organisation surviving through specialisation. The interviewee is female, in her late fifties and had been with the organisation for more than 20 years.

“But the work had become focused on providing accommodation. They had closed their Mother and Baby Home which was where the babies were born and adopted six weeks later and their mothers went back home as though nothing had happened. And we have that history here.”

R.W. “Can you give me some dates, just roughly, about when they closed their mother and baby home, when this period would have been....”

“From the 1940s onward you see some sort of effort to bring together these various little groups across the diocese and until 1956 we were called the ‘women and girl’s help society’ then it was changed to be the ‘Sunnyvale moral welfare society’ so we’ve got the moral welfare in the fifties and the work was really re-organised so whereas we had had sub-offices across the towns it began to be more centred. Then they closed St. Julians, the maternity home in 1959, and opened another but it didn’t seem to last very long. Moral welfare was set up across the diocese properly in 1961, um but the St. Julians part of it, the maternity home, carried on alongside. St. Julians closed in 1969 but it had struggled partly because you would by then give birth in hospital, for youngsters particularly, and of course families were becoming much more involved to support or youngsters themselves were also beginning to say we can keep our baby, it was beginning to be possible to fund your child as a single mum.”

RW “And that’s just after the Abortion Act isn’t it?”

“That’s right, yeah. So we’ve got um the diocese being responsible for all the

salaries. They had always been salaried these Church Army sisters from very early on, the early 1900s but at this time because I think St. Julian's was struggling, they were saying well what do people need, and they appear to have come up with a unique answer in this diocese, that there were these groups of people, young women, who wanted to keep their babies and could possibly just manage it but had absolutely no family support, so what do you do? You give them supported living. It is very much the in thing at the moment. So we opened up and converted some flatlets then and then we enlarged it and then we did the same over in Downton and it was really supported living, people who had chosen to keep their babies, who didn't need much help. But by the time I came on the scene we had got a big premises over in Downton. We had got a couple of smaller ones here, but in each case the local authority were beginning to buy into it because they saw that they should be supporting and I think that grants go back much further than that actually, only a couple of hundred pounds you know, most of it would be donations, um but we began to be sucked into a much more secular need of young women. We opened Bensons with the help of an urban aid grant, you know, that was central government money in the eighties. We bought another house here in '86. We actually moved from a tiny little office, pre First World War, up here in '87. We tried to use this sort of supported living using Building Associations, in the late 80s but we could never find enough money to make them really safe places. We couldn't get night cover and all sorts of things went on which made them much more dangerous. Basically the sort of young women who were now coming needed much closer supervision for their babies to be safe. We weren't any longer just providing a grateful mum with somewhere decent to live and a walk alongside. We were actually looking at children and babies who were at risk because their mothers were living very chaotic lives. So at about that time we found that our main building was falling down in Downton and we decided that it wouldn't suit our purpose anyway and we should look at a new design, and then we searched for a couple of years before we could get planning permission. What we did was we raised three quarters of a million pounds, and built a purpose built, its probably the only purpose built building I know of in the country, over in Downton, that we are very proud of and its independent flats around a courtyard, with central accommodation for a crèche and training kitchen but the flats

are independent, to the point where you have your own gas and electric meters, you know you learn to live on what you have.”

RW “To pay your way.”

“That’s right. And accommodation for staff. It’s staffed. And we have a similar project over here, not quite so modern but works in the same way and its working now with some of the most at risk families you can find because we do assessments and rehabilitation and training um where families have really come to the end of the line. They have received everything social services can give them, probably the family have been living in neglect for years or you have such a serious child protection risk that they can’t be left in their own community. So we do independent assessments for the courts and for social services. And we really do have families from all over the country.” (Interview 16)

VI. “... we can spot an opening in the market.”

The following is a description of two new projects set up by a Methodist Mission in a large city within the last two years. They are included as examples of the churches’ efforts to play a full part in new thinking about the work itself and also how that work can be financed. The director of social work at the Mission, who was a man in his fifties who had been in post for almost 20 years, described them as follows:

“But there are two other initiatives that we brought off last year that we are rather proud of. One is that there is a refuge for street drinkers that was set up by a private company, run for profit. The thing is called the Refuge and the one private company was taken over by another private company and although it was making a profit they didn’t particularly want to continue with it in their portfolio. So they offered it up for sale and we managed to buy it as a going concern. There were some very interesting debates with all kinds of dimensions going back to the policy I talked about at the centenary. First of all it was a wet project so was Methodism going to be associated

with a wet project. It was about dignity and respite care but there was no attempt to force people to change and it was not abstinence. So that was the first thing but OK we could stomach that. Then, all the ethics about buying a business. We had bought properties before and set up social work services but we were buying something as a going concern and using our capital to do so.”

R.W. “ Can you explain to me how it works as a business?”

“Well, I’m only learning myself um basically the private company that had set it up obviously had to take the risk of buying the building and adapting it and then having to run it at sufficient profit to pay back their investment and make them a profit and they managed to do it for about four or five years. So we found these ethical issues about business and profit and staff salaries and all the rest of it and also if we take our capital money out and can’t replace it we’ve got less to use for the day centres. On the other hand, and this is where our financial people shone, they said, OK we can upgrade the staff to our own conditions. It will still make a profit. Its a long term venture because the people come here to die, and we’ve had a couple of deaths since, so we don’t have to do this constant search for business, and local authorities frankly want these people off the streets. They will pay five or six hundred pounds a week very happily to have them cared for with dignity. So we can buy the thing for one and a quarter million pounds and we can get back from the service enough money, you know if that one and a half million produces however much it produces in the bank, but not only can we get the same amount of money back and therefore continue to fund our basics, we can do some good work at the same time. And it’s wet work if you like. So these were some very big debates, and we had never actually gone through the process of buying a business and there were all sorts of ethical issues about that, and we had to get Methodist Headquarters permission to do that. But we did it in about eight weeks flat which was quite stunning, having had the debate. So that is a good piece of work. It’s additional. It’s a kind of haven for people you know that everybody accepts can’t or won’t change. It’s interesting that a couple of people have given up drinking since they have gone in there which is not part of the plan. Quite fascinating.”

R.W. "People change when there is no expectation of change."

"Well yes, there's an interesting debate, that's right. So that we sort of took on last July.

...

"And then the other thing which is a mixture you know going back to what I said about the Police Court Missioners and the start of the probation service. The probation service is increasingly moving towards a punitive Thatcherite model and there are a lot of the rough sleepers and drunks and all the rest of it still coming before the courts and getting £10 no time to pay or a day's imprisonment and they are let out of course and the police at CC which has the highest concentration of homeless people on the embankment and around there, Um they came up with the idea of having a small team of people who would go to the police station and meet them and rather than go before the beak, you know could they go to the night shelter or deeps. office or something like that, so we've started this what we've called the 'Arrest and Reach Out' scheme, which is kind of plugging a gap because the homelessness strategy, the rough sleepers unit strategy doesn't include any staff on the streets or in the hostels who could go to the police station or go before the courts and speak to the magistrate, which is what the probation officers traditionally did. The probation service is leaving these minor offenders behind (obscure words) so we've kind of reinvented the old fashioned probation service from a church base. ...We were able to make a case because of the status of our other work, because we had some day centres and we were known in the field if you like. We had a reputation for being professional. We persuaded the rough sleepers unit of the boroughs in the city to fund a two year pilot project and it is less than a year old and already the police are saying can we have two more please. In Bigby and up the Smallby police station.

So it's just nice to know that a) we can do something like buying a business because we've got capital which very few other organisations have and that's often an ethical debate that the churches have, and second we are able because of our knowledge of government policy and our standing with the statutory sector because

of our probation hostel, we can spot an opening in the market and persuade someone like the rough sleepers unit, which is a new government initiative coming on, you know that there is a gap that we have spotted that we can fill.” (Interview 14)

The last two accounts in this section are from organisations that I have described in Chapter 1 as Christian social work agencies. Both are inter-denominational.

VII. “Our night shelter”

The first of the two is a description of a winter night shelter service provided by a non-denominational charity based in a Scottish city. Whilst noting how remarkably similar this description is to Rider Haggard’s descriptions in the literature review of Salvation Army Hostels dating from 1910, it is only fair to point out that this service is only one part of a much larger integrated service for homeless people provided by this charity. The interviewee is in his forties and has worked for the organisation for more than 10 years.

“For the last two years from the first Monday in December until the last Sunday in February, 12 weeks, we have operated what we call the care shelter. For the two years before that it was for a lesser duration. I think four years ago it was for the two weeks over Christmas. It originated as a Christmas/New Year compassionate shelter for the homeless at Christmas. You know, heartstrings tugging stuff, and genuinely so. It is no fun being homeless, it is even less so at Christmas. So that’s how it started. It expanded to this 12 week winter period, to just cover the worst of the Scottish winter weather as it were. And we have managed to run that, employing seven staff last year, eight staff sorry. Um for these twelve weeks and to do the whole thing on a budget of about £45,000. We have done that because all of our accommodation has been supplied by churches. We’ve about 21 different churches that were on our venues list. So we ran this whole thing as a peripatetic service. In the evening we would, well, we set up a rota of church venues around the city, probably within a radius of two miles, so the four miles of the city centre. We ran a mini bus twice in the evening from a fixed point in the city centre to whichever venue

we were using that evening. We ran that for the punters obviously so they knew, we advertised this all round the city, a whole list of venues and the taxi update. We publicised the rules which were very basic, basically don't fight with each other, don't fight with the staff, don't beat anybody up, come in. We co-ordinated it with all the churches. We went to the fire department. We asked them to vet the premises so all the premises were OKed by them to allow up to about 30 people a night to sleep on the floor. We bought camping mats, camping beds. We then recruited another 20-odd churches, some of the same churches but they provided teams to provide a meal. So when people arrived at a venue via the minibus they would come in and 4 or 5 other people from a church, about 27 churches were involved. Had made a two course meal, a hot meal and it was plated. They would sit down to eat. And the beds were all set out as well. Ideally in a separate room. That is an issue we have to look at as this service develops if it develops, there's big issues the appropriateness of running a peripatetic hostel, camp beds on the floor, the purists among us would say this is inappropriate as a modern facility. On the one hand I agree with them entirely, on the other hand if we do nothing these people are homeless and I am convinced that some of the folks that we ministered to, that we worked with are alive this spring because that facility was there. So, what do we argue about, it is should we do it or should we not. So that's how we do it. There are two teams, rota teams for meals, venues, minibus service. We employ teams of three with a floating worker, seventh person on permanent night shift, week on week off. The shelter opens about half past nine in the evening for the punters. Staff will start work about seven. They will set up the beds, they will set it all up, get it ready, the doors open, the people come in. They leave, they get their breakfast about six in the morning and they leave at seven. And we dismantle the whole thing. Take it all back, put it in the minibus and wait to go back out about seven o'clock the following evening or that evening to the next venue. So that's how we work. And we had over 2,000 bed nights used. The average nightly attendance was 24 people, some nights we had over 50, some nights we had about 10. Most people stayed from between one and two nights interestingly, so in total we had I think 400, 399 different people. So we are running this and arguing that it meets a need, it fills a gap in current provision, but its a very complex argument because others would say it is actually encouraging homelessness and these people would find

their -, these people would choose to use other routes out of homelessness if we weren't making that facility available. Quite whether that is true or whether it is true for everybody it is hard to know. Um even if half the people really needed the service, is that enough to justify it? But that's our night shelter." (Interview 23)

It is noticeable that religious sensibilities and language,(note that people are ministered to rather than assisted) is much more overt than in church social work. This trend is even clearer in the next interview.

VIII. " [They] built in an ethos of wanting to show God's love in action in what they were doing in a very practical way."

This is an account of the establishment of a Women's Refuge set up by a Christian social work organisation. The interviewee is female, in her thirties and had worked for the organisation for six years:

"I suppose the bit that is not in there [annual report] is the very beginning as it were, because that start date in there, 1981, is really when we had the first refuge house. The history prior to that was that one of our current trustees who was actually the founding trustee of the organisation, had been involved with Women's Aid as a trustee but certainly quite active I think and-

RW "What is Women's Aid? I think I know but you better tell me."

"Women's Aid is generally part of the national movement of refuge groups. There is a national federation WAFE, which is the Women's Aid Federation of England which is the national group and most of the women's aid groups are affiliated to that in some form although they do all function autonomously, totally autonomously, but that is the kind of umbrella and that tends generally to have a kind of um feminist general ethos really. At the time when our trustee was involved in that organisation they brought in this thing that organisations could not be affiliated if they had men on

their management committee or on the staff or anywhere. So he at that point removed himself.

He knew somebody else who was doing some hostel type work who was a female, and the two of them together really talked about the possibility of having some kind of Christian-based refuge organisation, which partly allowed him to continue his involvement in a way but also recognised that this could be a Christian response to a need because Women's Aid on its own cannot meet all the need. But that it would have a different ethos, it wouldn't have necessarily a feminist approach, it wouldn't have an anti-men approach, whilst recognising the sensitivity of the issues for women.

So they actually began to set up a Mums and Tots group initially with some volunteers, in the Eastern district of the town,...So the Mums and Tots group was set up within that area and they were finding that a lot of people were actually victims of domestic violence, so John who is our current trustee, he actually has always been very much a pioneering person and able to move things on. And they entered into discussions with a housing association and looked into the possibility of a relationship there and buying a house with Housing Association money and to manage it, to set up themselves as a registered charity. .. So these discussions went on and eventually they bought a House, and that was Wade House.”

RW. So between '81 and '84 there was just the one house and that was Wade House.

“Wade House yes. I'm not sure if the Mums and Tots was running alongside that but in a sense they had moved on in a way and also by then other community based things were beginning to come into the eastern district so it is about recognising where there is greatest need really. So they started with one or two staff, recruiting for that. And its interesting that John is actually from a Methodist background and the other lady he was working with was actually Roman Catholic so they started off with an interdenominational theme and really just built in an ethos of wanting to show God's love in action in what they were doing in a very practical way. So that house came into being.” (Interview 20)

PART TWO - ANALYSIS

Chapter 3

Lady Bountiful's Legacy: Church Social Work's Poor Reputation.

It was stated in the thesis included in the Introduction that church social work has suffered the disdain of the rest of the social work profession. This chapter examines the roots and causes of this experience.

Contempt for the churches' involvement in social work has been found amongst state social work practitioners from their earliest days. Church historian Roger Lloyd writes:

“But after 1906 the state began to step in, and soon there was conflict between the voluntary workers of the parish and the professional agents of the state or the local boards. Mrs Luke Paget, [the wife of a Church of England bishop] who herself saw most of this development in London, gives this picture of the process:

“The big parish churches still continued on tried, traditional lines, amply staffed, well respected and counting for much in the neighbourhood. But the trend was from parish to platform, from neighbour to committee. Indeed there was already some impatience with older methods. Social workers looked with a little contempt on Church workers; Church workers were a little touchy over interference; and political partisans were irritated by both.” (Lloyd, 1966: p.69)

Something of the hostility that poisoned relations between different groups working in early social work is caught by J. C. Pringle, writing in his characteristic polemical, hot-house prose style:

“ The groups which have applied Darwin-Huxley–Spencer concepts to social administration, and their friends, have now been for fifty years denouncing as ‘charity mongering’, ‘Lady Bountiful’²¹, ‘tainted with pauperism’, what had by the eighties of last century a wonderfully complete and thought out scheme of Social Service, the stem of which was Personal, Parochial, Family Case-work and visiting;” (Pringle, 1937: p.131)

²¹ “Lady Bountiful - The original character comes from Farquar's *Beaux Strategem* (1706) and about a century later the term acquired the generic application of a village benefactress now in use.” (Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, 1981) The phrase proved to be an enduringly powerful epithet of abuse in the social work literature. One of its most conspicuous uses is by Kathleen Woodroffe in her book *From Charity to Social Work in England and the United States* (1962: 75, 149) where she uses the phrase twice in section headings without ever defining it in the text.

Despite Pringle's gloss, the touchiness of church workers referred to by Paget above must have derived in part from a deep down acknowledgement that at least some of the criticisms were justified. Church social work was never able to shake off what in the 20th Century was considered the dubious reputation of its 19th Century philanthropic origins. Kathleen Heasman, in her book *Christians and Social Work* (1965: pp.29-30) suggests that the fact that church social work in the 20th Century was unable to rid itself of its "do-gooder" image was one of the most important factors leading to its decline. Heasman did not go on to clarify exactly what do-gooder was supposed to mean or evaluate whether or not the reputation was deserved. However, it is important to establish what exactly do-gooding was supposed to be because part of the mythology of the formation of professional social work is that it is something better than its predecessor philanthropy, as found in the churches and elsewhere. This chapter will attempt to clear the ground, take a close look at the do-gooders and the Lady Bountiful figures as found in the churches, try and distinguish the constituent parts that went in to forming their poor reputation, trace how much each part endured as church workers transformed themselves from district visitors into church purity workers, then into moral welfare workers and then into church social workers. The chapter will go on to form a judgement on the extent to which the poor reputation was justified and then through interview material will note what effect this reputation, justified or not, continues to have on the self-image of contemporary church social workers. It concludes with a discussion on the vagaries of reputation as state social work has come to suffer its own poor reputation in recent years.

One of the great difficulties in discussing this subject is the silence that surrounds it. For critics of church social work its poor reputation is something obvious, that does not require too much thought, and for others, those still associated with the church, there is no benefit in trailing through the ashes and examining supposedly discredited past work. Graham Bowpitt claims that for some:

“... contributors to the social work literature, the Christian legacy has been the skeleton in the cupboard, something best forgotten and preferably ignored.”
(1998: p.676)

More specifically Frank Prochaska has written:

“the pieties and social assumptions of Victorian charity have made it a subject which causes embarrassment in some circles, even amongst voluntarists. Sensitive to image and language they are, naturally enough, anxious to portray themselves and their causes as up to date. Consequently historical associations sometimes appear a burden. As a recent publication on voluntarism stated: ‘The traditions of 19th century do-gooding continue to colour the public image of the voluntary sector.’” (1988: p.9 quoting from National Council of Voluntary Organisations Information Sheet No.6 Section 2, 1.)

Steve Chalke in his recent book *Faithworks* (2001) spends much of the book railing against the prejudice that he faced in attempting set up a new Christian social work agency (The Oasis Trust) but he never once addresses the possible causes of that prejudice, such as the poor reputation with which church social work is burdened.

I. The Composition of the Reputation

Just a few quotations spaced out over more than 100 years will suffice to track church social work’s poor reputation. Helen Bosanquet’s use of J.R. Green ‘s comment on church workers in the 1860s as “silly and ignorant women.” who duplicated their services has already been referred to in Chapter 1. It was not just ignorance, however, that led to this duplication. Different churches competed against each other in an attempt to use philanthropy to swell their congregations. Anyone who might suggest that these complaints of sectarianism and proselytism were unfounded abuse need look no further than the colourful evidence provided by Jeffrey Cox in his book on Lambeth in which he describes ways in which potential converts were bribed :

“Bribery seems to have run amuck in West Southwark and two or three neighbouring parishes in North Lambeth, where Anglicans complained as bitterly as Non conformists about the legacy of Father A.B. Goulden of St. Alphege’s. At his death in 1896 the parochial relief fund had a balance of £2,528. Everyone admitted that the Anglican sisters of the parish used bribery and a London City Missionary claimed that the men in St. Alphege’s Bible class received a suit for regular attendance, the women a dress and each family so many pounds of meat. The nearby Hope Street Mission responded to this real or imagined philanthropic aggression by giving women a blanket for regular attendance and an apron for occasional attendance, and rumours flew around the neighbourhood of women who supported themselves by attending as many as ten different mother’s meetings. This was gossip, but the director of Fegan’s orphanage and mission admitted that he lured away

members of other meetings by such tactics, and the rector of Christ Church, Southwark put a stop to his predecessor's practice of leaving relief tickets in prayer books." (1982: p.73)

This activity, sometimes known as sheep stealing, cast a long shadow over subsequent church social activity. As late as 1962 Margaret Hewitt wrote in the Church of England Board of Social Responsibility journal *Crucible*:

"Too many people have a picture of the moral welfare worker as being either a sentimental²² middle aged Churchwoman making it easy for some girl who has 'gone wrong', or a hard-faced, slightly younger, Anglican Church worker, who exploits the misfortunes of others as an opportunity for some high-pressure proselytising." (Hewitt 1962: p.114)

Advocates of the post-World War II welfare state were among the strongest critics of the old ways, including the ways of the churches :

"In parliament, Aneurin Bevan diplomatically accepted that the Labour government should make full use of the voluntary organisations, but he was no friend to charity. As Minister of Health, he equated it with the nurses organising flag days on their weekends off, which struck him as an indignity in a modern society. Many other Labour politicians, civil servants and students of social policy, transfixed by state social action and their part in its promotion, shared the view that charity was demeaning. As government would attend to everyone's needs from cradle to grave, what was the point of it? For those who took this view, Victorian traditions of parochial service and self-help were repugnant, remnants of a tribal past. As Bevan put it, 'a patch quilt of local paternalisms' is the 'enemy of intelligent planning'". (Prochaska, 1988: 84-85 quoting A. Bevan, 1952: p.79)

Modern criticism of the original district visitors/Lady Bountifuls has been led by feminists. They have been harsh in their condemnation of 19th Century philanthropy and early social work:

"One could argue that both groups [lady philanthropists and working class female recipients of care] were sowing the seeds for further female oppression, albeit unwittingly by colluding with a system of help that sanctified womanly attributes as ideal for care provision and identified women as the clients needing help, rather than identifying the structural weaknesses of the social system causing problems...By glorifying motherhood

²² The accusation of sentimentality is also a recurring one and it will be dealt with in Chapter 5.

and ‘wifely undertakings’ early charitable pioneers condemned future practitioners to collude in oppressing women.” (Rojek, Peacock and Collins, 1988: p.79-80)

The phrase used by Bevan, “a patch quilt of local paternalisms“, neatly encapsulates the criticisms that were made against church philanthropy and philanthropy in general. It was seen to be home-made (i.e. amateurish), small-minded and fragmented, lacking a wider vision of society than just the immediate suffering before it and also loaded with class conscious condescension. In addition it was, like quilt making, the hobby of certain women.

For the sake of clarity it may be helpful to expand on the nature of these criticisms: they were, principally, an uncritical awareness of class or class superiority and its resulting condescension and moralism; secondly, parochialism and fragmentation of effort (and in the case of church philanthropy the fragmentation was exacerbated by sectarianism and the quest for converts) and the preoccupation with the alleviation of local symptoms of suffering without any real vision of how to deal with the causes; thirdly a suspicion of any social activity that is not given freely and of “trade” (or professionalism); and fourthly a certain gender disengagement or separation, with women talking to women about women’s (defined as “domestic” or “family“) issues. These characteristics are deeply interwoven and whilst it is necessary to look at each one in turn, their interconnectedness must always be borne in mind. Also, the reader may like to consider, as the limitations of the origins of church social work are traced and exposed, to what extent some of those limitations were an inherent part of the social work profession as a whole.

i. Class consciousness and condescension.

Firstly, there can be no doubt that the original Lady Bountiful district visitors were “ladies”, that is to say of a higher social class than the women or families they visited, and that they counted on the universal recognition of this difference in order to do their work. As Wilson comments:

“Middle class women with no direct experience of marriage and motherhood themselves took on the task of teaching marriage and motherhood to working class women who were widely believed to be ignorant and lacking when it came to the domestic task.” (Wilson 1977 : p.44)

One might add that these ladies would not hesitate to offer additional advice on domestic economy, although they must never have suffered hunger or deprivation themselves. The class system and the expectation of deference were an everyday reality in late 19th Century England. Gareth Steadman Jones pinpoints the meaning of deference in relation to philanthropy:

“ In all known traditional societies, the gift has played a central status maintaining function. ... ‘To give’ wrote Mauss, ‘is to show one’s superiority...To accept without returning more, is to face subordination, to become a client and subservient.’ ...the gift generally serves as a method of social control. To give, for whatever motives, generally imposes an obligation on the receiver. In order to receive one must behave in an acceptable manner if only by expressing gratitude and humility. ...” (Steadman Jones 1971 : 251-2 quoting Mauss *The Gift*, tr. Cunningson 1966 : p.15)

This is one of the reasons why, as we shall see in a later section, the amateurism of the Lady Bountifuls was so important. They were paid in the coinage of deference.

Turning to the alleged condescension of church workers, the writers of the 1920 Archbishop’s Committee Report on *The Church and Social Service* were well aware of the criticisms that were, by then, being made against church work. The report includes the following:

“There must, of course be no sense of patronage. Churchmen of leisure are advised to take part in clubs etc., remembering that the Church embraces all classes. The true Christian spirit is sympathy and that implies the finest tact. How often do the kindest people offend by the mere fact that their tone assumes superiority. The spirit of the Church is Brotherhood and Equality. Some of the best intentioned people - most anxious to help their less fortunate fellows - just miss that spirit. They want to give of their best, but they just fail to hit the mark because they cannot forget themselves and their more fortunate position. They feel for, but not with, their poorer brethren.”
(1920: p.35)

This passage is incredibly revealing. It exemplifies the standard thinking in the churches, that harsh economic realities and class differences can be overcome by a change in an individual’s tone of voice. Just how far off the mark and offensive that tone could be is revealed by Brian Heeney when he quotes from the anonymous “Hints to a Clergyman’s Wife.” According to this document the purpose of visiting the poor in the parish was to:

“ ‘give advice as to domestic economy, diligence, frugality, and order’ as well as to inculcate ‘habits of self denial, industry and cleanliness’. The object

was to ‘promote a cheerful, contented disposition and lead them to look on the bright side even of those little adverse circumstances which are perpetually occurring in this changing and uncertain world’. The poor often need to be reminded that happiness belongs to a cottage no less than a palace; that it depends upon character rather than upon circumstances.’”(Heeney 1988: p.22)

Behind any condescension was a complacency about inequality. The 1920 Archbishop’s Committee Report might claim that the spirit of the church is brotherhood and equality but there was little evidence showing the late 19th/early 20th Century Church fighting inequality. The truth was that, far from embracing all classes, the Church often acted as a wedge, keeping them apart²³. Often the churches simply refused to consider the causes of the hardship and injustice around them. The churches in the cities were performing social work for the economic victims of the way Britain had been industrialised, that is through “*laissez faire*” or virtually untrammelled and unregulated free market capitalism. The very political question must eventually be asked - What is a tolerable number of economic victims and what happens when the number exceeds this amount? The overwhelming majority of 19th Century and early 20th Century church-based philanthropists and activists managed to avoid ever asking this question. To deal with a problem only as it confronts individuals and not to consider the wider implications for the group or the society is to endorse the status quo. It is fundamentally conservative. Bevan, as well as the specific comment on philanthropy quoted above, wrote more generally about the complacency of the churches in the face of inequality:

“One experience stands vividly in my memory. While the miners were striking in 1926 a great many people were moved to listen to their case. Certain high ecclesiastical dignitaries even went so far as to offer to mediate between the mine owners and the miners. They were convinced that the terms that the mine owners were attempting to impose were unreasonable and would entail much suffering and poverty for hundreds of thousands of miner’s homes. Their efforts failed. The miners were beaten and driven back to work under disgraceful conditions.

“For years these conditions continued. But were those high Church

²³ Ample evidence is available of the divisions along class lines of various churches and denominations and the absolute exclusion of the lowest classes. See, for example, Cox, op. cit. pp. 129-141.

dignitaries moved to intervene then? Not at all. For them the problem was solved. It had never consisted in the suffering of the miners, but in the fact the miners were still able to struggle and therefore create a problem for the rest of the community. The problem was not their suffering but their struggle. Silent pain evokes no response. The social reforms of the twentieth century are the consequence of the democratic power of the masses and not of increased enlightenment.” (Bevan, 1951: pp.4-5)

Bevan’s reference is directed at William Temple, Archbishop of York in the 1930s and later Archbishop of Canterbury. In his case the accusation is unjustified as an analysis of Temple’s work in the 1930s, such as his contribution to the Pilgrim Trust report *Men without Work*, would show (Hastings, 1986: 258). However, the more general point about the complacency of the churches still rings true. The American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr neatly sums up the limitations of their emphasis on philanthropy:

“The most obvious weakness of religion in social action is that it seems always to create a spirit of generosity within terms of a social system, without developing an idealism vigorous or astute enough to condemn the social system in the name of a higher justice. Religion, in other words, is more fruitful of philanthropy than of social justice.” (1932: pp.18-19)

The Church was not alone in its obtuseness on this matter. For the Charity Organisation Society, a person could and should be encouraged to make their own way in the world. Many in the C.O.S. believed in a world where every healthy, willing male should have been able to provide sufficiently for himself and his dependants. This was a groundless belief. Such a world did not, in fact, exist. The London of the 1860s, for example, was a place where people rioted when they found that they could not pay the price of bread and there were periods throughout the 19th Century when economic depressions led to large numbers of the poorest people in the cities enduring suffering that was the direct result of destitution and malnutrition (see Stedman Jones, 1971: p.241ff). These were “the little adverse circumstances” the clergyman’s wife refers to above.

Church work had never been work done by the poor for the poor. It is significant that Ashton and Young claim that they wanted to write about that social work done for the poor by the poor but abandoned the attempt because they could not find the evidence (1956: p.2). They would not have found it in the churches either.

One church or denomination stands out as the exception to this rule. E.R. Wickham, quotes from a local newspaper, describing the arrival of the Salvation Army in Sheffield in 1878:

“In spite of hooligan ribaldry and even attack, as they processed through the streets of the town, they gathered to themselves a remarkable number of the outcast. An early article on their work in their Sheffield press speaks of their ‘scouring the gutters’ and ‘netting the sewers’, and ‘gaining many recruits from that class that nobody seems to care about, the occupiers of our courts and alleys who have hitherto known more about drink and dirt than religion...men in whose minds the truth was probably dawning that it is not absolutely necessary to wear patent leather boots and a broadcloth coat to enter the Kingdom of Heaven’. By 1881 they had four halls, with a Sunday attendance of no less than 4,000, predominantly of the working class and the poor.”

(Wickham, 1957: pp.156-157 quoting the *Sheffield Independent*, Aug.14.1879.)

In “*In Darkest England and the Way Out*” General William Booth, founder and long-time leader of the Salvation Army, also warns of the dehumanising effects of paternalism and condescension (1890: p.72). Few listened.

It would be good to write that condescension was a problem in church work in the late 19th Century and that by the mid-20th Century it was a relic of the past. It is not possible to confirm that. One interviewee who was involved in organising soup kitchens in London in the 1960s noted how volunteers always wore suits and stood clearly behind rather than in front of serving tables just to make it crystal clear that they were the helpers rather than the helped. Another interviewee who was attempting to recruit volunteers in the churches in the 1980s and 1990s noted that they were always far readier to do things for rather than with homeless people. Kenneth Leech, an Anglican priest working in the East End of London notes:

“The Churches have a long record of concern for ‘the poor’. They have done good to ‘the poor’. They have fed and clothed ‘the poor’. They have campaigned on behalf of ‘the poor’. They have been advocates for ‘the poor’. But ‘the poor’ have always remained ‘out there’ The well-used term ‘out there’ is a significant one, and has become part of the jargon of the liberal intelligentsia. It implies a population who exist somewhere else, for whom the jargon users, be they the Church or journalists, have care and concern. And this does sum up the situation accurately. The relationship between the church and poor people has been an ‘I-it’ relationship. This is more than just a semantic quibble, indeed it is becoming more serious as the years go by. We are increasingly labelling whole sections of society by use of terms such as

‘the poor’, ‘the underclass’ and so on. It is a dehumanising mechanism with built-in elements of condescension and at times contempt. It destroys human relationships and encourages the worst kind of paternalism.” (1997 p.101)

Condescension is rarely voiced today. Yet the thinking that underlies it, the idea that there is no human commonality, that some people are of a different sort, a different breed, is as prevalent as ever.

Closely related to class consciousness and condescension directed towards the poor was moralism directed towards the church philanthropy’s other main client group, the fallen or the sinful. This subject will be dealt with in Chapter 5 where a preoccupation with sexual sinfulness is presented as church social work’s poor substitute for a proper theological or sociological framework.

However, this may be the juncture to suggest a broader and less critical perspective. The social work that the churches do with the poor may or may not still be laced with condescension. Yet the most fundamental point is that the churches, mostly through single inner-city churches rather than diocesan or regional structures, are continuing to do social work with the very poorest in society. Both Woodroffe (1962: p.225) and Richan and Mendelsohn (1973: pp.10-11) characterise the social work profession, in the USA in particular, as attempting to make itself respectable by getting out of work with the poorest and aiming instead to provide therapy to the middle classes. This is not an accusation that can be made convincingly against church social work in Britain. Much of its work continues to be done amongst the most downtrodden members of society (Bagwell, 1987: chapters 12 and 13; Beasley, 1997: *passim*).

ii. Parochialism and Immediacy

One of the most basic criticisms made of the philanthropic scene by the pioneers of the Charity Organisation Society was of duplication of effort and relief because of lack of co-ordination and co-operation. Philanthropic agencies concentrated exclusively on alleviating the distress that was before them. Heasman notes that Evangelicals had no interest in the philanthropy of Non-Evangelicals (Heasman 1962 : p.20). The churches managed to maintain this lack of co-operation by employing different styles of philanthropy. The Evangelicals were founders of lay

societies both national and local (Russell, 1984: p.174). Anglo- Catholics tended to focus on and support the work of priests in poor parishes. It occurred to neither that their doctrinal differences had little to do with philanthropy.

The tendency to focus only on the local and immediate problem and a lack of a wider view is one of the most basic characteristics of church social work and as was seen in the literature review this tendency continued throughout the moral welfare period.

iii. Sectarianism

Little needs to be said on this. The case against the churches is overwhelming. Frank Prochaska has commented on the general sense of competitiveness amongst 19th Century philanthropic enterprises

“Philanthropic enterprise was in a sense, laissez-faire capitalism turned in on itself. There were few restrictions placed on the charitable contributor, and in a society splintered by class, local and religious allegiances, charities proliferated. Curiously enough, they competed for the custom of the poor.” (Prockaska, 1980: p.106)

In the case of the churches rabid sectarianism inhibited co-operation between churches. Young and Ashton refer to the sectarianism of many 19th Century visiting charities. They cite the report of a Dr. A Ward to Edinburgh City Council in 1868:

“In this, he advocated more and better visiting, but argued that it should be freed from the religious bodies, because sectarianism prevented co-operation among like-minded public citizens who would join to improve the lot of the poor if they were not separated by religious dogma. Moreover, the Church Visiting Societies, he said, led to hypocrisy. How could the visitors be single-minded if they wished to advance the interests of their church on the one hand and yet had to relieve distress before they could do so? And how could the poor be honest in their conversion to the Faith, if that was the only way to obtain bread? His conclusion was that the poor would be more receptive to religious teaching, if some of their distresses had first been removed by lay agencies.” (Young and Ashton, op. cit: p.90)

In the 20th Century it was finally seen that social work might something that churches could use to break down their tribal barriers (Archbishop's Report 1920: p.4). Moral welfare's record especially in regard to training is exemplary in this regard. Nonconformists, Roman Catholics and Anglicans (plus a single Hindu

woman²⁴) all studied together at Josephine Butler Memorial House. There is some evidence that there is a clear link between the development of an ecumenical spirit and the effectiveness of church-based social work. For example, one of the most successful of the post World War II councils of churches was in Coventry where the churches worked together to rebuild the city (information from pilot interview No. 2).

However, right down to the present day, church doctrine and the importance of making a clear theological statement still plays a significant part in church-based social work and for some social workers who are Christians. For example the Social Workers' Christian Fellowship (see Bowpitt 1998: pp.689-690) is an associate member of the Evangelical Alliance, a connection which gives a signal to more liberal or Catholic Christians that they might not find a welcome there. There is also a Catholic Social Workers' Guild. The two organisations have no formal contact.

iv. Proselytism

The issue of proselytism, although clearly connected to sectarianism, should be dealt with separately. Obviously, the aforementioned descriptions of bribery were mindless excesses. However the issue is more complex than that. To the modern mind evangelism and philanthropy are clearly separate endeavours. However 18th Century Methodists and then 19th Century Evangelicals would not have seen the distinction between the two activities. For them, they were:

“...in pursuit of an Evangelical purpose, [and] charity was not only a feature of a redeemed life, but an instrument in the redemption of others.” (Bowpitt, 1998: p.679).

It was felt that in order to bring about permanent changes in their material circumstances the recipients of charity needed to experience a genuine change of heart, a fundamental re-ordering of their lives, to be redeemed. Subsequently in amongst acrimonious debates on the appropriateness or otherwise of evangelism being mixed up with charity, the emphasis on spiritual redemption was eventually

²⁴ See Chapter 4 for material related to the controversy surrounding the appointment of this woman. The archive papers centre on the question of whether a Non-Christian could be a Moral Welfare Worker.

lost to social work but what social work kept was the concept of a sort of semi-spiritualised material redemption and a belief in the potential for change within human beings:

“The idea that social work is concerned with changing people and situations, and that this can be achieved by the rational application of social scientific knowledge, is fundamental to social work theory and is as old as social work itself.” (Bowpitt, 2000: p.352)

Needless to say, therefore, proselytism disguised as church social work is unacceptable. The deeper question, however, of how the social worker motivates, but not coerces, a person to make changes in their own life, remains. Chapter 5 on theology discusses this topic in greater detail.

v. Amateurism

Another supposed characteristic of the Lady Bountiful spirit listed at the beginning of this chapter was an opposition to professionalisation or at least an idealisation of the amateur ethic. If the Lady Bountifuls might be criticised for their indifference to issues related to class, inequality and their parochialism and sectarianism, the situation in regard to professionalism and professionalisation was not simply one of a disdain for money honestly earned. It is much more layered than that.

Yet in recent times the churches themselves have accepted a simplistic analysis of the emergence of professionalism in social work. Robert Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury in the 1980s, is quoted in a biography as stating:

“...clergy, when it comes to social care, are amateur, anecdotal, and generalised; whereas in social work people are professional, succinct and specific. What are we doing about that?” (Carpenter 1996 : p.164).

Similarly, The Church of England’s famous report from the 1980s, *Faith in the City*, contains sheepish references to the Josephine Butler Memorial House training for moral welfare work and has little positive to say about social work apart from recommending that church social work staff make sure they are “fully qualified” (1985 : pp. 277- 278), as if the church must make up for the guilty secret that it did not fully endorse training in the past. Clearly, the Church itself has bought into the idea that professionalisation and secularisation in social work necessarily went hand

in hand and the two processes were inextricably bound up with each other. As shall be demonstrated, things were not as simple as that and church social work training has not been without its merits. Secularisation was not axiomatic with professionalisation or vice versa.

The obvious topic to begin a discussion on the nature of the amateur/professional divide is that of financial remuneration. Firstly, it should be noted that not all 19th Century church work was unpaid. As discussed in Chapter 1 Heeney (1988) found five groups of paid employees involved in church social work but almost all of them were supervised by "Lady Bountifuls" or by clergymen. The earliest paid church social workers (admittedly untrained) occupied a lowly social position and the fact that they were paid was directly related to that. The churches have been always been very reluctant firstly to pay people and then to pay people properly to do its social work. Money has always been a taboo subject. One reason why the transition from church work to social work was difficult was that the churches were never fully convinced of the need for social work as paid, professional activity. The social work of the Roman Catholic Church has continued to rely heavily on the religious, nuns and friars who, because of their vows of poverty, do not draw a salary (Fann and Dodds, 1986, p.113). Other churches did employ social workers but they preferred it if these workers continued to act as if they were volunteers and not to bring up the unsavoury subject of money (see, for example Higson, 1955, quoted below).

When wages and salaries have been discussed it has rarely been without the use of the language of Christian sacrifice. The tone used in an article by Keith White is typical:

"The self-giving love of Christ himself has been the primary motivating force in the church throughout the centuries. There have always been those prepared to give and not to count the cost, to labour and not to ask for any reward save knowing that they do his will. Such motivation is in sharp contrast to the attitudes most have towards work in western societies, where financial reward and career-development figure most often at the top of a person's priority list." (White in Philpott (Ed.) 1986: p.85)

Essentially what White objects to about social work is that it is work, that it is a job. He manages, as have many before him, to give the impression that it is somehow

unchristian to be reasonably paid or interested in career development and that those who insist on reasonable pay or conditions will doubtless prove to be inconstant. This attitude has been a mill stone around the necks of church social workers in their attempts to carve out a profession for themselves.

Jessie Higson's autobiography (1955) is a good place to read about the Church of England's high-handedness on the issue of financial remuneration. Of her appointment as first Central Organising secretary in 1918 she writes:

"In the same year, 1917, a memorandum was sent out to the bishops pointing out the need for a trained worker. In response to this, thirty-five bishops agreed to send a donation of £10 for the year 1918-1919. I was appointed the first Central Organising Secretary for England and Wales in September 1918." (Higson, 1955: p.19)

Clearly the church paid lip service to valuing its social work, but they did not value it enough to pay this woman or anybody else to organise it. There was no structure in place to fund this post. At the time of her appointment she was relying on the largesse of Bishops. Ten years later, at the time of her appointment as peripatetic lecturer on moral welfare matters, the situation had not improved:

"The Board decided that it was not in a position to raise funds for the salary of such a lecturer, but signified its willingness to appoint me to the post if my salary could be provided! Though greatly against my principles, I felt the urgency of the need justified me in asking seven friends to provide £50 each for three years thus making a salary of £350 in order that this work should be demonstrated. This was done and I resigned my post in Liverpool." (ibid: pp.162-163)

What does it say about the way the church did its business and its underlying attitude towards church social work that it would accept the funding of such an important post on this basis?

Higson's book is an account of a mover and a shaker in the Church of England in the first third of the century but Hall and Howes reveal startling data in their book about the salaries of ordinary church social workers of a later period. They make a direct comparison between moral welfare workers and social workers employed by the state:

"...the starting salaries recommended in 1961 for outdoor workers were at least £100 lower than those of social workers in comparable professions and with comparable training and there was an even more noticeable discrepancy

in career prospects. An organising secretary, at the height of her powers, carrying heavy responsibilities and perhaps with many years experience behind her would, if her diocese adopted the scale recommended, receive a salary similar to that of a probation officer entering the service at 28, or a young graduate with a year's professional training taking up her first post in child care." (Hall and Howes, 1965: p.122)

It was almost as if a sense of vocation had to be tested by a significant financial disincentive.

Several of the interview accounts for this present research revealed that this situation had not improved significantly by the 1970s. A former Director of a Church of England Diocesan social work team said:

"You know of course that the church at that time employed people on abysmal salaries, abysmal salaries.... Um my personal opinion is and I still think that the church expects social work on the cheap. Now I suppose I became unpopular in those days for shouting my mouth off and saying pretty much that if you pay peanuts you get monkeys...

"I am very happy for the church to initiate new tasks. Sometimes you can find very well intentioned and kind people to do it on low salaries. But then I think once a work becomes established you have got to start paying proper salaries if you are going to keep it going, because you can't maintain the work on vocation. You know you have these people who come in and are absolutely bright lights and when they are dead the work is finished. If you are going to continue the work you have got to be able to think professionally and pay professionally." (Interview 12)

A former Director of a large church social work organisation working during the 1970s said:

"And I also increased their wages. In my first year I increased the wages by on average 60%. The exploitation by the church of its workers was appalling. I'll be very frank with you, coming from my very left wing political stance I just couldn't stand it." (Interview 25)

Irrespective of the quality of their work, the truth is that the churches have paid their social workers, in comparison with State social workers and even those working for other voluntary agencies, as if they were indeed less valuable. So not only did their social work colleges intimate that church workers were inferior, the evidence was there in their pay packets as well.

The idealisation of the role of the amateur also had an effect on how church

social work was managed or structured. Woodroffe suggests that during the first third of the 20th Century as the demands on social workers grew:

“...volunteers unwillingly retreated to advisory and fund-raising committees, and the actual casework was left in the hands of paid, trained agents.”
(Woodroffe, 1962: 98)

In the field of church social work, however, the volunteers did not retreat very far and for a long period local organising committees continued to be involved in the detail of social work itself. One of the key elements in the move towards professionalism in modern social work has been an emphasis on the rights of the clients and in particular the right of confidentiality. It has to be admitted that it took church social work a very long time to become “professional” (i.e. proper) in this regard. Hall and Howes describe one of the customs that remained part of the structure of moral welfare work through much of the twentieth century:

“A particular issue over which differences in outlook sometimes became apparent [between workers and committees] was that of the confidential nature of the work. This was especially noticeable in those areas, usually rural areas or small towns, where the old fashioned custom of the worker giving a synopsis of the history and the progress of each case still prevailed.” (op. cit.: pp.151-152)

Hall and Howes also give examples of the make-up of some of these local organising committees:

“2 clergymen (one the chairman)

6 ladies (one the hon. secretary)

The organising secretary

2 workers

(Outdoor work committee)

3 clergymen (the chairman, the chaplain and one other)

1 layman (the treasurer who was a banker and a Methodist)

7 ladies (including the hon. secretary, one a local councillor)

The organising secretary

(Committee of a Mother and Baby Home)”

(ibid : p.147, my highlighting)

As late as the 1960s, then, women in the churches were party to the details of the personal lives of other women in their communities, simply because they were

“ladies” and presumably fund raisers for moral welfare in their local churches. Even if church social workers were not condescending or moralisers and had managed to purge themselves of the Lady Bountiful spirit, the way the work was supervised or controlled meant that the direct descendants of the original Lady Bountifuls were still in positions where they could influence or interfere with the work. These practices were eventually curtailed. Only one interviewee out of all those I spoke with intimated that these attitudes persist in the churches today :

“I mean I walked a tightrope of , I mean there are still supporters of ours who are in the bloody feudal system, there are still elements within the church who will take you down those paths unless you are very careful.” (Interview 5)

He went on to make clear that any individuals still holding such opinions no longer had power in the organisation.

On the matter of social work training the churches’ record has not been without its merits. Indeed there is an argument that the churches took up training earlier and took it up more seriously than many other secular agencies. The Women’s Social Work section of the Salvation Army opened its first training institute in 1902 providing six month training courses for its officers. This was extended to 11 months in 1904 (Clarke, unpublished c. 2000 : p.40). Brian Heeney noted that the Raynard Biblewomen survived well into the 20th Century principally because they established a training school (Heeney, op. cit.: p.55). Josephine Butler Memorial House opened in Liverpool in 1920 providing 2 years’ residential training for potential moral welfare workers mostly for members of the Church of England but as has already been noted Roman Catholics and Free Church Christians trained there too in significant numbers. One interviewee, who was a former student at the college, sometimes known as JB, commented:

“You do realise that the JB course was the first social work course in the country. There was no other course before that. The church was the first organisation that trained its social workers. In my day [1960s] if you went to work in the children’s department you got in on good works. If you had a nice personality and you got on well with children and you could cope with committees, you could get into the children’s department. In those days. And then of course the Morley Report came along and then Seebohm and the whole thing changed.” (Interview 12)

The accuracy of the first part statement might be questioned, depending on what is

meant by “course” (for example the London settlements ran short social work courses and the London School of Economics was involved in social work training before 1920) but the comparative point that the interviewee goes on to make is important. The statutory social work system came late to the idea of compulsory training, particularly in comparison with moral welfare work. The interviewee’s assertion is borne out by available statistics:

“Whilst the number of fully trained child care officers rose from 422 to 612 between 1963 and 1965, the number without even a basic relevant qualification rose from 618 to 827.” (Heraud, 1970: p.236)

Even if one accepts that the training that the churches were offering was inadequate by the standards of the wider social work profession (a debatable proposition), there is evidence that the churches took pains to obtain wider recognition for their students. The more able students at Josephine Butler Memorial House were sent to Liverpool University to complete a Social Studies Certificate alongside their moral welfare training²⁵. The Salvation Army began sponsoring its Officers to study for university Social Studies Certificates before the Second World War. This tradition continues with a small number of Salvation Army officers undertaking the DipSW course at present (information from Interview 1).

One group in the churches stands in significant contradiction to this trend towards social work training and that is the clergy. The clergy were a problem for the progression of the professionalisation of church-based social work because the fact that they were adamant that they were entitled to do it stood alongside their reluctance to train for it. This contradiction is revealed in the Archbishop’s report *The Church and Social Services* (1920). This report is disjointed. It has sections clearly written by the realists on the committee including the following:

“At the present time we find, as the result of careful inquiry, that there is practically no systematised teaching on social subjects to the students in our Theological Colleges. At best occasional lectures are given, sometimes in connection with the course of lectures on pastoral theology...The failure to provide this instruction has meant that the clergy as a rule have gone straight out into their parishes with no real knowledge of the conditions of life of those among whom they have to live. They have been confronted at once with

²⁵ 22 students did this between 1947 and 1959 (Hall and Howes op cit. p. 112)

poverty sickness, want of sanitation, overcrowding; they have had no acquaintance with the various statutory and voluntary organisations that visit to deal with these and other subjects, and they have had to learn gradually, and by chance, what can be done for the social welfare of their people. Above all, their lack of previous social education makes it impossible for them to apply an independent mind to the problems before them.” (1920: p.17)

However, nestling only a couple of pages away from this remarkable piece of clear sightedness is the following passage, clearly drawn up by the idealists on the committee:

“We would like therefore to emphasise the fact that, apart from any specific form of social activity in which they take part, the ordinary life and daily work of the faithful clergyman have a social value of their own. He contributes to the community by being what he is; and the character of a loyal Christian priest, happily giving himself to the service of his brothers, is a contribution which no good citizen can afford to despise. Indeed we would go further and say that a clergyman who does his duty as pastor, as teacher and, perhaps above all, as visitor, can do more for the social welfare of the community than any other social worker.” (ibid: p.14)

The offence lies in the “going further” of the final sentence which reveals an underlying defensiveness about the arrival of this new profession, social work. That these two passages can lie only a couple of pages apart in an official report of the Church of England reveals, at best, the ambivalence or, at worst, the contempt which the clergy as a body felt for the emerging social work profession. Just to make it clear, the same report which accepts that the clergy had had no proper training in social work is at the same time trumpeting their suitability for the work. The complex subject of the relationship between the clergy and the social work profession will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 4.

In summary, specifically as regards to amateurism and/or amateurishness, the findings are mixed and one can only say that the poor reputation was partially deserved. Firstly, the churches did pay some personnel to do church work (perhaps alongside evangelism) from the 1860s onwards but the idealisation of philanthropy as something particularly Christian later made it difficult for the payment of church social workers to be rationally addressed. Secondly, there were clearly certain practices embedded in the structures of church social work over a long period that simply were unprofessional. Thirdly the advocacy of amateurism was not necessarily

detrimental to training and competence. It is undeniable that the churches attempted to provide a reasonable standard of education for its field social workers if not those in residential work.

Whatever the true extent of amateurishness in church social work it was clear from the interviews that a number of church social work managers perceived themselves and their role as that of professionalisers. Edward Norman (1976) writes about the need for reformers in the churches to believe that they are doing a new thing, that they are the first to advocate a position or make a change because there is something about the inertness of institutions that trace their history back hundreds of years that means that they need the frisson of the new and fresh to move them along, even if in fact the changes are not always truly new or fresh and simply part of a cycle. That does not matter. The prevailing view amongst many of the interviewees can be paraphrased as “it was amateur here before my day. Since I came we have made a change.” A senior official in the Church of Scotland Board of Social Responsibility said:

“At my retirement Ian Jones said what I had done was professionalize the service here.” (Interview 25)

One Anglican Church social work manager said of his work:

“They all had their case committees of which I was an ex-officio member. So I had to wander around all these committees trying to professionalize them and also at times trying to close them down,” (Interview 12)

Others were not quite so personal but still saw themselves as reformers or central to the process of reformation. One Anglican manager describes the circumstances of her appointment:

“I saw this post for Director of what was then called the Oldshire Diocesan Council for Social Work and the ticket really that I was employed on was a ticket of change. This organisation had stayed the same for quite a long time and now it was time to change. And they realized that that would be in the face of protest but they thought change was necessary, inevitable.” (Interview 15)

One Methodist social work manager said when asked if his reforms met with resistance:

“I was kicking at a half-opened door.” (Interview 14)

The point is these workers have had to think like this in order to achieve anything.

vi. Women’s work, a Domestic Affair.

The fact that almost all church social workers in the 20th Century were women²⁶ stands not insignificantly alongside the fact that almost all the clergy were men. Throughout the 19th Century and most of the 20th, a career as a minister was out of the question for women in almost all the Christian denominations in Britain. Church social work developed partly as a kind of alternative to a career as a member of the clergy for women who had a sense of vocation or the desire to devote their working lives to their church. The tension between church social workers and clergy that has been an important feature in the history of the movement is played out with these issues about ordination in the background.²⁷

In regard to the wider social context, the social norms in relation to gender that the churches perpetuated are significant. Brian Heeney emphasises the fact that, in the Church of England at the end of the 19th Century and into the early part of the 20th:

“The institution [of the Church] was widely seen, and many of its leaders confirmed the view, as a guardian of basic antifeminist doctrine rooted in the Pentateuch and enshrined in the Pauline epistles. It was easy for Christians speaking to largely uncritical or traditionalist congregations, to define as God’s law both the notion of woman’s subordination to man and also the propriety of her prime concern with home and family... There was no doubt in the minds of many conservative churchmen that widening a woman’s horizons by introducing her into spheres hitherto reserved for men would weaken her natural domesticity, thereby threatening home and family life in general. Over and over again, home was brought forward as ‘woman’s appointed sphere’” (Heeney, *op cit.* pp 6-7).

District visiting, under the auspices of the church was therefore seen as women, in subjugation to the parish priest, offering their domestic abilities to those

²⁶ The exception, again, being Police Court Missioners who were predominantly men.

²⁷ Again, see Chapter 4 for further analysis of the role of the clergy.

apparently in need of them. Women were perceived as having a greater ability to care than men. Heeney (op. cit), as does Lewis (1984), describes how many women were able to move from these unpromising beginnings and carve out something more significant for themselves:

“Thus did the tradition of female subordination and the limitations of domesticity prove flexible; within these very traditional limitations some women, especially (but not exclusively) well-to-do ladies, developed spheres of labour in which they were in fact neither very submissive nor wholly domestic.” (Heeney, op. cit: p.14)

Indeed, Prochaska (1980) does write about some philanthropic organisations that were wholly in the hands of women but in the churches, at least, men were firmly in control. Under these circumstances it is quite amazing that the possibility of women having social work careers in the churches ever emerged at all.

As women gained a foothold through their social work and by other more radical means, the Church’s fall back position was that men and women were “equal but different“. Heeney quotes the Bishop of Southampton speaking in 1913:

““In certain respects... women can never be the equal of men, and in other respects it is just as true that men can never be equal to women’. He went on to hope that opportunities would be provided ‘for the education of women separately from men to qualify for their own special work.’ It transpired, of course, that in the Church, the women’s sphere turned out to exclude vocations of power or direction or, indeed, major ministerial responsibility.”(op. cit: p.16)

If there is any social work still done by the churches today at a diocesan or regional level it is almost inevitably called “family” social work, with all the traces of past meaning that implies. One example of how the sanctification of womanly attributes was perpetuated in much of 20th Century church social work is provided by an account of one particular Salvation Army venture:

“In 1954...the magazine Picture Post featured a new Salvation Army venture, The Mayflower. This home was an experiment in conjunction with the Home Office and the name was meant to suggest that it was a voyage of discovery into a new solution for a previously hidden problem. Mothers who had been before the courts for neglecting their children, instead of going to prison were admitted to the Army’s Training home. After a spell in the Mayflower there was usually an improvement and the courts were pleased with the outcomes. There are reports as well of praise from the husbands who experienced a happier family life.” (Clark, c. 2000: p.76)

The incongruity, at least to modern eyes, of this last sentence sums up how handicapped church social work was by the gender segregation it imposed upon itself. The Men's and Women's Social Work sections of the Salvation Army did not amalgamate until 1978 and then only for financial reasons and against the wishes of many of their female social workers (Clarke, *ibid*: p.70). The Church of England officially amalgamated its male and female social work efforts in 1939 (Hall and Howes *op cit.*: p.51) but in practice there were only ever very few male moral welfare officers.

However, there are good arguments to say that nothing else was possible for female church social workers and they achieved what they did by managing to keep themselves away from structures of male authority. The diocese based structures of moral welfare work can be seen in these terms in that the single parish was often not a hospitable environment for church social workers. The original poor women recruited as parish workers by Mrs. Talbot (see Heeney, *op cit.* p.70) were a relatively short lived phenomenon and the parish social worker in 20th Century church social work has always been a rare animal. The main reason for this, according to Hall and Howes, is that parish social work was never integrated into the hierarchy of the Church of England and therefore a parish social worker with any number of qualifications and years experience would be:

“technically junior to the youngest curate. [They] are without security of tenure as it is open to the parish priest to dispense with their services at any time, should he so desire. This is a position likely to be unacceptable to most women with social work training and their own professional standing and skills.” (Hall and Howes, *op cit.*: p.270).

One explanation of the way that church social work in general has developed in the 20th Century can be seen as an attempt by women to avoid or resist the unreliable authority of men:

“The moral welfare worker, whatever her financial disadvantage compared with her colleagues in the statutory sector (although not in comparison with other women church workers), is employed by an independent committee and has a recognised professional status which enables her to meet both clergy and local officials on an equal footing.” (*ibid*: p.270).

For a relatively brief period, church social work allowed a number of women

to have careers as social workers within the churches and so advanced the position of those individuals and possibly the position of women within the churches. How far church social work furthered or hindered the position of women in general or its female service users in particular is, of course, another question altogether. This issue demonstrates one of the problems of focusing on social work professionalism as a subject. It can and does blot out much else. The issue of whether church social work and the particular forms of work that were done promoted or inhibited the feminist movement cannot be dealt with in depth here.

I made no attempt in the interviews to gain parity of male and female interviewees. However, after having described church social work as an overwhelmingly female occupation, it is interesting to note that I interviewed 15 senior church social work managers (including managers of residential homes, regional and diocesan managers). Of those nine were male, six were female. The reader can draw their own conclusions from these figures.

Evaluation

This section has sought to address the question of to what extent the poor reputation of church social work in the wider social work profession was deserved. Of the four constituent parts that it was suggested contributed to making that reputation, the durability of the first, class consciousness was by far the most damning element. Some of the accusations made are irrefutable. Sectarianism, if not proselytising activity, has also endured. The amateurism of the churches' social work has been shown to be not necessarily amateurish although the scorn of paid work has been one of the churches' most unhelpful contributions to the professionalisation of social work. The escape into domesticity, while obviously the criticisms of such a move by modern feminists are valid, has nevertheless been shown to be a wholly reasonable response to the hostility of the clergy. Bearing in mind this mixed picture the lack of an articulated defence of the reputation of church social work is curious. Loud voices have not been raised to defend the reputation of the social work of the churches when clearly, as this section has demonstrated, such a defence is at least possible. The next section draws more heavily on the interview material to provide possible explanations for this apparent reluctance on the part of church social

workers and their superiors to be drawn into the debate.

II. The Consequences of the Reputation

State social workers were not interviewed as part of this research. It has not therefore been possible to ascertain whether contemporary state social workers continue to regard church social work with contempt, as do-gooders or Lady Bountifuls. What was clear from the interview material was one can still come across a number of church social workers who are defensive on this subject and think of themselves as poorly thought of by other social workers. Several of the accounts of church social work provided in chapter 2 reveal a level of sensitivity and awareness about possible criticism of the work, the interviewee's reflection that his welfare work in the 1960s was "feeding people's sense of anomie" (Interview 4) being perhaps the clearest example. In addition a number of anecdotes were related to me describing experiences that, it was claimed, revealed the attitudes of other social workers to church social work:

"The other part of this which we haven't looked at at all is there was great mistrust by professional social workers of church workers and voluntary workers generally and the hatted ladies were really what they saw. And I remember when we started intermediate treatment there was a guy called John Jones who was Head of Social Work at the university who came and ... we had a student who wanted to be placed with us... and he came down and he said, the gist of what he said was 'well it's very nice but it's not really social work is it?' So dismissive, and I thought yeah well if that's what you think, but we'd got two qualified social workers, a qualified teacher and a guy who was a researcher, four people employed on that project, you know very very qualified people. But it was because it was the church."
(Interview 5)

The following interviewee quoted was probably the most exercised and most eloquent on this issue:

R.W. "One of the things I am most interested in is the church as the employer of social workers and also the perception of the church as the employer of social workers. This social work agency would be the one that I've come across would be the one that has the most to do with statutory social workers

and other social work agencies. Um I presume that in the past when things were much more amateur, relations were much more difficult.”

Interviewee “Well, still are. I think it is without honour. There are still one or two social workers here that see us as those people who pick up the ends that social workers wouldn’t do.”

R.W.” Is that still going on then?”

Interviewee “Well its sort of, yes, there are certain social workers of a certain age. You know they wouldn’t um you wouldn’t get a job if you put down you were a Christian in this neighbourhood twenty years ago. Very prejudiced....

“You know all the time our workers, Josephine Butler trained, when I first came here, were not valued in any way by statutory social workers. I mean I can remember fighting my way into a child protection conference, literally. The mother and baby were living with us 24 hours a day and had done for a very long time. We were the mother and baby home for her and I think I got rather fed up. The social worker said oh yes come along, its then [a specific time]. So I duly turned up with the senior worker who was also a qualified social worker by that time, because we had started to appoint people, and um we got in and they had told us half an hour late so we were late and there weren’t any chairs and we finally got a chair around the table and I remember it very clearly because I had been working in child guidance so it didn’t intimidate me at all, and um the chair went all the way around the circle and then didn’t ask us. So at some point I said excuse me but this young women is living with us with her baby. We have given her all of her practical experience in child care. You know she came to us like this and you haven’t even asked us about her. And yes fine you know I probably had a real go at the psychiatrist because he was talking a load of nonsense but we did then get invited to child protection conferences and we did begin to be valued for the work that we do but we had to fight our way in because the workers up until that time had been seen as sort of cheap taxi drivers. And the church was giving a lot of money and not being valued at all for what was clearly a hugely nurturing input in the hostels” (Interview 16)

A clergyman who was also a qualified social worker said:

“Most of my work is not actually with my fellow clergy, it’s with social services etc. etc. Being a social worker has helped there tremendously, that has made a big difference. It shouldn’t, a piece of paper should make no difference at all but it does, it opens doors. Once it’s opened the doors, what you make of those open doors is up to you and the longer I am in the job the less difference it makes because the doors are open now because of my abilities in the job but initially it opened doors because there was suspicion in the secular field of involving the church.”

RW “Do you know why that was?”

“I guess it was just suspicion of the church. Lots of people in social services have no church connections. Lots of people in society have no church connections but lots of people in particular in social services have no church connections and a suspicion of the motives of the church I think sometimes. The church is going to run projects that-, we talked earlier what’s a church project, if it’s a project where [pause], in some church projects I’ve seen really there’s quite an amount of evangelism goes on in the project, I suppose there was suspicion amongst social services colleagues that’s what a church family centre would be like.”

RW “And the moral welfare background as well, do you think that plays a leading role?”

“Yeah, although when you look at how the church ran adoptions, it wasn’t that much different to how society was doing them at the time. But yes the very name sort of says it all doesn’t it now to our minds. But I suppose there was a suspicion that the church would run it in a very religious manner, that the church didn’t know how to run it, so the project wouldn’t be very good, that the church didn’t have the experience of running a project that could hold its own, that somehow all told it would be a bit second rate. The doors are open in Seatown because they know our work. Initially the fact that I was a qualified social worker helped because remember we are looking at times there where we didn’t have projects to open doors for us. We earned our spurs before we started our projects really.” (Interview 28)

These anecdotes are often describing incidents from years before but there is no doubt how bruising and formative they were to the people concerned.

The church social workers who are most secure and comfortable in their relationships with other social workers are those such as adoption workers who are working alongside statutory and other voluntary agency workers all the time. For them it is simply not an option to be insecure or nurse grudges or offences and the working relationship is one in which the preoccupation with image or reputation must be put aside. A female adoption social worker in her forties in a Roman Catholic adoption agency was asked:

R.W. “ What do you think are the impressions that state social workers have of church social work agencies?”

Interviewee “I think the ones we deal with, you know you try to keep to the same groups, you know especially round the London area or say I’ve dealt quite a bit with Bendsleigh in the Midlands, if you get to know an agency,

you get to know the social workers and you get to work closely together, and once that barrier has broken down and they begin to realise that this is good work you know we will come back to you again. So you know they are for ever coming back, you know we had a good placement last time, have you got any other couples, and I think that in itself will show that we can work together and that also we can appreciate each other's work, and difficulties and problems, because I think that social services, their big problem is the turn-over in social workers you know that they are here today and gone tomorrow....

It is a working relationship you have to build up.” (Interview 13)

This interviewee is certainly not trying to make a comparative point about how stable church social work is in comparison to state social work and in not making this point she proves her confidence and security. This common sense attitude, however, was not the one most common in the interviews.

III. Full Circle: Church Social Work and the Poor Reputation of Contemporary State Social Work

i. No Solidarity

Possibly because of their sense of insecurity or lack of fellow feeling for their colleagues in the statutory sector who they may well feel kicked them when they were down, church social workers are rapidly abandoning the rest of the social work profession and forging out on their own.

One interviewee who had been a director of one of the largest church social work agencies in the country said:

“My predecessor for example said ‘I will never employ a professional social worker. Over my dead body.’ he said.”

R.W. “Why was that?”

Interviewee “Well, professional social workers had a bad name at this time.” [1970s] (Interview 25)

This is an extreme example but even if professional social workers are employed in the churches it is often not with the title “social worker“:

“I should add that out of choice, a few years ago the social work staff chose to

be described as project workers and we thought that had some sort of professional edge to it at the time but it seems that mostly it was to do with the rather poor image that social workers had with the public, slightly above estate agents” (Interview 4)

One interviewee was able to fit the latest name change of his church social work organisation into the succession of name changes the organisation had gone through. He was also candid about the reason for this latest change:

“We have just changed our name....

“We were Southbridge Diocesan Association for Penitentiaries, then we were Southbridge Diocesan Purity Association then Southbridge Diocesan Moral Welfare Association then Southbridge Diocesan Association for Family Social Work and now Southbridge Diocesan Association for Family Support Work and what that [last change] is about is getting social work out of our title. And the reason for that is that the supporters find it difficult to get support [funds] for social work, and also in peoples’ minds it is connected with the local authority. If it’s social work then the local authority do it. And in terms of the workers, they are also supportive of this title change because they are trying to distance themselves from the local authority.”(Interview 5)

When one considers the whole debate about whether church social work (as in moral welfare work) was proper social work, and how church social workers struggled to achieve recognition, this latest twist is superbly ironic. The last thing that church social work now wants is recognition from statutory social work because of the stigma of child protection (or lack of child protection) that comes with it.

One Social Responsibility Officer questioned whether church social work’s effort to distance itself from state social work went deeper than just the change of name and worries about public perceptions of the work. He queried whether church social workers even bothered any more to maintain proper working procedures and practices with the statutory service:

“What would interest me is what is the relationship of a social worker, a qualified social worker working for a voluntary organisation like the family social work here although that is changing its name anyway, and social services, how much is there shared case conferences, how much do they participate? I really wonder. I bet they don’t.”

“My own personal thing about the Family Social Work is that I don’t think it has really got its frames of reference vis-à-vis the local authority. I think there

is still a danger of doing your own thing and somehow therefore saying we are as good as or better than because social workers are nasty people who take our children away. The demonising of social work is something that I've spent a lot of my time tackling in the job I'm doing - saying let's, you know, affirm social work, for goodness sake. (Interview 3)

Incidentally, an interesting feature of this last quotation is that the social responsibility officer does not know how much co-operation there is between state and church social workers in his diocese. He has to make a bet about it. In fact he was right because the organisation he was describing was that of the interviewee above who admitted that his workers did not want to be associated with the local authority. However the fact that the social responsibility officer did not know is a clue to how isolated social movements within the churches can become even from each other. His affirmation of social work will not reach church workers (no longer calling themselves social workers) because for a number of reasons considered in the next chapter he and the movement he represents became estranged from church social work.

ii. Overtures from the Other Side

As a last twist in this narrative, several of the interviewees indicated that they had the impression that in recent years state social workers had become more amenable to the efforts of the churches in social work. One, a spokesperson for social and family issues for the Methodist Church, gave his reasons for the new friendliness towards church agencies:

RW "Can you expand a bit on your perception that it is getting better?"

Interviewee "The main reason, well two. One is I think even The Church of England would accept quite strongly now um that the UK is multi-faith, multi-cultural and though yes its origins, its traditions are Christian and maybe in terms of an established church, The Church of England, there is no monopoly and no community is summed up by saying they are Church of England. Therefore Christians have become, very conservative Christians haven't, but I think the main churches have accepted themselves as in a sense another minority group within a society which has no 100% religious base. We are not a Catholic country like some, we are not a Muslim country like some. Being a Christian country means a very different thing in this country. It is partly about being origins, its partly about things that are ongoing, value bases, I think many people would see Christian ethics as being basically rightish and would claim to live by the Sermon on the Mount. Wouldn't

necessarily go to church, wouldn't necessarily believe in God. But alongside that is what I was saying a minute ago that the other faiths, and Christian churches increasingly respect each other and can work together in communities where there is racial tension and so on, overtly doing so and I think that many social workers I have worked with and spoken to who are not members of faith communities themselves accept that faith communities are important within the particular communities they are working in. And so long as they play it in a balanced way then they are equally willing to speak to the Imam as to the vicar. It is quite important that faith-based communities are a resource in the community. That is one reason.

“The other reason which is very recent really is purely that, I think that, well the word that I would use would be spirituality. That the spiritual needs of children, the spiritual way of defining people has an increasing respect or lip service from people who are not part of the faith communities whether it be new age or whether it be, we've organised a couple of conferences in the last couple of years on spirituality and childhood. Educationalists are starting to take it much more seriously, what does this spiritual bit mean, when it isn't just about making sure that they are card carrying members of the Church of England. And certainly we've had quite a bit of interest in events and publications around this whole question in terms of their identity, in terms of helping children fly and not just crawl, you know what is full humanity and those kind of issues the churches, as long as if we play it as if we don't have all the answers but we are part of the debate, I think there is a greater openness than there was perhaps ten years ago.” (Interview 10)

Another interviewee noted in a feedback telephone conversation that one of the biggest changes she has experienced in the attitudes of the state representatives is the new enthusiasm for “faith-based agencies” which, of course, is a phrase which has travelled from the United States. However, this may not be the best moment for these overtures in that many of the churches involved in social work, especially newer Christian social work agencies, would certainly not accept the pluralist vision that is part and parcel of this new openness. This subject is discussed in greater depth in the coming chapters.

It is the contention of this thesis that isolationism combined with immediacy, backing into a corner and getting on with what you can get on with, is a feature of church social work. This chapter has been about perceptions of church social work, not necessarily the realities. But one of the realities is that church social work allowed those perceptions to endure. It did not act positively to eradicate them.

Not only has church social work failed to engage with the social work

profession, it has failed to make an adequate case for its retention within the churches themselves and where it persists it often maintains an isolated position there too. One of the reasons why church social work as a movement has not mounted an adequate defence of its reputation may have been because there was an awareness that the movement had few allies supporting it even within the churches. The next chapters examine in more detail the position of church social work within the churches themselves, both from an organisational and from a theological perspective.

Chapter 4

Structured Ambivalence: The Organisation of Church Social Work

In the previous chapter church social work's professional reputation was evaluated. It is not possible, however, to make a full evaluation without some consideration of the context in which the work takes place. In his book *Sociology and Social Work: Perspectives and Problems* Brian Heraud describes the difficult organisational settings in which some forms of social work take place:

“Social work, like most other forms of professional and semi-professional work, is a highly organised activity and is therefore influenced by the organisation and its administrators, who may or may not be social workers. Again, the organisations in which social workers function are often devoted to ends (medical or legal) which may be marginal to the social worker's central concern. There are therefore a complex and powerful set of influences on the social workers in the organisation which, to an extent, pull in the opposite direction to influences from the profession.” (Heraud, 1970: pp.179-180)

This chapter will demonstrate that church social work is an extreme example of social work undertaken in an organisational context inimical to the profession. There is no obvious reason why this should be the case. Indeed, the churches could potentially have been excellent locations for professional social work. In theory they have any number of organisational advantages. William Lock in his contribution to *Lux Mundi*, the collection of essays that caused so much controversy in the late 19th Century church circles, wrote:

“The idea of a Church, then, as conceived in its most general form, and without especial reference to the Christian Church, is this, that it widens life by deepening the sense of brotherhood; that it teaches, strengthens and propagates ideas by enshrining truth in living witnesses, by checking the results of isolated thinkers by contact with other thinkers and by securing permanency for the ideas; and it expands and deepens worship by eliminating all that is selfish and narrow and giving expression to common aims and feelings.” (Lock in Gore Ed. 1890: p.368)

As I will argue a fundamental problem for church social work as it developed in the 20th Century is that the church never readily or wholeheartedly put the services Lock describes at the disposal of their own social work. Church social work as a result has

been just barely within the fold in a formal sense but in reality isolated from the life of The Church and any sense of commonality or broad based support that would have come with it. It failed to “secure permanency”. Social work has not become part of what The Church is, in essence, and this can be seen clearly by an examination of church social work structures. The structures that have been put in place (or not put in place) illustrate this isolation and containment and will be shown to have stymied the development of the work. All told, this chapter will provide supporting evidence for the assertion made in the thesis in the Introduction that church social work never enjoyed the whole hearted support of parent churches.

I. Secondariness or Supplementarity: “A Bolt-on Extra”

The first and most important thing to understand about the organisation of church social work in Britain is that it has never been considered one of the churches’ primary interests and therefore never organised as such. This is linked to the idea that social work, or indeed anything “social”, is somehow not the churches’ proper domain. The Archbishop’s Report on *The Church and Social Service* began by stating:

“We are, of course, aware of the view held in many quarters that ‘social work’ is not the proper work of the Church; in brief, that it is not ‘spiritual’. We do not agree with this view.” (1920: p.2)

Eighty years later the view that social work is not the proper work of The Church is still common. In a recent article in the *Church Times* under the headline “We’re a Church, not a social-work centre” the Revd Nicholas Jowett, a parish priest in Sheffield, comments:

“ It’s becoming very clear that, the more the Churches get into social work, the less anyone sees a specifically religious content to what they do.” (7th Dec. 2001 : p.15)

Jowett’s distinction between social work and any “specifically religious content” is telling. He wants to bracket religion away from social work. There is no acknowledgement that church social work may itself be a religious activity.

Diane Garland, an American academic specializing in church social work, writes:

“Churches are not primarily social service agencies. Instead they are host settings, settings in which social work is a ‘guest’ invited in for a reason.” (Garland, 1997: p.101)

Garland is writing in a North American context where church social work based in a single congregation appears to be more common than in Britain, (see for example Bailey in Garland {Ed.} [1992: pp.58- 65] although this impression cannot at present be verified as comparable figures for parish/local church based social work in Britain are not available) and therefore the concept of hosting social work may be more meaningful. In Britain, where much of the work has been established on a diocesan and not a parish basis, church social workers are all too aware that they are not the primary workers in the church, that secondariness is their lot. Evidence of such awareness can be found recurring in the church social work literature over the last thirty years or so. Magnass, following her 1968/1969 survey of Anglican diocesan social work, which included interviews with church social workers, commented:

“Sometimes the work was unwillingly sponsored and ill-supported by diocesan authorities and it was both tiresome and depressingly frequent to hear the phrase ‘I’m afraid it is the Cinderella of diocesan concern.’” (Magnass, 1970: p.38)

In 1986 an article appeared in *Crucible* written by the Directors of both the Anglican and Roman Catholic Diocesan Social Work Teams in Liverpool. It describes the crisis church social work experienced in the city in 1985 when local government funding collapsed. The article’s target is not the local authority but the hierarchies of both churches and their failure to respond to the crisis. They write:

“But have the churches altered their view of their social work, their diaconates, as being marginal to their central purpose? Have they affirmed the work of the people undertaking it? We believe not.... The diaconal ministry of social work lacks credibility because it is treated as a side issue. The Gospel message will remain hidden in the ecclesiastical structure.” (Fann and Dodds 1986: p.115)

In the Diocese of London in the Church of England, approximately 70 workers were made redundant in the mid-1990s when the diocese decided it could no longer fund church social work. Today in London there is still an Anglican social work organisation known as RADICLE that wishes to associate itself with the Church of England as can be seen from the fact that they have an entry in the Directory of

Diocesan Projects compiled by the Anglican Diocesan Social Workers Group. A section is left at the bottom of each entry for Bishops' comments and in the case of RADICLE the comment is as follows:

“Bishop Richard Chartres is supportive of the work, as are the other London Diocese Bishops - though not financially.”(Bishop's underlining, unpublished document circa 2001²⁸).

So-called support of this nature has dogged church social work. It is curious that agency workers would want to continue to be seen to be Anglican in such circumstances.

Secondariness or supplementarity was also a significant theme in the interviews for this present study. When one considers that all the interviews were cold in the sense that I was meeting interviewees for the first time, it was striking how determined people were to make this “disloyal” point and it became clear that this was one of the issues on which there was considerable strength of feeling and a number of people wanted to unburden themselves and to set the record straight.²⁹ Four of the interviewees who were involved in social work organised on a diocesan basis³⁰ made direct criticisms and in several other cases although they did not go as far as what follows there was a general sense of struggling with being unwanted or ill-favoured. One male interviewee in his fifties who had been a Director of an Anglican Diocesan Social Work Team for more than 20 years commented:

“But I'm not sure if the hierarchy didn't see me and the association as anathema. It is almost as if we are in an area that wasn't of great interest or import and nobody thought to move us into one that might be. I don't know really. It's very odd....” (Interview 5)

The interviewee goes on to give an example of where he feels the work is not advancing because of the church's reluctance, as represented in this case by a particular committee, to commit itself financially:

²⁸ This Directory is available from Church of England church social work offices such as those in the Diocese of Oxford and Peterborough.

²⁹ Although, see my introductory letter in the appendices. The reader must make up their own mind as to whether the letter, with its reference to decline for example, gives a lead for these sorts of comments.

³⁰ This is four out of twelve or 33% of those employed under similar diocesan or central type conditions and not for example in local parishes or in Christian Social Work projects.

“We are looking at the moment to expand the lone parent support work....And Joan is having talks with the advisory group about doing just that, seeing if they will fund it, and see if they really want to get into it. And my guess is that they will say ‘no, we can’t even afford to pay our clergy, how are we going to afford this’. And that where we fit in the scheme of things. This is a bolt-on extra ...and I think it’s a great shame. I think the church should own this. I think, for one, we are a credit to them.” (Interview. 5)

The following comments are made by a woman in her fifties working as a detached social worker for a Roman Catholic diocesan social work agency and working with homeless people in a Midlands city:

“And as far as my relationship with the agency that funds me is concerned, I think it can best be summed up by saying out of sight out of mind. I was originally wished onto them by the then Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westhaven, so they got landed with me, um”

R.W. “So what church, is this a particular local church or?”

“That was, yeah, the agency that funds me is the Roman Catholic Diocesan social work agency, Father Philip’s Society. ... So I was wished onto them, a completely new departure from their point of view but the then Director felt it was right to go along with what the Archbishop wanted....I think I should say that I don’t think they ever knew what they were taking on... So I think they sort of see it as I can be seen to be doing good. And I think the rest of it is a bit of a blur and whether they acknowledge it is another matter. So it is a strange situation.” (Interview 9)

Another female Anglican Diocesan Social Work Director with vast experience in her post and of the national Anglican scene summed up the perception of church social work within the church itself as follows:

“Really within the hierarchy of the church, social work does not figure. Witness, you’ve got 23 [Church of England dioceses doing some sort of social work/social intervention according to the calculation of the Diocesan Social Workers’ group, circa 2001] and I wonder how many of those 23 dioceses actually know that they have got it.” (Interview 16)

When interviewees are referring to the hostility or ignorance of those in the hierarchy, it is the churches’ primary workers that they are referring to, the clergy, because in all the cases of churches that tried to set up professional social work

services it is the clergy who actually hold the power in those churches (or at least who hold the power to promote or hinder another professional group).

II. The Changing Role of the Clergy as a Key to Understanding the Difficult Position of Social Work Within Church Organisations

Both David Cannadine's book *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (1996: pp.255-264) and Anthony Russell's book *The Clerical Profession* (1980) track the changes in the role of the clergyman from that of 18th Century gentry or at least aspiring gentry, closely allied to the landed interest, to the late 19th Century middle class "technologists of the sanctuary" (Russell, op. cit: p.40). Russell argues that as the 19th Century progressed the clergy lost more and more of the lay roles that they had previously held and became instead religious specialists:

"Such was the growth and complexity of Victorian society that many of these activities outgrew the competence of the clergy, and there arose a number of new professional roles which were concerned exclusively with those roles which they had previously been content to perform in an amateur way. The accredited county doctor, the lay magistrate, the policeman, the party agent, the trained teacher, the county solicitor, the registrar and a number of new local government officials were all in a sense new professional roles in the mid-nineteenth century. The effect of their emergence on the clergyman's role was to sharply contract the range of his functions. In some instances, this happened quickly and with resentment, as when the clergy ceased to be the registrars of births and deaths. In other instances the clergy gradually disengaged themselves in the face of mounting public opinion as in the case of politics and the magistracy." (Russell, 1980: p.234)

It is interesting that Russell does not include social workers amongst this list of emerging professionals. Indeed, social work as a profession emerged somewhat later than these others and its relationship with the clergy was more complex because as shall be shown the clergy were never entirely sure whether social work was something from which they should or even could be disengaged .

The almoning role that the clergy had historically played formally through the Elizabethan Poor Law parish vestry system changed after the 1832 reforms to a more informal role but as chapter 1 has shown, church (and clergy – see Norman, 1976: pp.128-129) philanthropic activity was frenetic in the late 19th Century. The pastoral role of the clergy, which Russell describes as a charter role [that is as specified in the

Ordinal of the Book of Common Prayer –effectively the charter document for Anglican clergy] and one which is still centrally important to clergy self perception to this day (Russell, op. cit: p.276), was one to which professional social work as it developed certainly had pretensions. It became almost inevitable that the clergy would come to see social workers as secular rivals. Also, unlike some of the other professions such as registrars or solicitors which were entirely handed over to the state or private agencies, the church did not wholly give up its claim to be involved in social work. It began to employ church social workers so that within the churches other professionals were now performing a similar role to that previously performed by the clergy. The ingredients for conflict were all there; a rich mixture of envy, rivalry, resentment and ignorance leading to confusion and mess.

III. Rivalry, Resentment, Lack of Interest or Knowledge and Different Styles of Communication and Management

Russell has noted that even in the earliest days of district visiting some clergy were threatened by the role of district visitors and determined to get them under clergy control:

“ Some of the clergy regarded the activities of these agents as a potential threat to their role, and certainly many were suspicious of the role of the district visiting society. A typical letter of 1829 referred to such a lady as ‘a female spiritual quack.’ ...The Clergy with their new conceptions of their role and its importance, were anxious to remain at the head of such activities and thereby limit the excesses of their lay assistants. Like other professions, the clergy were worried about the encroachments of assistants into their area of professional competence.” (Russell, op. cit: pp.120-121).

Subsequently district visiting organisations were held on a very tight rein by the clergy and other organisations such as the Raynard Bible Women were brought under clergy control (Heeney, 1988: p.49). Suspicions and perceived threats re-emerged when district visitors began, in the first third of the 20th Century, to transform themselves into professional moral welfare workers. Those sections of Higson’s book already quoted in Chapter 1 (1955: p. 5,17) reveal the clergy to be ambivalent and in some cases downright hostile to the emerging moral welfare profession within the Church of England. Pringle’s book, *The Social Work of the London Churches* is a good example of that tradition within the churches dating from Thomas Chalmers’

work in the 1820s and continuing right through to R. Whelan's *The Corrosion of Charity* (1996) that has been opposed to the State's involvement in philanthropy and relief. Pringle's book is a polemic, critical of statutory social work performed for example by the London County Council Children's Committee workers, and advocating a revival of district visiting in the parishes but very much under the control of the clergyman. It is significant that diocesan social work, which was well established by then, is scarcely mentioned in his book. The more recent works by this movement have seen social workers, as the state's operatives in these matters, as fair game. It may well have been the case that church social workers struggled in their relationships with the clergy because the clergy associated church social work with statutory social work of which they were suspicious and sometimes resentful. It is not clear to what extent the two were lumped together. As late as 1964 Jean Heywood, a moral welfare worker, was writing in *Crucible* about the ambivalence felt by clergy about the post WWII welfare state:

"It is not an uncommon experience to meet with confusion about the function of the Church in the welfare State. Its traditional, compassionate concern for the unhappy and the underprivileged, which inspired so many individual men and women to push for humanitarian reforms is now said to have become embodied in an impersonal but effective code of legislation, superseding many of the expressions of care. Some clergymen are left with a feeling that a good deal of their own work has also been superseded by the social workers of the state." (Heywood, 1964: p.39)

However, specifically in regard to church social work, as time wore on and moral welfare became more established in the churches on a diocesan level rather than in individual parishes, it was lack of interest and knowledge rather than outright hostility or resentment that became the more common attitude amongst clergy. It is clear that communication between diocesan social work agencies and local parishes was always problematic. Early evidence of a rift between the local parish priest and the emerging diocesan social work system can be seen in a speech on rescue work to the 1924 Annual Conference of Principals and Vice Principals of Theological Colleges given by Canon T. Pym. The following is an excerpt from that speech:

"We had not, as a Committee, [sub-committee of the Archbishop's Advisory Board for Preventive and Rescue work] been long at work before it became clear to us that one most important line of advance would be a development of much closer co-operation between parish priests and rescue workers. For

there is plenty of reason to suppose that many priests remain for years and often throughout their whole ministry ignorant of the magnificent work that is being done. In consequence of this ignorance not only does the work suffer from the lack of intercessions in many parishes, but rescue workers often lack other support, interest and sympathy they might expect from their clergy.”(Pym in Higson, 1955: p.147)

Higson writes in a note at the beginning of this extract: “It is interesting to note that the facts put forward in the following are still [in 1955] germane.” (ibid: p.146).

One of the questions on the June 1955 Central Council for Women’s Church Work - Moral Welfare Grade B examination paper was:

“When a Moral Welfare Worker goes to a new post how can she seek to interest and gain the co-operation of the clergy?” (JBMH papers 2/8)

The fact that this was set as a question suggests that there was little expectation that a meaningful relationship between the moral welfare worker and the clergyman could be taken for granted.

In the summer of 1960 as part of their research into church social work, Hall and Howes interviewed 49 clergymen in the Anglican Diocese of Manchester (a one in four sample) on their views on church social work and social work in general (Hall and Howes, 1965: 218-226.) This survey provides valuable material on the relationship between clergy and church social workers at this time although the clergy appear skilled at the vague, non-committal reply. Hall and Howes began each interview by asking about the visits of speakers on moral welfare and fund raising. This provided preliminary evidence of a high level of contact although limited to a certain sector of the church community:

“Only three incumbents said they had not had a speaker recently... We were not told of moral welfare workers addressing any parochial organisations other than women’s groups.... 34 out of the 49 parishes contributed to the Women’s Offering and eight of these also contributed to the local work.” (Hall and Howes: op.cit: p. 218)

Direct contact between clergy and moral welfare workers was less evident with 28 of those interviewed saying they had been in contact with diocesan moral welfare workers (regarding cases) and 21 had not. Evidence of a desire for further contact was even less forthcoming:

“Only a small minority, 10 out of 49, expressed a strong desire for a closer

working contact between themselves and moral welfare workers” (ibid: p.221)

Hall and Howes asked several questions designed to test the knowledge of clergy of church social work. Most answered these questions in vague or general terms from which it is difficult to draw anything concrete but Hall and Howes go on to note:

“Several mentioned temperance work and evidently linked the work of the Board of Moral Welfare with that of the Church of England Temperance Society [the involvement of this organisation in probation work had been brought to a halt by the state in 1936, see McWilliams (1986)], whilst another informant confused moral welfare work with the work of the Vigilance Association. In both groups there were one or two answers which revealed real confusion as to the nature and scope of the work.” (ibid: p.220)

Hall and Howes were interested in the question of whether moral welfare workers were a link or a bridge between the clergy and statutory social services. Only a minority of interviewees had had any contact at all with statutory social service, 22 out of the 49 claiming to have had contact:

“probation, children’s departments, health visitors, marriage guidance councils and adoption services being the services most frequently mentioned.” (ibid: p.221)

Those 22 were made up of 11 from each group (those who had and those who had not had contact with a moral welfare worker) so on the evidence of this sample moral welfare workers did not appear to be an especially effective bridge between the churches and statutory social services. Hall and Howes go on to comment that the nature of the contact and relationship between the clergy and statutory social workers was “somewhat limited.” (ibid: p.221).

Additionally there appeared to be no consensus on the differences between the clergyman’s role and that of the social worker, or as Hall and Howes put it, pastoral work and social work:

“The relationship between social and pastoral work, which appears to be fundamental to this discussion, was regarded in differing lights by the individual clergymen in this sample. Excluding eight answers that were not directly relevant, we were left with 18 replies to the effect that there is no essential difference between the two, six that they are essentially the same but differ in practice, one that although they overlap they are not necessarily the same and 16 to the effect that they are both theoretically and practically different. The type of parish for which they were responsible seems to have

affected the answers given, as, for example, one clergyman who replied 'There is no difference in this type of parish. In practically every house one visits there is some social problem. No time to pay purely pastoral visits'." (ibid: p.223)

The overall picture from this survey is of very mixed results but Hall and Howes did come away with an overall impression of a lack of interest. They concluded:

"...the general impression we brought away from this piece of fieldwork was that moral welfare work was regarded by most clergymen whom we visited as useful, specialist work but hardly a matter of vital concern to either himself or his parishioners." (ibid: p.225-226)

Bringing this subject up to date Kenneth Leech, himself a clergyman, has written as recently as 1997:

"To this day, many clergy still confuse sociology with social work, and refer to both with contemptuous and dismissive ignorance." (Leech, 1997: p.22).

In the interviews for this present research there were a number of complaints about lack of clergy interest in or knowledge of social work. In the following interview excerpt, a senior male social responsibility officer mischievously speculates on how much Anglican clergy know about church social work in their own diocese:

"Well I mean you're not going to quote me word for word I'm sure about this and you'd be foolish if you did. But um I'd love to ring up one or two clergy you know and say, you know what do you use Family Social Work for. Some would say 'Does it exist?'" I think. Some would say 'Oh, we make a donation once a year or we take part in the deanery summer fair or whatever' for the workers to get on with working with families." (Interview 3)

Another interviewee (Interview 11) thought that some of the older clergy in her diocese still thought of church social work as moral welfare work. This ignorance was not confined to outlying parishes. She went on to comment:

"My diocesan line manager [a clergyman] really didn't have a clue about the work that I do. So it is very much me reporting on the work, what is going on." (Interview 11)

This is why lack of knowledge amongst the clergy about social work is so important. Within the churches, because of their position as the primary professionals, the clergy

supervise, whether they are qualified to do so or not. Another interviewee, himself a clergyman with a background and qualification in accountancy, commented in a slightly different context about a situation overseas:

“I was sent in to clean up a financial mess because as so often in the church, as in this job here before me, it had been left to ministers per se. And ministers of the church are not trained in social work, or law or accountancy, a big mistake that the church makes. Constantly.” (Interview 25)

There is little hope that this situation is set to improve. One interviewee, who was also a part-time ordinand, was asked about the current level of input on social work or social policy themes on her ordination training course. She replied that there was very little, one morning only.

It was not only the lack of knowledge of social work that caused problems. In some cases there was a clash of cultures between the forms of management, supervision and communication that social workers expect and those used by the clergy. Broadly speaking the different forms can be categorised as formal and informal. Clergy, more secure in their position within the church, may not be aware that their informal methods of working may be considered unsatisfactory and even a threat by church social workers and church social work managers. One interviewee described how such differences can lead to serious breakdowns in communications between clergy and church social work practitioners.

Interviewee “Some parishes have got money from maybe European Funding or some other funding, if those were part of a team ministry, I was very concerned as a professional manager, I mean where these people were getting their support because they were being supported by the clergy but they needed professional development and we had in our diocese several cases where that relationship broke down and there was a lot of conflict between the professional social worker and the professional vicar if you want, I’m sure they would see themselves as equally as professional but these people need professional support. They need a management structure. They need to have regular development and appraisal and all of those sorts of positive things that you would want to make. So there has to be a level of accountability to somewhere, maybe other than the clergyman and the clergy aren’t very good at accountability and appraisal and”

R.W. “No, it’s a different culture.”

Interviewee “Well, it is coming in a bit now but you know so those are some issues, um now it just so happens that our executive officer on the social responsibility committee, whilst he is ordained was a senior manager in a

social services department in his past life. So he's actually OK at doing that and would be ideal at doing that but there is no way that humanly he can be responsible for 20 people, 30 people if they start to drive them up [that is - increase the number of parish-based social workers]." (Interview 7)

At a management level the informality that is the hall mark of clergy internal communication methods, "having a word", can be perceived as closed or unavailable to church social work managers. Fann and Dodds, in the article referring to both Anglican and Roman Catholic diocesan social work in Liverpool already cited above, went on to note:

"The (Diocesan Social Work) Directors operated in an organisational vacuum, probably because they were not priests. The informal structures available to clergy were not available to them; the strength of these informal structures meant that no-one had thought of formal structures to replace them." (Fann and Dodds, op cit: p.114)

IV. The Failure to use the Parish System

One of the most significant consequences of the failure to engage with the parish clergy or convince them of the validity of the cause of church social work has been that church social work in the Church of England (and unusually this also applies the Church of Scotland) has been unable to use what would at first sight appear a major asset, the parish system. The success of the more well-known parish or local church social work centres such as St. Martin's in the Field in Trafalgar Square or the Methodist West London Mission in Hinde St., has usually had much to do, at least in their initial phase, with the charisma and drive of individuals such as Dick Shepherd, and Hugh Price Hughes. The success of these centres should not disguise the fact that they are very much the exception to the rule and that the bulk of professional church social work in the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches of England, Wales and Scotland, and in the Church of Scotland has been carried out away from the parishes in diocesan or regional offices.

The parish clergy are invariably the gatekeepers to their parishes; they decide who has access to their territory. One female interviewee, a diocesan social work director who had been successful at internal fundraising, was asked whether parish clergy were supportive of the work:

"There will be some who say, quite clearly, you're not evangelising,

particularly on the Evangelical side of the C of E, you're not evangelising, you're not doing what we should be doing as Christians, therefore we don't approve of you and we won't give you any money and we won't ask you to come and talk about your work. You know there is a handful of them. There is another group that aren't terribly interested in us because this is not their particular scene and they won't interest their parishes. And then there is another group of about 50% who are very active and very aware and we just keep it in front of them and tell the stories. And we do have voluntary fundraisers in the parishes. So we've kept that visibility and haven't allowed it to go away." (Interview16)

She was the only Anglican interviewee who said she still put considerable time into parish-based fund-raising. All the others I spoke to had given up on this activity or only gave it a very small amount of time (although information from pilot Interview 3 indicated that Roman Catholic diocesan social work organisations still make serious attempts to raise funds in the parishes). It is worthy of note that even in this case where she has managed to keep half of the clergy on board in some sense, it is in keeping with the overall pattern that it is the lack of interest rather than outright hostility that does most damage in terms of fundraising.

As well as being gatekeepers the parish clergy were and continue to be almost invariably the employers or more specifically those who have the final/most influential say on employment matters within their parishes. Hall and Howes (op. cit: p.270) noted the position of the parish-based social worker was always a very weak one as she was employed usually on the whim of the parish priest and placed junior to the most junior curate within the local parish hierarchy. Most professionally trained social workers/moral welfare workers would not tolerate such a situation and parish priests would not employ them especially if they had the usually cheaper option of what were called parish workers. According to Younghusband 375 female parish workers were employed in the Church of England in May 1950. She describes the work they did as follows:

"It includes general parochial work, Sunday Schools, Bible classes and religious education in various forms, clubs, home visiting, women's classes, moral welfare; as well as mission work, and acting as chaplain's assistants in the women's services. The essential equipment, in addition to the right qualities of personality, is a knowledge of the Bible and of Christian doctrine, the ability to help people with their religious difficulties and ethical problems, some understanding of group work and teaching method and case work

principles and a good knowledge of social agencies.” (Younghusband 1951: p.60)

Younghusband makes no reference to formal training and there was no parish worker equivalent of Josephine Butler Memorial House.³¹ Clearly, such dogsbodies would be of more use to a parish priest than a professionally qualified worker who might be perceived as a potential rival.

Heasman’s description of the Borehamwood experiment (1965) and the North American experience of parish-based church social work (as described by Bailey in Garland (Ed.) 1992) are an indication that the parish or local church is still a good-sized unit for church social work. Diocesan social workers in interviews (Interviews 11 and 16) reported that there is a growing tide of opinion urging a move towards the smallest organisational unit possible for church social work (possibly a cluster of parishes or congregations as described by Bailey, op cit: 58). The following long extract is from a director of a church social work scheme based in one locale, and connected to one church and it shows all the advantages that arise from having an organisational structure that is so closely connected to the work itself. Once again it is important to emphasis that this sort of organisational basis, indeed any work that is strategic in this sense, is very much the exception in Britain:

“They had quite a review here in the late 70s /early 80s, around about the time of the centenary and they really set out on quite a new path, in the early 1980s which is germane to what we are nowadays. And they said, first of all, let the social work that the church does be first of all good social work. It must be as professional if not more so than the statutory, it must run to that standard. The church must not be associated with second class, amateurish kinds of social work. So that was the first thing.

“The second thing was, they said let us concentrate on what we would call client groups. They had a range of services historically, children, old people, mothers and babies and so on, and they said the rest of Methodism, particularly nationally, there’s National Children’s Homes, Methodist Homes for the Aged, so Methodism nationally was involved in quite a lot of social work so they said let us concentrate on homelessness, substance misuse and criminal justice and protect and develop those projects that they had in that

³¹ One interviewee (19) did refer to an educational establishment for these workers but I have been unable to confirm its existence.

field. They closed down some other work and said we will focus on this. Partly because the rest of Methodism isn't touching it, partly because it was quite close [geographically] to the disadvantaged, marginalized groups they wanted to support.

“The third thing they said was let the financial policy, the use of this investment policy, the hall, reflect the same long term view as our social work. So if our social work isn't to be palliative and amateurish but address peoples deep problems , why they are addicts, why they are homeless, whatever whatever, we must have a financial underpinning that helps that kind of policy, we mustn't burn all these investments in five years or something....

“And the fourth thing that they said, let us do real social work, let us concentrate on these client groups, let us have a financial discipline in the use of investment income and that it is ethically managed and all that kind of thing and finally, to help give expression to this, let us have a director of social work. Who will be a professional social work manager who knows something about these client groups because clergy and volunteer committee groups however good and there are some very good folks here, can't really on a day by day basis manage the range of social work that they wanted” (Interview 14)

It would be a mistake to assume that because church social work is not usually integrated into the parish or local church system and it is often called diocesan social work that it is instead neatly inserted into the parallel diocesan or regional structure. In some dioceses this is the case but in many it is not so easy to explain the linkage between a church social work organisation and its parent church. In the Anglican Church in particular a common form of church social work organisation was attempted at a level in-between the parish and the diocese, based on deaneries (Hall and Howes, op. cit: pp.128-129). In some cases this has led to a federated system with local deaneries maintaining a high degree of independence and sometimes idiosyncrasy. A good example of idiosyncrasy can be seen in the Welcare organisation in the Anglican Diocese of Southwark where all of the 11 deaneries in the federation have been set up on an Anglican denominational basis except Richmond which is explicitly ecumenical.

Focussing on the more centralized services however, it was possible in the interviews to establish two organisational trends; one was an attempt to establish a certain safe legal distance between a church and its own social work and the other

was simply evidence of organisational neglect or “muddle”.

V. Establishing Distance

Most of the Directors of the Anglican Social Work Associations, in describing the history of their associations come to a point where the association is required to become an independent charity. This, it appears, has often been done for legal reasons, specifically the fear of being sued. One interviewee, already quoted above as believing his service was thought of as “a bolt-on extra”, went on to comment:

“There were three posts being paid for by the diocese, not very well but three posts. When I came they didn’t want to continue that, there were all sorts of problems. Technically the association is an independent charity, it doesn’t form part of the diocese... It sounds technical and not important but in a way it is very important because suddenly you are not part of the diocese, not part of the structures. And this business of paying people, you can’t pay people you have no authority over so it was converted into a grant, a grant was given to family social work of about the same amount of money and this continues to this day... So it’s not really [Church of England social work]. It’s an independent charity. (Interview 5)

“At Diocesan level we have become more and more distant from the church in a sense. So, our president is the Bishop ...but 11 or 12 years ago it was thought no longer necessary that an Archdeacon be chair of the management committee.” (Interviewee 11)

In one case only was this separation described in positive terms as an exercise in clarification:

“First, primarily it [the diocesan social work service] was made up of the work of the adoption agency. The churches developed other projects, unemployment loans, there is drug and alcohol abuse and the committee took on a whole lot of other projects, so that the adoption agency, it was still expanding but it was becoming a smaller percentage of the whole figure so in 1992 there was quite a major re-organisation within the whole system and we became an independent organisation still retaining the title Angleshire Diocesan Adoption Service and I’ll come back and talk a bit about how it fits into the structure but also the diocese reformed its board for social responsibility to a number of committees who were responsible for different projects and we still have an executive officer or a director who is an ordained person but who also has social work experience in his background, um so they allowed each of the projects to become much more independent and responsible for their own development which was really quite good. And we

became much more responsible for our own development.” (Interview 7)

More frequently interviewees described this process of creating distance between the work and its church sponsor as being surrounded by tension or even bitterness. If a particular issue was perceived as encapsulating the position of church social work as only temporary lodgers within the church organisational structure, it was that of paying rent. Two Anglican Diocesan Social Work organisations whose directors were interviewed (Interviewees 5 and 11) occupied office space in the Church House of their diocese but they had to pay rent to the diocese to do so. (One interviewee noted in a feedback letter that in no sense was this a peppercorn rent. They were required to pay the full commercial rate for use of the diocese’s office facilities.) This situation clearly rankled with both of these interviewees and they took it to be symptomatic of their true situation within the Church of England.

VI. “Muddle”

“I’m only answerable to my board but the chairman is appointed by the bishop. It gets crazier in ways and it’s part of the muddle.” (Interview 5)

Besides the organisational pattern of churches creating a legally safe distance from their own social work, the other characteristic that can be observed in regard to organisational matters at a diocesan or regional level is a general air of neglect, muddle and sometimes structure placed on top of structure. Sometimes the muddle arises because churches want to hold this safe distance but also exercise a certain influence. Interviewee 5 went on to describe how he took advantage of this sense of muddle and neglect to suit his own purposes:

“I suppose the interesting bit for your research was nobody told me that my chairman, the Bishop of Shelford and my predecessor had decided that adoption work, that we were going to pull out of it. So I just disregarded it, total lack of communication really. So I came... and then for another ten years it went on.” (Interview 5)

More commonly, however, the sense of muddle only brought confusion and frustration with it. Simple questions about the extent of authority of church committees provoked answers filled with frustration. The only way that one Anglican church social work manager appeared to be able to cope with these entanglements

was to wish them away, act as if they were not there, or simplify them by force of will and good practice as can be seen from this interview excerpt:

R.W. "What control do they (the management committee) have over you?"

"Very difficult to answer that question, one of our big problems at the moment is struggling with the question of where authority lies and who can tell who what to do.

have two bosses really. I report to that central management committee. I also have a diocesan line manager who is a clergyman. And the Management Committee itself reports to the Board. And this clergyman is the Officer of that Board. I don't know if you can picture that. It is not clear. It is not clear to me either. My diocesan line manager really didn't have a clue about the work that I do. So it is very much me reporting on the work, what is going on. I tend to work as if I was responsible to the management committee. But actually if I chose not to work like that I'm not sure what they would or could do about it. So I chose to work as if this was a voluntary agency and this [the management committee] was my Board of Trustees. Um, but I'm actually employed by the Diocese and not by them so they can't sack me, um, but that is the way it works best so I see them as having an influence on our strategic direction. They certainly oversee our financial situation. And anything in our code of practice has to go through that committee. Um that is how I've chosen to work, my predecessor too, although whether in reality that is what it is I don't know. I mean there are, I think it is a typical church thing in that it kind of evolved and we are sort of mixed up in church structures and - it's a minefield of legalities." (Interview 11)

It is the nature of muddle that it is not deliberate. In most Anglican dioceses church social work has not been deliberately mishandled but it might as well have been.

Church social work has remained in the church, even as church bureaucrats have sought to distance themselves from it or have just not thought about it at all, mostly because of the enthusiasm of individuals to stay on board. Just as the demise of Josephine Butler Memorial House had much to do with the deaths of some of its key individuals, so too several of the managers interviewed see themselves as having kept their organisation a church organisation almost through the force of their personalities alone, and they worry for its future:

"And here, you could make the same argument about here after I'm gone. I mean we'll be set up as an organisation that will survive in the secular. But if we were to get someone who wasn't comfortable with keeping the church or even didn't want to put in the energy to keeping the church bit going, it would grant and be able to challenge it, and after 5 or 6 years it would be gone and

that link wouldn't be there anymore." (Interview 16)

The reference to a sinister committee person sniping at the diocesan grant raises the issue that probably gives the clearest indication of the churches' ambivalence towards their own social work, finance. Lip service support cannot disguise the figures in annual reports as shall now be shown.

VII. The Reduction in Financial Commitment

Another of the consequences of failing to convince those with power and authority in the churches of the value of church social work was that direct funding from the churches dried up. The often unconvinced clergy held the purse strings. At the same time, some church social work organisations were not wise in the way they allowed their parent church to come to see them as a financial burden. One interviewee (Interview 14), a woman in her forties, once again an Anglican Diocesan social work director, described how as recently as five or six years ago the diocese would simply balance the books by making up any shortfall in the budget at the end of each year. Anyone with a grasp of the overall situation facing the churches in recent years in terms of their steady decline in membership and the consequent reduction in financial resources would be able to appreciate that such an arrangement, that of automatically making up a financial shortfall, could not go on indefinitely and would eventually come under scrutiny³². See Chapter 6 for a more subtle discussion of these issues.

To examine the finances of church social work is to gain an appreciation of how tenuous is the link between these organisations and the church with which they associate themselves. The reduction in funding of church social work by the churches themselves has taken place over a long period. Hall and Howes noted as far back as the early 1960s that agencies were forced to go elsewhere if they were to continue to operate:

³² Although one should be careful about assuming a direct correlation between the overall decline in church attendance and the decline in church social work programmes. As Wilmer recently noted (2002) The Church of England was big enough and influential enough to continue to run social work programmes even in the face of decline. The point stands however that such services became more and more vulnerable, especially to a purely financial reckoning.

“Some Associations, particularly those without investments and those involved in heavy expenditure on obsolescent buildings, were evidently finding it difficult to keep going, and it is hard to see how they could have survived at all were it not for the local authority grants. In other words, the continuance of this social work carried out in the name of the Church was dependent on the goodwill of the political community.” (Hall and Howes, op. cit: p.159)

One interviewee described the situation in the 1970s where he was a social work programme director:

“We started with the adoption agency, working in partnership with Bankshire and by the time I left Bankshire were paying for 90% of our old moral welfare work because they realized that if we were to have pulled out of it they would have had to have taken it over and done it.”

R.W. “... How did it go down in the churches, that change in the funding?”

Interviewee “... There was an awareness that they were keeping the work together but they weren't having to pay for it all. You know of course that the church at that time employed people on abysmal salaries, abysmal salaries. Now by the time that I had done these deals with local government, our workers' salaries had improved enormously, so we had to find that money from somewhere and sometimes we were criticised actually for paying social work salaries. You know people saying “Where is the vocation gone in this?” so we had to find fresh money if we were going to increase the professional approach of our work. We couldn't recruit professional social workers, trained social workers and pay them half the money, like we were doing in those days. Our budget went sky-high but at the very same time we were getting money in from the local authorities which the church was very pleased about” (Interview 12)

This interviewee went on to emphasise that that figure of 90% local authority funding only applied to the old moral welfare programme and that the church was paying for a greater percentage of other work. Since that time the percentage of finance provided by the churches for their own social work has continued to decline. For example Welcare in the Anglican Diocese of Southwark, received 9.8% of its overall funding from the church in 1996/7 (1996/97 Annual Report: p.25). Family Care, a social work service in the Anglican Diocese of Peterborough received 7% of funding from the diocesan grant and a further 2% from Parish Donations in 2001 (2001 Annual Report). It is important to add, however, that in several of the interviews it was revealed that church hierarchies were still very much aware of the power of their

funding, however small it might be proportionately. They are often in the privileged position as the parent of the association to still have an input on how their money is spent. This is done most obviously through allocated funding. In three of the interviews a situation was described whereby a church insisted that its funding pay the salaries of senior managers of the agency. This meant that they got the best value for their money in terms of power and influence in the organisation.

Those agencies that have relied on local authority funding alone to make up the shortfall in church funding have not fared well, mainly because local authority funding has not kept up with the cost of social care, especially residential care. The Church of Scotland suffered as a result of its specialisation in residential care of the elderly. A senior member of staff within the current Church of Scotland Board of Social Responsibility explained their recent financial troubles in the following terms:

“The pressing situation that we have right now is a financial one. Right at this particular point in time and it has been for the last ten years and that situation has been that the government both centrally and locally have not paid the rate that is the required in residential care. And in the first few years there was a denial that that existed but ... but over a period of time there has been this gap, this growing gap which has resulted in the Board spending massive amounts of its resources, as in millions of pounds ensuring that we still care for older people.” (Interview 24)

Another interviewee explained that such reliance on one funder is no longer thought to be a safe form of funding church social interventions in the new funding environment:

“I’ve no illusions that I could be sitting here in five years’ time and it could all be very different. I’ve seen it happen to too many colleagues. So we’ve no illusions that we don’t have to be always aware of what we are doing [a reference to the unreliability of internal church funding]. Consequently one of the things that we do to ensure success in that field is we don’t put all our funding eggs in one basket. None of our projects are funded by one funder. They all have a proliferation of funding from wherever.” (Interview 28)

For many church or Christian organisations the search to find funding for social work projects is complicated by the fact that they are not guided only by financial necessity and that churches are not as free as some within a free market. The Church of Scotland employee quoted above goes on to describe how the

standards that the organisation set themselves can conflict with the search for funding of the residential work with older people:

“Now our Christian principles as they have been worked out over the piece on this would be, first of all we did not expect relatives to make up the shortfall because we felt that that was the wrong thing to do but others in the field did. Secondly, we did not apply an inflated cost for those who were paying for it themselves but that has also happened, that if you were paying your own board you were expected to pay X pounds more to compensate for the lack of money coming through those who have their board paid for by the social services . We did not do that. Thirdly, we did not say we will only take those who can afford to pay. So those are three quite distinct decisions that we made in relation to that. The fourth thing that happened was that we still maintained a reasonable wage for our staff. If you remember round about that time the minimum wage was removed and many of our private colleagues had people on a very very low rate of pay, they had no holiday rights or sickness rights and the church has maintained those, we have always had all of those things. So a combination of that has made the cost such that it is not being met by the local authority although it is still cheaper to have an old person in one of our homes, it’s still cheaper than it is to be in one of the local authority homes. So that is the background of how that has arisen and right now, I mean right now we are literally in the pain of having to close services.”
(Interview 24)

VIII. Social Responsibility: A Rival Within

It has already been described in Chapter 1 how the social responsibility movement took over from moral welfare as the conceptual centre of church social intervention and how this process can be traced in the journal *Crucible*. The conflict was also felt at an organisational and financial level. One reason why internal funding for church social work projects dropped was that the social responsibility movement was emerging as a rival to church social work for funding within church organisations. From the organisational and financial point of view social responsibility (most commonly worked out in its earliest form by employing a single spokesperson on social issues) was a cheaper and more streamlined option than persevering with moral welfare or some derivative of moral welfare.

The internal rivalry between church social work and social responsibility was intense in some quarters. One very experienced church social worker recalled some of the conflicts she had been a part of in the early days of social responsibility:

“Um when I joined the organisation nearly 20 years ago now, the group of social workers across the country, in the dioceses that had social work, were experiencing the huge change in what the church thought it should be doing in terms of social justice, and it was no longer wanting to do it, it was actually talking about it, taking social responsibility and learning about it, a vast adult education thing. But what it did was to say it is no longer appropriate, this really happened in the 60s, for the Church of England to be doing social work. The state is there. It can do it. And everything will be done. ... and there had been a huge movement, you know this is difficult work isn't it for us and we don't want to be tarred with this single mother and baby thing and they don't need us any longer. They can do it. And the church just sort of [shrugging off gesture]. And the social workers were literally saying when I joined the organisation, well if we put our head above the parapet, we'll probably get shot....

“Social responsibility was growing and they formed their own association and in the early days didn't want social workers with them. And we had some wonderful battles... and social work was taking a dive in the dioceses as you know it was less and less so social responsibility officers were often being paid with the money that used to be raised for social work. So there was no love lost really.” (Interview 16)

A Church of England social responsibility officer whom I interviewed was at the end of his career and had been involved in the formation of the social responsibility movement. His account confirmed the comments of interviewee 16 above. It was clearly still important for him to distance himself from church social work:

“I've seen what's happened in the disappearance of adoption and family social work in this diocese disappearing as an adoption agency and trying to find a new role for itself, redefine itself, and therefore from the social responsibility side, what is the difference and what is the common ground? Is social responsibility to take up the issues that social work isn't prepared to take on? I still think it falls back on the old moral welfare model of doing, of the haves doing things for the have nots and there is not much of a partnership. I don't seem, I don't spend much time with the family social work team, I'm a one man band, I've got enough to do without them or getting involved with them but that interests me, that still the doing good things to people who are the deserving poor, whereas social responsibility deals with the undeserving poor.” (Interview 3)

The reviews of Higson and Heasman (1979) demonstrated that moral welfare work

was not always the reactionary non-political bulwark it might have appeared in the 1960s. In its early days a number of workers advocated for the rights of women, including the right of unmarried mothers to keep their child. However, it is clear that it would not have been helpful for the social responsibility movement in its own early days to acknowledge this complexity. The young turks needed something to kick against and church social work was it. These two quotations from the interviews do indeed demonstrate that there was no love lost and the mutual antagonism is neatly encapsulated in the definitions offered by the interviewees of the nature of each other's work. Both definitions, church social work as "the haves doing things for the have nots", and social responsibility as "not wanting to do the work, just talk about it," are useful and thought provoking but they also have to be seen in the context of the antagonism generated in the 1970s and 1980s by these two groups competing for the same small amount of funding³³.

More recently there are indications that church social work and the social responsibility movement are achieving a more peaceful co-existence eased along by less financial competition with most successful modern-day church social work projects finding much of their funding outside The Church. There seems to have been a rejection of ideological posturing and an acceptance that social responsibility and church social work are not necessarily incompatible: As one of the "hostile" interviewees already quoted above went on to say:

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I wrote to one Methodist Social Responsibility Secretary who replied:

"Thank you for your letter. I was interested to read about your forthcoming PhD work, but sadly fear that I will not be able to be of much help. There has probably been a misunderstanding, possibly at CCBI [the Council of Churches of Britain and Ireland, now called Churches Together – the agency that had referred me to this individual]. I am an officer for 'social responsibility' which in the jargon means social and moral issues, but not specifically social work - an area in which I have little personal expertise or knowledge.

I am sorry that you have been misled, but wish you well!" (Private correspondence)

Some social responsibility officers have clearly chosen to define what they do as effectively "not social work". This is an ideological position but it can be confusing because some of the activity carried out under the name of social responsibility is virtually synonymous with what was previously called church social work. It is also disingenuous to claim that social work and social responsibility have no common history or ongoing relationship. As was shown in chapter 1 the social responsibility movement emerged from church social work and was a reaction against it.

“But a few of us decided that we needed to hang in there. That social responsibility and social care must be in parallel. They weren’t any good without each other really. So we did and now have a place on the Board of the Anglican Association of Social Responsibility which is independent.” (Interview 16)

However, after going through a honeymoon period in the 1970s and 1980s, sometimes, as interviewee 16 said, at the expense of church social work projects, it appears that the social responsibility movement itself is starting to experience the cold wind of the churches’ underlying scepticism about all things social. It is informative to compare church social work with social responsibility in terms of organisation and finance and also in terms of how best to face church indifference. Social responsibility has been much more of an insider movement than church social work ever was in that it has, to a certain extent, been clergy led. This can be seen from the list of social responsibility officers on the Anglican Association for Social Responsibility website³⁴ where, 5 out of 12 (1 vacant) members of the Executive and 24 of the 46 contact names listed as social responsibility officers can be seen to have been ordained. Both the social responsibility officers I interviewed were ordained. In the Church in Wales all six social responsibility officers in post in 2002 were ordained and had part-time parish posts in addition to their social responsibility work (Interview 28). Such an arrangement eases the financial burden on social responsibility and it also means that these individuals as clergy have access to the informal support structures referred to by Fann and Dodds in the article on Liverpool cited above (op cit: 114) . This has meant they have been in a stronger, better informed position. As one male Church in Wales social responsibility officer in his forties put it in his interview following a question querying the commitment of the churches to social work/social responsibility:

“I think the main thing is with these issues that we always have to be on top of them. I have seen how very very quickly social responsibility or social work or the two together in some [Anglican] English dioceses have gone from sort of towers of strength to actually nothing and that’s been a salutary lesson for me and I think my colleagues of how fragile the whole thing can be and a lot of the ways that we have developed our working is to make it more robust and less

³⁴ <<http://www..socialresponsibilityassoc.org/main/contacts.htm>> , on the 12th June 2003

fragile, less easy for a church if it's minded or a diocese if it's minded would find it harder to pick off social responsibility, um because it is quite a robust child and to try to make it not want to pick off social responsibility and two ways of doing that are to make them realise, which is the only reason for doing social responsibility, that it is part and parcel of how the church is meant to be. If that is realised and taken on board then there won't be any [unclear word] problem. Secondly, if you are a robust child and bringing home the bacon sort of speak, bring home good publicity why would anyone want to kill that off, because you know it is not costing very much." (Interview 28)

This interviewee was the only one who in his interview went beyond complaining about the antagonism of The Church to its own social work to reveal his defensive strategies to cope with such antagonism or indifference. Yet despite all his best attempts at fusing his work into the church at a bureaucratic and structural level, and his wise caution about imposing an unwanted financial burden, for him the most fundamental task to ensure the future of social responsibility or church social work is still to convince the church to accept the necessity of social intervention "that it is part and parcel of how the church is meant to be".

IX. Is it Time to Leave?

Church social work identity founded on allegiance to a parent church has been shown to have been problematic in a number of ways. Church social work has been a one-way enthusiasm with its affection for The Church being mostly unrequited. This has evidently fostered passivity, the idea that nothing can be done, and also a great deal of resentment. Some agencies and associations, however, are now facing up to the fact that they do not get enough back from the churches that claim to support them and that still wield considerable power within them. In the past agencies had no choice but to stay within the half-embrace of The Church and subsist on the paltry funds they received. Now though, some agencies that have survived by finding sources of funding outside their church are beginning to reach the conclusion that it may well be better for them to break free of that church connection altogether. One interviewee, following a description of committees and structures in her organisation, commented:

"So there is that bit of diocesan control, now whether that is going to survive the next two or three years, I'd be very surprised, because I think we'll be moving to being a more autonomous voluntary organisation with strong church

connections rather than that first tie in and I think that is partly because we can free stand. Um I mean I'm fighting to keep this £125,000 [diocesan grant] but you know I'm saying we might keep half of it, Um I think we would survive in some form even if they cut it all away."

R.W. "But then it would be an organisation that only chooses to associate itself with the church and the church can have no claim over it."

Interviewee "Mmm, I don't know how much claim the church is going to have over it because in a way its contribution is getting so small, you know when it actually only makes that small contribution can it actually still have the sort of control it's got? And that is the big debate really. And I know that there are lots of different opinions and it is causing quite a lot of pain about whether we actually stay very firmly part of the church or whether you know we step outside." (Interview 11)

The next question that arises is how a former church social work agency can define itself or establish a new identity after it has broken free of its old church structures. The following section outlines two broad options for those who wish to maintain some form of Christian ethos. The stark choice is between an exclusive organisational model, maintained by Christian Only employment practices, and an inclusive organisational model, incorporating a broader conception of Christianity.

X. Alternative Organisational Structures

In 1956 Christabel Blackburn, Warden of Josephine Butler Memorial House (JBMH), the training college for moral welfare workers, wrote a briefing paper for the Moral Welfare Workers' Association. It had been provoked by a controversy over whether a woman of Hindu faith could be admitted to membership of the Association. The following is an excerpt from this paper:

"C.S. Blackburn
Warden
Josephine Butler Memorial House
21st October 1956

"Moral Welfare Workers' Association - Is it to be an 'open' association, or a professional guild or fellowship of Christian moral welfare workers?

"Present Position.- Membership composed of Christian moral welfare workers. This Christian basis has hitherto been taken for granted. I understand it is not explicitly stated in the constitution.

“The occasion of the present controversy - Mrs. Marbelli, a Hindu, on a United Nations scholarship, was admitted to the JBMH (decision taken by JBMH selection committee knowing her to be a Hindu) for a year’s moral welfare course 1952 -1953. She passed Grade B examinations in Moral Welfare and Social Administration (C.C.W.C.W. assessors were also informed of her religion) but obviously could not take an examination in Christian Theology. All reports on her practical work were excellent. She wished to join the Moral Welfare Worker’s Association and I sponsored her application. She was refused admission on the grounds that she was not a Christian...

Thus Mrs. Marballi’s case was the occasion for this debate, re: open or closed membership of the Moral Welfare Worker’s Association. In refusing to admit her to membership (although strictly speaking the constitution as it stood would have permitted her admission) it was argued - ‘only a Christian can do moral welfare work’ - which is the ground of the present controversy as I see it.

“Points for consideration

1. All Christians are committed to the belief that the Christian Faith contains the true and full conception of God, man, society and human relationships etc. This is however not to say that ‘only a Christian can do moral welfare work’. A non-Christian may in fact be doing work of a Christian Character. All compassionate, healing and reconciling activity, and all ‘works of mercy’ rendered to men and women, who carry the image of God, are surely received by Christ (St. Matt 25)

If this truth is perceived by Christians, surely there is an argument in favour of an inclusive basis for MWWA membership.... ”

(Josephine Butler Memorial House archive material Box No. JBMH 2/10)

It is apparent from other papers in the box that the MWWA chose not to take Ms. Blackburn’s advice and instead closed the loop-hole in their constitution so that all non-Christians were excluded.

This briefing paper was prophetic. Firstly, it was dealing with an issue previously unknown in church circles but which would become more important as the century progressed, that is how to work alongside people of other faiths in Britain. Secondly, and much more germane to this study, it outlined the choices of self-definition available to church social work associations/agencies in the years ahead, choices which have become more urgent as the interest in and commitment to church social work on the part of the church institutions themselves have withered away. Previously the church connection meant that agencies did not have to deal with definitions or boundaries. They simply worked for The Church. Now, organisations moving away from their old denominational allegiance or new organisations setting

up face a choice. One option is to adopt an exclusive approach and claim that only Christians can do Christian Social Work and then expand on a Christian rather than a church basis: Alternatively, they can choose an inclusive track and assert that there is some work that has of itself a Christian character and who does this work is ultimately not so important as long as it is done and as long as some kind of Christian ethos is maintained at some level. Both of these approaches are loaded with assumptions about the nature of Christianity and specifically about the nature of the Church.

i. An Exclusive Model: Christian Social Work

Garland, describes the term “Christian social work” as “a misnomer”:

“We speak of Christian physicians, but not Christian medicine, and Christian farmers but not Christian agriculture” (Garland 1986: p.19).

However, “Christian social work” is being used in contemporary British society especially in church circles and it does have a specific meaning. It is an agency in which in order to be employed, all prospective employees must explicitly declare a Christian Faith and any who cannot make that declaration, those of other faiths or of none, are excluded from employment in the organisation. A Director of Care of a non-denominational Christian social work organisation which uses such an employment policy explained /justified it in the following terms:

“... we only employ Christian people. We do that because we believe that it is part of the ethos of the organisation in terms of its founding documentation and its vision of the work, incorporating elements of doing this as a result of Christian faith, the work comes from Christian faith. So there is an issue there of motivation and what motivates the people who apply. Issues of cohesiveness and unity. It is about also being willing and able and resourced spiritually to be involved in praying for people...and if people haven't an active Christian faith, they could feel very much out on a limb, they would not be happy with the strong culture that does exist that is overtly Christian as opposed to implicitly Christian. There are discussions then about how that fits clients and how we handle that.” (Interview 23).

The explicit nature of such a stance is what is new. In the past Church social work organisations may well have wanted only Christian employees and organised their recruitment accordingly (for example by only advertising posts in the religious press) but it is only in recent years that such preferences have been put down on paper as

Christian Only employment policies. To appreciate the meaning and context of this development requires some understanding of the historical background.

At the beginning of the 20th Century the Evangelical churches in Britain were leading the philanthropic/social work effort. For much of the 20th Century, however, the Evangelical movement, from a position of such dominance, withdrew and did not deign to get involved in church social interventions. This withdrawal has been called *The Great Reversal* (Moberg, 1972). Adrian Hastings has posited that the beginning of the end of this period of withdrawal in Britain was the National Evangelical Congress at Keele in 1967³⁵. One of the consequences of the subsequent re-engagement of the Evangelical churches with “the social” has been the emergence of the Christian social work movement.

There is a clear reason why Christian social work is more Evangelical / Protestant than Catholic. How does a Christian social work agency worker prove their credentials? Essentially by stating them, by claiming that they have made the choice to become a Christian. Amongst Catholics, both Anglo and Roman, allegiance to Christianity is expressed primarily through association with the institution of The Church through the receiving of the sacraments. Individual extempore expressions of faith are less important than allegiance. The move from church-run social work to Christian social work is necessarily a move from structures of faith to statements of faith, and therefore a move from an emphasis on Catholicity to that of Evangelicalism. This is essentially the difference between being Christian and being

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“But the great moment of renewal was undoubtedly April 1967 - the National Evangelical Congress at Keele. It had been prepared meticulously by a committee presided over by John Stott and meeting in his vestry at All Souls, Langham Place. Over a thousand people attended the Congress, acclaimed a ‘milestone’ because it broke so emphatically with the rather negative tone of the twentieth century Evangelical past. ‘Evangelicals have a very poor image in the Church as a whole’ Stott declared in a preparatory address, ‘We have acquired a reputation for narrow partisanship and obstructionism. We have to acknowledge this, and for the most part we have no-one but ourselves to blame’.

“The Keele statement with its stress on the need for social responsibility, for ecumenical attitudes, for a willingness to experiment, for two-way intercommunion, for a greater sacramentalism, was one of the more important ecclesiastical documents, not only of the sixties but of this century. It so greatly altered the Evangelical sense of direction. It was the first deliberate and public step towards closing the mental schism with most other Christians which Evangelicals had been somewhat smugly cultivating since 1910.” (Hastings 1986 p.553-554 citing *Keele '67: The National Evangelical Congress Statement*, [Ed.] Philip Crowe (1967) p.8)

a Christian. In theological terms the indefinite article is all important. Christian social work agencies require their workers to be able to say "I am a Christian".

This means that Christian Social Work individualises social work. Usually discussions about the individualisation of social work are about the work, that it is case-work or one-to-one work. In this case, however, I mean that Christian Social Work is Christian in that its work force is made up of a number of Christian individuals. Its Christianity is dependent on the Christianity of its employees. Inefficient structures run by distant, uninterested Church bureaucrats are replaced with a collection of personal faith statements made by those most closely connected and committed to the work itself. It is not simply a matter of allegiance as was the case for much church-based social work. What church a person comes from or whether that church itself is involved in social work is simply not an issue in Christian Social Work. Marty has warned against characterising Protestants as uninterested in the concept of The Church (1972: pp.134-136) but in regard to Christian Social Work, organisations are being set up without much reference to the churches. Most of the newer social work projects that are being established by people from the churches are not being set up on a church or denominational basis. Rather the workers are simply expected to be practising Christians. In three interviews conducted as part of this research with managers of non-denominational Christian social work agencies, relations with local churches could best be described as lukewarm. They all obtained funding from a variety of other sources so there was no necessity for relations with the churches to be any more than that.

ii. The Church Of Scotland: A Separate Case

At a number of points in the study thus far I have pointed to The Church of Scotland and the Salvation Army as being the two organisations to which my critique of church social work does not readily apply. Their commitment to social work has not been questioned. Similarly in terms of structure and organisation the comments made above about muddle and distended working practices do not apply to them as their organisations are much tighter and much more centralised. They managed to avoid getting stuck in the cul de sac of moral welfare. In the case of the Church of Scotland there is a further instance of their exceptionality. Thus far in this section I

have made a neat distinction between Christian Social Work and Church Social Work and have written as if the two are completely different. The Church of Scotland contradicts such a depiction.

In the mid-1970s the Church of Scotland Board of Social Responsibility chose the same exclusive path as that previously chosen by the MWWA as described above. They acted to make explicit what had previously been implicit in adopting a Christian Only recruitment policy for staff working in their numerous social work projects. According to this continuing policy applicants do not have to be members of the Church of Scotland but they must sign a declaration that Jesus Christ is their personal saviour and one of their references must be from their Minister proving an ongoing connection with a church congregation. The Church of Scotland is therefore unusual in that it is also maintaining its old church social work structures whilst pushing forward Christian social work at the same time. It should be noted as a result that the position of social workers in the Church of Scotland significantly different to that in other Christian Social Work agencies. They have the backing of their Church. Nevertheless, the Church of Scotland's advocacy of a Christian Only employment policy has been an example that new non-denominational agencies have followed.

In Scotland I interviewed seven people and six of the seven made explicit declarations of their own faith in God and what that meant to their work. The Scots went out of their way to make faith statements such as the following:

“Through it all, as a Christian, seeking God's will for my life and for my family's life, I seek to serve him in the context of a caring vehicle that happens to be Trinity Christian Trust at the moment.”(Interview 23)

Such assertions were by no means as common in England and Wales. It would seem reasonable to deduce that in Scotland, at least partly as the direct result of the Church of Scotland's employment policy, followed as has been said by a number of other newer Christian Social Work agencies, there is a much clearer expectation that personal faith will be enunciated rather than simply assumed or implied. This was confirmed by one interviewee, a female manager of a Church of Scotland residential home in her forties who was asked:

“R.W. How does it change things that, because of the employment policy we talked about earlier on, you know that all of the staff are Christians, how does that change the atmosphere or the environment of the place you work as compared to say Barnados or some of the more secular work places where you have worked before?”

“Um it is very easy to be a Christian here. It’s easier. Um, let me rephrase that. It’s easier to talk the Christian talk, It’s not necessarily easier to walk the Christian walk. There is a difference.” (Interview 22)

One can only speculate about how Christians Only recruitment policies affect ordinary working practice. There is no question of a Christians Only policy amongst recipients of care/residents of residential homes, and all Christian Social Workers interviewed were careful to state that they did not evangelise amongst residents/users (although in one case it was only very recently that the element of choice had been introduced as to whether residents from a residential home for people with learning disabilities went on the minibus to church every Sunday!). So to serve one must be a Christian, to be served no religious allegiance is necessary. What does this say about the relationships between the workers and those with whom they work? Amongst staff the fact that they hold common beliefs can be a uniting force with an intimate culture of daily prayers etc. Keith White describes such practices as evidence of “a common cause” (1986: p.87). In the case of White’s Mill Grove home the differences between staff and residents are deliberately blurred but in most Christian Social Work residential environments that distinction is still very clear. Coercion or proselytising activity is not the issue. The issue is that a basic concept of self-definition divides two groups of people and that must have an impact on work in practice.

Another way in which the work is affected by a Christian Only policy is in dealings with other agencies and authorities. I have characterised church social work as for much of the 20th Century maintaining a frosty relationship of mutual disdain with the rest of the social work profession where for the most part each went their own way, few questions asked. One of the consequences of the move from church social work to Christian social work is an end to any comfortable isolationism. Certainly, Christian social work is more exposed in that it does not have church structures and finances to rely on and it must go out and establish its place amongst

other “secular” agencies. Choosing an employee partly on the basis of their faith runs counter to contemporary employment practices and such a policy, particularly in a situation where agencies are hoping to work in co-operation and partnership with each other, puts the cat firmly amongst the pigeons. One interviewee, whose agency he said gained just under half of its funding from statutory sources, described such a development:

“So what has happened with the C. of S. and with ourselves, particularly because of the equal opportunity issues in terms of employment, and this is where the rubber hits the road, local authority both with the Church of Scotland and with Bethesda are saying to us very clearly that they are reluctant to fund us because we are such a big spender of money now that it is too much of a risk for them to fund us to that extent because we only employ Christian people. ...But the local authority are saying that since it is part of your recruitment policy that you intentionally only employ someone who can sign up to your Christian philosophy, it is too big a risk for us to fund you because if someone applies to you for a job and you knock them back on that basis that they are not Christian, they could sue the council via one of the unions, it would be you know quite a weighty process on the basis that the council are funding an agency that is not operating an equal opportunity policy ... So its a risk management issue for them.” (Interview 23)

In another case a Church of Scotland home for people with learning disabilities was attempting, in line with the move towards greater integration in the community for people in such relatively large establishments, to close itself down and house its residents in smaller accommodation run by housing associations. The Church of Scotland was planning to staff the accommodation. However the transfers were abandoned because the housing associations, advocating a pluralist employment policy themselves, objected to the Christians Only employment policy of the Church of Scotland (Interview 22).

Christian Social Work is certainly distinctive and it forces others who come into contact with it to clarify their own position. There is no attempt to be all embracing. Christian Social Work does this clear-sightedly but there can be no doubt service users clearly have been affected and will continue to be affected by Christian Social Work taking this strong stance as seen in the examples above.

Christian Social Work knows what it is and what it is doing. On matters of faith it is invariably uncompromising. Ironically in a pluralist environment it may well survive better than most because it has a distinct identity. It also adds a twist that

the most theologically conservative forces involved in current social interventions are invariably the least constrained by old church structures. What “Christian” means is that people can be drawn into new loose alliances. Christian Social Work can organise itself on a geographical basis or on a selected service user basis, for example as a women’s refuge that has been set up on Christian principles (Interview 19). This means that it can have strong local roots and be firmly connected to a locality. It has much in common with Church Community Work in this respect. At this stage in the development of Christian Social Work in Britain it is perhaps too early to tell whether the abandonment of old church structures has been a success and whether Christian social work will be strong enough to face the future, possibly a litigious future. Christian social work is certainly a significant development and it exerts a pressure on the rest of church social work.

iii. An Inclusive Model: “-in sympathy with Christian Values.”

In her briefing notes, Blackburn’s alternative to a Christians only association was to claim that the work itself could have a “Christian Character”. This was the position of William Temple and all those Christians who had previously lobbied for the welfare state. According to this view, dividing the world up into Christians and non-Christians, the religious and the secular, does not make sense because all the world and all its people belong to God, not just the religious parts or the religious ones. If one does not distinguish between the religious and the secular then one does not distinguish between religious and secular means to achieve truly “Christian” ends. On this basis many Christian Socialists and Social Christians in the 20th Century gradually moved away from supporting church work to advocating a statutory response. The American academic Paul Phillips writes:

“Some Social Christians were surely moved toward disbelief by their association with secular movements, but more often they could be suspected of helping to subordinate the social role of churches by co-operating with the secular forces of reform. In some cases this was certainly true. Their early and continuous fixation with the dark side of human life made them fully conscious of the inadequacy of the tools of the church in dealing with problems of such magnitude. Their gradual shift away from almsgiving through organized philanthropy to sanctioning support for state interventions was driven by the desire to meet these formidable challenges. Social

Christians were not afraid to work with and through secular organisations to attain their goal. But the selflessness of the compliance with Christian principles is evident in their willingness ultimately to relinquish social services and their considerable investment in social science in favour of more expert professionals or bureaucrats in order to fulfil the higher mandate of alleviating human misery.” (Phillips, 1996: p. 288)

The complex relationship between Social Christianity, church social work and state social work will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapter. Suffice to add here that for a long period supporters of church social work could assent to the Social Christianity view and claim that the work they did complemented state social work. The structures they worked within meant that they did not have to be explicit about what the Christian Character of work actually meant. When those structures became defunct or organisations realised that it was no longer worthwhile to remain within them, the inadequacy of their unspoken position became apparent.

Specifically in regard to employment policy, the alternative to a Christian Only employment policy for an organisation that has freed itself from its old church ties and responsibilities or is setting up a new service and wishes some sort of Christian connection, has become to ask prospective job candidates if they are “in sympathy with Christian values”. What exactly is meant by that has not always been clearly worked out. Several interviewees suggested that this formulation originated with The Children’s Society. A senior official at The Children’s Society (Interview 18) confirmed that this was true but also confessed that until recently very little had been done in the organisation on what was meant by Christian values. This is true not only of the Children’s Society but across the board in Church or Christian Social Work projects that do not advocate Christian Only policies³⁶. Their alternative has not been clearly worked out.

One of the consequences of the use of such an undefined formulation is that the Christian identity of social work agencies has weakened considerably. Effectively, the question is no longer one of commitment but of not objecting, ‘Do you mind working in a Christian organisation?.’ or as one agency manager put it:

³⁶ Organisations that use or have used the phrase “in sympathy with Christian values” in their recruitment advertising include the YMCA, Care, World Vision and a number of dioceses of the Church of England.

“To work for us you mustn’t mind if your pay check at the end of each month has ‘Methodist Church’ on it.” (Interview 14)

The interviewee from The Children’s Society told me that he estimated maybe 5% percent of the social work staff were not hostile or indifferent to Christianity. Clearly it is all very different to Christian Social Work organisations which are claiming to be 100% Christian. The study will return to this subject in the following chapter.

To sum up, this chapter has looked at the organisation of church social work and has argued that the forms that organisation took were a physical manifestation of the half heartedness of the churches in regard to social work. It has been argued that the churches dismissal of social work as a secondary activity can be seen in the structures that were put in place and that even the reluctant support that existed can be seen ebbing away in the steady reduction in internal funding. One of the clearest pieces of data to emerge from the study, in keeping with previous observations such as those of Hall and Howes and also of Fann and Dodds, is that of the perception of clergy ignorance of or indifference towards church social work. Undoubtedly the biggest single weakness in the system was the lack of communication between the local, parish level and the wider, diocesan level. I have in part blamed clergy for this but church social workers were also culpable because of their passivity as seen in the interview material in this chapter which has been long on grumbles and short on practical suggestions. That said, the problem has been seen to be more about structures than individuals and even the most persuasive and charismatic individuals have failed to have a great impact on failing church social work structures. The chapter went on to examine alternative models of identity for former church social work projects once they become independent of their church origins or for new agencies setting up and seeking to assert some form of Christian ethos. The section on Christian social work has demonstrated this to be one viable alternative model whilst the liberal inclusive option has been preliminarily described as vague. To grapple with such questions as what Christian values mean in a social work context it is clearly necessary to broaden the framework and deepen the analysis, to get beyond the narrow vision of church committee decision-making (as referred to by Interviewees 5, 16 and 28 above) and to engage with the subject theologically. The next chapter will examine the theological roots of church social work. It will show

how this distinction between inclusive and exclusive models of working is far from new, that the wooliness of the inclusive position also has a long history but that it has always had within it the potential at least to make a meaningful contribution to the wider discussion of social work values/ethics.

Chapter 5

Navigating without Compass or Bearings: The Impact of Theological Trends on the Development of Church Social Work

It is asserted in the thesis in the Introduction that too much of the theological baggage of church philanthropy was carried over into church social work and this hampered subsequent efforts. This chapter makes plain all that that assertion signifies, not so much by an examination of theology itself as by a study of theological trends and movements and their impact on the work, whilst still attempting to provide a theoretical explanation for the churches' cold shouldering of their own social work.

The previous chapter, after a review of how the churches failed to organise their own social work properly, ended with a look at alternative organisational models to traditional church social work. It concluded that whilst the model based on a Christian Only employment policy was viable, the model based on the concept of an employee or a whole organisation being "in sympathy with Christian values" was vague and not a strong basis for a structural or organisational foundation. It was suggested that a deeper examination of what exactly "Christian values" means in relation to the social work profession was necessary and to do that an investigation of the theological roots of church social work was required.

The theological roots of church social work are, however, difficult to find. Theology is not a subject that is much in evidence in the journals of church social work. It was hardly discussed by interviewees. One is tempted to conclude simply that church social work has been untheological. Picking up a theme from the previous chapter it might be said that theology is predominantly a preoccupation of the clergy and if the clergy are not interested in social work, it will inevitably be untheological. This chapter, however, posits an alternative theory, that this absence of a theology of church social work is connected to the rise and fall of certain church parties.

John Atherton, Canon Theologian of Manchester Cathedral, in a chapter of his recent book (2000: pp. 66 -91) attempts to construct a framework connecting theological concepts to wider movements in social thought over the last two hundred years of social history in Britain. He characterises the 19th Century as The Age of

Volunteerism during which The Atonement dominated theological thinking, the 20th Century up until the 1960s as The Age of the State and of the theology of the Incarnation and the era from the 1960 to the present and on into 21st Century as The Age of Partnership and a period with a theological emphasis on Reconciliation. This chapter takes Atherton's classifications and uses them in an examination of the significance of theological trends and the rise and fall of parties and movements within the churches specifically in regard to the history and theology or lack of theology of church social work.

Section 1. The Age of Volunteerism and Atonement

I. The Doctrine of the Atonement and its Applicability to Philanthropic Activity.

It has been shown in Chapter 1 that church social work in Britain emerged out of a late 19th Century philanthropic environment that was dominated by the Evangelical churches (Heasman, 1962: pp.13-14). Heasman also points to the elevation of the doctrine of the Atonement as the defining mark of the Evangelical (Heasman, 1962: p.15). Atherton provides a good working definition of the doctrine:

“The Evangelical atonement-based gospel profoundly affected individuals but also society, though often unintentionally. It was a conversionist Christianity in theology and purpose, summarised as what God does for us through Christ's atoning death (Romans 1.16-17) and then what God does in us as the fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5.22 -6). Its beliefs therefore centred on a strong conviction of the importance of the individual in its relationship to God and therefore on responsibility for its life to God. So it began by recognising that we are all born and live in sin. (Atherton, op cit. p.73)

Atherton's placing together of the atonement and volunteerism is interesting although his examples of volunteerism are mutual aid societies and friendly societies rather than philanthropic ones. Nevertheless, the doctrine of the atonement also fitted in well with small scale localised philanthropy in which face to face work was done with individuals on a very personal and intimate basis mainly in the hope that they would be saved and find Christ. That the doctrine of atonement begins with a recognition of human sinfulness is also important in terms of the development of church social work.

II. The Limitations of the Doctrine of the Atonement as a Motivating Force in Church Social Work.

Whilst the doctrine of the atonement fitted in well with church philanthropy, it was not so suitable for the more comprehensive and thorough work of professional church social work. There are at least five aspects of Evangelical social thought, all of which are connected to the primacy of the doctrine of the atonement, which severely limit the nature and scope of church social work and in some cases are actually demotivators. Principally, the gospel of the atonement is sometimes interpreted as a discrete thing in itself, isolated from any other reality and certainly from any concept of service. All the other limitations are connected to this first. They include a preoccupation with the sinfulness of individuals and how the individual might be justified in the face of their sin, a tendency towards sentimentality and non-politicism.

i. Something Separate

The first and most important limiting factor for church social work created by emphasising the doctrine of the atonement is that the doctrine is not directly connected to the concept of service. It is something separate. One interviewee said:

“I cannot conceive of a proper Christian Church without having a social work outreach. It’s a *sine qua non*. It is the Gospel.” (Interview 25)

The interviewee went on to cite Jesus’ comments in Matthew Chapter 25 on feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick etc. (as does Christabel Blackburn in her briefing paper to the Moral Welfare Worker’s Association quoted in chapter 4). In fact, to many in the churches, especially to those to whom the atonement is the first theological truth, church social work is not actually itself the Gospel. It is instead sometimes taken as an opportunity to talk about the something else, to say to the recipient of a service that Christ died for their sins. More indirectly but very similarly, church social work is used to demonstrate a life of service that, it is

claimed, results from an acceptance that Christ has died for one's sins ³⁷. Church social work is thought by some Christians to provide a seemly backdrop for a gospel of the atonement, what Drummond, founder of the Boys Brigade movement, called "the outward machinery; ... a mere take-in." (cited in Heasman, 1965: p.112).

This is why a sermon followed the soup in the soup kitchen. The soup itself was not deemed gospel enough.

The Preoccupation with the Sinfulness of Individuals

Deeply embedded in the doctrine of the atonement as propagated by 19th Century Evangelicals was a preoccupation with human sinfulness. Such a preoccupation is certainly not an Evangelical or even a Protestant invention. It has a long history in the churches. It is, of course, present in the Bible but most church historians agree that St. Augustine brought it to prominence. Binyon characterises this particular aspect of St. Augustine's thought and later developments of it as Latin Theology and he describes it as:

“...a tendency to limit Religion to those apprehensions and phases of it which grow out of the relation between human sin and divine righteousness.” (1931: p.65)

According to Binyon Latin Theology came to dominate thinking in the western Church after the sixth Century at the expense of what he calls Greek Theology (described below). The result of nine centuries of such dominance can be seen in the 16th Century practice, which Martin Luther found so repugnant, of the sale of Indulgences, that is allowing people to think they can pay The Church to compensate for their or their relatives' sins and hence buy salvation. Such practices only arise when The Church fosters a morbid preoccupation with human frailty and weakness over a long period of time. However, Luther's repugnance was directed at the practice of Indulgences, not the emphasis on sinfulness. The Reformation did not put an end to the preoccupation with sinfulness. F.D. Maurice notes:

“Romish and Protestant divines, differing in the upshot of their schemes, have yet agreed in their construction of them. The Fall of man is commonly

³⁷ A recent (no date of publication) Baptist Union of Scotland Social Action Committee publicity leaflet printed DONT TELL THEM THAT JESUS LOVES THEM on the front with UNTIL YOU'RE READY TO LOVE THEM TOO written inside followed by a list of projects readers could support.

regarded by both as the foundation of theology ... - the fall of Adam - not the union of the Father and the son, not in the creation of the world in Christ - is set before men in both divisions of Christendom as practically the ground of their creed.” (quoted in Vidler 1948: pp.36-37)

The differences in the schemes are important for the development of church work. The Protestant scheme of salvation was based on an individualistic conception of religion. R.H. Tawney in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1938) wrote authoritatively about the rise of this conception. He depicted medieval Catholic society as an organic whole. Salvation was achieved through the auspices of The Church to which the community as a whole belonged. Church, community and society in some senses were interchangeable ideas. Martin Luther’s Reformation, predicated on the idea that justification was by faith alone, effectively introduced an individualised religion and broke up the organic whole of Catholic society. Again according to Tawney, Luther himself would have been horrified with the epithet “the grand individualist” (1938: p.93) but that, in effect, was what the results of his teaching made him:

“Since salvation is bestowed by the operation of grace in the heart, and by that alone, the whole fabric of organised religion which has mediated between the individual soul and its Maker- divinely commissioned hierarchy, systematised activities, corporate institutions-drops away, as the blasphemous trivialities of a religion by works.... the Christian has a sufficient guide in the Bible and in his own conscience.” (Tawney op cit: pp.99 -100)

Individual salvation became the main focus of Protestant, and later Evangelical theology. Indeed it is possible to claim that Evangelical religion in the 19th Century did not have a theology at all, only a soteriology (a scheme of salvation)³⁸. Whether or not a person was saved or converted became the first and possibly the only question of interest for the Evangelical. Thus Parkin, in an article on the development of social thought in the Salvation Army, quotes a Salvation Army convert saying:

“I live in a queer den with a little chaff to sleep upon, and them bricks for a bolster... and that... is all the furniture I have. But I am happy in Jesus.” (Parkin, 1972: p.109)

³⁸ F.D. Maurice once “allowed himself to say” that to Evangelicals God was merely the provider of a scheme for man’s deliverance (cited in Binyon op cit. p. 87).

Evangelicals believed, however, that the change in character in the true convert would mean they would be able to change their material circumstances. Parkin also quotes a Salvation Army Evangelist, Elijah Cadman, as saying:

“in all my days I’ve never found a truly converted, Christ -serving family actually destitute, and I’ve had some experience.” (ibid: p.107)

Later in the 19th Century this position was recognised as unsustainable and larger social engineering projects were attempted by The Salvation Army and others such as the Methodist Forward Movement but it should be remembered that for Evangelicals the first aim was always winning converts. Criticism of this emphasis was sometimes met by pointing to the workers themselves as a justification for the evangelism:

“It is the strangest hearing to a Salvationist when some well meaning friend says: ‘I don’t see much in your Evangelical work; it is the social work I believe in.’ Social work of any kind must needs be the work of individuals. Homes, hospitals, hostels, however attractive are but bricks and mortar. And social work of the Salvation Army kind can be accomplished only by the type of individual who is produced by its Evangelical work.” (Unsworth, 1954: p.21)

iii. Anecdotalism, Sentimentality and Anti-Intellectualism

The focus on individuals left Evangelicals open to the accusation of sentimentalism. One of the most common conventions in Evangelical literature is that of the testimony, the story of personal transformation (from Street Arab to Evangelist etc.). Potter’s biography of Thomas Jackson of Whitehall (1929) is typical of the genre in that it contains long sections recounting tales of bad boys, often the badder the better for a good story, who made something of themselves following their conversions or time spent under Jackson’s influence.

A series of writers have castigated Evangelicals for their sentimentalism including Ashford (1986: p.62), Hynes (1968: p.69), Niebuhr (1932: p.17) and Annan (1959). Annan (1959: p.18) makes the point that the highlighting of single stories and individual morality was no substitute for proper social analysis.

There was also a certain amount of anti-intellectualism in Evangelical circles usually connected with the accusation of uselessness :

“Social agencies were also assailed by certain reformers who looked to political change as the sole means of human well being. Christian philanthropy was

contemptuously dismissed as ‘charity’, a mere palliative which retards the good time coming. There are many people who propose to love mankind in the mass, who have never relieved the woes of a single human being. Indifferent to such theorists and their propositions, Thomas Jackson pursued his sacred mission of amelioration” (Potter op cit: p.101-102)

It was not that the Evangelicals were intellectually incapable of examining other causes of social problems than individual conduct, they simply did not see the need. In addition a deeper engagement with the issues would necessarily have involved political engagement and this, for theological reasons, most Evangelical philanthropists were not prepared to do.

iv. Non -Politicism

“You are in the world but not of the world.” (paraphrase of The Gospel of John chapter 17, verse 16. Revised Standard Version)

In 1942 the Charity Organisation Society publication *How to Help Cases of Distress* complained that the title Moral Welfare which the church had taken to using for its social work had:

“displaced the former and equally unilluminating title of Rescue Work.” (1942: p.167).

In fact rescue work is an illuminating title if not in terms of the work itself then of the attitude that lay beneath it, that it was a work of saving the lost from a sinful and hostile world. Evangelicals had a strong sense of the world as a sinful, corrupting place into which they might venture in their philanthropic rescue work but they were not about to stay long enough to engage in the wider political process.

Good evidence of this underlying attitude is provided by Parkin’s description of the career of Salvation Army officer Frank Smith. Smith was a senior officer in the Salvation Army in the late 1880s who returned to London after leading The Army’s work in the United States, to take charge of the Army’s social welfare work in London. In August 1890 he began a series of articles in *The War Cry* under the title of “Sociology”:

“Where the evangelists had paid little heed to the economic distinctions in society, for example, Smith saw them as of great importance, emphasising as they did the social order was contrary to the will of God. He ignored the individualist concept which saw economic advantage as one of the blessings

which attended conversion and demanded that the rich as a group recognise their responsibilities to the poor. He was not pleading for charity, but speaking of rights.”(Parkin, op cit.: p.110)

Unsurprisingly, his series of articles was cut short after the fifth. Parkin goes on:

“However it should not be imagined that Smith’s voice was a representative one. His thinking was certainly to the left of the vast majority of Salvationist opinion, to the extent that he eventually felt himself compelled to resign. He is the only known Salvationist, and certainly the only prominent one, who eventually resigned and devoted himself to secular politics. ...He disappeared from the Army scene and became involved in local and national government. A friend and confidant of Keir Hardie, he became a member of the LCC and in 1929 MP for Nuneaton.” (ibid: p.111)

Whilst they certainly did not go as far as Smith most Evangelicals eventually had to recognise that the causes of poverty and destitution were not entirely personal. Charles Booth’s *Life and Labour* survey did much to convince them in this regard as did *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, Congregationalist Revd Andrew Mearns’ influential pamphlet.³⁹ Evangelicals began to be more systematic and ordered in their philanthropy. This can be seen in the work of the Methodist Forward movement spearheaded by Hugh Price Hughes at West London Mission (Bagwell, 1987).

McWilliams (1986) in his study of the Police Court Missioners (PCMs) of the Church of England Temperance Society has analysed how Evangelicals justified to themselves this extension of the work and managed to keep it within the conceptual framework of the doctrine of the atonement. McWilliams notes how PCMs developed the theory in their work with offenders that addiction to drink was a stumbling block between a person and their redemption and a fresh start. That stumbling block needed to be removed for them to be saved and for the work to progress. McWilliams goes on to note how this theory became a fatal flaw for PCMs, quoting several Police Court Missioners who were in favour of enforced abstinence and even one who advocated forced sterilisation for “the hopelessly morally polluted, or half-witted evil-doer of either sex” (McWilliams, 1986: p.142 quoting Potter 1927: 98) The reason why this position is a fatal flaw is that it reveals an attitude that

³⁹ Controversy exists over who was the anonymous author of this pamphlet. It may have been a William Preston - see Philips 1996 : p.55 footnote.

is entirely determinist or worldly, abandoning all hope that the grace necessary for change might be bestowed on the life of an individual. McWilliams concludes:

“Once this became widely accepted it meant that the Mission had no ultimate defence against the determinist ontology of the diagnosticians.”(McWilliams, op. cit: p.142).

This stumbling block theory can be used more widely to include other stumbling blocks such as poverty, illiteracy, poor housing. It fits in well with Parkin’s assessment of William Booth’s motivation for the “In Darkest England” scheme. Parkin writes:

“The basic reason why Booth was persuaded to launch into a scheme of this scope was his observation of a phenomenon which recent studies in the sociology of religion have tended to confirm, that the very poor failed to join the Salvation Army, not because they were very sinful, but because they were exceptionally poor. He saw them flocking to the meetings led by his devoted officers, he saw the manifest desire of many to accept their offer of a new way of life opening through the gospel, he saw that in all too many cases circumstances forced them to drift away from its influence. His answer was logical, simple and devastating in its directness. He would set up machinery whereby the destitute and poor could be gradually and effectively trained in an industrious way of life, so they would be better able to respond to the offer of salvation open to them. He had observed that in many cases religious commitment increased material prosperity; now he wanted to provide the means whereby a certain amount of material advancement would increase the possibility of religious commitment. This was made quite clear in the Preface to Darkest England.:

“In providing for the relief of temporary misery, I reckon that I am only making it easy where it is now difficult, and possible where it is now impossible, for men and women to find their way to the cross of our Lord Jesus.”

“For Booth the basic factor was still the irreligion of the masses, not their poverty.” (Parkin op cit: pp.112-113.)

v. Justification by Works

For a theoretical basis for social work to function it should be a source of motivation for doing the work. The doctrine of the atonement, as it has been interpreted by Evangelicals, does not do this directly. As a result a split sometimes occurred between the stated motivation and actual motivation for doing church social work. Whilst justification by faith was the official Evangelical position on salvation

of the sinner, during the practical outworking of church social work, because there was so much emphasis on activity, a gradual shift may have taken place, a shift to justification by works. McWilliams, in his essay already cited on the Police Court Missioners employed by the Church of England Temperance Society (1986), shows how the belief in justification by works develops in a church social work context. McWilliams asserts that the C.E.T.S. held the standard Evangelical position on the subject of salvation:

“Mercy is the concept which provides the key to understanding the missionaries’ place in the courts and in particular their social enquiry practice. Mercy stood between the offender, the missionary and the sentencer, and it was mercy which made sense of their relationship.... Special pleading was of the essence of the missionary effort in court, and the essence of the plea itself was for mercy. If the court could be persuaded to show mercy to the penitent accused, the missionary would have the opportunity to work with him to encourage and guide his reformation.” (Mc Williams, op. cit: p.137)

However, he goes on to say that the daily work of the missionaries in their efforts to guide “reformation” gradually undermined this position and made them effectively “meliorists”, with no effective difference between their work and that of humanists or atheists working in the same field:

“‘Viewed in historical perspective, the temperance movement unconsciously realised atheist objectives by emphasising man’s control over his fate, his capacity to triumph over sin, and the irrelevance of many Biblical statements as guides to modern living.’

Thus, in its theology, the movement as a whole was pushed inexorably away from justification by faith towards justification by works and the C.E.T.S. was no exception to this.” (ibid: p.138 quoting Harrison 1971 p. 185)

Whether or not church social workers inevitably moved from believing in justification by faith to justification by works is neither provable nor particularly important in terms of this study. Crucial is the understanding that workers have been preoccupied with a need for some form of justification, that is with competing ideas of how human beings can be justified before God in the face of their sinfulness. Sinfulness, how it is defined and how condemnation can be avoided, was always the starting point.

III. Sin in the 20th Century

Before moving on to look at Atherton's next theological age it should be made clear that in terms of church social work there is a perceptible lag, in that the Age of Atonement lasted well into the 20th Century. Not surprisingly the preoccupation with individual sin that was deeply embedded in church philanthropy found its way into church social work. This can be seen most obviously in the 20th Century name church social work chose for itself, moral welfare work. That sin was the subject of moral welfare was axiomatic. A requirement for a qualification in Moral Welfare work from Josephine Butler Memorial House was to sit an examination in theology, which meant Old Testament, New Testament and Church Doctrine. In November 1956 the New Testament paper included the following question:

“Summarise what St. Paul says in the epistle to the Romans on sin.” (JBMH archive papers Box 2/8).

One of the interviewees, a young manager of a Church of England diocesan moral welfare programme in the 1970s recalled:

“You know, I can remember one of the women, [a Church of England moral welfare worker] she was a lovely, lovely ancient lady but when I went to visit her in her own office situation there were two notices up on the wall, ‘Thou God see-est all’ and ‘No smoking’. And that was, you know there was a very judgmental air about the work at that time.” (Interview 12)

It was not judgmentalism in a general sense that is being referred to here but specifically judgmentalism in regard to sexual activity. Indeed the perceived connection between sinfulness and sexuality needs to be emphasised. As has already been suggested it was not St. Paul's views on sin that held such sway, it was those of St. Augustine. Augustine's views on the transmission of Original Sin from Adam through the generations, because “the sexual impulse can never be free of some degree of concupiscence”(Chadwick 1967: p.232), was an essential aspect of The Church's perception of sin. Sinfulness and sex were thus inextricably linked. One of the most obvious questions to arise out of any study of church work is why was it

that, of all the variety of philanthropic activities the 19th Century churches were involved in, only rescue work or moral welfare work professionalized within the structure of the Church of England and this, as Cox points out (1982: 214), at a time in the 1920s of declining birth rate. One answer would be that it was work that fitted most closely to the sexuality fixated moralism of the church. It is surely not surprising that much of church social work has been with what were once called fallen women because the first theological truth of church social work has been that humanity is fallen and must be washed in the atoning blood of Christ.

Bowpitt objects that these kinds of criticism are unfair and makes a nice distinction:

“Social workers have often objected to the Christian emphasis on personal sin because it appears to blame people for their own problems and this is both unfair and unhelpful. Yet this charge fails to distinguish between blame and responsibility. We blame in order to engage in recrimination; we attach responsibility in order to offer hope. Christian teaching calls on us to indulge in the latter, not in the former. Moreover, responsibility should be distributed widely and should not reside simply in the people who experience the problems, but neither should it be removed from them entirely.” (Bowpitt, 2000: p.358)

However, when viewed historically it can reasonably be asserted that church philanthropy and then church social work focused far too much on individual blame and not enough on wider responsibility.

When the philanthropic energy of Evangelical churches dissipated in the first third of the 20th Century their theological individualism remained important in forming church social work/ moral welfare work. Hylson-Smith, an historian of the Evangelicals, sums up their place in 20th Century social work:

“The Evangelicals, with their focus on the atonement, did not produce a ... conceptual framework for the analysis of social matters. They were not able to develop a Christian social philosophy based on the ‘extension of the atonement’. Their primary doctrinal emphasis equipped them well for coping with individual spiritual matters, and even individual behavioural problems, but it was less helpful in the theological understanding of such questions as bad housing and sweated industries. Evangelicals were engaged in social work in an unheralded way, but theirs was a pragmatic approach. They did not think profoundly about social issues or develop their own distinctive philosophy and theology for social action...It was too easy for the explanation to be given in terms of a simplistic reference to individual sin, and the pervasive effect of original sin”(1989, pp.260 -261)

Creating a Christian social philosophy based on the “extension of the atonement” is no easy task. It has still not been done convincingly⁴⁰.

For fifty years from approximately 1920-1970 many Evangelicals in Britain and North America withdrew from social involvement. Moberg has named this period *The Great Reversal* (1972) and Wirt claimed that during it:

“The social conscience of the Evangelical went into *rigor mortis*” (Wirt, 1968: 46) Evangelicals broke back into social concern/social work in the late 1960s/early 1970s but little had changed in terms of their primary theological emphasis. One of the first calls to Evangelicals to re-enter the field of social concern began with these lines .

“In the first place, any program of social action which is part of mission must point men to - not away-from - the central message of redemption through the blood of Christ.

“Second, our expression of social concern must provide, wherever possible, for a spoken witness to Christ. Because we desire the best for the ones to whom we minister, we long that our expression of social concern shall be an introduction to Jesus Christ, who can meet their needs in a way and to an extent never possible to us.”

(H.L. Fenton, speech to “Congress to the Church’s World-wide Mission”. Wheaton Illinois ,1966 cited in Wirt op cit: 152)

The persistent emphasis on the doctrine of the atonement by Evangelicals continues to complicate the churches’ involvement in social work.

Section 2. The Age of The State and Incarnation

Whilst the Evangelical party was undoubtedly the most dominant party not only in church work but in the Church of England itself from 1850-1880s, the success of F.D. Maurice and J.D. Ludlow’s programme of socialising Christianity became manifest towards the end of the century. At a grass roots level the Evangelicals still probably predominated but in the upper echelons of the church hierarchy the theology of Social Christianity became more and more common.

⁴⁰ It is pertinent that the leading Evangelical John Stott in his book *Issues facing Christians Today* (1984 particularly pages 14-26), does not even attempt to create an Evangelical social creed, rather he tries to convince Protestants/Evangelicals that the Social Christianity doctrines of Incarnation, The Kingdom of God etc. are not fundamentally incompatible with their own core values.

This theology traces its heritage back to what Binyon labelled Greek Theology. He sums up F.D. Maurice's interpretation of the Greek tradition:

"His desire was to ground all theology upon the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost - not to begin with man and his sins; and to ground all human morality upon the relation in which man stands to God -not upon the dread of punishment or expectation of reward." (Binyon, op cit: 85)

The doctrine of the Incarnation was an emblematic one for Social Christians just as Atonement was and still is for Evangelicals . Atherton writes:

"The age of incarnation embodies the transition from the age of atonement, regarding life on earth as journeying through a vale of tears to an eternal home, to regarding life on earth as a calling to transform God's world for the better. In that process of change, the incarnate Christ is both model and means." (op cit. p79)

One figure came to personify the advocacy of this doctrine and its connection to a collectivist approach to the alleviation of social problems:

"But the most obvious and tangible connecting of state and Incarnation was represented by William Temple, great exponent of incarnational theology and et the person who named the Welfare State, epitome of the age of the state. His classic Christianity and the Social Order was published alongside Beveridge's great report on the Welfare State in 1942, the one underwriting the other; the one influencing the other in formation and practice; two sides of the same coin." (Atherton, op cit: 82)

I. The Seeming Compatibility of the Theology of Social Christianity and the Practice of Church Social Work.

On the face of it the theologies of Social Christianity should have provided an excellent theoretical basis for the practice of church social work. Hylson-Smith, writing about the late 19th Century/ early 20th Century, expands on some of the areas in which there appears to be a perfect fit:

"The social thinking of the church as a whole had, for about forty years been dominated by High Church incarnational theology, and the concept of the Kingdom of God. In the light of this particular theological focus, the fact that God was incarnate in Christ, and thereby fully identified with the problems of the world, gave special significance to social problems, and Christian social work. The immanence of God, manifested supremely in the incarnation, gave

a framework for the consideration of specific social issues. Likewise, the biblical teaching on the Kingdom of God was used as a blueprint or ideal for social relationships, and for society as a whole. (Hylson-Smith, 1989: pp. 260-261)

One other doctrine which Hylson-Smith does not mention in the quotation above but which is almost always associated with the others as a Social Christianity doctrine, is the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and related to that, the fraternity of all humanity:

“Religious believers have a special stimulus to co-operate with others and to give themselves to the worthwhile duties of the moment, for they believe that their companions are also the sons and daughters of God - and they believe also that their work, however unromantic or unrewarding, is also the work of God.” (Edwards 1971: p.301)

It is tempting to anticipate that because these theologies so obviously could have been used /implemented in church social work that this is what happened (Bowpitt 1998: p.688) In fact there is little evidence that this is what did occur. The leaders of the Social Christianity movement chose not to step into the breach left in church social work by the departure of the Evangelicals. They may have been interested in social work but they were not interested in church social work.

II. “Not Interested” - The Disconnection between Social Christianity and Church Social Work

Heasman, as has already been noted on the Introduction, believed that one of the reasons why church social work declined in the 20th Century was due to “lack of interest of the churches in social work.” (1965: p.29). She goes on:

“Instead of concentrating upon the giving of practical help, as they had done in the previous century, the churches, in the early decades of this century, became more alive to the application of Christian principles to life in general...

“Admirable though this social concern was, it did mean that though the churches still carried on some forms of social work, mostly for the neglected fringe members of society, the proportion of the field they covered became increasingly smaller. Many Christians seemed to overlook the needs of the individual in order to concentrate upon social policy; and seemed to find little reason to discuss or question what social work was being done. The

fact that the Christian had a social duty to his neighbour was taken for granted rather than acted upon.” (ibid: p30, 31)

The lack of interest in church social work is evident from an analysis of the journals of moral welfare to which none of the incarnationalist theologians chose to contribute. None published works suggesting the compatibility of church social work with social theology. There is a rather pathetic (because it is so adoring) description in Jessie Higson’s autobiography (1955 p.23) of her one meeting with William Temple at which he gave her 15 minutes before lunch. Clearly one of the architects of the welfare state had other priorities.

III. Reasons for the Lack of Interest

Firstly and most obviously, this age is being described as the Age of State and Incarnation. William Temple and his circle were pushing towards a welfare state. Whilst he certainly never denigrates the “ambulance” work of the church and may have been privately supportive of Higson and other senior moral welfare workers, he never championed church social work. Social Christians were advocating a larger role for the state in human affairs. They were not therefore going to provide any kind of support for the dual or rival services of the churches. Edward Norman studied the text of Church of England Reports from immediate post World War One period to reveal how inclined towards statism or collectivism thinking had become in the higher echelons of the Church of England:

“In 1920 yet another Committee appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury reported on *The Church and Social Service*. Its terms of reference themselves indicate the collectivist principles within the Church: the Committee was charged to consider ‘the ways in which the clergy, church workers, and church people generally can best co-operate with the State in all matters concerning the social welfare of the community’. The Report noted that ‘a vast web of new social machinery has been created in the form of salaried and other agents to give effect to the long series of legal enactments to secure better conditions of life for those who have not always been able to look after themselves’. The Report was an acceptance of the scale of social welfare: it was now seen to be too great for private or religious agencies to handle alone. It therefore recommended the co-operation of the Church with the State, rather than any attempt by the Church to duplicate public effort with its own welfare agencies (Quoted in the *Guardian*, 6 Feb. 1920: text of the report).”(Norman, 1976, p.244-245)

The other reason why Social Christianity appeared to avoid church social work was probably that church social work was still too closely associated with its Evangelical heritage. It needs to be appreciated how rabid factionalism within the churches could be in this period and this had a significant effect on church social work. One of the very few references to the social work or the philanthropy of the churches in Binyon's book on Christian Socialism is from the manifesto which the Guild of St. Matthew, an Anglican Socialist society, had drawn up to present to the 1908 Lambeth Conference. In the manifesto the society declared itself concerned that:

“there was a serious danger of benevolent activities and charitable agencies being confused with socialism.” (Binyon, op. cit: p.192)

Church Socialists clearly did not want themselves associated with such activity so they were not about to provide a theological justification for it. Norman's study of church reports also illustrates how little time advocates of Social Christianity had for the church work and social thinking of their Evangelical philanthropic contemporaries and predecessors:

“Another feature of the social attitudes of Church leaders in these years [1900-20] was the insistence, in the face of all the evidence to the contrary, that the church had, until then, failed to bother with social and economic questions. It is quite astonishing that they could have been as ignorant as they clearly were of all the developments of the previous century. This may, in part, be explained by their disapproval of any social teaching suggestive of individualism - which they did not regard as social thought at all, since it resulted from premises different from their own. But it is one thing to castigate a preceding generation for adopting ideas which are considered improper; quite another to assert that preceding generations did not have any social ideas at all. Already the habit was growing of isolating a few committed thinkers, like Maurice and Westcott, and assuming that they - the forerunners of ideas similar to those later found acceptable - had been unique in their social concern. Like the young men who went into the slum settlements at the end of the nineteenth century, and discovered for themselves what their predecessors had come to know, but what their own class upbringing had shielded them from, the generation who grew up in the first two decades of the twentieth century fell upon the conditions of working-class life as if they were the first churchmen to realise how appalling they were...The confession of guilt was again a familiar theme. ‘It is undeniable that the church's own record in the past stand in its way today,’ declared the Archbishops' Third Committee of Inquiry in 1918; ‘ old abuses - child labour, sweated labour, the intolerable conditions of housing and the monstrous evils

of the slums - long continued to exist with scarcely a protest from the church at large' (*The Evangelical Work of the Church, Being the Report of the Archbishops' Third Committee of Inquiry* (London, 1918) p.2) This statement, coming from an official source too, is simply unhistorical; its authors' ignorance of the positive passion of the nineteenth century Church for social improvement is remarkable... This generation was reinterpreting the past: their opinions have come to later generations as virtually unquestioned truths. But their own opinions were formulated in ignorance, in an earnest appraisal of their own social vision." (Norman op. cit.: pp.229-230)

IV. A Theological Void

Church social work continued in this period but in a time of deep party divisions it lacked a party with which it could be associated. Many Evangelicals had withdrawn from social involvement altogether and the theology they had bequeathed to church social work was of only limited value. Social Christians who did have a potentially useful theological basis to offer, did not support the sort of work in which church social workers were engaged. It was too much associated with sin and fallenness which was not Incarnationalist at all. As a result church social work existed in a sort of theological/theoretical void, receiving little guidance from wider movements in the churches. It is symbolic of a wider lack of guidance that in the mid 1950s the Chaplain of Josephine Butler College wrote a series of letters and engaged in some debate with Church House officials on what exactly the content of the theology course should be at JBMH. (JBMH archive documents Box 2/9). It appears that he did not receive a satisfactory answer. Church officials simply insisted that church moral welfare officers must obtain the general Inter Diocesan Certificate in Theology. Undertaking this course meant that it was difficult to direct theological thinking directly at social work issues. In any case JBMH students would have been attempting to do such work without textbooks or other support from the rest of the church.

One of the ironies of this situation is that in the late 1960s when JBMH was applying to the Central Council for Education and Training of Social Workers for registration as a social work training college, one of the reasons given for its rejection was that too much of the two year course was spent in the study of theology (Heasman 1979: p.89) If it was thought in some quarters that theology was absolutely

irrelevant to social work theory, the churches, because they had lacked clarity on this issue, had only themselves to blame.

V. Too little, Too late

Right at the end of the moral welfare period of church social work articles begin to appear in *Crucible* expounding the doctrines of Social Christianity and their applicability for church social work (Danson 1971, Fisher 1974). Fisher in particular produces the sort of article that could and probably should have been written decades earlier.

VI. Criticisms of Social Christianity

Atherton very clearly sees himself as a part of the tradition of Social Christianity and is therefore understandably disinclined to criticise too sharply. However, other writers have not been so slow to detect faults in the tradition.

First of all it should be remembered that Temple did not carry all The Church with him in his championing of the welfare state. There was a tradition in the churches dating back to Thomas Chalmers that opposed all state intervention in the welfare of its subjects. Pringle (1937: 130) objected that the State was obliged to classify and categorise groups of people together rather than dealing with the intricacies of individual cases and therefore it failed to meet the needs of “the whole man”. This strain of criticism continued even after the welfare state had become generally accepted as a good thing:

“If in the past the ‘charity’ of the Churches too easily and too often degenerated into a patronising almsgiving, the Welfare State of the future may as easily become depersonalised, a matter of card-indexes, and numbers, thereby losing the individual contact and concern which characterised the voluntary service. It is here that the religious tradition must seek opportunities for continued influence. The Churches should inspire administrators, inspectors, almoners and other social functionaries with the ideal of the social services as a cure of souls, that is of a personal and individual concern for the beneficiaries.” (Sykes 1961: p.116)

In regard to the personal conduct of Social Christians Edward Norman comments with some acidity on the respectability of Anglican social radicalism. He notes how Church leaders managed to strike radical poses whilst retaining positions

of wealth and privilege. He quotes F.W. Bussell, himself a clergyman, who nevertheless dared to criticise the bishop who:

“ ‘ delights to pose as an advocate of Labour, a true friend of democracy, and indeed half a socialist’ who nevertheless insisted that his clergy live in dwellings fit for ‘gentlemen’; and another prelate ‘known for his noble lineage, high principles and advanced views who refused to consider anyone for ordination who had not been to a university. ‘It seems in my humble judgement’ he concluded ‘another (quite involuntary) instance of the ‘snobbism’ which honeycombs our social life, that the Church should thus be bound up with a particular university degree in her ministries, and in a certain and stipulated number of bedrooms and reception rooms in its manses.’ It was this sort of class reference that many churchmen managed to avoid recognising.” (Norman ,op cit. p.233 quoting from F.W. Bushell *The National Church and the Social Crisis, or, The Churchman’s Attitude to Political Panaceas* London 1918: p.8)

Valerie Pitt (in Leech 1997: pp.159-160) in a passage personally critical of Bishop Mervyn Stockwood, traces this tradition of apparent hypocrisy through the 20th Century, and Leech himself accepts that much Anglican social concern has been:

“very patrician -aloof, genteel, polite, detached from the lives of working class people, committed to the basic structures of society - not in fact socialist at all, certainly not revolutionary.” (Leech, *ibid.* p.159)

In regard to the emphasis on the theology of the incarnation both Leech (*ibid.*) and Gaden (1979) have commented that incarnationalism tends to hallow existing structures even if they are patently unjust. Gaden following David Jenkins has suggested the cross/resurrection of Christ as a doctrine with a more truly radical theological emphasis

“To focus on the Incarnation certainly leads to identification with the poor, as many Anglo- Catholic priests and lay people have done. Nor must we forget the contribution of the Christian Socialist Movement to the British Welfare State, but this involvement falls short of deliberate struggle (agony) and conflict which characterise the transfigured glory of the crucified One as proclaimed by the Resurrection. The Incarnation impels us to bind up the wounds of the broken: to take action against the forces that break and wound human beings is the gift of Jesus’ Death and Resurrection. As those who work in relief and caring services discover, real involvement with the oppressed leads to confrontation with the forces of oppression in the interests of change.” (Gaden, 1979: p.178)

The complex irony of all this is that in the 19th Century the cross of Christ and his atoning blood was used as a mechanism to foster individualistic quietism. Here it is

being used as a rallying point for struggle against oppression.

With Heasman (1965: p.29) my own criticism of Social Christianity is that it was not sufficiently practical or grounded in everyday life. Stewart Headlam, the most prominent Christian Socialist of the 1880s was unable to find a parish because of his radical views and he concentrated on sweeping national projects. A generation later William Temple, the man who succeeded in making socialism a respectable topic of conversation in church circles was himself only a parish priest for three years and that was in a society church. An adherence to collectivism appeared to necessitate an avoidance of the local, the parochial, the individual. Social Christianity shunned church social work for petty reasons rather than taking it and moulding it into something glorious.

Eventually Social Christianity's opportunity passed and its ways and means became seen as antiquated. John Gladwin, former Bishop of Guildford, writes:

“A way of working which was symbolised by William Temple's *Christianity and Social Order* , is beginning to look rooted in something which is passing away. It is not just the changed position of the church in our social order that brings us to this assessment. It is that Temple was able to conceive, with some measure of practical hope, a comprehensive theological and ecclesiological response to the needs of a world emerging from the bitterness of war and the disasters of the economic depression. He looked at a kind of modern and democratic Christendom. He thought in macro, inclusive and universal terms. It fitted well with an age which sought large and comprehensive ways of tackling the task of social construction. Much was achieved and not least a credible theological shape of mind to undergird the church's task. The world however moved forward in ways which were not foreseen. Poverty remained persistent and perplexing. The revolution in all sorts of communications systems made the world a manifestly more international, mobile and multifaceted place. The culture moved away from confidence in institutional change on its own.”
(Gladwin, 1999: p.12-13)

Section 3. The Age of Partnership and Reconciliation

It is this multifaceted, complex world that Atherton is attempting to address with his classification of the age of Partnership and Reconciliation. He claims the age begins in the confusion of the 1960s and traces some of the political, economic and religious changes of the years that followed including the “resurrection of the market, the eruption of individual choice-based consumption and the rebirth of civil society.”
(op cit: p.83)

He goes on:

“For it is becoming evident that no one grand narrative in politics, religion or economics can describe or explain all this satisfactorily. It is as though the new age is requiring increasingly our ability to construct connections between perspectives and with each others. It is about finding ways of holding together often profound differences for our own self sufficiency and for the future of living on earth. It is about an emerging age of partnership and reconciliation.”
(ibid: p.84)

The phrase “no one grand narrative” reveals that Atherton in this section is attempting to grapple tentatively with post-modernist theories on the nature of society.

I. Partnership

In his first two ages Atherton writes in very general terms about theology and society and the applicability to the church social work scene has had to be drawn out. In this third age, both at the end of this chapter and later in his book, Atherton comes closer to describing the realities of the present-day social work situation and indeed to using the language of social work itself .He writes about “contract culture“, “short term work” etc.

Partnership is certainly a current social work and political buzzword. One interviewee, who was clearly thinking along the same lines as Atherton, commented:

“Partnership is like the key word really because increasingly through the 1990s we started going in partnership with different people. I mean it had always just been the local authority but it suddenly began to be like the university or a Health Authority or whomever. So it was really widening , all that, those kind of contacts were just going [broadening hand gesture]. We were very opportunistic really...” (Interview11)

Whether partnership is convincing as a concept to encompass a whole epoch and not just a popular current term and practice is another question entirely. Indeed the parts of Atherton’s writing in this section which are less successful and least likely to stand the test of time are when he appears to be writing a theological supplement to Gidden’s *The Third Way*. In writing about the previous ages of Volunteerism and of the State he was basing his thesis on a strong body of widely accepted thought. Atherton can only prophesy about partnership and the theology of reconciliation, he

cannot prove beyond doubt that it will be the mark of this current and future epoch.

II. Reconciliation

One Scottish interviewee said :

“There is a god that they worship more and more the further south you go into England. His name is Compromise.” (Interview 25)

Atherton, however, attempts to make clear that he is not advocating compromise but a reconciling of positions whereby the recognition of the value of another position does not necessitate giving anything up. A strong and confident identity is important for any organisation working in partnership because it allows for borrowings without entailing loss. In addition for Atherton the process of partnership and reconciliation is as important as the result itself:

“The novelty of the emerging age is manifested particularly in the growing importance for theology and society of that process of interaction itself, without detracting from the contribution of partnership and reconciliation in themselves. For the emerging context, in its nature and challenges, promotes and requires collaboration, seeking to hold together different perspectives, interests and resources.... It is as though there is a dialectical relationship between thesis and antithesis which does not generate a synthesis but is a continual process of critical interaction” (op cit: p.85)

This passage and indeed the whole section is remarkably similar to material in Paul Halmos' last book *The Personal and the Political* (1978). In this book Halmos advocated equilibration, or a holding together of opposing positions, specifically the personal and the political, in tension:

“This book identifies two polar and distinct manners of intervening in society, the personal and the political modes....I must say forcefully that I do not regard these two modes as mutually exclusive alternatives or options. This is not a matter of choosing one and dispensing with the other. Nor is it a matter of making a new ‘mix’ of two contrary principles. Many writers write as if the politicisation of the personal would create an aromatic blend like whiskey and soda or coffee and cream. They believe that a half way compromise between the two extreme positions can be achieved through hybridisation.... I will argue that the solution lies in recognizing that there are no halfway solutions, that a consistent equilibration between incompatible polarities is the sole response we can justify both by logic and by a humanistic moral philosophy.” (Halmos, 1978: p.18-19)

This passage and Atherton's above are almost interchangeable in spirit although of course they originate from entirely different views of the world with Halmos being the humanist and Atherton, the liberal Christian. Atherton would replace "humanistic moral philosophy" with a "Capacious God"(op cit: p.4) and "Christ in whom 'all things hold together'" (ibid: p.90 quoting Colossians 1.17). Then the social worker does not have to hold the tension herself, only acknowledge that it is properly held.

Atherton himself then attempts to put into practice what he is preaching .As someone clearly more at ease with the Social Christianity theologies he makes an effort to reconcile them with theologies of a more Evangelical colour:

"Holding together opposites drives us to acknowledge that their ultimate reconciliation can only be achieved through their participation in the benefits of Christ's atoning death." (ibid: p.90)

He describes the effect of sin on the world in terms of created imperfection, provisionality and failure, the interim nature of existence "this side of the cross" (ibid: p.90)

Elsewhere in recent social work literature it is possible to see similar attempts at reconciliation being attempted. Bowpitt (2000), who is certainly an adherent of the Evangelical/atonement tradition, includes in his Christian paradigm for social work a number of "Greek" theologies such as Creativity and Creatureliness as well, of course, as Sinfulness and Redeemability. The WelCare value base ((Anglican Diocese of Southwark, circa 2000, included as Appendix IV) is another example where not only are Latin and Greek theologies found together, but others (and this is where an it becomes possible to escape the old Evangelical/ Catholic, conservative/ liberal polarities) such as Orthodox and Liberationist theological emphases are also present. It is included as an example of how coherent theology can be a basis for social work. That such a thing is possible and practical only leaves one with a sense of sadness that it was not done earlier.

It is, of course, only a small step forward if two previously antagonistic traditions within Christianity acknowledge the validity of each other's theological emphases. Atherton then tries to use this form of reconciliation as a model to take into a multiform, pluralist world. In this he is only partly successful but he is surely right to insist on the urgency of the task of reconciliation between pluralism and

Christocentrism.

It would not be appropriate at the end of this chapter to tag on an extra discussion on pluralism. However, it must not be forgotten that whilst all the above was taking place in the churches, significant changes in the wider society were occurring simultaneously. The next chapter attempts briefly to place church social work within the context of those wider changes.

In summary, it has been noted that church social work emerged out of a 19th Century Evangelical theology that elevated the place of the individual. This gave early church social work a certain momentum but was ultimately a barely adequate theological basis for church social work. Evangelicalism's abandonment of social intervention for much of the 20th Century meant church social work was out of step with other movements in the churches. Broader, more all encompassing theologies have been shown to have not been brought to the assistance of church social work, leaving it without compass or bearings as it attempted to set a course through the "secular" debate on social work values.

Chapter 6

Coping with Marginality: Church Social Work in the Context of the Decline of the Churches

“A secular society is one in which organized religion is treated as being only of marginal significance, a private pastime for those who like that sort of thing. A secularised mind recognises religion, if at all, only on the margins of experience.” (Hapgood, 1983: p.27)

Both the last two chapters have been concerned in different ways with the internal workings of the churches. There has, until now, been no acknowledgement that whilst the churches were busy building structures of ambivalence and failing to connect theology with the practice of church social work, wider changes were taking place in society that were to have a profound impact on church social work, namely that Britain was in the process of becoming a secular and pluralistic society. As a result of these changes the churches have reached the point where they are no longer part of the central stream of British civic life. They are on the margins. This chapter briefly examines this new position for the churches focussing on two different responses to it, an inward looking response and an outward looking response, and what each means for church social work. As shall be seen both responses embrace marginality but for different reasons.

As already quoted in the Introduction to the whole study Kathleen Heasman believed that the decline of church social work in the 20th Century:

“...can also be attributed to the greatly reduced number of practising Christians.” (Heasman 1965: p.29)

Heasman was incorrect to make such a simplistic connection. In fact as shall be shown professional church social work was relatively unhindered by the decline in the number of Christians, in that there was no direct correlation between the number of Christians and the number of church social workers. At a deeper level, however, the reduced number of practising Christians certainly has had an indirect effect on the role the churches have been able to play in society.

I. No Direct Correlation

At first sight Heasman's assumption of a direct correlation between the decline in the number of Christians and the number of church social workers appears to be borne out in the figures of the even steeper decline in church attendance since the 1960s⁴¹. This decline corresponds quite closely with the period of the closure of moral welfare/church social work programmes. However this is a co-incidence which masks a complex swirl of different processes. Haddon Wilmer, professor of Theology at Leeds University, has in a recent article portrayed church social intervention in the 20th Century as being carried out successfully directly against the flow of decline:

“Christian social action as partnership within secular parameters flourished in the twentieth century, though now the tradition is jaded and problematic. In its heyday it was able largely to ignore the decline in serious Christian believing. The churches, though declining, were still big enough, wealthy enough and influential enough with the governing authorities to be able to engage in social ministries without being undermined by the weakening of Christian belonging and believing.” (Wilmer, 2002: 140)⁴²

Early on in the research process I was intending to make the concept of decline of church social work the basis of the entire thesis, giving it a title such as:

“What have been the consequences of the decline of the involvement of the churches in social work, both for the institution and the profession?”

I became preoccupied with establishing the peak in terms of activity of church philanthropy/ social work and tracking the quantitative decline. It was around this time that I was gently chided for the simplicity of my approach by an early interviewee:

Interviewee “You say [quoting my introductory letter] ‘church social work peaked in terms of activity....social work on a local parish level, in the last

⁴¹ “In absolute terms, 46,000 fewer Anglicans and 108,000 fewer Catholics were attending church in 1979 than had done so four years before....The Methodist Church lost almost 30,000 members, 6 per cent of the total, in the three years after 1981.” Gilbert in Gilley and Sheils (Eds.) 1994: 512,513)

⁴² Wilmer goes on to make the criticism that church social intervention has separated itself off too well from the rest of the church so that it is hardly noticing that the church is disappearing altogether. He urges a reconnection between evangelism and church social action.

quarter of the nineteenth century'. But of course church social work is much broader and much bigger than that, than that people can say 'it peaked'. What specific sort of social work did you have in mind?"

R.W. "Um I think what I was looking at was what was happening in individual churches on a local basis. The last quarter of the nineteenth century was the peak particularly of visiting, district visiting. You had the slums in the cities and the churches that were next to the slums in the cities trying to generate activity in their members, to do something about the local slums. So I think that I mean a peak in terms of number of Christians involved in dealing with their local community, if you like. I certainly don't mean a peak in terms of effectiveness or influence because I think that came much later. But in terms of getting about and doing things I think that's why I say the end of 19th Century."

Interviewee "Yes, so you are really concentrating on that rather than looking at the broader picture. The Church has always been involved in social work, and from time to time it sort of tails off and then comes back again like a wave..."

R.W. "Yes, What I've done is - The idea of a peak might be a bit artificial but what you do is, you have to start somewhere, so, you know, let's go from there and see what happened subsequently."

Interviewee "What I'm saying is that your peak is just a crest of a wave and there is a crest of another wave coming and there was a crest of another wave before that and before that. And some of the foam is always floating around even in the troughs" (Interview 2)

At the time I took this to be an assertion of faith. Closer examination of the available facts shows it to be a description of the true state of affairs, at least inasmuch as it is a metaphor for complexity and fluctuation. The true situation is much more complex than a simple and direct correlation between church attendance and a resulting reduction in the number of church social workers. This is just one instance amongst many others (references) where it is unwise to use church attendance as the only indicator of the vigorousness of religion. Both Heasman (1979, *passim*) and Higson (1955, *passim*) indicate in their accounts of the history of moral welfare that there was a constant struggle to find appropriate people from amongst the Christian community to staff moral welfare programmes but this was not an insurmountable problem and there was certainly no direct relationship between the decline in churchgoing and the availability of church social workers.

In December 2000 Mary Ann Sieghart wrote a newspaper article under the

headline “The Church is thriving beyond its empty pews.” In it she wrote:

“Forget bums on seats and squabbles over liturgies: it is what the Church is doing in the outside world that should secure its survival in a Godforsaken age.” (*The Times* 22nd December 2000: 16)

She then goes on to describe the social work/community work of two parishes in Liverpool, the vitality of which is apparently unrelated to church attendance in those parishes.

Evidence from this research indicated that whilst church attendance may well be still declining, the decline in church social work has bottomed out, and that those church agencies still in operation are in reasonably healthy situations, especially as they no longer rely on their churches for funding. So even though the number of Church of England adoption societies fell from approximately 43 in 1965 (Hall and Howes) to currently seven, those seven are not fading away and recently have even formed a mutual support group (information from interview 7).

II. An Indirect Correlation: “We don’t do God”⁴³

Nevertheless, even if there is not a direct correlation between the decline in church attendance and the decline in church social work, there is overwhelming evidence of an indirect correlation. To use Siegart’s language the number of “bums on pews” cannot be ignored or forgotten. Certainly activism may not be squashed by the adversity of unpopularity and may even be bolstered by it but that is not the widest possible view. For church social work to continue it needs not only willing practitioners, it also needs to be considered plausible by the rest of society and by potential users of any service. One does not have to accept the conception of the unremitting decline of religion to recognise that the place of the churches in British society has altered profoundly over the last 100 years or so. That British society has become more secular is a truism. What this means in practice for church social work is that there are fewer public places/ environments in which the activities of the

⁴³ A comment reportedly made by Alastair Campbell, The Prime Minister’s director of strategy and communication in response to a question from an American journalist concerning Tony Blair’s religious faith. (*The Church Times* 9th May 2003)

churches are tolerated. In the 1920s it passed without comment or criticism that the churches would be the only agencies working with single mothers. By the 1950s prevailing attitudes had changed considerably. Balfour-Melville (1953), in his description of moral welfare work in Scotland, says that the Episcopal church of Scotland training home in Edinburgh closed in 1953 not because of a shortage of sisters to run it but because of a shortage of “girls” prepared to undergo the training under church auspices. By the 1970s such an arrangement had become perceived as entirely inappropriate.

John Hapgood (1983), the former Archbishop of York, coined two phrases to describe what was going on in society above and beyond the decline in church attendance; “the secularisation of the mind” and “the privatisation of religion”. It is Cox, however, with reference to particular practices and individuals in Lambeth, who sums up very well what the secularisation of the mind means for the place of the churches in contemporary public life:

“What was happening in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the gradual disintegration of a complicated view of the world- a world in which the offhand distinctions we now make between the “social” on the one hand and the “religious” on the other hand do not apply in the same way as they do now. As social and institutional relationships changed, assumptions about religion changed - including assumptions about the importance of religion. And that is the kernel of the matter. The Rev. C.E. Brooke of St. John the Divine, Kennington; W.S. Caine of Wheatsheaf Hall; Frank Briant of the Brixton Independent network of philanthropies -each of these men thought that religion *and* the churches *and* “church work” were all of the utmost importance. In some way the coal club and Sunday School and a burial guild and public worship and individual conversion were related in their minds in a way which they are not related in ours.” (Cox 1982: pp.210-211)

The secularisation of the mind is exactly this, that now these different activities, or their contemporary equivalents, have become unrelated. It is this that has made it appear incongruous that the churches continue to be involved in social work.

As regards the privatisation of religion and the concomitant eradication of public religion, this process has been neatly summed up in a recent article by Alastair McFayden on the tacit nature of British Secularism. It is important as well to note that the privatisation of religion and the secularisation of the mind are not concepts that have been imposed upon Christians. To a certain extent they have been embraced:

“The frames of reference we habitually employ as we analyse, interpret, communicate, judge and act in our public lives and work exclude any reference to God. They are predicated on the assumption that, because there is no explicit and obvious presence of God in the public world (the material, institutional, social, economic, political), because the world has its own integrity, God is irrelevant to the tasks of interpreting, understanding and acting in it. God-talk and faith in God are sidelined along with God when it comes to the public domain. This is as true for Christians and other members of religious traditions as it is for atheists and agnostics. As civil servants, planners, social workers, neighbours, bankers, machinists, nurses, teachers - even if we have a strong central core of faith in God -we adopt secular means of analysing, understanding, judging, acting. In public, then, we adopt frames of reference and actions which are built on the assumption that God and the public world are, for all practical purposes, unrelated.”

“Because our secular culture is a form of practical atheism, rather than one of explicitly argued or acknowledged conviction, then, we may all be performatively incorporated into its atheism without any apparent contradiction with or loss of theistic conviction. It does not lead Christians into open and conscious conflict with the ideas and beliefs we explicitly assent to since we have colluded with the removal of such beliefs from the public sphere of ordinary life.” (McFayden, 2002: p131, 134)

Within church social work there is awareness that the language of God is no longer meaningful or acceptable in wider society. It has no purchase. This awareness can clearly be seen in the following interview excerpt:

RW So in laymen’s terms, if people ask you what you do, what would you describe yourself as, if not a social worker?

Interviewee laughs

“Well I think that is quite difficult depending on who the person is because obviously one couldn’t say to some people one takes an incarnational approach to people who are socially excluded or something that. That wouldn’t make sense. I would probably say that I work with homeless alcohol and drug abusers and see how they react to that.... So in a Christian Context yes I can define my role because it would make sense theologically but to a lot of people it might not make sense. So I just sort of say among other things I do something which is visible and hopefully useful, among other things I run, I am responsible for running soup kitchens..” (Interview 9)

III. An Inward-Looking Response to Marginality

In the previous chapter there was some discussion of the “world” rejection of Evangelicals in the past. This idea retains considerable power. In the churches there are still groups of people who see adjustment to secular values and language in the performance of church social work and in other spheres as a corrupting process and they are determined to stop the rot. There is no deep analysis of “the world”; it is simply rejected. In the literature review it was shown that there is a group of writers, Bowpitt principal amongst them, who see the development of professional social work as a militantly secular enterprise. According to this group church social work was dragged along by this enterprise and compromised by it. Wilmer, for example, writes:

“While haunted by memories of dominance and embroiled in apologetic, Christian social action in the twentieth century drifted, or was drafted into, social service as defined in secular terms by secular authorities.” (Wilmer, *op cit*: p.139)⁴⁴

An alternative and opposing approach to tacit acceptance of creeping secularism has been that some in the churches have turned inward, away from the secular world and have attempted to create, or they would argue that they are returning to, a religious framework for living. In 1956 and 1959 respectively Martin Thornton, a parish priest, wrote two books called *Pastoral Theology: A Reorientation* and *Spiritual Proficiency* that became influential in church circles. In them he split the people in his parish into three groups; the devout, the conventionally religious and those who had only occasional or very intermittent contact with the church. Thornton claimed that it was the second group, the conventionally religious, who actually had most control over the activities of the parish church. He argued that it should be the first group, the devout or “the remnant”, who led (being an Anglican Thornton defined the devout as those who were prepared to say the daily office, and regularly receive communion).

⁴⁴ This position, similar to that held by Bowpitt (1989, 1998, 2000) and White (in Philpott (Ed.)1986), is not entirely consistent with the facts. The history of moral welfare, for example, shows that it was not drawn into being defined in secular terms by secular authorities but remained a sort of parallel service alongside state provision for much of its history. Had it been better assimilated into state mechanisms it might not have collapsed as quickly as it did. Bowpitt, White, and Wilmer are simply too defensive and leave themselves open to the charge of paranoia.

This would profoundly alter parish life, because unlike their fellow parishioners the remnant was not so susceptible to the tacit secularism of the age, not so eager to chase after relevance or influence. Not surprisingly these ideas became known as Remnant Theology. Hapgood characterises the position of those who advocate such a position, noting:

“There are frequent references to the corrupting effect of trying to be socially significant. Better a privatised gospel in its purity than a publicly acceptable religion which has lost its soul.” (Hapgood 1983: p.54)

In fact, Thornton argued in reply to his critics (1960: pp.99-103) that it was not a pure privatised form of religion he was aiming for but a redefinition of the terms and purpose of public worship and religious life.

A recent article in the Church Times demonstrated that Remnant Theology is alive and well and has serious consequences for church social work. The Revd N. Jowett, a parish priest in Sheffield, in a recent article under the headline “We’re a church, not a social work centre” characterises, in similar fashion to Wilmer above, the attempts of the churches to involve themselves in social work as being motivated by a need to be seen to be a useful adjunct to the welfare state, and as a rather pathetic attempt to hold on to positions of influence and power in society, as a sop to secularism. His main target is voluntary church social work, which he thinks is unsustainable due to shortage of resources and personnel, but professional activity certainly gets caught by his broadside:

“But now, as the Church faces continuous numerical decline, it grasps again at the straw of community involvement and service. This is a way, it thinks, of proving its relevance, of getting alongside non-believers of goodwill, and eventually drawing them into the fold....

“This is a slightly desperate Church, longing to retain its big role in society and grasping at straws of evangelistic possibility, but actually becoming an over-extended shadow of its former self, rather like the Co-op. ...if, in short, we are still grasping at yesterday’s power orientated, institutional weapons of Christian influence in the world, we show our lack of faith in our theology, our spirituality and our God, and ultimate failure is certain.” (Jowett, 2001: p.15, 16)

He goes on to suggest an alternative, more limited and more exclusively religious church, very much an adaptation of Thornton’s ideas:

“Let me paint a different picture of a smaller Church, with fewer buildings, with fewer pretensions to power and influence in society. But it is a Church where biblical literacy, a lively spirituality and practical theology are the norm – a Church which gives people the tools with which to make their own decisions of discipleship.” (ibid: p.15)

It is interesting that these things, “ biblical literacy, lively spirituality” etc. are presented as alternatives to church social work as if social work really is the way the church loses its soul. There is also the implication in this last quotation that if Christians want to engage in social intervention as an aspect of their discipleship, the church will give them tools to make that decision, but not the tools, resources, premises etc. to carry it out.

The power of Jowett’s criticisms rests on acceptance of the assumption that church social work has been about either toadying up to the state in an effort to maintain influence (as was also suggested by Cox, cited in Chapter 1 and by Lorenz, 1994: 42 referring to the wider European context) or about covert evangelism.

IV. An Outward Looking Response to Marginality

“Modernity ...a world without margins, leftovers, the unaccounted for-”
(Bauman, 1992, xv.)

The essential difference between an inward and an outward looking response is, of course, that the outward looking response looks at the world and it notices what is happening in it. It notices, for example, that marginalization is not just something that is happening to the churches, that it is a much more widespread phenomenon.

Nigel Parton, professor in Child Care at the University of Huddersfield, has written about the theories of modernity and post-modernity and how they relate to social work and social work theory. Parton emphasises the imposition of order as one of the distinguishing marks of modernity and the role of social workers accordingly as officers for the maintenance of order:

“Social work, in its modern emergence in the context of welfarism, was imbued with considerable optimism and believed that measured and significant improvements could be made in the lives of individuals and families by judicious professional interventions...

It was assumed that the interests of the social worker, and hence the state were similar to, if not the same as, the people they were trying to help. It was to be

an essentially benign, but paternalistic relationship.” (Parton, 1994: p.97)

In this article Parton draws on the thought of Zygmunt Bauman, who as a concentration camp survivor, has a jaundiced view of the modern nation state’s paternalistic efforts to bring about order. Bauman comments:

“The new, modern order took off as a desperate search for structure in a world suddenly denuded of structure. Utopias that served as beacons for the long march to the rule of reason visualized a world without margins, leftovers, the unaccounted for- without dissidents and rebels... In the city of reason, there were to be no winding roads, no cul-de-sacs, and no unattended sites left to chance - and thus no vagabonds, vagrants or nomads.

“In this reason-drafted city with no mean streets, dark spots and no-go areas order was to be made; there was to be no other order. Hence the urge, the desperation: there would be as much order in the world as we manage to put into it. The practice stemming from a conviction that order can only be man made, that it is bound to remain an artificial imposition on the unruly natural state of things and humans, that for this reason it will forever remain vulnerable and in need of constant supervision and policing, is the main (and, indeed, unique) distinguishing mark of modernity. From now on, there would be no moment of respite, no relaxing of vigilance. The ordering impulse would be fed ever again by the fear of chaos never to be allayed. The lid of order would never seem tight and heavy enough.”(Bauman,1994: p. xv, xvii)

Bauman goes on to claim that such efforts led directly to the totalitarianism of Stalin, Mao and Hitler. Modernity, therefore according to Bauman, failed to produce a world without margins and its efforts to eradicate the margins, the vagabonds and the vagrants were crude and terrifying. The fear of chaos is a constant in contemporary life in part because previous attempts to do away with it became abhorrent. This is why the celebration of difference, diversity and tolerance have become the important touchstones of a pluralistic society.

However, the idealism of a truly post-modern and pluralistic society in which all views are equally valid masks the true situation in which, because of the absence of equity, commonality or justice, there is still a centre of public life, and a whole series of neglected corners and margins. John Atherton in his latest book refers to “the marginalizing character of majoritarian democracy” (2003: p.121) and cites Gill’s comment on the “temptation towards coercion in a context of moral pluralism.” (Gill, 1999: p.239)

One response of those looking outward is to claim that The Church can be an

umbrella organisation, bringing together the marginalized, claiming - "look, we are marginalized, just like you." Graham Ward in a reference to the *Faith in the City* report noted:

"The Church, albeit in a different way, is as marginal as so many of the poor it portrayed." (Ward, 2000: p.28).

Beasley (1997: p.102) entertains the somewhat romantic idea that because the church is being marginalized it is in a better position to stand in solidarity with others who have been pushed to the margins of modern society, often social work recipients, what she calls the voluntarily and involuntarily marginalized. Atherton refers to the "Double Whammy" (2003:p.93) of discrimination experienced by the churches in inner city Manchester, with members discriminated against because of their poverty and also because the supposed redundancy of their religious outlook.

Those who hold with the idea that The Church is a voluntary organisation (which must include all those outside of it and many within) will have considerable problems with this position, especially if the churches rush to claim some sort of new found credibility or inverse influence because of their own marginalization. This can be illustrated by taking one of Atherton's assertions (and admittedly taking it out of the context of its argument):

"...empowering the marginalized is likely to include discriminatory action in relation to such marginalized groups as the poor, black people, women and churches." (Atherton, 2003: 121)

What jars somewhat about this comment is that the first three groups mentioned are certainly not voluntary organisations. Whether or not those in the churches chose their status and therefore their marginality is an open question. In any case the marginalization of the churches is of a different order to that of women or black people. It is slighter. Kenneth Leech is more sober in his estimation of the marginalization of the churches:

"The Churches in Britain on the whole are not marginal, not poor, not desperate. They hold a very privileged position, their voices are heard (although there is selective deafness). But this situation is probably ending, and Churches in the next century are likely to become more marginal. They will need to earn the right to be heard by the intrinsic sense of what they say and by their own integrity and credibility. This could be the salvation of the

Churches, but we need to develop newer and far stronger forms of solidarity and sustenance. We are probably entering a new desert period, a dark time, in which our own ability to cope with despair and desolation will be tested and purified” (Leech, 1997: p.108)

V. Church Social Workers: Experts at Coping with Marginalization

The churches attempts to cope with marginality show them to be struggling with the new, struggling to make sense of a new existence on the margins of society where even lip service is no longer paid. However, if any one group within the churches is in a position to deal with this new situation it is church social workers. If the churches need advice on how to cope with despair they can turn to church social workers. The reason is obvious. Church social workers knows all about life on the margins. They have subsisted on the margins over a long period. As Fann and Dodds note:

“In the Roman Catholic Church it is the professed religious communities of sisters and brothers who are seen as the caring arm of the church - not the professional lay social workers in the diocesan agencies. In fact the diocesan agencies are marginalized. Even with social workers authorized by the Church of England something very similar happens. Their skills and values are rarely used by the Bishop’s Council. There is only one diocese in England and Wales where the co-ordinator of the social and pastoral programme is on the Diocesan Church Council.” (Fann and Dodds, 1986, p113)

PART THREE: REVIEW

Chapter 7

The Methodological Framework of the Research

In the previous chapter some tentative remarks were made about the pursuit of church social work in a pluralist and postmodern society, where doubt rather than faith or surety is the common currency. Equally necessary are some preliminary comments on the work of research itself in the context of this society. This chapter therefore begins with a look at the overall aims of the research in a research environment that queries the quest for absolute truth. It moves on to a discussion on the use of interview material and the theory that supports such use. Thirdly, many of the methodological and practical choices that were important to the formation of the study are then considered in depth.

I. Epistemology, or Dispensing with “Paradigms”

In 1985 Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba published their book *Naturalistic Inquiry*. The book has since become, in the world of social science research, especially in the United States, a fundamental text.⁴⁵ Researchers are expected to know where they stand in relation to it and the issues it raises. As the book is essentially about epistemology, how we know what we know, its success has ensured that social science researchers are aware that they must hold a coherent epistemological position and the book’s tenets, whether one agrees with them or not, provide a good starting point for any consideration of methodology and clarification of what a researcher is seeking to achieve in a given study.

Naturalistic Inquiry is a polemic. It advocates that researchers should move from maintaining a positivist paradigm to a naturalistic or postpositivistic paradigm in the performance of research. Not responding to the polemic is taken as clear evidence of a tardy acceptance of the old, outdated, positivist stance. Positivism is characterised in the book as being based on five assumptions or axioms which are countered by five alternative naturalistic axioms, as follows:

⁴⁵ See Ely et al, 1997: p.8

“The Axioms of the Naturalistic Paradigm

Axiom 1: The nature of reality (ontology)

Positivist version: There is a single tangible reality “out there” fragmentable into independent variables and processes, any of which can be studied independently of the others; inquiry can converge onto that reality until, finally, it can be predicted and controlled.

Naturalist version: There are multiple constructed realities that can be studied only holistically; inquiry into these multiple realities will inevitably diverge (each inquiry raises more questions than it answers) so that prediction and control are unlikely outcomes although some level of understanding (*verstehen*) can be achieved.

Axiom 2: The relationship of knower and known (epistemology)

Positivist version: The inquirer and the object of the inquiry are independent; the knower and the known constitute a discrete dualism.

Naturalist version: The inquirer and the object of inquiry interact to influence one another; knower and known are inseparable.

Axiom 3: The possibility of generalization

Positivist version: The aim of inquiry is to develop a nomothetic body of knowledge (laws) in the form of generalizations that are truth statements free from both time and context (they will hold anywhere and at any time).

Naturalist version: The aim of inquiry is to develop an idiographic (individualized) body of knowledge in the form of “working hypotheses” that describe the individual case.

Axiom 4: The possibility of causal links

Positivist version: Every action can be explained as the result (effect) of a real cause that precedes the effect temporally (or is at least simultaneous with it).

Naturalist version: All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects.

Axiom 5: The role of values in inquiry (axiology)

Positivist version: Inquiry is value-free and can be guaranteed to be so by virtue of the objective methodology employed.

Naturalist version: Inquiry is value bound in at least five ways, captured in the corollaries that follow:

Corollary 1: Inquiries are influenced by *inquirer* values as expressed in the choice of problem, evaluand, or policy option, and in the framing, bounding and focusing of that problem, evaluand, or policy option.

Corollary 2: Inquiry is influenced by the choice of the *paradigm* that guides the investigation into the problem.

Corollary 3: Inquiry is influenced by the choice of the *substantive theory* utilized to guide the collection and analysis of data and the interpretation of findings.

Corollary 4: Inquiry is influenced by the values that inhere in the *context*.

Corollary 5: With respect to corollaries 1 through 4 above, inquiry is either *value-resonant* (reinforcing or congruent) or *value-dissonant* (conflicting). Problem, evaluand, or policy option, paradigm, theory, and context must exhibit congruence (value-resonance) if the inquiry is to produce meaningful results.” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: pp.37-38)

As an archetypal polemic everything is presented in this quotation above and throughout the book as an either/or choice. There is no middle ground. So either a single reality exists or it does not. In regards to epistemology either the knower and the known are separable or they are not. Either it is possible to make generalisations or it is not, cause and effect exist or they do not, inquiry is value free or value bound.

My own position with regard to the polemic as found in this book is a fudge, that is I am drawn to some of Lincoln and Guba’s axioms but not others, and have found some of their suggestions for the performance of the research useful and not others. One can clearly see the strength of their criticisms of the positivist position and to attempt to maintain a purely positivist position in the field of social science research after Lincoln and Guba’s work leaves the researcher open to some very obvious criticisms. That accepted, one is still very reluctant to abandon entirely some of the laudable aims which Lincoln and Guba characterise as being within the positivist paradigm. Taking each of the axioms in turn I shall break down the specifics of my fudge.

Firstly, I have a belief in realism that I trust is not naïve, that is I am quite prepared to accept multiple realities or rather multiple constructions of reality but would not accept the inevitability of divergence or abandon the effort to create convergence and agreement, to get as close as possible to a single reality. For

example, the study seeks and indeed uncovers a high level of agreement amongst interviewees about what happened to Anglican church social work in the 1970s. I have not, however, in this study been interested in either prediction or control. Secondly, I accept entirely the inseparability of knower and known and would reject the concept of an independent object of inquiry. Thirdly, whilst I am not interested in the creation of universal laws, I have not abandoned the aim of making statements that are meaningful outside of individual contexts, in other words - generalisations. One simply needs to be aware of the boundaries of generalisability. For example, I have sought to make a number of generalisations about Anglican church social work, many fewer about British church social work and even fewer about British social work or social work per se (incidentally, as with all these philosophical word games Lincoln and Guba lay themselves open to their own axioms being used against them; most obviously the impossibility of generalisation is itself a generalisation). Fourthly, I do not know what I think about the theoretical possibility or otherwise of separating cause from effect and I do not believe the study has suffered too greatly as a result of my ignorance or ambiguity. The study has simply proceeded on the basis that it is possible to trace the causes of events and processes, such as in this case the causes of the decline of church social work. In regard to the fifth axiom I accept entirely that inquiry cannot be value free but I respond to Lincoln and Guba's corollaries with varying levels of enthusiasm. Corollary one on inquirer values (and knowledge) and their impact on the study would seem to me to be obvious and I discuss it in detail in the section on pilot interviews below. Corollary two on the choice of paradigm and its influence is all part of Lincoln and Guba's thesis that one must choose one paradigm over another which I am here resisting although I am prepared to accept that even my fudge over these issues will inevitably contribute to the form and content of the study. Corollaries three, four and five I deal with in the following section on oral history.

Lincoln and Guba, of course, insist on paradigmatic rigour and "coherence and mutual reinforcement" amongst the axioms and characteristics of naturalistic inquiry (ibid: p.43). They would reject entirely the idea that one can do as I have done above and cherry pick from their work and they would furthermore take such an approach as proof of an enduring attachment to positivism. So be it. In my defence I

claim the inveterate pragmatism and magpie tendencies (take a bit of this and a bit of that) of the social worker (Bowpitt, 2000: p.353) and intend to cherry pick further from Lincoln and Guba's advice on the performance of the research task in the rest of this chapter.

II. Oral History

That element of the study which is central to the claim to originality is the material that updates church social work history from the published material available dating from the 1960s and early 1970s (such as Hall and Howes [1965], Magnass [1970], Cameron [1971]), and that material is almost entirely drawn from interviews. Those interviews have been gathered as oral histories and it is the theories of oral history that underlie their use. In the following section material from one interview (Interview 12) is used to provide examples of the use of the theories of oral history.

Oral history, as a form, has in recent years been appropriated by social workers and social work researchers. A good example of this activity is Ruth Martin's book, *Oral History in Social Work: Research, Assessment and Intervention* (1995). Within the book her interview-based research into the involvement of African Americans in the Settlement Movement in Connecticut (Martin, 1995: pp. 105-117) has some parallels with this present study, in that it is using interviews to gain an insight into the history of social work practice. To Martin (*ibid*: p.9) there appears to be a good fit between the values found in the social work profession and those advocated by oral historians. The research subject and the research method certainly evince what Lincoln and Guba would call "value-resonance" (Lincoln and Guba, *op-cit*: p.38)

Oral history also appeals to those with a more radical agenda in that it purports to provide "a voice to the voiceless" (Martin, *op-cit*: p.15), and a more democratic approach to history than more conventional histories, which are often representations of the worldviews of certain elites:

"Since the nature of most existing records is to reflect the standpoint of authority, it is not surprising that the judgement of history has more often than not vindicated the powers that be. Oral history by contrast makes a much fairer trail possible: witnesses can now be called from the underclasses, the

unprivileged, and the defeated. It provides a more realistic and fair reconstruction of the past, a challenge to the established account. In so doing, oral history has radical implications for the social message of history as a whole.” (Thompson, 1978: pp.5-6).

Whilst it is obvious that church social workers, the group of interviewees in this research, are in no sense an underclass or underprivileged, they have certainly been virtually voiceless in the debate surrounding church social intervention in recent years and this research has been in part an attempt to give them an opportunity to express their views and tell their stories.

Oral history, however, has struggled to an extent to achieve recognition and acceptance within the academic community. William Moss, former chief archivist of the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, U. S. A., in an assessment of the value of oral history material (1991), draws up a number of levels for the evidentiary value of sources in research. He claims that oral history evidence is evidence that lies third in its relative value to historians. Ranked ahead of oral history is primary evidence or what he calls transactional records, for example laws, contracts, deeds and military orders. Secondary or selective evidence is an attempt to preserve or communicate what is happening at any given time. Moss emphasises concurrency as an important distinguishing factor for selective evidence and gives the examples of stenographic notes of conversations, audio and video recordings, and still photography. Moss urges researchers who are about to use oral history interviews to be as familiar as possible with these other, according to his evaluation, higher sources so that they have an understanding of where their interview material fits into the field of the research. This is a commonplace saying as almost every researcher accepts the necessity of a literature review.

Moss then goes on to divide the material obtained in oral history interviews into two categories, recollections and reflections. Moss claims that recollections are “another step removed from reality into abstraction.” (ibid: 110) and goes on to list several factors that he claims decrease their evidentiary value in comparison with other forms of evidence (ibid: 110). He notes that recollections are often second hand accounts or hearsay, and even if first hand they are susceptible to the normal selective processes of memory. Events in the intervening period will colour and affect memories, as will prior receptivity to certain ideas. Moss also claims that there can be

“an intrusion of purposes” (ibid: 111) that can have an impact on the evidence. An interviewee may wish to dignify their own position or blame someone else for failure, etc. Below recollections in terms of evidentiary value Moss places reflections, although he accepts that within oral history interviews the two will inevitably be intermingled. A good example from this current research is the following:

You know, I can remember one of the women, [a Church of England moral welfare worker] she was a lovely, lovely ancient lady but when I went to visit her in her own office situation there were two notices up on the wall, ‘Thou God see-est all’ and ‘No smoking’. And that was, you know there was a very judgmental air about the work at that time.” (Interview 12)

That last sentence is clearly a reflection and of a different order from the rest of the statement although quite clearly the whole statement is structured to make his point. Whether they are reflections or recollections Moss is determined to emphasise that such comments are not, of themselves, history:

“Crucial to a sound understanding of oral history is that the record produced by an interview should not be confused with the original events, nor even with the memory of that event. The record is a selective one that itself selects information from a selective record of the witness/ narrator’s memory of past events and subjects. Whatever other values oral history has for journalists, novelists, dramatists, educators and propagandists (and these values may be many) the historian must understand and respect the evidentiary limits of recollections if he is to use them honestly in his attempts to master the past. He must understand that the evidence has been refracted several times before he confronts it in an oral history recording.” (ibid: p.111)

Having made these provisos Moss does go on to acknowledge the value of human selectivity. This is one of the central defences of oral history made by Paul Thompson in his book *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (1978). Thompson casts doubt on the whole scheme of a hierarchy of evidentiary value and has pointed out how particularly what Moss calls selective sources, or sources at the second level, can be subject to considerable bias. Thompson also deals with the apparent unreliability of human memory, stating that it is in fact less unreliable than might be thought as regards information that is important to the person remembering:

“For each of us, our way of life, our personality, our consciousness, our knowledge are directly built out of our past life experience. Our lives are cumulations of our own pasts, continuous and indivisible. And it would be purely fanciful to suggest that the typical life story could be largely invented. Convincing invention requires a quite exceptional imaginative talent. The historian should confront such direct witness neither with blind faith, nor with arrogant scepticism, but with an understanding of the subtle processes through which all of us perceive and remember, our world around us and our own part in it. It is only in such a sensitive spirit that we can hope to learn the most from what is told to us.” (Thompson, op.cit: p.148)

It is interesting to return to the quotation above from this present research on judgementalism in the light of Thompson’s comments. The interviewee had a memory of the signs in the office. From the context of the rest of the interview it is clear he had a perception of himself as a moderniser, a remover of old prejudices, hence this story. He remembered the signs and took them to be symbolic of something, of a kind of church social work that he thought of as intolerant and that itself could not be tolerated any longer. Whether his reflection was instantaneous or came to him after some time is not crucial. It is part of what Thompson calls the cumulations, how this man made sense of himself as a church social worker and that process is indeed continuous and indivisible. Moss’s objection appears one dimensional.

Thompson wants interviewers to trust interviewees, at least to the extent of accepting that the interviewee believes what they are saying to be true. Moss too is sympathetic to this and points out that:

“Even when erroneous or misguided, recollections may in their very errors provoke understanding and insight.” (ibid: 111)

A good example provided in the research interview is the following:

“You do realise that the JB course was the first social work course in the country. There was no other course before that. The church was the first organisation that trained its social workers. In my day [1960s] if you went to work in the children’s department you got in on good works. If you had a nice personality and you got on well with children and you could cope with committees, you could get into the children’s department. In those days. And then of course the Morley Report came along and then Seebohm and the whole thing changed.” (Interview 12)

As already pointed out in Chapter 3 the interviewee is wrong to say that the church

was the first organisation to train its social workers. Nevertheless his assertion is an interesting example of competitiveness or one-upmanship, which, as other interviews from the research showed, is an attitude that can sometimes be found amongst church social workers in their dealings with the state and other agencies.

Moss concludes:

“Oral history interviewing and the documentation that it produces are a logical part of the system and process by which we transform the evidence of reality into the composition of history that masters the past. As evidence, oral history is less than transactional or selective records, but it makes a significant contribution to insight and understanding, and in the absence of primary evidence an aggregate of testimony may serve to approximate historical certainty.” (Moss, 1991: 120)

Whether or not one questions this hierarchy, the urging of the use of aggregates of testimony is surely sound and this is why I have attempted where possible in the study to group together recollections and reflections that are similar or comparable. Thompson sees the value of such an approach but points to what is lost in not allowing interviewees space for a fuller account of their stories. The inclusion of the longer interview excerpts in Chapter 2 is an attempt to compensate for this loss. The presentation of interview material is discussed in greater detail below.

III. Reflections on Methodological Choices

Having outlined the overall framework of the study in terms of the very broadest ideas about what I think I am attempting in the work and more specifically in terms of the theory of the use of interview material, I propose in this section to look at the study as a whole and offer my own critique, not of the thesis itself, but of the research methods. The section consists of a roughly chronological examination of the choices I made about how to do the study and how those choices directly affected the study itself.

There are a number of aspects I would do differently if I could do it all again but obviously I only discovered them in the doing of it. This account of the research is itself a mixture of recollection and reflection and, following Moss, it is important where possible to establish the extent to which my contemporaneous reflections influenced my actions. As Seale says:

“The broad thrust of [my] argument is that methodology, if it has any use at all, benefits the quality of the research by encouraging a degree of awareness about the methodological implications of particular decisions made during the course of the project.” (Seale, 1999: ix)

Although I do not intend to go through all the choices made in order it is informative to examine some of my earliest preconceived ideas. I therefore intend to begin this section with a brief analysis of my own research proposal, submitted prior to officially starting the research. The following is the title of the study as presented in the research proposal:

An exploration of the ways in which the Christian Churches can assist in furthering the development of the social work profession.

This title is strikingly different from that eventually submitted for examination. However, it is notable that “Churches”, plural, is there from the beginning. The first letter I wrote as part of the research in 1997, prior even to university enrolment was to The Council of Churches of Britain and Ireland (now called Churches Together) asking for their social work contacts list. They replied with a list of 25 names. This list was used as the starting point of my search for contacts and interviewees. The desire to make the study as wide as possible and to include as many different denominations as possible has remained throughout and is one of the bases of the claim to originality,⁴⁷ although as shall be shown this emphasis is one that I have struggled with and not entirely successfully retained.

The optimistic and practical tone of the proposal title was emphasised in the text:

“It [the study] will begin with the contention that the social work profession is in danger of reaching a sterile impasse unless some sort of debate on social work ethics and values can be stimulated and it will go on to examine the particular input of the churches into this debate.

“Without descending into bickering about who is using whom, this study will aim to analyse the current input of the Churches into social work

⁴⁷ Almost all other studies, such as Unsworth (1954) on The Salvation Army, Hall and Howes (1965) on The Church of England, Cameron (1971) on The Church of Scotland are strictly denominational. The one partial exception would be Heasman’s 1962 book on the contribution of the 19th Century Evangelicals. That, however, provides only the most cursory of mentions of non-Evangelicals.

and examine future possibilities...

I have written a previous study on the legitimacy of church social work. Here I would like to move on to consider its unique value, being very positive and looking at what exactly church led social work has to offer to help to ensure the healthy future of social work.”

The proposed title itself points to the future and within the text of the proposal several references to the future are included and only the most summary of mentions of the past. The past was something from which one “moved on”, and my confidence that I knew what exactly one moved on from is slightly disturbing on re-reading, only because I now know how little I knew then about church social work’s past. One of the ways in which I was best and most clearly guided in the course of the study was in gaining an appreciation of how important is a well grounded understanding of what has gone before to any work done in the present and any plans for the future. The study became an examination of exactly what contribution the Churches have made in the past in the social work field and where that contribution leaves them now.

Another prominent feature of the proposal was the preoccupation with the relationship between church and “secular” social work. This is still of course an aspect of the study, see especially chapter 3, but its early prominence led to some problems and dead ends as shall be described.

Lastly, from the brief words on methodology in the proposal it is clear that from the beginning I was planning to use interviews as the main research tool. This probably stemmed from my determination to keep to the present. If this was my intention, it was not what subsequently happened. In fact the interviews became, as I have discussed above, small oral histories. A number of the interviewees were in retirement or right at the end of their careers and saw the interviews as an opportunity to look back. This was not discouraged. However, when one sees that I was determined to use interviews from the start, with hindsight alarm bells ring. Was that the best research tool for what the study subsequently became? It is worth considering how else it could have been done.

Some of these preconceived ideas will now be taken in turn and their impact on the study analysed.

i. "Churches"

Quite early in the research process I came across Penelope Hall and Ismene Howes' book *The Church in Social Work* (1965). Many researchers must experience similar excitement when they come across the work of predecessors who have had similar preoccupations and purposes. I did consider at one point making the study a full-blown follow-up of Hall and Howes' work. In the book they focus on the social work (moral welfare work) of two Anglican dioceses, Manchester in the north and Southwell in the south. Because they confined the study in this way and because they had the full co-operation of the church hierarchies, they were able to use a variety of research techniques including face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, close observation, and study of official papers. It would certainly have been a viable study to trace what had become of church social work in these two dioceses possibly using similar research techniques. However, one of the most telling criticisms made against Hall and Howes was that their work was too limited in its scope. Workers and administrators in other Anglican dioceses could comfort themselves with the idea that whilst Hall and Howes might have found faults elsewhere it is not like that in their diocese (Magnass, 1970: p.36). As for other denominations, they scarcely get a mention in the book. A follow up study would suffer from the same limitations and when one considers how barren has been the field of church social work research in Britain since Hall and Howes and then Magnass, it was surely right to attempt something broader and hopefully foundational for further more specialised pieces of research.

I have, however, still arrived at a study in which 13 out of 32 interviewees were Anglicans and the study is more about Anglican social work than church social work in general. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, my snowball interviewing selection technique led me from Anglican to Anglican and I did not want to interfere with that process because that in itself is an interesting piece of data that shows how strong internal denominational contacts remain, seemingly unaffected by ecumenicalism. Not one single interviewee referred me to another from a different denomination. Secondly, the kind of professional activity I was interested in is actually predominantly under Anglican auspices. The non-conformist churches are not big players in this field (once again with the perennial exceptions of the Church

of Scotland and The Salvation Army) and never attempted to move from philanthropy into professional social work on a large scale despite the occasional work of individual churches or chapels. I would be the first to admit, however, that the Roman Catholic Church, with 18 dioceses operating social work programmes (According to The Catholic Directory 2003: p.677) and only 3 interviewees, is under-represented in the study. Mitigation lies in the fact that the interviews I did conduct and some published material (Fann and Dodds,1986) indicate that both in terms of organisation and professional practice Roman Catholic social work is broadly similar to that of the Anglican churches (Church of England, Church in Wales). Nevertheless the point remains that any claim that the study has to being an overall critique of church social work is not borne out from the literature review or by the use of interview material which both have a markedly Anglican leaning. The study is instead a detailed examination both through the literature, unpublished material and interviews of primarily Anglican social work with the commentary being enriched by reference to comparable situations in other churches

The Church of Scotland have the second highest representation in the study with five interviewees (and one other who was a Church of Scotland member but who worked for another organisation). I quickly discovered during my time conducting interviews in Scotland that it had very possibly been a mistake to believe that one could write a study on Church social work in Britain. One Scottish interviewee commented: “There is no such thing” [as British Church social work] (Interview 25). Church social work in Scotland is markedly different from its counterparts in England and Wales. It is bigger, more centralized, more confident, mostly based in residential environments (whereas most Church of England residential homes have now closed), and more stridently Christian/Evangelical. The section on employment policies in chapter 4 deals with these differences. In the course of my study I met two other students who are writing PhDs on Church of Scotland’s social work and I would alert and refer the reader to their forthcoming studies. My comments on Scottish church social work are shallower and less detailed than those on church social work in the rest of the country but I assert that there is still some common ground and much to be learned by the comparison, in particular between the Church of Scotland’s social work and that of the Church of England, so I

have retained mainland Britain as the geographical boundary.

ii. Other Potential Research Methods

As stated above I was clearly determined to use interviews as a central research technique from the start but it would be wise to take a step backwards and ask whether or not interviewing was the most appropriate method to use for the research, and whether any other techniques would have been suitable and appropriate.

The study has obviously been an exercise in qualitative research. Some statistics are provided on the size of the field in the introduction where the unavailability of such material is noted. Otherwise the study does not feature quantitative analysis. Undoubtedly better figures on the exact rate of closure of residential Mother and Baby homes would have been interesting. Useful and informative as it might be to add up the total number of social workers employed by the churches through the century, comparing decade with decade and tracking the decline that way, the data is simply not available in a usable form. In any case it is difficult to see how quantitative methods and analysis would have significantly furthered research that became an examination of the essential character of church social work.

Another option was to do a qualitative study based on historical and contemporary documentation. As the literature review made clear this material is not available in abundant form. The Church of England organised its social work on a diocesan rather than a central basis so there is no one location for the documentation. It is spread out around the country and much of it has been lost as dioceses gave up on social work. Even those that have ongoing social work programmes, such as Oxford and Southwark, have been careful to keep confidential records of adoptions etc. but less careful about retaining general documentation relevant to the history of their organisations. The documentation in the archive of Josephine Butler Memorial House at Liverpool University consists of the contents of three boxes. This material is used in the research but it is not a great deal to show for 52 years of training. I attempted to access the Church Army's archive, aware that many Church Army sisters were employed as moral welfare officers and was informed that the archive

was only open to Church Army officers. I had no such problems with the Salvation Army and their archivist could not have been more helpful. However one cannot attempt a comprehensive piece of research attempting to do justice to the social work of the many churches in Britain with such patchy resources.

The one form of documentation that was generally retained even after agencies closed, were Annual Reports. These documents are strong on details of ongoing work and on financial matters but they are not necessarily the best place to discover church social work's essential nature.

Observation of the work of church social workers was another possible source of data. It was decided however that this was impractical for a single researcher hoping to gain insights from a number of different denominations. Also such observation would only provide a snapshot of the present situation and not give any sense of the historical development of the work which was becoming an increasingly important aspect of the study.

Overall, interviews clearly are a source of relevant data and an efficient way of gathering it, of obtaining material in a form that could be used for purposes of comparison. Another reason to do interviews was because it was viable now but will not be in ten or twenty years time for some future researcher. The period of the 1960s and 1970s was a focal point of the study and a number of the interviewees were working then. Two interviewees were in their seventies, a number of others in their sixties, and several I managed to interview just prior to their retirement. If these interviews had not been done now or at some point in the next five to ten years at the latest, the memories these people hold would be lost.

iii. Lessons Learnt from the Pilot Interviews.

The first significant lesson learnt from the pilot interviews concerned the role of the researcher themselves in the formation of any research data, in that the storyteller adapts their story to fit in with what they think the hearer wants to hear. (once again see Lincoln and Guba [op. cit: p.38]). It used to be suggested that the interviewer remove themselves from the account making process altogether:

“[The interviewers] should assume an interested manner towards the

respondents and never divulge their own views. If the interviewers should be asked for personal views, they should laugh off the request with the remark that the job is to get opinions, not to have them.” (Kidder and Judd, 1986: 267)

This is simply not an option. To do this will itself distort any data. The joint construction of an interview, whilst it may be a relatively new idea in the field of qualitative research, has long been accepted as a norm in social work interviews:

“ In the process of both diagnosis and treatment the interview is in reality an interplay of dynamic personalities which constantly act and react to each other’s questions and answers, to each other’s gestures, facial expressions, manners and even dress. Generically an interview is a mutual view ... of each others thoughts, feelings and actions.” (Young 1935 p. 2 quoted in Biestek, 1961: p. 9-10).

Although I did not know any of the four interviewees before the pilot interviews and all had been given very similar information about me and my aims, it was interesting that there were different responses to me as an individual. Prior to the start of their interviews both the retired hospital social workers (nos. 1+ 4), quizzed me about my own social work career. I got the impression that they were checking my social work credentials. Presumably they were then satisfied that they could talk as one social worker to another. Both the director of the children’s charity, (no. 3) and the council of churches activist, (no. 2) expressed very little interest in my own professional credentials and both presumably were satisfied that a common interest in churchly things (or even a common faith) was a sufficient starting point. To 1 and 4 I was a fellow social worker and to 2 and 3 I was a fellow Christian. Baker (1997) writes about membership categorisation in interviews. The pilot interviews demonstrated to me that interviewees form a view about who it is who is interviewing them before any questioning takes place. One way to control this effect, to a certain extent, is to introduce oneself fairly formally as a preamble. Even then it is important to bear in mind that membership categorisation would still take place. Nevertheless, following the pilot interviews I chose to begin each interview with a short preamble introducing myself and my interest in the subject of church social work. The following example is taken from an interview and, although they were not scripted, I tried to keep them all as similar as possible:

“Maybe I should start off telling you a bit about myself because here I am a

person out of the blue and you don't know anything about me or my background, and it might help you to pitch what you want to say.

Um I qualified as a social worker in the early 1990s and all my work experience has been with Children with learning disabilities, mostly residential work, I'm not working at the moment but my last social work job I was deputy a manager of a respite care home.

I first got interested in the churches in social work when during my social work training I did an exchange, I was six months in Austria, in Vienna, um at their social work training college. But they have got two, one that is run by the Roman Catholics and one that is run by the state, but even the one that is run by the state has religion and society lectures. So that got me interested in that and then I sort of discovered that forty percent of social workers are employed in religious organisations. So that set me thinking and I didn't really know much about what the churches were doing in Britain but I thought it was a lot less than that. So when I came back I did a little bit of comparative work but because of course I was doing my social work qualification. I didn't have enough time to look at it properly. But I always wanted after that to come back and have a proper look at what the churches are doing in terms of social work in Britain and map that and that is what my PhD has been really."

It should be taken as significant that, in terms of member categorisation, I chose to emphasise my professional role rather than discuss my personal beliefs or church connections.

The interviewer, whoever he or she is and whatever their personal history, will have a further impact on the interview simply by choosing to be a researcher on this subject. All researchers do their utmost to ensure that work which is so important to them is also perceived as important by their readers. This is a pressure that will always play a part and have an effect. For example, one deep-rooted fear of my own is the simple view that the work of the churches is now irrelevant to social work. So am I, as a researcher, out to prove ongoing relevance? The rather eccentric choice, as it might appear with hindsight, of two hospital social workers for the pilot interviews is relevant here (nos. 1+ 4). It was a part of my preoccupation at that time with the relationship between religious and secular social work, or pastoral work and social work, referred to in the introduction above. The idea was to interview two sets of workers, hospital social workers and hospital clergy (possibly also patients) and examine the similarities and differences in both forms of work. I was especially interested in how the workers saw the work itself and I was hoping to lead on to something fundamental or definitive about the essential nature of social work in

relation to pastoral work. The choice to explore this option can be seen as part of my determination to say something relevant to social work as a whole. In the pilot interviews, however, neither social worker had any close working relationships with clergy at any point in their long careers. Whether hospital social workers and hospital clergy have close working relationships or not is a fair topic for research and analysis. However, it should not be the researcher's role to go out and find close relationships and then speculate about meaning or relevance of that closeness. In one case what I was clearly straining for must have been apparent when one of the hospital social workers said:

“ Since I got your letter I've been wracking my brain to think of something that might be useful to you and there was this one time...” (Pilot Interview 1)

She goes on with an anecdote about prayer and a patient prayer list that was circulated among Christian staff at a hospital where she worked and how patients objected to being prayed for without their permission being asked. To me more interesting than the anecdote is the way in which it is presented. It reveals someone trying to accommodate the researcher but struggling to see their own career in the terms that they see that the researcher is looking for. Unsurprisingly, I decided it was not wise to pursue the research in this form although that does not mean, of course, that I abandoned all attempts at relevance!

The interview with the Chair of a local Council of Churches (no.2) was the least successful of the pilot interviews but became one of the most important in that it clarified in my mind what I did not want from the interviews in terms of both form and content. I wrote a letter to all the interviewees with a suggested list of topics for the interview (see Appendix I). This is in line with the advice of Thompson:

“With a minority of informants, like politicians and professionals, it may be wise to set out your research proposal and the use you intend for the interview more fully. This will help them decide whether to see you, and will clarify your future right to use the material. Some may begin to thinking about the topics which interest you and search out some old papers before you come.” (Thompson, 1978: p.206)

However, in this case he did not have the letter with him during the interview and I did not have my copy. The result was a wholly unstructured interview, a ramble through his and his wife's (who he asked to join us at one point) volunteer activity.

This experience convinced me that whilst I did not want too much structure in the interviews, I did want some. Subsequently I recommended to interviewees that they have my preliminary letter in front of them during the interview and I made sure that I also had a copy to hand.⁴⁸

I was further disquieted by the content of this interview. Throughout the interview I was unsure in what capacity I was interviewing this person. As a volunteer he did not separate the personal aspects of his life from his causes. The causes themselves were all interwoven. So, for example, he had done much voluntary social work in the deprived parts of the city but had also been deeply involved in working for Oxfam and had travelled to Africa as an Oxfam representative. To him, it was all one. This interview brought home to me the importance of establishing the parameters of the research. Subsequently I decided that I would exclude voluntary church social work activity from the study. The question of whether someone is being interviewed as an individual or as a representative of an organisation cannot be dealt with so straightforwardly, however.

This last point became even more apparent in the other pilot interview not discussed thus far (no.3). This was the only one of the pilot interviews conducted with an employee in their place of work. The other three interviewees were all retired and therefore had some distance between themselves and the organisations for which they had previously worked. They all also assumed that it was them as individuals that I had come to interview (rather than them in some official capacity) and so therefore spoke far more expansively about their own careers. This interviewee very clearly saw himself and presented himself in the interview as the spokesperson for his organisation. He spent very little time on his own life story and most on the history and current practice of the organisation and the interview in general had a much more formal “on the record” feel to it than the other three. It is obviously important to note which interviewees are at home and which at work (see Appendix III) although whilst I emphasised that it was social work as a profession I was

⁴⁸ Interviews can therefore be described as semi-structured. Interviewees were aware beforehand of the topics I was interested in but not of particular questions. Generally I just asked them to talk about x, y, or z and interjected specific questions as I deemed appropriate

interested in I generally left it up to interviewees to decide for themselves whether they wanted to place emphasis on their own experiences in church social work or keep it more general and talk about their organisations. I found that in the better and usually longer interviews it eventually became difficult to distinguish between the two.

Interview No.3 was superficially at least the most successful of the pilot interviews. It confirmed in my own mind the way I wanted the study to progress, concentrating on professional activity conducted under the auspices of the churches.

Other lessons from the pilot interviews were much more technical and mundane. The interviews were tape recorded. One of the problems with this method was establishing when an interview actually started and finished, especially in the informal setting of peoples' homes ("would you like a cup of tea first?"). In all four pilot interviews interesting and relevant information was shared both before the tape recorder was switched on and significantly after it was turned off. Whilst the accuracy of data collection is much greater with a tape recorder, the fact that such a device may well inhibit expression should also be taken into account:

"Fear of tape recorders is quite common among professionals whose work ethic emphasises confidentiality and secrecy, like civil servants or bank managers." [and social workers] (Thompson, op. cit: p.204)

In the pilot interviews I made the mistake of waiting until the interview itself to ask for relevant written material (Annual Reports etc.). Subsequently, I asked for them prior to interviews in order to be able to use such information in the interviews themselves.

The pilot interviews played a significant part in the preparations for the main body of interviews. They provided an opportunity for reflection on my role as interviewer, instigator and conductor of the research. They also helped to clarify the direction of the study and, in particular, what the study was not.

iv. Choosing a Sample

The sample of interviewees for the main body of interviews was selected in four ways, described as follows:

The CCBI list

The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland social work contact list provided me with a starting point for gathering contacts and interviewees although only two of those listed eventually became interviewees. I had some correspondence with several others on the list (part of one of these letters is quoted in Chapter 4) and three interviewees were recommended to me by people on the original list.

Contacting Central Organisations.

I contacted the headquarters of churches and church organisations and asked to be put in contact with those involved in church social work. I chose this method of gaining access and obtaining interviews both as a straightforward and simple method and as a way of finding out how far church social work had penetrated into the institutions of a church. Whether or not I obtained interviews, I still obtained useful data about the level of penetration. So, for example, I contacted the Methodist Church's central office and obtained an interview with their spokesperson on social work issues who in turn recommended several others involved in social work in the Methodist Church, one of whom I went on to interview. This method also worked well for various Anglican dioceses, The Church of Scotland, and the Church Army. However, in the case of the Elim Pentecostal Movement and the Assemblies of God churches, their officials could not direct me to local congregations that performed social work. This might well say as much about the relative strengths of central organisations of the different denominations as about the prevalence of social work. I do not doubt that both Elim and the Assemblies of God do have local churches that host professional social work but I was not directed to any.

Snowballing

At the end of each interview I asked if there was anybody else that the interviewee might recommend for me to interview. This technique is known as snowball interviewing. There are some obvious strengths and weaknesses inherent in this technique.⁴⁹ Amongst the strengths is that following their own interview an

⁴⁹ See Biernacki and Waldorf (1981).

interviewee is in a good position to consider who else might be appropriate. One weakness is that interviewees might recommend those in very similar work, at a similar professional level, holding very similar opinions and there can be a consequent lack of variety. I have already noted above that interviewees tended to keep recommendations within their own denominations. They also tended to recommend peers rather than subordinates. This is one of the reasons why it might be said that this study, especially in those aspects working closely with data from interviews, is more about social work management than social work per se. Much of the study, especially chapters 3 and 4, focuses on management preoccupations and structural issues. Of the 28 interviewees in the main study only seven were still involved in face-to-face social work with clients and only three were in no sense managers. In three cases I did two interviews in an organisation, one with a manager and one with a social worker but that was unusual and so it was not really possible to record differences of outlook at different levels of organisations. It is possible that, for example, the frustration expressed by managers about the apathy and lack of interest of their own churches in the work is a particular experience of managers and may not reach social workers. Such fluctuations are not traceable in the study as it stands.

Clearly this snowballing technique had a great impact on the study and in many ways made it what it is in that it created a core group of interviewees - Anglican Diocesan Social Work Managers, (Interviewees 5, 7, 11, 12, 15, 16, 19 and 28). They are the most frequently cited interviewees and their preoccupations for the most part are the preoccupations of the study.

See the notes for Table 1 for a detailed list of who recommended who. Almost equally important is who did not recommend who. So for example, in Chapter 4, two interviewees (5 and 11) are paired together repeatedly in the sections on Establishing Distance and Muddle. It is important for the reader to know that neither of these two referred the other. Likewise, in the section on social responsibility that reads like a debate between interviewees 3 and 16, the reader must know that neither recommended the other.

Diversification and Filling Gaps

As the interviews were progressing I gave some thought to who else I might interview. The main gaps I was looking to fill were in denominations represented and in the variety of social work fields. This meant that a certain amount of overt finding and “soliciting” on my part was necessary. Also, as is made clear in Chapter 1, after the 1960s church social work was not alone in the field of church social intervention. Also present was church community work, the social responsibility movement, the social justice movement and Christian social work as represented by non-denominational agencies. As an attempt to track these changes and especially what they meant for church social work, I also chose to interview two people involved in church community work, two social responsibility officers and three managers of non-denominational charities.

One could use this last method to supplement or manipulate the list further, making it even more of an “opportunistic sample”, looking for example, for an even male/female split, representative voices for ethnic minorities, or even using class as a variable in selection. There may be something to be said for each of these and I did, in fact, make some efforts to contact social work practitioners in The Black Majority Churches involved in rehabilitation of offenders (to no avail). My main reasons for interfering in the sample, however, were as I have said, to increase the number of denominations and social work fields represented

In sum, interviewees have been selected in one of four ways, either from a contact list, through the recommendation of another interviewee, the recommendation of a central administrative system, or, lastly, by being directly chosen by the researcher to fill a perceived gap in the group.

v. Presentation of the Interview Material

In Chapters 2,3,4,5,and 6 of the study, 21 of the interviewees are quoted directly (information that was useful to the research was provided by almost all of the remaining 7). The next question to be considered, already touched on briefly in the section on oral history above, was how best and most equitably to present the material in order both to make a case and to make a sufficient allowance for the overall context and content of the interviews themselves. According to Thompson’s

book on oral history:

“There are broadly three ways in which oral history can be put together. The first is the single life story narrative. ... The second is a collection of stories.... The third form is that of cross- analysis: the oral evidence is treated as a quarry from which to construct an argument. ..wherever the prime aim becomes analysis, the overall shape can no longer be governed by the life story form of the evidence but must emerge from the inner logic of the argument. This will normally require much briefer quotations, with evidence from one interview compared with that of another, and combined with evidence from other types of source material. Argument and cross-analysis are clearly essential for any systematic development of the interpretation of history. On the other hand, the loss in this form of presentation is equally clear.” (Thompson, op cit: p.239)

I have used two of the three methods to which Thompson refers. The first method, the single life story narrative, was never sought or used even though in the case of some interviewees I was interested in more than one stage of their career. For example, one interviewee spoke to me about his time as a student at JBMH, his time as a young manager of a moral welfare team, his role as an organiser of the Church Army’s social work and his ongoing involvement with social workers since his ordination and in his work as a Minister in the Church of England. Obviously all those aspects of his life and career were of interest to me. This means that in his case (and several others) the designation of job titles in the table in Appendix III is only a guide. Other interviewees, however, like the pilot interviewee referred to above, were in post and were determined to stick to a description of their current role and the interviews did not markedly step outside of those confines.

The second method, that of bringing together a collection of stories, is used in Chapter 2. The third method, cross analysis, is used in chapters 3 and 4 and to a much lesser extent in chapters 5 and 6. I used both methods to counter Thompson’s suggestion that cross-analysis loses something in the way it pushes interview data to fit an argument. Argument is deliberately excluded from Chapter 2. It should also be pointed out that, as Thompson predicted in the quotation above, in Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 various other kinds of evidence and material are included in the mix of the argument. The interview material is interspersed among excerpts from the texts of published material, unpublished personal notes, letters, and examination questions set for students of moral welfare. There are obviously problems with this approach in

comparing like with unlike. Off the cuff remarks in interviews or personal briefing papers are by no means the same as carefully considered thoughts and opinions that reach publication. The reader is asked to make allowances for this usage in following the argument. The alternative method, that of taking each form of data separately, would have been simply too unwieldy and repetitive.

vi. Feedback

Lincoln and Guba argue that even with all the doubts and uncertainties that now surround any the attempt to search for “truth” in qualitative research, criteria for the trustworthiness of research can still be found. They call one of their criteria “credibility” and suggest it involves “member checks“, (Lincoln and Guba, op.cit: p.314), that is sending transcripts and analysis of interviews back to interviewees for their comments, which are then included in the research. I used this method in the research (see feedback request letter, Appendix II) and was hoping to include a short chapter in the study on feedback and its incorporation.

In fact, however, I received many fewer comments than I had hoped and the majority of those I did receive were general rather than detailed. I received a number of brief, “ yes, that is fine” emails and telephone calls which, whilst superficially encouraging, were not at all what I was looking for as can be seen from the feedback request letter. I entered in to detailed correspondence with one interviewee about my interpretation of the history of moral welfare. Another wanted to tidy up his comments which I discouraged, and a third had concerns about strengthening their anonymity which I accommodated and corrected some factual statements. One interviewee, in a follow up telephone interview was concerned that I had used only the negative material in her interview and suggested that I must have got her on a bad day. Nevertheless, she stood by everything she said that I had included and did not disagree with my interpretation of it. Another interviewee said it was comforting to read of others with similar complaints to her own and it made her feel less paranoid. That was the sum total of interviewee feedback.

The decision to make interview comments anonymous may have reduced the level of interest in feedback as people cared less if they were not openly cited. Despite this, I stand by the decision to make contributions anonymous as it certainly

allowed me a greater freedom in the use the material. The other reason for the shortage of feedback was possibly to do with the amount of time that lapsed between interviews and the feedback request, which in a number of cases was 18 months or longer. Even if I had been able to better maintain contact with interviewees I am, however, doubtful that I would have received much more feedback.

IV. Options for Further Research

It was hoped that this research would be, in some sense, foundational, that further research might begin from here. A single piece of research by a single researcher cannot hope to cover the whole field and many of the choices and learning described above have been about how best to limit the study. A useful way to conclude this critique positively would be to reflect briefly on how work in this field might now develop following this piece of research.

The field of this present research could be both expanded and narrowed, both to useful effect. That the Church of England does not know the extent of its own social work is a sad state of affairs and, as has already been suggested, is symbolic of the church's lack of interest. Wide ranging quantitative research needs to be done to establish exactly how much Church of England Church social work is out there.

The latter part of Chapter 3 of the study is hampered by being a case of Chinese whispers, with church social workers saying of their state counterparts: "We think that they think this about us." Clearly a good piece of complementary research would be to discover exactly how much scorn and contempt for do-gooders and lady Bountifuls still exists among statutory social workers. This could be done through interviews with state social workers across the country. Bowpitt and Pringle's claims that Church social work faced prejudice at an administrative level could also be checked out. One interviewee (Interviewee16) claimed that registration for residential homes in her diocese was rejected purely on the basis of prejudice against religion. Such assertions could be checked by quantitative research using documented evidence.

This research is very much about church social work as a profession and I interviewed only practitioners. Another complementary piece of research would be to interview people who have had church social workers intervene in their own lives. In

addition the research was geographically broad-based, examining church social work across the country. It was not based in one locale. A piece of work that would interest me personally, and would incorporate both of these factors, would be to interview women who spent time in a particular Mother and Baby home possibly in the 1960s or 70s. Clearly there might be problems in finding and contacting these women but such small-scale work would greatly increase knowledge of the nature of moral welfare work.

Conclusions

I. The New Facts

First and foremost this study has consisted of an updating of the story of church social work in Britain. The last two major field studies of church social work that included within them the views of church social workers themselves were carried out between 1958 and 1960 and published in 1965 (Hall and Howes, 1965) and then in 1968 and published in a very abbreviated form in 1970 (Magnass, 1970). As Chapter 1 made clear, the period of the 1960s and early 1970s was one of reflection on the future of church social work and a number of other writers and thinkers on the subject published material during this time. Since this time however very little of substance has been written on the subject of church social work in Britain. Interviewees were encouraged to reflect on the period of the 1970s and 80s which otherwise is something of a blank in the field. Whatever the new facts are, and see below, there can be little doubt that they are indeed new.

II. How this research advances study of the subject.

There are four central claims to originality. The first claim is that the subject itself, that is church social work as a branch of the social work profession, has not previously been closely researched. Other writers have emphasised other aspects of church social work, such as its ongoing volunteerism (Harris, 1995) or the role of women within it (Heeney, 1988). This is the first study to focus on the standards of professionalism within church social work. The second claim is that this is a broader study of church social work than has previously been attempted in terms of the different churches and denominations included within the research. Previous studies have been rigidly denominational. The self-critique in the previous chapter has already noted the limitations of this claim in that the study is primarily about the social work of the Anglican churches. Nevertheless the contributions of others, members of the Church of Scotland especially, help to establish the distinctiveness of the study. Thirdly, not only is the study multi-denominational, it is conducted on a multidisciplinary basis, incorporating social work history, church history and aspects of the history of theology. Early in the literature review it was noted that church

history and social work history have had no common ground. The subject of the church has been peripheral to the history of the social work profession and social work as a professional activity has been peripheral to the history of the church. This study is set at the neglected confluence of these two disciplines. Fourthly, and finally, the thesis of the study provides a fresh and informative perspective on church social work.

III. Has the Thesis been Proven?

The thesis with which this study began highlighted two flaws or failings within church social work; its failure to engage with the wider social work profession and its failure to become integrated into The Church. I assert that this thesis is substantively proven in chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 produces ample evidence from interview material of the depths of ambivalence and suspicion felt by church social workers towards their state colleagues. It concluded on the possibly more hopeful note that good social work practice and plain dealing can overcome any amount of bad history. Chapter 4 found evidence of a much more serious fissure between the church and its own social work. The reason why this is more serious is that it is to do with structures and attitudes, not just practices. There is little that church social work can do to make itself more acceptable to the wider church community, although the interviewee (28) who showed determination to continue selling church social work to The Church demonstrated the way forward even as he put to one side his despair that such selling still had to be done.

Chapters 3 and 4 do more, however, than prove this rather simple thesis. They are the heart of the study and its richest data is provided by the comments of interviewees within them. Read in isolation those comments might make church social workers appear a negative, complaining, self-pitying lot. I interviewed a number of people who, for a variety of reasons discussed, took my interview to be an opportunity to have a rant. Those rants have often been included. The rest of the study is in many ways an attempt to provide a context, an explanation and an exposition of those sometimes extreme and even irrational expressions of resentment. More important than proving a thesis is the academic obligation to attempt to make sense of the work experience of these people and to have constructed a framework

within which their contribution to the social work profession can be properly appreciated and understood.

IV. Heasman's Three Points

Kathleen Heasman's original comments (1965: pp.29-30) on the causes of the decline of the church social work in the 20th Century formed the bones of the analysis of the study. To what extent these comments continue to be relevant must be clarified in the light of the new evidence.

Firstly, take Heasman's comments on do-gooding. The myth of the Lady Bountiful or the do-gooder figure is an enduringly powerful one and to this day it clearly has an effect on how many church social workers comport themselves and see themselves as being seen. Indeed the research showed that the message has hit home. Every church social work manager I met as part of the research was determined to emphasise the professionalism and competence of their staff. It is possible to say conclusively that there is nothing of the dilettante about the modern church social worker. Contemporary church social work has successfully lived down its poor image, proven that it is now undeserved. Another significant component in the Lady Bountiful reputation discussed in chapter 3 was social superiority. To the social responsibility officer who made the somewhat snide remark that there was still something of "the haves doing for the have nots" about church social work, I would say I found that to be no more the case than in other form of social work under the auspices of the state or any other agency working in a society which is still far from being entirely just or equitable. Clearly, Lady Bountiful's legacy damaged church social work but I would not place it as the primary cause of the decline. Church social workers lived with this reputation over a long period. It did not altogether stop them from doing their work.

Secondly and similarly, as I have indicated in Chapter 6, I am not convinced Heasman's claim that church social work declined in line with the decline in church attendance holds any great weight. It is a comment that would appear so obvious that it must be true but closer study has shown that not to be the case with church social work especially in recent years managing to continue in the face of rapid decline in church membership/attendance. The broader residual effects of secularisation are, of

course, not to be dismissed.

I discussed in chapter 6 how one of the findings to have emerged from the study is that the concept of the decline of church social work is a limited and limiting concept. Also, other changes have happened to church social work over the last 40 years or so beside simple decline and closure. I have characterised such changes as the move beyond church social work and I shall come to these developments in due course.

Of Heasman's three causes of decline, the accusation of a lack of interest by the churches themselves in their own social work was by far the most suggestive and profound comment. What so much of this PhD has been about has been unpacking and expanding upon this remark, trying to trace the causes and consequences of the apathy. Heasman's comment was made in 1965. In 2003 I can say I have found very little evidence from the intervening period to contradict it.

V. The Lessons from the Study for the Churches

I have spent the last five years attempting to discover the nature of social work found within the Church of England, not solely in that church, but that is where my attention has been most concentrated. A good deal of strong, effective professional social work that is being carried out under the auspices of the churches has been uncovered by this research and the fact that such work is ongoing is, I suggest, an important finding. It has had to be uncovered, however, because it is certainly not on show. It is not easy to find⁵⁰. It is certainly not promoted by the churches as a part of their identity.

I asked one interviewee who had been a senior social worker in the Church of Scotland what were his views on the efforts at social intervention made by the Church of England (Interview 25). He thought that ultimately the Church of England could not be described as a serious organisation because it could so easily be sidetracked into the trivial or the peripheral and therefore its efforts in the social work field were always going to be hampered or limited. I am writing these conclusions in the midst

⁵⁰ With the usual exceptions, see The Salvation Army Yearbook 2002 and The Church of Scotland Yearbook 2002/3.

of the controversy surrounding the appointment and subsequent resignation of Jeffrey John, an openly gay Anglican priest, as Bishop of Reading. This episode has produced ample evidence to support the interviewee's comments and in many ways makes the whole exercise of writing these final comments quite dispiriting. I had hoped to say forget about the decline that took place in the 1970s, the future, for those involved in church social work, is bright. Yet obviously I cannot just say that. Those who are still attempting to do social work through the auspices of the churches are attempting to work within a community that in many ways is at odds with much of the rest of society and certainly at odds with the interpretation of the values of that society most commonly found in the social work profession. For example, Oxford diocese, in which the Bishop of Reading works, has a social work team, which in recent years has reached a highly professional standard. It is working towards equal opportunities, carefully attempting to avoid discrimination and demonstrate good practice and yet one of its leaders, who might well chair its board meetings and have a large say in its dealings, is chosen in a way riddled with prejudice, discrimination, secrecy, and because of other pressures within the church, is certainly not permitted to be a gay man. This is not just a clash of cultures and values, it is a head-on collision. More will be said on this clash below.

At various points in its history church social work has been critiqued (Pringle 1937: 4, Blackburn in Heasman 1979), Wickham 1962, Hall and Howes 1965, Magnass 1970) and writers have come up with blueprints for a way forward, plans for what the church social work must do to go on, to be salvaged etc. None of these clarion calls had any significant impact. None of them managed to dispel the indifference. It makes one hesitant to offer yet another blueprint. Nevertheless certain aspects of the critique of church social work reverberate at a number of levels that must, in conclusion, be brought together.

If I was to characterise the essential nature of church social work in Britain in the 20th century in one word, I would say that it has been narrow. The emphasis on moral welfare work meant that it was narrow in the choice of client and became even narrower (as compared to the breadth of 19th Century philanthropy). It was narrow in its theoretical/theological underpinning. It was narrow in terms of its basis of support within the churches. Accompanying this narrowness, indeed perhaps intrinsic parts of

it, have been two further characteristics of church social work; inflexibility and isolationism.

Church social work sometimes has an image of itself as a pioneering service finding new avenues for social work and starting new endeavours (Niebuhr 1932: p.16 and Chalke, 2000: *passim*). Certainly, this has been the case and much church social work started like this with radical beginnings, especially in the late 19th and early 20th Century. However, there is another interpretation of the history of church social work which is especially applicable to a slightly later period. According to this interpretation work was allowed to fossilize until it became unable to change and adapt. As one interviewee said:

“But I can tell you that this agency in 1963 placed 250 kids for adoption and by 73 that was down to 25. A huge drop in numbers but with still 200 people waiting to adopt and that was partly due to East Topshire opening up but it was mostly to do with a decrease in the number of babies available for adoption: the pill, social stigma, abortion. And I suppose what is so difficult to understand is why did the church get so tied in to that adoption thing and so when that was in demise or in decline shall we say, they went into decline with it....” (Interview 5)

It is not difficult to understand this phenomenon with a grasp of what was going on more generally in the church social work scene. There was an inflexibility combined with a certain passivity. The survival strategy for much church social work was passive, ostrich-like, keeping the head down, not moving, not making too much fuss, and maybe the work can carry on. Obviously it did not work but it is not surprising that many agencies chose such an approach because keeping their head down and maintaining their small vulnerable piece of territory within the church was what church social workers had long done and this had long coloured their work. In the early 1950s Christabel Blackburn complained there was very little contact and communication between the dioceses. There was also little contact between denominations or, as Chapter 3 made clear, with the statutory sector. Very few people in this period had a broad overview of church social work and where it fitted into wider systems of provision..

One of the questions I asked many church social work managers was -“Why did your agency survive when so many others closed down?” A common thread in their answers was the ability to change, flexibility, adaptation, sometimes only

something slight such as the adoption agency that went from doing standard adoptions to specializing in helping older children get adopted, or the single mother flatlet scheme that became an assessment centre for at risk families. Yet it occurred to me that in order to make these changes these managers needed to understand that they were required and anticipate how successful they would be within the wider social work scene. In other words they needed to see further than their predecessors had done.

The other malady from which church social work has suffered ruinously is isolationism (although to be absolutely fair it has not always been clear whether church social work has deliberately isolated itself or whether that was its only option in the face of indifference or antagonism). Good work has been done in one place with little or no thought as to whether it might be being done better elsewhere. It is a particular trait of social work, perhaps both a weakness and a strength, that it focuses so hard on solving the immediate problem that it doesn't always see the big picture. In the case of church social work that trait is combined with denominationalism, idiosyncratic church structures, enemies within, insecurities about professionalism, and a theological grounding that is wary of 'the world'. Altogether they make for a strong brew of isolationism.

What I have been calling the diversifications beyond church social work, that is church community work, the social responsibility and social justice movements, and Christian social work have all come about in part as various forms of reaction to these flaws within church social work. Yet they themselves are susceptible and vulnerable to the same processes and flaws. I despaired of the social responsibility officer who wrote back to say that church social work was not his field. I despaired for two reasons. Firstly such a statement showed a lack of knowledge of the history of his own work and secondly it was evidence of compartmentalism, clinging to one's own territory, an attitude which has served church social work and the churches response to the social so poorly in the past. (Gladwin, 1999). Clearly the way forward for these various movements, including church social work, is to combine and co-operate.

The one movement to which I have devoted most attention and that I judge to be most important in relation to church social work is the Christian social work

movement. The reason why it is most important is because Christian social work provides a challenge to church social work at its point of greatest vulnerability, its inadequate structure. Christian social work's response to the inadequate support that churches have provided is to strike out and become independent of church patronage. Interestingly, one of the pieces of feedback I received was from a manager of a church social work organisation that had been contemplating as she called it, stepping outside. Subsequent to her interview with me the organisation had a review and as a result they decided to do it, to make that step. For them, the choice between Christian Social Work and being "in sympathy with Christian values" beckoned.

My one concern about the rise of Christian Social Work is that it often combines the most radical of organisational structures with the most conservative of theological standpoints. All my criticisms in Chapter 5 of the gospel of the atonement as a starting point for social work are as applicable to modern Christian social work as they were to 19th Century Evangelical philanthropy. The atonement alone will prove as inadequate for Christian Social Work as it proved for church social work. The task of bringing together the atonement and the broader theologies, the personal and the political, has begun but a great deal more work remains to be done.

The temptation to offer a blueprint is, of course, irresistible. For what it is worth here is my own blueprint although it says little which has not been said by the others cited above. If church social work is going to go on and thrive it must take a look at the bigger picture of the contemporary social work/social care scene, not be shy about entering into partnership with all sorts of strange people, make friends and common cause with the clergy, find out what is best structurally (small is beautiful) and it must become theologically more grounded but also paradoxically more adventurous.

VI. Lessons from the study for the Profession

Whilst the main focus of the study has been a very specific and targeted one I also wrote this study in the hope that the reader with a general interest in the social work profession would find it worthwhile and would be able to extrapolate to a wider context. At one point in the study I suggest it is interesting to consider to what extent the particular failings of church social work are also the failings of the wider social

work profession. However it is important to emphasise that as I did not interview statutory social workers the comments in this section are ruminative rather than evidence-based.

I stated in the Introduction that I did not intend to take a view on the position propounded most prominently by Bowpitt (1989: p.15), that the churches were elbowed out of social work by a militantly secular lobby within the profession. However, if professional social work did indeed become a secular creature, the churches bear a certain responsibility for that. The 1920 Archbishop's Report on *The Church and Social Service* urged co-operation between church and state in social provision. As the study has demonstrated such co-operation was rare. The churches either did a job all by themselves and insisted it was their work (as in moral welfare work) or they simply bailed out and left whole areas of work up to the state. It was obviously much easier for social work to become a secular profession as the churches continued their work in splendid isolation and did not engage with others. Even so, after this long proviso, there remain issues that this study has thrown up that secular social work should address.

i. Tolerance

Discussions on social work values are normally concerned with relationships between the social worker and the persons they are seeking to assist. When Biestek wrote about "Acceptance" and Rogers about "Unconditional Positive Regard", they were referring to relations with clients. Another way of viewing the values or ethics of a profession, however, is to look at how they treat their own, to look at internal relations. How much tolerance, acceptance and unconditional positive regard has been found amongst state social workers in their dealings with church social workers? Insufficient. This study has shown that such conduct cannot be argued away as a defence of the profession in that church social workers for much of the 20th Century were better trained and generally better qualified than their peers working for the state or other agencies. The myth of the untrained, amateurish bumbler that was apparently the typical church social worker has been undermined by this study. The lack of tolerance that these workers claim to have come up against (remembering again that theirs is just one side of the story) in their dealings with their secular peers

has been, to say the least, unseemly.

ii. Culture and Context

To a great extent the social work profession rejected the churches' way of doing social work when it moved beyond philanthropy. Indeed it has been shown there was much about old style church-based philanthropy that was discredited and was rightly disregarded. But in taking this course the social work profession also lost some things of great value.

In dispensing with parish-based methods professional social work also lost the connection to a locale (moral welfare lost that too when it moved to a diocesan rather than parish based work setting). The message of church community work to church social work is the same as the message of secular community work to secular social work. It is the importance of local resolutions to local problems.

Beyond that, by ignoring what Bowpitt (1998: p.676) refers to as the religious skeletons in the cupboard, professional social work lost a grounding in the culture and heritage of Britain. Payne (1990) claims that British social work values are essentially humanist. Whatever the validity of that claim it is clear that the great bulk of British heritage and tradition is not humanist. It is Christian. So if Payne is correct then the social work profession has not been true to its roots. It has not been grounded in the norms and values of wider society. It weakened its own foundations by refusing to recognise the religious context from which it had, in part, emerged. What D.S. Browning writes in *The Moral Context of Pastoral Care* strikes a chord here:

“I have the suspicion that most of today's helping disciplines are oblivious to the fact that that care (psychotherapy, counselling, guidance) goes on in a cultural context of some kind. When a practitioner is oblivious to this fact, and a blindness to the cultural assumptions, symbols and goals that define the actual horizons of care. There is a tendency to see care as a set of specific acts that one does for another person, or as a set of scientific truths that are applied, or even as a matter of simple 'love' or 'concern' or 'feeling' for another. This simple view fails to realise that whatever care is, it must take a point of departure from a culture and feed back into that culture, or seek to create an alternative culture. The recognition of this fact somehow escapes many practitioners in the helping professions, be they religious or secular in orientation.” (Browning, 1976: p.71)

VII. Final Thoughts on Failure

At several points in the study I have grappled with the question of what has been called the “Christian character” of social work and also with the question of sound motivation for church social work. Felix Biestek, in his well known book *The Casework Relationship* (1961) provided one answer to both of these questions by emphasising one Christian doctrine as being an appropriate starting point for any social work intervention:

“The Human person has intrinsic value. He has an innate dignity and worth, basic rights and needs. Man has a unique value in the universe. This intrinsic value is derived from God and is not affected by personal success or failure in things physical, economics, social or anything else. The applicant for financial assistance, the deserted child, the alcoholic lying at the rear door of a tavern on Skid row, the violent patient in a mental hospital, each has the same intrinsic human dignity and value as the wealthy person, the child of loving parents, the well integrated person, and even the saint. The social failures, just as the socially successful, are made in the image of God, are children of the infinitely loving heavenly Father and heirs of heaven.... No individual characteristic forfeits this value. Heredity and environment do not alter a person's basic value...It is necessary to stress the source of human dignity. It does not come from personal success, it does not originate in a Bill of Rights or in a democratic Constitution – these merely proclaim the worth of the individual rather than bestow it. The origin of the dignity of humanity is divinity.

“Because of its origins the person cannot be deprived of his worth by anything or anyone. Man's worth is inalienable. This value of the human person is the basis of the principle of acceptance and gives meaning and direction to the casework helping process.” (Biestek: 1961: pp. 73-74)

I would like to end by highlighting Biestek's ruminations on failure in the quotation above. Hapgood has similarly noted:

“The [preceding] reference to failure brings us to the quality which is perhaps most neglected in public life, and where Christians have most to offer. A key difference between Christianity and secular Humanism is that Christians have, or ought to have, more effective ways of dealing with failure. A gospel of forgiveness is utterly different from advice to try harder.”
(Hapgood, 1983: p.48)

With a little imagination the comments of Biestek and Hapgood can be

extrapolated to an overall consideration of church social work. By that I mean that undoubtedly church social work, just like its predecessor church philanthropy, has been a failure. This study has been for the most part an analysis and reflection on various aspects of that failure. Yet to paraphrase or parody Biestek, church social work has, despite its flaws, an intrinsic worth and dignity which is inalienable and invulnerable. Such dignity and worth cannot be taken away by rejection, even rejection by The Church. The Irish women met on the dock and found hostel places and who thus escaped the possible fate of prostitution, the families who remained together because of the assistance provided by the church assessment centre, the homeless people who are “alive this spring” because of a church night shelter, the elderly people who are able to find places in church residential homes without making themselves paupers, the drinkers who have found in a church hospice a place to die unmolested, all stand testament to the intrinsic and enduring value of this work and temper any ultimate pessimism.

APPENDIX I

Sample Preparatory Letter Sent to Interviewees

Mrs. ** *****
Director of *****
Trinity House

14th August 2001

Dear Mrs. *****,

As promised in my earlier letter, here are more details of what I hope to be discussing with you in our meeting next Monday.

As I have already said the general area of my research is social work and the churches and I am interviewing representatives and practitioners from a number of church-based organisations.

Amongst the subjects I envisage our meeting covering are the following:

1. An outline of your own career and present work, to provide a context for the interview.
2. An overview of the current social work/social service of ***** in *****.
3. What you consider the most significant developments in the recent history of *****'s social work/social service? I have a 1996/7 Annual Report.
4. The details of the connections between ***** and the "state sector". At what level co-operation is organised etc.
5. The details of the connections between ***** and the Diocese of *****
5. The relationship between ***** and other churches and religious organisations involved in social work. At what level co-operation is organised etc.
6. The future of the social work/social service of ***** and church-based social work in general.
7. Any other thoughts or opinions you may want to voice on the research topic. Would you accept, for example, that the influence of the churches on social work has declined, and has *****'s work had to accommodate itself to this decline or has it acted as an exception to it?

The interview should last between 60 and 90minutes. If it is all right with you I would like to use a tape recorder.

I hope this letter will be of some help you as you plan for our meeting.
I'm looking forward to our meeting.

Yours sincerely,
Russell Whiting

APPENDIX II.
Sample Follow-Up letter to Interviewees

Mrs *****
Director of *****
Trinity House

26th May 2003

Dear Mrs,

I hope you recall the interview that you gave me as part of my research into church social work. At the time of the interview I promised to send you any material from the interview that I planned to use in my PhD and give you a chance for feedback. As you will see I have anonymised all interview contributions but there is a chapter in the study allocated for feedback contributions.

I have sent the whole section in which your comments are included to provide the context. I have also enclosed a contents page and an introduction to give you some indication of the framework of the study. If you are interested in receiving more material I can send by post or preferably by e-mail the whole study or any chapter(s) of the work you might be interested in.

Depending on your degree of interest it is possible to engage in the feedback process on a number of levels. Firstly, you can write to add to your thoughts from the interview. Secondly, you can comment on my use of them. Thirdly, if you would like to further our earlier discussion it would be possible to hold follow up interviews, either by telephone or in person. If you wish to engage in this feedback process I would be grateful if you could submit your comments or contact me by the end of June.

I have tried to make this study collaborative in spirit, bringing together a number of views of people involved in the field. The feedback is an opportunity for you to extend the dialogue if you wish. I would like to thank-you for your contribution thus far and I look forward to receiving any comments you wish to make.

Yours sincerely,

Russell Whiting

**APPENDIX III.
LIST OF INTERVIEWEES**

No.	Job Title, Agency	Denomination of Agency/Interviewee (same unless stated)	User group	Location	Gender
Pilot 1.	Hospital Social Worker	Unknown	Hospital patients	Home	Female
Pilot 2.*	Secretary, Council of Churches	The Church of England	Various	Home	Male
Pilot 3.*	Manager, Children' Charity	Roman Catholic	Children and Families	Office	Male
Pilot 4.	Hospital Social Worker	Unknown	Hospital patients	Home	Female
1.*	Spokesperson,	Salvation Army	Various	Office	Female
2.	Archivist	Salvation Army	Various	Office	Male
3.*	Social Responsibility Officer	The Church of England	Various	Office	Male
4.	Special Projects Manager	The Church of England	Homeless People	Office	Male
5.	Director,	The Church of England	Children and Families	Office	Male
6.	Lecturer in Social Policy	Independent Evangelical	Students	Office	Male
7.*	Chief Executive,	The Church of England	Children and Families	Conference	Male

	Community Worker	Independent Evangelical	Various	Conference	Male
8.		Independent Evangelical	Various	Conference	Male
9.	Social Worker	Roman Catholic	Homeless People	Home	Female
10.	Spokesperson,	The Methodist Church	Children and Families	Office	Male
11.*	Director	The Church of England	Children and Families	Office	Female
12.	Manager, Moral Welfare Team	The Church of England	Children and Families	Home	Male
13.	Social Worker, Children's charity	Roman Catholic	Children and Families	Office	Female
14.	Director,	The Methodist Church	Homeless People	Office	Male
15.	Director	The Church of England/ United Reformed Church	Children and Families	Office	Female
16.	Chief Executive	The Church of England	Families of Children at risk	Office	Female
17.	Manager, Residential Home	Non-denominational/ Baptist	Homeless People	Office	Female
18.	Missioner,	The Church of England	Children	Cafe	Male
19.	Manager, Moral Welfare Team	The Church of England	Children and Families	Home	Female
20.	Manager, Women's refuge	Non-denominational/ Independent Evangelical	Women and Children	Office	Female

21.	Community Development Co-ordinator	Non-denominational/ Unknown	Various	Office	Female
22.	Manager, Residential home	The Church of Scotland	People with Learning Disabilities	Office	Female
23.	Director of Care	Non-denominational/ Church of Scotland	Homeless People	Office	Female
24.	Manager	The Church of Scotland	Various	Office	Female
25.	Manager	The Church of Scotland	Various	Office	Male
26	Manager, Residential Home	The Church of Scotland	Elderly People	Office	Male
27.	Care Worker, Residential Home	The Church of Scotland	People with Learning Disabilities	Office	Male
28	Social Responsibility Advisor	The Church in Wales	Various	Home	Male
Totals:		Agencies 11 Church of England 5 Church of Scotland 4 Non-denominational 3 Roman Catholic Church 2 Methodist Church 2 Salvation Army 1 Church in Wales		22 Office 7 at Home 3 others	18 M: 14 F.

Notes to Table

* Interviewees who were on the original Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland social work contact list or were recommended as alternatives by people on that list.

The technique of snowballing was used in 11 instances:

Pilot Interviewee 3 recommended interviewee 13

Interviewee 1 recommended interviewee 2,

3 recommended 5, 5 recommended 19.

7 recommended 15 and 16, 15 recommended 28, 16 recommended 19.

9 recommended 18

10 recommended 14

22 recommended 27

APPENDIX IV.

THE VALUE BASE OF THE WELCARE SERVICE

1. **Belief in God as a Holy Trinity of Persons in Relation** implies a high value on personal relationships as the heart of what it means to be human. Respect for persons within their network of human relationships and the recognition and fostering of community, **are at the centre of WelCare's work.**
2. **The understanding of humanity (of both genders and all races) as made in God's image** not only implies a high value on each person's individual life, but also rebukes any discrimination between people which values one person above another. This means not imposing one's own views or emotional needs on others and accepting people as they are.
3. **God's graces as undeserved and unconditional** can be reflected in the high value placed upon Welcare's desire to offer its service of support and care unconditionally.
4. **God's initiative of love (he first loved us)** requires us to recognise the need of each person to be loved and valued from birth so that he or she can, in turn, learn to give love and to value both self and others.
5. **God's love expressed in the ministry of Jesus** is on the side of the poor and the disadvantaged, The high value Jesus placed on the care of vulnerable children, and his acceptance of and respect for women underlies our work with women and children in need.
6. **God's Justice** seen in the anger of the prophets against injustice and in establishing the values of his Kingdom, is reflected in WelCare's stand against injustice and in advocacy on behalf of the disadvantaged.
7. **God's creativity** is reflected in human creativity and in the use of the gifts and abilities we have. We are committed to helping people use their gifts and realise their potential, from whatever emotional or social starting point they come. WelCare also encourages its staff, committee members and volunteers to use the gifts and skills they have in the fullest possible way.
8. **God's forgiveness**, seen in his reconciling of the world to himself in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, can be reflected in our recognition of ambiguity, coping with failure, handling guilt creatively, seeking reconciliation between estranged people, working for renewal.
9. **God's purpose to bring all things to their completion in the Kingdom of His glory** motivates us to live and work in hope. We value the possibilities of change and development in line with God's purposes and for human welfare.

10. **God's rhythm of creativity and rest**, also seen in Jesus' work and prayer, is reflected in the encouragement WelCare gives to its staff and service users to have times of retreat and recreation.

11. **God's church, as a body of members with different gifts and needs**, requires within WelCare a recognition of collaborative work, rejection of omnipotence, need to refer, willingness to accept help for ourselves, and accountability for our work to committees and management.

12. **God is Spirit**. This makes us place a high value on the spiritual dimensions of all human life. Our work is rooted in the prayers of our supporters and in our concern to develop the spiritual dimension of peoples' lives.

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